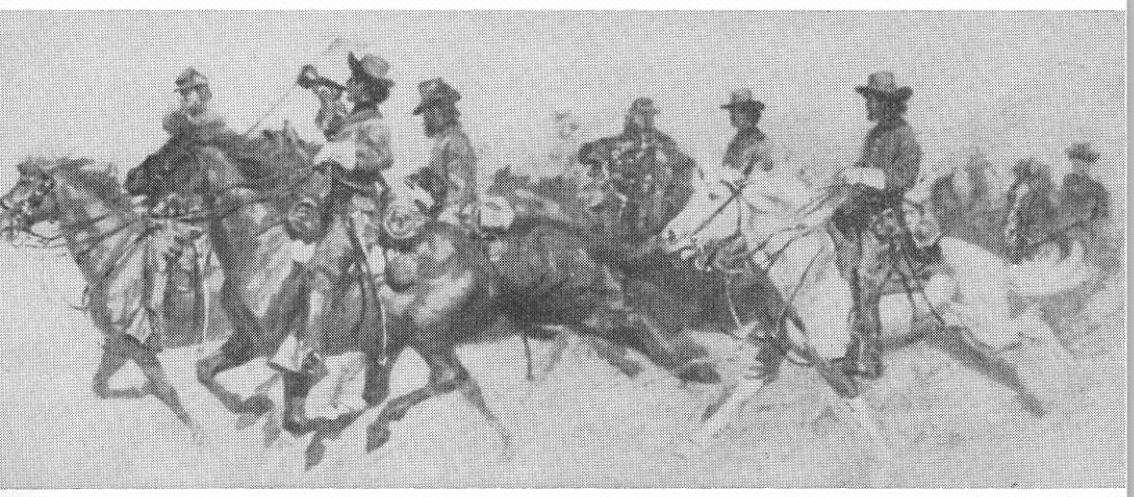
The Battle of Pilot Knob

CENTENNIAL OBSERVANCE

Iron County, Missouri

September 27, 1964



COMMEMORATIVE
PROGRAM AND HISTORY OF
THE BATTLE

Published by

MISSOURI CIVIL WAR CENTENNIAL
COMMISSION

PROGRAM

SATURDAY

26 September 1964

10:00 - 10:15 Opening ceremony

10:15 - 5:00 Conducted tours for visitors, band concert and flower ceremony for the dead

5:00 - 5:15 Retreat ceremony

SUNDAY

27 September 1964

10:00 - 11:00 Battlefield Church Service for Jewish, Protestant and Catholic

11:00 - 2:00 Conducted tours for visitors and band concert

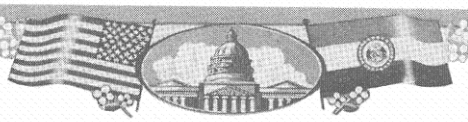
2:00 - 2:45 Memorial Ceremony, Rifle Volley and Taps

ADDRESS

Dr. Richard S. Brownlee
Director and Secretary
The State Historical Society of Missouri

2:45 - 5:00 Conducted tours for visitors and solemn band music

5:00 Retreat Ceremony



The Battle of Pilot Knob

Iron County, Missouri

September 27, 1864

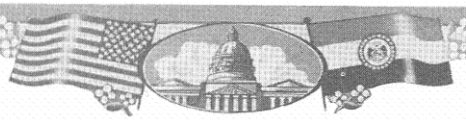
MORE THAN a thousand clashes took place between Union and Confederate forces in Missouri during the great Civil War. Of these, the Battle of Pilot Knob, which was fought in Iron County on September 27, 1864, reveals perfectly the supreme aspects of drama and antique heroism so very common to the Southern and Northern armies of those lost days.

Indeed, on the Centennial of the Civil War, the terrible, short struggle at Pilot Knob provides a magnificent example, over the span of a hundred years, of the unequaled devotion to duty by the young Confederate and Union soldiers of Missouri. At Pilot Knob the best blood of Missouri was poured out in a few short minutes by men and boys courageously pursuing their divided beliefs as to what was right, as God caused them to see that right. In the uncertain and dangerous days of the present their exemplary ways of courage and valor deserve restatement.

The summer of 1864 saw the Confederate States of America dying. East of the great Mississippi River death was coming for the Confederacy through continuous, convulsive battle. Westward, in the Trans-Mississippi Department, the end was being attended by lethargy and confusion.

In July, 1864, the Trans-Mississippi Department was commanded by Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith, whose luxurious headquarters were at Shreveport, Louisiana. Kirby Smith's department, however, was not the conventional combat-ready military structure of the Confederacy. It was a great, sprawling domain extending from the Mississippi up the Arkansas River into the Indian Nations of present day Oklahoma. It encompassed western Louisiana and the vast areas of Texas and New Mexico. Moreover, it was an independent empire, separated from the eastern Confederacy since the fall of Vicksburg the preceding summer, by the inland sea of the Mississippi which was controlled by Union gunboats.

All of the signs of ultimate collapse for the Confederacy were present in July, 1864, although there were many men in high places, both North and South, who could not see them



clearly. In the East, General Grant's great plan of hold and stab was being carried out relentlessly. General Robert E. Lee's Army of Virginia was pinned down, at last, at Petersburg, Virginia, in a starving siege, deprived after four years of the capability of brilliant maneuver which had been the key of its past success. General William Tecumseh Sherman had sidestepped his tough western army down through Georgia to threaten Atlanta. No forces of the Confederacy seemed able to stop his surge toward the Atlantic. The pattern was evolving; while Grant clutched Robert E. Lee, free-marching Sherman was to cut the lower South and its seacoast to ribbons.

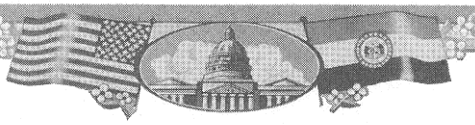
The Grand Strategy

There was only one way for this great combination, this grand strategy of the Union, to be defeated. Its weakness lay in the Union's almost completely exposed western flank, the one facing the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederacy. If Kirby Smith could gather the 60,000 men of his command and march northward through Arkansas and Missouri it was almost certain that Sherman would have to pull back from Georgia and Grant's endlessly needed reinforcements in Virginia would have to be diverted westward.

General Grant was aware of his exposed western flank and calculated and accepted the risk. In the course of the war there had been no indication that the military leaders of the Confederacy had ever recognized the flanking value of the Trans-Mississippi Department. In 1861 they had allowed the State of Missouri to fall quickly and easily into Union hands. Worse, they had let Union forces take all of Arkansas north of the Arkansas River and had been unable to keep the Mississippi River from becoming a cruising ground for the United States Navy.

Isolated Command

Down at Shreveport, General Kirby Smith behaved in those crucial days about as Grant anticipated and hoped he would. With real talent for civil administration, he ruled his wealthy, isolated command as if it were a country separate from the Confederacy—and made no military plans beyond those necessary to defend his borders. It was not until the last of July, 1864, that his tranquility was shattered. At that time, orders came for him to transfer his best infantry units east of the Mississippi for the relief of Georgia and Alabama. Kirby Smith was shocked. He did not want his infantry taken from his command and he realized the near impossibility of getting it across the Mississippi in the face of the very alert Union Navy. General Smith advised President Jefferson Davis



that he would do all that he could to effect the transfer, but that he had been making plans for a campaign into northern Arkansas and Missouri which would be ruined by the loss of his infantry.

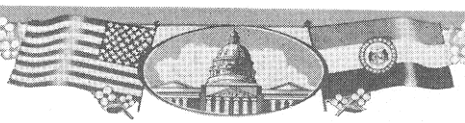
On August 8, 1864, President Davis consequently ordered Smith to send his infantry east "only at his discretion," and remarked that he did not know that Smith had intended to commence offensive operations either in Arkansas or Missouri. This was all that was needed; for although plans for transferring Smith's infantry were talked and written about until December, not a Confederate rifleman was sent over the Mississippi to the relief of Atlanta or Mobile. In the meantime, to save face, Kirby Smith hastily set up a cavalry expedition to invade Missouri. The Missouri Confederates in the Trans-Mississippi had been begging for a raid for months. Now they could have one.

In a military sense, there was very little reason why a heavy, fast-moving cavalry thrust into Missouri in the late summer of 1864 would not be successful. Union General Frederick Steele, who commanded in northern Arkansas, had had most of his troops siphoned off to Sherman. He could only hold his line along the Arkansas River by keeping strong garrisons at Little Rock, Fort Smith and Pine Bluff with patrols working between those posts. By mid-July the Arkansas River was too low for navigation, and Steele was having difficulty from his headquarters at Little Rock in maintaining liaison with his garrisons up the river.

Missouri is Vulnerable

To the north, the State of Missouri lay open to invasion. The Department of Missouri was commanded at this time by General William S. Rosecrans, who had been relieved by Grant the preceding fall for his failure at the Battle of Chickamauga. General Grant distrusted Rosecrans' military ability completely, and had sent him out to Missouri as it seemed an area in which he could make few mistakes and do little harm. Throughout the summer of 1864 Rosecrans had been carrying on a vigorous, but largely unsuccessful, campaign with the Missouri State Militia, the only forces available to him, against the Confederate guerrilla organizations of "bloody Bill" Anderson, George Todd and William C. Quantrill. His department had been stripped of regular troops and his inexperienced militia companies were scattered over the western and central portions of the state.

