

The Battle of Pea Ridge

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Part V

General Albert Pike had been watching as Rosser's troops came down off Pea Ridge and crossed the head of Cross Timber Hollow. Pike, not knowing that Van Dorn had given orders to fall back, believed Rosser's soldiers were en route to reinforce the Missouri State Guard on the left. Shortly thereafter, there was a wild outburst of cheering. Since there were almost no stragglers drifting to the rear, Pike and his companions concluded that "the day was ours."

While the officers were exchanging congratulations, another officer galloped up and told Pike that the Federals held the field. He was closely followed by a second, who informed Pike that it was feared Van Dorn and Price had been captured. The area where the two ranking officers had last been seen "was full of Federals." Before Pike could reply, the officer remarked, "You are not safe here, for the enemy's cavalry are within 150 yards of you."¹

At this time, one of Colonel Watie's Cherokees rode up. Pike directed him to rejoin Watie, and to tell the colonel to collect his regiment. Watie would report to Pike on the Telegraph road. The messenger, however, was unable to contact Watie. After remaining on Pea Ridge for several hours after the firing had ceased, Watie discovered the Federals had sent a "flying column" up Cross Timber Hollow. Fearful lest he be cut off, Watie, accompanied by his regiment, struck out cross country for Camp Stephens.²

Meanwhile, the situation had continued to deteriorate. Two batteries came rumbling down the Telegraph road from Elk-

¹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 290-291.

² *Ibid.*, 291.

horn Tavern. Calling to the captain of one of the batteries, Pike asked where they were going. The captain replied that some one had ordered a retreat. As the guns thundered past the thoroughly bewildered general, one of the artillerists was heard to cry out, "Close up, or you will all be cut to pieces."

Wheeling their mounts around, Pike and his comrades accompanied the batteries. At the point where the Telegraph road crosses Big Sugar Creek, Pike sought to rally the troops which had retreated down Cross Timber Hollow. Here, the Confederates would have plenty of open ground in which to form for battle, while the bluecoats would find their movements restricted by the narrow walls of the hollow. It was with difficulty that Pike prevailed on the cannoneers to halt and throw their guns into battery. Finally, three pieces were put into position and sighted to command the mouth of the hollow. Two regiments of infantry were ordered to support the guns. Before the footsoldiers could be deployed, the head of the pursuing column appeared.³

* * *

General Curtis reached Elkhorn Tavern soon after the firing stopped and found that the Rebels had vanished. Accompanied by his escort, Bowen's battalion, Curtis started up the Telegraph road. Almost as soon as he entered Cross Timber Hollow, the general sighted a number of stragglers and wagons beating a hasty retreat up the hollow. An aide raced to the rear to bring up a battery. Within a few minutes the gunners of the 1st Missouri Flying Artillery thundered up with their two remaining pieces. Throwing their guns into battery, the Missourians "threw a few shots" at the rapidly disappearing foe. Looking about, Curtis was disappointed to see that except for his escort, the only mounted unit in the area was a detachment from the 5th Missouri Cavalry. Orders were issued for these two small commands to press the pursuit up the Telegraph road.

As soon as the troopers moved off, Curtis prepared to return to Elkhorn Tavern. Evidently, the general made a sweep to the east. When he reached the hotel, he learned that Sigel had proceeded up the Telegraph road with most of his wing.

³ *Ibid.*

Curtis was distressed by this news. Almost all of the troops which the general had committed to press the pursuit had gone up the Telegraph road toward Keetsville. The more he thought about this situation, the more fretful Curtis became. He felt confident that "a frightened foe was not likely" to strike north. Several staff officers were sent spurring off with orders for Sigel to retrace his steps. Scouts were sent to see if they could locate Van Dorn's army.⁴

* * *

Immediately upon reaching Elkhorn Tavern, Sigel had called for Captain Eugene von Kielmansegge. The captain and one company of the 5th Missouri Cavalry was sent racing up the Telegraph road. A "flying column" consisted of the 3d and 17th Missouri and two guns of the Flying Artillery followed close on the heels of the horsemen. At the same time, Sigel had Osterhaus form his division. Placing himself at the head of Osterhaus' command, Sigel rode down into Cross Timber Hollow.⁵

Except for a number of stragglers rounded up by the cavalry, Bowen's battalion and the 5th Missouri, Sigel's column encountered practically no resistance as it pushed northward. Approaching Big Sugar Creek, the bluecoats sighted Pike's batteries. Unlimbering one of their pieces, the cannoneers of the Flying Artillery sent a round whistling toward the Rebels. At this, the cry "The Cavalry are coming!" was raised by the Confederates.

