

The Battle of Pea Ridge

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PART III Continued

Sigel was afraid that the Confederates, in the wake of their Leetown repulse, might regroup and send a column to cut the Union communication lines linking Leetown with Little Sugar Creek. A patrol consisting of two companies of the 44th Illinois (A and C) and 20 troopers from the 15th Illinois Cavalry were sent to picket the area west of Winton's Spring Branch.

As soon as the patrol moved off, Sigel started for Leetown with three infantry regiments (the 15th Missouri and the 25th and 44th Illinois) and two of Welfley's guns. Colonel William N. Coler of the 25th Illinois reported, "A stern joy was felt when General Sigel rode up in person and ordered the regiment . . . to move forward to the support of the left wing." After reinforcing Davis and Osterhaus, Sigel planned to hurl the Confederates back toward Bentonville. He would then wheel his wing to the right and attack Price's Missourians in the Elkhorn Tavern sector.⁷¹

Taking the road which ascended Winton's Spring Branch, Sigel's column moved off on the double. By the time Sigel reached Leetown, the fighting in that area had ended with the Federals victorious and in possession of the field. Sigel was joined by Captain Thomas I. McKinney of Curtis' staff. McKinney told Sigel that the Union right was hard-pressed. Unless reinforcements were sent, he warned, the front in the Elkhorn area was in danger of disintegrating.

Sigel called for Colonel Coler of the 25th Illinois. The colonel was told to rush a battalion of his regiment and two guns of the 4th Ohio Battery to the point of danger. This "flying column" would be led by Major Richard H. Nodine.

Turning into a farm road which passed to the southeast of Round Top, Nodine's combat patrol pushed rapidly forward. As he approached the Telegraph road, Nodine encountered

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 212, 221.

General Curtis. The general directed the major to put his men into action on Asboth's left. By the time Nodine's troops had closed in on Rosser's Confederate outposts, it was too dark to distinguish friend from foe. To make matters worse, the gunners of the 2d Ohio Battery began to pound the underbrush into which Nodine's bluecoats had ventured. Nodine accordingly withdrew his patrol to the opposite side of the meadow which it had just crossed. After he had posted his men in the timber on the left of Carr's troops, Nodine permitted them to sleep on their arms.⁷²

As soon as Nodine's column had been detached, Sigel proceeded beyond the hamlet to the battlefield. Reaching the corn fields north of Leetown, Sigel found Davis' and Osterhaus' troops in control of the situation. The only Confederates Sigel was able to see were ensconced on Round Top.⁷³

In the meantime, the 44th Illinois, the 15th Missouri and the section of guns manned by Welfley's cannoneers had pressed ahead. Calling to the senior officer present, Colonel Charles Knobelsdorff of the 44th Illinois, Colonel Davis gave him the task of mopping up the area between Round Top and the corn fields. To carry out this assignment, Knobelsdorff deployed his men—the 15th Missouri to the left of, the 44th Illinois to the right of the road. Covered by a strong skirmish line, the Federals swept forward, "passing over the dead and wounded, who lay in every direction." As they pushed northward, the bluecoats smashed several pockets of resistance and captured a number of prisoners. Not until his troops had gained possession of Round Top did Knobelsdorff permit them to take a break.⁷⁴

Before advancing to overtake Knobelsdorff, the ever cautious Sigel had another problem which he wished attended to. He still worried about an attack on his left. He accordingly asked Davis to send a regiment to patrol the woods and underbrush north of the corn fields. When Davis agreed to do this, Sigel ordered the march resumed.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 212, 223-224, 238.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 224-225, 247.

Sigel's column (a battalion of the 25th Illinois and four guns) marched up the road pioneered by Knobelsdorff's command. At Mrs. Sturdy's, Sigel rendezvoused with Knobelsdorff. After listening to Knobelsdorff's report of the situation, Sigel decided that he had nothing to fear from the wing of Van Dorn's Army of the West which had been defeated north of Leetown. Before pushing on toward Elkhorn Tavern, he sent one of his staff officers racing off with a message directing Colonel Osterhaus to join him with the 36th Illinois, the 12th Missouri, and a section of the 4th Ohio Battery.⁷⁵

White's brigade of Davis' division was given the task of screening the left flank of Sigel's column as it struck northward toward the Bentonville — Sugar Creek road. The only Confederates encountered by White's soldiers on their sweep to the northwest were a few stragglers who quickly grounded their arms. Retracing their steps, the troops rejoined the division. Davis' command camped in John Ruddick's fields, a short distance west of Winton's Springs.⁷⁶

When the Confederates disappeared from north of Leetown, Colonel Bussey called for Colonel Calvin A. Ellis of the 1st Missouri Cavalry. Ellis was told to take his regiment and the battalion of the 3d Iowa and pursue the Rebels. After advancing about two miles and failing to overtake any organized Confederates, Ellis retraced his line of march. Following Ellis' return, Bussey directed him to report to Colonel Osterhaus with his regiment and Colonel Joseph Nemett's detachment of the 5th Missouri Cavalry. At this time, Nemett's troopers were posted in the corn field to the left of where Greusel's "brigade" had made its gallant stand. Accompanied by the horsemen of the 3d Iowa, Bussey started for Elkhorn Tavern. As he rode off, Bussey noted the hour—it was 5 p.m.

By the time Bussey reached the Telegraph road, Carr's division was falling back across Samuel Ruddick's field. Reporting to Carr, Bussey was directed to dismount and deploy his troopers in support of Dodge's brigade. Bussey's Iowans pic-

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 212, 225.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 247, 253.

keted the Army of the Southwest's right on the night of the 7th.⁷⁷

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The sun was starting to dip below the western horizon when Osterhaus put his command in motion. As soon as Osterhaus' troops came tramping up the road, Sigel passed the word to move out. A short distance beyond Mrs. Sturdy's dwelling, (which had been turned into a Confederate hospital), Sigel turned his vanguard into the Bentonville—Sugar Creek road. By the time Sigel's column reached Ford's house it was almost dark. A short distance east of the buildings, a halt was called. The guns were unlimbered; the infantry was brought into line of battle in the fields north and south of the road. From the ground occupied, Sigel's bluecoats could see the camp fires kindled by Price's troops around Elkhorn Tavern.

A staff officer was detailed to notify Curtis that Sigel was in position and ready to cooperate. Before the aids returned it was dark. Although the artillery to his front continued to rumble, Sigel did not believe the Rebels planned a night attack. Consequently, he determined to hold his troops where they were. To keep the Confederates from pinpointing his wing, Sigel forbade the building of fires. The troops were ordered to rest on their arms, all unnecessary noise was to be dispensed with.⁷⁸

Osterhaus reported that his men "laid down to rest in a wet corn field, having eaten nothing since morning, but not a murmur was heard; they waited in patience. So ended the second day of battle."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 234, 245.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 212-213, 219, 225, 226; Bennett and Haigh, *History of the 36th Illinois*, 160.

⁷⁹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 219. Like many of the officers involved in the campaign, Osterhaus considered the fighting which had accompanied the Union withdrawal from Bentonville on March 6 as part of the battle of Pea Ridge.

Part IV

The Battle of Pea Ridge

THE FEDERALS WIN THE DAY

Both the Confederate and Union leaders redeployed their commands on the night of the 7th. Since the battle hung in the balance, each wanted to be ready to harvest the fruits of victory when the fighting was resumed in the morning.

Reports reaching Curtis from his subordinates and scouts indicated that General Van Dorn was shifting the shattered force formerly commanded by McCulloch from the area north of Leetown to Elkhorn Tavern. As on the previous night, there was heavy traffic on the Bentonville Detour. In view of this information, Curtis knew that he had better reinforce Carr's battered command. A staff officer was rushed off with instructions for Davis to arouse his troops and have them take position on Carr's left.¹

By midnight, Davis and his officers had formed and mustered their dog-tired troops. When Davis gave the word, the division moved off. With Pattison's Indians taking the lead, Davis' command left the Leetown area. Taking the road which ascended Winton's Spring Branch, the head of the column turned into the Telegraph road.