Since 1861 Missouri had been occupied by Union forces and governed, largely, by military government. Assuming widespread disloyalty to the Federal authority, the Union



military commanders had pursued a harsh program of occupation. This had led to vicious guerrilla resistance. As a result, in the summer of 1864, Missouri apparently seethed with revolt and promised a general uprising to join any major Confederate invasion.

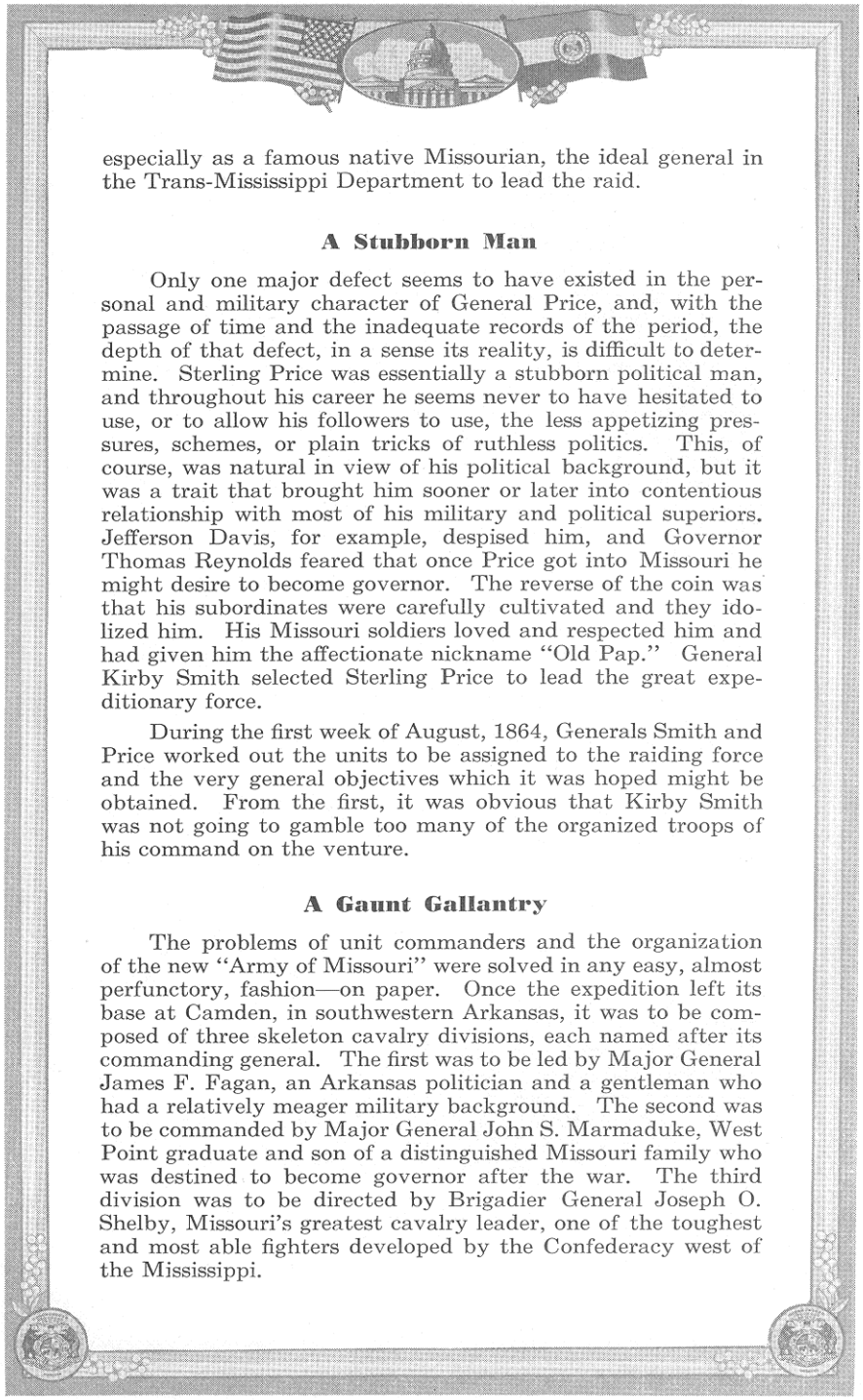
To Kirby Smith, the situation looked propitious for a raid, even if he were more or less being forced into it by the threatened transfer of his infantry. If he could push a cavalry force up into Missouri, and support the movement by using his infantry against General Steele in Arkansas, he might obtain limited gains. If Steele weakened himself to defend Missouri, Little Rock and Pine Bluff might be taken—perhaps the entire State of Arkansas might be recovered. Further, any major demonstration into Missouri was bound to divert troops from General Sherman. And if the State could be held by an invading force until November, there was a possibility that Lincoln might lose the election to the Democratic peace candidate, George McClellan.

Who Will Lead?

Now that the raid must take place, who was to lead it, who was to go on it, and what were its objectives to be? This, of course, involved Missourians, and the Trans-Mississippi Department swarmed with officers and politicians of that state —a great many of them very troublesome, jealous, contentious and irritating fellows.

The government of the Confederate State of Missouri had been in exile in Texas and Arkansas since the winter of 1861. It was actually no government at all, for there were no citizens, no legislature, and such state officials as existed did so, for the most part, in name only. Governor Claiborne F. Jackson, who had been elected in 1860, and who had taken himself and his state out of the Union in '61, had died in 1862. He had been succeeded by Lieutenant Governor Thomas C. Reynolds, and that ambitious man was sure to want to go on the raid in the hope of being within Missouri in November in order that he might be legally elected governor.

The truly representative figure of the Missouri Confederacy was, and always had been, Major General Sterling Price, ex-governor of Missouri, who at the time commanded the District of Arkansas. Sterling Price had been a Congressman, a hero of the War with Mexico, and was a statesman, politician and gentleman. His military career with the Confederacy had been controversial. He had gained dogged victories over the Union at Wilson's Creek and Lexington in Missouri early in the war, and later had suffered defeat at Pea Ridge and Little Rock in Arkansas. He was by grade, field experience, and



especially as a famous native Missourian, the ideal general in the Trans-Mississippi Department to lead the raid.

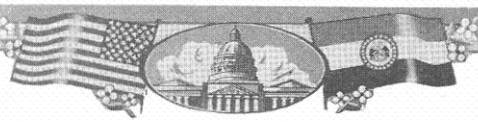
A Stubborn Man

Only one major defect seems to have existed in the personal and military character of General Price, and, with the passage of time and the inadequate records of the period, the depth of that defect, in a sense its reality, is difficult to determine. Sterling Price was essentially a stubborn political man, and throughout his career he seems never to have hesitated to use, or to allow his followers to use, the less appetizing pressures, schemes, or plain tricks of ruthless politics. This, of course, was natural in view of his political background, but it was a trait that brought him sooner or later into contentious relationship with most of his military and political superiors. Jefferson Davis, for example, despised him, and Governor Thomas Reynolds feared that once Price got into Missouri he might desire to become governor. The reverse of the coin was that his subordinates were carefully cultivated and they idolized him. His Missouri soldiers loved and respected him and had given him the affectionate nickname "Old Pap." General Kirby Smith selected Sterling Price to lead the great expeditionary force.

During the first week of August, 1864, Generals Smith and Price worked out the units to be assigned to the raiding force and the very general objectives which it was hoped might be obtained. From the first, it was obvious that Kirby Smith was not going to gamble too many of the organized troops of his command on the venture.

A Gaunt Gallantry

The problems of unit commanders and the organization of the new "Army of Missouri" were solved in any easy, almost perfunctory, fashion—on paper. Once the expedition left its base at Camden, in southwestern Arkansas, it was to be composed of three skeleton cavalry divisions, each named after its commanding general. The first was to be led by Major General James F. Fagan, an Arkansas politician and a gentleman who had a relatively meager military background. The second was to be commanded by Major General John S. Marmaduke, West Point graduate and son of a distinguished Missouri family who was destined to become governor after the war. The third division was to be directed by Brigadier General Joseph O. Shelby, Missouri's greatest cavalry leader, one of the toughest and most able fighters developed by the Confederacy west of the Mississippi.



Organization of Price's Army

FAGAN'S DIVISION

Maj. Gen. James F. Fagan

CABELL'S BRIGADE

Brig. Gen. William L. Cabell
Lieut. Col. A. V. Reiff

Monroe's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. James C. Monroe
Gordon's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. Anderson Gordon
Morgan's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. Thomas J. Morgan
Hill's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. John F. Hill
Gunter's (Arkansas) Cavalry Battalion
Lieut. Col. Thomas M. Gunter
Harrell's (Arkansas) Cavalry Battalion
Lieut. Col. John M. Harrell
Witherspoon's (Arkansas) Cavalry Battalion
Maj. J. L. Witherspoon
Hughey's (Arkansas) Battery
Capt. W. M. Hughey. Two guns.

SLEMONS' BRIGADE

Col. W. F. Slemons
Col. William A. Crawford

2d Arkansas Cavalry
Col. W. F. Slemons
Crawford's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. William A. Crawford
Carlton's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. Charles H. Carlton
Wright's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. John C. Wright

DOBBIN'S BRIGADE

Col. Archibald S. Dobbin

Dobbin's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. Archibald S. Dobbin
McGhee's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. James McGhee
Witt's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. A. R. Witt
Blocher's (Arkansas) Battery (one section)
Lieut. J. V. Zimmerman. Two guns.