Whereupon the gunners hitched up their pieces. The retreat was resumed, amid great confusion. Pike's pleas to stay and fight fell on deaf ears.

Supposing that the fleeing greyclads would turn into the Bentonville Detour, Pike and his staff raced ahead. The general felt the climb up the steep grade west of Big Sugar Creek would slow down the retreating column enough for him to get control of the situation. When he gained the crest of the divide, Pike looked back. He was shocked and dismayed to see "our retreating troops, batteries and all, had

⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 215, 220.

passed by on the Telegraph road, the enemy's cavalry pursuing, en route for Springfield, Mo."⁶

Pike and his few companions remained on the rim overlooking the hollow for a few moments. They were uncertain what their next move ought to be. Spotting the Confederate horsemen, the Union gunners quickly threw one of their pieces in battery. Opening fire, they helped Pike make up his mind. The Rebel officers dug their spurs into their horses' flanks and started for Bentonville at a high lope.⁷

Reaching the point where the Bentonville Detour branched off from the Telegraph road, Sigel called a brief halt. His scouts examined the ground, and told Sigel that Confederates had taken both roads. To be on the safe side, Sigel called for Colonel Knobelsdorff. The colonel was to take his regiment—the 44th Illinois—two companies of the 36th Illinois, two guns of the 1st Missouri Flying Artillery, and a company of the 5th Missouri Cavalry and reconnoiter the Bentonville Detour. Sigel with the rest of his command would press the pursuit up the Telegraph road.⁸

Darkness overtook Sigel's column before it reached Keetsville. The troops bivouacked for the night in the hollow a short distance south of the village. According to one of the soldiers, the "cross and supperless, stretched [their] weary limbs upon the ground and slept soundly."⁹

The next morning (the 9th), the march was resumed. Keetsville was entered at an early hour. Questioning the inhabitants, Sigel learned that the Confederate force which he had followed from the battlefield had divided. One group was said to have headed for Berryville, the other for Pineville.

Sigel was placed in a quandry. He didn't know in which direction to turn. A staff officer soon rode into Keetsville with a message from Curtis for Sigel to return to Little Sugar Creek. This dispatch solved Sigel's dilemma. Before

⁶ *Ibid.*, 291. It has been impossible to determine which of the Confederates batteries retreated up Cross Timber Hollow and which accompanied Van Dorn.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 215, 225.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 220; Bennett and Haigh, *History of the 36th Illinois*, 170.

evacuating Keetsville, Sigel's troops were cheered by the arrival of a heavily guarded supply train loaded with commissary supplies from Springfield. Before starting on the return march, the "half famished" bluecoats were issuedhardtack and bacon. By 4 p.m. Sigel's column had rejoined the army.¹⁰

After being detached on the afternoon of the 8th, Colonel Knobelsdorff's command had pushed ahead cautiously along the Bentonville Detour. When he stopped for the night, Knobelsdorff covered his camp with a strong line of outposts.

Learning that a Union column (Knobelsdorff's) had turned into the Bentonville Detour, Pike pushed on toward Bentonville. Late in the afternoon, the general encountered his brigade quartermaster. From him, the general learned that the trains had left Camp Stephens. Shortly thereafter, a wild rumor reached Pike. According to this report, Sigel, striking swiftly down the valley of Little Sugar Creek, had blocked the road. The trains, he reasoned, were as good as lost.

Abandoning the Bentonville Detour in favor of a road farther to the west, Pike sought to avoid the patrols which he knew Curtis would send to mop up Confederate stragglers. Just before dark on the 8th, Pike's party ran into Colonel Frank A. Rector of the 17th Arkansas. The colonel told Pike that his 500 men were in no condition to march more than eight miles a day. Consequently, he planned to have his troops cache their arms and disperse. Rector asked Pike's opinion of this plan. Since Pike mistakenly believed that Van Dorn and Price had been captured and the train taken, he told Rector that "he thought the course he proposed was the wisest one under the circumstances." Rector proceeded to carry out his plan. Unfortunately for the Confederates, a Union patrol stumbled on the cave in which Rector's troops had hidden their arms.

