

# McLain's Battery and Price's 1864 Invasion: A Letter from Lt. Caleb S. Burdsal, Jr.

Edited by Bryce A. Suderow

## INTRODUCTION

THE FOLLOWING letter, written by Lt. Caleb S. Burdsal, Jr., of McLain's Independent Colorado Battery<sup>1</sup> to his father in Denver, Colorado, sheds new light on the military service of the battery during the 1864 Missouri invasion<sup>2</sup> by Maj. Gen. Sterling Price.<sup>3</sup> Lieutenant Burdsal was the son of the well-known Prof. Caleb S. Burdsal of Denver, a man equally gifted in the fields of mineralogy, surgery, and pharmaceuticals.<sup>4</sup> The young lieutenant joined McLain's battery on September 18, 1862, at the age of twenty-two and served with the battery until it was disbanded. He was mustered out as a second lieutenant on August 31, 1865, at Fort Leavenworth.<sup>5</sup>

When news of Price's invasion reached Kansas, the scattered sections of McLain's battery were recalled from Lawrence and Fort

Larned. They concentrated at Hickman Mills, Missouri, with the rest of Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis's<sup>6</sup> Union forces who had assembled there to block General Price and his force of nearly twelve thousand Confederate cavalymen. Price had invaded Missouri on September 19, his objectives being to divert Union troops from east of the Mississippi, to relieve pressure on Hood's and Lee's armies, and to permanently reoccupy the state. An initial setback at Pilot Knob in southeast central Missouri, and his failure to move quickly, prevented Price from capturing either St. Louis or Jefferson City, and he was soon forced to retreat westward through Missouri toward Kansas,<sup>7</sup> pursued by six thousand Union cavalymen under Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton.<sup>8</sup> Knowing he could not stay in Missouri, Price changed his plans. His goal now was to enter Kansas, capture Forts Leavenworth and Scott, and to then retreat through Kansas to Arkansas, devastating Kansas as he traveled southward.

Fortunately for the citizens of Kansas, Price was encumbered by a huge wagon train full of plunder,<sup>9</sup> and his army did not approach the

1. Organized at Denver on December 15, 1862, Capt. William D. McLain's Independent Colorado Battery saw service against Indians in Colorado and Kansas in 1863 and 1864. The battery was ordered to the District of Kansas in June 1864 and was at Fort Larned, District of South Kansas, until August of that year. Ordered to Lawrence on August 9, it was later stationed at Paola until October 1864. Following action against Price's Missouri invasion, McLain's battery returned to Paola until May 1865 and was ordered to Fort Scott and Fort Gibson for duty in the District of North Kansas until August. The battery was mustered out on August 31, 1865.—Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines: The Publishing Co., 1908), p. 1005.

2. For detailed descriptions of the 1864 Missouri invasion, see Howard N. Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864* (Kansas City: Westport Historical Society, 1964); Richard J. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas and the Campaign of the Army of the Border* (Chicago: Church and Goodman, 1865); Lumir F. Buresh, *October 25th and the Battle of Mine Creek* (Kansas City: Lowell Press, 1977). Bryce A. Suderow, "The Battle of Pilot Knob, Missouri, September 27, 1864" (Master's thesis, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, Cal., 1982), and *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), ser. 1, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 303-729.

3. A former legislator, congressman, and governor of Missouri, Maj. Gen. Sterling Price had earlier gained a reputation as a military leader in the Mexican War. The "hero of Lexington" in 1861, he had commanded Missouri troops at Wilson's Creek and at Pea Ridge, but by late 1864, when he began his last raid into Missouri, he was no longer the "strikingly handsome" general "erect and of a commanding presence" that he had been in 1861. At fifty-five years old he was "fat and flabby, weighing very nearly three hundred pounds. . . . His great weight . . . compelled him to lead his troops in a four-mule carriage driven by a negro boy."—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 12-13.

4. For a brief sketch of Professor Burdsal, see his obituary in the *Denver Republican*, April 5, 1888.

5. For Lt. Burdsal's military records, see Civil War service record, book 0, p. 8, in 7, Colorado Division of State Archives and Public Records, Denver.

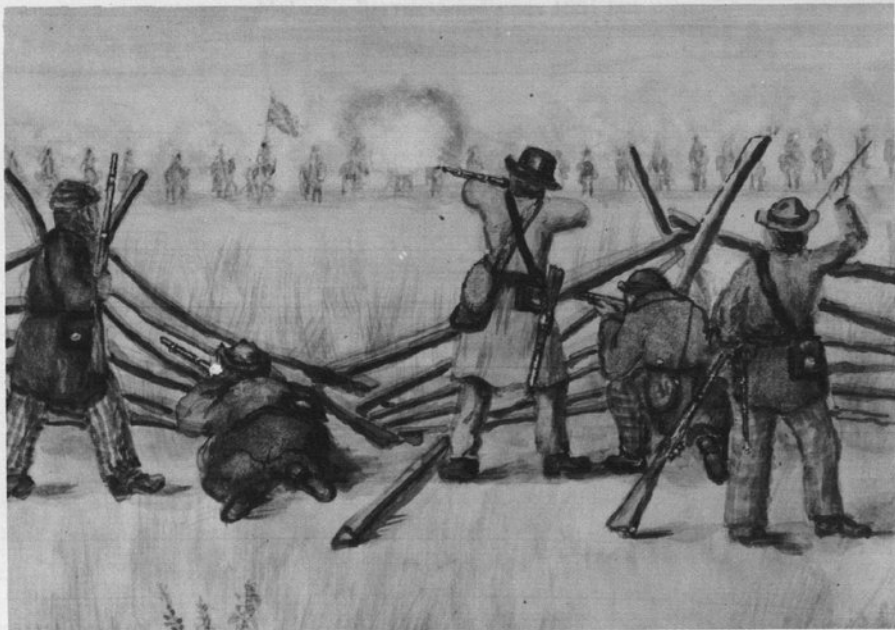
6. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1831, Maj. Gen. Samuel Ryan Curtis served in the army for a brief time on the frontier and in the Mexican War. When the Civil War erupted he reentered the military service as a colonel and rose rapidly in position. On January 1, 1864, he was placed in command of the Department of Kansas, which comprised the districts of Colorado, Nebraska, North Kansas, South Kansas, and Upper Arkansas.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, p. 35; George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, 1802-1840* (New York: James Miller, 1879), v. 1, pp. 395-396.