McCRAY'S BRIGADE

Col. Thomas H. McCray

45th Arkansas (mounted)
Col. Milton D. Baber
47th Arkansas (mounted)
Col. Lee Crandall
15th Missouri Cavalry
Col. Timothy Reves

UNATTACHED

Lyles' (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. Oliver P. Lyles
Rogan's (Arkansas) Cavalry
Col. James W. Rogan
Anderson's (Arkansas) Cavalry Battalion
Capt. William L. Anderson

MARMADUKE'S DIVISION

Maj. Gen. John S. Marmaduke
Brig. Gen. John B. Clark Jr.

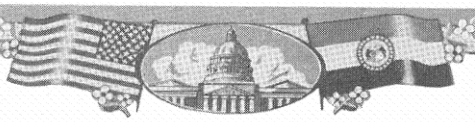
ESCORT

Company D, Fifth Missouri Cavalry, Capt. D. R. Stallard

MARMADUKE'S BRIGADE

Brig. Gen. John B. Clark Jr.
Col. Colton Greene

3d Missouri Cavalry, Col. Colton Greene
4th Missouri Cavalry, Col. John Q. Burbridge
7th Missouri Cavalry } Col. Solomon G. Kitchen
Davies' (Missouri) Battalion Cavalry } Lieut. Col. J. F. Davies
8th Missouri Cavalry, Col. William L. Jeffers
10th Missouri Cavalry, Col. Robert R. Lawther
14th Missouri Cavalry (battalion), Lieut. Col. Robert C. Wood



Hynson's (Texas) Battery, Capt. H. C. Hynson. Three guns.
Harris' (Missouri) Battery, Capt. S. S. Harris. Three guns.
Engineer Company, Capt. James T. Hogane

FREEMAN'S BRIGADE

Col. Thomas R. Freeman

Freeman's (Missouri) Cavalry, Col. Thomas R. Freeman
Fristoe's (Missouri) Cavalry, Col. Edward T. Fristoe
Ford's (Arkansas) Cavalry Battalion, Lieut. Col. Barney Ford

SHELBY'S DIVISION

Brig. Gen. Joseph O. Shelby

SHELBY'S BRIGADE

Col. David Shanks
Col. Moses W. Smith
Brig. Gen. M. Jeff. Thompson

5th Missouri Cavalry
Col. B. Frank Gordon
11th Missouri Cavalry
Col. Moses W. Smith
12th Missouri Cavalry
Col. David Shanks
Elliott's (Missouri) Cavalry
Col. Benj. Elliott
Slayback's (Missouri) Cavalry Battalion
Lieut. Col. Alonzo W. Slayback
Collins' (Missouri) Battery
Capt. Richard A. Collins. Four guns.

JACKMAN'S BRIGADE

Col. Sidney D. Jackman

Jackman's (Missouri) Cavalry
Lieut. Col. C. H. Nichols
Hunter's (Missouri) Cavalry
Col. De Witt C. Hunter
Williams' (Missouri) Cavalry Battalion
Lieut. Col. D. A. Williams
Schnable's (Missouri) Cavalry Battalion
Lieut. Col. John A. Schnable
Collins' (Missouri) Battery (one section)
Lieut. Jacob D. Connor

UNATTACHED

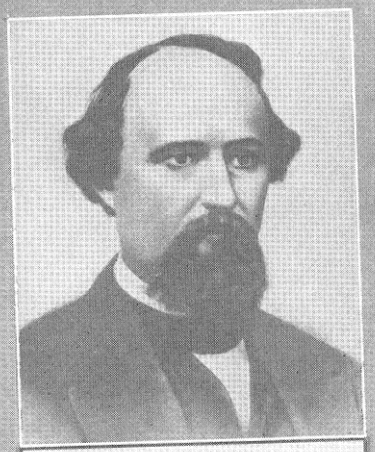
46th Arkansas (mounted), Col. W. O. Coleman

TYLER'S BRIGADE

Col. Charles H. Tyler

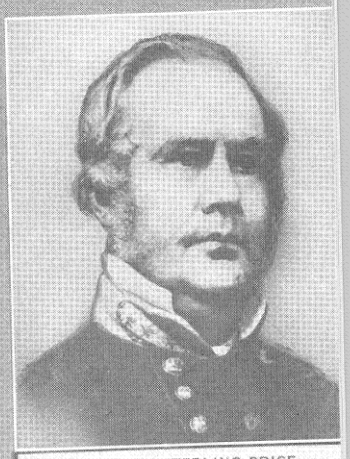
Perkins' (Missouri) Cavalry, Col. Caleb Perkins
Coffee's (Missouri) Cavalry, Col. John T. Coffee
Searcy's (Missouri) Cavalry, Col. James J. Searcy

By mid-August, Sterling Price had organized and drawn together two of the three divisions assigned him for his mission. It was a pitifully small force, not over 4,000 men, and the condition of the troops, horses and equipment would seem desperate today. The men were in tattered rags. Most of the troopers wore only shirts and pants, stained a grey-yellow with butternut dye, and over half of them were barefoot. As soldiers of a semitropical climate, each man had a hat of some sort, ranging from handwoven straws to Union forage caps. The troops were gaunt and dirty and there was no remedy for their condition as soap did not exist. The standard field ration was corn bread and salt pork. Those men old enough to grow beards wore them, but, as most were only boys, many had to



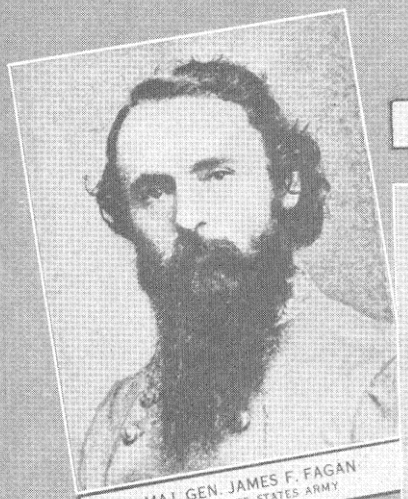
COL. THOMAS C. FLETCHER
UNITED STATES ARMY

BRIG. GEN. THOMAS EWING JR.
UNITED STATES ARMY

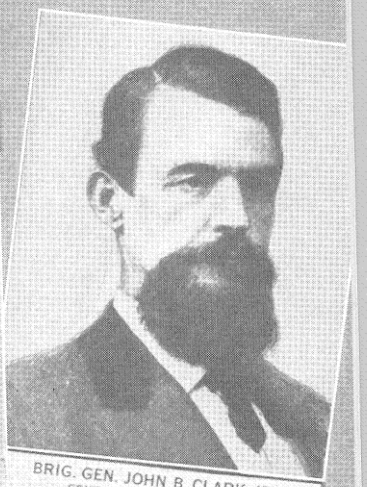


MAJ. GEN. STERLING PRICE
CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY

BRIG. GEN. WILLIAM L. CABELL
CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY



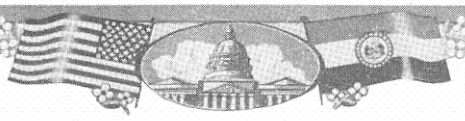
MAJ. GEN. JAMES F. FAGAN
CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY



BRIG. GEN. JOHN B. CLARK JR.
CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY

MAJ. GEN. JOHN S. MARMADUKE
CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY

THE COMBATANTS OF PILOT KNOB



be content with long hair which flowed to their shoulders. All in all, they resembled a band of wild, unwashed pirates, but they had been hardened in the fierce fires of war and only the courageous and the strongest physically were left.

Ragged But Skilled

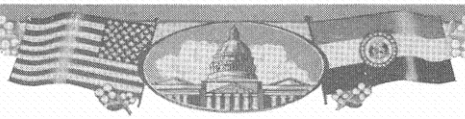
The condition of the Confederate cavalry mounts was only fair, and there was an acute shortage of stronger artillery horses, mules and draught animals. Saddles, bridles and harness had either been captured from the Union or were patched wrecks. Rags or tow sacks served as vital saddleblankets. Thousands of these broken-down nags were to be left stranded in Missouri, and in replacing them Price's men were to gain an eternal name as unexcelled horse thieves once they had entered the state.

The arms and ammunition available for Price's expedition was a crazy ordnance hodgepodge. Most of Marmaduke's and Fagan's men had a gun of some sort and kept it in serviceable condition. Much more important, each trooper was skilled with his weapon, but the variety and caliber of their rifles and muskets were endless and ammunition supply in the field was a most difficult task. Only Jo Shelby's division was well armed with Colt revolvers and excellent Sharps rifles which had been taken from the Yankees on frequent raids into Missouri.

Price's cavalry traveled light. It had no tents and very few blankets. Once the troopers entered Missouri they were to live off the country. Only a few canteens had been issued in the department. but, like all soldiers, the ragged men knew the constant thirst that accompanies marching and each had a jug or water flask at his saddle. Cooking was done in primitive squad messes and usually consisted of roasting beef or warming pork on ramrods and preparing corn bread in common frying pans. Eating was accomplished with knife and finger. Every man had at his belt a homemade cap pouch which was watched carefully as rifle caps were scarce. Paper cartridges for their Springfield and Enfield rifled muskets and their shotguns and unrifled Mississippi muskets were carried in bulging pockets or in their shirts as issue cartridge boxes were scarce. The army had fourteen cannon, but of these, only Collins' Battery of Shelby's division served four modern Parrot rifles which had been captured from the Union.