After a hard, circuitious ride, Pike and his comrades reached Elm Springs on the 10th. Here, the general found that there was no truth to the reported capture of the Confederate

¹⁰ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 215, 220, 279; Bennett and Haigh, *History of the 36th Illinois*, 170. The train was guarded by a combat patrol commanded by Major Joseph Conrad, 150 troopers of Colonel Clark Wright's 6th Missouri Cavalry, and 300 replacements.

trains. From the Confederate outposts who garrisoned the hamlet, Pike learned that his Indians were en route back to the Indian Territory. Pressing on after his command, Pike overtook the brigade at Cincinnati.¹¹

It was 9 a.m. on March 9 before Colonel Knobelsdorff resumed the pursuit. Feeling its way ahead, Knobelsdorff's column penetrated to within five miles of Bentonville. Here, Knobelsdorff was joined by the 1st Missouri Cavalry. At this, the overly cautious Knobelsdorff recalled his troops and retraced his steps. Knobelsdorff's combat teams spent the night camped on the Bentonville Detour, a mile east of Big Sugar Creek. On the 10th, Knobelsdorff, having accomplished absolutely nothing, rejoined Sigel's wing.¹²

* * *

It was almost 2 p.m. on March 8, before General Curtis was able to obtain sufficient information from his patrols to satisfy himself that most of Van Dorn's Army of the West had taken the Huntsville road. Upon doing so, he called for Chief of Cavalry Colonel Bussey. Bussey was told to take the battalion of the 3d Iowa Cavalry and pursue the Rebels toward Huntsville. Within a few minutes, Bussey had his column in motion.¹³

The 3d Texas Cavalry had been given the task of covering Van Dorn's retreat. Since the Rebel leaders had expressed fear that the Union cavalry would fall upon their rear before it reached the hollows, Colonel Lane massed his regiment across the Huntsville road, a mile and one-half east of the tavern. Supported by the St. Louis Artillery, the Texans held their ground until the last of the army had passed. After waiting several hours to insure that the main column had a good start, Lane recalled his men and followed.¹⁴

As a result of the Federals' failure to pinpoint immediately their line of retreat, the Confederates were able to get a good head start. Despite their best efforts, Bussey and his Iowans were unable to overtake Van Dorn's rear guard. It

¹¹ O. R., Series I, Vol. VIII, 225, 291-292.

¹² *Ibid.*, 225. Two companies of the 44th Illinois were left to watch the Bentonville Detour.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 202, 234.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 294, 300.

was starting to get dark, when Bussey abandoned the chase and retraced his steps. This foray by the Union horsemen was not a complete bust because the hard-riding Iowans succeeded in bagging 59 Rebel stragglers.¹⁵

After fording the White River, Van Dorn halted his column. Van Dorn, having placed a water barrier between his army and the Federals, decided to let his weary men rest. Orders were issued for the troops to camp near Van Winkle's sawmill.

In the meantime, Van Dorn had learned that a number of his batteries had retreated by way of the Telegraph road. At Keetsville, Van Dorn was told, the artillerists and their escort would find a road leading to Huntsville. The general accordingly called for Gates and Lane. The two colonels were directed to proceed to Huntsville with their two cavalry regiments and meet the artillery. The guns were to be escorted to Van Buren, where Van Dorn planned to reorganize his army, preparatory to undertaking a new campaign.¹⁶

At the same time, Van Dorn organized a burial detail. Covered by a flag of truce, this group would return to the field and request permission from General Curtis to inter the Confederate dead.¹⁷

Van Dorn had his troops on the road early on the 9th. Passing to the east of Fayetteville, Van Dorn headed for Van Buren. Since the supply trains were with General Green, the troops suffered from a shortage of rations. For several days they were compelled to subsist "on parched corn and such other scanty resources as the waste and barren mountain region" which they passed through afforded. To make matters worse, it started to rain on the morning of the 9th. The exhausted Confederates' troubles were compounded by muddy mountain roads and swollen streams. A large number of men straggled; others deserted the colors.

It was a bitter, broken down army which reached Frog Bayou, seven miles from Van Buren, on the evening of March 12. Here, the troops were permitted to camp and recoup

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 291, 300-301; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178.

¹⁷ Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178; O. R., Series I, Vol. VIII, 193-194.

their strength for the new campaign of which Van Dorn dreamed. Staff officers were sent with orders for Green's, Stone's and Gates' commands to rendezvous with the main column on Frog Bayou.¹⁸

* * *

About daybreak on March 8, General Green had sent one of his aides racing ahead to see General Price. The aide was to tell "Old Pap" that Green's division was still at Camp Stephens. Long before the messenger returned, Colonel Robert C. Wood of Price's staff reached Green's command post. He told Green that Price wanted him to bring up the trains.

