

THE KANSAS HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Volume XXX

Autumn, 1964

Number 3

Price's Raid and the Battle of Mine Creek

EDGAR LANGSDORF

IN THE spring and summer of 1864, when the Civil War was entering its fourth year, the situation of the Union armies was grim. In the east, they had suffered terrible losses in the battles of the Wilderness (May 5 and 6), Spotsylvania (May 12), and Cold Harbor (June 3), while west of the Mississippi campaigns in Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas had ended disastrously, allowing the Southern forces to assume the offensive. Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, who had been placed in command of the Confederate District of Arkansas in March, had been urging Maj. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith to authorize an all-out invasion of Missouri, and by June, when Union troops had been repulsed in the Red river campaign in Louisiana, Smith was ready to consider the idea favorably.

Three cavalry raids into Missouri had been made by the Confederates in 1863. In January Maj. Gen. John S. Marmaduke led a partially successful attack on Springfield and destroyed several small forts in southwest Missouri. In April and May his raid into southeastern Missouri, intended to relieve Federal pressure against Vicksburg and Little Rock, was a failure. The third raid, in September-October, commanded by Col. Joseph O. Shelby, was planned to obstruct or prevent Federal reinforcement of Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans at Chattanooga, to recruit, and to keep the Confederacy alive in Missouri. It was well planned and effectively executed, resulting in the capture or destruction of large quantities of Federal military supplies, and it won Shelby a promotion to brigadier general.¹

The fourth raid, led by Price, was authorized by Smith in an order dated August 4, 1864, at Shreveport, La., the headquarters

EDGAR LANGSDORF is assistant secretary and treasurer of the Kansas State Historical Society.

1. Stephen B. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1961), pp. 114-140.

of the Confederate Trans-Mississippi department. Instructing Price to make immediate arrangements for the invasion, the order included the following specific statements of purpose:

Rally the loyal men of Missouri, and remember that our great want is men. . . . Make St. Louis the objective point of your movement, which, if rapidly made, will put you in possession of that place, its supplies, and military stores, and which will do more toward rallying Missouri to your standard than the possession of any other point. Should you be compelled to withdraw from the State, make your retreat through Kansas and the Indian Territory, sweeping that country of its mules, horses, cattle, and military supplies of all kinds. . . .

Price was directed to utilize the entire cavalry force of his district, to which were added the divisions of Maj. Gens. James F. Fagan and Marmaduke and Shelby's brigade. These were largely skeleton organizations which were to be filled out by the large number of expected Missouri recruits. Price was further ordered to "avoid all wanton acts of destruction and devastation, restrain your men, and impress upon them that their aim should be to secure success in a just and holy cause and not to gratify personal feeling and revenge."²

Sterling Price was the ranking Missourian in the Confederate army, a former governor, member of congress and officer in the Mexican War. He had had no experience with cavalry, although he was a veteran infantry commander. However, his stature in civil as well as military life made him an obvious choice to lead this expedition, which had in addition to its military objectives the aim of overthrowing the loyal government of the state and the installation of a pro-Southern administration to be headed by Thomas C. Reynolds. Marmaduke and Shelby were also Missourians, as were many of the officers and men of the command. The state, although it had remained in the Union, numbered thousands of secessionist sympathizers in its population who were active in stirring up disorder. These sympathizers were counted upon to assist in a Confederate occupation of the state by giving Price information as to the location and movements of Federal troops, pointing out property of Unionists which could be looted or destroyed, and in helping to line up recruits for his army. In addition, Price as a practical politician was undoubtedly hopeful that his occupation of the state would have a considerable effect on the

2. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1893), Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 728, 729. Hereafter cited as *Official Records*.

forthcoming Presidential election, in which the South ardently desired the defeat of Lincoln by George B. McClellan.³

Price did not leave Camden, in southern Arkansas, until August 28, because of a delay in receiving the necessary ordnance stores from Shreveport. Marmaduke's and Fagan's divisions were at Princeton when he arrived there on the 29th. On September 7 they forded the Arkansas river at Dardanelle and moved on north-east, reaching Pocahontas on September 14. Here they were joined by Shelby's brigade and the expedition was organized into three divisions. From Pocahontas the march north was in three columns, Fagan's division in the center, Marmaduke on the right, and Shelby on the left. As they entered Missouri on September 19, Price reported his strength at nearly 8,000 armed and 4,000 unarmed men, and 14 pieces of artillery. Fagan's division, he said, was much the largest, with Marmaduke's next, and Shelby's consisting of only two brigades.⁴

Rumors had been circulating for months in Kansas and Missouri that Price was planning a large-scale invasion. Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans, commanding the Department of the Missouri with headquarters at St. Louis, had been occupied most of the summer in uncovering a pro-Southern conspiracy instigated by an organization called the Order of American Knights. He had learned that Price counted on the co-operation of this group and other Southern sympathizers when he should enter the state. On September 3 Rosecrans received his first information of the beginning of the raid and on the 6th wired Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, Lt. Gen. U. S. Grant's chief of staff, requesting that Maj. Gen. Andrew J. Smith and his infantry division, then passing Cairo on the way to reinforce Gen. William T. Sherman, be halted near St. Louis to wait until Price's intentions were clarified. Rosecrans' departmental troops at this time did not exceed 10,000 men, most of them scattered in small detachments over the state, while Price's strength was estimated at about 20,000. Smith received orders from Halleck on September 9 to operate against Price, and thereupon moved to a point near St. Louis from which he would be able to shift quickly by rail or river transportation. The leisurely pace of Price's northward march, during which he traveled often in a carriage rather than in the saddle and made "eloquent speeches

3. William Furse Scott, *The Story of a Cavalry Regiment: The Career of the Fourth Iowa Veteran Volunteers . . . 1861-1865* (New York, 1893), pp. 304-306; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 192, 318, 375; Oates, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

4. Wiley Britton, *The Civil War on the Border* (New York, 1904), pp. 389, 390; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 622, 623, 626, 627.

along the way," allowed reports of his progress to filter up to Union headquarters.⁵

Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis, commanding the Department of Kansas, had spread his 4,000 man force over a vast area in an attempt to protect the frontier settlements and the Santa Fe and California trails from Indian attacks. At the beginning of September Curtis himself was near Fort Kearny, Neb., with a force of volunteers and civilians, and Maj. Gen. James G. Blunt, who had recently assumed command of the District of the Upper Arkansas, was in western Kansas. Curtis returned to his headquarters at Fort Leavenworth on September 17, leaving Blunt to continue the Indian campaign. On the same day he sent telegrams to Gov. Thomas Carney of Kansas and to Generals Halleck and Rosecrans, informing them that Price had crossed the Arkansas river with 15,000 men. He also sent a message to Blunt ordering him to return to Council Grove with all possible speed.⁶ On September 20 Brig. Gen. Thomas Ewing, Jr., commanding the District of St. Louis, received reports that Price was at Pocahontas. However, the officer in charge of the patrol which obtained this information from a wounded Confederate soldier indicated that he had no confidence in its accuracy. Other reports were received, but it was not until September 23 that Rosecrans was finally satisfied that Price had crossed the Arkansas river. Apparently he had not put much stock in the report sent in by Curtis a week earlier. Further word reached him that Shelby was south of Pilot Knob, Mo., with 5,000 men, moving toward Farmington, but still he did not know the direction of Price's main attack. As late as September 24 Rosecrans telegraphed Curtis that he placed no reliance in reports from Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele that Price was at Pocahontas.⁷

As Rosecrans analyzed the situation, there were three possible invasion routes open to Price: into southeastern Missouri via Pocahontas, north toward Jefferson City by West Plains and Rolla, and north to the Missouri river either through Springfield and Sedalia or by way of the Kansas border. He believed Price's main force would probably head north toward Jefferson City while secondary columns would move through southeastern Missouri, and

5. [Richard J. Hinton], *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas and the Campaign of the Army of the Border Against General Sterling Price* (Chicago, 1865), pp. 7, 8; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, p. 307.

6. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 464, 465; Britton, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

7. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, p. 307; Hinton, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 16; Britton, *op. cit.*, pp. 392, 393.

he therefore alerted the militia garrisons in that part of the state and began concentrating regular units at St. Louis.⁸

Upon learning that Smith's infantry was reinforcing Rosecrans at St. Louis, Price realized that he could not risk an attack there and so shifted his line of march toward Pilot Knob, 80 miles south of St. Louis. Reconnoitering parties sent out by General Ewing met his advance on September 26, and on the 27th the battle of Pilot Knob took place. Ewing had barely 1,000 men, but they held off Marmaduke's and Fagan's divisions through the entire day in a defense that has been described as "one of the most brilliant deeds of the war."⁹ Ewing's losses were about 200 men killed, wounded, and missing, as compared to 1,500 Confederate casualties, and the punishment he inflicted on the Southern divisions was so severe, it is said, that they never entirely recovered their morale during the rest of the campaign.¹⁰

At this point Price decided to move against Jefferson City. Rosecrans had been concentrating troops at various locations in hopes of intercepting Price. When he learned that the invaders were definitely on the march toward the state capital he sent brigades under Brig. Gens. John McNeil and John B. Sanborn from Rolla, ordering them to parallel Price's line of march and reinforce Brig. Gen. E. B. Brown, commander of the District of Central Missouri, whose headquarters were at Jefferson City. Rosecrans also sent 4,500 men of the Third division, 16th Corps, and about the same number of men of Brig. Gen. Edward C. Pike's division of enrolled militia, all under General Smith, to follow Price. On October 7 Price reached Jefferson City, which by that time was defended by about 7,000 men. From reports reaching him he concluded that the defending forces numbered 12,000, and this overestimate, coupled with his knowledge that Smith was coming up, made him decide not to risk a battle but instead to push on toward Kansas.¹¹

On October 8, Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton arrived in Jefferson City with orders from Rosecrans to assume command of all Union forces there. Four thousand were cavalry, and these troops, augmented by Col. Edward F. Winslow's cavalry brigade of the 17th

8. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 507, 508; Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

9. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

10. Britton, *op. cit.*, p. 412; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 308, 445-452, 628-630.

11. Samuel J. Crawford, *Kansas in the Sixties* (Chicago, 1911), pp. 140, 141; Britton, *op. cit.*, pp. 414, 415, 421, 422; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 308-311, 375, 376, 630, 631.

Army Corps and eight pieces of artillery, he formed into the Provisional Cavalry division which he commanded in the subsequent pursuit of Price and the battles which followed along the Kansas-Missouri border. This division consisted of four brigades under Generals McNeil, Sanborn, and Brown, and Colonel Winslow.

On the same date Governor Carney issued a proclamation, requested by General Curtis, calling out the state militia for service along the border:

The State is in peril! Price and his rebel hosts threaten it with invasion. Kansas must be ready to hurl them back at any cost.

The necessity is urgent. . . .

Men of Kansas, rally! One blow, one earnest, united blow, will foil the invader and save you. Who will falter? Who is not ready to meet the peril? Who will not defend his home and the State?

To arms, then! To arms and the tented field, until the rebel foe shall be baffled and beaten back.

The proclamation was implemented by General Order No. 54, issued by Maj. Gen. George W. Deitzler, the militia commander, on October 9, designating points of rendezvous at which the militia units were to assemble with supplies and equipment for 30 days service. Curtis on October 10 declared martial law throughout the state and called on all men between 18 and 60 to arm and attach themselves to some military organization.¹²

These men were without uniforms, and to provide some means of identification Curtis directed that they wear a piece of red material as a badge. Most of them accordingly sported a leaf from the ever-present sumach, turned scarlet at this season, and called themselves the "Sumach Millish" or the "Kansas Tads."¹³ Few had any military training or experience and most were without arms. One later reminisced: "We were about as inefficient a force as could have been mobilized anywhere on earth to check the advance of a seasoned army. . . . What would have happened were we subjected to gunfire can better be imagined than described. Fortunately the Confederates were turned back before they reached us raw recruits. After a service of about twenty-one days we were permitted to return home, where we received our discharges."¹⁴

In obedience to Deitzler's call, 12,622 men assembled at Olathe,

12. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 311, 340, 467-470; Hinton, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-33. The *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*, October 15, 1864, was one of many Kansas newspapers which printed the full proclamation.

13. Hinton, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

14. George A. Root, "Reminiscences of William Darnell," *Kansas Historical Collections*, v. 17, p. 505.

Atchison, Paola, Mound City, Fort Scott, and Wyandotte City. More than 10,000 of this number were concentrated south of the Kansas river. Units detailed for special duty at other points were not counted in these figures, and it was estimated that a total of more than 16,000 Kansans were actually in the field.¹⁵

On October 10 Price moved into Boonville with Marmaduke's and Fagan's divisions. Shelby was already there. For two days Price remained in camp, resting, recruiting 1,200 to 1,500 new troops, receiving visits from such guerrilla leaders as William C. Quantrill and "Bloody Bill" Anderson, and distributing portions of the booty already acquired. Both Quantrill and Anderson were sent out by Price to destroy railroad lines, Anderson to tear up trackage of the North Missouri railroad and Quantrill to cut the Hannibal and St. Joe line. They effected some damage, according to Price, but none of any material advantage. Anderson is said to have admired and respected Price, and at Boonville presented him with a pair of silver-mounted pistols. When he was killed 15 days later near Albany, Mo., a letter was found on his body containing Price's orders to him. There was no such kindly feeling between Price and Quantrill, and in fact Quantrill remained in Price's service only a few days.¹⁶

During the night and early morning of October 13 the Confederates resumed their march. Sanborn's brigade, which had been harassing Price during the Boonville occupation, followed him and continued the hit and run tactics which were designed to prevent Confederate side excursions and delay Price until Rosecrans and Smith, who were moving west by river transport, railroad and forced overland marches, could come up in his rear. Sanborn marched along roads behind and to the south of the invaders. Price, as he left Boonville, learned of a cache of several thousand small arms stored in the city hall of Glasgow, and at Arrow Rock he sent a force across the river to capture the garrison and seize these arms and other supplies. This delayed his progress and gave Rosecrans and Smith time to join Sanborn. As Price moved out of Marshall, Mo., toward Lexington, he found himself pushed from behind by 8,000 Federal troops while another 4,000 moved parallel to his course on his left flank.¹⁷

15. Hinton, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

16. Ralph B. Rea, *Sterling Price, The Lee of the West* (Little Rock, 1959), pp. 130, 131. Rea cites Lucy Simmons, "Sterling Price," unpublished M. S. thesis, University of Chicago, 1921, p. 101. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 442, 631, 632.

17. Rea, *op. cit.*, pp. 131, 132; Britton, *op. cit.*, pp. 431, 432; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 311, 312, 632.

