THE FIRST KANSAS COLORED
—MASSACRE AT POISON SPRINGS

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In late March, 1864, Union Gen. John Milton Thayer led his small Army of the Frontier, including regiments of the First and Second Kansas Colored volunteers, south from Fort Smith, Ark., heading toward the Confederate supply center at Shreveport, La. After three weeks of hard marching through rugged, mountainous terrain, Thayer rendezvoused 110 miles to the south at Arkadelphia with the larger VII Corps commanded by Gen. Frederic Steele. There the combined Union force of 12,000 found itself beset by poor communications, difficult terrain, and aggressive Confederate forces led by Gen. Sterling Price. By the middle of April, the Union expedition was pinned down in the southern Arkansas town of Camden with casualties mounting and supplies diminishing. There, the story of the First Kansas Colored volunteers and the action at Poison Spring began.

The dust and mud of three weeks of almost continuous skirmishing and marching washed from their uniforms, the black soldiers of the First Kansas Colored volunteers rolled out of their blankets early on the morning of April 17 to learn that their regiment had been detailed as guard for a forage train that day. His supply situation now desperate, General Steele decided to risk sending a foraging party, only lightly guarded, beyond his lines to the west in order to resupply his command.1 Following verbal orders from Steele, General Thayer, commanding the Army of the Frontier, dispatched a column of 198 wagons with an escort of 500 infantry of the First Kansas Colored volunteers and an additional 195 cavalry2 with two James guns from the second Indiana Battery to march west from Camden on the Washington road.3

Commanding this foraging expedition was Col. James M. Williams. A quiet, competent leader, Williams had led the First Kansas from its inception in late 1862.4 At Honey Springs the previous summer, the regiment had distinguished itself, although Williams had been badly wounded. But the First Kansas Colored mirrored in microcosm the problems that beset the Union black soldier in the war, now suddenly transformed, in many instances, in months from slave to soldier.

First, there was the problem of the Confederate soldier, who, both officially and unofficially, often followed a policy of no-quarter, denying the black soldier the rights generally accorded white prisoners of war.5 On May 18, 1863, the men of the First Kansas had learned this firsthand when they were ambushed during a foraging party east of Baxter Springs by Confederate guerrillas led by Maj. T. R. Livingston. Of the 50 men in the Union party, 20 were killed initially in the surprise attack, and one black soldier captured by the Missourians was quickly executed shortly afterward. Colonel Williams had reacted promptly, ordering one of the Confederate prisoners taken by his command shot in retribution.6 By 1864 many of the black soldiers in the Union army fought with desperate abandon believing, as did the men of the First Kansas, that surrender or capture meant death.7

Nor was hatred of the black soldier peculiar only to white Confederates. Even moderate Pres. Abraham Lincoln seemed reluctant to grant equality of treatment and protection to the black soldier. Acceptance of the growing role of the black man in the Union army, where eventually 180,000 served as events dictated, proved a necessity as the casualty lists grew.8

2. Elements of the Second, Sixth, and 14th Kansas cavalry.
5. Ibid., pp. 170-177.
6. Ibid., 145-146.
7. Ibid., pp. 175-177.
8. Ibid., p. 81.

(121)
Most of the white federal soldiers reluctantly agreed that the black soldier had a place in the Union army. But few federal soldiers looked on their black brothers with any sense of equality. Early in the winter of 1864 an Iowa veteran had touched on the feeling many of the Union soldiers had for the Negro, generally. Speaking of a family of contrabands that cooked for his unit during the winter in Little Rock, the federal soldier described the black family as

Respecting us and themselves, yet knowing and understanding the differences of color and tastes, they [the black family] attended unobtrusively to their own business, and were treated as civilly as white folks would have been in the same circumstances. If all negroes were like them, the social problem need never present a problem.

This feeling of inequality and hostility affected the black soldier’s performance. In the summer of 1863, Williams had taken the First Kansas out of their garrison at Fort Scott, when the men had become nearly mutinous. The regiment’s poor spirit seemed justified to Williams. Although they had served nearly 10 months, the black soldiers received neither pay nor bounty until late in the summer of 1863.

Characteristically, with but one day’s rest after the long march from Fort Smith of the past month, the First Kansas Colored was selected to guard the foraging train on April 17 even though white federal infantry regiments were better rested.