A short tramp up the Telegraph road brought Pattison's brigade to the area south of Samuel Ruddick's field where Carr's exhausted troops lay in line of battle. Here, Colonel Shunk's battalion and three of Klauss' guns rejoined the brigade. Pattison deployed his men on the right of the road. The left flank of the 18th Indiana was anchored on the road, Shunk's battalion was posted on the right of the 18th Indiana, while the 22d Indiana held Pattison's right. Captain Klauss' artillerymen of the 1st Indiana Battery emplaced their three James rifles in front of the sector held by Shunk's battalion. Like Carr before him, Pattison had his troops take cover at

¹ O. R., Series I, Vol. VIII, 201.

the "edge of the brush-wood," a cleared field to their front. After the men had been detailed for guard duty, the troops were permitted to rest on their arms.²

White, unlike Pattison, did not deploy his brigade until morning. At daybreak, White's soldiers were formed on the left of the Telegraph road. The cannoneers of Battery A, 2d Illinois Light Artillery emplaced their four remaining guns next to the road. Three companies of the 59th Illinois were posted in support of the artillerists. The rest of White's infantry was stationed behind a rail fence, separating two open fields on the left of the artillery.³

Upon being relieved by Davis, Carr recalled his troops. For the time being, his division would be in reserve. Carr had his soldiers take position in the woods behind Pattison's brigade. Dodge recalled bitterly, "Davis placed his troops behind a rail fence and we stood from 12 o'clock midnight till daylight shivering in the cold, without fires or food, exhausted and without sleep; while all of Seigel's [sic] troops, who were fresh, slept soundly. They got their breakfast leisurely and did not get into position before 7 A.M."⁴

* * *

Nightfall on March 7 found the units of Sigel's wing scattered. Sigel with a large force was in position astride the Bentonville-Sugar Creek road, a short distance east of George W. Ford's house. There, his troops were in position to strike the Confederate right when fighting was resumed. To keep the Confederates from spotting his troops, Sigel had his officers hold the men in line of battle. The soldiers were cautioned to make as little noise as possible. No fires were permitted. Many of the soldiers had not had anything to eat since morning. Osterhaus and several of the officers sent details to bring up the ration wagons, but each time they returned without them. The officers notified Sigel it "was

² *Ibid.*, 250. Shunk's battalion of the 8th Indiana and three of Klaus' guns had reinforced Carr late on the afternoon of the 7th.

³ *Ibid.*, 254; Herr, *Nine Campaigns in Nine States*, 74-75; Lathrop, *History of the 59th Illinois*, 95-96. As yet, the artificers of Battery A had been unable to put the two pieces which had changed hands twice on the previous afternoon back in action.

⁴ Dodge, "Personal Biography," I, 49-52.

indispensable that . . . [their] men should eat something before entering on another day's struggle."⁵

A detachment from the 4th Ohio Battery led by Corporal Conrad Ebner was sent to Pratt's Store to pick up a caisson load of ammunition. Reaching Pratt's Store, Ebner's detail secured the projectiles. At 1 a.m. the four artillerymen left Pratt's Store with a heavily loaded caisson, drawn by six horses. Ebner's detail became confused in the darkness and took the wrong road. Unfortunately for the Ohio cannoners, this road led directly into the Confederate lines. When challenged by a Rebel officer and asked where he was going, Ebner replied, "Dis for Sigel!" Before the surprised Federals could collect their wits, they had been disarmed.⁶

Between 12 and 1 o'clock, several of Sigel's patrols came in and informed the general they had heard noises which sounded suspiciously like troops moving along the Bentonville Detour toward the northeast. Accompanied by several of his staff, Sigel rode out to the picket line. He remained there about one-half hour, but was unable to hear anything.

Unlike the Federals, the Confederates had been permitted to build fires. As he returned to his command post, Sigel began to reflect on this. To the east and southeast could be seen the glare of the camp fires kindled by Price's Missourians, while to the west and southwest "the sky was illuminated" at two different points. Late on the previous afternoon, several of Sigel's scouts had sighted Pike's column, as it marched along the Bentonville Detour. When he evaluated the available information, Sigel concluded (correctly) that the Rebels had determined to abandon their operations in the Leetown sector and concentrate all their troops at Elk-

⁵ O. R., Series I, Vol. VIII, 213, 219; Sigel, *The Pea Ridge Campaign, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 325-326. Major Poter's combat team, along with six companies of the 2d Missouri and two guns of the 2d Ohio Battery, held the camp overlooking Little Sugar Creek; two companies of the 44th Illinois and 20 troopers from the 15th Illinois Cavalry were on picket southwest of Leetown; General Asboth's column (which had been reinforced about dark by Nodine's battalion of the 25th Illinois and two guns of the 4th Ohio Battery) was with Carr's command southwest of Elkhorn Tavern.

⁶ O. R., Series I, Vol. VIII, 238; W. P. Gault, *Ohio at Vicksburg* (Columbus, 1906), 254; Curtis, "The Army of the South-West and the First Campaign in Arkansas," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VI. No. III. 152.

horn Tavern. In the morning, Sigel reasoned, Van Dorn would hurl his entire army against the Union right.⁷

Sigel accordingly determined to withdraw his troops from their position in the fields east of Ford's house. The soldiers would return to their camps. There, they would be allowed to rest and eat. At the same time, staff officers would be sent to recall the detached units. When the battle was resumed, Sigel planned to hurl his entire wing against the Rebel right. Several companies of the 5th Missouri Cavalry and some infantry would be left to hold the Bentonville - Sugar Creek road.⁸

When Sigel gave the word, his officers quietly formed and mustered their units. Orders were given in whispers as the column moved off. The march was made cross-country. One of the soldiers recalled:

. . . we silently left our position in the field [Ford's], groping our way among the deadened cornstalks, clambering over fences, meandering through woods, falling over logs . . . , after an hour's painful marching we reached the [Telegraph] road, near where a muddy rivulet . . . [Winton's Spring Branch] headed . We rushed to the banks, and, lying prostrate upon the earth, quaffed great draughts of the precious beverage and found refreshment and vigor in its cooling waters, the whole brigade [Creusel's] brightening up under its invigorating influence.⁹

While his troops were quenching their thirst, Sigel reported to General Curtis. Sigel informed Curtis that he was taking his men to their camps, so they could obtain ammunition and rations. Since it was about two miles from Pratt's Store to the camps, Curtis was afraid that if Sigel were allowed to continue with his plans, he would be tardy in returning to the front. He urged Sigel to let his troops camp on Winton's Spring Branch near headquarters. Details could be sent to bring up the commissary and ordnance wagons. Sigel, seeing the wisdom in Curtis' proposal, concurred. Rejoining his wing, Sigel ordered the troops to bivouac.¹⁰

Sigel now permitted his men to build fires in the hollows. As soon as the ration wagons arrived, the soldiers broke out frying pans and kettles. According to the regimental historians of the 36th Illinois:

⁷ Sigel, "The Pea Ridge Campaign," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 326.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Bennett and Haigh, *History of the 36th Illinois*, 161.

¹⁰ O. R., Series I, Vol. VIII, 201.

. . . a few hastily and half-baked flap-jacks, made of flour and water, were the first morsels of food which had passed our lips for nearly twenty-four hours. This, in a measure, appeased our ravenous hunger, after which a craving for rest was gratified by an hour's sleep upon the muddy ground. The damp, cold air, and a want of blankets and sufficient clothing, rendered this a most chilly and restless affair. This dumping down by the roadside is not suggestive of special comfort, but we were thoroughly tired out, and had reached a point where sleep, however uncomfortable, was a necessity.