7. For further details on Price's September invasion into Missouri and his defeat at Pilot Knob, see Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 23-27; Albert Castel, "War and Politics: The Price Raid of 1864," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Topeka, v. 24, no. 2 (Summer, 1958), p. 131.

8. An 1844 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton was the commander of the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac from June 1863 to July 1864 before being transferred to Missouri. In 1865 he was promoted from major general to brevet brigadier general "For Gallant and Meritorious Services During the Campaign Against . . . General Price, in Missouri."—Cullum, *Biographical Register, 1841-1867*, v. 2, pp. 103-104.

9. When Price entered Missouri in September his forces had "300 not-too-full wagons." When the wagon train reached Westport on October 23, it had grown to 500 wagons, all well filled.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, p. 26.





Missouri-Kansas border until mid-October. By that time the Kansas militia had been armed and had joined the state's regular troops in the field. By October 15 the entire force of fifteen thousand men—designated the Army of the Border by General Curtis, its commander—was concentrated at Hickman Mills.<sup>10</sup> The army was divided into two divisions. The first, consisting largely of regular troops, was under Maj. Gen. James G. Blunt, and the second, composed entirely of militia, was commanded by Maj. Gen. George Deitzler.<sup>11</sup> Blunt's division did most of the fighting in the campaign and was divided into four brigades: the First Brigade under the command of Col. Charles R.

Jennison, the Second Brigade commanded by Col. Thomas Moonlight, the Third Brigade under Col. Charles W. Blair, and the Fourth Brigade commanded by Col. James H. Ford.<sup>12</sup> Lt. Caleb S. Burdsal and McLain's battery

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38, 40, 43; Castel, "War and Politics: The Price Raid of 1864," pp. 132-134.

For insight into the procedure and the difficulty General Curtis had in securing orders from Kansas Gov. Thomas Carney to call out the state militia, see *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 465, 468-469.

11. A medical doctor by profession, Maj. Gen. James Gilpatrick Blunt was perhaps the most aggressive combat soldier in the Missouri-Arkansas theater. He had defeated Confederates in a number of engagements in 1862 and 1863, and he continued his fine record during Price's 1864 invasion.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 41-42; *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), v. 2, pp. 399-400.

An antislavery leader in Kansas, George Washington Deitzler was active in organizing the first regiment of Kansas volunteers and was appointed its colonel. He was later promoted to the rank of brigadier general and, during the Price invasion, was placed in command of the entire state militia with a rank of major general.—*Dictionary of American Biography* (1930), v. 5, pp. 201-202.

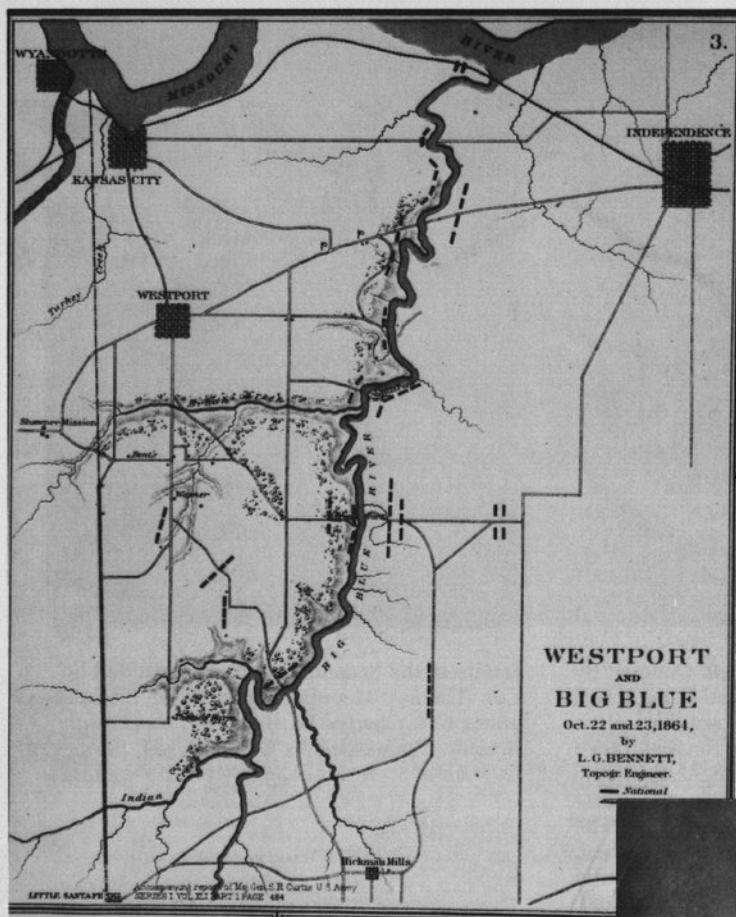
12. *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 572, 575.  
Col. Charles R. Jennison had fought in Kansas before the Civil War as a member of the antislavery faction. His bitter hatred for Missourians and his brutal treatment of civilians in 1861 had made him an object of fear on the border. His brigade consisted of the Fifteenth Kansas Cavalry, the Third Wisconsin Cavalry, and a battery of five mountain howitzers.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 43-44, 139; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, p. 63; Stephen Z. Starr, *Jennison's Jayhawkers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), pp. 31-42.

Col. Thomas Moonlight was a veteran fighter with two years' experience of fighting in the Missouri-Arkansas theater. His brigade was composed of the Eleventh Kansas Cavalry, companies L and M of the Fifth Kansas Cavalry, companies A and D of the Sixteenth Kansas Cavalry, and a battery of four howitzers manned by Company E of the Eleventh.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 44, 139; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, p. 63; Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), v. 1, p. 720.