Green was a man of action. Within a few minutes, the teamsters had hitched up their wagons and the train was in motion. To provide for the train's security, Green divided his command. Part marched in front, the remainder in the rear of the wagons. Mounted patrols were thrown out to the east to guard against a sudden flank attack. Pressing rapidly ahead along the Bentonville Detour, Green's column passed around the northwestern point of Pea Ridge.

The morning was well along by the time Green's vanguard turned into the Telegraph road. Shortly thereafter, Green encountered the messenger he had sent to get in touch with General Price. The aide informed the general that he was to turn the train around and return to Elm Springs. At Elm Springs, Green would "await further orders, unless hard pressed by the enemy." If he were attacked by the foe, Green was to retire into the Boston Mountains.

It was with a heavy heart that the aggressive Green gave the order for the teamsters to turn their wagons around and for his division to counter-march. Green stopped briefly at Camp Stephens to let Colonel Stone, who was in charge of Green's trains, know that the Army of the West had been compelled to abandon its position astride Curtis' supply line.

Colonel Douglas H. Cooper had reached Camp Stephens with several fresh units from the Indian Territory during Green's brief absence. After listening to what Green had to

¹⁸ Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178; O. R., Series I, Vol. VIII, 281, 777, 783-784.

say, Cooper decided not to press on. Since Green was worried about a cavalry attack on the trains, Cooper agreed to help escort the wagons to Elm Springs. Colonel Drew's regiment would accompany Cooper's column.

While Stone was turning out his command, Green pushed on. Darkness had blanketed the area before Green's tired command reached Bentonville.¹⁹

It took Colonel Stone several hours to get his wagons ready to roll. Evacuating Camp Stephens, Stone's column followed along behind Green's. Nightfall on the 8th, found Stone's command camped on the prairie, north of Bentonville. To present a surprise attack on his camp, Stone left strong combat patrol to watch the Bentonville road.²⁰

* * *

About the same time as Van Dorn's troops were breaking camp on the morning of the 9th, General Curtis called for Colonel Bussey. Curtis told Bussey to take the 3d Iowa, Bowen's Battalion, and a battalion of the 1st Missouri Cavalry and see if he could overtake the Rebel trains which were known to be retreating via Bentonville. Bussey soon had his men in the saddle and on the road. Passing rapidly down Little Sugar Creek valley, the bluecoats occupied Camp Stephens. Here, the Federals found numerous signs that a large force of Confederates had recently evacuated the area. Scattered about the abandoned encampment was a large amount of public property (arms and accoutrements) and personal gear, such as is usually found when troops are pulled out of an area on short notice.

After a brief pause to inspect the camp, Bussey pushed on. A short distance north of Bentonville, Bussey's vanguard, was fired on by several Confederate scouts. Pursued by Bussey's troopers, the greyclads fled through Bentonville. In this running fight, one Rebel was shot from his horse.

By 2 p.m. Bussey's cavalymen had occupied the town. Bussey now learned from his scouts that a small Confederate

¹⁹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 292, 317.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; 304, 318. In addition to the 6th Texas Cavalry, Stone's command included: the 1st Arkansas Cavalry Battalion, the 1st Texas Cavalry Battalion, a detachment of the 11th Texas Cavalry, the 22d Arkansas Infantry Regiment, and Provence's Arkansas Battery.

patrol was hovering in the brush south of Bentonville. At this, Bussey shouted for Major Bowen to bring up his mountain howitzers. Two shots from the "Jackass" battery sent the Rebels scampering.

Bussey questioned the inhabitants. They told Bussey that a large number of Confederates (Colonel Stone's command) had passed through Bentonville, several hours prior to the Yankees' arrival. The Rebel horsemen and wagons were said to have taken the Elm Springs road.

