GENERAL JAMES G. BLUNT AND THE CIVIL WAR IN THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST

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GENERAL JAMES G. BLUNT AND THE CIVIL WAR

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PREFACE

Major General James Gillpatrick Blunt has become a forgotten figure of the American Civil War. He was victorious in seven major federal campaigns in the trans-Mississippi (Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Indian Territory) theater of war, yet no extensive study of his military career exists. Information about his wartime exploits may be gleaned from books on related topics, such as Albert Castel's A Frontier State at War and Wiley Britton's Union Indian Brigade in the Civil War.[1] To relegate any mention of Blunt to a footnote or chapter, or worse, to ignore him completely, is to neglect a central and influential character in the far-western theater of war.

Blunt characterizes and offers for study many different aspects of the Civil War. Most significantly, Blunt was one of the thousands of men who formed the backbone of the Union army--the volunteers. His career exemplifies a volunteer, unschooled in the military arts, who was able to use his personal drive to win victories and rise to the highest volunteer rank, that of major general. Blunt's battlefield strategies were simple, which is not surprising considering his lack of a military background. Despite this lack of training, Blunt became a capable

general. Although he was probably not conscious of it, Blunt followed many of the principles of warfare codified before the Civil War by Swiss military theorist Baron Henri Jomini. In books such as Traité des grandes opérations militaires (1804), Histoire critique et militaire des guerres de la Révolution (1824), and Précis de l'art de la guerre (1837), Jomini advanced nine prinicples of war that became the basis for most military study in the first half of the nineteenth century. They were: setting a clear objective; seizing and retaining the offensive; concentrating an army's mass at a critical point along its enemy's line; using an economy of force, or the minimal force necessary to obtain an objective; accomplishing a mission with skillful maneuver; maintaining a unity of command so that everyone in an army is working toward the same goal; seeking the element of surprise; maintaining the security of one's army; and keeping plans and orders simple.[2] The fact that Blunt unwittingly followed many of these Jominian principles points to the degree that they were based on common sense. Thus, success on a Civil War battlefield was not exclusively the domain of West Point graduates. Blunt exemplifies the winning general who achieved victory through drive and determination.

Blunt and his armies also provide insight into the character of the war and the armies in the trans-Mississippi west. The armies were small (Blunt's were generally no larger than a division by eastern theater

standards), they were led largely by unprofessional officers, and often composed of a mixture of white and Indian troops. The small size of the armies and the vast area of the trans-Mississippi made it difficult for armies to exploit success. Union and Confederate forces frequently clashed in skirmishes or fights, and more infrequently in full-scale battles, then retreated upon their lines of communication.

Blunt also provides an opportunity to study abolitionist generals. His antislavery ideals led him to Kansas, the hotbed of pro-slavery and free-state factionalism in the 1850s, and eventually into the war. His career also offers historians a look at political generals, a breed of officer found in the Union army both east and west. Blunt initially rose to a general's rank not through military achievement but rather through the aid of his sponsor, Kansas Senator James H. Lane. This fact alone makes Blunt a political general but he also became embroiled in political disputes within the army organization. These disputes show that the armies of the trans-Mississippi were just as political as the more professional armies of the east.

Blunt was born July 21, 1826, in Trenton, Hancock County, Maine. He displayed a taste for adventure early and in 1841, at age fifteen, he went to sea, serving five years on a merchant vessel. In 1848 Blunt enrolled in Starling Medical College at Columbus, Ohio, where he

studied medicine under his uncle by marriage, Dr. Rufus Gilpatrick. Blunt earned his medical degree one year later and began practicing medicine in New Madison, Ohio. There he married Nancy Carson Putnam.[3]

Blunt was an abolitionist and while his anti-slavery activities were not numerous they led Blunt into his military career. Blunt aided the underground railroad in Ohio and his political ideals prompted him to join members of his family, Dr. Gilpatrick included, in Kansas in 1856 where free-state men fought pro-slavery men over the admission of Kansas to the Union as a slave or free state. He pre-empted a land claim near Greeley, Kansas, where he farmed and practiced medicine. Blunt became more active in the underground railroad, provisioning runaway slaves and giving them temporary sanctuary in his home. By 1859 Blunt had made enough of a name for himself that he was able to run for, and win, election as Anderson County's delegate to the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention. It was under the Wyandotte Convention's free-state constitution that the United States Congress eventually admitted Kansas to statehood, January 29, 1861. During this time Blunt met two of Kansas' most famous abolitionists: John Brown, who would lead the raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in 1859, and James H. Lane, self-appointed general of Kansas' free-state forces and future senator from that state.[4]