Deserters Recruited

Marmaduke's and Fagan's Divisions were seriously understrength, and to build them up Shelby's Division was sent into



northern Arkansas to round up as many deserters as possible back of the Union lines. These deserters, isolated and absent from their commands by necessity or choice were to make up almost a third of Price's army. As Shelby brought them all in at gun point their morale and dependability were very problematical.

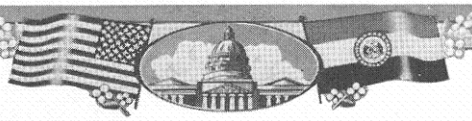
On August 30, 1864, General Price, with Marmaduke's and Fagan's understrength divisions, left Princeton, Arkansas, and headed north toward Dardanelle on the Arkansas River. In a pouring rain Price's "Army in the Field" formed its column in the mud. Marmaduke's Division led off; the nearsighted general, at the head of the column, wore a fine grey wet uniform. His color guard carried his personal flag, not the red, blue and white battle flag of the Confederacy, but the small national banner. The division rode with a strength of only 1,200 men. The troopers splashed through the mud in a column of twos, huddled in their saddles, their long rifles worn on slings across their backs, muzzles down. The division was accompanied by parts of two small companies of engineers, "Pioneers," commanded by ex-West Point Captain Thomas J. Mackey. Mackey's men carried their axes and shovels in wagons and were to repair roads and bridges.

Proud March to Poor Music

General Price and his escort came next, the general mounted on his beautiful white charger Bucephalus. Price had a small brass band with him and that organization, which had a horrible musical reputation in the department, attempted to enliven the occasion with "Listen to the Mocking Bird," "Dixie," and "The Yellow Rose of Texas." All these songs were prime favorites of the troops.

Price and his escort were followed by the quartermaster wagon train, a vast unit of some 300 vehicles, most of them captured and bearing the initials U. S. on their sides. There were ambulances in which the general officers rode and slept; ordnance wagons filled with powder, extra muskets, cannon shell and cartridges, tightly covered by canvas from the elements; supply wagons loaded with bread, corn meal and salt bacon; and eighteen giant pontoon boat wagons.

Following Price's wagon train was a curious entourage of unorganized men and animals. Here rode every Missouri Confederate politician and civilian who had the desire and courage to go on the raid. Many brought along their Negro servants. Governor Reynolds was later to call these men "a rabble of deadheads . . . giving the army the appearance of a Calmuck horde."



General Fagan's division of about 2,000 men came next. They were the most miserable on the march as they had to ride and wallow through mud, dust and ruts created by the thousands of horses that preceded them. The army headed north and west toward the Arkansas River, over a hundred miles away.

Mission Announced

On September 6, Price's Army, without opposition, crossed the Arkansas River at Dardanelle. Elated at their success in breaking through General Steele's lines the Confederates hastened on into the wilds of northeastern Arkansas. They were aware that their crossing had been reported by Union patrols on the Arkansas and they knew that speed was now imperative on their march toward Missouri. On September 15, Price met Shelby's Division of 3,000 men at Powhatan, where that able cavalryman reported that he had rounded up almost 3,000 deserters to join the expedition.

The following day at Pocahontas, Arkansas, General Price organized his force for entry into Missouri, assigned the deserter recruits to Fagan's and Marmaduke's Divisions, and passed out the extra muskets from his wagon trains as far as they would go. He now had a force of almost 12,000 mounted men, but of that number, a quarter still lacked arms.

For the first time, the mission of the army was announced to the men. They were to press as rapidly as possible in three columns to Fredericktown, group there, and then dash into St. Louis. Advancing about twenty miles apart, in order to enjoy adequate forage possibilities, Price, with Fagan's Division and the wagon train, was to march in the center. Marmaduke was to move up on Price's east flank toward the Mississippi. Jo Shelby and his fast riding troopers were to advance on the west flank.

On September 19, the army crossed the Missouri-Arkansas line and ran into its first opposition, a small Union patrol which burned the town of Doniphan, Ripley County, and then retreated hastily before Shelby's men. General Price knew now that it would be only a matter of hours before his entry into Missouri would be reported to General Rosecrans at St. Louis. The three columns pressed on as rapidly as possible. On September 22, Price passed through Greenville, the deserted county seat of Wayne County, and, on the same day, moving like lightning, Shelby gobbled up a small Union detachment stationed at Patterson. The seizure of the Patterson garrison was important as the outpost was the most southern connected by

telegraph with Pilot Knob. Shelby's men grabbed the instruments before word could be sent north that the Confederates were in the area.

Ominous News

On the evening of the 21st, however, Price received an ominous dispatch from a courier from Marmaduke. Marmaduke's patrols, moving near the Mississippi, had brought in reports of troop-laden Union steamboat transports moving up the river toward St. Louis. General Price became worried; he felt certain that his line of march was now known and that St. Louis was being reinforced from the south. In a race against time he threw Shelby's patrols as far north as Farmington and on September 24 pulled into Fredericktown and waited impatiently for Marmaduke to join him.

Up at General Rosecrans' Department of Missouri Headquarters at St. Louis confusion had reigned since early September. Rosecrans had been advised that Price, with a major force, was near the Arkansas River advancing toward Missouri. On September 5, he had begged General Halleck, at Washington, D. C., for the loan of an infantry division of the 16th Corps commanded by General A. J. Smith, which was on its way to Sherman. Halleck consulted with General Grant and Smith's veteran division was stopped at Memphis, its transports turned about, and under forced draft hastened back up the river toward St. Louis. By September 19, Smith had arrived at Jefferson Barracks, and on the 20th, his 4,500 riflemen, along with some 1,500 cavalry Rosecrans had been able to scrape together from Missouri and Illinois, had been pushed out on the Meramec River south of St. Louis. These 6,000 men were all that stood between the greatest city west of the Mississippi and Price's ragged horde.

Fruits of Indecision

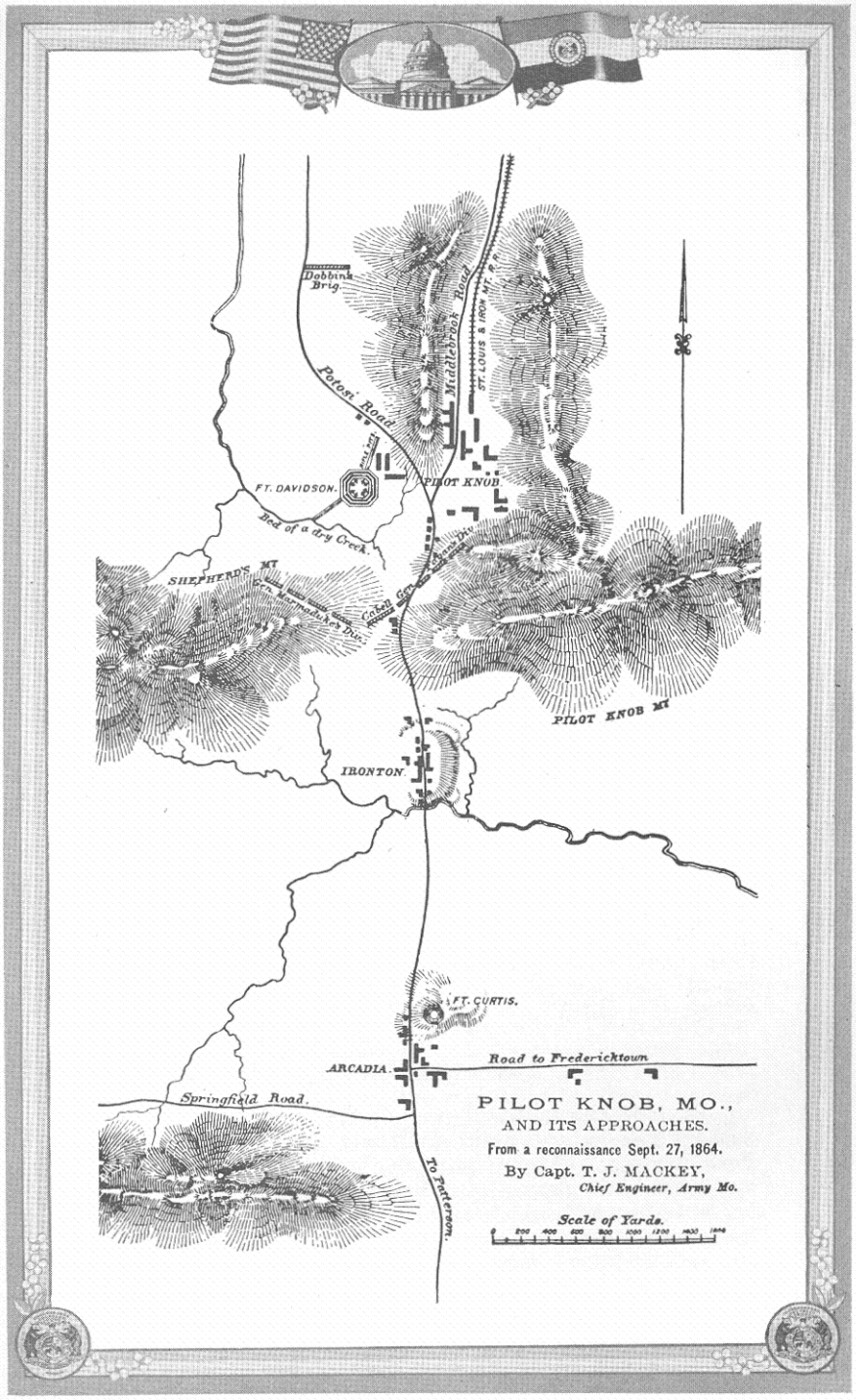
Now, again, William Rosecrans showed the indecision which had ruined his career earlier in the war. He knew that Price was moving on Missouri, but he had not the slightest idea where, and he made no plans to concentrate his scattered State Militia to hunt the Confederate force down. Instead, he closed all business in St. Louis, kept the wires hot begging for reinforcements from Illinois, and had General Smith guard the crossings of the Meramec. As Pilot Knob was his only fortified point in South Central Missouri he sent his district commandant, Brigadier General Thomas Ewing, and Colonel Thomas C. Fletcher, to that post by train to see if Price intended to advance through the area. He then ordered the Missouri State Militia to concentrate at Rolla and Jefferson

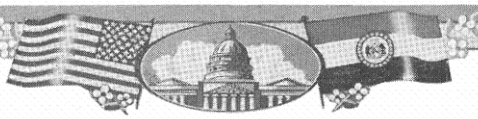
City. By these inept moves Rosecrans made it possible for Price, with vastly superior forces, to eliminate his defensive troop concentrations one at a time.