The foraging party’s immediate objective stood near the edge of the White Oak creek, 24 miles west of Camden, the same place that most of the VII Corps had camped on the night of April 14. Near that spot, the corps quartermaster, Capt. C. A. Henry, had learned, was a cache of 5,000 bushels of corn. Aware of both the corps’s need for food and the vulnerability of his own small column, Williams pushed his worn troops hard. Reaching a camping spot 18 miles west of Camden on the Washington road on the afternoon of April 17, the colonel divided his command. Maj. Richard G. Ward led six companies of the First Kansas Colored six miles farther west toward the much needed corn, a hundred wagons following in trace.

Williams dispatched the remaining wagons in different directions from his headquarters, guarded by small elements of the command and seeking additional forage and supplies. By midnight Ward’s section of wagons returned nearly to Williams’s campground, fully loaded with corn. Although the Confederates had destroyed much of the corn at the approach of the federal column, some 2,500 bushels had been confiscated and loaded by hand into the wagons by the First Kansas following their long march to White Oak creek.

With little sleep, Ward moved his six companies back to join the main body of Williams’s column at seven the following morning. Moving up the road, his men now extremely fatigued from a combination of hard marching, lack of sleep, and short rations, Ward joined Colonel Williams’s party after the early morning six-mile hike back from White Oak creek.

Williams growing more anxious of ambush with his small column divided and scattered, began moving the command slowly east at sunrise on April 18, loading the few remaining empty wagons as the train headed back the 18 miles toward the safety of Camden. Four miles east of his campgrounds he welcomed a reinforcing column of 375 infantry of the 18th Iowa under the command of Capt. William M. Duncan, and nearly 100 additional Kansas cavalry troopers. With these reinforcements, Williams’s command now numbered, theoretically, 875 infantry and 285 cavalry and, with the addition of the two mountain howitzers accompanying Duncan’s column, four pieces of artillery. Actually, however, his command included only about 1,000 effectives, and all of those were hungry and footsore. Over 100 of the First Kansas had fallen out on April 17, following 24 days of nearly continuous marching. Additionally, large portions of the cavalry had wandered away from the command in violation of orders.

Colonel Williams had good reason to be apprehensive as he moved his long column easterly through the rolling Arkansas

11. The white regiments in the Third division had rested nearly a week waiting on the Army of the Frontier to come up.
13. Ibid., pp. 743, 751.
15. Ibid., p. 680.
16. Ibid., p. 751.
17. Ibid., p. 754. Ward’s men spent 66 hours out of 78 on their feet.
18. Ibid., p. 743.
20. Ibid., p. 744.
hills, walled in by dense underbrush and heavy pine forest. As the foraging train had moved slowly out of Camden on the previous morning, Confederate Col. Colton Greene of the Third Missouri cavalry, bivouacked before the federal position at Camden, near the junction of the upper and middle Camden roads, west of the city, observed its movement. Initially, Greene’s scouts reported that a train of 20 federal wagons with a guard of only 200 cavalry was moving on the upper Washington road. Greene ordered his command immediately to strike the rear of the federal army but quickly cancelled the order and placed his regiment in ambush when he learned the true state of the Union force. Greene then notified his commander, Brigadier General Marmaduke at his headquarters eight miles to the south at Woodlawn, of the enemy movement, requesting instructions and support.

Greene’s scouts reached Marmaduke with this intelligence that same morning. The confederate general planned an immediate attack, but since his own command numbered only 500 men he requested reinforcements from General Fagan’s division of cavalry camped nearby. Fagan responded by promptly dispatching two of his brigades under Colonels Crawford and Cabell to assist Marmaduke. Reinforced, Marmaduke now led his three brigades of cavalry out the Prairie d’Ane road toward the federal train. Again Marmaduke received additional intelligence on the size of the federal train now overestimating the column’s strength at some 2,500 men. Certain that the train would not return to Camden until the next morning, Marmaduke led his men back to their camp at Woodlawn and requested additional support from the Department of Arkansas commander, Maj. Gen. Sterling Price. Price responded by directing Gen. Samuel B. Maxey to reinforce Marmaduke further with two brigades, Gano’s Texans, under Col. Charles De Morse, and the Second Indian brigade under Col. Tandy Walker.