General Curtis meantime was collecting his troops, those under General Deitzler assembling at and near Shawneetown, Kan., and those under General Blunt at Hickman Mills, Mo. These two divisions were designated by Curtis as the Army of the Border. Blunt, commanding the first division, organized his units into brigades, the first under Col. Charles R. Jennison, the second under Col. Thomas Moonlight, and the third under Col. C. W. Blair. Militia units commanded by Brig. Gen. W. H. M. Fishback were directed to report to Colonel Blair. The militia units under Deitzler at Shawneetown were the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Twentieth, and Twenty-first regiments. Other militia regiments were added later.¹⁸ Curtis ordered Blunt's first division to move toward Pleasant Hill and Warrensburg and Deitzler's second division to move toward Independence and Lexington. Both were to send out cavalry to ascertain the line of Price's approach and to harass his advance. Blunt reached Pleasant Hill shortly after midnight on October 17 with his First and Second brigades and at daylight moved on toward Warrensburg. Learning that General Sanborn and his cavalry were near Dunksburg and that General Smith's infantry and artillery were within supporting distance, Blunt sent a message to Sanborn suggesting a joint offensive. At the same time he requested Curtis to send forward Colonel Blair and the Third brigade, and the 16th Kansas and Second Colorado cavalry. That evening he began the march toward Lexington, where Colonel Moonlight arrived with the advance on the morning of October 18. Next morning Blunt sent out scouts who encountered Price's army moving in three columns from Waverly to Lexington. Blunt reinforced his outposts and ordered that the enemy be resisted. Shelby, commanding the Confederate advance, pushed forward and after a sharp encounter drove Blunt's troops past Lexington and on toward Independence. Blunt reported that the engagement and subsequent withdrawal, which began shortly before noon and continued until dark, inflicted severe punishment on the enemy but more importantly developed Price's position, strength, and movements for the first time since he had crossed the Arkansas river. The rear guard in this action was the 11th Kansas cavalry under Moonlight.¹⁹

Blunt withdrew to the crossing of the Little Blue river nine miles east of Independence, and finding there a strong natural defensive

18. *Official Records, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 473, 474, 572, 614, 615.*

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 312, 475, 573, 574, 632, 633, 637.

position went into camp in line of battle on the morning of October 20. However, in response to a request for reinforcements, he was ordered by General Curtis to leave an outpost at the Little Blue, under the command of Colonel Moonlight, and retire with the rest of his troops to Independence. Curtis' message to Blunt read in part as follows:

" . . . Your troops must take position here [Independence] where dry corn and provisions are arranged. The militia will not go forward and the Big Blue must be our main line for battle. . . . Probably Moonlight had better be left in command of that point [Little Blue], not to fight a battle, but to delay the rebel approach, and fall back to our main force. I will now be able to bring forward to Kansas City a respectable force. We must pick our battle-ground where we can have united councils as well as a strong position. This we are securing at Big Blue and elsewhere. The blow you gave the enemy is doing good in the rear. It is crushing some of the silly rumors that had well-nigh ruined any prospects of a successful defense."²⁰

The "silly rumors" to which Curtis referred had been a handicap to his military plans and operations since early in the month. Governor Carney believed it unlikely that Price would actually attempt an invasion of Kansas. He distrusted Curtis, whom he considered a supporter of his bitter political foe, James H. Lane, and in view of the approaching elections Carney believed that the whole idea of mobilizing the militia was nothing more than a scheme of the Lane camp to take the voters away from their homes, thereby making it impossible to hold an election at all or giving the Lane faction the advantage. Carney's newspaper, the *Leavenworth Times*, clearly indicated this suspicion, and an anti-Lane editor, Sol Miller of the *White Cloud Kansas Chief*, on October 6, wrote:

People of Kansas, do you know that Gen. Curtis has entered into a conspiracy with Lane, to call out the entire Kansas Militia, to compel their absence at election time? It is the only hope Lane has of succeeding. They admit that danger is remote, but are determined to make Price's movements a pretext for taking the voters away into Missouri, or from their homes. . . . We have our information from a trustworthy source.

Further, since Blunt himself was a bitter personal enemy of Carney and a "military and political henchman of Lane," Carney was unlikely to put much faith in any information received from him either directly or indirectly. Not until it was known definitely that Price had left Jefferson City and begun moving west did Carney issue the proclamation calling out the militia. For about ten days thereafter the state was gripped by intense excitement. Charles Robinson, who had served as the first governor of Kansas,

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 476, 574.

wrote to his wife from Lawrence on October 9: ". . . The rebels are in Mo. in earnest & coming this way. The entire State Militia are called out & will be in the field in a few days. . . . We had an alarm last night. Several guns were fired east of the town & the guard alarmed the town. It proved to be nothing & we went to bed again. . . ." ²¹

By October 16 some 10,000 militia had taken stations along the border, almost all of them poorly armed and inadequately trained. Even at this time their patriotic enthusiasm had begun to wear thin. Since the issuance of Governor Carney's proclamation on October 8 nothing had been heard of Price, and even Robinson, serving on General Deitzler's staff, wrote:

. . . It is beginning to be thought that our being called out is all a sham & trick of Lane & Curtiss [*sic*] to make political capital. We cannot hear anything of importance as to the movements of Price. We think that we are kept in ignorance of the true condition of affairs in order to keep the people out as long as possible. . . . I have no doubt Price has gone South & that there are only a few guerillas [*sic*] prowling about. Nobody thinks we shall have anything to do but go home in a few days & attend to our business. . . . ²²

On October 16 Lt. Col. James D. Snoddy of Mound City, commanding the Sixth regiment Kansas State militia, had asked Blunt's permission to take his regiment back to Linn county. Upon Blunt's refusal Snoddy started home anyway, and Blunt had no recourse but to arrest both Snoddy and his immediate superior, Brig. Gen. William H. M. Fishback. This he did, in person, and the Sixth regiment chose James Montgomery to be its new commanding officer. In his report Blunt stated that no other officers or men of the Fifth, Sixth, and Tenth militia regiments, all of which had been brigaded under the command of Colonel Blair, had refused to recognize his authority, nor

evinced any other disposition than to do their whole duty and move against the enemy in Missouri or elsewhere that he could be found. Nor could I attach so much criminality to the acts of Brigadier-General Fishback and Colonel Snoddy, especially of the former, and inflict upon them the summary punishment prescribed by the rules of war, viz, death, as would have been the case had I not known that they were the instruments selected by the Executive of Kansas and others, their superiors in the militia organization, to carry out their mischievous and disgraceful designs.²³

Pro-Carney, anti-Lane newspapers, among them the Leaven-

21. "Robinson Collection," Manuscript division, Kansas State Historical Society.

22. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1864. See Albert Castel, "War and Politics: The Price Raid of 1864," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 24, pp. 129-143, for a discussion of the political intrigues in Kansas as they affected the military situation at this time.

23. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 572, 573, 597, 619, 620.

worth *Daily Times*, White Cloud *Kansas Chief*, Oskaloosa *Independent*, and Lawrence *Journal*, announced that Price had left Missouri and urged that the militiamen should be released from service. Many regiments refused to go any distance into Missouri and some said that they would not cross the state line at all. General Deitzler supported them, believing that Price was below the Arkansas river. The situation as affecting military discipline was so serious that Maj. H. H. Heath, provost-marshal-general at Fort Leavenworth, sent the following message to General Curtis on October 20:

Leavenworth Times daily publishing demoralizing articles, tendency urging militia to return home and disband. It condemns and seriously and offensively criticises, generally and specially, your acts in keeping militia in arms and martial law in force. . . . Am of opinion that the paper should be temporarily suspended, and editors and writers arrested as enemies to the public and cause. Do not doubt that its incendiary articles are the cause mainly of the tendency to bad conduct of the militia. . . . Please instruct. Course of paper is highly treasonable at this time.²⁴

At this juncture Curtis received a telegram from Rosecrans, dated October 18, reporting Price's location at Waverly on the 16th, with Union forces beginning to move in earnest. Reporting the disposition of his units, Rosecrans concluded that, "combined with yours, it seems to me we can push the old fellow and make him lose his train. His horses' feet must be in bad order for want of shoes." Curtis thereupon arranged for newspaper publication of this intelligence in an attempt to convince the militia and state officials that the danger was real, and his effort was bolstered by the news of Blunt's clash with Price at Lexington.²⁵

On October 21 Price resumed his march to the Little Blue, Marmaduke's division in advance. Moonlight and the rear guard were driven back across the stream and a hard-fought withdrawal, lasting nearly six hours, ended with the Union forces taking up prepared positions on the Big Blue and Price's army entering Independence. For the defensive battle of the Big Blue Curtis assigned Blunt to the command of the right wing and Deitzler to the left. His force totaled some 15,000 men, including militia, volunteers, artillery, and a number of colored troops under Capt. Richard J. Hinton and James L. Rafety, to oppose an enemy estimated at this time to consist of nearly 30,000. Curtis telegraphed Rosecrans late in the afternoon of October 21 that he was confident of stopping Price and hoped the Missouri commander would come up on the

24. *Ibid.*, pt. 4, p. 148; pt. 1, pp. 614, 615.