Blunt's acquaintance with Lane helped him in the early

days of his military career; in 1862 Lane used his political influence to secure Blunt's general's commission. Blunt was a true political general, entering the Civil War with no military education or experience and achieving high rank only at the behest of his mentor. Lane's support of Blunt, however, was selfish and the senator appeared only interested in bringing a friendly general into his camp who could help control government contracts in Kansas while Lane attended Congressional duties in Washington, D. C. Political enemies often suspected Blunt and Lane of fixing government military contracts for their own profit, though they never proved such accusations. After securing for Blunt command of the Department of Kansas (a job for which Blunt was blatantly unqualified), Lane put forth little effort in promoting his protégé. Lane's wartime correspondence with Blunt is minimal, indicating that the senator left the general to make his own reputation. This Blunt did in December, 1862, when he won his major-general's stars at the Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas.

In the field Blunt, given his inexperience, showed a surprising affinity for military campaigning. He was not a brilliant general but neither was he shy of a fight: Blunt took the offensive in each of the eight campaigns he led. It is interesting to note that President Abraham Lincoln never made much mention of Blunt, or corresponded with him to any great extent, when Blunt displayed the aggressive

battlefield characteristics Lincoln applauded. Blunt's generalship was not complex. He had no military training and his battle dispositions were often straight-forward attacks, sometimes accompanied by uncomplicated flanking maneuvers. He understood, though, that cavalry could be used for more than just scouting missions. Early in the war he employed his horsemen as dismounted cavalry, often using them to anchor key parts of his battle line. This is the same tactic used by Army of the Potomac cavalry commander John Buford on the first day's fighting at Gettysburg. One of the most common characteristics of his campaigns was speed. Blunt utilized forced marches and it was not unusual for his army to average forty miles per day.[5]

Blunt led his armies from the front, never from his headquarters tent. When a detachment of his division captured Van Buren, Arkansas, in December, 1862, Blunt galloped into town at the head of his cavalry. At the Battle of Honey Springs in Indian Territory, July, 1863, Blunt ignored a high fever to direct the battle from horseback. The general's actions won him the respect and confidence of his troops. After his escort and band were ambushed by Confederate guerrillas near Baxter Springs, Kansas, in October, 1863, Blunt took a party of nine men and followed his attackers until nightfall. One of his soldiers, Alexander McDonald, wrote to his brother that Blunt was "the bravest of the brave. No man living could have followed an enemy as Blunt did. God speed him."[6]

Like so many other Civil War soldiers Blunt believed personal courage was a weapon. It could make up for any number of disadvantages, including a lack of military training or even troops in the field. Blunt is an excellent example of the courageous soldier described in Gerald F. Linderman's recent work Embattled Courage.[7] Linderman theorizes that courage was the highest quality a Civil War soldier could possess. Courage equalled an heroic action undertaken without fear, for feeling fear was to be a coward, and cowardice could not co-exist with courage. The author maintains that Civil War officers, northern or southern, failed to earn the respect of their men unless they displayed personal courage in some way.[8] Blunt time and again asserted his courage in front of his men. Linderman also suggests that soldiers used courage as a form of assurance in battle: they believed that only the cowardly would die, the courageous would live.[9] Again Blunt is an example of this idea. After the Baxter Springs ambush in Kansas, Blunt indicated his own belief that his personal courage would prevent him from dying in the war when he told two of his captains that "revolver bullets flew around my head thick as hail but not a scratch. I believe I am not to be killed by a rebel bullet." For Blunt, courage was like a suit of armor.[10]