No one removed his sword or separated himself from his gun. Horses stood saddled, ready for instant service. The mules continued their braying. Pickets stood with eyes and ears open, ready to give warning should a night attack be attempted.¹¹

In accordance with Sigel's orders, General Asboth had withdrawn the two sections of the 2d Ohio Battery and Colonel Frederick Schaefer's four companies of the 2d Missouri from their advance position southwest of Elkhorn Tavern. Near Pratt's Store, Asboth found Sigel. The wing commander told Asboth to have these two units return to the Little Sugar Creek line. There, they relieved Lieutenant Conrad Gansevoort's section of the battery and the six companies of the 2d Missouri which had been watching the Bentonville road. These two units set out immediately for Winton Springs, where they reported to Asboth. Thus, when the battle was resumed, Asboth would be able to employ fresh troops.¹²

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Several hours before daybreak, Sigel and Asboth reportedly approached Colonel Bussey and talked him into asking Curtis "to call a council of war."

Curtis refused, in strong terms. He stated that "he wanted no council; that his orders were out and he was going to fight it out on that ground."

After leaving headquarters, Bussey encountered Colonel Dodge. Upon hearing what had transpired, Dodge went directly to Curtis. He informed the general in the strongest terms that "the troops that had been idle the day before should be gotten to the front to relieve our troops that were exhausted."

Curtis replied, "Siegel [sic] should be up with his force, and that he was now on the ground."

¹¹ Bennett and Haigh, *History of the 36th Illinois*, 161-162.

¹² *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 214, 242-243.

Dodge remarked, this was not true, because Sigel "was in camp to our rear, and his men were sleeping."

At this, Curtis told Dodge of Sigel's and Asboth's efforts to get him to call a council of war. Although he would not order Sigel to take position until after daybreak, Curtis informed Dodge, "his plans were all made." His troops, Curtis thundered, would "fight it out right where they were."

Dodge assured Curtis, if he put Sigel's wing into action early, "and force [d] the fighting, the moral effect on our men and on the enemy would be great and would win the day."

"That is just what I am going to do," Curtis rejoined. Satisfied that Curtis had made up his mind to fight, Dodge returned to his command post.¹³

* * *

The rumble of artillery and wagons moving into position, and the shouts of the Union officers as they gave orders were heard by the Confederates. At daybreak, the butternuts were taken back to discover a powerful battle line, with several batteries unlimbered, in the edge of the timber on the opposite side of Samuel Ruddick's field. Heavy columns of infantry could be distinguished massed behind Curtis' main line of resistance; bluecoated horsemen were posted to cover the Federals' flanks. In the distance the Secessionists could make out the canvas tops of the Union train. It was apparent to the Rebels that Curtis had massed his army and would make a determined "effort to retrieve the position lost on the previous day."¹⁴

Van Dorn had spent an anxious night. Almost as soon as the fighting ceased on the 7th, his officers began to send in reports that their units had shot up most of their ammunition. When questioned, the chief of ordnance informed the general that there had been a mistake. The ordnance wagons had been left at Camp Stephens with the commissary train. A staff officer was sent galloping with instructions for General Green to put the trains in motion and rejoin the army. Van Dorn knew it would be well after daybreak before the train could reach him. In addition, many of the soldiers had been

¹³ Dodge, "Personal Biography," I, 49-52.

¹⁴ Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 176.

without food, except what they could forage, since the 6th. The artillery horses were "beaten" down.¹⁵

When dawn revealed that the Federals had taken advantage of the night to redeploy their troops, Van Dorn called for his principal officers. He would accept the "gage."¹⁶

All the units which had accompanied Pike on the march from the Leetown area to Elkhorn Tavern, except Watie's regiment and Welch's squadron, were directed to report to other officers. This was an example of the low esteem in which Van Dorn held Pike. The 16th and 17th Arkansas, the 1st Arkansas Mounted Rifles, the 4th Texas Cavalry Battalion (The two latter units had been dismounted.), and Good's Texas Battery would report to Colonel Little.

Pike was directed by Van Dorn to employ Watie's Cherokees to protect the army's flanks. One wing of the Cherokee regiment took position on Pea Ridge, the other on the ridge north of Williams Hollow. The Indians were to watch the Federals' movements and notify Van Dorn if the Yankees tried to turn his position. Pike accompanied the battalion of Watie's regiment which scaled Pea Ridge. Before doing so, he gave Captain Welch permission to join any Texas cavalry regiment he wished. Welch chose the 3d Texas Cavalry.¹⁷

As soon as the units which had accompanied Pike reported to him, Colonel Little redeployed his command. His infantry took position in the verge of the timber which overlooked Samuel Ruddick's field on the north and in Jesse Cox's wood lot. Colonel Burbridge's 2d Missouri was posted in the wood lot with its left flank anchored on the Telegraph road. From right to left Little's main line of resistance east of the Telegraph road was held by the 3d Missouri, General Frost's infantry, and the 16th Arkansas. To strengthen their position, the Confederates threw down the fence and erected breastworks of fence rails. The 4th Texas Cavalry Battalion (dismounted) was massed in the rear of the 3d Missouri.

Captain Wade's six gun battery was emplaced on the

¹⁵ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 284.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 290. Welch's squadron served with the 3d Texas Cavalry during the remainder of the campaign.

road about 200 yards in rear of the 2d Missouri. The intervening timber masked the Missouri artillerists' guns from the prying eyes of the Federals. Colonel Thomas J. Churchill with two Arkansas regiments (the 1st Mounted Rifles and the 17th) was stationed along the Bentonville - Sugar Creek road. The Arkansans were about 300 yards to the rear, and on the right of Burbridge's 2d Missouri.¹⁸

Most of the Confederates were satisfied that they could hold this position against any attack which the Army of the Southwest might mount . . . One of Little's Missourians observed:

To drive us from the ground we occupied was a task full of difficulty and danger. Protected by the brow of the hill from the enemy's fire, their lines would be entirely exposed in advancing upon us. Our whole battle array was composed of troops upon whose firmness the most implicit reliance might be placed. If the hostile force had been more than double our number, its ranks would have been so shattered in attempting to reach us, that any who might have arrived at our line would have been almost sure of destruction or defeat.¹⁹

Colonel Rosser's brigade held the southeastern point of Pea Ridge (known locally as Sugar Mountain). Patrols watched the ground between Rosser's left and Churchill's right, while Watie's Indians screened the brigade's right.²⁰

Three divisions of the State Guard (Rain's, Saunders', and Clark's) occupied the ground to Little's left.²¹ Two Missouri Cavalry battalions (Cearnal's and Riggins') patrolled Van Dorn's left, south of the Huntsville road.²²

Van Dorn had sent one of his staff officers to order up Colonel Greer's command. After turning into the Telegraph road from the Bentonville Detour, Greer had called a halt. The men were allowed to fall out and take it easy. It was about sunrise when the aide reached Greer's command post. Calling to Greer, the messenger informed the colonel that it looked as if the Federals planned to renew the battle. Greer was to rejoin the army as promptly as possible.

When Greer gave the word, the officers hurriedly formed

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁹ Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 176-177.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 313, 315.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 320, 321, 327-328. From right to left these divisions were deployed; Rains', Saunders', and Clark's.

²² *Ibid.*, 316, 329.

their units on the road. The column had not gone very far before a guide reported to Greer. About the time that Greer's division forded Big Sugar Creek and turned up Cross Timber Hollow, the soldiers heard the distant boom of a cannon. Within a few minutes, a number of other guns had growled into action. As one of the soldiers recalled, "The cannonading was terrific – the thunder of the guns reverberating among the hills in a continuous roar."

Taking the wood road which gave access to the south rim of Williams Hollow, Greer's troops gained the Huntsville road. In accordance with Van Dorn's instructions, Greer ordered his infantry (under McNair) to shuck their packs. Throwing aside their few remaining blankets and overcoats, McNair's footsoldiers advanced into the wooded area south of the Huntsville road on the double. McNair deployed his command (the 3d Louisiana, the 4th, 14th, 16th, and 21st Arkansas) into line of battle about 250 yards behind Van Dorn's main line of resistance. Greer massed his cavalry in close column by regiments on the right of McNair's infantry.²³

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The artillery duel which broke out as Greer's greyclads marched to the front had been inaugurated by the Federals. Shortly after Davidson's gunners of Battery A, 2d Illinois Light Artillery had unlimbered their four pieces, they sighted a Confederate battery moving into position at the edge of the timber on the north side of Samuel Ruddick's field. Colonel Little had spotted White's brigade as soon as it advanced into Lewis Pratt's field. He ordered Tull's battery to the front. Manhandling their four pieces forward, Tull's gunners emplaced them between the 3d Missouri and Frost's infantry.