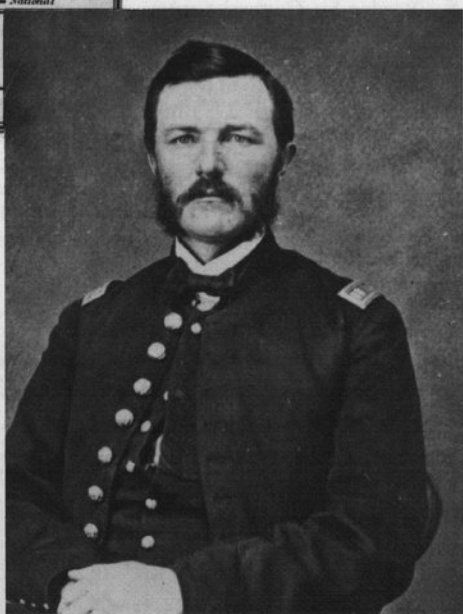
Col. Charles White Blair was widely respected because of his reputation as a man who liked to fight. He had been present at the Battle of Wilson's Creek as a member of the Second Kansas Infantry. His brigade consisted of the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Tenth, and Nineteenth Kansas state militia, Company E of the Fourteenth Kansas Cavalry, Capt. John Wilson's Independent Scouts, the Ninth Wisconsin Battery, and the Second Kansas State Artillery.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 44, 139-140; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, pp. 63-64; Heitman, *Historical Register*, v. 1, p. 222.

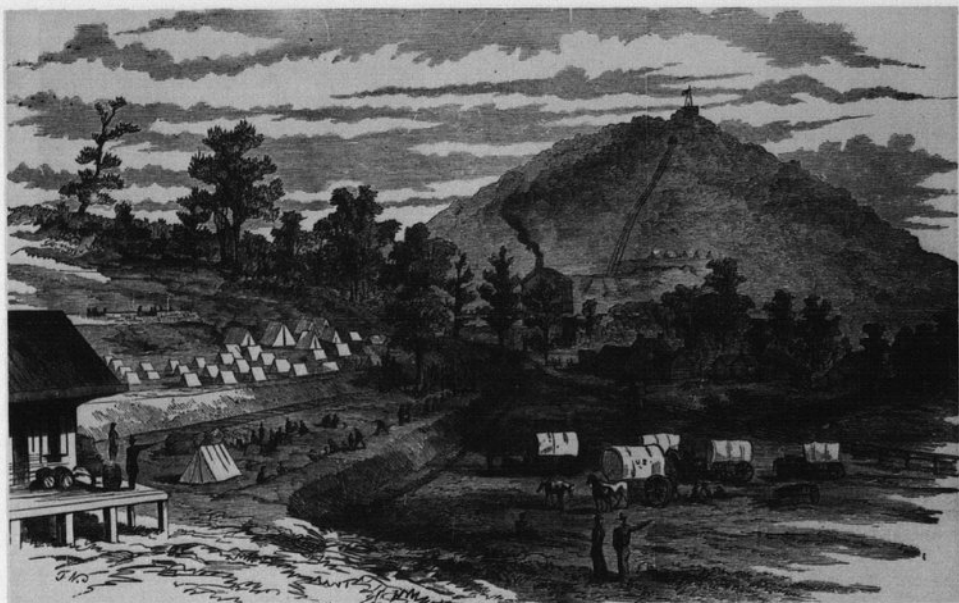
Col. James Hobart Ford had fought against the Confederates during their 1862 invasion of New Mexico and in Arkansas and Missouri in 1863 and 1864. His brigade consisted of the Second Colorado Cavalry, the Sixteenth Kansas Cavalry, and McLain's Colorado Battery.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 59-60; Heitman, *Historical Register*, v. 1, p. 429.





Capt. William D. McLain, *right*, commanded the Independent Colorado Battery in which Lt. Caleb S. Burdsal, Jr., served from 1862 to 1865. Photograph reproduced *courtesy* Colorado Historical Society. The above map, from the *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, shows the Big Blue River with federal lines on the west and the Confederate units on the east. Shown at the bottom is Hickman Mills, where the Union's Army of the Border, including McLain's battery, was concentrated by mid-October 1864.





Pilot Knob, a Union fort in southeast Missouri, was attacked by Price on September 27. Although the Confederates heavily outnumbered the garrison, the defenders repulsed the assault. However, the Union sustained about two hundred casualties, a loss that the small garrison could ill afford. That night the fort was evacuated, the men slipping through Price's camps and escaping to fight again at Leasburg. The delaying action was a serious setback for the Confederate raiders. This sketch of the Pilot Knob fortifications and entrenchments is reproduced from the *Official and Illustrated War Record* by Marcus J. Wright (Washington: N.p., 1899).

were originally a part of Blair's brigade but were soon transferred to Ford's brigade.

Curtis's aim was to delay Price on the Kansas border long enough for Pleasonton to attack Price's rear. He hoped that the two Union armies would then trap and annihilate Price's entire army. Fighting between the Curtis and Price forces began on October 19 when Blunt fought a skirmish at Lexington, Missouri, to learn the strength of Price's army. The Union cavalymen fell back to the Little Blue River and there, on October 21, Blunt sought to delay Price until Pleasonton could attack Price's rear. After bitter fighting, the Union force was driven west through Independence to the Big Blue River. At the Big Blue on October 22 Curtis's entire army fought from behind strong entrenchments, but Price flanked the position and forced Curtis's troops to retire to Kansas City, routing Grant's militia brigade and nearly destroying one of Grant's

regiments, the Second Kansas State Militia.<sup>13</sup> That same day, Pleasonton overpowered a portion of Price's rear guard under Gen. James F. Fagan at Independence and captured two cannon. Nightfall and stiffening resistance halted Pleasonton's advance.<sup>14</sup>

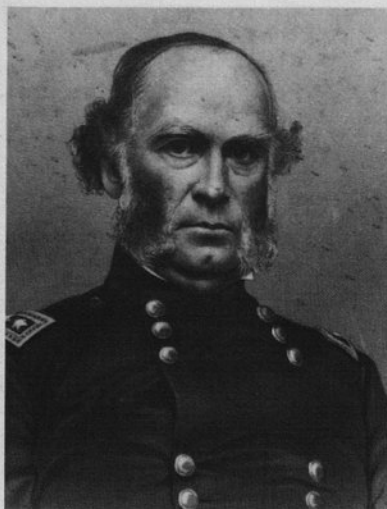
On October 22 Brig. Gen. Joseph Shelby,<sup>15</sup>

13. For detailed descriptions of the battles of Lexington, the Little Blue, and the Big Blue that took place October 19 to October 21, see Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 51-53, 56-67, 77-85; Castel, "War and Politics: The Price Raid of 1864," pp. 77-85.