25. *Ibid.*, pt. 1, p. 475.

Confederate rear and left. "If you can get that position we will bag Price, if I succeed, as I hope to do. . . ." ²⁶

The battle of the Big Blue began on the morning of October 22 with a skirmish on Deitzler's wing. Curtis reported that Price found both this wing and the center too strong and avoided a full-scale attack. In fact, Price's immediate concern seemed to be the safe passage of his train down the road to Little Santa Fe, about nine miles south of Independence. Shelby attacked Jennison at Byram's Ford and forced a crossing, thus cutting off and capturing substantial numbers of militia under Gen. M. S. Grant near Hickman Mills. Curtis threw in reinforcements to help Jennison, but by dark Price had penetrated and broken his right flank, taken Hickman Mills and all of the Blue south of Byram's Ford. Blunt ordered Deitzler to withdraw his troops to Kansas City, and by nightfall all the Union forces except the regiments of Jennison, Moonlight, and Ford were positioned within the lines of fortifications which had been prepared.²⁷

Early on the morning of October 23 the battle of Westport began. Blunt's First, Second, and Fourth brigades were deployed into line of battle on the south side of the timber along Brush creek. Price's army, with Shelby's division in advance, began the attack and forced Blunt's front line to fall back across the creek. With the arrival of the Sixth and Tenth regiments of militia under Colonel Blair, Blunt ordered a general advance which was successfully accomplished. At noon the center of the Confederate line was broken and the rebel retreat turned into a near rout with Blunt's cavalry and artillery in rapid pursuit. When this had continued for two miles Blunt reported that he came up with Pleasonton's forces, which were facing a portion of Price's army. Blunt's artillery threw a raking fire into Price's flank just as the rebels were about to charge Pleasonton. This threw them into confusion and stampeded them with the main column of the retreating enemy. Blunt's cavalry continued to press Price's rear, Pleasonton's cavalry following closely behind, and thus the pursuit continued until dark. Blunt's Second brigade bivouacked that night at Aubrey and the remainder of his division at Little Santa Fe.²⁸

The battle of Westport, sometimes called the Gettysburg of the West, was by far the most successful Union operation of the campaign. However, Price's main objective was to cover the southward

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 478, 479, 592, 593, 633, 634.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 479-484, 575, 634, 635, 658.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 485-491, 575, 576.

movement of his enormous train as it withdrew along the road to Little Santa Fe, and this objective he was able to carry out. The Union forces were also successful in protecting Kansas City and preventing Price from crossing the state line into Kansas.

Ten miles south of Westport, at about 2:30 in the afternoon, Generals Curtis, Pleasonton and Blunt met in a farmhouse and held a short conference. General Sanborn was also present, as were Governor Carney and General Deitzler of the Kansas militia. It was agreed that Price must be pursued vigorously to prevent his taking any of the military posts along the state line between the Missouri and Arkansas rivers, a distance of about 300 miles. Pleasonton's army, the 10,000 militia, and Curtis' 4,000 regular volunteers were considered more than sufficient. Pleasonton wished to move his command toward Harrisonville, in Cass county, Mo., and mentioned the long march of some of his cavalry, which had come up from Arkansas, as well as the importance of allowing his Missouri volunteers to be at home for the approaching election. However, Governor Carney and General Deitzler urged that the Kansas militia be released first, since they had left their homes and served faithfully in spite of inadequate equipment and pay, if indeed they were to be paid at all. Curtis supported this argument, perhaps to clear himself of any possible charges of political shenanigans such as had been raised earlier, and Pleasonton agreed. Therefore Curtis immediately released all the Kansas militia whose homes were north of the Kansas river, retaining in service only the Fifth, Sixth, and Tenth regiments which were from southern Kansas. He also revoked his Order No. 54, which had proclaimed martial law north of the Kansas river, adding: "The enemy are repelled and driven south. Our success is beyond all anticipation. . . ." ²⁹

That night the forces of Curtis and Pleasonton also camped at Aubrey and Little Santa Fe, where they arrived at dusk. Early next morning, October 24, they resumed the pursuit. Blunt as commander of the Kansas forces was given the advance, with Pleasonton following. Blunt's force was now designated the First division and Pleasonton's, consisting of Missouri, Iowa, Indiana, and other units, was called the Second division. Moonlight's Second brigade marched on the Kansas side of the line, on Price's right flank, in order to protect the state against marauding detachments. At noon Curtis telegraphed General Halleck that he was on the State Line road opposite Paola. Price, he said, "makes rapid progress, but dead horses and debris show his demoralized and

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 491, 492, 616, 617.

destitute condition and my probable success in overhauling him." He also sent a message to Col. Samuel A. Drake, commander at Paola, to inform him that the pursuit had passed far enough south to guarantee the safety of the town and that it was continuing rapidly. "I hope fresh mounted troops will press down on Price's flank by the Fort Scott road," he added, "and by travelling night and day strike his train. He is scattering his heavy baggage along the road, but making rapid progress due south. I have fears he may move against Fort Scott, but shall press him so hard to-night he will not dare to make the divergence. . . ." ³⁰

At dark the pursuit halted for two hours near West Point, Mo. Price's army was then camped in the vicinity of Trading Post, in Linn county, Kansas, about 25 miles north of Fort Scott. When the march was resumed by the Federal forces about eight o'clock Pleasonton's division took the advance, a change for which Curtis was criticized because it wasted time. Pleasonton placed Sanborn's brigade in the lead with orders to push forward until the Confederate pickets were met and driven in. The night was extremely dark and rainy, and the forward regiments, the Sixth and Eighth Missouri State militia under Col. Joseph J. Gravelly, moved forward cautiously until they encountered Price's units near Trading Post. Curtis, when he was informed of the contact, ordered Sanborn to harass the enemy with artillery during the rest of the night, but bad weather and washed-out roads made this impossible.³¹

Shortly after four o'clock in the morning a general advance was ordered. In accordance with instructions from General Pleasonton, Sanborn pushed his line through the timber to the Marais des Cygnes river. Curtis reported that the enemy deserted his camp in great confusion, attempted to make a stand at the river crossing, but was forced to retreat in disorder, leaving his guns behind, because the advance led by the Second Arkansas cavalry was so close upon him that he had no time to organize. "Cattle, camp equipment, negroes, provisions partly cooked, and stolen goods were scattered over miles of the forest camp, and along the lines of the retreat. Few were killed on either side as the night and early morn attack created a general fright in the rebel lines and only random shots on either side." Sanborn pursued for about a mile and then halted his brigade to allow the men to eat breakfast while Pleasonton continued to move ahead with the remainder of his

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 492, 493, 576. Price was indeed planning to attack Fort Scott. See *ibid.*, pp. 636, 637.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 390, 410, 493, 494, 576.

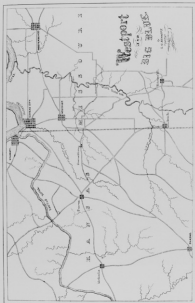
division. This was the battle of the Marais des Cygnes, which ended shortly after dawn, October 25.³²

Pleasanton's leading units now consisted of the two brigades commanded by Col. John F. Phillips and Lt. Col. Frederick W. Benteen. Phillips, who was commander of the Seventh Missouri State militia, had replaced Brig. Gen. E. B. Brown as commander of the First brigade on October 23. Benteen, commanding officer of the Tenth Missouri cavalry, had assumed command of the Fourth brigade on the same date, when Col. Edward F. Winslow was wounded and forced to retire.³³ Phillips' brigade, totaling some 1,500 men, was composed of the First, Fourth, and Seventh cavalry, Missouri State militia. Benteen's included the Tenth Missouri, Third, and Fourth Iowa, and contingents of the Fourth Missouri and Seventh Indiana regiments, about 1,100 men in all. Against these two brigades were aligned the divisions of Marmaduke and Fagan, estimated to number 7,000 to 8,000 men.