That night the confederate plan of attack evolved. Marmaduke’s three brigades would interdict the road 10 miles from Camden, opposing the federal advance. Simultaneously, Maxey’s two brigades would smash the Union column on its exposed flank and rear. By seven on the morning of April 18, confederate command moved to implement the plan. Three hours later, the confederates moved into position. Facing west down the Prairie d’Ane road, Crawford’s brigade held the north side of the road supported by a battery of artillery. To the south of the road, Cabell placed his brigade in a rough semicircle, on a pine ridge facing to the northwest. This gave the confederates command of the road that lay between sloping pine hills on the south falling away to the north to a deep ravine, leading into an almost impassable swamp. Behind the brigades of Cabell and Crawford, Colonel Greene held his men in reserve.

On the extreme confederate right, General Marmaduke now briefed his brigade commanders on their role in the upcoming fight. Dismounted and whistling calmly on a piece of white pine, Marmaduke explained that when Gano [Gano’s Texans under De Morse] shall be well engaged with the enemy in his rear, this line [Cabell, Crawford, and Greene’s brigades] is to advance and strike him in the flank. This is the wheeling flank and should advance at doublequick.

Marmaduke remained in overall command of confederate forces. He had offered the command to Maxey when he had come up at 10 that morning, but the senior confederate officer had declined the command. Maxey told Marmaduke that, “as . . . [Marmaduke] had planned the whole movement [he] should take charge and make the fight.”

Thus between 10 o’clock and noon on April 18, 2,700 confederates waited in an “L” shaped ambush along the Prairie d’Ane road, with both numerical and tactical superiority. As the sun burned away the morning coolness, skirmishers from the federal cavalry

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 781.
26. Ibid., pp. 825-826.
30. An ambush where the long axis of the “L” provides flanking fire while the shorter axis provides enfilade fire.
had moved east from Williams’s camp­ground of the previous night, followed by Williams’s detachment of the First Kansas Colored infan­try. Shortly after moving up the road, skirmish­ing began between confederate and fed­eral cavalry, the Union forces driving the enemy easily before the column for more than a mile. Suddenly, at the road crossing 14 miles west of Camden the federal troops came on a dismounted line of enemy skirmishers posted across the road. Williams immediately halted his column, brought up 200 infantry, placing them across the road facing east, and began consolidating the long line of wagons. The battery of the Second Indiana was ordered forward with their two James cannon and directed to open on the enemy skirmish line both to develop the enemy’s strength and position and to recall those forage wagons still absent from the main body of the Union party. The Union cannonade brought only a brisk answering fire from the confederate skirmishers, but Williams, still apprehensive of an ambush, ordered the elements of infantry under Major Ward to press to the front of the column, throwing out additional skirmishers from the Second, Sixth, and 14th Kansas cavalry to the infantry’s immediate front.

Although silence greeted Union attempts to develop confederate intentions, Williams con­tinued to ready his command for an attack. The First Kansas Colored now ringed the front of the wagon train facing east in a 180 degree arc with federal cavalry to their front. At this time, a confederate messenger rode mistakenly into the federal position, Williams learning from him that strong enemy forces surrounded him on three sides. Almost simultaneously, the federal commander observed movement in the dense underbrush to the right flank of the forward Union position. Williams immediately ordered forward detachments of the Second and Sixth Kansas cavalry and they met a brisk volley from confederate infantry to his front. While Williams called for reinforcements from Captain Duncan guarding the rear of the train, the federal cavalry gave way before the hidden enemy to their front, reforming to the extreme right of the First Kansas. Several fell in the brief exchange including Lieutenant Henderson, severely wounded in the abdomen. As the federal front reformed, Williams’s mes­senger returned from the rear, relaying a message from Duncan that his 18th Iowa was closely pressed and could not send forward any reinforce­ments.

Col. James Monroe Williams (1833–1907), commander of the First Kansas Colored from its inception in late 1862, led the foraging expedition which was overwhelmed by confederate forces near Camden, Ark., in April, 1864. He called the engagement in which the black soldiers bore the brunt of the fighting “the action of Poison Spring.”

32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
Brig. Gen. John S. Marmaduke (1833-1887) led the Confederate troops in an ambush of the federal forage wagons guarded by the First Kansas Colored volunteer in the "action of Poison Spring." Realizing the Southern intention of "no quarter," many of the black troops who retreated from the superior force feigned death in the swamp.

