

Kansans Go to War

The Wilson's Creek Campaign
as Reported by the
Leavenworth Daily Times

Part II

edited by

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In part one, of "Kansans Go to War," the reader followed the men of the First and Second Kansas Volunteer Infantry as they advanced from Kansas and "invaded Missouri" in the opening days of the Wilson's Creek campaign. The grand adventure of the war's early days was readily evident in these thirteen letters. The authors wrote about the men's eagerness to be "sent down South where they will have a chance to burn a little powder in defense of their country," and how they left "in high glee, and thoroughly imbued with a desire for fight."¹



"The Great Battle at Wilson's Creek" as depicted in volume one of Frank Leslie's Pictorial History of the War of 1861.

Even after a few weeks of army life's routine, enthusiasm and patriotism were still running high as described by "R." in his letter of June 18, 1861:

In spite of the discomforts of camp life, its frequent marches, drills and fatigue parties for fortifications, there is a fascination about it, something akin to that which draws us all to the West. Neither is altogether devoid of sentiment and poetry.

Later he wrote:

The thick black clouds of war are gathering fast, and through their murkiness no rift is seen, no gleam from the sun of peace. Civil war is upon us—the most horrible calamity which can befall a nation—but we must meet it as becomes Americans and freemen, battling against the encroachments of an old feudal and decrepid system, and oligarchic rule. May Heaven yet interfere and avert the storm.²

In these words lies the essence of Kansas in 1861. Citizens who had overcome the trials of frontier life, organized a territory into a state, and survived the horrors of Bleeding Kansas did not want war but answered the nation's call without hesitation.

But by June 18, after only approximately two weeks of active campaigning, they had only advanced as far as Kansas City, and at least part of this journey had been by riverboat. Still ahead of them lay the realities of war, which included forced marches in the heat of a Missouri summer, desertion, crime and military justice, a shortage of uniforms and rations, and a battle along the banks of Wilson's Creek, more than 180 miles to the south. The following letters, including the appeal by the chaplain of the First Kansas, reflect all these elements except one—desertion. On this embarrassing topic all the correspondents are conspicuously silent. However, the Kansas adjutant general's report records that during and immediately after the campaign, the Second Kansas lost four men through desertion, and one officer was reported absent without leave. Far worse, during the same period eighty-five men, the equivalent of an entire company, deserted the First Kansas. The majority of these, fifty-five men, absconded during the four months preceding the battle, while two deserted on August 10, from the battlefield.³

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1. From "M." with the "Union Guards," Company G, Second Kansas, dated Lawrence, Kansas, June 13, 1861, published June 14, 1861; from "Ed. F.S.," with Company B., First Kansas, dated June 14, published June 16, 1861.

2. From "R.," with Company B, First Kansas, dated Camp Wyandott, June 18, 1861, published June 20, 1861.

3. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1861-'65* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Co., 1896), 22-65.

Desertion was a serious problem on both sides during the war, and many units suffered a much higher rate than did the First Kansas. The real mystery, as yet unsolved, is why so many more left the First Kansas than the Second Kansas. A possible explanation may lie in the fact that the Second Regiment was only a ninety-day unit while the men of the First Kansas had enlisted for three years. Inexperienced leadership may have contributed to the problem, for the order book of the First Kansas testifies to the problems Col. George W. Deitzler and his subordinate officers had disciplining their men. Yet such difficulties appeared in all new regiments, and the sorts of problems Deitzler encountered, which were most often drunkenness or theft of civilian property, were hardly unique to the First Kansas.⁴

The ability of Kansans to stand and fight is readily evident in the letters. Indeed, heavy losses may have prompted post-battle desertions in the First Kansas. This unit of some 800 men suffered 284 casualties (77 killed, 187 wounded, 20 missing) at the battle of Wilson's Creek. Of the 187 wounded, 29 died, resulting in 106 total combat deaths.⁵ This figure places the First Kansas seventh on the list of Northern units suffering the largest numbers of killed or mortally wounded in any one engagement.⁶

As noted in the introduction to part one, this article provides the complete text of every letter sent to the *Times* from a correspondent with the troops, together with an appeal from the chaplain of the First Kansas. Obvious typographical errors have been corrected, but anachronistic spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are as they appeared in the paper. *Sic* has been used only when necessary to avoid misunderstanding.

4. Regimental Order Book, First Kansas Volunteers, Records of the Kansas Adjutant General, Kansas State Historical Society.

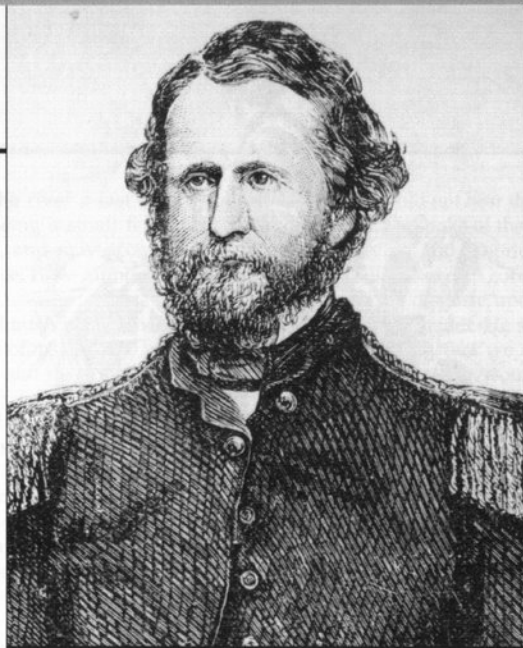
5. Edwin C. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek* (Bozeman, Mont: Arcraft Printers, 1975), 162; E. B. Long with Barbara Long, *The Civil War Day By Day, An Almanac, 1861-1865* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), 717.

6. Long and Long, *The Civil War Day By Day*, 717, lists the following federal units as suffering the largest number killed or mortally wounded in any one engagement: 210 of the First Maine Heavy Artillery at Petersburg; 207 of the Eighth New York Heavy Artillery at Cold Harbor; 117 of the Fifth New York Infantry at Second Bull Run; 116 of the Fifteenth New York Infantry at Spotsylvania; 109 of the Forty-ninth Pennsylvania Infantry at Spotsylvania; 108 of the Fifteenth Massachusetts Infantry at Antietam; 106 of the First Kansas Infantry at Wilson's Creek; 103 of the First Missouri at Wilson's Creek; 103 of the Ninth Illinois at Shiloh; 103 of the Eighteenth U. S. Infantry at Stone's River; 102 of the Eleventh Illinois Infantry at Fort Donelson.

From "Rover," with the Regulars-Major Sturgis' Command, dated Camp Washington, near Clinton, Missouri, July 7, 1861, published July 16, 1861:

Editor Times: — When we left Fort Leavenworth on the 11th ult., we were not allowed to carry as much as a change of clothing with us; my port-folio being packed up amongst my clothing, I had to leave without it, and while laying at Kansas City, no opportunity offered me to purchase another one—so here I am without the necessary documents to carry on my regular correspondence.

Of the doings in the vicinity of Kansas City, I need not inform you, as they have been widely circulated. We left Kansas City on the 24th ult., for the interior of this State; no one, excepting the commanding officer knowing our destination. All, however, had an idea that we would join Gen. Lyon. The command consists of four companies of infantry, four companies of cavalry, two companies of rifle recruits, one company of dragoons and one light battery, (six pieces) company of regulars, and two regiments Kansas Volunteers—the whole under command of Major S. D. Sturgis, 1st Cavalry.⁷ The march thus far, has progressed slowly, on account of unfavorable weather. When encamped near Harrisonville, Mo., four companies were detached and sent on a scouting expedition to cut off a force of 600 rebels on the march to join Jackson, who is fleeing South, then encamped near Butler, Mo. When we



Gen. Nathaniel Lyon

arrived at Butler, we found that the enemy had got wind of our coming, and immediately took up their flight, taking everything with them. We left our camp at 10 o'clock, p. m., the rebels vacating their camp same night at 12 o'clock. After a ride of sixty miles, we arrived in camp, located near Austin, Mo. At this place, upwards of 400 Missourians were mustered into the U.S. service, to form a Union Home Guard.⁸ Requisition for arms and equipments were immediately forwarded to Fort Leavenworth. In all parts of this State, the rebels flee upon the appearance of U.S. troops, even if they number ten to one.

The day we encamped near Austin, it commenced raining, and continued for two days and nights, during which time we remained in camp. The heavy rains swelled the rivers and creeks to such an extent, that we could not proceed any further on this route. We turned about, and directed our course towards Clinton, Mo. When within twenty miles of this place, three companies were detached to proceed forward and secure the bridge over Grand River, near Clinton, from the wrath of Claib Jackson & Co., and I understand that they have only a few hours to spare, as the secessionists have already made preparations to destroy it, as soon as the water had fallen sufficiently to gain access to it.

The command arrived at Clinton on the 4th of July and formed camp near Grand River, about a mile from Clinton, and named it Camp Washington. While the Second Regiment of Kansas Volunteers, were passing through town, the Lawrence boys hoisted the stars and stripes upon the secession pole, which floated majestically in the breeze the entire day.⁹ At 3 o'clock, p.m., a salute of 34 guns were fired in celebration of the 85th anniversary of American independence. The rebels here seemed very

7. Samuel D. Sturgis was an 1846 graduate of West Point and a veteran of the Mexican War and conflicts with Native Americans. As a major in the First U.S. Cavalry and commander of the Federal Arsenal at Fort Smith, Arkansas, in 1861 he refused to surrender to local secessionists and marched his command, with most of the government's property, to Fort Leavenworth. The column that Sturgis led toward a junction with Lyon consisted of the First and Second Kansas Infantry; four companies the First U.S. Infantry; four companies of the First U.S. Cavalry; two companies of the Second U.S. Dragoons; Co. I, Second Infantry (Kansas Mounted Rangers); an artillery battery; and one company of unassigned recruits for the regulars. George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy From 1802 to 1867*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1868), 2:159-60; Hans C. Adamson, *Rebellion in Missouri: 1861* (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., 1961), 129.

8. On June 11, 1861, Secretary of War Simon Cameron authorized Lyon to enlist loyal citizens as Missouri Home Guards. More numerous than the Reserve Corps, they received pay only when called into active service during emergencies. U.S. Pension Office, *Organization and Status of Missouri Troops (Union and Confederate) in Service During the Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 146-64.

9. "Lawrence boys" is a reference to either Company D or Company F of the First Kansas.

wrathful at having the Star Spangled Banner floating over their town, and especially on the 4th of July.

Since our stay here, a marauding party, chiefly belonging to the Kansas 1st, sprinkled with one or two regulars, have robbed and plundered all, or nearly so, the farmers within a circle of five miles from camp. A detachment of Calvary was sent out to scour the country for the scoundrels, and succeeded in catching fifteen just in the act of plundering gardens and hen roosts. They were brought before the commanding officer and were there and then tried for their offenses. Ten of them were sentenced to be tied to a cannon, and receive fifty lashes each, with a "black snake," upon the back, and then drummed out of the service. The operation commenced at sunset. About half of them were flogged, when it became too dark to carry the sentence into execution upon all of them, and the proceedings were terminated, much to the satisfaction of those escaping with a sound back. The punishment inflicted upon those who deserved it, may create ill feeling amongst the volunteers at present, but they will eventually find out that it was a great benefit to the regiment to which they belonged that they are rid of them. Our stay here is caused by the water being still too high in the bottom to gain access to the bridge with the wagons. We are awaiting the arrival of the bridge guard to ascertain the state of the water this morning.

Camp Near Grand River
July 7, P. M., 1861

Upon the arrival of the guard, it was ascertained that the water was as deep as ever. We struck the tents and marched down the river about nine miles to the ferry. When we arrived at the ferry, Gen. Lyon was there, crossing over his command. It will probably take him until tomorrow evening to cross over his command. As soon as he gets across, we commence crossing. As soon as everything gets straightened out, I think we will make a break for the secession camp, who I understand, intend to stand at Sycokse [*sic*; Sarcokie], Missouri. If the rebels do as well there as they did at Boonville, we will have plenty of fun. The Claib. Jackson army, while passing through here, threatened to exterminate all Union men upon their return



trip. They rob and plunder all they can lay hands upon along the route. If they are asked for pay, their answer is: "Uncle Sam will pay you." A number of women had been engaged to bake bread for them while encamped near Rose Hill, Mo. When they asked for the pay, they were told that Uncle Sam would pay them. We happened to pitch our camp at the same place, and the women presented their bill to the commanding officer for payment. He told them he could not pay them for work performed for the enemy, but if they had worked for Uncle

Sam's boys, they would have been sure of their pay. Secessionism is a grand swindle from beginning to end.