When notified of this, Colonel Davis ordered Battery A to open fire. Tull's cannoneers replied. Moments later, a masked Confederate battery (Wade's) roared forth, spraying the ground on both sides of the Telegraph road with a storm of canister and shell. Captain Klauss bellowed for the men of his 1st Indiana Battery to man their three James rifles. Springing to their pieces, the Indianians returned Wade's

²³ *Ibid.*, 294, 300; Tunnard, *History of the 3d Louisiana*, 135-136, 139.

fire. Klauss' Hoosiers were unable to get off more than a few rounds, before the Confederates' fire compelled them to give ground. Limbering up their pieces, the Indianians fell back. Two of Pattison's units, the 22d Indiana and Shunk's battalion, followed hard on the heels of the retreating cannoners. The retreat was so rapid that the officers lost control of the situation, a number of men panicked.

Apparently, the Rebel gun spotters were unable to pinpoint Pattison's third unit, the 18th Indiana, which was posted in the woods on the right of the Telegraph road. This regiment held its position while Pattison and his subordinates rallied and reformed the rest of the brigade in the timber about 300 yards south of Ruddick's field. As soon as he had completed his dispositions, Pattison recalled the 18th Indiana.

In the meantime, Klauss' artillerymen had placed their three James rifles in battery next to the Telegraph road. When the 18th Indiana pulled back, the troops formed on the right of Klauss' guns. To protect his right, Pattison refused that flank which was held by Shunk's battalion.²⁴

Following the retreat of the Indianians, Captain Davidson's gunners grimly clung to their advance position for another one-half hour. All this time, the Illinoisans continued to duel with the ten Confederate guns, while White's supporting infantry "crouched behind the doubtful shelter of a rail fence." Shifting their pieces, the butternuts found that they could enfilade White's infantry.

Colonel White had a narrow escape when a round shot ricocheted under his horse and tore a leg off Lieutenant Landgrove's mount. The horse fell. As soon as Landgrove freed himself from his saddle, the pain-crazed animal scrambled to its feet. When last seen the horse was hobbling off into the Rebel lines, "taking with it all the Lieutenant's available funds, which were concealed in his holsters."

White now ordered his troops to pull back. Retiring about 250 yards, Davidson's artillerymen emplaced their four guns on a knoll within easy range of Little's main line of resistance.

²⁴ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 247, 250-251, 254, 309; Herr, *Nine Campaigns in Nine States*, 74.

White's footsoldiers took cover in a belt of timber on the west side of the Telegraph road.²⁵

The Confederates had scored the day's first success. Fierce yells rent the cold March air as Davis' division started to yield. One of the Missouri infantrymen recalled:

The Federal artillery opened upon our lines as soon as it was fairly light, and the thunder . . . [of seven] guns rolled over the plain. But a single position on our side commanded the enemy's line, and it only gave space enough to work one battery. This was in the road, about two hundred yards in our rear, and was first occupied by Captain Wade, whose pieces were discharged with such accuracy of aim and incessant rapidity, that they swept and tore through the Federal lines with fatal destruction, exposed as they were on a high open plain, without any protection, and at short range.²⁶

Colonel Carr's exhausted division spent the night in the woods behind Pattison's battle line. When the 22d Indiana and Shunk's battalion gave way, many of the Hoosiers passed rapidly through Dodge's camp. Things looked grim for the Federals.

General Curtis, who was sitting in the grass by the side of the Telegraph road waiting for Sigel's wing to arrive, called for Colonels Carr and Dodge. Carr had little comfort for his chief. He told Curtis, "if worse came to worst, he should endeavor to get out with his regiment of cavalry, the 3d Illinois."

Turning to Dodge, Curtis asked his opinion on what the Federals ought to do in case they were unable to drive the Confederates from Cross Timber Hollow.

Dodge replied, "Put my command at the head and we will cut out to the east towards . . . [Huntsville], the enemy are certainly weak there for we hear nothing of them."

Curtis agreed to adopt this course of action, if he were unable to break the Rebels' grip on his supply line.²⁷

By this time, the crisis had passed. Davis had established a new line of resistance, and the Confederates made no effort to follow up their success. Carr was accordingly ordered to

²⁵ O. R., Series I, Vol. VIII, 254-255; Herr, *Nine Campaigns in Nine States*, 75; Curtis, "The Army of the South-West, and the First Campaign in Arkansas," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VI, No. III, 151.

²⁶ Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 177.

²⁷ Dodge, "Personal Biography," I, 49-52.

move forward and post his division on Davis' right with Dodge's brigade on the left, Vandever's on the right.

Carr wasted little time in carrying out his instructions. Only one battery, the 3d Iowa, accompanied the division as it moved into position. Captain Hayden had his cannoneers emplace their three remaining guns on the road linking Pratt's Store with the Huntsville road. Colonel Bussey employed the 3d Illinois Cavalry and the battalion of the 3d Iowa to guard Carr's right.²⁸

When the 1st Iowa Battery took the field on the 8th, Lieutenant David found that casualties, loss of equipment, and an ammunition shortage had taken their toll. He would be able to put only one section — two guns — in action. General Curtis had a special assignment for the battery, so it did not accompany Carr's division. Instead, David had his gunners emplace their two pieces in Lewis Pratt's field to the left of Davis' division.²⁹

* * *

Sigel's officers awakened their men at daybreak. After the troops had prepared and eaten a hasty breakfast, they were ordered to fall in.

In the meantime, General Sigel had summoned Colonel Osterhaus and Lieutenant Charles W. Asmussen to his command post. These two officers were directed to reconnoiter the ground to the left of Davis' division where Sigel proposed to deploy his wing. In addition, they were to see if they could locate a feasible route which Sigel's artillery and infantry might use in moving to the front.³⁰ If so, Sigel planned to hurl his wing against the Rebel's right and rear as soon as they struck at Davis' division.

The 44th Illinois, Colonel Knobelsdorff commanding, would follow the two high ranking scouts. Knobelsdorff was to take position on the left of Davis' battle line. When the rest of Sigel's wing advanced, the officers would form their units on the left of the 44th Illinois. Because Sigel wished to keep the Confederates in the dark as to his plans, he admonished

²⁸ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 234, 262.

²⁹ Black, *Soldier's Recollections*, 8.

³⁰ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 214, 219; Sigel, "The Pea Ridge Campaign," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 327. Lt. Asmussen belonged to Sigel's staff.

Knobelsdorff to keep his men under cover as much as possible. He would not enter into an engagement unless attacked.³¹

Reaching the front, Knobelsdorff posted his regiment on the left of White's brigade. Almost immediately thereafter, the artillery duel began. When White's men retired, a number of them broke through the ranks of the 44th Illinois. Within a few minutes, Knobelsdorff received instructions to pull back. On doing so, General Curtis ordered the Illinoisans to support the two guns of the 1st Iowa Battery, which had just reached the front.³²

Sigel was standing in front of his tent anxiously awaiting Osterhaus' and Asmussen's return, when Davis' artillery opened fire. Within a few moments, General Curtis rode up. As he did, Curtis remarked excitedly, "General I have opened the battle; it will be a hard fight; Davis is already there. Please bring your troops in line as quickly as possible."

Sigel was taken aback by Curtis' remarks. He couldn't understand why Davis had been permitted to let his batteries open fire, before his wing was in position. A Confederate attack at this time could prove very embarrassing. In addition, Sigel had just returned from a canter up the Telegraph road. What he had witnessed was anything but reassuring. Not only was the road jammed with artillery, ambulances, and ordnance wagons, but Davis' position didn't appear to be very formidable. If he marched his wing to Davis' support, Sigel reasoned, he would have to form his troops behind Davis' initial line. Here, his troops would find their field of fire obstructed, while at the same time they would be exposed to the deadly projectiles of the Rebel artillery massed in the timber at the edge of Samuel Ruddick's field.