To the southwest of Williams's position, General Maxey had worked his two brigades silently forward in the heavy underbrush on the exposed rear and flank of the now consolidated Union train. Moving with difficulty through the broken ground and heavy brush, Maxey now ordered a battery of his artillery to open on the federal train to draw attention away from the movements of his dismounted cavalry. 37

Col. Charles De Morse led the right flank of the Confederate movement under Maxey. In the thick brush, the Confederate colonel had suddenly led his 29th Texans out onto an open field where Williams had observed their movement and thrown forward cavalry skirmishers. Here, Confederate cavalry and infantry first engaged the Sixth Kansas cavalry. As the skirmishing continued, De Morse, following Maxey's orders, followed the Choctaw Brigade [Second Indian Brigade] under Col. Tandy Walker around the field, through heavy brush and up a steep slope. With Walker at the far left of the long axis of the Confederate "L," information and De Morse on his immediate right, the Confederates formed a line of battle, kneeling in the underbrush facing to the north. Confederate artillery then opened on the front of the Union column, and De Morse ordered his Texans forward, his line sweeping down through a hollow and up a steep ascent where they, for the first time, saw the federals, only about 100 yards distant. The Confederates went after the black soldiers of the First Kansas with a shout but met a hail of musket fire that drove them back down the hollow. 38 As the Texans retreated before the federal small arms fire, De Morse's battery of artillery opened on the Union train, shells dropping in the midst of the First Kansas, killing and wounding many. Instantly, the Texans reformed, plunging back through the hollow and again up the slope toward the federals. 39

Marmaduke now sent forward Greene's dismounted Missourians. As the engagement grew general on the left and center, the Third Missouri passed through heavy woods from behind Cabell's brigade where they had been held in reserve and formed in the same open field where De Morse's Texans had first been discovered by federal cavalry. Greene moved his line forward at a walk under heavy fire as Confederate artillery slammed into the rear of the federal train and De Morse's Texans again moved forward. After the Missourians passed a final fence fronting the federal position, Greene ordered his men forward at the double quick. The Missourians responded with a shout, double timing forward with a cry of "Here's your mule" 40 and delivering several...

37. Ibid., p. 842
38. Ibid., pp. 846-847.
39. Ibid.
40. The battle cry of Greene's men alluded to the perverse and hardy character of the Missouri mule.
volleys into the federals as they passed through the now burning woods filled with heavy smoke.\textsuperscript{41}

To the far left, confederate Indians fighting under Col. Tandy Walker faced the 18th Iowa but were only lightly engaged. Walker had led his brigade through heavy underbrush and, like the Texans on their right flank, found the going hard in the broken ground. Finally in position as De Morse’s Texans moved forward in their first charge, Walker halted his dismounted cavalry on the edge of a field because of a report that the federal troops were attempting to flank him. As the firing gradually increased to a steady roar, however, Walker’s Choctaws surged across an open field and drove the federals back from a position at the wooded edge of a ravine. Pausing to regroup, Walker saw the federals assume secondary positions parallel to the train, now grouped in close formation along the edge of the Prairie de’Ane road.\textsuperscript{42}

Positioned to the front of the federal column, Gen. William L. Cabell listened to the engagement grow in intensity to his left and followed the plan evolved earlier in the morning. His six howitzers now opened on the van of the federal column, smashing through the pine forests where most of the First Kansas Colored regiment crouched. With friendly artillery firing over his regiment from a ridgeline to the southeast of the federal position and enfiling the Union train stretched down the road, Cabell ordered forward his and Crawford’s brigade.\textsuperscript{43} With a shout the confederates shouldered their way down through the alder bushes and underbrush of the ridge, double timing across an open field some 200 yards wide to the edge of a timelapse in which the First Kansas waited.\textsuperscript{44}