July 8, A. M.—Gen. Lyon visited our camp last evening. A salute of 11 guns were fired in honor of him. He delivered a brief speech to a crowd that had collected about him. I could but indistinctly hear him. When he had finished, three cheers were proposed and given; and another three followed the first. He thanked them for their good feelings towards him, when three more cheers were given, and the crowd dispersed. More anon.

From "M.," with the "Union Guards," Company G, Second Kansas, dated Camp Cameron, Missouri, July 8, 1861, published July 24, 1861:

Editor Times: — Last Sunday morning, soon after breakfast, we received orders to be ready to march at 12 o'clock, M. At the appointed time the Regulars and 1st Regiment moved off, in the direction of Grand River. The 2d did not get under march until near 1, P. M. Passing over a fine country, though thinly settled, after a march of 9 miles, we reached the river, and camped for the evening. Here we met Gen. Lyon, with his command, numbering about 3,500, mostly volunteers from Iowa and Illinois.¹⁰ He had reached this point about 10, A. M. the

10. At this point Lyon's column consisted of Company B, Second U.S. Infantry Regiment; Light Company F, Second U.S. Artillery; one company of unassigned recruits for the regulars; the First Missouri Infantry; two companies of the Second Missouri Infantry; Vorester's Pioneers; one four-gun artillery battery; and the First Iowa Infantry. On the question of Illinois troops, see "M."s letter of August 18, 1861. *The*

same day, and was crossing the river as fast as possible. The only means of crossing being a small ferry boat, it proved rather a tedious work, and may occupy several days yet before the whole force, now numbering about 7,500, is safely crossed.¹¹

It was good news to the volunteers to learn that at last they had met the General. Heretofore we have been under the command of Major Sturgis, and his brutal and unwarrantable treatment of volunteers near Clinton has so completely disgusted every man that they are tired of being controlled by him; and any change, even should it be for the worse, is preferable. Many of the boys went down to his camp yesterday evening, to see and hear him speak. Being tired, and having duties to perform at camp, I did not go. To-day, however, he payed us a visit. Whilst seated under a cool shade tree, enjoying myself as we volunteers best can, I saw a crowd gathering in front of an officer's tent, and on inquiry as to its meaning, was told that Gen. Lyon was there. Of course I joined in, and from the reputation of the man, naturally expected to see a regular giant, surrounded with all the stiffening of military dignity that it could be possible for a man of his form to assume. I looked around for my ideal Gen. Lyon, but could find no one present to fill the bill, except the handsome and oily tongued Halderman. Of course I know that was not Lyon. On inquiry, a little, red headed, sandy whiskered man, with a weather beaten countenance, and keen restless eye, was pointed out as the man that had chased the infamous Claib. Jackson from Boonville, down through Missouri, and struck terror into the hearts of secessionists. He had on a military coat and pantaloons, much the worse for wear, and an old, worn-out white slouch hat, which gave him more the appearance of a back woodsman than the famed man and General he is. His physiognomy does not bespeak the ruffian, or cruel hearted commander, which the Missourians represent him to be; but in every look and expression you may see fineness depicted and the nerve to carry out a good resolution. He is, I am told, a strict disciplinarian, though human in his treatment of soldiers.¹² Of course he had to make a short

speech. I could not hear the whole of it, as he spoke in a very low tone. He spoke of the work before us, and the cause we were serving, and exhorted the men to be true and loyal to their country, and to conduct themselves in such a way as not to bring disgrace upon themselves and the cause they were enlisted under. He said that Missourians had received the impression that we were all a band of robbers, who would lay waste the country, murder the men indiscriminately, and every sacred right of humanity. By our course thus far, we had disabused their minds of this impression, and he hoped and believed we would continue to do so. He first stated that we had hard work before us, and it might be that we would soon run short of provisions. In that case, he would press it from the enemy. It was his duty to feed his men, and he would do it. He was greeted with hearty cheers. The boys seem to like his looks. We feel now that we have a man for our leader whom we can trust, and whose loyalty to the Union no man can doubt or question.

The excitement in the camp, in reference to the flogging of the volunteers, has not yet died out. The men feel very bitter about it, and I have heard many threats made against the lives of Col. Deitzler, Halderman, Sturgis, and several other officers. I should not like to occupy their positions in a battle.

The Missourians have queer ideas of our mission. The majority really believe we are no better than a band of murderers and robbers, and at the approach of the army desert all and flee to the woods. I had a conversation, the other day, with an intelligent man, who told me that he knew many families who had deserted their homes on our approach, really believing that we would murder men, women and children indiscriminately, burn houses, destroy property, &c., just as a band of savages would. But they soon gain confidence, and before we leave generally visit our camps in considerable numbers. In no instance, that I know of, have women been insulted, or property taken, except for immediate use as provisions.¹³

About 1 o'clock today, two men belonging to Capt. Stockton's company, named Cole and Steel, got into a difficulty, which resulted in the death of Steel. He was stabbed in the left side, and died immediately. Cole is under arrest.¹⁴

War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, ser. 1, v. 3. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1881), 389, hereafter cited as *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*.

11. The combined commands actually numbered about forty-five hundred men. *Ibid.*

12. This is an example of the wide range of opinion that soldiers held of their officers. These opinions were often based upon rumor and general impressions, not facts. In actuality Lyon was a shocking sadist whose cruel punishments jeopardized his antebellum career. Christopher Phillips, *Damned Yankee: The Life of General Nathaniel Lyon* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 2-3, 32-36, 70-71, 72, 85, 87-91, 116, 127-28, 156, 164, 169, 180, 222, 251, 263-64.

13. With men such as Jennison at large, who made no distinction between loyal and disloyal Missourians, local residents had valid reasons for assuming the worst of all Kansans. Many saw the Kansans as participants in an unprovoked invasion and assault upon the legal state government.

14. This incident occurred on July 8, 1861. Privates Joseph Cole and Michael Stein (not Steel), both of Leavenworth, were members of Company G of the First Kansas. Cole's death by firing squad on July 14, 1861, west of Springfield, Missouri, was the first Union military execution in the war. Cole is buried in the Springfield National Cemetery; Stein's place of burial is unknown. Robert I. Alotta, *Civil War Justice* (Shippensburg, Penn.: White Mane Publishing Co., 1989), 46.

From what I can learn, our next point is Oceaola, some 15 miles distant. Before long, I doubt not, we will see the Arkansas line—perhaps some secessionists.

Monday, 7, P. M. — A messenger has just arrived, bringing the intelligence that some 1,500 volunteer Union troops have been defeated by upwards of 7,000 secessionists, some seventy miles South of us.¹⁵ Only part of our troops are across the river, but we expect to get the balance over early to morrow. A detail of ten men from each of our companies was sent to the river this evening, to build rafts to cross us. As soon as we cross we will move off rapidly to the aid of our friends. At battalion drill, this evening, the order was given for every man who felt able to march thirty miles a day for two days to step out. Not more than half a dozen failed to respond. These were not able.

Our boys feel "awful good" at the prospect of a brush. They are now all as busy as bees, getting ready for the march.

If I write again, in all probability it will be after I have seen the enemy. As soon as the matter is decided, and I get an opportunity, I will give you details. I hope we will not be disappointed this time.

Wednesday morning, July 10. — The raft proved a failure, and we were compelled to cross on a small ferry boat. Major [sic] Lyon is now, probably, at Osceola, having crossed on Tuesday morning. A portion of the Regulars are still back. The 2d Regiment commenced crossing about 12 o'clock last night; all will get over this forenoon. The 1st will follow as speedily as possible.

Another messenger to Lyon says the Secessionists are entrenching themselves about twenty-five miles from here. They are about 4,000 strong. It looks as though we have a "brush" on hand, but we may be disappointed.

From "L., with the First Kansas, dated Camp Lyon, Henry Co., Missouri, July 9; 1861, published July 19, 1861:

Editor Times: We have now been lying two days in camp here, waiting for the army to cross the river. We met Gen. Lyon here, who was crossing the river when we came. He had under his command about 2,200 men.

Yesterday a young man, by the name of Cole, killed another by the name of Michael Stein (I don't know as I spell the name correctly) with a knife; both belonged to Captain Stockton's Company. A military commission is now sitting and trying the case.

We are crossing the Grand River on a small flat boat. Gen. Lyon's men that came with him are over, as well as a part of the regulars. Only one wagon can cross at a time and no mules attached. They are crossing night and day about three teams an hour.

We may commence moving to-night sometime with our regiment, and perhaps be ready to march in the morning. We have the Osage River to cross to-morrow, but I understand that there is a bridge about thirty-five miles below us with about 10,000 secessionists entrenched there.

Col. Seigel is at Springfield, about as far below Claib Jackson as we are above, and will probably march so as to be on hand about the time we reach there.¹⁶

This country cannot sustain an army of 10,000 men, and Jackson has hardly had an opportunity to collect a depot of provisions.

I cannot give a guess even at our destination, but suppose we shall follow wherever secession shows itself.

From "Cosmopolite," with the First Kansas, dated Camp near Springfield, Missouri, July 15, 1861, published July 23, 1861:

Making a retrograde march of a few miles, we passed the Second at Austin, and encamped on Big Creek. At Grand River crossing, we joined the command of Gen. Lyon, ten miles from Clinton, Henry county, an almost

15. As Lyon moved south toward Clinton, he sent a force of about eleven hundred men under Col. Franz Sigel farther west in an attempt to prevent Jackson's retreating Missouri State Guard from joining Price's forces at Cowskin Prairie. Sigel and Jackson clashed near Carthage, Missouri, on July 5. The four thousand-odd Missouri State Guard drove Sigel several miles in a confused running fight. As a result of Sigel's defeat, Lyon made a forced march for Springfield, Missouri, which lay on the Telegraph or Wire Road that ran from the railhead at Rolla, Missouri, into northwestern Arkansas. Thomas L. Sneed, "The First Year of the War in Missouri," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols., ed. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel (New York: Century Co., 1887-1888), 3: 268-69.

16. Franz Sigel, a native of Baden, Germany, received a military education but fled Europe following his participation in the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848. Employed by the public schools in St. Louis when war broke out, he received a commission for political reasons and was responsible, directly or indirectly, for the enlistment of thousands of German immigrants in the Union armies. Although he rose to the rank of major general, his repeated military failures led to his removal late in the war. Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 447-48.

deserted village, but not by any means the *loveliest* of the plain. By a copy of the *TIMES* received in camp to-day, I perceive that you are in receipt of the "*Clinton Journal*," published by a detachment from both Kansas regiments.¹⁷

At the camp before reaching Grand River, an unfortunate occurrence took place in our company, resulting in the death of a private named Stein, who was stabbed in the back, the blade of a large knife passing through his heart. Not having been a witness to the origin of the quarrel, I forbear to speak of it, as so many reports are in circulation. The murderer's name was Jos. N. Cole, an individual who has, I believe, never borne an unblemished reputation for morality. Cole made but slight effort to escape, as the murder took place almost within the camp lines. A general court martial being ordered, he was found guilty, and at sunset last evening was shot in presence of the whole regiment, which was called out on dress parade for the purpose. A large assemblage of people from the surrounding country were congregated, though it was not probable that any of them were aware of the nature of the proceedings until the fatal consummation, there being a large proportion of ladies. Cole met his fate firmly, but it was that desperate hardihood nurtured in the saloon, the gambling den and brothel, rather than any degree of moral courage. His death was instantaneous, five balls striking him in and near the heart. He was quietly buried, and to-day I do not believe his absence is remembered in the regiment.

You will doubtless have received ere this, a more reliable report of the battle at Carthage, than I should be able to give, but all reports agree, that in Sigel, the State troops caught a red tartar; in fact, a whole force of tartars. The



Col. Franz Sigel

general impression here is, from a comparison of reports, that upwards of one thousand rebels were killed, and this they have the assurance to call a victory.

Jackson is reported near Mount Vernon, some forty miles from the scene of his late disaster. Of a company of eighty men from Cass county, only nine returned from the field.