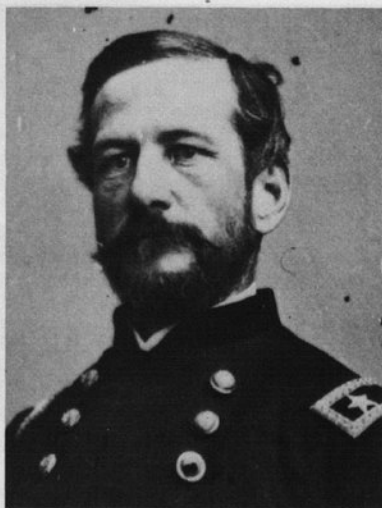
14. *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, v. 41, pt. 1, p. 340.

Maj. Gen. James Fleming Fagan had seen service in the Mexican War and in 1861 was commissioned colonel of the First Arkansas Infantry. He distinguished himself at the battle of Shiloh and later at Prairie Grove, defeating Union forces. Along with Generals Marmaduke and Shelby, Maj. Gen. Fagan was one of the three division commanders of Price's Army of the Missouri.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, p. 19.

15. Brig. Gen. Joseph Orville Shelby entered the Confederate army as a captain and fought with distinction at Carthage, Lexington, Wilson's Creek, and Pea Ridge. He organized his famous Iron Brigade, which was considered to be "the best combat outfit in Price's army." He is credited with having saved Price's forces from complete destruction at Westport.—*Ibid.*, p. 20.

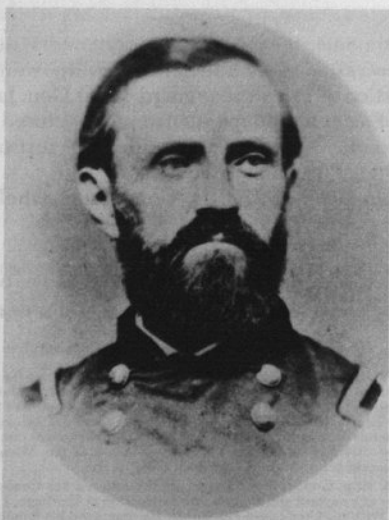


Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis  
(1807-1866)



Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton  
(1824-1897)

### *Union generals repulsed the invasion*

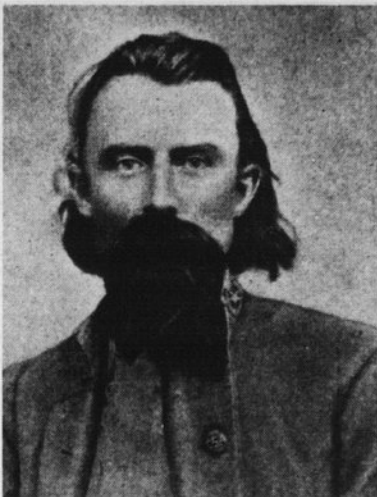


Maj. Gen. George Deitzler  
(1826-1884)

Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis commanded the Department of Kansas, which comprised the districts of Colorado, Nebraska, North Kansas, South Kansas, and Upper Arkansas.

Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton, formerly commander of the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, pursued Price with six thousand Union cavalymen. Photograph reproduced courtesy National Archives (negative no. 111-B-1886).

Maj. Gen. George Deitzler organized the first regiment of Kansas volunteers and during the Price invasion was placed in command of the entire state militia.



Brig. Gen. Joseph Shelby  
(1830-1897)



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

### *Price's generals were forced to retreat*

Brig. Gen. Joseph Shelby, considered the best of Price's three division commanders, saved the Army of Missouri from complete destruction at Westport. Photograph reproduced *courtesy* State Historical Society of Missouri.