About three miles from the crossing of the Marais des Cygnes Phillips came upon the enemy, drawn up in line of battle on the open prairie with Mine creek, a tributary of the Marais des Cygnes, immediately behind him. Price's train, passing slowly across the stream, had blocked the passage of the troops in the rear. Marmaduke and Fagan, defending the withdrawal, had no choice but to stop and fight, for the advance regiment of Phillips' brigade, the First Missouri militia under Lt. Col. Bazel F. Lazear, was only 500 or 600 yards behind them. The Confederate commanders decided that they would not have time to dismount their troops, send horses to the rear, and fight on foot, as would have been the normal procedure in such a situation. Instead, their troops were thrown into line for immediate defensive action, Fagan's division on the right, Marmaduke's on the left. Shelby and his division had gone ahead in charge of the train, with an additional directive from Price to attack and capture Fort Scott, where Price had been told there were 1,000 Negroes under arms. The defense was formed in two ranks with a projecting angle in the middle and a battery of artillery at the apex of the angle and on each wing. In his report Colonel Phillips gave this description:

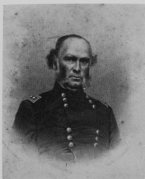
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 390, 391, 493, 494.

33. Benteen is best known today as a member of the U. S. Seventh cavalry who was with Custer at the time of the battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, though he did not participate in that battle. After his Civil War service he entered the regular army as a captain in the Seventh cavalry, July 28, 1866. Most of his service until his retirement July 7, 1888, was connected with the Indian campaigns.—Thomas H. S. Hamersly, *Complete Army and Navy Register of the United States of America, From 1776 to 1887* (New York, 1888), p. 296.

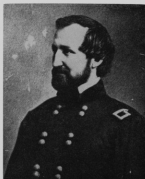


Map of the Kansas City-Independence-Westport area, shows all the battles of the Little and Big River and Westport, October 21, 22, and 23, 1864. Reproduced from Maj. Gen. Samuel B. Cook's manuscript report of his campaign against General Price, in the manuscript collection, Kansas State Historical Society. This is essentially the same as his report printed in the War of the Rebellion series.

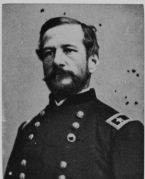
UNION COMMANDERS DURING THE PRICE RAID



Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis
(1805-1866)



Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans
(1819-1898)



Maj. Gen. Alfred S. Pleasonton
(1824-1897)



Maj. Gen. James G. Blunt
(1826-1881)

Photographs of Generals Curtis and Blunt reproduced from collections of the Kansas State Historical Society; Rosecrans and Pleasonton courtesy The National Archives, U. S. Signal Corps Photos Nos. 111-B-3646 and 111-B-1886 (Brady Collection).

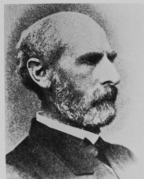
CONFEDERATE LEADERS OF THE PRICE RAID



Maj. Gen. Sterling Price
(1809-1867)



Maj. Gen. James F. Fagan
(1828-1893)

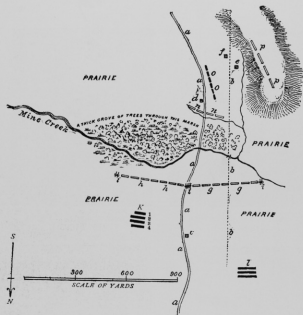


Maj. Gen. John S. Marmaduke
(1833-1887)



Brig. Gen. Joseph O. Shelby
(1830-1897)

Photograph of General Price reproduced from Kansas State Historical Society collections; Generals Marmaduke and Fagan courtesy The National Archives, U. S. Signal Corps Photos Nos. 111-B-1816 and 111-BA-1671 (Brady Collection); General Shelby reproduced from John N. Edwards, *Shelby and His Men*.



BATTLE OF THE MARAIS DES CYGNES (OR "OSAGE," OR "MINE CREEK"),
OCT. 25, 1864.

- a, a, Road (then) from Trading Post to Fort Scott.
b, b, Present road.
c, Widow Regan's house.
d, Jones' house.
e, McAuley house (then).
f, " " (now).
K, K, Fagan's Division.
A, A, Marmaduke's Division.
i, i, i, Two, four, and two guns.
B, Benteen's (Winslow's) Brigade.

1. Tenth Missouri.
2. Fourth Iowa.
3. Third Iowa.
4. Seventh Indiana and Fourth Missouri, detachments.
I, Phillips' Brigade.
n, n, Second position of the enemy.
e, e, Second position of Benteen's Brigade.
f, f, Third position of the enemy, on one of the large "mounds" peculiar to the country.

This map of the Mine creek vicinity, showing locations of Union and Confederate troops, is reproduced from William F. Scott, *The Story of a Cavalry Regiment: The Career of the Fourth Iowa Veteran Volunteers* . . . 1861-1865. Note that north is at the bottom of the map.

The enemy was formed at 600 yards distance in treble lines and in overwhelming force. My ground was high and commanding. Here the whole rebel army and train were in full view. General Price on his famed white horse was plainly visible directing and urging the rapid flight of his train. The scene was grand; the work before us of fearful import. . . . The enemy's vastly superior numbers enabled him to outflank me, which he evidently intended to do, by his movements.

Another writer who was on the scene commented: "In view of the numbers engaged the spectacle is probably without a parallel in the war."³⁴

Phillips had no reserve force, and the Union artillery, delayed by obstructions placed by the enemy at the Marais des Cygnes crossing, had not yet come up. The Confederate batteries began to fire on him and the rebels appeared ready to move forward to the attack. At this moment Benteen's brigade came up on Phillips' left and two pieces of artillery got into position. The order to charge was given, Benteen against Price's right and Phillips against his center and left. The Tenth Missouri started forward, bugles sounding, but they hesitated and came to a stop half way down the slope when the enemy showed no sign of breaking. In spite of repeated commands from Benteen and other officers they did not resume the charge, apparently brought up short by some strange psychological block. There was danger that the regiments following them would be thrown into confusion. Just behind was the Fourth Iowa, stretched out in a line which extended the length of two companies beyond the Missourians. Maj. Abial R. Pierce, commanding the Iowa regiment, galloped to the left of his line and gave the order to charge. The two companies on the left, A and K, responded and were followed by the others as quickly as they could force their way through the confused lines of the Tenth Missouri. This movement seemed to break the spell and the Tenth regained its poise and followed. They struck the enemy line from left to right, broke it, and "it all fell away like a row of bricks."³⁵ The Third Iowa followed the Fourth into the melee, and Phillips' brigade quickly joined also. Phillips in his report wrote:

The impetuosity of the onset surprised and confounded the enemy. He trembled and wavered and the wild shouts of our soldiers rising above the din of battle told that he gave way. With pistol we dashed into his disorganized ranks and the scene of death was as terrible as the victory was speedy and glorious.

³⁴ Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 332, 333; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 330, 332, 341, 351, 352, 493, 607.