The force now encamped here, will number near if not quite, six thousand, and there is an equal number at Springfield, ten miles South. Gen. Lyon has one Iowa regiment, and two from Missouri. It is now reported that the command will soon be divided, the 2d going to quarters at

Fort Scott, and the 1st with Gen. Stanton to New Mexico, in which latter event, we may return to Leavenworth to outfit.¹⁸ I give this as only a rumor, and these are numerous as mosquitoes in August, or fleas in camp.

From "M.," with the "Union Guards," Company G, Second Kansas, dated Camp Lyon, Missouri, July 21, 1861, published August 8, 1861:

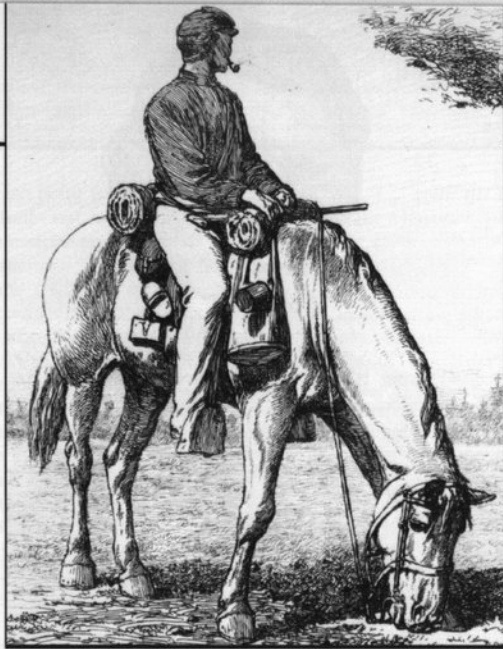
Editor Times: — It seems as if this regiment had been enlisted for the express purpose of marching all over the State of Missouri, and running secessionists into Arkansas. Already we have marched near three hundred miles, most of the time forced marches on half rations. We are now in camp 12 miles west of Springfield, but there is no certainty that we will remain here twenty-four hours longer. We came here on the 26th, and we have had orders ever since to be ready to march at a moment's warning. Last night we slept with our "harness" on and our arms at our sides. To-day we have orders to remain in camp all day, so you see we are having a pretty hard time of it—rather more than many of us bargained for. But

17. Members of the First and Second Kansas apparently took over the office of the *Clinton Journal*, which was published in Clinton, Missouri, between 1858 and 1861 by Isaac E. Olney, to publish a "camp" or "soldier" newspaper. This was a common occurrence in the early months of the war. Minnie Organ, "History of the County Press of Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 4 (July 1910): 277.

18. Frederick P. Stanton was former secretary and acting governor of Kansas Territory.

such is a soldier's life, and we must accustom ourselves to these petty annoyances as best we can. If we were better outfitted, in the way of transportation and camp equipage, it would not go so hard.

On Saturday morning, the 20th, we struck our tents, and left Camp Sigel, for Springfield, accompanied by the Iowa 1st, the Missouri 2d, and one company of the Missouri 1st, and about seven companies of regulars. We reached Springfield, 12 miles, about 1 p.m. Here we expected to go into quarters, to rest and recruit, but when we got there, we found that Gen. Lyon had laid out a little job of work, in which we were to take a hand. Intelligence had been received that some four or five hundred secessionists were encamped at Forsyth, forty-five miles south, in Taney county, and the Kansas 2d, five companies of the Iowa 1st, one company of cavalry, and two pieces of artillery, under the command of Gen. Sweeney, were ordered off to break up the rebel camp. The command numbered about 1,200 men all told.¹⁹ After an hour's rest, we took up our line of march for the rebel quarters. The first few miles lay across a level prairie. The sun poured down its blistering rays upon our heads with unmerciful severity, and long before we reached the timber, the men began to suffer terribly from heat and the want of water. Lieut. Graham, of the Leavenworth Union Guards, was sun struck, and for a time was in a dangerous condition.²⁰ Aside from numerous cases of exhaustion, there were no others who suffered seriously. A march of 4 miles further brought us to our camp, and most cheerfully did we pitch our tents, for we were all completely tired out. During the night we received a complete soaking; and the next day marched over ten miles



through a drenching rain. About 11 o'clock we passed through Ozark, a small country village, which was taken possession of by our men, and for over an hour we "ran the masheen" to our heart's content. Stores were opened, and whatever we found in the way of shoes, clothing, &c., was taken and distributed to the boys. All the stores—three or four only—were owned by secessionists, who had closed up and left at our approach. Aside from this no others property was disturbed. After standing around in the rain for about two hours, we formed in line, and marched out to the edge

of the village, and halted in front of a grocery. By order of the General, a liberal supply of mountain howitzer was passed around to the men, in order I suppose, to counteract the deleterious effect that was likely to be produced by the rain on the outer man. Buckets being scarce, a rather novel kind of vessel was pressed into service, one not generally used for such purposes, but generally kept concealed from sight. I must confess the looks of the thing were rather "against the appetite," but under the circumstances, we felt that this was no time to be fastidious, or squeamish, so we "pitched in," and relished the drinks just as much as if they had been served up in the neatest glasses.²¹ This day we made about 12 miles, camping early.

The third day we took an early start, and pressed on at a smart gait. We had about 33 miles to go, and the road wound across and through what is here known as the Ozark Mountains. The road was very rough, and steep hills met us at almost every turn, making the travel very tedious, and hard on the feet. The country is of a very uninteresting character, and but little settled. We did not pass more than half a dozen houses during the day, and most of these miserable little cabins, that looked more like the huts of the Western Indians, with no manner of refinement or enterprise about them. As we passed, men, women and children would flock to the door, and gaze at us with open mouths in mute astonishment. A few, more bold than the rest, ventured close enough to inspect our

19. Lyon dispatched twelve hundred men under Capt. Thomas William Sweeney to Forsyth, Missouri, to break up a recruiting station of the Missouri State Guard. A native of Cork, Ireland, Sweeney was commissioned in the regular army following volunteer service in the Mexican War. His service after Wilson's Creek was complex and controversial, as were his postwar activities in support of Irish independence. Phillips, *Damned Yankee*, 233; Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 491-92.

20. Second Lt. Jacob A. Graham mustered in with the regiment in June but absented himself without leave on August 30, never returning to the unit. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 74.

21. "Mountain howitzer" was apparently some sort of alcoholic concoction that the men drank from a chamber pot.

two six pounders. It was laughable to see the inexpressible astonishment pictured on their countenances as they looked into them,—and as for touching them, that they never could do. Up to this time, they had never seen anything better than their old flint lock rifles, and the little cannon seemed to strike terror to their hearts.

About 2 o'clock, P.M., we came to a halt, eight miles from Forsyth. After an hour's rest, we started off on a brisk march, in order to reach the place before dark.

The cavalry of regulars and Wood's mounted company, led the way, followed by the artillery, the Kansas 2d, and the Iowa boys bringing up the rear.²²

As soon as the artillery had passed, the order for "double quick" was given, and for about 4 miles our regiment went on a full run, keeping close to the cannon all the time.

When within a half mile of the place, the artillery stopped on a hill which commanded a view of the Court House, and prepared to give them a salute, while our boys filed off to the right, passing through two corn fields, crossing a creek waist deep, and filing around another field, coming in on the opposite end of the town. All this was done in double time, and in admirable order; and when we halted on the bank of the last creek, to form our line, it was found that but a few were absent, and those were unable to keep up either from sickness or sore feet. As soon as the line was formed, we divided into two companies, one led by Col. Mitchell, the other by Major Cloud—the one division marching directly into the town, the other flanking the town to the south, so as to cut off the retreat in that direction.

But after all our hard marching, we were doomed to disappointment, for the cowardly rebels had taken flight for the bushes. The rear division to which I was attached, fired four or five shots at a single horseman as he crossed the creek, but aside from this, our regiment did not get a shot, or even the sight of an enemy. The horseman fired at was killed.

As near as I can learn, there were about 500 secessionists quartered in the town. Had the matter been managed properly, every man could have been taken or killed. The cavalry made the first and only charge, and as they went in the rebels went out on the opposite side, firing only a few stray shots as they left. Had the cavalry surrounded the town, and cut off their retreat, leaving the infantry to take the charge, the work would have been well done, and their defeat complete.

22. Company I of the Second Kansas, led by Capt. Samuel N. Wood of Cottonwood Falls, was mounted. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 13, 76.

The Kansas boys behaved themselves in a very creditable manner. Of course they had no fighting to do, but the manner in which they marched to get to the fight, showed they were in earnest, and I doubt not, had the enemy stood, they would have proved themselves as good at fighting as they did at marching. We were the first infantry in town, and filed around through the corn fields nearly as soon as the cavalry did. The Iowa boys did not get up until after dark. No doubt they were willing, but I find they cannot stand marching as well as we did. They are not quick enough on foot.²³

That night we spent in Forsyth. The next morning, about 10 o'clock, we left for Springfield. When about four miles out of town, our regiment was fired on by a few rebel scouts. The cannon gave them a little grape, killing two men. No other interruptions were met with on the way, and on the 25th we camped in sight of Springfield. The next morning we passed through, bearing West, and camped about 12 miles from town. We have about 5,000 men here, in command of Gen. Lyon.

From "Cosmopolite," with the First Kansas, dated Camp Scott, Lawrence Co., Missouri, July 30, 1861, published August 15, 1861:

Dear Times: — By reference to my journal, I find that my last letter bore date about the 14th inst. It is now the 30th, though the hiatus of sixteen days may be filled up in a very few words, so far at least as important movements by the South-west Expedition are concerned.²⁴ We are, in truth, preserving a "masterly inactivity," not having, up to this time, seen a vestige of the 50,000 men, who have not yet sprung like Minerva, full armed from the brain, not of Jove, but of Jackson.²⁵ General Lyon does not seem disposed to make any "forward movement" until he is fully prepared, having pushed his victorious columns to the very extremity of Missouri. He is too intelligent to be caught in a Manassas trap, or decoyed by a *ruse de guerre* further into an enemy's country than a proper regard for the safety of his command will warrant; but when he does move, the country may rest assured that the genius of

23. Perhaps not surprisingly, men of the First Iowa had a different view of the affair at Forsyth. Pvt. Eugene F. Ware emphasized his unit's marching ability in his book *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri: Being a History of the First Iowa Infantry* (Topeka, Kans.: Crane and Co., 1907), 235-40.

24. The campaign was commonly known by this name.

25. In ancient mythology, Minerva, goddess of wisdom and invention, sprang fully grown from the forehead of her father, the god Jove.

success will again smile upon his arms, and victory attend our starry flag.²⁶

A few extracts from my journal will give our friends an idea of where we have been, and what doing, for the past fortnight. Camp life is by no means a promoter of literature and the arts; and if one does at times attempt to traverse anything but a plain matter-of-fact path, he is apt to have the train of his thoughts interrupted by some call from the Adjutant's department, regular or irregular.

July 18th. Two days have passed without anything to vary the regular monotony of camp life, if I except a heavy storm on Thursday night, which demolished many of the tents, and otherwise discommoded our nomadic populations. Rations for the past few days, have been rather short; coffee and sugar have entirely given out; flour scarce; but where the fault is, we are unable to tell, and wonder if we have any of those voracious army contractors attached to the command.

Here, leaving the journal, I may say that the same state of things has existed ever since. Beef forms the staple of diet, sometimes without salt; and we have been on half rations of flour so long, and in a country of plenty, too, that we have almost forgotten what a full ration is. Have been out of sugar for three weeks, rice and beans ditto, and are strictly prohibited from declaring potatoes, onions, corn, chickens, &c., contraband. The fault is somewhere, and if it be ascertained, I do not think the cause of it will ever be voted for M. C. from, or Governor of, Kansas.²⁷ Patriotism is an excellent quality, but will not always answer for supper. If a sufficient cause were assigned, if we were not surrounded by plenty, not a murmur would be heard; but when the lack is manifestly owing to an incompetency somewhere, either in the Q. M. Department or the regimental head, we are not disposed to bear it uncomplainingly.²⁸ The Kansas First are not over anxious about their uniform, but they would like to know if there is a prospect of ever getting anything to eat. Think of boiled fresh beef, Ed. F. S., when you sit down to the sumptuous tables at the Mansion House, and wish you were a soldier. If "Doc" Insley were only Quartermaster!²⁹

26. "Manassas trap" is a reference to the first battle of Manassas (Bull Run), fought in Virginia on July 21, 1861, where Union forces under Irvin McDowell were defeated by Confederates under Joseph E. Johnston and P. G. T. Beauregard.