Explaining his feelings on the subject to Curtis, Sigel announced that he momentarily expected the return of Osterhaus and Asmussen. Sigel asked his commanding general for ten minutes grace. As he did, he argued that even if the Rebels attacked, they would be unable to exploit their success, because his wing would be in position to fall upon their rear

³¹ Sigel, "The Pea Ridge Campaign," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 327.

³² *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 225.

and right. As he started to turn his horse, Curtis remarked, "Well, General, do what you propose."³³

Before the stipulated time elapsed, the two officers returned from their reconnaissance. Osterhaus reported, "they had found an excellent position" on a commanding ridge in Jesse Cox's field, southwest of Elkhorn Tavern. Furthermore, the colonel continued, the 44th Illinois was already on the ground. At this, Curtis declared himself satisfied and returned to his headquarters. Scarcely had Curtis disappeared than the cannonade increased in intensity. Several shells from the Rebel guns burst near Sigel's command post.³⁴

After placing Colonel Osterhaus in charge of the column with instructions to put it in motion, Sigel and Lieutenant Assmussen headed for the Telegraph road. When they reached the front, the two officers found several of Pattison's regiments retreating in disorder. Sigel and his staff officer helped Pattison re-form his troops.³⁵

In the meantime, Osterhaus' column had moved out. As soon as Osterhaus' lead unit (the 25th Illinois) entered Pratt's field, Colonel Coler deployed his regiment. To reach the position indicated by Osterhaus behind a rail fence and barn, Coler's troops had to cross Pratt's field. In doing so, the Illinoisans were "compelled to pass through a shower of shot and shell . . . in full view of the enemy's batteries." Reaching the fence, Colonel Coler had his men drop to the ground. Although they were within one-half mile of Wade's death-dealing battery, the Confederate gunners were unable to depress their pieces enough to cause much damage to Coler's bluecoats. Shortly after taking position, Coler established contact with White's brigade on his right.

As each successive unit of Osterhaus' columns entered the corn fields, it deployed to the left of the one which preceded it.³⁶

General Sigel rejoined his wing just as the 25th Illinois was crossing Pratt's field. While en route to the left, Sigel had

³³ Sigel, "The Pea Ridge Campaign," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 327.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 327-328; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 219.

³⁵ Sigel, "The Pea Ridge Campaign," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 328.

³⁶ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 219-220, 222.

encountered the 44th Illinois. Colonel Knobelsdorff, in accordance with Sigel's instructions, shifted his regiment to the left. Knobelsdorff's troops occupied the ground to the left and front of the 25th Illinois. Captain Welfley's cannoners unlimbered their five guns in the interval between the 44th Illinois and the 12th Missouri. Captain Hoffmann's 4th Ohio Battery placed its six pieces in battery on the left of the 12th Missouri. The 36th Illinois, which was massed in close columns by division, guarded Osterhaus' left. The 3d and 17th Missouri (constituting Osterhaus' reserve) were massed behind his center.³⁷

Asboth's division was posted about 250 paces behind Osterhaus' command. Although the wound which he had received late on the previous afternoon was very painful, Asboth was in the saddle.³⁸

Sigel's position, which was on a plateau, was formidable. From the plateau, the ground sloped toward the woods where the Rebels had massed their infantry and emplaced their artillery.

As soon as Colonel Little spotted Sigel's bluecoats, he called for Captain Good. The captain was to take his six-gun Texas battery, move down the Telegraph road, and take position in the edge of the wood lot on the right of the 2d Missouri. Thundering forward, the rugged Texans threw their pieces into battery. Almost as soon as the trails struck the ground, the guns were in action. Good's Texans had a difficult time registering. Many of their shots whizzed harmlessly overhead, or struck the ground and were buried a short distance in front of Sigel's battle line. To cover the deployment

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 220, 225, 226-227, 236, 238. Major Poten's combat team (the 17th Missouri, two companies of the 15th Missouri, two companies of the 4th Missouri Cavalry, and two guns of the 1st Missouri Flying Artillery) left the Little Sugar Creek encampment at 9:30 a. m. Upon reaching Jesse Cox's corn field, Poten disbanded his command, the units rejoining their parent organizations. *Ibid.*, 280.

³⁸ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 214, 242; Sigel, "The Pea Ridge Campaign," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 328. During the night, the four guns of the 2d Ohio Battery and the four companies of the 2d Missouri which had been engaged near Elkhorn Tavern returned to Little Sugar Creek. Here, they relieved the six companies of the 2d Missouri and the two guns of the battery which had been holding the works covering the Bentonville road. The two fresh units reported to Asboth near Pratt's Store.

of his troops, Sigel had Welfley's and Hoffmann's batteries return the Texans' fire.³⁹

Writing of the artillery duel many years after, the historians of the 36th Illinois recalled:

Never were guns more admirably handled than those which all along the line were shaking the earth with one continuous and tremendous peal that seemed the prolonged howl of a hundred thunder storms mingled into one. There were moments when the firing would slacken, when, perhaps, a single gun away off to the right or left would be heard; then the roar of half a dozen in succession, so quick that each succeeding wave of sound lapped on the preceding one. Then the lapping would become indistinguishable, and . . . [all the] guns would be wreathed in volumes of smoke and flame, the thunders of each merged in one terrific volume.

In this sulphurous atmosphere Sigel was perfectly at home, and utterly regardless of the balls which were hailing around him, he rode from battery to battery, encouraging the men and giving his directions as coolly as if on parade. Dismounting from his horse, he personally sighted the pieces, directed where to fire, and by his example induced the gunners to redouble their efforts, thus sweeping the ground with such an incessant storm of iron that the enemy dared not advance in a decisive charge across the open fields.

But our batteries had not an entire monopoly of the awful thunders of the day. The fatal precision with which the enemy's shot came tearing through our ranks told us that the opposing batteries were not handled by novices in the art of war. The infantry were ordered to lie down on their arms a few yards in rear of the artillery; and while lying thus upon their faces, closely hugging the ground in vain endeavors to escape the storm of shot which was raining around, a solid shot ricochets over the field and through the dry corn stalks, and passing within a few inches of Col. Greusel's head, for a moment paralyzed and forced him half way to the earth; then with a dull thud it plunged in the midst of Company E, and was buried a foot beneath the surface, in its passage killing Private [John] Ray instantly.⁴⁰

Curtis kept close tab on Sigel's movements. He told the members of his staff that he was now satisfied with the Army of the Southwest's position. The battle line, much of which was on open ground, was continuous. Van Dorn's troops were all before the Federals. Even better, the Rebels were in an area with which the bluecoats were familiar. The rugged "de-files" which lay behind Van Dorn's battle line would hinder the Confederates' efforts to shift reserves to bolster threatened sections of the front. Curtis felt, "Victory was inevitable."⁴¹

As soon as the 36th Illinois was seen to move into position

³⁹ Sigel, "The Pea Ridge Campaign," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, I, 328-329; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 310.

⁴⁰ Bennett and Haigh, *History of the 36th Illinois*, 165-166.

⁴¹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 202.

near the Bentonville-Sugar Creek road, Curtis issued orders for Davis to advance and reoccupy the ground from which his division had been driven by the Rebel artillery. At the same time, Curtis hurried to his extreme right. Here, the general found a knoll ahead of Carr's battle line which commanded the Confederates' left and center. Contacting Captain Hayden, Curtis told him to occupy the elevation. Limbering up their three pieces, the gunners of the 3d Iowa Battery moved forward. Unlimbering their guns on the designated knoll, Hayden's Iowans began throwing shot and shell into the Elkhorn Tavern area.⁴²

Within a few minutes a Rebel battery (Bledsoe's) roared into action. The Confederates directed a vigorous counterbattery fire toward the knoll where Hayden's people had placed their pieces.

After watching the 3d Iowa Battery go into action, Curtis returned to his command post in rear of Davis' left flank. From here the general could watch the artillery duels in progress to his right and left.⁴³

* * *

Sigel was delighted to see the speed with which Osterhaus and Asboth completed their dispositions. Better yet, the fire of the Rebel battery (Good's), which was emplaced in the wood lot one-half mile to his front, was not very effective. Sigel decided it was safe to move closer to the foe. Captains Wefley and Hoffmann were ordered to advance their 11 guns 250 yards.