A hasty inspection of his fagged out command convinced Bussey that his men and mounts were in no condition to press the pursuit. He determined to return to Little Sugar Creek. Evacuating Bentonville, the Federal horsemen retraced their route of march. When he reached camp at 8 p.m., Bussey turned over to the provost-marshal about 50 greyclad stragglers that had been captured by his command on its forced reconnaissance to Bentonville.²¹

As soon as he learned that Bussey's troopers were in contact with Colonel Stone's pickets, Green put the trains into motion. Major Crump with his battalion of Texas cavalrymen was sent to reinforce the troopers manning the line of outposts which were established on the prairie south of Bentonville. By the time Crump's troopers arrived on the scene, the Federals had evacuated Bentonville and were returning to their camps.²²

Soon after the trains reached Elm Springs on the afternoon of the 9th, a message signed by General Van Dorn reached Green. Green was directed to rush to the army a number of ordnance wagons loaded with amunition. A rendezvous east of Fayetteville was designated. Lieutenant Colonel J. W. Priest with a 100-man detail was placed in charge of the wagons. Before reaching the rendezvous, Priest's detachment ran into trouble and was compelled to turn back. While returning to Elm Springs, Priest's command was attacked by one of Curtis' roving patrols. The Federals were beaten off.

In the meantime, Green had received a second note from Van Dorn, urging "the amunition must be brought up if

²¹ *Ibid.*, 235, 270.

²² *Ibid.*, 317.

possible." Green accordingly ordered out Colonel Joseph C. Porter with 200 of Watie's Indians. Porter and the Indians joined Priest before he reached Elm Springs. As soon as the wagons could be turned around, the train headed eastward. Too much time had been wasted. By the time the ordnance wagons and their escort reached the rendezvous, the army had pushed on. Retracing its steps, Porter's command rejoined Green at Walnut Grove.

Colonel Cooper and the Indian brigade stayed with Green's column as long as it remained at Elm Springs. At the same time, Colonel Stone employed his command to patrol the prairies north of the wagon park. When Green put his troops into motion for Frog Bayou, Cooper's troopers broke camp and headed for the Indian Territory.²³

* * *

General Curtis' Army of the Southwest remained camped on the battlefield until March 12. Then, "to avoid the stench," the army moved down the valley of Little Sugar Creek and occupied Camp Stephens.²⁴

The scenes following the terrible fighting were grim. For miles, the fields and woods were strewn with war's grim harvest. On the 7th, dry leaves had caught fire, adding to the smoke, flame, and confusion of battle. Spreading through the timber, the flames had burned and blackened the dead, and added to the tortures of the wounded. A number of badly injured men had perished in the fires before the hospital stewards could reach them. Writing while his memories of the battle were still vivid, Captain Samuel P. Curtis reported:

On the cliffs of Elkhorn [Pea Ridge] lay many wounded rebels, helpless and suffering in the bushes; here one with a wound in the bowels, imploring every passer-by to put an end to his agony; there another, pale in rapidly approaching death, with an entire leg torn away by a cannon ball and the ragged, bloody stump dabbled in the dirt, yet, calmly smiling and thanking his late Union foe for the swallow of lukewarm water from the broken canteen picked up on the field of battle; here a corpse, with the head as neatly removed by a cannon ball as if done by the guillotine; there a shattered ghastly arm, grasping a bent and broken flint-

²³ *Ibid.*, 317-318. Colonel Stone's command consisted of his regiment, the 6th Texas Cavalry, and the 1st Arkansas Cavalry Battalion.

²⁴ Curtis, "The Army of the South-West, and the First Campaign in Arkansas," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VI, No. IV, 249.

lock; everywhere scattered blankets and homemade quilts and coverlets, and in the woods below and beyond, muskets, arms, and dead and wounded rebels in the common costume of the country, home-spun "butternut," or the coarse, gray uniform of the Confederate soldiers. Many were partly clad in Federal uniforms torn from our dead and wounded in battle. The latter were generally found partially stripped, especially in the matter of shoes and stockings, of which articles the rebels stood in great need.²⁵

North of Leetown, the dead were scattered through the corn fields and in the thick underbrush. The bodies had been exposed for two days. The heavy rain which fell on the morning of the 9th had "washed white their exposed flesh, and many were partially devoured by hogs."

Young Curtis, on examining the lane where the fight between Trimble's patrol and the Texans occurred, found a large number of dead. "Here," he recalled, "were to be found huge home-made bowie-knives of the [Texas] rangers; here, also, lay unburied, many of Pike's Indians."

Besides the bodies, the people policing the area where the Leetown fight transpired found "guns, cartridge boxes, bayonets, etc, with solid shot, and shell exploded and unexploded, and all the general debris of battle."²⁶

Every house for miles around was taken over and turned into a hospital. Red hospital flags, often an old handkerchief or piece of cloth from the dress of the wife of some farmer, flapped in the breeze "over tenements that any other time would only have been used as stables or outbuildings."