27. "M. C." refers to a member of Congress.

28. The reference is in error, as the quartermaster's department supplied soldiers with clothing and equipment, not food.

29. The Mansion House, a hotel at the intersection of Shawnee and First streets in Leavenworth, was owned by a Mr. Kaiser and Merrit H. "Doc" Insley. *Southerland and McEvoy's Leavenworth Directory 1859-1869* (St. Louis: n.d.), 162.

23d — Have been in camp here three days—the water is excellent.

24th — A friend now in the Missouri First, visited us to-day, and together we talked over old times, of happier hours, and old friends and loved ones to the Northward.

25th — Started about 7 A. M. to-day, nearly a Westward course. We are to take possession of a mill on Spring Creek, which will give us flour, at all events.³⁰ Distance to-day about fifteen miles; are in Lawrence county, about thirteen miles from Mount Vernon. Rumors are current of an approach by the State Guard, though their nearest pickets are probably at Sarcoxie.

26th — After dark this evening, an alarm was occasioned in camp, the pickets being driven in by a scouting party of the rebel cavalry. We were ordered to sleep on our arms—but no further disturbance was experienced.

27th — Much depression is caused in camp to-day, by intelligence of the repulse at Manassas; but all feel that it will have a good effect in arousing the nation to a full sense of peril. We have too long underrated the strength of our opponents.

28th — As usual, we were ordered to march this morning. We have passed but one Sunday in camp yet. However, we have moved only two miles to-day, and are now encamped in one of the most pleasant spots in Southwest Missouri, at the far-famed Chalybeate Springs, which are yet to be to Missouri what Saratoga is to New York, or the Mammoth Cave to Kentucky, and make the "tarnal fortune" of some enterprising down-easter with a small capital.³¹ The water possesses strong mineral properties, of which iron appears the most prominent. Already is the future greatness and popularity of the place foreshadowed, for the frame of a large hotel is erected, and other indications are apparent of preparations to accommodate the vast tide of summer travel which *sometime* may flow hitherward. Our mill is about a half mile distant, and is at work night and day, yet the flour rations do not perceptibly increase; nor do the beans, pork, rice, sugar, and coffee, which have been promised day after day, make their appearance. But such is life—at least military life.

We are also within a half a mile of the wonder of the West, which must hereafter be classed with the Mammoth Cave, Natural Bridge, and Niagara Falls, as in this case, Nature has equally exerted herself to produce subterranean sublimity and grandeur of no common order. We

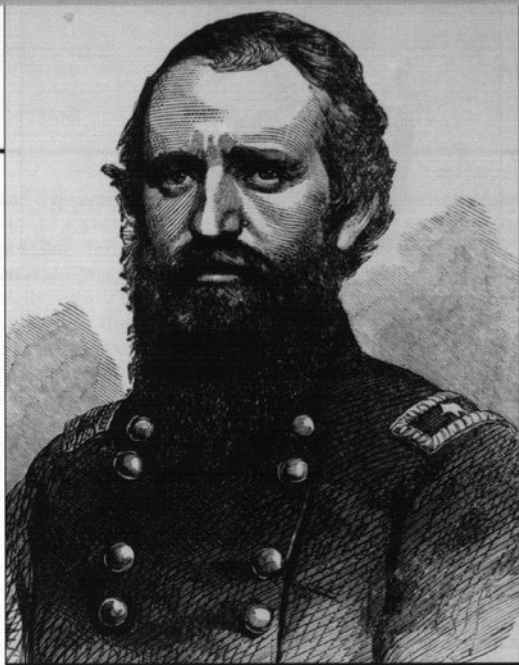
30. This stream currently is known as Johnson's Creek. Doug Seneker, president, Lawrence County [Missouri] Historical Society, interview with author, June 14, 1992.

31. The site currently is known by the names Chalybeate, Johnson, or Paris Springs. *Ibid.*

have given this the appellation of Union Cave.³² As it has been visited to-day by large crowds from the regiment, each are naming the various walls, corridors and chambers to suit their fancy. I shall not attempt a description of the cave *in extenso*, as I made no notes while visiting it, but only speak of a very few of its principal features. I hope to be able to make a thorough exploration before we leave, and shall give you the result. Visits are necessarily brief and few, as candles are scarce, and wood suitable for torches, not to be had. I have been over perhaps half a mile of this subterranean wonder, or through the main or entrance hall to the river, and can safely say that nowhere on this continent is the beauty of Union Cave excelled. I opine its existence is not generally known, or at least I have never heard of it, and learn that it has been open scarce a year. The entrance is difficult, though from the crowds going in and coming out constantly, a looker on would never imagine it was fancied insecure. We have hurried through it to-day, scarce halting to note its beauties, but only trying to get a general idea of its extent, which so far has been vain. Almost at each step new entrances to other halls and apartments present themselves; some high up in the vaulted roof, others yawning before you, and some under shelving rocks, or past a ponderous column.

To-night a detachment consisting of four companies—Captains Zesch, Walker, Fairchild and Clayton, and a part of Co. C, 2nd dragoons, started for Springfield, some twelve miles South, but for what object I am unable to learn. The whole is under command of Capt. Clayton.

29th — In company with Lieut Farrand of the dragoons, Adj. Nash, of the 1st, a number of others, I visited the cave again to-day, exploring many beautiful halls, and going perhaps beyond any previous explorations, as we found no traces of visitors.³³ The most prominent fea-



Col. Robert B. Mitchell

tures of the cave, as far as I have seen, I term as follows: Hall of the Black Diamond, Corinthian Basins, Crystal Run, Corniced Rooms, the Amphitheatre, Maiden's Grotto, Alpine Pass, Echo Cliff, the White Chamber, &c. Most beautiful of all, is the fountain, where the clear cold water rises in jet and spray to the height of five to ten feet, and falling back disappears through the rocky floor. On my first visit, soon after we camped, with a small party, I found our somewhat obese Lieut. McCarty, groping his way thro' a narrow passage in cimmerian darkness, perspiring and puffing like a porpoise; but perfectly delighted

with the scenery of the cave.³⁴ It reminds one of the Arabian Nights, of Aladdin's cave on the Grotto of Antiparos. To your health, dear TIMES, in a bumper of sparkling water from the fountain, I will drink, next time.

From "M.," with the "Union Guards," Company G, Second Kansas, dated Camp near Rolla, Missouri, August 18, 1861, published August 22, 1861:

Ed. Times: — Since I penned my last, I have heard the roar of artillery and the rattle of musketry to my heart's content. I am no longer "spoiling for a fight"—at least, not with such great odds as we had to contend against on the 10th inst. In anything like a fair fight, say two to one, I would have no objections; but five to one I consider rather an unequal contest, and would rather be excused.

On the evening of the 9th, about 6 o'clock, our little army, of less than 5,000 men, began to move in two

nated the Second Cavalry on August 3, 1861, but units in the field maintained the older identification for some time. Edwin S. Nash of Olathe was a second lieutenant in Company F, First Kansas. He was promoted to first lieutenant and appointed regimental adjutant on June 1, 1861. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 2: 466-467; *Official Army Register for 1866* (Washington, D.C.: Adjutant General's Office, 1866), 21; *Report of the Adjutant General*, 41.

34. Hugh D. McCarty of Leavenworth joined as a second lieutenant in Company G on May 29, 1861, was promoted to first lieutenant on October 1, 1862, and resigned on July 15, 1862. He was wounded at Wilson's Creek. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 45.

32. This cave currently is known as Chalybeate, Johnson, or Paris Cave. *Ibid*.

33. Initially assigned to the First U.S. Infantry, Second Lt. Charles E. Farrand, an 1857 West Point graduate, commanded Company C, Second U.S. Dragoons as of June 10, 1861. The Second Dragoons were redesignated the Second Cavalry on August 3, 1861, but units in the field maintained the older identification for some time. Edwin S. Nash of Olathe was a second lieutenant in Company F, First Kansas. He was promoted to first lieutenant and appointed regimental adjutant on June 1, 1861. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 2: 466-467; *Official Army Register for 1866* (Washington, D.C.: Adjutant General's Office, 1866), 21; *Report of the Adjutant General*, 41.

columns from our camp, on a march of ten miles, to make an attack upon an encampment of rebels, about 30,000 strong.³⁵ In a military point of view, the move was a rash one, as the sequel has clearly proven. It was well known to our officers that the rebels were collecting in large numbers, near Springfield, preparatory to making an attack upon our forces. Various rumors were in circulation as to their strength, but the most reliable was received on the evening we set out from a deserter from their camp, who stated that their forces numbered from 30,000 to 35,000, all well armed, with the exception of about 300, and supported by large bodies of cavalry and about twenty pieces of artillery. But the deserter's statement was discredited, and he put under close guard. The question of an attack had been considered, and a retreat determined upon; but it was decided to give them at least one trial of an attack, and prove to the loyal citizens of Springfield and the country, that we were willing to do all in our power to protect them in the enjoyment of all their rights.³⁶ The bravery and gallantry of the Union troops proved itself worthy of the great cause for which they contended. They fought like brave men, long and desperately, against overwhelming numbers. Too much praise cannot be awarded them—they have earned bright laurels, and a proud name.



General Sigel, with six pieces of artillery, his own regiment and that of Col. Salomon's, moved in a Southerly direction, with a view of attacking the enemy in the rear.³⁷ Of his movements I know but little, as they did not come under my personal observation.

General Lyon had the other division, and took a more direct route, being Westward, about ten miles. It was composed of the Kansas 1st, Colonel Deitzler; Kansas 2d, Colonel Mitchell; Missouri 1st, Lieutenant-Colonel Andrews; Iowa 1st, Lieutenant-Colonel Merritt; part of the Missouri 2d, under Major Osterhause, and a detachment of twenty

men from Colonel Wyman's Illinois regiment; three or four companies of mounted Home Guards; a force of Regulars about eight hundred strong, and two batteries of four and six pieces respectively.³⁸ The slow, tedious march across the hills and prairies, was continued until 2 o'clock, with comparative cheerfulness, when we halted and the men lay down for a few hours rest, with all their accoutrements strapped around them, and their guns in their hands. The sleep was short, but refreshing, and about 4 o'clock we were again moving on.

35. Each side greatly exaggerated the strength of the other. According to the best calculations, Lyon's force was 5,400, while the Southerners had 10,125 armed men, and between 2,000 and 3,000 unarmed men present at the battle. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 161-64.

36. At Springfield, Lyon learned that the combined forces of Price and McCulloch had reached Wilson's Creek, only nine miles to the southwest. Outnumbered, short on supplies, and denied reinforcements (indeed, some of his own troops' enlistments were about to expire), Lyon considered a retreat inevitable. Fearing the enemy's cavalry would cut him off before he could reach the railhead at Rolla, he decided to stun the enemy with a surprise attack on August 10. This would buy him the time needed to retreat. However, on August 9 Sigel convinced Lyon to divide his forces into two columns. One, under Sigel, would circle to the enemy's rear and cut off his retreat by seizing the Wire Road. The second, under Lyon, would attack from the north, driving the enemy into Sigel like a hammer striking an anvil. Phillips, *Damned Yankee*, 248-51.

37. Sigel's column consisted of the Third Missouri Infantry, the Fifth Missouri Infantry, Company I of the First U.S. Cavalry, Company C of the Second U.S. Dragoons, and Backoff's Missouri Artillery, a total of some twelve hundred men and six pieces of artillery. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 162.

38. Lyon's column was divided into three brigades. The first, commanded by Maj. Samuel D. Sturgis, consisted of a battalion of regular infantry; a battalion of the Second Missouri Infantry; Company I (mounted) of the Second Kansas Infantry; Company D of the First U.S. Cavalry; and Company F (six guns) of the Second U.S. Artillery, for a total of 884 men. The second brigade, under Lt. Col. George L. Andrews, consisted of the First Missouri Infantry; a battalion of regular infantry; and Du Bois's Battery (four guns), a total of 1,116 men. The third brigade, commanded by Col. George Deitzler, consisted of the First Kansas Infantry; the remaining (nonmounted companies) of the Second Kansas Infantry; and the First Iowa Infantry, a total of twenty-two hundred men. Col. John B. Wyman's Thirteenth Illinois Infantry was stationed at Rolla, Missouri, from approximately July 5, 1861, until spring 1862. No other references to members of this unit participating at Wilson's Creek have been found. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 161-62; J. N. Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, 9 vols. (Springfield, Mo.: State Printers, 1900-1902), 1: 605-6.