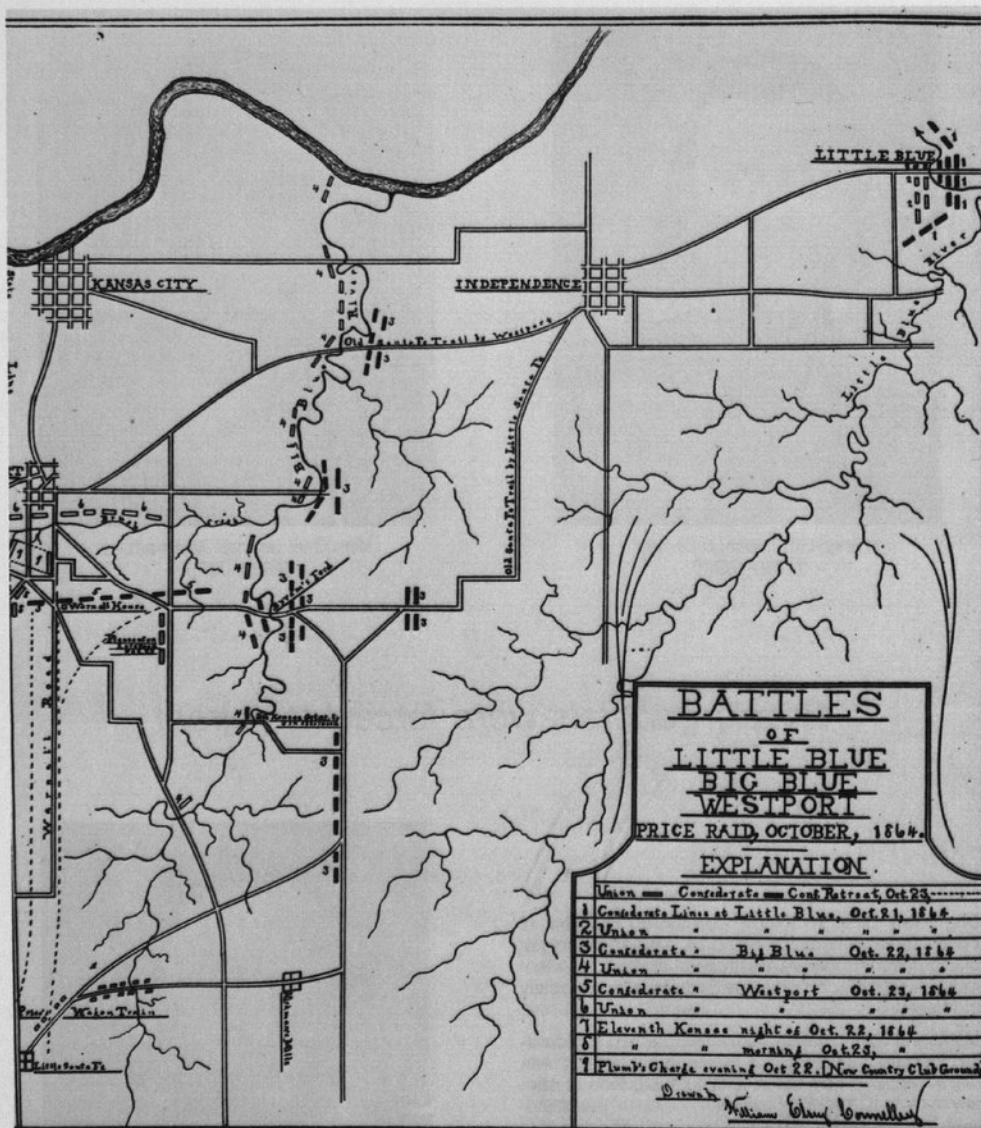
Maj. Gen. John S. Marmaduke had earned a reputation for hard fighting, but at Westport his division was the first to give way before the pursuing federal cavalry.

Maj. Gen. James F. Fagan, who commanded a division made up largely of cavalry from his native Arkansas, had distinguished himself at the battle of Shiloh. Photograph reproduced *courtesy* National Archives (negative no. 111-BA-1671).



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



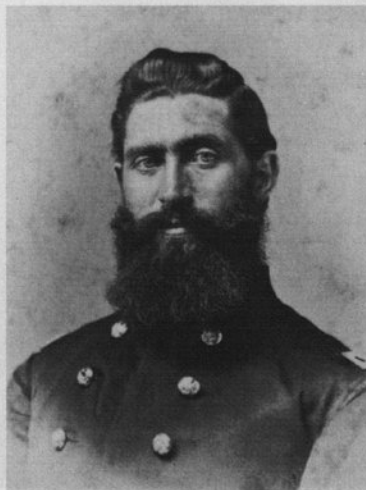
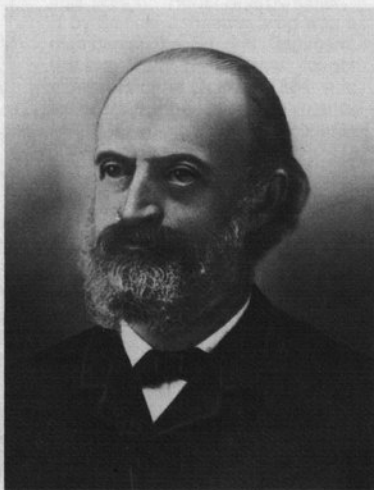


An advance detachment of Blunt's division fought a skirmish with Price's force at Lexington, Missouri, on October 19 to learn the strength of the Confederate army. The Union cavalymen fell back to the Little Blue River, where they fought a delaying action on October 21. Again they retreated in good order through Independence and on to the Big Blue, where Curtis's entire army had prepared to make a stand behind trenches and barricades along the river. When Price attacked at midday on October 22, he broke through the Union defenses held by Jennison's brigade with ease, and Curtis's army was forced to fall back to Westport. The same day, however, Pleasonton engaged Price's rear guard under Marmaduke, inflicting heavy losses. On October 23 at Westport Price tried to hold Blunt and Pleasonton at bay while he sent his wagon train of plunder south. The battle was a Confederate defeat, but Shelby's brilliant action enabled Price to escape with his army intact. This map of the battles of the Little Blue, Big Blue, and Westport is reproduced from *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans*, v. 2, by William E. Connelley (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1918).





Gen. James G. Blunt (1826-1881), *above left*, the only major general from Kansas, commanded a division in Curtis's Army of the Border, which consisted largely of regular troops. His division, which saw severe fighting during the campaign, was divided into four brigades. Three of the brigade commanders were Col. Charles R. Jennison (1834-1884), *above right*; Col. Charles W. Blair (1829-1899), *below left*; and Col. Thomas Moonlight (1833-1899), *below right*.



Price's best division commander, urged him to abandon his huge and cumbersome wagon train—it now contained four hundred wagons—and to retreat before he was trapped. Price refused to consider Shelby's plan, realizing that he had failed to carry out any of his objectives and knowing that the wagonload of plunder was his only tangible proof of success. Because of this, Price fought a bloody and unnecessary battle on October 23. He tried to hold Blunt and Pleasonton at bay while he

sent the wagon train south. Shelby attacked Blunt at Westport, while Gen. John Marmaduke's<sup>16</sup> division kept Pleasonton from crossing the Big Blue. After hard fighting, Blunt and a portion of Deitzler's militia counterattacked against Shelby, just as Pleasonton

16. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy in 1857, Maj. Gen. John Sappington Marmaduke came from an aristocratic Missouri family. He entered the Confederate army as colonel of the Third Missouri Cavalry and earned a reputation for hard fighting during his raids into Arkansas and Missouri.—*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.