At the front of the federal column the 29-year-old commander of the First Kansas Colored volunteers now found his worst fears materializing. His column lay within the cone of fire of nine confederate artillery pieces, firing from the ridge and to the east and south catching the federals in an accurate cross fire, allowing rebel infantry to advance between the shot and shell. Seeing that his position was indefensible against the superior forces now moving against him from three sides, Williams resolved to defend the train with the much-needed supplies as long as possible. He hoped that the roar of battle might bring reinforcements from the federal fortress in Camden. Directing his black infantry, who waited calmly through the initial confederate cannonade, to hold their fire, Williams ordered the first volley of federal muskets when the enemy had moved to within 100 yards of his position. The federals volleyed with buck and ball,\textsuperscript{45} and the two lines of troops exchanged fire at a distance for nearly 15 minutes until the confederate troops finally gave way, retreating to the far edge of the open field which they had crossed only minutes before.\textsuperscript{46}

The respite proved brief. Quickly reformed, the confederate line again surged through the pines, with colors flying, the steady yip-yip of the rebel yell now momentarily drowning out the musketry as the forces again grappled in the burning pine forest. Williams again ordered his troops to hold their fire until the enemy approached to almost point-blank range. Again the First Kansas opened with buck and ball. As the two lines closed together, both confederate and Union batteries continued their exchange, and the roar of battle increased to the loudest intensity Williams had heard during his Civil War experience.\textsuperscript{47} Again the confederates fell back, having twice during the second charge had their colors shot down only to be raised again by cheering Arkansas troops.\textsuperscript{48}

While Williams beat back the confederate onslaught at the extreme head of the column, elements of Major Ward’s First Kansas found equally hard going. Early in the fighting they exchanged volleys with De Morse’s 29th Texans, only to have artillery fire and the reinforcements under confederate Colonel Greene again smash into their portion of the Union perimeter. De Morse again had led his men through the ravine and up a steep slope where they exchanged volleys at 75 yards with Ward’s soldiers. So close were the two lines that the Texans, who had been overrun by the First Kansas the previous July in the battle of Honey

\textsuperscript{41} Official Records, v. 34, pt. 1, p. 828.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 849.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 791
\textsuperscript{44} Harrell, “Arkansas,” pp. 249-250.
\textsuperscript{45} “Buck and ball” refers to a cartridge which contained one round ball and three buckshot and was fired from rifled muskets.
\textsuperscript{46} Official Records, v. 34, pt. 1, p. 745.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Springs, introduced themselves. “You First Nigger, now buck to the Twenty-ninth Texas,” they shouted. As the second charge to the front of the column slackened, Williams estimated his losses at 50 percent killed and wounded. Three of his companies were now without officers, and Williams realized that without reinforcements his men could hold back the Confederates “but little longer.”

Moving to his right rear, Williams rode to that portion of the Union perimeter which faced convexly toward the southeast and where Major Ward’s six companies of First Kansans fought. Here the Federal commander intended to turn the command of forward elements of the command over to Ward, then personally ride to the rear of the column where the 18th Iowa had experienced only one assault by Tandy Walker’s Choctaws. A secondary line of defense formed, the First Kansas might then retreat to this position.

At Ward’s position, however, Williams received more bad news. As the Confederates drove on his forward positions “yelling like fiends,” Ward reported only two men remained to work his two cannons. The Federal colonel immediately ordered them limbered and taken to the rear. This was done but only after Pvt. Alonzo Hinshaw of the Second Indiana double shotted one piece and fired a last round into the advance of the approaching Confederate column with tremendous effect at a range of 300 yards. This “parting salute” accompanied by another volley of musketry from the resolute First Kansas drove the Confederates back for the third time in the engagement.

Driven from the shelter of the trains, the Union soldiers now formed again behind the outbuildings and fences of the adjoining Lee plantation on the north side of the road, parallel to the train. Again the Confederates came on, led by Greene’s Missourians, double timing forward with much shouting through thick burning underbrush and again driving the Union force this time from the plantation itself, into the bare fields beyond and onto a hill fronting a ravine that ran into the swamp that surrounded the battlefield to the north. Again, a brief Union stand broke before overwhelming numbers, the retreat down the road and into the swamp now becoming general.

Tandy Walker’s Choctaws, who had spent most of the fight feeling for the 18th Iowa at the rear of the federal train, now came down on the fleeing Union troopers with a vengeance. Like the Texas brigade, they had fought the First Kansas at Honey Springs and both mounted and dismounted Choctaw and Chickasaw warriors, some only partly clothed, sprang forward and joined in the final attack. First in the van of the Indian brigade ran Pvt. Dickson Wallace of the First regiment who, upon reaching the first abandoned Union cannon, leaped astride the piece and gave a war whoop which was answered in kind by his fellow braves, adding to the crescendo of rebel yells and musket volleys in the rout.