It soon became evident that we were nearing the enemy's encampment, and we moved forward with great precaution, but as rapidly as possible. Small parties of rebels, acting as pickets, were seen scattering over the hills, to give the alarm, but were partially cut off by our front, who had already advanced close on to the camp. The Kansas 2d occupied the extreme left—the second position of honor—and consequently the firing had commenced sometime before I had a view of the encampment.³⁹

The battle was opened by the Missouri 1st, Colonel Blair's regiment, who encountered a heavy body of infantry, and after a short, but severe contest, the rebels were driven back with a heavy loss.⁴⁰ I am told that the Missouri volunteers behaved with great credit to themselves, fighting against great odds, and only retiring after they had driven back the enemy.

As we moved over a hill which brought a part of the enemy's camp in full view, the fierce rattle of musketry to our left, in a cornfield, told us that the engagement was becoming more general. In this place two companies of Regulars, under command of Captain Plummer and Captain Gilbert, had a fierce contest with a large body of rebels.⁴¹ They fought bravely, but the enemy receiving fresh reinforcements, they were compelled to retire, after having suffered a very heavy loss.⁴²

By this time our artillery had gained a position, planted their batteries, and opened a destructive fire upon the enemy. The fierce roar of the cannon, the whizzing of bombs through the air, the spiteful rattle of musketry, and the clouds of dust raised by the heavy bodies of cavalry, told us that the fight had become general, and that we might expect a share of it before long.

39. The flank positions were the points of greatest danger in the linear tactics employed by Civil War armies. According to an ancient tradition, the right flank was the post of the greatest honor, the left flank the post of the second greatest honor.

40. Col. Francis Blair, Jr., a Republican congressman and staunch supporter of Lyon during the crisis in St. Louis, led his regiment at the battle of Boonville. He then returned to St. Louis and soon went to Washington. His unit was commanded at Wilson's Creek by Lt. Col. George L. Andrews. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, x, 161.

41. Joseph B. Plummer and Charles C. Gilbert graduated from West Point in 1841 and 1846, respectively. Both were captains in the First U.S. Infantry and both were wounded at Wilson's Creek. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 2:180-19, 153-54.

42. Lyon ordered Plummer, with a battalion of three hundred regulars, to cross to the east side of Wilson's Creek to guard the federal left flank. As Plummer's men advanced through John Ray's cornfield they confronted the seven hundred-man Third Louisiana Infantry and the four hundred-man Second Arkansas Mounted Rifles, who fought on foot. About nine hundred of these Southerners charged, driving Plummer back across the creek. The federals were saved from destruction only by Lt. John V. Du Bois' federal battery on Oak Hill, which fired into the advancing Southerners' flank and rear. Having suffered eighty casualties, the majority of Plummer's men remained in reserve there after. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 161.

Slowly, but steadily, the Second Kansas moved on through the valley, in the direction of a ravine, to the left of which, on a hill our artillery was belching forth its death dealing missiles, and where our infantry was scattering destruction among the ranks of the enemy.⁴³ The roar of artillery and musketry was incessant, but our boys marched on with a firm, steady step, resolved to meet the foe with a brave front. We filed up the ravine, formed our line of battle, immediately at the foot of the hill, in sight of the enemy, and we halted to await further orders. Around us lay scattered the dead, and from different directions, wounded men were hobbling in, or being carried on the shoulders of their comrades, some horribly mangled, and covered with blood, and others gasping their last breath. Here, in my opinion, we passed through the most severe trial of the day. As yet, we had not caught that excitement of the battle which makes one perfectly reckless of danger. We were cool, unexcited, and had ample time to contemplate our chances of escape, and the danger that awaited us. Time was given for reflection, and I doubt not it was well improved. The suspense was painful, and plainly visible in every countenance. We knew that our brave comrades were contending against fearful odds, and we longed to give them all the assistance we could; and still we felt that perhaps it would be our last struggle for the support of the Union. This suspense lasted for about, or near, two hours. In the meantime the Kansas 1st had been called out, fought nobly, and retired with credit, taking a position near Totten's Battery.⁴⁴

At last the order came for the Kansas 2d to move to the front. In an instant every man was on his feet, ready to march. The spell was broken, and all that was thought of was the work before them. Colonel Mitchell took his position at the head of our little band—only about four hundred—and up the hill we moved passing Totten's Battery, the Kansas 1st, and several other regiments who had fallen back to rest.⁴⁵ As we filed up the steep ascent, we passed numbers of men who had "fought their last battle," and were sleeping their last sleep; and near the battery I saw large pools of blood. Still the column moved on, firmly, until the summit of the hill was reached. Company B, Captain McClure, was not with us, having

43. The hill mentioned, previously unnamed, was soon called Bloody Hill.

44. Born in Pennsylvania, James Totten graduated from West Point in 1841. His coolness under fire and skill in directing his guns was an important factor at Wilson's Creek. He ended the war as a brigadier general and died in 1871. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 1: 966.

45. The Second Kansas actually took six hundred men into the battle. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 162.

been detached as skirmishers, under command of Major Cloud, and as we were marching by a left flank, Company K, Captain Tholen, was in front, followed by Company G, Captain Russell.⁴⁶ Soon after reaching the summit of the hill, and before we had formed in line of battle, the front came upon a large body of the enemy, said to have been Cherokee Indians, who were concealed in the grass and brush.⁴⁷ When within about thirty yards of them, they opened upon us a most terrific and destructive fire. It seemed as if the entire line, about three hundred yards, was fringed with a perfect blaze of fire and smoke, and the bullets rattled around us, and through our ranks, like hail. Capt. Tholen's company delivered their fire, and broke into confusion, falling back upon Capt. Russell's company. Of course our ranks were somewhat broken, but the "Union Guards," true to their pledge made their friends, stood their ground, discharging their pieces right into the faces of the enemy, and only fell back into line, when ordered by their Captain. The whole regiment was formed into line of battle, about twenty yards back of where Company K received the first fire, and in a moment or two we were pouring back into the ranks of the enemy, who still remained under cover, a most destructive fire of musketry. After our line had been formed, we stood to our places as firm as rocks, every man feeling it his duty to load and fire as fast as he could. For about twenty minutes as incessant fire was kept up on both sides, when at last the enemy broke, and the field was left to us, with the exception of an occasional straggler, who, more bold than the rest, had remained to give us a parting salute; but as soon as their heads popped above the brush, a well directed ball from some of the boys, would settle them forever. Soon after the fire had ceased, two men came riding up to our rear. One inquired of Capt. Russell whether he could pass down our rear. The Captain suspecting him to be a Secessionist, ordered him to halt, but instead of halting, he put spurs to his horse and tried to escape. The Captain immediately drew his revolver and fired, the shot taking effect, but not fatally. He immediately fired again, together with three others with muskets, when both horse and rider fell, mortally wounded. Lieut. R. Newell went up to him, found him nearly dead, and removed from his person a fine revolver

and sabre.⁴⁸ He stated that he was an officer in the Secession army. I had the pleasure of firing at this rebel, but can't say whether or not I hit him.

In this charge Col. Mitchell received a dangerous, but not fatal, wound, and was removed from the field. Lieut. Col. Blair had his horse shot from under him, and Acting Adjutant R. Lines, of Waubesa, also had his horse shot from under him.⁴⁹ Major Cloud being absent skirmishing, and Col. Mitchell wounded, the command of our regiment fell upon Lieut. Col. Blair, assisted by Adjutant Lines. Both behaved with cool bravery, and constantly exposed to a raking fire, rode along the line, directing and encouraging the boys. In this charge, we met with our heaviest loss; and here it was, immediately in the rear of Company G, that Gen. Lyon fell dead, the ball entering near his heart. A moment before he fell, I was by the side of his horse, then falling back into line, and heard him cheer the boys on, in his own clear, calm voice. The next moment, I heard that he was killed. His body was carried from the field to the ambulance by Lieut. Shryer, of Co. K, A. Keplar and Ed. Spurlock, of Co. G, Kansas 2d, and not by his Aids, as stated by a correspondent of the Missouri Democrat.⁵⁰ At the time he fell, none of his Aids were near him; and as the Iowa 1st was some distance down the hill at the time, it is not possible that he could have been leading them on to a charge, as stated in the Democrat.⁵¹

This was my first battle—the first time in my life that I had men shoot at me, I returning their shots as well as I could, and seeing men fall dead at my side. I cannot say that I was frightened, for there is an excitement about the matter that completely banishes fear, and makes one blind to the danger around him. I saw the men fall, heard their groans, saw the enemy and heard their bullets

48. Robert Newell, a third lieutenant in Company G, was killed later in the action. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 74.

49. Charles W. Blair of Fort Scott was not related to the famous Blairs of Missouri. He served as lieutenant colonel of the Second Kansas until he resigned on October 9, 1861. He was later lieutenant colonel, and then colonel, of the Fourteenth Kansas Infantry, and he served as commander of Fort Scott and the Third Kansas Militia Brigade during Sterling Price's 1864 raid. Edward C. D. Lines of Wabunsee served as a "third" lieutenant in Company B, was wounded in the battle, promoted to second lieutenant on August 31, 1861, and mustered out with the regiment on October 31, 1861. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 67, 68, 471.

50. Gustavus Schroyer (spelled Shryer by "M.") served in Company K, Andrew Keplar was a private in Company G, and Marsh. E. Spurlock served as a corporal in Company G. All three mustered out with the regiment on October 31, 1861. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 74, 77. There are numerous conflicting accounts of Lyon's death. Samuel J. Crawford, who commanded Company E of the Second Kansas and later served as governor of Kansas, left one such account, which is probably among of the most accurate. See *Kansas in the Sixties* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1911), 32-33.

51. While both regiments claim the honor of having Lyon with them at the time of his death, the Second Kansas has the stronger claim.

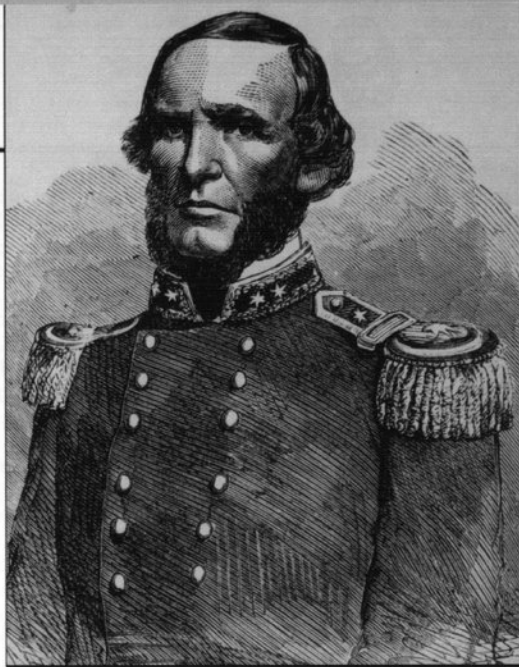
46. James R. McClure of Junction City commanded Company B; William Tholen of Leavenworth commanded Company K; and Avra P. Russell commanded Company G. All three mustered out with the regiment October 31, 1861. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 68, 77, 74.

47. One company of mounted Cherokees, commanded by Capt. Joel Mayes, participated in the battle. W. Craig Gaines, *The Confederate Cherokees: John Drew's Regiment of Mounted Rifles* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 9.

whistling around me, with, I believe, as much unconcern as I would at witnessing a fire into a covey of quails. I had too much to attend to, to think of getting frightened.

For about half an hour, we held the ground undisturbed. Not a gun was fired. In the mean time, I drew some "grub" from my "haversack," and made a tolerably comfortable meal. It was rather a novel "hotel" in which to "dine," but still I relished it, notwithstanding cannon were booming from the opposite hills, with an occasional "shell" whizzing over my head.