On September 26, General Marmaduke's column joined Sterling Price at Fredericktown. The stores of the little county seat of Madison County were looted thoroughly. Price's brass band boomed all day in an effort to lend some cheer to the scene, but there was no elation at his headquarters. In the first place, only some 400 recruits had joined the Army of Missouri since it entered the state. Price had expected several thousand. Most of the people had simply vacated their homes and towns and moved away from his invading army. Spies in from St. Louis brought discouraging and, of course, vastly exaggerated reports. They stated that the city was now held by at least 20,000 veteran Union infantry and more were arriving every minute. Sterling Price had fought the black-hatted Union regulars in 1862 in Mississippi and he knew he could not pit his poorly armed force against veterans.

Price's Decision

A council of war was held and General Price heard the opinion of his generals. Fagan, the stout Arkansan, had none. He scarcely knew where he was. The fiery and energetic Jo Shelby wanted to move on into St. Louis. His patrols, probing north of Farmington, were meeting only token resistance. He believed St. Louis could be taken in a day. Marmaduke thought the race to St. Louis had been lost and that the army should move on to central Missouri where Confederate sentiment was felt to be the strongest. Sterling Price made up his mind, and, at midnight, September 25, drew up new marching orders. Shelby's division was to move west from Farmington to Irondale to destroy the Iron Mountain Railroad track and bridges between St. Louis and Pilot Knob. Shelby was then to take Potosi and wait for Price to join him. The shortest route for Price's column to move westward was now through Ironton and Pilot Knob. Informed that the Union garrison at Pilot Knob could not exceed 1,500 men Price determined to eliminate it on his way. An overwhelming victory would help the morale of his troops and encourage recruiting. Shelby's destruction of the Iron Mountain Railroad would prevent Rosecrans from reinforcing Pilot Knob so that an assault upon the small Union force holding that place was almost certain to be successful. After victory at Pilot Knob, the army would then move north and westward through the rich pro-Union German-settled counties of Franklin, Gasconade and Osage to Jefferson City. There the capitol could be taken and thousands of recruits from central and western Missouri would come


Dobbins Brig.
Potosi Road
Middlebrook Road
ST. LOUIS & IRON MT. R.R.
FT. DAVIDSON.
PILOT KNOB
Bed of a dry Creek.
SHEPHERD'S MT
PILOT KNOB MT
IRONTON.
FT. CURTIS.
ARCADIA.
Road to Fredericktown
Springfield Road.
To Patterson.
PILOT KNOB, MO.,
AND ITS APPROACHES.
From a reconnaissance Sept. 27, 1864.
By Capt. T. J. MACKEY,
Chief Engineer, Army Mo.
Scale of Yards.



swarming to the Confederate colors. What good would St. Louis be anyway? The army would march to Jefferson City.

Battle Approaches

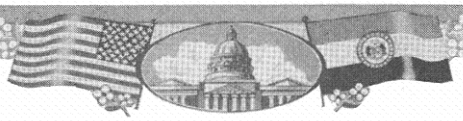
Shelby's 3,000 troopers raced westward through the night from Farmington and by noon of September 26 had cut the Iron Mountain Railroad bridges and torn up miles of track. Without waiting for all of Marmaduke's Division to arrive at Fredericktown, Price ordered Fagan's Division west on the road toward Arcadia and Ironton.

Twenty miles from Farmington, in the Arcadia Valley, the Union garrison under General Ewing was unaware of the Confederate avalanche headed in its direction.

The Arcadia Valley of Iron County was, and is, one of the most scenic and attractive spots in Missouri. In the fall of 1864, Pilot Knob was a tiny mining town of less than 200 people, the terminus of the Iron Mountain Railroad from St. Louis. It lay on a plain of a thousand acres circled by Cedar and Rock Mountains on the north, Pilot Knob Mountain on the east, and Shepherd's Mountain on the south and west. Each of these great hills, from 500 to 600 feet in height, rose abruptly from the valley. Pilot Knob Mountain was covered with scrub oak, great masses of twisted rock and tangled undergrowth. The southern and western ends of Shepherd's Mountain were more accessible and had several roads leading to the iron diggings on its summit. Stout's Creek flowed along the base of Shepherd's Mountain and through a gap between it and the more lofty Pilot Knob into a larger valley of several thousand acres. This valley was also circled by hills and at its northern end, about a mile from the village of Pilot Knob, was the town of Ironton, the county seat of Iron County. Through these two valleys ran the road from Pilot Knob to Fredericktown, passing out of the Ironton valley by the "Shut-Ins," another gap four miles southeast of Pilot Knob. The two valleys were called Arcadia.

Lay of the Land

In 1864 the northern pass of the Arcadia Valley was guarded by a hexagonal dirt and sandbagged earthwork called Fort Davidson. The ruins of this circular fortification still stand within the present town limits of Pilot Knob. The fort lay in the flat, 300 yards from the base of Pilot Knob Mountain, and about 1,000 from the gap leading south to Ironton. The summits of Pilot Knob and Shepherd's Mountain were not



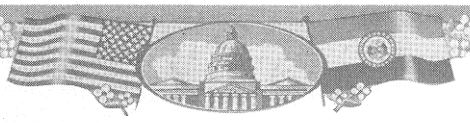
over 1,200 visible yards from the fort. Every foot of the two hills, excepting the extreme west end of Shepherd's Mountain, was within range of the excellent Union military rifles and artillery of the period.

The fixed armament of Fort Davidson consisted of four heavy siege cannon which threw thirty-two pound shells, three howitzers which fired twenty-four pound shells and three twelve-inch mortars. The latter could not be used in horizontal fire against assaulting forces. The sand-bagged rifle parapets of the fort were nine feet above the surrounding plain and allowed troops a clear field of fire for almost 900 yards in every direction. The fort was surrounded by a dry moat ten feet in width and seven in depth, but the walls could be run up and over by a man carrying a rifle. All of the cannon were mounted on open wooded battery platforms on the parapet. The only shell proof structure within the fort was a deep, earth-covered powder magazine. Davidson was designed for a garrison of not more than 500 men, and access to it was through a sally port in the north wall which had a draw bridge to cover the moat.

A Wicked Trap

From one military point of view, Fort Davidson was almost impregnable, from another, it was simply a wicked, vulnerable trap. Guarding the mouth of the gap leading down to Ironton, and located on a gentle rise, it was situated so that enemy infantry would have to advance in the open across hundreds of yards in any direction to reach its walls. Its fixed artillery could be elevated to shell every inch of the sides of Shepherd's and Pilot Knob Mountains, and these guns had been ranged in time and again on visible targets. In case of direct assault the cannon could be fired at plateau level. Charged with canister shot they could pour a horrible grazing fire down the long gentle slopes about the fort.

However, Fort Davidson was simply a death trap in the valley to any force attacking it with artillery. Surrounded on three sides by commanding hills, and having no shell proof shelters, carefully placed and well served artillery could easily direct a murderous plunging fire into its walls. The fort had been built as part of a complex of two others which were to go on the top of the Knob and Shepherd's Mountain, but the latter had never been constructed. The reduction of Fort Davidson was only an artillery problem; it was a circular earthwork target which would have to surrender as soon as an energetic attacking force would take the time to bring up artillery and place it on the heights overhanging its walls.