Manhandling their pieces forward, the Union cannoners soon had their pieces back in action. Good's Texans now found the range. Since Wefley's battery on the right occupied a more exposed position, the Texans blasted the Missouri artillerists with a terrific counterbattery fire.⁴⁴

While his two batteries were endeavoring to beat down Good's Texans, Sigel determined to throw forward his right flank unit, the 25th Illinois.

For the past hour and one-half, the Illinoisans had been "exposed to a terrible fire from" the Rebel guns. Since the

⁴² *Ibid.*, 202, 269.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 202, 214, 269, 327-328.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 214, 236, 238.

Confederate cannoneers were much more interested in Sigel's artillery, most of the projectiles screamed overhead. Casualties in the regiment were slight. In accordance with Sigel's instructions, Colonel Coler prepared to advance his regiment. When Coler gave the word, his men leaped to their feet. Scrambling over the rail fence, the bluecoats stormed across the corn field to their front on the double and gained a small field grown up in underbrush. Here, Coler called a brief halt. Keeping well covered, so as not to attract the butternuts' attention, the Illinoisans felt their way through the "underwood." Coler had his soldiers take position at the edge of Cox's corn field. On the opposite side of the field, 400 yards away, was the wood lot which sheltered Colonel Little's right flank regiment, the 2d Missouri (Confederate).⁴⁵

Sigel now decided to extend his left. Colonel Schaefer and his battalion of the 2d Missouri (Union) was called up from the reserve. Accompanied by a section of 12-pounder howitzers manned by the 2d Ohio Battery, Schaefer's troops hastened to the front, moving into position on the left of the 36th Illinois. Deploying his Missourians as skirmishers, Schaefer dislodged Rosser's outposts from a thicket north of the Bentonville-Sugar Creek road. Retiring, the Confederates rejoined their parent unit atop Pea Ridge.⁴⁶

All this time, Sigel's artillerists continued to hammer the area where Good's Texans had emplaced their guns. The Texans were compelled to give ground. A direct hit by a shell from one of Sigel's 13 guns which were now in action exploded a limber, killing a number of horses. When the Texans retired, they were compelled to leave one of their six guns behind.⁴⁷

Subsequent to the battle, one of the Texans wrote, "not less than 100 cannon balls passed within a few feet of us."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 222. The 25th Illinois occupied the ground between Welfley's Battery and the Telegraph road.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 214, 243.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 310; Senator Ralph W. Yarborough, "Notes on the Douglas Texas Battery," (Talk before the Civil War Roundtable of Houston, Texas, on November 23, 1959.) Cooper Ragan of the Houston Roundtable generously let the author use a tape which he cut of the senator's address.

⁴⁸ Ltr. James P. Douglas to Sallie Smith, March 15, 1862. Robert W. Glover, "Douglas' First Texas Battery," unpublished manuscript (files, Stephen F. Austin State College).

Observing that the Texans were falling back, Colonel Little called for Captain Hart. Little told Hart to have his four gun battery occupy the ground abandoned by the Texans. Since his men already had their pieces limbered up, Hart soon had his battery in motion. Reaching the front, the Arkansans threw their four pieces into battery.⁴⁹

Sigel took advantage of the hiatus between the withdrawal of Good's Texans and the arrival of Hart's Arkansans to advance Osterhaus' battle line. The division rushed forward and aligned on the 25th Illinois and the 2nd Missouri. Skirmishers forged ahead, taking position close to the wood lot in which the Confederates were ensconced. Asboth's reserve division followed occupying the ground vacated by Osterhaus.⁵⁰

The build up of Sigel's wing on his left, took the pressure off Davis. With Sigel's wing massed on their right, it would be suicidal for the Confederates to launch an attack down the Telegraph road. No longer would Davis have to employ his infantry to protect his artillery.

In addition, Davis was cheered to see Carr's troops move into position on his right. Davis determined to redeploy his infantry, preparatory to seizing the initiative. Colonel White's brigade was shifted to the right of the Telegraph road. Because these movements were carried out in a wooded area, some confusion ensued. One of Pattison's units, the 18th Indiana, formed on the left of White's brigade, the remainder on the right. Davis, knowing that Curtis would soon give the order for him to hurl his division against the Confederates, decided not to waste any time correcting his alignment.⁵¹

* * *

Once Sigel had emplaced his guns on the plateau southwest of Elkhorn Tavern, the Federals began to gain the upper hand. Van Dorn's main line of resistance was subjected to a heavy bombardment by seven batteries (25 guns). The intensity and accuracy of the shelling increased as the Yankee gunners advanced their pieces. Besides their inherent infe-

⁴⁹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 310.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 248, 251, 255.

riority in the employment of artillery, the Rebels were plagued by an ammunition shortage. The caissons and limbers of a number of their batteries were nearly empty; the army's reserve was in the ordnance wagons which were with General Green's column.⁵²

Hart's artillerists (who had emplaced their four guns in the wood lot west of the Telegraph road) had a difficult time holding their ground. Sigel's cannoneers sent projectile after projectile crashing into the timber. Wade's battery was exposed to the fire of the nine Union guns emplaced to the left and right of the Telegraph road. According to one of Little's infantrymen, "The whole fire of the enemy's artillery was quickly concentrated on Wade's battery . . ."

With his ammunition running short and his six pieces becoming "too hot to handle," Wade withdrew. Wade's battery was replaced by Clark's. Clark's four guns rumbled down the Telegraph road, to the cheers of the Rebel footsoldiers. Unlimbering their pieces, Clark's Missourians opened fire. At the same time, Captain Gorham's four-gun battery went into action. Gorham's men had emplaced their guns in the field southwest of the tavern.⁵³

One of the Rebel soldiers grimly recalled, "The roar of artillery, for several hours, was incessant, the balls from both sides passing a few feet over our heads."⁵⁴

About 9 o'clock, the soldiers posted along Little's battle line spotted a number of Union skirmishers. Advancing out of the woods and into Samuel Ruddick's field, the bluecoats threw down the fence. Simultaneously, Union sharpshooters opened fire with their "long-range" rifle-muskets. These actions on the part of the Federals convinced Little that Curtis was getting ready to launch an all out attack. A staff officer was sent racing to inform Van Dorn of these developments. When he returned, the aide told Little "to hold . . . [his] position as long as possible."⁵⁵

⁵² *Ibid.*, 284.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 310; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 177. The nine guns emplaced near the Telegraph road were manned by the 1st Indiana Battery, the 1st Iowa Battery, and Battery A, 2d Illinois Light Artillery.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 177.

⁵⁵ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 310.

Van Dorn's jubilation engendered by the initial success scored by his artillery soon faded. After Sigel put his batteries into action, Van Dorn was dismayed to observe that the Federals were gaining the upper hand. When several of the batteries fell back, Van Dorn questioned their commanders. Several laid the blame for their inability to hold their advance positions on an ammunition shortage, others reported the Yankee fire too much for their cannoneers to endure. Van Dorn accordingly decided to disengage his army and retire from the area. The Army of the West would fall back via the Huntsville road. If the Confederate retreat were to be successful, Little's and Rosser's commands on the right would have to hold their ground until the last possible minute.⁵⁶

Following the receipt of Van Dorn's order to defend his "position as long as possible," Little made several changes in his dispositions. Whitfield's 4th Texas Cavalry Battalion was called up from the reserve. The dismounted cavalarymen would support the 2d Missouri in the wood lot. East of the Telegraph road, Little's officers massed their troops behind the fence overlooking Samuel Ruddick's field.⁵⁷

* * *

Sigel, as he turned his field glasses on the rugged southeastern face of Pea Ridge, spotted heavy troop movements. Not knowing of Van Dorn's decision to disengage, Sigel erroneously decided that the Rebel brass was reinforcing Rosser with artillery. At this, Sigel ordered the two artillery units on the extreme left (Lieutenant Gansevoort's section of the 2d Ohio Battery and two guns of the 1st Missouri Flying Artillery) to report to Colonel Osterhaus.