But this calm did not last long. A messenger soon brought word that the enemy, in perfect swarms, were pressing up the hill towards us. Capt. Chenoweth, who happened to be near us, of the 1st Kansas, saw the position of affairs, and called for a battery, to rake them as they came up.⁵² Capt. Totten at length consented to send two pieces, under command of a Lieutenant.⁵³ The pieces were planted, and the Lieutenant left immediately, leaving only a Sergeant and a few privates to work them. Major Cloud took charge of them, and they fired some ten or twelve shots into the advancing foe, with fearful effect. Still they advanced, and soon opened upon us one of the most terrific fires I had heard during the day. Before the firing had commenced, we had been ordered to lay down. By this means we were not so much exposed. Part of the boys were down, others standing, all busy pouring a hot volley into the enemy. Co. G was in the rear of the two pieces, and it seemed to me as if the main fire was directed at this point. It was a perfect blaze, and the balls flew like hail over our heads, cutting the limbs off the trees over our heads at a fearful rate. The artillery soon



Brig. Gen. Ben McCulloch

left, the Sergeant remarking that they had no officers, and that it was hot work. But the Kansas Second stood firm, and soon after had the satisfaction of seeing the enemy retreat down the hill. A second time we were victorious—a second time we had repulsed the enemy, who, in this last charge, certainly outnumbered us four to one. This was the last charge that was made. And here again the correspondent of the Missouri Democrat is at fault. The Iowa 1st did not engage in the last charge. The Kansas 2d, part of the Kansas 1st, and a part of the Regulars, were the only ones who took part in it. The Regulars and Kansas 1st were on the left,

some fifty yards further down the hill, while the other troops, with the exception of the artillery, had left the field. The two pieces of artillery did good service; and, had it not been for them, I fear but few, if any, of the 2d would have remained to tell the story of the battle. The enemy would have flanked us on the right, and cut us to pieces.

On the death of Gen. Lyon, the command of our forces fell upon Major Sturgis, who soon after ordered a retreat. The Kansas 2d was the last regiment to leave the field, and the only regiment that left with all the companies present, and in perfect order. We left slowly, followed by the artillery, and soon were off the field.⁵⁴ As we were leaving, a shell thrown by the enemy fell and burst near us, killing our Third Lieutenant, Robert Newell, from Oskaloosa. He was struck on the back of the head, and killed instantly. He was a young man of sterling worth, and as true a heart as fought on the field. During the whole time he was at his post, cool and firm. His loss is keenly felt by us all.

I cannot speak of our officers and men in too high terms. Each had confidence in the other—all worked together, and all have won laurels that they may wear

52. Bernard P. Chenoweth of Elwood commanded Company A, and mustered out with the regiment on June 16, 1864. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 23.

53. This was Second Lt. George O. Sokalski of the Second Dragoons, a native of New York and 1861 graduate of West Point. He was conducting regular army recruits from Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, to Fort Leavenworth in June 1861 when war broke out. Accompanying Sturgis' column, he was assigned a section (two guns) under Totten. *Cullum, Biographical Register*, 1: 545-546; Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 56.

54. By Sturgis' orders, Du Bois' Battery, the Second Missouri Infantry battalion, and the Second Kansas formed a line on the northern spur of Oak Hill to cover the federal withdrawal. Capt. Frederick Steele's battalion of regulars formed the federals' rear guard. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 130-31.

with pride. I cannot distinguish between the officers. From our little Major down to the Lieutenants, all were cool, prompt and efficient. I find a great deal depends upon good officers.

Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the officers and men who fought this battle. There are a few individual exceptions of which I have heard, but they are not worth mentioning—perhaps they could not help acting cowardly. In fact, the fearful odds against us were enough to alarm almost any one.

I cannot call this a defeat. Long before our regiment left the field, the enemy had commenced retreating, and burning their trains. This I saw with my own eyes.⁵⁵ Had Gen. Lyon lived, I think we would have held the field. That they did not follow us, looks as though they had been handled rather roughly, and were willing to quit.

Our command returned to Springfield the same evening.⁵⁶ Arrangements were at once made for bringing our wounded into Springfield, and by 12 o'clock all were safely placed in the hospital, under the care of our Surgeons. Our wounded were treated very kindly by the enemy, while on the field, and in most cases they had been supplied with water.

On Sunday morning we commenced our return for Rolla. Six days of tedious, hard marching, brought us safely within five miles of the place, without losing anything or even meeting an attack.⁵⁷



It is impossible to get a correct estimate of the force of the enemy. Various persons, and many of their own members, say it was from 28,000 to 35,000. I am certain they outnumbered us four to one.

The following is a correct list of the killed and wounded of the Second Regiment:⁵⁸

KILLED.

Co. A. — Privates—James Roberts, Eri B. Morley.
Co. E. — T. A. Harrold.
Co. G. — Lieut. Robt. Newell.
Co. H. — Private—Hiram Burt.

WOUNDED.

Col. R. B. Mitchell, severely.

Co. A. — Lieut. T. Fulton, seriously; Corp. A. W. Knowles; Private—N. P. Gregg, slightly.
Co. B. — Corp. A. H. Lamb, slightly; Private—W. F. Allen, slightly; Oliver Wilber, missing.
Co. C. — Privates—A. Moody, Leonan Fox.
Co. D. — Sergt. Sam Houston, slightly; Corp. H. M. Dyke. Privates—N. Schuyler; J. W. Longfellow; M. C. Glathart.
Co. E. — J. F. Walker; H. S. Shannon; A. Johnson; Z. Norris; V. Osborn; W. F. Noble. Missing—Lt. A. R. Morton.
Co. F. — Sergt. W. Betts; Corp. W. N. Godley; Privates—D. Mesker; Geo. Spain; Chas. Adkins; Pittman; Thos. Copp; H. C. Adams; Wm. T. Sudberry; John Wright. Missing Sergt. F. Newell; Privates—G. W. Hull; H. Barton; John Peterson.
Co. G. — Lieut. C. P. Wiggins; Privates—Daniel McFarland, in the left arm near the shoulder; Wm. Coope, in the

55. The Southerners did not burn their trains, nor did they retreat. The writer apparently misinterpreted the chaos in the Southern camps caused by Union artillery fire (particularly that of Sigel), which ignited tents and baggage wagons. Two to three thousand unarmed Southerners were in camp during the battle. Some of these were marched off the field for their protection, while other troops moved south in response to Sigel's attack. This might have looked like a retreat to a federal observer on Oak Hill. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 67-71, 93.

56. The retreating federals reached Springfield at approximately 5:00 P.M. *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 1 (1880), 3, 69.

57. The Southerners failed to press their beaten foe for several reasons. Short on supplies and ammunition, they delayed to distribute captured federal stocks. Rampant looting also disorganized the victors as did the need to care for their own and the enemy's wounded, which

simply overwhelmed local capacity. There were also rumors, which proved false, that federal reinforcements rapidly were approaching Springfield. As even veteran armies rarely were able to pursue effectively following combat, it is not surprising that Price and McCulloch were temporarily paralyzed. *Ibid.*, 3, 746; Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 135-36.

58. There are numerous differences in the spelling of names between this list and those appearing in the *Report of the Adjutant General*, 67-77, which credits the regiment with five killed, seven mortally wounded, forty-three wounded, one missing, and one captured. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 162, reports five killed, fifty-nine wounded, and six missing.

side; Geo. De Sanno, in the head, slightly; John Dawson, slightly; Abe Newell in the hand.

Co. H. — Lieut. C. S. Hill, slightly; Sergt. C. A. Archer, severely; Corp. H. H. Luttle; Corp. Thos. Miller; Privates—John Curtis; John Clark; Samuel Hammills; Fred. Hirth; Elijah Hampton; Chas. Kiger; Michael Myers; Michael McLain; Geo. W. Reed; Ed Trask.

Co. K. — Sergt. Aug. Tonsoheidt; Corp. T. Schiller; Privates—Henry Noakamph; John Mansh; Carl Longyoe; Solomon Elk; Wm. Cast; John Gerlings; Zac. Conrad; John Conrad.

Most of them were left at Springfield, and at last accounts were doing well; of Co. G., D. McFarland, Geo. De Sanno, and Wm. Coope were left at Springfield. Sergt. Hamblin is also there. He has been sick for some time, and was not in the engagement. Ed. Phillips was also sick and left there.

Col. R. B. Mitchell was doing well at last accounts.

Our entire loss is estimated at about one thousand two hundred, killed and wounded. The loss of the enemy was very great. According to their own estimate it reaches over five thousand.⁵⁹ Some persons who remained in Springfield until most of their wounded had been brought in, state that almost every house there had been converted into a hospital. According to their own statement, one Louisiana Regiment, the flower of the army, was cut to pieces—not more than twenty left.⁶⁰ This was one of the Regiments that made the second charge on the Kansas 2nd, and received the fire of one of the pieces of artillery. They were evidently very much cut up and crippled, else they would have followed us.

I do not wish to rob any regiment or company of their hard earned honors, but it is conceded, by all hands, that the Kansas 2nd made the bravest stand and best fight of any of the troops on the field. Certain it is that we were ordered to the most dangerous position on the field, and held it for over two hours, against fearful odds. They have a proud reputation among all the officers, Regulars and Volunteers, and they deserve it. Major Sturgis remarked, in the hearing of some of our officers, that he did not know whether it was ignorance of our danger, that made us stand, or what, but that he never saw men fight so bravely; and that if he wanted to storm hell, he would call upon the Kansas 2nd.

59. The federals lost 258 killed, 873 wounded, and 186 missing, for a total of 1,317 casualties. The Southern forces lost 277 killed and 945 wounded, for a total of 1,222 casualties. Losses of 24.5 percent and 12 percent, respectively, made Wilson's Creek remarkably bloody considering the relatively small number of men engaged. See Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 162-64, for a breakdown of losses by unit.

60. The Third Louisiana, which numbered seven hundred effectives, lost nine killed and forty-eight wounded—heavy losses, but far less than rumored. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 162.

I would like to speak of the Kansas 1st in detail, but have not the time. All honor is due them for their noble and gallant bearing.

We are now two miles from Rolla, awaiting further orders. I would not be surprised if we would be with you soon. Governor Robinson is doing his best to have us sent back, to protect our own State and homes. He was in our camp this evening, and spoke to the boys. We are all anxious to get back and have a little rest. We are very much worn out.

From "Cosmopolite," with the First Kansas, dated St. Louis, Missouri, August 23, 1861, published August 27, 1861:

Dear Times: — I have had little time, inclination or opportunity to write, since the late terrible battle at Springfield, where so many of the Kansas boys went down in the death storm that waged so fiercely about them.⁶¹ You will find much better accounts of the battle in the Democrat than I could possibly give, as I saw nothing save our gallant First sternly pressing upon the legions of Arkansas and Louisiana troops. Nor must the Second be overlooked. Side by side with us they bore the brunt of the battle on the left, during the whole of that fearful time, and the mortality list will show how fierce was the conflict. It was in truth "Greek meeting Greek," when those gallant men of the further South charged up to the very muzzles of our batteries.⁶² Though they are enemies, they are honorable ones, and brave as men well can be. Once, twice, thrice, they moved in perfect order up the slopes, only as often to be driven back, leaving heaps of slain, upon the bloody field. All unite in praising the stern courage of the Kansas boys; and in answer to Gov. Robinson's application, Gen. Fremont said he could not spare such men as the Kansas boys had proved themselves.⁶³ Kansas loses many

61. The First Kansas ranked fifth among all federal infantry regiments in the war for the number of killed or mortally wounded in a single engagement. It lost 77 killed, 187 wounded, and 20 missing, for a total of 284 casualties out of the 800 men taken into battle. The First Missouri ranked sixth, with total casualties of 103 out of 775. *Ibid.*, 161-62; Long and Long, *The Civil War Day by Day*, 717.

62. "When Greeks joined Greeks, then was the tug of war" is from *The Rival Queens, or, The Death of Alexander the Great* (1677) by poet Nathaniel Lee (1655-1692). John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, 13th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1955), 291.