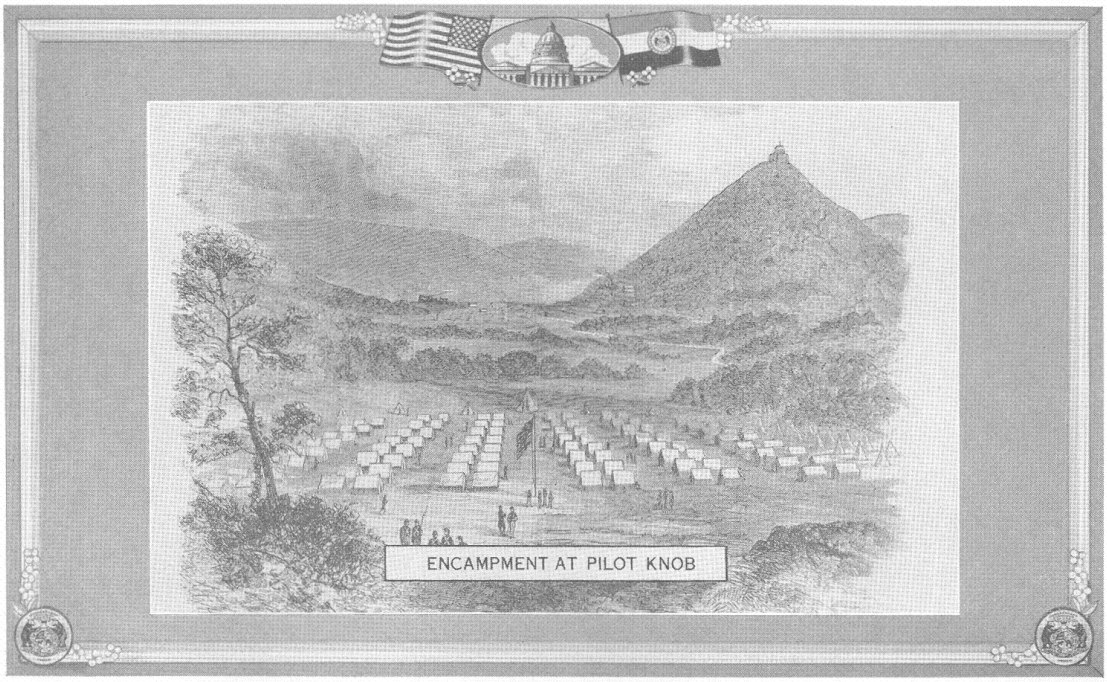


Prior to September 26, the Union garrison at Pilot Knob had been commanded by Major James Wilson with Companies A, C, D, H, I and K of the Third Missouri State Militia Cavalry. Major Wilson was a courageous fighting man and had gained a name, which would shortly cause him to be murdered while a prisoner, as being a ruthless guerrilla hunter in South-Central Missouri. Companies A, E, F, G, H and I of the Forty-seventh Missouri State Militia Infantry, and one company of the Fiftieth were also assigned to hold Fort Davidson. Neither the infantry nor the cavalry was combat tried, and the commanding officer of the Forty-seventh was Thomas C. Fletcher, a prominent Missouri politician who was at the time the Radical Republican candidate for governor in the coming November election. The heavy guns of the fort were served by Company H of the First Missouri Infantry which had been trained for this duty. One mobile battery of six-pound field guns, Battery H, Second Missouri Light Artillery, with six cannon was also present for duty.

A Hated Man

At ten o'clock, Monday morning, September 26, 1864, the last train from St. Louis steamed into the siding at the town of Pilot Knob. From it dismounted Brigadier General Thomas Ewing who was to direct the Union forces during the coming battle. Colonel Fletcher was with him ready to assume command of his infantry.

In 1864, General Thomas Ewing was probably the most hated Union officer in Missouri. A member of a prominent Ohio political family, whose wife was a sister of General William T. Sherman, Ewing had been a leading pro-Union lawyer and politician in Kansas before the war. In 1863 he had commanded the troublesome guerrilla-ridden District of the Border in western Missouri. Following Quantrill's massacre at Lawrence he had written and enforced his notorious Order Number Eleven which had literally vacated and destroyed most of four Missouri counties along the border. Actually, Tom Ewing was a brave and honorable young man, and he would prove himself a most courageous one, but there is no doubt that Sterling Price's western Missouri Confederates would have hanged him as quickly as they could put hands on him. Climbing off the train with Ewing, came welcome reinforcements for Pilot Knob: Companies B, C, D, E and H of the veteran Fourteenth Iowa Infantry, part of General A. J. Smith's Division. Two hundred strong, these veterans wore the black hats of regulars, and, as they marched to Fort Davidson, their long Springfield rifles carried in perfect order, they promised, and would be, a powerful element in the coming struggle.


ENCAMPMENT AT PILOT KNOB

Another Decision

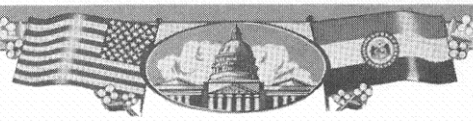
General Ewing, Colonel Fletcher and Major Wilson met to estimate the situation. All told, there were 886 effective soldiers available to fight in the Arcadia Valley. Some thirty-five civilians had also come to the fort, a number of them Negroes, and these men along with the infantry were put to work digging two rifle pits outside the earthwork. One trench extended seventy-five yards north of the fort, the other about one hundred yards to the south. If it came to the worst and the fort had to be defended, these pits would take care of the men who could not find cover behind the walls. They would also provide a wider and heavier base of fire.

General Ewing's orders from General Rosecrans had been explicit. He, Fletcher and Major Wilson were to hold Pilot Knob against any detachment of Price's Army that came that way, but they were to evacuate the area and pull back toward St. Louis if the main army moved against them. Ewing had Wilson throw cavalry patrols out on the Fredericktown road down to Arcadia, but it is evident he felt the likelihood of a major attack remote. Price was obviously on his way to St. Louis.

As the noon of September 26 came on, General Ewing rode about his command in the valley. He did not know that 9,000 of Price's men were moving in on him from the east. He did not know that Shelby had cut his line of retreat to the north. With almost 900 men, and with Fort Davidson at his rear, Ewing felt secure. If he had to fight it would be a holding action at the Arcadia passes until the main part of his command could get clear. He did not believe enemy artillery would appear on his front.

The First Blood

In the afternoon General Ewing sent two infantry companies down through Ironton to the "Shut-Ins" leading toward Fredericktown. There this small force ran head on into General Fagan's leading brigades. Fagan's Arkansas troops fanned out into the valley and drove the Missouri infantry back into Ironton where there was brisk skirmishing in the streets and about the courthouse which to this day shows the marks of Confederate rifle and cannon fire. Ewing immediately reinforced his men in Ironton with the detachment of the Fourteenth Iowa, two guns of the Second Missouri artillery, and all of Wilson's Cavalry. To Fagan's amazement this small Union force turned on him and in a few minutes his men were forced back into the gap of the "Shut-Ins." His ragged Arkan-



sas troops could not face the terribly accurate fire of veteran United States Infantry. The slashing, punishing volleys of the Fourteenth Iowa threw them into near panic. By dusk, however, a heavy rain came on, and under repeated attacks by Fagan's men the Union troops again withdrew to Ironton. The people of that hamlet had huddled in their cellars throughout the noisy bullet-streaked afternoon.

As the drizzly night wore on Major Wilson and Captain William J. Campbell, who commanded the Fourteenth Iowa, scouted south out of Ironton to determine the enemy strength. To their surprise they saw hundreds of fires gleaming in the lower Arcadia Valley and could hear the muffled sounds of thousands of mounted men either on the march or going into bivouac. It was painfully obvious that Price's main army was in the Arcadia Valley. Campbell was frankly scared, for he did not see how his small infantry detachment could escape being cut off by cavalry in any new attack. At his urging, dispatches were sent to General Ewing telling him of the situation and asking permission to fall back on Fort Davidson.

Wilson Overwhelmed

At dawn of September 27, Fagan's dismounted brigades, now reinforced by Marmaduke's, hurled themselves at Wilson's cavalry and Campbell's infantry as they moved back over Shepherd's Mountain and through the Pilot Knob pass toward Davidson. During the night Ewing had become aware that he was cut off from St. Louis and had done his best to bring the fort into a complete state of defense. By torch and lantern his men had built six platforms within the fort and the four field guns of the Second Missouri which had not been sent down to Ironton, were wheeled inside and set up facing the Ironton gap.

Major Wilson and his cavalrymen fought desperately in the pass and on the sides of Iron Mountain, but eventually they were overwhelmed. Wilson was wounded and captured, but most of his men finally raced across the fields to Fort Davidson and fell into the northern rifle pit. Captain Campbell brought his Iowa infantry off Shepherd's Mountain with professional skill. Again and again, the riflemen of his detachment literally shot themselves into the clear. By noon he and his men reached the south rifle pit and the two field guns of the Second Artillery not in the fort were placed in battery behind his position.

General Ewing now jumped to the parapet of Fort Davidson and through his field glasses took stock of the field. The Ironton gap and the walls of Pilot Knob and Shepherd's Mountain were swarming with dismounted Confederates. His heavy

guns were thundering under the direction of Colonel David Murphy, shelling the sides of the mountains and the gaps accurately wherever a concentration of the enemy was observed. Crammed into the open fort at his feet were some 400 men. Three hundred more lay in the rifle pits to his right and left. A cool misty rain fell and the Stars and Stripes on the pole on the magazine in the fort hung limply. Ewing turned to the north and to his horror saw rapidly moving cavalry at the foot of Cedar Mountain. He was surrounded, completely bottled up in Fort Davidson. It was plain that a great Confederate Army was forming to attack his position and that there was now no avenue open for retreat.