Osterhaus directed the gun captains to shell the ridge. By this time, the gun spotters of Welfley's Battery and the 4th Ohio observed that the fire of Hart's Battery was becoming very erratic. Captain Hoffmann shouted for his gunners to wheel their pieces to the right and train them on the ridge. Sigel and his troops were delighted with the effect. The general reported that the three batteries opened fire "with

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

terrible effect to the enemy, as the rocks and stones worked as hard as the shells and shot." ⁵⁸

Encouraged by this success, Sigel determined to increase the pressure on the Confederates. Since his wing was operating on an exterior arc, Sigel proposed to extend his left. Asboth was instructed to call the 15th Missouri Infantry and the 5th Missouri Cavalry up from the reserve. Moving to the front, Asboth massed these two units behind Osterhaus' left flank. As it advanced, Sigel's wing would converge on the tavern.⁵⁹

Preparatory to pushing forward, Osterhaus told Major Wangelin of the 12th Missouri to advance two of his companies as skirmishers. Led by Captain Gustavus Lightfoot, the Missourians pressed toward the southwestern corner of the wood lot, where the Rebels had emplaced Hart's Battery. Skirmishers from the 44th and 25th Illinois kept pace with Lightfoot's men on the right; those from the 36th Illinois operated to the left.

As they forged ahead, the skirmishers encountered a scathing fire from the Rebel infantry. Sigel's gun captains took advantage of this situation and advanced their pieces closer to the wood lot. To insure that the bombardment did not slacken, the bluecoated artillerymen manhandled their pieces forward by successive sections.⁶⁰

Colonel Little was distressed to see that the Federals were extending their flanks. Unless he were reinforced, which was impossible under the circumstances, Little would be unable to keep the Yankees from enveloping his position. Nevertheless, Little resolved to carry out Van Dorn's mandate to hold his ground as long as possible. The well-aimed volley's of Little's infantry compelled the bluecoated skirmishers to keep their distance. The inability of their artillery to check the advance of the Union guns spelled trouble for the Confederates. Little knew it would be only a matter of time before the Federal cannoners silenced all his guns. When this occurred, Curtis and his generals would be able to em-

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 214, 238, 243.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 214, 243.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 220, 222, 225, 227, 229.

ploy their artillery to punish the Confederate infantry unmercifully.⁶¹

After another one-half hour's bombardment, General Curtis became satisfied that his artillery had softened up the Confederate position sufficiently to insure the success of an onslaught by his infantry. West of the Telegraph road, Sigel called for Osterhaus to hurl his men against the foe.

As soon as Major Wangelin had beefed up Lightfoot's skirmish line with a third company, the 12th Missouri took up the advance. Supported on the right by the 25th Illinois, Wangelin led his cheering bluecoats across Jesse Cox's corn field on the double.

The Confederate infantry (the 2d Missouri and Whitefield's Texans), which was posted in the wood lot against which the two Union regiments advanced, pulled back after getting off several half-hearted volleys. Captain Hart shouted for his gunners to limber up their pieces.

Before reaching the timber, Major Wangelin was sent sprawling into the corn stalks, his horse shot from under him. Scrambling to his feet, the major led his men into the woods. Colonel Coler's 25th Illinois reached the fence bordering the wood lot at the same time. Before entering the woods, Coler had his soldiers strip off their blanket rolls and knapsacks. By the time the Illinoisans had disencumbered themselves of the surplus gear, Davis' left flank unit (the 18th Indiana) had drawn abreast of them.

The advance was resumed, the 25th Illinois and the 12th Missouri swept into the wood lot. Fortunately for the Federals, the officers kept a light rein on their troops. Suddenly, "a loud clear voice was heard to cry out, 'Ready!'"

At this, the Union officers shouted, "Cover."

Moments after the bluecoats had dropped to the ground, the soldiers of the 2d Missouri and the 4th Texas let loose a "terrific volley of musketry." A hail of lead tore through the branches and thudded into the tree trunks. From the prone position, the Yankees returned the Rebels' fire. Several of Welfley's guns now reopened upon the butternuts. After

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 310; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 177.

getting off about six volleys, the Confederates abandoned their position behind the rail fence which bounded the wood lot on the north. As they did so, the 2d Missouri and Whitfield's Texans were subjected to a heavy fire. Colonel Churchill's command, which was posted on the right of the 2d Missouri, was also compelled to withdraw.

In their charge across the wood lot, the soldiers of the 12th Missouri overran the area where Good's and Hart's batteries had been engaged. The blucoats were aghast to see the destruction caused by the fire of their artillery. Large oaks had been "shivered." A butternut had been "impaled to the earth by a splinter six feet long struck from a tree by a cannon shot." Among the booty which fell into the Missourians' hands were two brass field pieces (one abandoned by the Texans, and the other by the Arkansans), and the colors of Hart's Arkansas Battery.⁶²

In the meantime, Sigel called for Major Poten of the 17th Missouri. The major was told to take his regiment and storm the rocky southeast face of Pea Ridge and block the Telegraph road. Two regiments (the 2d and 15th Missouri) would support Poten's advance.⁶³ Colonel Greusel was instructed to use a regiment (the 36th Illinois) to watch the ground between the left of the 12th Missouri and the right of Poten's skirmish line.⁶⁴

As soon as he could deploy his men as skirmishers, Major Poten led them to the attack. The 2d and 15th Missouri, in line of battle, followed the 17th Missouri as it swept forward. Prior to the advance of the three Missouri infantry regiments, Sigel's artillery had subjected to a fearful hammering the area over which the footsoldiers would have to advance. Colonel Hughes of Rosser's Confederate command reported, "a terrific volley of bombs and balls hailed through our ranks; several were wounded pretty severely, but none killed in my command." Colonel Churchill's and Major Whitfield's com-

⁶² *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 220, 222-223, 229; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178; Curtis, "The Army of the South-West, and the First Campaign in Arkansas," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VI, No. III, 150. Colonel Churchill's command consisted of the 1st Arkansas Mounted Rifles and the 17th Arkansas Infantry.

⁶³ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 215.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 215, 280, 313, 315.

mand which were posted closer to the Union artillery were not so lucky, a number of their men were killed or wounded by the fire of Sigel's guns.⁶⁵

Shortly before Sigel sent his troops scrambling up the steep face of Pea Ridge, one of Van Dorn's staff officers rode up and told Rosser to pull back. Abandoning their position on the rocky crest, Rosser's brigade, screened by Hughes' battalion, moved down and across to the Telegraph road. Here, Rosser learned that most of the Army of the West had already left the field. Screened by Little's and Churchill's troops which were still holding the area around Elkhorn Tavern, Rosser put his brigade into motion for the Huntsville road. Hughes' brigade, which brought up the rear, brought off two guns which had been captured from the Federals in the fighting on the 7th.

As a result of the withdrawal of Rosser's brigade, Poter's bluecoats encountered only a few stragglers as they scaled Pea Ridge. Except in a few isolated instances these men threw down their arms or took to their heels.

One rebel officer, a Captain of a Louisiana Company, seemed crazed with desperate valor. Instead of retreating with his comrades, he advanced towards our troops until almost alone. Waving his sword, he called in a loud, clear voice for his men to follow him, and denounced as cowards all who retreated. They heeded not his appeals, and finding himself deserted he ran towards our advance, shouting something which was understood to be, "I am as brave as Caesar. If we are whipped I do not want to live. Come on, you d..... d Yankees!"

The national soldiers, with a generous admiration for useless and misguided courage, sought to take him prisoner; but a Union battery opened fire from the left on the retreating foe, and in its relentless storm swept down the one brave heart which so full of fierce life and unavailing determination, poured out its crimson tide on the cold and trampled earth.