Blunt's strong-willed, aggressive character served him well on the battlefield but worked against him in his administrative duties and political dealings with other

officers. He made enemies of many of his superiors (including Major-Generals Henry W. Halleck and John M. Schofield) and subordinates alike. At times his behavior was so openly insubordinate that historian Castel has theorized that he was already afflicted with the disease that put him in a Washington D.C. insane asylum in 1879.[11] Blunt died there in 1881 with what doctors then described as "softening of the brain."[12] The general had plenty of contemporary detractors, among them his former adjutant general Colonel Thomas Moonlight. After historians discovered a 117-page account of wartime memoirs, handwritten by Blunt, in the archives of the Kansas State Historical Society in 1896, they asked Moonlight to comment on the reminiscences. Moonlight started to edit Blunt's memoirs but thought better of it, saying that he had already done enough for Blunt. "But for myself Blunt would not stand in history with the same military victories attached to him," said Moonlight, specifically noting Blunt's battles at Old Fort Wayne, Indian Territory; Cane Hill, Prairie Grove and Van Buren in Arkansas; and Honey Springs, Indian Territory. Moonlight said he might have a further comment to make later. He never did, thus leaving his own allegation unsubstantiated.[13]

There was always a hint of scandal around Blunt, though it did not detract from his effectiveness on the battlefield. There is some evidence to suggest he took

"female servants" with him while campaigning and drank heavily in camp.[14] Yet in the majority of allegations leveled against Blunt, neither drunkenness nor womanizing were mentioned. The most persistent controversy that followed Blunt was the allegation of government contract fixing, which accusers never proved. In the post-war years, which is beyond the scope of this work, Blunt became a solicitor of claims for Indians. In 1870 the federal government charged Blunt with taking $30,000 from a group of Quapaw Indians he represented, and in 1873 he again faced charges of defrauding the federal government and a group of North Carolina Cherokee. The government dropped both charges.[15]

Civil War scholars have ignored Blunt. More than likely it is because he was a minor figure in the overall story of the war, fighting in the back areas of the conflict. Blunt left behind a paucity of documents. This lack of source material can be attributed in part to the Baxter Springs ambush in which guerrillas burned Blunt's baggage wagon, which carried his official documents, including his general's commission.

It is the purpose of this work to shed much-needed light on Major General Blunt, one of the central figures of the trans-Mississippi theater of operations in the Civil War, his generalship and his campaigns. Blunt's career proved that unprofessional officers could still lead victorious armies in the early 1860s. Their battlefield

successes point to the indispensable role played by volunteers in the United States army of the Civil War. This work will study, through the political infighting in which Blunt submerged himself, the politicization of the United States Army, even in the far-west where leaders were not professional military men. This work will also study Blunt's career as that of an abolitionist general, although his pro-black stance was largely in name only. Blunt played a relatively minor part in pre-war Kansas abolitionist activities. During the Civil War he used black troops in battle only minimally and he did not recommend any black soldiers for promotion, even after writing glowing reports of their courage.

In the completion of this work I am indebted to many people. First and foremost I want to thank my wife, Judi, for her patience, encouragement, research help, and assistance with the maps which accompany this work; my parents, Bob and Pat, for all the things they have done (which are too numerous to mention); Judi's family for their encouragement, and my friends, especially B. and S., for all their support.

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Oklahoma State University in Alva, for their friendship and special input on this project; to Bertha L. Inhat, archives assistant for manuscripts at the Ohio State University Archives, for helping me research Blunt's scholastic background; to Sheryl K. Williams, curator of the Kansas Collection at the University of Kansas Libraries, and Jo Ellen Kerksiek, University of Kansas graduate student in history, for helping me explore Blunt's relationship to Senator James H. Lane; and to John Mark Lambertson for making Judi and me feel welcome and not quite so lost at the Kansas State Historical Archives.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Albert Castel, A Frontier State at War (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1958); Wiley Britton, The Union Indian Brigade in the Civil War (Kansas City, Missouri: Franklin Hudson, 1922).

[2]Henry Jomini, Life of Napoleon, with foreword and trans. by Henry Wager Halleck (Kansas City, Missouri: Hudson-Kimberly Publishing, 1897), 21-22; Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 711-12; E. J. Stackpole, "Generalship in the Civil War," in Military Analysis of the Civil War, An Anthology by the Editors of Military Affairs (Milwood, New York: KTO Press, 1977), 95-96.