The Generals Decide

Down in Ironton Generals Price, Marmaduke and Fagan held a council. Their plans were developing perfectly although Fagan's Division had taken almost two hundred casualties in the fighting the previous evening and that morning. The expedition's engineering officer, Captain T. J. Mackey, was sent to the top of Pilot Knob to view the situation. He came down to report that the Union force was bottled up in the fort. All that had to be done, Mackey stated, was to bring up the ten cannon available, mount them on Shepherd's Mountain, and in fifteen minutes the earthwork would have to surrender. Price ordered two guns taken up the mountain, and put two more in battery where the Ironton depot stood. He then had Fagan form his division in the woods on the lower slope of Pilot Knob and Marmaduke his at the base of Shepherd's Mountain. While these operations were going on he sent his adjutant, Lieutenant Colonel Lauchlan A. Maclean, to the fort with a white flag to demand surrender.

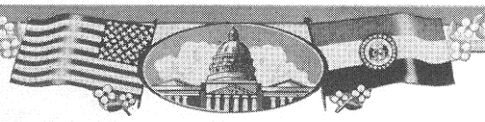
As an emissary Price could hardly have picked a worse representative than Maclean. The colonel, a hot-headed Scotsman, had been in Kansas during the border wars and was a personal enemy of Ewing. When the Union general stoutly informed him he would not surrender he returned to Price and urged an immediate frontal assault. Maclean told Price that the hated Ewing was in the fort, that Fletcher was also there in command of a detachment of Negro soldiers, and that there was simply no time to bring up and place all of the artillery on the mountains. His comments were borne out when the first Confederate gun, hastily placed on Shepherd's Mountain, opened fire without waiting for support and every Union cannon in Davidson was turned on it. A few rounds saw it disabled and its gunners killed or wounded. Price determined to attack frontally and his staff galloped away to launch a co-

ordinated assault at 2:00 p.m. For almost an hour a strange silence settled over the valley around Fort Davidson. Partially hidden by the heavy brush and timber, on the mountains the Confederates were forming their brigades. Down in the fort General Ewing and his men prepared for the coming storm. The heavy fixed cannon in the fort were run down from maximum elevation and trained across the flat to the base of the hills. The seven-men gun crews laid by ready ammunition; silk sacks of powder with attached shells fused for three second bursts for initial fire, and stacks of canister rounds, wicked tin containers packed with half-inch lead balls, for close range. The four field guns were trained on the Ironton gap and their shells and canister rounds were also readied. Each rifleman on the three angles of the parapets facing Shepherd's Mountain and the Knob was given a hundred rounds of ammunition. As not all of the men could take a place to fire from the wall, details were set up to tear cartridges, load and pass guns up as they would be needed. In the rifle pits extending out from the fort similar preparations were made, and orders given that they were to be evacuated if the enemy succeeded in nearing the fort. The two guns of the Second Missouri which remained outside the fort were to maintain battery as long as possible and then were to be brought in if the pits could not be held. This was to be a back to the wall last stand.

Ready to Go

Across the valley to the south and west, Price completed his order of battle. Along the slope of Pilot Knob, Slemons' and McCray's Arkansas Brigades were formed in the brush. Dobbin's entire Missouri Brigade was sent mounted to the rear of the fort to hold the road leading north to Caledonia and Potosi. In the Ironton gap Brigadier General William L. Cabell's Brigade was formed. "Old Tige" Cabell was a Virginian, a West Point graduate, and had helped design the Stars and Bars. Second in command to Fagan, he was known as a master of the onslaught, and his men were given the most exposed approach. Fagan's Division was ready to go.

In the gap the Confederate artillery was brought up to be run out to support the attack in the open field. Unfortunately, Fort Davidson presented a very small target in the flat. Along Shepherd's Mountain John Marmaduke arranged his brigade. His second in command, Brigadier General John Clark, of Howard County, would lead the assault. The main effort would fall on Fagan's Arkansas troops because of their superior strength, but the Missourians intended to be in on the kill.



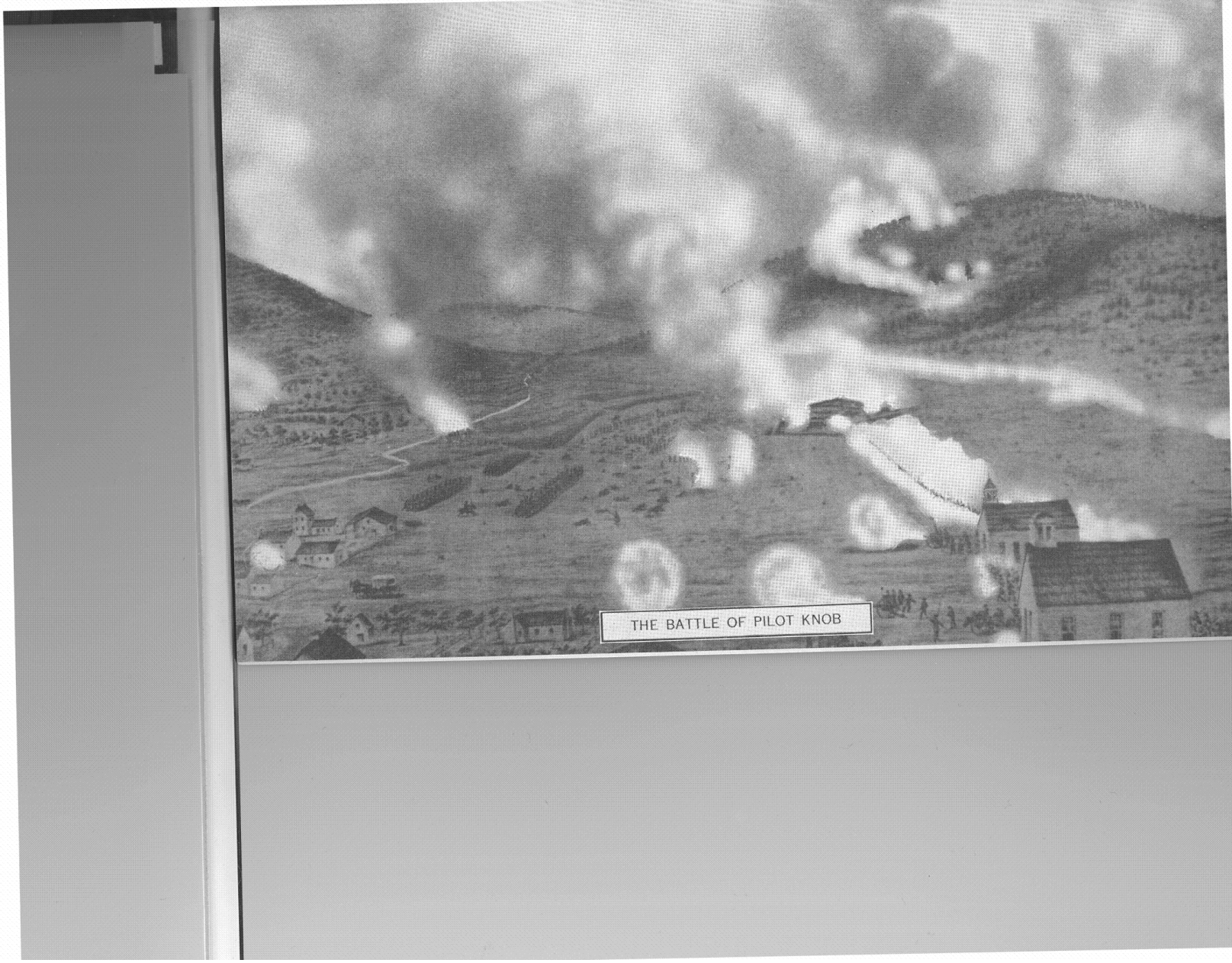
The Confederates formed silently; rifles were loaded and capped. The few bayonets the men had were put in place. For two miles along the valley almost 9,000 Confederates crouched down and waited. Back down in Ironton, and in the valley, thousands of horses were held or tied, choking the streets and roads.

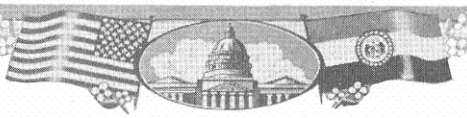
Suddenly, on Shepherd's Mountain, a white table cloth flag was displayed and every Union eye in the rifle pits and in Fort Davidson was turned on it. As the flag was waved Marmaduke's men moved down the slope of the mountain. General Ewing held his fire a moment and then, swearing, directed Colonel Murphy to turn a gun on the flag. One shell caused it to be withdrawn hastily.

Assault on the Fort

At two o'clock four Confederate cannon opened on the fort and one of the first shells burst red on the parapet, blowing off the head of a Union cannoneer. With a high, screaming cheer Price's army came into the open from the south and west. The men were formed in columns, three ranks deep, at the foot of the hills and began to move slowly toward the fort. In front of each brigade and regiment mounted field officers led, and, for the first time, the bright red, blue and white Confederate regimental battle flags, the Stars and Bars, could be seen.

In Fort Davidson the age-old cry of defending infantrymen was heard again and again. "My God here they come!" Orders were passed to the riflemen to hold their fire and General Ewing leaped to the parapet and shouted for the two cannon outside the fort to be brought in. Terrified by the bursting Confederate shells, the artillery teams stampeded and the horses ran away. Men in the south rifle pit shot the horses with pistols and the guns were pulled by hand behind the fort. Ewing then turned to Colonel Murphy and said, "All right, Murphy, let them have it." Fused thirty-two, twenty-four, and six pound shells were run into the muzzles of the eleven guns in the fort and with a crash Murphy's artillery opened fire. A dense cloud of smoke immediately sprang out, blanketed the earthwork, and then rose from the small enclosure in a column hundreds of feet high. Eight hundred yards out the shells burst in the Confederate lines with crashing explosions and terrifying red flashes. Price's men moved on, and at 600 yards began a quick step. Murphy's cannoneers hastily swabbed out their guns, ran them back on the wooden platforms into battery, and began to fire at will as rapidly as possible. At point blank range they could not miss.