63. Known as "the Pathfinder of the West" for his explorations in the early 1840s, John Charles Fremont was a former U.S. Army officer, Mexican War veteran, U.S. senator from California, and in 1856 the first presidential candidate of the Republican party. Commissioned a major general in the regular army on May 14, 1861, Fremont was given command of the Department of the West, with headquarters in St. Louis. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 160-61.

of her best and bravest, but they fell nobly, and all fill honored graves. Keep their memory ever green in the hearts of those at home! The list as published in the St. Louis papers, is nearly correct. A few names are misspelled, and one or two perhaps of the lost are omitted. Of our Co., (G) only two were killed. Corp'l C. T. Harrison, of Maryland, and Benson Boyles.⁶⁴

The night after the battle, I saw the Conservative's correspondent, poor Frank Tracy; he was shot through the left breast, dangerously it would seem, but he bore it without a murmur. He was left in Springfield, as were Lieutenant McGonigle, Capt. McFarland, and Capt. Swift, all very severely and dangerously wounded.⁶⁵ Lieut. McCarty was shot through the left arm. It would be vain to attempt to particularize as to the bravery of officers or men, but I cannot forbear mentioning one or two of our regiment who came immediately under my notice. Col. Deitzler proved himself the true soldier—calm and collected. He was in the thickest of the fight, until his horse was shot under him, and he received a severe wound in the leg. Major Halderman was so excited as to be of no service in the field, and the command devolving upon Adj't Nash; he evinced a coolness and disregard of danger remarkable on the first "foughten field." Lt. James Ketner, of Co. G, was calm as on parade, standing erect and firm amid the terrible shower of iron and lead, all day. Having secured a long double-barreled shot gun dropped by one of the retreating rebels, he used it with telling effect upon the advancing lines of the enemy, until a ball struck the rammer out of his hand and passed through his blouse in rather close proximity to his breast. Our position as supporting four guns on the left of Totten's battery, was one of extreme danger, as the enemy's artillery was, in a great measure, directed towards us; but we have it to say that not a man of the Kansas First flinched from his duty during those terrible hours, the great difficulty being to keep the men back.

In another battle the disparity of numbers will not be so great, as regiments are constantly arriving from Indiana, Ohio and Illinois. There are now probably 30,000 troops in and about this city, with a large force at Ironton,

Rolla, Jefferson City, and other threatened points. Four 32 pounders have been mounted at Rolla, on a high hill, commanding the country for miles around.⁶⁶ The cry is, "Back to Springfield!" and I hope that this will be the first movement; but we must go in force. Such battles as that at Springfield, only render the foe more arrogant, and though the loss is not great, are productive of much evil to our cause.

The wounded are quartered in the new House of Refuge, which is being used as a hospital, and though the accommodations are not of the best, things are rapidly assuming a more healthy condition under the personal supervision of our energetic and able Major Gen. Fremont.

Lieut. Wiggan, of the Second, is in town, wounded in the breast. Capts. Walker and Roberts, are also here, the former having been very unwell for some weeks.⁶⁷

Lieut. Ketner has been appointed to the command of Co. K, made vacant by the unexplained absence of Capt. Fairchild from the field.⁶⁸

The regiment now at Rolla, is very much in want of its equipments, having been without tents since the battle.

From "One Who Was There," with Company G, First Kansas, no place or date, published September 6, 1861:

I had been thinking of giving you a chapter of incidents concerning and growing out of the late battle at Springfield; but having delayed so long, one or two only come up to my recollection clearly.⁶⁹

The night of the arrival of the wounded in St. Louis, a crowd of the Secesh had congregated at the Planter's House—which, by the way, is their headquarters—and were discussing in not a very quiet way, the fight and its results, as usual, of course, claiming a glorious victory. It so happened that a member of the Second Regiment—the acting Orderly of Col. Mitchell, was present, and he promptly took up the gage of discussion thrown down by the "go-to Tom Harris" portion of the "Jacksonian"

64. Charles T. Harrison apparently was killed outright; Benson Boyles died on August 25 of the wounds he received at Wilson's Creek. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 46.

65. Pvt. Frank M. Tracy of Elwood recovered from his wounds. He was eventually promoted to first lieutenant and transferred from Company A to Company I. Peter McFarland of Leavenworth commanded Company C, and he resigned December 11, 1862. Francis P. Swift of Lawrence commanded Company D, and he resigned May 26, 1862. *Ibid.*, 23, 25, 29, 33.

66. This position was named Fort Wyman in honor of Col. John B. Wyman, commander of the Thirteenth Illinois Infantry.

67. Charles P. Wiggins served as second lieutenant in Company G and mustered out with the regiment on October 31, 1861. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 74.

68. For reasons unknown, Fairchild resigned his commission the night before the battle. *Ibid.*, 57.

69. The battle at Wilson's Creek was sometimes referred to as the battle of Oak Hill or even the battle of Springfield. The latter term passed out of usage when a battle was fought within the city of Springfield on January 8, 1863.

school present.⁷⁰ The Orderly was asked what the Federal forces were fighting for, to which he replied: "Seven hundred wagons and \$280,000 in gold."⁷¹ In fact, gentlemen, we accomplished every purpose for which we fought." Secesh couldn't see the case in this light, and wanted the matter illustrated, which the Orderly did in this wise: "Suppose," said he, "that I had a bushel of onions here which you were endeavoring to get possession of. Suppose further that I should set down the basket, meet you half way and give you such a confounded threshing that you could not follow.

Suppose then that I should pick up the basket and walk off—which would have the best of it?" Here a perceptible smile appeared upon the faces of the bystanders, and one of them broke out with, "dry up Dick, he's got the onions on you." Secesh subsided amid the snickers of the crowd.

Very few of the Kansas boys had any idea that a fight was to occur, even after the first few rifle shots from the enemy's pickets, and on the way out from Springfield, bets were freely offered and taken that the rebels would run as they always had done previously. However, when the Missouri First was ordered to the front, and Totten's dogs began to bark, there was a sudden change of opinion among the boys as they lay in reserve, startled occasionally by the shrill scream of a shell overhead. We had been "spoiling for a fight," and the prospect was that our desire would soon be gratified. The First was ostensibly in reserve, but the quick patter of the balls among the leaves, the dull "thud, thud" as they struck the trees, the strange tenor of the grape, combined with the heavy bass of full balls and shell, made some of us think, perhaps, that it was a very queer reserve. I would not undertake to say that there was not a tremor of the lips, a quickening of the pulse, nor that hearts did not beat faster than usual as the long roll of musketry and the heavy booming of our batteries broke upon



the many listening ears. The bets made in such a jocose spirit, but a few hours before, might have been drawn without objection. It was here that Lieut. Dyer, of Co. B was killed—the first of the regiment who fell.⁷² Co. B was on our left, and the Lieut. was at the head of the company, vis a vis, with the writer of this article. He had raised up to notice something on the field, when a ball struck him full in the mouth, going out at the back of his head. He fell back dead, without a groan. From our position we could see little of the severe contest that was going on in front; but the thick clouds of sulphurous

smoke rolled up and floated towards us, inciting a strange feeling, a desire to be engaged in the struggle. There is an effect unaccountable and indescribable, produced from the first snuff of war upon the faculties of those to whom the carnage and roar of battle comes with such a strange newness, so to speak.

Then came the order—"Kansas First to the front!" and with one good hearty cheer, the regiment rose to its feet. As we advanced, the gallant Missouri First fell back slowly and in good order, all the time hurling death upon the devoted ranks of the South.—On, through the thick woods, where the chivalric and devoted LYON bestrode his favorite dapple grey, with his old felt hat aloft in his right hand, his small grey eyes sparkling with a fierce light, he met us. "Forward like men," was his order, and cheerfully the regiment obeyed. There was the gallant Deitzler, bestriding his "old whitey," his lips set with a fierce determination, but calm as on parade, riding along the line. Here was our Adjutant, mounted on a diminutive pony, passing quickly over the field. There was a temporary lull in the storm; but each one felt that the decisive hour had come. In dense masses up the slopes, came the men of Mississippi, of Louisiana and Missouri.⁷³ On they move, almost seeming resistless, when the three guns forming the left section of the gallant Totten's battery, hurled forth its red ruin upon their ranks; and then, with a shout that echoed above the

70. A reference to Gov. Claiborne Jackson's secessionist followers.

71. Although the dollar amount is almost certainly exaggerated, funds were removed from the Springfield bank. R. I. Holcomb, ed., *History of Green County, Missouri* (St. Louis: Western Historical Co., 1883; reprint, Clinton, Mo.: The Printery, 1969), 314.

72. Second Lt. John W. Dyer was from Wyandotte. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 26.

73. There were no Mississippi troops with the Southern army.

roar of battle, the Kansas First rushed for the first time upon the foe. Halting within fifty yards of the already thinned ranks of the Confederates, the deadly minies pour forth volley after volley, in such rapid succession that it seems one continuous discharge, re-echoing from the hills like the sharp, quick crashes of thunder in an April storm.⁷⁴ Here Lieut. McCarty received a ball in the left arm. It startled him a little perhaps; but pressing with his right hand upon the injured limb, he says, with rather more energy than is usual for him, "Zounds, I'm shot!" and he makes a retrograde movement for lint and a bandage.



And then Tubbs—Tubbs, the butt of the whole company, of whom many amusing things might be said—holds up his shattered arm with an attempt to smile, and goes off to the hospital wagon. Poor fellow! We saw his name among the list of those left at Springfield, and after it the sad word "doubtful."⁷⁵ And then as the chivalry disappear down the hill, we notice our wounded upon the ground.⁷⁶ The firing has become heavy on our right; but it will not do to leave our brave fellows alone upon that dreary hill side to die. Poor Boyles—made famous among our men by his night adventure among the Rangers—lies with his "back to the sod, and his feet to the foe."⁷⁷ He is shot in the groin with a minie ball. Catching a stray horse, we carefully lay him across the saddle, and move away. McCormick, who fell near, makes a desperate effort, and with a ball through the breast, slowly follows us, aided by his comrades in arms.⁷⁸

74. Rifled firearms were referred to as "minies" because of the ammunition they used. The so-called "minie bullet" or "minie ball" developed by French army officer C. E. Minie allowed rifles to be loaded as rapidly as the less accurate smoothbore musket. While the data available is slim, Wilson's Creek probably had a higher percentage of soldiers armed with smoothbore weapons, including many flintlocks, than any other major Civil War battle.

75. Henry Tubbs of Leavenworth was a private in Company G. He recovered from the wounds he received at Wilson's Creek and remained with the regiment until he mustered out with the unit on June 17, 1864. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 48.

76. "Chivalry" is a derogatory reference to Southerners.

77. A reference to Benson Boyles.

78. Charles McCormick of Leavenworth was discharged for disability on October 5, 1861, as a result of wounds received at Wilson's Creek. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 47.

We take them to the rear, furnish them with a canteen of muddy water, and then hurry away to rejoin the company.

The regiment is in line, and with guns all ready, awaits the next attack. Not long do we wait however. On the right, the rattle of musketry is growing fierce. Dubois is working his guns with a rapidity which tells how desperate he is beset.⁷⁹ Nearer and nearer comes the storm, and then again the contest rages all along the line. On our right, the hardy Second, headed by Col. Mitchell and the gallant Blair—who are coolly sur-

veying the field; to the left are the brave Iowas, moving with a firm and steady tread to the front. But the enemy is desperate now from his repulse, and will exert all his energies to silence those dreadful guns, which are pouring such a shower of death upon them. Patiently the First awaits their coming; but the gallant Deitzler is not with us, and it is whispered with white lips that he is dead. We could not believe it. Dead? when, in that short time, he had retrieved the almost universal unpopularity of the past three months, and rendered himself the idol of the regiment? But it was no time for surmise; there was work—hot work, too—deadly work—at hand, as we felt when the legions of McCulloch came again to the charge. But they were the second time driven back, for men must be encased in mail to withstand that terrible storm of bullets.⁸⁰ And then again there was a momentary stillness, unbroken by the crash of the rifle, or the booming of the cannon. Below we could see them forming for a third, and, as it proved, last attempt to break the line where they had been twice repulsed.

Soon the enemy's batteries open again, and we lie flat upon the ground to escape the effect of his shot and shell. There is a peculiarity in this firing to the experienced ear of Capt. Totten, and he ordered a pause in the firing of his

79. John V. Du Bois graduated from West Point in 1855 and served with the Mounted Riflemen. He was posted at Fort Leavenworth when war broke out and was assigned an artillery command. He later became colonel of the First Missouri Artillery and led a brigade at the battles of luka and Corinth, Mississippi. Thereafter he served primarily in staff positions in the Department of Missouri. Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 2: 399.