[3]James G. Blunt, "General Blunt's Account of his Civil War Experiences," Kansas Historical Quarterly 1 (1931-32): 211; James Claude Malin, John Brown and the Legend of '56 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1942), 570; Matriculation Record of the Starling Medical College (Columbus, Ohio, 1848).

[4]Levi Coffin, Reminiscences of Levi Coffin (Cincinnati: Western Tract Society, 1876), 471-74; "Reminiscences of Mrs. J. H. Gilpatrick and her mother, Mrs. James. G. Blunt, Leavenworth, November, 1905," James G.

Blunt Papers, Kansas Historical Society Archives, Topeka, Kansas.

[5]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 224-25.

[6]Topeka State Record, October 14, 1863.

[7]Gerald F. Linderman, Embattled Courage, the Experience of Combat in the American Civil War (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 61-79.

[8]Ibid., 43-47.

[9]Ibid., 61.

[10]Blunt to Captains Tholen and Loring, October 7, 1863, Blunt Papers.

[11]Castel, Frontier State, 83.

[12]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 211.

[13]Ibid., 212.

[14]Castel, Frontier State, 83.

[15]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 211.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

BLUNT'S FIRST COMMAND

1861

When James G. Blunt entered the United States Army after the fall of Fort Sumter in April 1861, he was little different from thousands of other men offering their service to the Union. He had never been a soldier and did not claim to know anything about military strategy or command. He enlisted out of patriotic fervor and strong abolitionist conviction. Blunt's anti-slavery sentiment earned him several political acquaintances in Kansas and one of them, Senator James H. Lane, quickly promoted Blunt through the ranks. Again Blunt was not unique as political promotions were common throughout the Union army. But before the year was over Blunt proved that he had an affinity for command and was not content to rely on political friends to secure his reputation.

Blunt entered the American Civil War with no military experience. He had served briefly in 1857 on Major-General Lane's staff in the First Kansas Militia Regiment but his experience with that organization could not qualify as military training. Lane hastily organized the regiment in December 1857, to protect free-staters from pro-slavery

retribution after the two factions skirmished at Bayne's Fort, an abolitionist stronghold. No fight came and Lane disbanded the regiment, but he left Blunt behind with thirty men to protect free-staters if trouble arrived. Apparently Lane selected Blunt for the job on the recommendation of fellow abolitionist James B. Abbott. Abbott suggested Blunt because he was "courageous" and "would not be rash." Blunt's rear guard faced no opposition and disbanded. Subsequently Blunt's assignment involved no fighting or maneuver and was a command only in the loosest sense.[1]

Though his greatest contributions to the Union war effort were his victorious campaigns through Arkansas and Indian Territory in 1862 and 1863, Blunt joined the army with no martial training or preconceived notions of his military capabilities. In fact, he volunteered for a position entirely commensurate with his training, that of private in the Tenth Kansas Volunteer Infantry.[2] Authorities disbanded the regiment, though, when it failed to draw enough recruits. Blunt then learned that James H. Lane was recruiting troops for three new regiments and he volunteered to help abolitionist James Montgomery organize the Third Kansas. The men of the regiment elected Montgomery colonel and Blunt lieutenant-colonel. That a man of Blunt's inexperience could become second in command of a regiment was not unusual by Civil War standards. The ranks of colonel and lieutenant-colonel generally went to

the men who recruited the regiment, their election by the rank and file being merely a traditional formality.[3]

The Third Kansas joined Colonel William Weer's Fourth Kansas and Lieutenant-Colonel Charles R. Jennison's Seventh Kansas Cavalry to form James Lane's "Kansas Brigade" (more popularly known as the Lane Brigade), which earned a reputation early in the war for its jayhawking, or retaliatory, raids into Missouri. The raids were essentially a continuation of the border violence that occurred in the 1850s when free-state men fought Missouri pro-slavery men known as "border ruffians." In 1861 most Kansans believed all Missourians were secessionist. This was not true. One-third to one-half of the people in western Missouri were either Unionist or neutral. Jayhawking raids, accompanied by stories of Kansans freeing Missouri slaves, often drove these loyalists and neutrals into Confederate ranks.[4]