³⁵ Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

This fighting at close quarters was described by Benteen as surpassing anything "for the time it lasted [that] I have ever witnessed." The rebel line was routed along its whole length within a few minutes for the long infantry rifles with which many of the troops were armed were difficult to reload on horseback and therefore were almost useless in a cavalry fight. As the Union regiments charged, the Confederates fired and then turned their horses and fled. This, of course, resulted in breaking the defensive lines formed in their own rear and the whole force was almost immediately demoralized and panic-stricken. Benteen reported that the "enemy was completely routed and driven in the wildest confusion from the field; several of his wagons were abandoned in the narrow road that crosses the creek just in the rear of his position. Many of his force were left dead and wounded upon the field and in our hands. . . ."³⁶

In the bend of the creek, only a few acres in extent, 300 Confederates were killed or wounded and about 900 were captured. Among the prisoners were Generals Marmaduke and Cabell, the latter a brigade commander in Fagan's division, and a number of field and company grade officers. Marmaduke's capture was credited to Pvt. James Dunlavy of Company D, and Cabell's to Sgt. Calvary M. Young of Company L, both of the Third Iowa cavalry. Dunlavy was later awarded a Medal of Honor. Eight artillery pieces and two stands of colors were also taken, besides numerous wagons, small arms, and other equipment and supplies.³⁷

Marmaduke, when he saw that he would be forced to fight at Mine creek, had at once sent a note to General Price telling him of the situation. Price had been ill and at this time was riding in a carriage with his train, which was escorted by Shelby's division. Apparently he was not, in spite of Colonel Phillips' belief, astride his famous white horse until he received Marmaduke's call for help. Then he mounted and rode back, first ordering Shelby to take command of his old brigade and do what he could to assist Marmaduke

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 333-335; Britton, *op. cit.*, pp. 493-496; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 332, 335-338, 352, 361, 495, 496, 637. William A. Mitchell, *Linn County, Kansas, A History* (La Crosse, 1928) reports on pp. 235-240 the recollections of Henry Trinkle. Many Confederates were "iced over the head and crushed. . . . The scene after the battle was terrifying. Fully three hundred horses horribly mangled were running and snorting and trampling the dead and wounded. Their blood had drenched them and added to the ghastliness of it all. One hundred and fifty Union dead were taken to Mound City for burial, and the rebels buried on the battlefield. A lady living there at the time says that three hundred were buried in one grave, while at numerous other places groups of rebel dead were interred. . . ." This account appeared originally in the *La Crosse Weekly Journal*, June 21, 1895, and was reprinted in the *Kansas Historical Collections*, v. 16, pp. 654, 655.

37. Thomas Julian Bryant, "The Capture of General Marmaduke by James Dunlavy an Iowa Private Cavalryman," in *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Iowa City, v. 11 (April, 1913), pp. 248-257.

and Fagan. Price said that he met the troops of the two divisions "retreating in utter and indescribable confusion, many of them having thrown away their arms. They were deaf to all entreaties or commands, and in vain were all efforts to rally them. . . ." Shelby himself said that as he returned he met "the advancing Federals, flushed with success and clamorous for more victims. I knew from the beginning that I could do nothing but resist their advance, delay them as much as possible, and depend on energy and night for the rest."³⁸

So the Battle of Mine creek came to an end.³⁹ In time elapsed it had been scarcely half an hour from Benteen's charge to the panicky flight of the rebel divisions. According to Samuel J. Crawford, an aide on General Curtis' staff, after the two forces closed in battle a life and death struggle continued for about 20 minutes. Within 30 minutes Marmaduke and other officers were prisoners and the rest of the Confederate troops were fleeing as though they felt the devil prodding them. The best efforts of Fagan and Shelby were unable to stem the rout, which continued across the prairie to the crossing of the Little Osage river near Fort Lincoln, 12 miles northwest of Fort Scott. There Shelby posted a brigade, or part of a brigade, to cover the further retreat of the train and the rest of Price's army. Sanborn's brigade was now the advance of the Union forces, and as he approached Shelby withdrew to the timber along the river. From here he was pushed south another five miles. Sanborn stopped to rest his horses and men and McNeil took over the pursuit with the Second brigade. Benteen and the Fourth brigade soon joined him, and about six miles northeast of Fort Scott they

38. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 338, 339; Ren, *op. cit.*, pp. 148, 149; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 637, 650, 660.

39. A description of the events of October 24 and 25, from the view of a man in the ranks, is found in the diary of Fletcher Pomeroy, quartermaster sergeant of the Seventh Kansas cavalry and a member of Company D: ". . . Our march was on the state line road. The country was entirely devastated. For thirty miles lone chimneys and piles of brick and stone marked the site of once happy homes, now desolated by the hand of war that for nearly four years has afflicted this border. About 4.00 P. M. we passed Price's last night's camp. We reached West Point about ten P. M. Monday, where we passed Gen Blunt's command and continued our march nine miles when we struck the rebel pickets within a mile of the Maridezene River at three A. M. Tuesday morning. Gen. Curtis' and Blunt's forces came up at daylight and our whole army moved forward. The enemy's pickets were driven and his whole army was pressed back across the river at Chotem trading post, and about two hundred head of cattle captured from him. Our forces crossed and moved upon the enemy who were in position on Flint [Mine] Creek. After some skirmishing a cavalry charge was made by the 10th Mo. Cavalry under Maj. Benton [Benteen] which resulted in the capture of the rebel Major Gen. Marmaduke, Brig. Gen. Cabell [Cabell] and four colonels and nearly four hundred soldiers and seven pieces of artillery [sic]. Many rebel dead and wounded were left on the field. Not a man was killed on our side, though several were wounded. After this the enemy made several stands as we pursued him, but was easily driven. The whole action of the day has been a succession of charges during which we drove the enemy forty-five miles. We are halted to-night in line of battle on the open prairie with nothing to burn, and nothing to hitch our horses to. I tied my horse to my saddle and used my saddle for my pillow. Some others ran their sabres into the ground and tied them to the hills. We get corn for our horses from a field half a mile distant which is the first they have had to eat in thirty-two hours, during which time we have marched one hundred twelve miles. . . ." —Pomeroy diary, Manuscript division, Kansas State Historical Society.

came upon Price's whole army drawn up for battle on Shiloh creek. Artillery fire eventually broke the Confederate lines and near sundown Price again began a rapid retreat.⁴⁰

It was at this time that one of the several inexplicable incidents connected with the Price raid occurred. General Curtis in his official report wrote that as twilight approached and the enemy lines were slowly retiring, he saw a large portion of his own forces moving to the right as if to turn the enemy's left flank. However, as they continued well beyond the flank he rode to the head of the column to determine what was happening, and was told by General Pleasonton that his troops were exhausted and they were going to Fort Scott to rest and obtain supplies. Pleasonton was informed, as Curtis listened, that it was only two or two-and-a-half miles to the fort, though Curtis protested that it was at least six miles. He urged Pleasonton not to abandon McNeil's brigade and suggested that the troops be allowed to rest in the field while supplies were sent out from the fort. However, Pleasonton did not concur and General Sanborn continued to lead the march toward Fort Scott. Curtis then sent word back to Blunt to hurry forward to support McNeil. Going into Fort Scott himself after dark, Curtis had a further talk with Pleasonton, who said that he would have to withdraw personally from the campaign for reasons of health although his troops might continue. Blunt also came into Fort Scott, either through misunderstanding or failure to receive Curtis' orders to reinforce McNeil, who, with Benteen's brigade, was still on the field. Curtis then ordered rations sent out to the men of McNeil's and Blunt's commands, but the supply train met Blunt's men coming in to Fort Scott and so turned around and came back. McNeil's troops were thus left to spend a miserable night without food.⁴¹

By this time Price's remaining troops had reached the limit of their endurance. On the night of October 25, at the Marmaton river, Col. Sidney D. Jackman, one of Shelby's brigade commanders, was given orders to burn most of the remaining wagons and to blow up the surplus ammunition. Then the retreat continued. In two days Price put 40 miles between himself and the Union army, camping on October 28 just south of Newtonia, Mo. In this area crops had been good, and Price lost no time in sending out foraging parties to get food for men and horses.⁴²

On the night that Price's train was being destroyed General

40. Crawford, *op. cit.*, p. 161; Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 338; *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 391, 392, 502, 660.

41. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 502, 503, 576, 577.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 637, 661; Res, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

Curtis, at Fort Scott, issued an order rescinding martial law in the southern part of Kansas. Next morning he sent a telegram to General Halleck in Washington announcing that he had saved Fort Scott from attack by his constant pressure against Price and that he intended to continue the pursuit with all the troops at his command. Meantime Pleasonton had reported to his superior, General Rosecrans, that the enemy was beating a rapid retreat and that his own men and horses were exhausted from almost six days and nights of action. He said he would be unable to do anything more until he could obtain fresh horses, and recommended that Sanborn's and McNeil's brigades follow in support of Curtis as long as there was any prospect of damaging the enemy and then return to their own districts. Rosecrans accepted this suggestion, and accordingly Pleasonton, with Phillips' brigade, withdrew from the pursuit and returned to Warrensburg, Mo. Blunt, following orders from Curtis, moved out in pursuit next morning, October 26, with the brigades of Sanborn and McNeil following. Benteen's brigade remained under Curtis' command but took no part in the remainder of the campaign. That night Curtis' force camped near Shanghai, Mo., where they struck Price's trail, and on October 27 continued on his trace all day and most of the night.⁴³

Blunt, in the advance, about one o'clock in the afternoon of October 28 allowed Colonel Moonlight to halt his brigade to feed his horses. McNeil came up behind Moonlight and also halted, and Curtis, assuming that Blunt had stopped his entire division to rest and feed, allowed the other troops to do the same. However, Blunt had gone on with Jennison's and Ford's brigades, and when Curtis learned this he ordered Sanborn to move on as quickly as possible, fearing that Blunt might overtake the enemy with insufficient force at his disposal. McNeil was also directed to follow as soon as he was able. As Blunt approached Newtonia he found Price encamped in the timber south of the town. The rebels, when they saw Blunt coming up, hastily broke camp and began to move out, deploying Shelby's and part of Fagan's divisions to cover their withdrawal. Blunt's attack against this superior force nearly ended in disaster, but near sundown, after the fight had been underway for almost two hours, he was reinforced by Sanborn's brigade. This turned the tide and the enemy retreated.

By midafternoon, October 29, Blunt was ready to resume the pursuit, but that morning Curtis received a message from Pleasonton that he had been instructed by Rosecrans to send Generals San-

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 314, 338, 342, 504-507, 577.

born and McNeil to their home districts and to lead the other brigades of his command to Warrensburg. This left Curtis with only the troops of Blunt's division, less than 1,000 men, and he therefore instructed Blunt to abandon the pursuit. Curtis was greatly disappointed at this inconclusive end to the campaign, and was therefore pleased to receive a message from Halleck stating that General Grant desired the pursuit of Price to continue to the Arkansas river. Since this instruction overruled Rosecrans' earlier order, Curtis at once sent messengers to each of the retiring brigades to recall them. On October 31 he moved toward Cassville and next day he was joined by Benteen and his brigade. With this force he continued to the vicinity of Pea Ridge, Ark., and then south to Fayetteville, arriving there November 4. Thereafter he marched south to the Arkansas river, only to find that Price had already crossed. On November 8 he issued the final order of the campaign, dismissing the troops who still remained with him and thanking them for their loyal and successful service.⁴⁴

Conflicting statements and over-enthusiastic reports of commanding officers make it difficult to evaluate satisfactorily the results of the Price raid. Obviously Price did not succeed in accomplishing the military objectives set forth in Kirby Smith's order: the seizure of St. Louis and its supplies and stores. He was unable to capture Jefferson City, his secondary objective. He failed signally to achieve his political goal of revolutionizing Missouri by overthrowing the pro-Union administration and installing a Confederate government with Thomas Reynolds as governor. In Kansas he failed to inflict damage of any tactical significance as he retreated. Finally, he failed to influence the result of the national elections against Lincoln. On the other hand, he claimed that he captured and paroled more than 3,000 Federal officers and men, seized large quantities of supplies and stores of all kinds, destroyed many miles of railroads and burned depots and bridges, all this property amounting to not less than \$10,000,000 in value, and added at least 5,000 new recruits to the Southern armies. His losses he put at about 1,000 prisoners, 10 pieces of artillery, 1,000 small arms, and two stand of colors. He failed to mention the hundreds of wagons and horses and the tons of ammunition and other supplies and contraband which he was forced to abandon or destroy during his retreat.⁴⁵

General Shelby, probably Price's most capable and effective division commander, also was inclined, not unnaturally, to put the best

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 314, 392, 507-518, 577, 578.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 640.

possible face on the incidents and outcome of the campaign. In his official report he found no difficulty, for example, in describing the battle of Newtonia as "another beautiful victory" for the Confederate arms when it should more accurately be classed as another successful withdrawal. Shelby was a romantic who found emotional release in the tensions of battle and who gloried in the clash of forces. During the Confederate retreats down the Kansas-Missouri line, and especially following the battle of Mine creek, the Southern troops were worn-out, ragged, half-starved, and intent only on getting away as rapidly as possible. Yet Shelby could describe one rear guard action in these words:

The fate of the army hung upon the result, and our very existence tottered and tossed in the smoke of the strife. The red sun looked down upon the scene, and the redder clouds floated away with angry, sullen glare. Slowly, slowly my old brigade was melting away. The high-toned and chivalric Dobbin, formed on my right, stood by me in all that fiery storm, and Elliott's and Gordon's voices sounded high above the rage of the conflict: "My merry men, fight on."⁴⁶

Criticisms of the Confederate plans and tactics were directed at Price personally and not against his subordinate commanders. After the raid it was said that Kirby Smith himself considered Price "as a military man 'absolutely good for nothing.'" Shelby, according to William E. Connelley, had a poor opinion of Price as a commander and agreed with the comment of Maj. John N. Edwards that Price had "the roar of a lion and the spring of a guinea-pig." However, Shelby added, in Missouri, where Price was highly esteemed and respected, it was treason to say so, and Shelby himself had a high opinion of Price as a patriot and a gentleman.⁴⁷ One of Price's chief military shortcomings, was his ignorance of cavalry tactics. He concentrated on supply problems as an infantry commander would and was reluctant to live off the country. He failed to realize the importance of mobility and attached undue importance to saving his train. He conducted a retreat "that one might expect of a worn-out infantry column" instead of a rapidly moving cavalry force and allowed his units to melt away by desertion.⁴⁸

A most scathing attack on Price was made immediately after the raid by Thomas C. Reynolds, recognized by the Confederacy as the governor of Missouri, in an open letter dated at Marshall, Tex.,

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 660, 661; Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 351, 352; Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 10. S. J. Crawford, *op. cit.*, p. 167, later commented on this description that it was indeed a fateful hour for Shelby, and the fate of his army did hang upon the result. However, he said, "nobody was 'tossed in the smoke' of battle, and nobody on our side, in so far as I ever heard, was either killed, wounded, or turned up missing. It was simply a lively skirmish."

47. Statement of William E. Connelley, September 19, 1908, in "Connelley Papers," Manuscript division, Kansas State Historical Society.

48. Oates, *op. cit.*, pp. 151, 153.

December 17, 1864, and printed in the *Marshall Texas Republican* on December 23. Reynolds was ostensibly defending Marmaduke and Cabell against charges of drunkenness but actually was bitterly denouncing Price for ineptness, dilatoriness, confusion, ignorance, timidity, lack of leadership, somnolence, lack of discipline, and almost every other failure of command that can be imagined.

With reference to the battle of Mine creek, Reynolds had this to say:

All these causes, and many others . . . had visibly affected the tone, spirits and efficiency of the troops. Military men had forebodings of disaster to an army that General Price's mismanagement had converted into an escort for a caravan; God-fearing men trembled lest . . . some thunderbolt of calamity should fall upon our arms.

It did fall, and like a thunderbolt.