80. Mail is a reference to chain mail armor.

guns. He thinks that Sigel may have mistaken us for the Confederates; but a long look through his glass seems to satisfy him, and the cannonade is renewed. Directly in front of us, upon a hill, distant about two thousand yards, is a heavy gun, the balls from which are coming unpleasantly close. Loading his favorite with a full ball, the Captain sights the gun himself, fires, and we anxiously watch the effect. A group of perhaps fifty have been standing around the hostile battery, but as the shot strikes, they seem to disperse suddenly—there is a hurried movement from the spot, and that gun causes us no more inconvenience. It was here Corporal Harrison was killed in the struggle which followed.⁸¹ Poor Charley! he wanted to know how long a battle could last as severe as this one was proving. Which had been the longest duration among the battles of which we had read? We spoke of Lundy's Lane, of Buena Vista and others, as hotly contested, and, perhaps, with Wellington, we might have wished for some Blucher, or night to come.⁸²

But they are coming again. On the right, though we do not see them, are the Louisianians; in the center three Arkansas regiments, led by the redoubtable Price; on the left, a regiment of repudiators from Mississippi. The thick underbrush hides their approach, but the Arkansans have a Union flag, which indicates a belief that Sigel is advancing to form a junction with our column.⁸³ But we are getting ahead of our story. We are waiting their approach. Yonder to the right lies the brave Lyon; his body is being borne from the field by the men of the Second; but his words are yet in our ears: "Now, boys, once more for young Kansas and the old flag!" He did not look familiar then, for the red current flowed from a wound in the head, and the beautiful

gray which had served him so well, was gone. Col. Mitchell has been taken to the rear. Jones, Agniel, Pratt, Swift, McFarland, McGonigle, Dyer, Newell, McCarty, and others, are not with us.⁸⁴ Capt. Chenoweth commands the six companies on the right of the First; the four on the left seem without a leader. Now the enemy advances. Capt. Totten asks anxiously, "Who commands this division?" No one responds, and he repeats the question. Still no answer; and passing in front of the division, he asks: "Men, will you support this battery?" There is a shout of assent, but hardly has the echo died away, when "this battery" opens on the advancing columns of the foe. Well might Gen. Hughes say it was a ripe harvest of death, for the reports from the rebel forces are, that but forty of the Mississippi regiment answered to their names after that terrible day.⁸⁵ The crash of the guns is terrific, as shot after shot is hurled from the already heated batteries of Totten and Dubois. The timber is so dense that the artillery horses cannot be used effectually, and they grasp the wheels and turn the howitzers into position.⁸⁶

Meantime the Arkansas regiments are advancing on the Second Kansas, and the right of the First laying close down to the ground and partly hidden by the brushwood. Col. Blair, of the Second, is watching closely their advance, and as the long line of grey emerges over the brow of the hill, he shouts his order—"attention, battalion—fire low," ending off with an expletive more forcible than polite. A sheet of fire ran along the line; again the batteries belch forth their heavy thunder, and the rattle of small arms becomes incessant and terrible. Again the Confederates are driven down the slopes, but their way is marked in blood, and one may trace the red streams trickling down the stony declivity. The firing grows fainter to the right—a few shots are fired at the retiring forces, and again the field is still.

And now, sitting calmly on his gallant bay, Maj. Sturgis says, "Fall back slowly to the other hill." In good order the command obeys; but halts upon reaching the summit, to await another attack. It is not made.—That fierce onset was the rebels' last. Their train and camp are in flames, which blaze fiercely through the intervening timber—their legions are broken and disordered, and full four thousand of their men are weltering in their blood upon that fatal field.

81. Charles T. Harrison was from Leavenworth. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 46.

82. Lundy's Lane and Buena Vista were closely contested battles during the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, respectively. Napoleon had nearly defeated Wellington at Waterloo when the arrival of Marshal Blucher's Prussians late in the day turned the tide. During the battle Wellington reportedly remarked, "Give me Blucher, or give me night."

83. The flag probably was waved by Col. John Gratiot's Third Arkansas Infantry, which may have been displaying the captured colors of the Third Missouri Infantry. Sigel's column never joined with Lyon. After bombarding the Southern camps from two different locations, thereby causing tremendous confusion, Sigel placed his men on a rise near Sharp's farm in a position blocking the Wire Road. This effectively cut the enemy's retreat and fulfilled the federal battle plan. Thereafter, however, Sigel remained inexplicably inactive, even though his position would have allowed him to shell the Southerners attacking Lyon on Oak Hill from the rear. Around 8:30 A.M. Sigel mistook the approaching Third Louisiana for the gray-clad First Iowa, and ordered his men to hold their fire because he believed Lyon had broken through. The Louisianians fired at point blank range and spearheaded an attack that drove Sigel's column from the field in panic with the loss of a quarter of its force and all but one piece of artillery. Bearss, *The Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 87-91, 123.

84. Levant L. Jones of Olathe, a first lieutenant of Company F, Caleb S. Pratt of Lawrence, a second lieutenant in Company D, and Camille Aguiel of Atchison, a first lieutenant in Company K, were all killed in action. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 33, 41, 57.

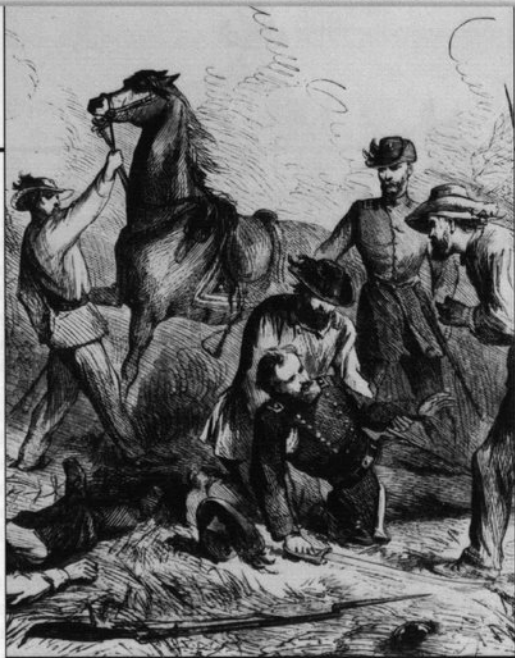
85. Probably a reference to a widely circulated account of the battle by Col. John T. Hughes of Brig. Gen. William Y. Slack's division of the Missouri State Guard. This was printed as a *Reporter* "Extra" by the Plattsburg (Missouri) *Reporter* on August 17, 1861. Copy in John K. Hulston Library, Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, Springfield, Mo.

86. Bloody Hill was not heavily wooded except in isolated patches such as the one described here.

Worn down with exertion and pressed by hunger our force is led by the heroic Major from Wilson's Creek, four miles through the timber and out upon the prairie, where we halt and form, anticipating pursuit, though such fear was, as it proved, groundless.

Of the toilsome march to Rolla, I will not speak here. Just as the retrograde movement commenced, the writer encountered the popular Drum Major of the regiment, who had been rendering much assistance during the day to the wounded.⁸⁷ We remarked that it had been a pretty warm time, to which Billy responded, "yes, by _____, and it is not half over yet." "Oh," said we, "it'll be all right when we get out on the prairie."—"Yes," said Billy, dubiously, "but how in h___ll are we to get out on the prairie?" However, in spite of the Drum Major's doubts, we did reach the prairie, and that without the least difficulty.

The men had all been without anything to eat during the day; but as soon as the retrograde movement was known in Springfield, wagons were loaded with bread, and sent to meet the weary ones returning. Water had been very much of a luxury during the day, and the rush towards wells and springs was perfectly frightful, though long before reaching Springfield, every fortunate possessor of a canteen had succeeded in filling it. The bread was fast demolished, and with relish which few in the city feel for the choice edibles at even "Doc." Insley's Mansion House. The close of the day with me may well be made the finale of this imperfect sketch. Imagine, dear reader, a long line of men—perhaps five thousand—to a great extent in disorder, straggling along the road leading from the battle ground to Springfield. About a mile from the town, a little creek crosses the road, and loses itself in the thick undergrowth on either side. Upon the banks of the creek aforesaid, on the memorable 10th of August, just inside the



The death of General Lyon as it appeared in the 1899 Official and Illustrated War Record.

fence, as the sun was enveloping his broad disk in the foamy clouds of the west, were seated your humble servant, Ol. Hastings and Geo. McKenna, all well known hereabouts, each with a fair supply of apples, a large piece of bread, and a tin cup, which alternated between the creek and as thirsty and hungry a trio of mouths as Wilson's "Run" was productive of.⁸⁸ And thus we leave the field.

Epilogue

Following the battle, the experiences of the First and

Second Kansas diverged sharply. Its term of enlistment having expired, the Second returned to Leavenworth, where the men were treated to a series of celebrations, even as Kansans expressed concern that Price and McCulloch might invade their state. Col. Robert Mitchell soon organized a new regiment, the Second Kansas Cavalry, which contained many of the men who had served in the Second Infantry.⁸⁹

The Southern forces, meanwhile, were beset with a host of difficulties. They were too badly mauled to advance immediately following Wilson's Creek. Price and McCulloch squabbled away the window of opportunity created by the Union retreat from Springfield. The Confederate and Arkansas state troops soon withdrew to Arkansas. Price led the Missouri State Guard to victory at Lexington, Missouri, in September, but logistical difficulties prevented him from holding the territory he gained. Federal forces under Maj. Gen. John C. Fremont returned to Springfield in October. The Union victory at Pea Ridge in March 1862 finally cemented federal control of the region, although Missouri and Kansas

87. The rank of drum major is not listed in the regiment's records. Thomas Dwyer was the senior musician among the noncommissioned officers, and "Billy" may have been his nickname. The only musician named William was Pvt. William H. H. Beck. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 22-23.

88. Oliver Hastings and George McKenna served as privates in Company G, Second Kansas, mustering out with the regiment on October 31, 1861. *Ibid.*, 74, 75.

89. *Ibid.*, 14-15.

witnessed thousands of small skirmishes and guerrilla raids until the closing days of the war.⁹⁰

The First Kansas saw few of these events. Following Wilson's Creek, the regiment was withdrawn to St. Louis and used to garrison various locations in Missouri. It returned to Leavenworth briefly in February 1862 but was then sent east to participate in the Vicksburg campaign. The regiment came back to Leavenworth in June 1864, where the men mustered out, their term of enlistment having expired. Enough men reenlisted to form two companies, which served in Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana until the end of the war.⁹¹

Two years after the battle of Wilson's Creek, some members of the First and Second Kansas—many of them on sick leave, still recovering from wounds—gathered in Leavenworth to honor their fallen comrades and celebrate their accomplishments as members of the Southwest Expedition. Their meeting on August 10, 1863, foreshadowed others that would occur through the long years until sometime in the early twentieth century when the last soldiers who had trod the hills and prairies of Missouri were laid to rest. That first veterans reunion was special, of course, as the war raged unabated and Union victory was by no means certain. But much had changed. In January 1863 Lincoln had issued his Emancipation Proclamation, altering the course and consequences of the war, making it, as many Kansans desired, a struggle that would forever settle the issues that had brought violence and violent men to the borderland

in the mid-1850s. Now, amid champaign and candlelight, the Kansas veterans gathered to reaffirm the meaning of their sacrifices.⁹²

They had never felt defeated. In their eyes Wilson's Creek was as grand and significant a battle as the war had seen. Delivering the main address, John A. Halderman, now a major general commanding the state's militia, described the battle as a Thermopylae that had redeemed the national disgrace of Bull Run and "proved to the world how impotent were the insolent pretensions of Southern traitors." He called the two regiments "the first born of our people, offered as a sacrifice, if need be, upon the altar of liberty, law, and free government." He continued at some length in the flowery tones of nineteenth-century oratory: "No soldiers in this war have earned a brighter record than you did on the 10th of August, 1861. No battle has been fought where more disinterested patriotism, more endurance, more fortitude, or more true Spartan valor was exhibited. . . . You, gentlemen . . . will be known as the soldiers of Lyon's army—as the heroes of Wilson's Creek."⁹³

For modern ears, however, perhaps the best summary of what the Kansas veterans felt that day is found in a simple paraphrase one newspaper gave of the words of Capt. Peter McFarland, who had led Company C of the First Regiment: "He said the grand children of those who had participated in the battle would be proud to refer to it; the name of the gallant Lyon would never be forgotten, nor would the Kansas boys ever forget each other."⁹⁴

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90. Jay Monaghan, *Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 182-204, 239-51.

91. *Report of the Adjutant General*, 8-9.

92. *Ibid.*, 279.

93. *Ibid.*, 280.

94. *Ibid.*, 281.