James Montgomery, colonel of the Third Kansas, was of a breed of Kansas Jayhawkers known as "practical abolitionists" who preferred not to wait for legal measures to erase slavery but rather to take immediate action against it themselves. Charles R. Jennison, lieutenant-colonel of the Seventh Kansas Cavalry, also belonged to this group. They chose to take their extra-legal measures to their enemies--the slave-holding Missourians--and by the end of July 1861, they had made several plundering and slave-stealing raids across the

border. Blunt joined the Third Kansas as its second-in-command on July 24, 1861, and thus missed most of the summer jayhawking escapades. He no doubt approved of Montgomery's tactics, though, as he had given the man sanctuary in his home during the pre-war days. Blunt's wife Nancy recalled that Montgomery arrived at the Blunt home "for safe keeping after one scrape on the border in which he had not taken part." Montgomery brought with him a black house servant named Elizabeth, the first of several fugitive slaves to seek refuge in the Blunt household.[5]

In early August 1861, the Topeka State Record quietly applauded the completion of the Third Kansas Regiment. The newspaper's account also tacitly acknowledged its Jayhawking background. "This regiment will be called anti-slavery and Black Republican," read the news report, "but most people will, we trust, just call them abolitionists and be done with it."[6]

Blunt's first real taste of military action did not come until late September 1861, and it was in an independent command. On August 10, 1861, the same day that rebel generals Sterling Price and Benjamin McCullock defeated federals at Wilson's Creek in southwest Missouri, James H. Lane moved the Lane Brigade to Fort Scott in southeast Kansas to counter a feared Confederate attack. Price's army did not strike toward Kansas but instead moved north to the Missouri River and the Lane Brigade also marched north, endeavoring to stay on Price's left flank.

ADAPTED FROM ATLAS TO ACCOMPANY THE OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES [HEREINAFTER CITED AS OFFICIAL RECORDS ATLAS] (WASHINGTON, D.C.: GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE, 1891–95), PLATE XLVII, NO.1

Figure 1. Blunt's Theater of Operations

Lieutenant-Colonel Blunt did not accompany the brigade. For no apparent military reason Lane placed Blunt in command of the Sixth Kansas Cavalry and assigned him to stay behind and protect Fort Scott. While Blunt garrisoned Fort Scott a group of Missouri guerrillas led by John Mathews, an Indian trader whom Blunt described as "the terror of southern Kansas," raided and burned the town of Humboldt, Kansas, forty miles west of Blunt's position. Immediately after learning of the attack Blunt mounted up two hundred troopers and took them in pursuit of Mathews. Blunt rode his men hard, opting to travel by night and take cover during the day. After three successive nights of marching Blunt's command (along with nineteen other men from Emporia also seeking Mathews) found the guerrilla gang near the Quapaw Indian Agency. Blunt's night movements had given him the element of surprise and he did not tip his hand until daylight when he unleashed his cavalrymen on the unsuspecting marauder camp. The federals killed Mathews and two other guerrillas and dispersed the rest. Even though the punitive expedition was small-scale, really only a police action, Lieutenant-Colonel Blunt had scored his first victory.[7]

In the pursuit of Mathews Blunt revealed several of the characteristics that would make him a capable field commander and, though he may not have known anything about them, he followed at least four of the nine Jominian principles of warfare, specifically objective, offensive,

maneuver (movement or mobility), and surprise. Blunt's objective was clear and simple, to capture or kill the Humboldt marauders. While the task was infinitesimally small in the scheme of the war, it is significant that Blunt, acting on his own initiative, put his two hundred cavalrymen in the field immediately upon hearing of the guerrilla raid, thus assuming the offensive. The lieutenant-colonel never relinquished the offensive, prodding his men on the night marches which capitalized on the small command's mobility. By utilizing the night marches Blunt also successfully gained the element of surprise on his quarry. His well-guarded approach allowed him to attack quickly, his cavalry having the effect of shock troops, and achieve his goal without loss to his command.