As the army left the Osage or Marais des Cygnes, Marmaduke's division and Fagan's were in the rear of the train, Tyler's brigade guarded it, Shelby's division was in the advance. A force of Federal cavalry, estimated by most who fought with it at twenty-five hundred, and without artillery closely followed us. To gain time for the enormous train to pass on safely, it was deemed necessary to form rapidly, and, without dismounting receive the attack; the ground was unfavorable, but the alternative was to sacrifice the rear of the petted but detested train. The two divisions were mainly the same heroic Arkansans and Missourians, well disposed and readily disciplined, who had, under the immediate direction of their own officers, aided in driving the well trained troops of Steele from the Washita valley; but under General Price's direct command they had become seriously demoralized. The enemy, not mounted riflemen but real cavalry using the saber, charged our lines. It matters little to inquire which company or regiment first gave way; the whole six large brigades, were in a few minutes utterly routed, losing all their cannon, Marmaduke, Cabell, Slemmons and Jeffers were captured, "standing with the last of their troops;" Fagan, almost surrounded, escaped by sheer luck; Clark owed his safety to his cool intrepidity and his saber. . . .

Seated in his ambulance, in which he had remained most if not all of that morning, at the head of the train, General Price was six or eight miles off when all this happened. Cabell had informed him the night before that the enemy was actually attacking our rear; he believed that experienced officer mistaken. Marmaduke had sent him word that morning that about three thousand Federal cavalry threatened our rear; he thought that Marmaduke, having called on Fagan for support, could manage them. After a day's march of only sixteen miles the army was ordered, to the general astonishment, to go into camp on the Little Osage, and had already commenced doing so, when news of the rout reached General Price. He sent for Shelby and besought that clear-headed and heroic young general to "save the army."

And Shelby did it. Like a lion in the path of the triumphant Federals, he gathered around him his two brigades, depleted in previous successive fights, harassed and weary, but still defiant. . . .

Price replied to these charges with a terse comment in the *Shreveport (La.) News*, January 10, 1865, which concluded: "So far as the

communication pays tribute to the gallantry displayed by the officers and soldiers engaged in that expedition, I heartily concur in it. So far as it relates to myself, however, I pronounce it to be a tissue of falsehoods."⁴⁹

Price requested a full investigation by a court-martial but instead was granted a court of inquiry "to investigate the facts and circumstances connected with the recent Missouri expedition." The court was appointed by General Smith on March 8, 1865, and convened April 21 at Shreveport. Hearings were held until May 3, but no accusers appeared and Reynolds, though invited, refused to testify. The end of the war brought the deliberations to an end and no judgment was ever handed down.⁵⁰

On the Union side there were equally severe criticisms of the conduct of the campaign. A Kansas newspaper, commenting on Price's escape across the Arkansas river, said:

It is humiliating in the extreme to think that this hoary headed miscreant should make such a successful raid as he accomplished, with so little loss, comparatively. Some terribly criminal negligence on the part of some of our Generals has been manifested during this great Price excursion. We are almost tempted to proclaim that the officials who are responsible for Price's escape are as deserving of the rope as old Price himself. We believe that Gen. Curtis and his command did all that could be performed toward giving the old sinner his dues; and had he (Gen. Curtis,) met with adequate and even the available co-operation from the other departments that he ought to have received, the laxative Missourian and all his followers might have been bagged."⁵¹

Another newspaper, more favorable toward other commanders, wrote: "To Gen. Pleasanton [*sic*] we owe our gratitude. Through swift and tiresome marches he approached the enemy, caught him, flung his flying squadrons on him. . . . Gen. Curtis, for whom we have had no admiration did his part well. This we concede to him. Everything that he could do to contribute to our salvation, we learn that he did so. . . ." ⁵²

Samuel J. Crawford, who said of Price that he "had no conception of the formation of a line of battle, nor did he know how to handle troops in action," also said that three times in three days the Southern army had been trapped and each time had been allowed to escape. At the end, he remarked, instead of moving into Fort Scott, Curtis, Blunt, and Pleasanton "should have moved around Price on the east and halted long enough for him to surrender.

49. Reynolds' letter is printed in its entirety, with Price's reply and a rebuttal by Reynolds, in Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 467-474.

50. Official Records, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 701-729; Rea, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-158.

51. Kansas Patriot, Burlington, November 19, 1864.

52. Kansas State Journal, Lawrence, October 27, 1864.

That would have saved the Generals a deal of trouble and their tired troops and jaded horses untold hardships."⁵³

General Steele, commanding the Department of Arkansas, was not involved in the campaign against Price and for that very reason was castigated by General Halleck, who complained that he "neither opposed the crossing of the Arkansas River by Price and Shelby, nor sent any forces in pursuit of them. . . ." ⁵⁴ General Grant later removed both Steele and Rosecrans for what he considered their incompetence in allowing Price to maneuver almost at will through Arkansas and Missouri, and Curtis was transferred to the Department of the Northwest. Rosecrans and his staff were reported to hold Curtis in low esteem, calling him a bungler and a "regular old muddle-head" and sometimes going so far as to ignore his orders. Curtis and Pleasonton also differed sharply as to strategy. Curtis wished to drive Price south, out of Kansas and Missouri and into the Arkansas hills where provisions for his troops and forage for his animals was scarce or nonexistent, and thus by depriving him of the necessities force his army to disband. Pleasonton on the other hand wanted to overtake and crush Price, although—to compound the confusion—it was also reported that General Smith, commanding the infantry, five times sent orders to Pleasonton that he must attack and bring Price to bay so that the infantry could close with him, and the fifth time threatened to send Pleasonton to the rear if he failed to obey.

There were errors on the part of subordinate commanders, too. McNeil, ordered by Pleasonton to move his brigade at full speed to Little Santa Fe, so as to intercept Price as he retreated after the battle of Westport, delayed so long that Price made good his escape. If McNeil had accomplished his mission it might well have led to Price's complete destruction. At Newtonia Blunt attacked the Southern army with only two regiments, the Second Colorado and the 16th Kansas, aided by two sections of artillery. Jennison and his brigade came up to help, but the attack was foolhardy and Blunt was saved only by the arrival of Sanborn. One critic has written that Blunt's action would hardly have been excusable in a captain commanding a company, much less a major general commanding a division. Blunt's own story, written in 1866, is a strong defense of his conduct during the campaign, and indeed throughout the four

53. Crawford, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-173.

54. Halleck to Maj. Gen. E. R. S. Canby, October 17, 1864, in *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 4, p. 24.

years of his military service, largely at the expense of Curtis and other ranking officers with whom he was associated.⁵⁵

One source of antagonism between Curtis and Pleasonton toward the end of the campaign was Curtis' order to his provost marshal to take charge of the prisoners, artillery and other spoils captured at Mine creek and transport them to Leavenworth. This order, issued at Fort Scott on October 25, had the effect of antagonizing some of the officers of Pleasonton's department, who interpreted it as meaning that credit for the victory was being taken from his troops and given instead to the Kansas department which had taken no part in the actual fighting. It was undoubtedly a factor in Pleasonton's decision to withdraw from the campaign at that point. Curtis himself, in his report, disclaimed any interest in where the prisoners were taken, stating merely his preference that "they should stop at Leavenworth, as an exchange will probably be made and delivery through Arkansas may be most convenient and preferable." Pleasonton concurred in Curtis' wishes in a letter of October 27 and said that he would furnish Curtis' provost marshal with an adequate guard. To this extent, at least, the two generals were in accord, but too many indications of disagreement are on record to dismiss the whole incident as without significance.⁵⁶

The battle of Mine creek was the most important Civil War battle fought in Kansas. Including the supporting troops, the numbers involved were about 25,000. Its major significance, in addition to the prisoners, guns and other material captured, was that Price was forced out of Kansas and was unable to carry out his planned attack on Fort Scott. It was the conclusive battle of the Price raid, after Westport, and it was the last significant battle of the Civil War, with the possible exception of Newtonia, in the trans-Mississippi area.

55. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 546-550; pt. 4, pp. 126, 673, 674, 811; v. 48, pt. 1, pp. 656, 780; Castled, *op. cit.*, p. 143; James G. Blunt, "General Blunt's Account of His Civil War Experiences," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, v. 1 (May, 1932), pp. 211-263.

56. *Official Records*, Series I, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 338-340, 505-507.