Maj. James Nelson Smith (1837-1864), *left*, of the Second Colorado Cavalry, was killed at the battle of the Little Blue October 21, 1864. The unidentified trooper, *above*, served with the Second Colorado volunteers, a unit that was part of Blunt's division.

drove Marmaduke from the field. Pleasonton and Blunt then combined forces and forced Shelby to flee. The battle of Westport was a Confederate defeat, but Shelby's brilliant and stubborn fight enabled Price to escape with an intact army.<sup>17</sup>

Curtis took command of the combined Union armies and pursued Price on October 23 and 24. For the first time during the campaign, Price made good time, and on the morning of October 25, thinking he had outdistanced his pursuers, he divided his army into two parts. He rode out with Shelby's crack division planning to capture Fort Scott, an important nearby Union post. He left Fagan's and Marmaduke's divisions to guard the wagon train and to follow in his path.

A portion of Price's wagon train was trapped

17. For detailed information on the battle of Westport, see *ibid.*, pp. 91-124; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, pp. 147-167.

at midmorning north of Mine Creek when an overturned wagon blocked the creek's main ford. At this critical moment, one of Pleasonton's Union cavalry brigades came into sight. General Marmaduke, who had command of the rear guard, recrossed the creek with his and Fagan's divisions and tried to make a stand with his back to the water. Reinforced by a second Union cavalry brigade, Pleasonton's troopers attacked and cut the Confederates to pieces.<sup>18</sup> Price lost eight cannon and five hundred men captured. That night he burned his wagon train and hurriedly left Kansas.

Although a severe engagement occurred at Newtonia,<sup>19</sup> Missouri, on October 28, and al-

18. For further reports on the Battle of Mine Creek, see Lumir F. Buresh's informative *October 25th and the Battle of Mine Creek*, from which the details in this paragraph were taken. See, also, *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 341, 494-496, and Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 130-131.

19. For reports on the battle of Newtonia, see *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, v. 41, pt. 1, pp. 507-510.

This sketch, "Rebel Sharpshooter," is by Samuel J. Reader, who was a member of the Second Regiment, Kansas State Militia, and fought against Price in October 1864. It is included in the illustrated manuscript autobiography that Reader wrote many years later.





though Curtis pursued Price until November 8, Mine Creek proved to be the decisive battle of the campaign. Price was driven from the western border and eventually reached Texas in late November 1864.<sup>20</sup> The Army of the Border was quickly disbanded and Price's 1864 Missouri invasion passed into history.

#### THE LETTER

Lieutenant Burdsal's letter to his father appeared in the November 25, 1864, issue of the *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, which introduced it as follows: "FROM THE COLORADO SECOND. We are permitted to publish part of a private letter received here, containing a minute and interesting account of the brave action of the Second in the engagements with Price in Missouri."

20. Monnett, *Action Before Westport*, 1864, p. 138.

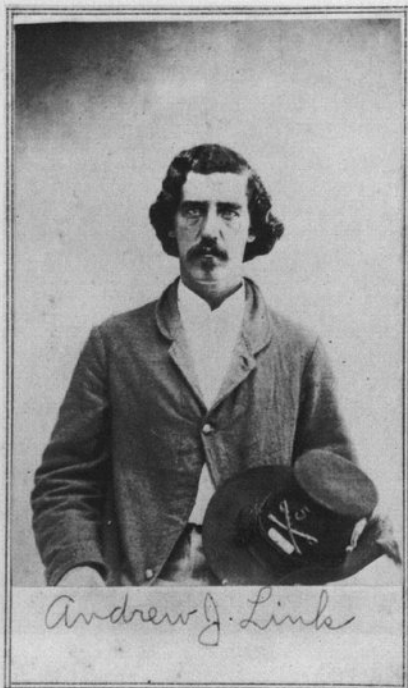
Fort Scott, Kansas  
Oct. 29, 1864

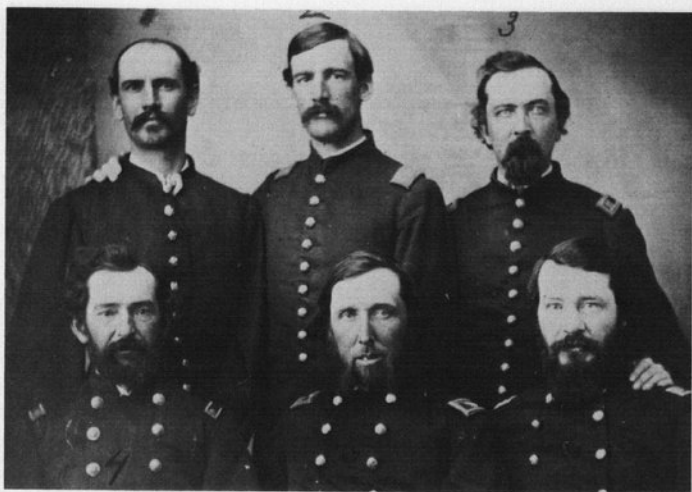
DEAR FATHER—

I remain here with one section of the Battery and the used up horses. I have been in three battles within four days. As you will want to know something of our march &c., I will give it from the time we left Paola. We received orders about midnight of the 11th to march at daylight for Hickman's Mills. We were joined by two regiments of Kansas militia and the 11th Kansas cavalry, Col. Moonlight. We camped about 4 P.M. at Aubrey, Kansas, where we were joined by another regiment of militia. We started again at 3 o'clock next morning, the 13th, and arrived at Hickman's Mills about 9 A.M., when we had the pleasure of meeting the Second Colorado. Charlie<sup>21</sup> was not there. I

21. Lt. Burdsal is referring to his brother, Q. M. Sgt. Charles W. Burdsal. Charlie joined Company E of the Second Colorado Infantry on June 7, 1862, at the age of twenty. He was promoted to sergeant after the regiment was converted into cavalry, forming the Second Colorado Cavalry. He served in Company C of that regiment until he was mustered out.—Civil War service record, book P, p. 145, ln. 1, Colorado State Archives.

Members of the Fifth Kansas Cavalry, of which Company L fought with Colonel Moonlight's second brigade, resisting the Confederate advance on the Little Blue River, on the Big Blue, and at Westport.