Blunt was an educated man and accustomed to large amounts of reading, but there is no indication he studied anything during his college career other than what was necessary for his medical curriculum.[8] Jomini's books, Henry Wager Halleck's Elements of Military Art and Science, published in 1846, and William J. Hardee's Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics (1855) were all available prior to the war. Whether Blunt read these attempts at defined military strategy we do not know.

Blunt was certainly not alone in his lack of military experience prior to the Civil War. While the Mexican War provided training for many Civil War generals, graduates of

the fourteen West Point classes since that war could point to few experiences that prepared them for the type of combat they would face in the Civil War. Of course those graduates had the opportunity to oversee troops but the United States Army of the 1850s consisted of less than sixteen-thousand men scattered across the nation. Skirmishes with Indians provided some combat experience but none in full-scale campaigning.[9] For this reason Mexican War veterans such as Ulysses S. Grant, George B. McClellan, and William T. Sherman were in demand at the outbreak of the Civil War. But they did not fight the war alone. The inexperienced volunteer officer corps formed the leadership backbone of the Union army.

Blunt did have access to at least one army veteran who may have passed on his own limited military knowledge--his political mentor, James H. Lane. In 1846 Lane, a politically ambitious, thirty-two-year-old Indiana lawyer, organized a company of Indiana volunteers to serve in the Mexican War. His men elected him captain of the company and later colonel of the regiment to which his company belonged, the Third Indiana. Lane had no prior military experience and his men received only two weeks of training before leaving for Mexico. Lane's Third Indiana served with General Zachary Taylor at the Battle of Buena Vista, February 22-23, 1847. On the first day's fighting Lane and his men waited in reserve until mid-afternoon when Mexican infantry and cavalry began to engage Colonel Jefferson

Davis and his Mississippi Rifles. Lane received orders to join with Davis in a counterattack which lasted until Taylor ordered a cease-fire, the Mexicans having sent forward a flag of truce. The white flag, Americans learned, was merely a ruse to allow Mexican reinforcements to slip into the main battle line. Lane and Davis resumed the fight. The fight culminated when Mexicans mounted a lancer charge on Lane and Davis, deployed on the slopes on either side of a ravine. The Mexican charge was oblique, meaning that the attackers did not present a square side to either American regiment, thus limiting their exposure to fire. Davis stayed put, lessening his riflemen's effectiveness but Lane, acting on his own initiative, moved the Third Indiana to a position where it faced the attacking Mexicans head-on. He did not give the order to fire until the attackers were within twenty-five paces and the resulting volley dispersed the charge. The next day Lane again acted on his own and interjected his regiment between a Mexican force and an American battery it was about to overrun. The term of enlistment for the Third Indiana ended soon after Buena Vista and although Lane recruited another regiment, the Fifth Indiana, it did not see combat.[10]

Lane's own background obviously did not discourage him from entrusting another young man without military experience, Blunt, with a field command. If Lane gave Blunt the benefit of his military knowledge such an

exchange is not recorded. And if he did, Lane must not have told Blunt about the flag-of-truce-trick: Confederates used a similar ploy on Blunt in Arkansas in 1862.

Blunt's expedition against Mathews was significant for one other aspect: it established him as a commander willing to spearhead his own campaigns. Blunt could just as easily have sent the two hundred troopers into the field while he stayed behind at Fort Scott. But this time, just as he would on every other expedition of his origination except one, Blunt subjected himself to the same grueling march as his men. By doing so Blunt displayed his personal stamina and courage, a sure way to gain the respect of his men.

With the killing of guerrilla leader Mathews to his credit, Blunt was eager for more fighting. Fearing that he would miss a general engagement with Sterling Price's Confederates, newly victorious at Lexington, Missouri, Blunt asked Lane for permission to relinquish command of Fort Scott and rejoin his regiment, the Third Kansas, at Kansas City. Lane agreed and Blunt left Fort Scott. Once at Kansas City Lane ordered Blunt to ride east with four hundred men and scout Price's army. Again Blunt marched by night, this time in the rain. Again Blunt relied on a hard march to fulfill his mission and the pace was grueling. He left Kansas City at sundown and by sunup was forty-five miles away at Lone Jack, Missouri. Price's army, trying to slip away from the concentration of federals at Kansas