The Confederate troops now pressed the pursuit west down the road and into the ravine paralleling the road and bordering the swamp. To Tandy Walker’s Choctaws, this pursuit proved more inviting than plundering the deserted Federal train standing on the road. They pressed on, from their position on the far west of the Confederate flanking attack, leading the pursuit as the Federals took to the swamps.

Williams had finally reached Captain Duncan’s position at the rear of the train and formed a defensive perimeter to which moments later the survivors of the First Kansas retired in good order. Quickly the Confederates again drove the Federals, and soon Williams moved down into the ravine, attempting to form his remaining cavalry there to check the Confederate advance momentarily and give his infantry time to escape.

Lit. Richard L. Phillips led a detachment of his Sixth Kansas cavalry into the ravine and attempted to slow the Confederate pursuit. At this moment, the Federal cannon were abandoned and spiked, the two supporting the 18th Iowa at the rear of the column never having been fired during the engagement. As Phillips and his men formed in the ravine they saw the enemy pursuing the surviving black soldiers of the First Kansas, firing continuously into their ranks.

51. Ibid. Although Duncan claimed his 18th Iowans were hotly engaged, casualty reports do not reflect this.
52. Ibid., pp. 745, 752.
53. Ibid., p. 828.
54. Ibid., pp. 843, 849.
55. Ibid., p. 842.
56. Ibid., p. 849.
57. Ibid., pp. 745-746.
58. Ibid., pp. 748-749.
Realizing the confederate intention of no quarter after seeing many of their wounded comrades shot and bayoneted during the battle, the black troops now made every effort to reach the safety of the swamp. 59 Many of the First Kansas threw away their muskets, in order to carry their wounded brothers down through the ravine into the muck of the swamp. Lt. William C. Gibbons, the Kansas regiment’s adjutant, rode to the top of an adjacent hill and watched the final phase of the engagement. Moving slowly to the west, he watched “Our brave but fatigued” black men shot down indiscriminately by the confederates. Some four miles west of the battlefield, Gibbons was joined by Colonel Williams as they began the long northeasterly circle of the swamp and the eastern route back to the safety of Camden. 60 As Williams and Gibbons rode from the battlefield, Tandy Walker’s Choctaws began to take scalps. 61 One wounded colored soldier reported that confederate execution squads trooped the field finishing the wounded blacks. Even those men of the First Kansas who reached the swamps met renewed hardship. There many feigned death in the watery wasteland and were bitten by poisonous snakes. 62

Fearing Union reinforcement, General Maxey now assumed command, ordering his units to break off the pursuit. 63 In the Union trains the confederates found, in addition to the badly needed corn, bed quilts, women’s and children’s clothing, and additional food stuffs. Soon, some of the wagons blazed, and the confederate command began to move the 10 miles southeast to their headquarters at Woodlawn. One black soldier who feigned death through the grisly aftermath of the fight heard confederate soldiers shouting, “Where is the First Nigger now?” “All cut to pieces and gone to hell by bad management.” 64 As Maxey led his command to Woodlawn, the survivors of the First Kansas and 18th Iowa crawled and struggled through the swamp to the north. Throughout the night and for several days, Union survivors struggled into camp. 65

General Maxey ordered a forward and advance guard thrown out and began to move the captured wagons, four cannon, and over 100 prisoners, to Woodlawn. 66 Although confederate returns on casualties proved incomplete, estimates placed both their killed and wounded in the nearly four-hour battle at only 115 men. 67 Maxey estimated federal casualties as high as 600 total with the proportion of killed and wounded between 300 and 500 men. “I know they were thick,” the confederate commander wrote in his report. 68

Thick they were; of the less than 1,100 federals engaged, 300 were killed and wounded with additional men missing. The First Kansas Colored, which bore the heaviest burden of the fighting, paid dearly in blood. Of 438 men present, 117 were killed and an additional 65 were missing for a total of 182 casualties. Williams summarized the savagery of the fight, reporting “Many wounded men belonging to the First Kansas Colored Volunteers fell into the hands of the enemy, and . . . were murdered on the spot. . . . I have named this engagement the action of Poison Spring.” 69