After the battle, inquiries were made of the Louisiana prisoners, but none could tell his name. They believed he was the son of a sugar planter living on Bayou LaFourche, who had joined the Southern army seeking death. It was the old story of disappointed love. If not killed, he had determined to become a suicide.⁶⁶

The 36th Illinois kept place with the 17th Missouri on the left and the 12th Missouri on the right. One of the Illinoisians recalled as they advanced down "the northern slopes of the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 313, 315; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178.

⁶⁶ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 280; Curtis, "The Army of the South-West, and the First Campaign in Arkansas," *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VI, No. III, 153-154.

ridge we found the smouldering camp-fires remains of half eaten-breakfasts; stacks of flour; sides of bacon, old hats, guns, and other paraphernalia pertaining to soldiers scattered about the woods in wild confusion. What remained of the evening's repast was devoured by our hungry men, who, seizing upon everything eatable, greedily crammed it down their throats as they marched along."⁶⁷

Davis' division had struck at the same time. Before doing so, the brigade commanders had formed their men in the edge of the timber. "Two of Colonel Pattison's units (the 22d Indiana and Shunk's battalion) had trouble gaining the jumping off point. Pattison, taking cognizance of the heavy undergrowth, had his men file to the front. Furthermore, the Union scouts had told Pattison that the Rebels had withdrawn the masked battery (Wade's) which earlier had given his brigade such a fearful time. What the scouts did not know was that a second battery (Clark's) had occupied the ground formerly held by Wade's gunners. As Pattison's troops neared the field, Clark's battery roared into action. "A perfect shower of canister belched forth from the thick brush in front." Fortunately for Pattison's Indianians, the Rebels had sighted their pieces to high. The deadly hail whistled overhead.

At this, the order to change front forward and form along the fence was given and executed. Meanwhile, the division artillery (Battery A and the 1st Indiana) had opened fire on the Rebel guns. Davis passed the word to fix bayonets and charge. This order was greeted with cheers by Pattison's and White's troops. Covered by a strong skirmish line, Davis' division surged across Samuel Ruddick's field.⁶⁸

Little's Confederates pulled back from their position on the north side of Ruddick's field in the face of this powerful thrust. Since a number of his men were armed with shotguns and the Union artillery had gained fire superiority, Little felt that by fighting in the woods he could partially nullify these disadvantages. Learning of Little's plans, Captain Clark ordered his gunners to limber up their four pieces. Clark remained until the last of his guns started for the rear. As he

⁶⁷ Bennett and Haigh, *History of the 36th Illinois*, 168.

⁶⁸ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 248, 251, 255.

was leaving the advance position, a shot from one of the Union cannons struck the youthful artilleryman, tearing off his head. Clark's body was carried from the field by several of his men.⁶⁹

Advancing into the heavy timber north of Ruddick's field, Davis' troops slowly forged ahead. Little's stout fighters were driven back, step by step. Gaining ground steadily, the Federals found the timber more open as they neared the Huntsville road. Pattison and White halted their lines frequently. Bringing their rifle-muskets to the ready, the Yankees would get off a crashing volley. Since most of the Rebels were armed with muskets and shotguns, they were at a disadvantage in the open woods. One of the soldiers complained, "our lines, now exposed suffered considerably from their long range guns."⁷⁰

Colonel Rives was shot in the abdomen. As he was carried from the field dying, the gallant colonel remarked to his aides, "I only wish I had a hundred lives, that I might die again and again for Missouri."⁷¹

Covered by Little's delaying action, Price recalled Clark's, Rains', and Saunders' divisions of the State Guard. These units, which were posted on the left of Little's command, fell back to the Huntsville road. As soon as the officers had mustered and formed their commands, Price put the troops in motion for Van Winkle's Mill. Although General Rains expressed surprise that "the fight was over; the victory within our grasp . . . lost," his battery (Bledsoe's) left one of its guns on the field.⁷²

McNair's infantry held its position in rear of Little's battle line during the artillery duel. While they were within easy range of the Union guns, most of the projectiles passed harmlessly overhead. When the order to fall back arrived, McNair recalled his troops. Rendezvousing with Greer's

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 310; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178.

⁷⁰ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 248, 251, 310; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178.

⁷¹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 310; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178.

⁷² *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 320, 322, 328. Riggins' battalion and Price's escort screened the State Guard as it fell back.

mounted units, McNair's footsoldiers fell in behind the State Guard.⁷³

In accordance with instructions from General Van Dorn, Colonel Greer detached the 3d Texas Cavalry. This crack regiment was given the task of screening the Confederate retreat.⁷⁴

By the time that Little's command had been pressed back to the neighborhood of the tavern, Price's and Greer's columns were en route to Van Winkle's Mill. Little's troops, with Sigel's and Davis' commands converging on Elkhorn Tavern, found themselves subjected to a galling fire. The 2d Missouri, Whitfield's Texans, and Churchill's Arkansans passed in rear of the hotel. Crossing the Telegraph road on the double, they reached the Huntsville road. Captain Emmett McDonald and his cannoneers of the St. Louis Artillery held their ground in front of the tavern until the last possible minute. As soon as Little's infantry had passed, the cannoneers limbered up their pieces. With the drivers putting the whips to their teams, the battery rumbled off just before the jaws of the Federal trap snapped.⁷⁵

Three companies of the 2d Missouri were unable to reach the Huntsville road and were cut off. Displaying the initiative which has always characterized the American fighting men, the company commanders followed the Rebel artillery which had retreated up the Telegraph road.⁷⁶

Colonel Lane, upon receiving his orders from Colonel Greer to cover the retreat, deployed the troopers of the 3d Texas Cavalry on the left and right of the Huntsville road. As they formed, the Texans could hear the shouts of the victorious Federals as they pressed ahead. Lane held his men in position as unit after unit of the Army of the West passed. The Texans were unable to discern any signs of panic. As soon as the last of Little's troops had passed through his roadblock, Lane reassembled his regiment. Accompanied by

⁷³ Tunnard, *History of the 3d Louisiana*, 136; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 294.

⁷⁴ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 294, 300.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 310; Anderson, *History of the 1st Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 178.

⁷⁶ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 311.

the St. Louis Artillery, the Texans fell in behind Little's Missourians.⁷⁷

Troops from Colonel Davis' division won the race for Elkhorn Tavern. Upon reaching the hotel, Davis brought up his artillery. The gunners threw their pieces into battery, registering them on the Huntsville road. While a detail was disarming a number of Confederate stragglers, Davis had his officers re-form their units and call the rolls.

Within a few minutes, Colonel Benton rode up at the head of a battalion of the 8th Indiana and three guns of the 1st Indiana Battery. Benton, who had been charged with the mission of holding the rifle pits overlooking Little Sugar Creek, was chagrined to learn that the fighting had ended with the Rebels in full retreat. His command would be unable to add to the laurels previously won at Rich Mountain.⁷⁸

Sigel's troops arrived at the tavern hard on the heels of Davis' division. The two wings of the victorious Army of the Southwest met at the head of Cross Timber Hollow. As Sigel rode up, one of the officers looked at his watch. It was noon.⁷⁹

The historians of the 36th Illinois recalled:

... officers and men shouted themselves hoarse. Gladness beamed from every countenance; all were feeling well. Sigel's eyes had a less nervous and more joyous twinkle than when, an hour ago, he was sighting the guns which had caused the wrecks lying around us. Asboth's stoic face for once was wreathed with smiles; and Osterhaus, never more jolly or at home than on the battlefield, was overflowing with encomiums upon "der prave poys," and expressions of entire satisfaction with the result; while towering over all was the massive brow and stalwart form of noble Curtis, who, in stentorian tones, congratulated the army upon the glorious victory it had achieved, and ordered a swift pursuit of the flying enemy.⁸⁰

Carr's infantry, which had done the lion's share of the fighting on the 7th, did not come into contact with the Rebels on the 8th. When Davis' division advanced to the attack, Carr's lagged behind. By the time, Carr's bluecoats reached the Huntsville road, Van Dorn's army had passed.⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 248, 251, 255. At the battle of Rich Mountain, Virginia, which was fought on July 11, the 8th Indiana had distinguished itself.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁸⁰ Bennett and Haigh, *History of the 36th Illinois*, 168-169.

⁸¹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. VIII, 262.

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