Col. James H. Ford, right, commanded one of the four brigades in General Blunt's division. Lieutenant Burdsal and McLain's battery, originally a part of Colonel Blair's brigade, were soon transferred to Ford's unit in October 1864. In addition to the Colorado battery, Ford's brigade then consisted of the Second Colorado and the Sixteenth Kansas Cavalry. Colonel Ford is among the six members of the Second Colorado, above (first row, center). Both photographs are reproduced courtesy Colorado Historical Society.



COL. JAMES H. FORD 2ND COLO. CAV.



Pvt. Samuel J. Reader, a Kansas militiaman, was captured October 22, 1864, in the fight at Mockbee farm south of Westport. The battle was one of the fiercest of the many scattered engagements that took place that day along the Big Blue River. Reader soon escaped, however, and many years later recorded the day's events in his illustrated manuscript autobiography. This watercolor sketch, "The Three Hundred 2nd Kansas State Militia Riding Into the Jaws of Death," is dated 1906.

heard he was at Kansas City. Troops continued to arrive all day and night during the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th and were sent on towards Independence. The Second was ordered to Independence the day we arrived, the 18th. We received orders (we had been assigned to Col. Blair's Brigade) to march. We passed through Westport, Missouri, and camped about six miles east of town at the Ford of the Blue, and about six miles from Independence. During the next day, the 19th, news came in that Gen. Blunt had engaged the enemy at Lexington and had to fall back. We commenced to clear the timber from the bluff which commanded the approach to the Ford, so as to have good range for our guns and to cover Blunt if too hotly pressed. On the morn of the 20th we received orders to march to Independence. We had been assigned to Col. Ford's Brigade of which the Second Regiment was a part.

At daylight of the 21st, our little army, composed of the 11th Kansas Cav., Col. Moonlight,

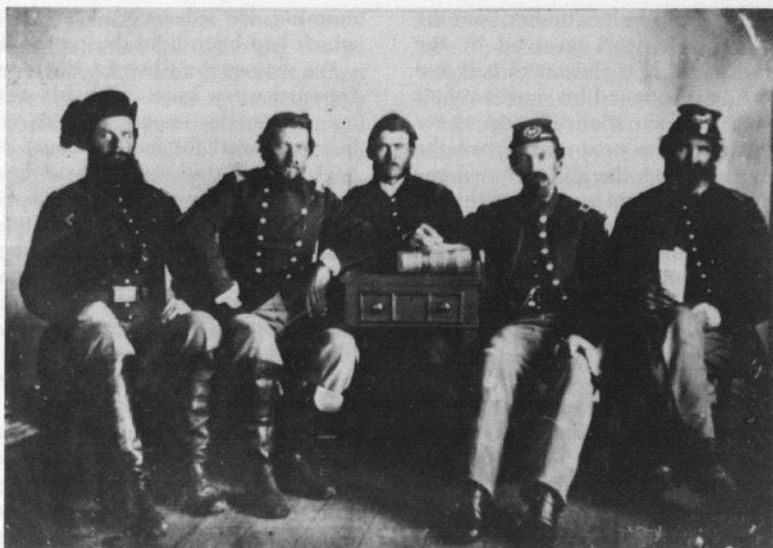
15th Kansas Cav., Col. Jennison, 16th Kansas Cav., Col. Walker,<sup>22</sup> 2d Colorado, Major Smith,<sup>23</sup> 3d Wisconsin Cav., Col. —,<sup>24</sup> and our battery, and three regiments of Militia—in all, about 4,000, under Gen. Blunt, marched out to embarrass the enemy's advance. During the morning I met Charlie, who looked as natural, but thinner than usual, and in good health. About five miles out the advance guard engaged the enemy at the second ford of the Blue. We were ordered up at a trot, came into battery, supported by the 2d, at about 800 yards from the ford; did not fire. Limbered up, and pressed on, coming into battery in an open

22. Lt. Col. Samuel Walker.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, p. 60; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, p. 67.

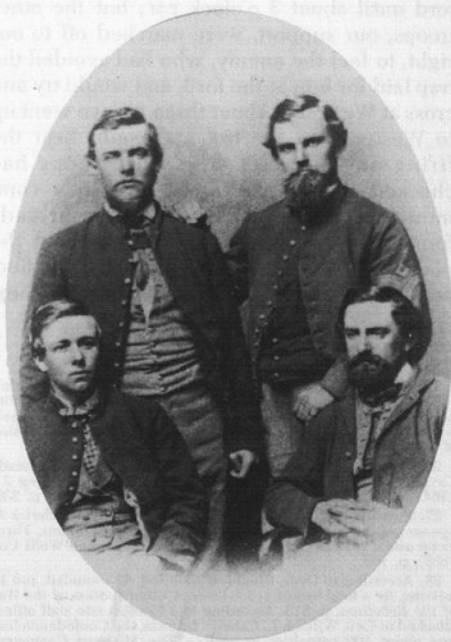
23. Maj. James Nelson Smith.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, p. 59; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, p. 67.

24. Lt. Burdsal is possibly referring here to Capt. Robert Carpenter, who was commanding the Third Wisconsin Cavalry battalion and was a part of Jennison's First Brigade.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, p. 44; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, p. 63; Paul B. Jenkins, *The Battle of Westport* (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1906), p. 166.





Members of the Eleventh Kansas volunteer cavalry, a unit of regular troops that fought in General Blunt's second brigade led by Col. Thomas Moonlight. The Eleventh Kansas was commanded by Lt. Col. Preston B. Plumb, who later represented Kansas in the U.S. Senate. On October 22 Colonel Plumb with four companies of the Eleventh Kansas drove back Shelby's brigade at the Big Blue and saved the town of Westport from capture. Moonlight later called it "one of the neatest and prettiest movements of the campaign."