In Leetown every house was filled with wounded. To take care of the overflow, the regimental surgeon of the 59th Illinois, Dr. H. J. Maynard, ordered tents pitched. The cooks were turned to and helped the hospital stewards take care of the wounded. Nothing that would tend to alleviate the suffering was neglected. According to the regimental historian of the 59th Illinois, "Long will the wounded of Pea Ridge remember Dr. H. J. Maynard."²⁷

Elkhorn Tavern which had served both armies as a hospital was filled with wounded. Piled up like cord wood on the porch of the hotel were the bodies of men who had died on

²⁵ Curtis, "The Army of the South-West, and the First Campaign in Arkansas," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VI, No. III, 143-144.

²⁶ *Ibid.*; Lathrop, *History of the 59th Illinois*, 97.

²⁷ Lathrop, *History of the 59th Illinois*, 97.

the operating table or immediately afterwards. Teams of Confederate surgeons administered to their wounded. As soon as the injured Secessionists were ready to travel, they were paroled and sent to Fayetteville; the disabled bluecoats were evacuated to Cassville.²⁸

After examining the returns submitted by his officers, Curtis listed his casualties in battle as 203 killed, 980 wounded, and 201 missing. Out of 10,000 effectives engaged, the Federals lost 14 per cent. Because Carr's and Davis' divisions had done the lion's share of the fighting, they suffered much worse than the units of Sigel's wing. Carr's division, composed principally of Iowa and Illinois troops, had covered itself with glory. But in doing so, Carr had lost 28 per cent of the men carried into action. The 3d Iowa Cavalry had also been hard hit. In the fighting north of Leetown on the 7th, Colonel Bussey had seen 21 per cent of his men cut down.²⁹

A detailed return of the Confederate casualties in the battle was never filed by General Van Dorn. In his preliminary report forwarded to Richmond from Van Buren on March 18, the Confederate leader noted, "Our loss was not as heavy, however, as I had thought and was reported to me, not being more than 800 or 1,000 killed and wounded and between 200 and 300 prisoners."³⁰

Nine days later, Van Dorn writing from Jacksonport scaled down his losses. He informed the War Department that his killed and wounded totaled about 600, while the Federals had captured approximately 200 of his men.³¹

In addition to the many killed, wounded, and captured, a large number of the Confederates left the columns. While many of these straggled, others had their fill of war. These men returned to their homes. If they were behind Union lines, many took the loyalty oath, while others headed for the frontier. A rough figure on what this entailed may be obtained by taking the effective strength of McCulloch's

²⁸ Curtis, "The Army of the South-West, and the First Campaign in Arkansas," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VI, No. III, 144, 145.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 145; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 204-206, 235, 261.

³⁰ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 282.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 285.

division on March 2 which was 8,384 and subtracting from it the reported strength of the division on March 11—2,894. It should be noted that the March 11 figure for the division does not include Stone's command (the 6th Texas Cavalry and the 1st Arkansas Cavalry Battalion) probably 900 effectives and three of the four attached batteries (Good's, Gaines', and Provence's).³²

Subsequent to the battle, General Curtis informed Colonel Dodge that "the secret of our victory was the tenacity with which" Carr's division held its position on the 7th at Elkhorn Tavern, while Davis' and Osterhaus' troops were repulsing McCulloch's wing north of Leetown. Since only part of McCulloch's former command joined Van Dorn on the night of the 7th, he was at a marked disadvantage when Curtis, who had concentrated his army, renewed the battle on March 8.³³

Both General Price and Colonel Dodge believed, and correctly, that the key to the Union success was Price's failure to get into position to attack at daybreak on the 7th. Price's column, as it pushed forward along the Bentonville Detour, ran afoul of the felled timber with which Dodge's working parties had barricaded the road. His column was delayed. According to Dodge, "the attack that should have been made at daylight (which would no doubt have been a surprise to us) was delayed till 8 o'clock."³⁴

By his victory at Pea Ridge, Curtis made certain that the Union would hold Missouri, a key state. If the Confederates had reached St. Louis, as Van Dorn had planned, they would have gained control of the mouth of the Missouri River. An invasion of Illinois and Iowa would have been a distinct threat.

Hereafter no Confederate army was able to maintain a foothold in Missouri. Raiding columns swept into Missouri on many occasions, but they would be compelled to fall back. Partisan warfare raged in Missouri throughout the remainder of the war, but the Confederacy saw the state of Missouri slip from its grasp.

³² *Ibid.*, 763, 766.

³³ Dodge, "Personal Biography," I, 49-52.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

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