THE BATTLE OF PILOT KNOB



Terrified Men

It became certain now that the rifle pits could not be held and the men in them scrambled out and raced for the drawbridge leading into the fort. Reaching it, they found its ropes shot away and they had to force their way through a mass of terrified soldiers who had sought shelter in the covered way from the Confederate shells. The entrance to the drawbridge was blocked with boxes and barrels, and the riflemen who had been outside, especially the keen veterans of the Fourteenth Iowa, shouldered their way up on to the crowded rifle steps. Now the Confederates were only 500 yards away, a solid mass of advancing men, and the Union infantry was given the order to prepare to fire. Some 300 rifles, long accurate Springfields and Enfields were poked over the parapets. At the order to fire, the Confederate lines were obliterated by smoke. After each round the empty rifles were handed down into the fort where hundreds of other men crouched, biting paper cartridges and ramming them down barrels. Fresh weapons were passed up and the Union parapets cracked and roared with almost machine-gun-like fire.

Now Murphy's gunners loaded with canister and each cannon spouted forth thousands of lead balls.

But Price's Confederates jogged on and on.

At two hundred yards the Southern brigades fired their first volley, the murderous Confederate mass advancing fire. The sand bags on the parapets of Fort Davidson splashed open and fountained their contents. Now Ewing's men took casualties, as gunners and riflemen dropped and spun from the cannon platforms and firing steps into the fort. With shrill, keening, rebel yells, Price's men broke into a mad running charge. The Union gunners could see only the legs of the thousands of Confederates as the upper parts of their bodies were covered with smoke. The red battle flags seemed to draw closer together, and to each desperate Union soldier it appeared as if the entire Confederate attack were directed upon him alone.

Invitation to Die

It looked as if the Southern wave would break over the fort; nothing could stop the screaming mass of running men. In their excitement two of the Union gun crews double shotted their guns with canister and on discharge both cannon were blown half off their platforms. At another cannon the swabber forgot to wet the bore of the gun and a loader with a bag of powder in his hands went up in shrieking flames. Colonel Murphy, beside himself with rage, jumped onto the parapet

and began to throw rocks at Confederates; cursing them, begging and urging them to come on to be killed. Ewing ordered him down.

The parapets of Fort Davidson were now a solid mass of Union rifle flame, and at thirty yards Price's men wavered and then broke and fell slowly back. Urged on by their officers they formed again, came on, and again hesitated. A third time they were ordered about, and with the gallant General Cabell leading the point of the attack, a few men actually charged into the moat.

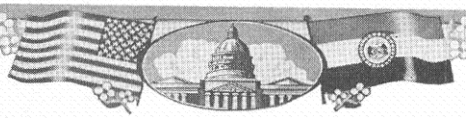
A Rain of Death

The fighting became desperate. Cabell's horse was killed ten yards from the fort and the thrown and badly shaken general was led in a daze to the rear. Once in the moat the Confederates huddled, and the Union riflemen leaned over the parapet and shot them like rabbits. Small artillery shells, fused as grenades, were brought out and thrown over the walls. Men were blown to bits, their bodies hurled above to fort's walls. It was too much for humans to bear and now Price's soldiers turned and ran. Ewing's troops, deafened, faces smeared with black powder where they had bitten paper cartridges, peered over the walls and for the first time saw what their fire had done. As long as the Confederates were advancing, closing ranks and firing, it was almost impossible to judge their losses. None seemed to go down. Now, as they streamed back down the slopes away from the fort, the tremendous casualties they had taken were apparent. For 500 yards on the three faces of the earthworks that had been attacked the ground was black with dead and wounded men. When the charge broke Price's men took their heaviest losses as the Union riflemen stood up and shot them in their backs as they ran.

In twenty minutes Sterling Price had over a thousand officers and men killed and wounded! In those short minutes one of the greatest carnages of the Civil War had taken place.

Marmaduke's Confederates ran back to the rocky banks of Stout's Creek and from cover began to shoot at Ewing's exposed gunners. The men of Fort Davidson, many standing on the walls cheering, took some quick casualties. Ewing ordered his men down from the gun platforms and all firing ceased as the sun began to go down.

Back down in the Ironton gap Sterling Price met the Marmaduke and that very brave Missourian, in tears, begged for another chance at the fort. Price cursed the Arkansas deserters in his ranks, whom he felt had not vigorously sup-



ported the assault, and when Fagan and Cabell rode up he informed them there would be no more frontal attacks. Cabell, who had lost his horse, his beautiful battle flag, and almost half his brigade at the very walls of the fort, was gasping with rage. He roared at Price that it was a "damn good idea not to attack again."

Frightful Wounds

A black rainy night fell and the entire Arcadia Valley was in chaos. Every shelter, the courthouse, the seminary, and the private homes in Ironton were filled with badly wounded Confederates who were carried in from the field around Fort Davidson. The Union shell fragments and canister, the massive soft lead .57 and .58 caliber Minie balls of Ewing's riflemen, made each wound frightful. There were no slightly wounded men and very few walking wounded. The few surgeons with Price's army worked hour after bloody hour among screaming crazed men, and finally toward dawn Price sent messengers north toward the Union lines to beg for Union medical assistance.

There was only one thing Sterling Price could do. With his entire command in complete confusion, with the best of his assault troops shot away in a wild, senseless, sacrifice, he ordered all of his cannon up on Shepherd's Mountain and entrenched. Couriers were sent galloping to Shelby and his division at Potosi ordering them to return south at once to Pilot Knob to join in a new attack the next day. Captain Mackey's engineers made scaling ladders out of every picket fence in the valley. In other words, Price made correct plans for an assault the next day that should have been made on the bitter afternoon of September 27th.

Out in silent Fort Davidson only a single dim lantern could be observed, but from the reflection of a great heap of burning charcoal in Pilot Knob the Stars and Stripes were seen still floating over the earthwork. Confederate camp fires circled the valley but Price's men were exhausted, shocked and disgusted. Many companies were scattered and mixed and it seems only a few units posted sentries or preserved any discipline or security in bivouac. Everywhere there were wounded, dying men who demanded attention.

Midnight Move

Toward midnight, after a council with his subordinates, General Ewing determined on a desperate measure. He decided to evacuate the fort. He had lost seventy-five men killed and wounded in the fighting at Davidson and perhaps double

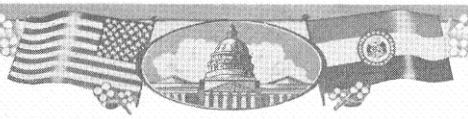
that number of his command were missing from the retreat through the passes. He also knew that Price would not repeat his ghastly mistake; that the next day would see the Confederate artillery commanding the fort, rendering it untenable. Ewing did not intend to die in a trap if he could help it. At midnight he muffled the wheels of his six field guns, put the valiant detachment of the Fourteenth Iowa Infantry at the head of his little column, and marched silently out of Fort Davidson and north on the Potosi road. One of the great miracles of the war then occurred. Ewing's men moved up the road right through the loose Confederate lines, were never challenged or recognized, and in a few hours were miles away to the north.

A brave squad of men left behind in the fort blew up its magazine at two o'clock in the morning, and when the Confederates were awakened by the tremendous explosion they thought that Ewing's powder had exploded by accident. At dawn the Confederates awakened to find Fort Davidson empty. Only a great smoking hole in its center marked where the magazine had been.

Again, Sterling Price lost his common military sense to rage. He sent Marmaduke's Division after Ewing who had run headlong into Shelby's Division at Caledonia, and was now fighting a successful rear guard action. Ewing retreated west to the southern branch of the Pacific Railroad above Rolla, and by excellent use of his artillery escaped his pursuers. Marmaduke and Shelby wasted three days following him.

A Dismal End

The whole event had been a shattering blow to the Confederate cause. In attacking Fort Davidson Price had lost a week of invaluable time. Now movement on St. Louis, which had been reinforced heavily, was completely out of the question. The Union garrison at Rolla had had time to march on up to Jefferson City and that town was now fortified. There had been no great initial victory for the Confederate arms in Missouri; rather, there had been a crushing defeat, one that had destroyed the combat effectiveness of two of the three divisions of Price's army. The Confederates straggled on north through Franklin, Gasconade and Osage counties, looting the countryside. Reaching Jefferson City Price did not have the courage to attack the fortified capitol. With Union forces at his rear and on his southern flank his army lurched on to defeat at the Battle of Westport in Jackson County, and then began a terrible retreat down the Missouri-Kansas-Arkansas line to Texas. His great expedition was a complete failure, and



his army had simply ceased to exist. Sterling Price was in disgrace, and went before a Confederate court of inquiry to investigate his failure as a military commander by the time the Civil War ground to its end.

The crumbling, tree-grown, circular dirt walls of Fort Davidson still stand in the little valley beneath Pilot Knob and Shepherd's Mountains. In the center of the old earthwork the water filled hole where the magazine was exploded may still be seen. The lost graves of hundreds of Missouri's Confederate and Union soldiers lie about the fort. The Arcadia Valley is still a beautiful place, but few men today know the details of the terrible battle that took place there and of the valor of Missourians, both North and South, which was so simply and plainly displayed in 1864.

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