space, on the edge of a belt of timber, near the Blue. Soon we were well received by the enemy in the shape of a shower of ball and shell. Lieut. Eayre<sup>25</sup> opened his guns on their battery, which he soon silenced, and as we learned afterward from prisoners, drove the men entirely away from the guns. The enemy pressed us pretty hard, and came up within 50 yards of our guns. We fired canister at them at short range, and drove them back. Our flanks were falling back and we limbered to the rear, took a position again, and let him have McLain's Pills at long range, but he was too strong for us—six to one! So he would drive us a few hundred yards, when we would form in line and give him another round, and check him. He drove us to Independence, and as his advance came up, we left the town—our rear skirmishing in the town as we left. We left about sundown, and camped at the joint fords of the Blue. We only had one hundred in our Company—Fred Daum was shot through the foot, Major Smith of the 2d was killed,<sup>26</sup> and Lieut. Spencer<sup>27</sup> wounded. Our loss in the whole command was not more than 100 killed and wounded.<sup>28</sup>

The next day, the 22d, we were kept at the ford until about 3 o'clock P.M.; but the other troops, our support, were marched off to our right, to feel the enemy, who had avoided the trap laid for him at the ford, and would try and cross at Westport. About three P.M. we went up to Westport on the trot and could hear the firing on the other side. Our troops had checked their advance. At five they commenced driving our troops: our brigade formed in the rear of Westport to hold the place, and at dark our company and the Second fell back to Kansas City. At three the next

morning we advanced again to Westport, which had been held during the night.

We crossed the Blue. Lt. Eayre was ordered forward up a lane, with his section, and opened on the enemy (our skirmishers had been engaged for half an hour). Word came back from Eayre that he was nearly out of ammunition. I was sent forward with my section and two caissons of ammunition to relieve him. I opened on the enemy at long range and did very good execution. A rebel battery came into position at my left, at a range of 1300 yards. I turned my guns on the battery, throwing shell into it pretty rapidly. We drove the enemy to a new position three times, dismounting one of his guns. This was the last we saw of the battery that day. Lt. Eayre in the meantime had replenished his ammunition and taken a position farther to the right. After silencing the rebel battery we commenced firing up the lane at a large column crossing and marching toward our right. We were doing such execution that they made a desperate charge on us. I had but time to give them one round of canister, when I was ordered to fall back. As I was limbering, our cavalry, the 15th Kansas and 2nd Colorado met their charge with a countercharge and drove them back.<sup>29</sup> The Captain then ordered Lt. Beach<sup>30</sup> up to the position I had occupied, and Lt. Eayre and I filled up our ammunition boxes. In that little round, with my two guns, we fired 128 rounds. Beach had to fall back, and likewise the whole battery fell back to another hill. We lay there near an hour. The artillery firing had all ceased, but volley after volley of carbine firing could be heard over in the woods. Then we were ordered to the front again at a trot. We came again into action to the right of our old position. We fired about 40 rounds, when the rebels fell back, but advanced again at a gallop and came into our battery. We broke their line

25. George S. Eayre was appointed first lieutenant in McLain's Independent Battery in 1862. After being removed for a disability he was re-mustered in as a first lieutenant in January 1864, again with McLain's battery.—Information from the Colorado Division of State Archives and Public Records, Denver.

26. James Nelson Smith, second major of the Second Colorado Cavalry, was killed at the battle of the Little Blue, October 21, 1864.—Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, p. 330.

27. Possibly Lt. Burdsal is referring here to 1st Lt. Frederick A. Spencer of the Second Colorado Cavalry.—Ellen Williams, *Three Years and a Half in the Army* (New York: Fowler and Wells Co., 1885), p. 169.

28. According to Dyer, Blunt lost 18 killed, 83 wounded, and 14 missing, for a total loss of 115.—Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, p. 813. According to a Confederate staff officer attached to Gen. William L. Cabell's brigade, the Confederate loss was about 100 casualties as well.—"The Missouri Campaign: Diary of an Officer," *Galveston (Tex.) Tri-Weekly News*, December 14, 1864, entry of October 21, 1864.

29. Burdsal here refers to one of the most famous incidents of the battle of Westport: Col. James H. McGhee with the Arkansas cavalry and Dobbin's brigade tried to capture the two guns of the Colorado battery, but was attacked in flank by portions of the Fifteenth Kansas Cavalry and the Second Colorado Cavalry. Capt. Curtis Johnson of Company E of the Fifteenth Kansas killed McGhee in a horseback duel with revolvers, and was himself wounded in the arm by McGhee's bullet.—Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, pp. 107-108; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, pp. 160-161.

30. Melancthon S. Beach enlisted as a private and in February 1864 was promoted to a first lieutenant in McLain's Independent Battery.—Information from the Colorado Division of State Archives and Public Records, Denver.

again. *We had them whipped.* They started again, at a gallop, (more like a cavalry charge than a battery going into action) and attempted to form a line again. We came into battery at a distance of 400 yards and let them have a couple of rounds from each of our guns, and then the whole of our cavalry charged them, and what a rout it was. Gen. Pleasanton [*sic*] had come up on our left and reinforced us with 6,000 cavalry and two batteries. We pursued the enemy until beyond Little Santa Fe that night.

We started again next morning at daybreak after him, marched all day, stopped about half an hour at sundown, marched all night, and found the enemy in force about 3 a.m. at the Mary-des-Cyres [Marais des Cygnes], engaged his forces and drove him on. Our command (Blunt's) was halted to let the horses feed, and the men get something to eat. Pleasanton went to the front with his command, and engaged the enemy at the Osage—capturing

Generals Marmaduke and Cabell, about 1,500 other prisoners, and ten cannon. As to the killed and wounded, I can not form any idea. Our loss has been very small. The rebels' loss was very heavy.<sup>31</sup> We arrived at Ft. Scott the same night; our battery horses had pretty well give out, having marched about one hundred miles in two days. We put fresh horses in and put an extra team to each gun and caisson, and started again with Lieut. Beach and Eayre's sections. I remained here with the used up horses. Price is pretty well whipped, and I think we will destroy his whole army in less than a week.

Yours, &c.

C. S. BURDSAL, JR.

31. Lumir F. Buresh puts the Union loss at 8 killed, 72 wounded, and 2 captured. He estimates the Confederate loss at 300 killed, about 250 wounded, and 686 captured. Hinton puts the Confederate loss at about 200 killed and over 200 wounded.—Buresh, *October 25th and the Battle of Mine Creek*, pp. 224, 233; Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, pp. 212-213.