City, had left Lone Jack only hours before Blunt's arrival. Learning that Price was trying to effect a safe retreat to the Osage River, Blunt turned his command and rushed back to Kansas City to inform Lane. Once there he found that Lane had been reinforced by three thousand men under Brigadier General Samuel Sturgis, but that Department of the Mississippi commander Major-General John C. Frémont, fearing an attack by Price, had ordered them to evacuate Kansas City. Frémont's directive was ludicrous in light of Blunt's reconnaissance and Lane and Sturgis revoked the order. Instead they moved their army southeast toward Springfield, Missouri, in pursuit of Price.[11]

As the Kansans moved out of Kansas City on October 18, 1861, Lane gave Blunt a new job, that of cavalry commander for the entire Lane Brigade. As far as Union cavalry use in the early stages of the war went, Blunt had proven himself an effective cavalry leader. Until mid-1863 federal commanders principally used cavalry for scouting patrols. Blunt's patrol had been excellent. He had accomplished his goal, brought back useful information, and done it with speed. The troops arrived at Springfield on November 1, but Blunt had little opportunity to exercise his new command. Blunt said he saw nothing but "the feathers of secesh poultry and the debris of disloyal beegums," on the march.[12]

At Springfield Blunt and the rest of the Kansans discovered that General Frémont was on the field to lead

the federals, now numbering forty-five thousand, in a campaign against Price's twenty-five thousand men. But Frémont did not bring on a fight and the men of the Lane Brigade were disappointed that they had marched from Kansas City for no apparent reason. President Abraham Lincoln was also upset with Frémont's inactivity and sent Major-General David Hunter to relieve Frémont of his command. He did so on November 2, 1861, the day after Lane's men arrived. Believing that Price had eluded battle, Hunter ordered the federal army to disperse and he sent the Lane Brigade back to Fort Scott, Kansas. Unhappy with the prospect of a countermarch and revealing his aggressive character, Blunt said he and his companions felt "disgust for our new profession of arms" and lamented that with more such timid federal campaigning "it would take a long time to put down the rebellion."[13]

FOOTNOTES

[1]"Recollection of O. P. Bayne," James B. Abbott Papers, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas; Murlin Welch, Border Warfare in Southeastern Kansas, 1865-1859 (Pleasonton, Kansas: Linn County Publishers, 1977), 46-47.

[2]D. W. Wilder, The Annals of Kansas (Topeka, Kansas: T. Dwight Thacker Publishing House, 1886), 337; Castel, Frontier State, 82.

[3]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 214; see Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 24, for further discussion of the regimental election of officers.

[4]Richard S. Brownlee, Gray Ghosts of the Confederacy, Guerrilla Warfare in the West, 1861-65 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 39; Castel, Frontier State, 61.

[5]Castel, Frontier State, 42, 45; Wilder, Annals, 337; "Reminiscences of Mrs. Blunt," Blunt Papers.

[6]Topeka State Record, August 3, 1861.

[7]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 214; Jay Monaghan, Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955), 195.

[8]Letters from James G. Blunt to John C. Williamson, 1847-1849, John C. Williamson Papers, Ohio Historical Society.

[9]Stackpole, "Generalship in the Civil War," 96.

[10]Wendell Holmes Stephenson, Publications of the Kansas State Historical Society Embracing the Political Career of General James H. Lane (Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1930), 19-26.

[11]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 215.

[12]Ibid., 216.

[13]Ibid., 216-217.

CHAPTER II

BLUNT BECOMES A GENERAL

1862

James G. Blunt had the makings of a good soldier but as a politician he was a failure. During the first months of the Civil War Blunt showed some of the characteristics that would make him an effective field commander: the ability to identify his objectives and use speed and mobility to achieve them. But he also displayed a character flaw that would plague him throughout his military career, namely, a propensity to quarrel with his superiors. During an uneventful winter in Kansas, Blunt began a feud with the state's first governor, Charles Robinson, that would be the first of many such arguments Blunt would have with superiors during the war. Blunt suspected Robinson, whom he said was "assiduously engaged in his efforts to deprive me, and other officers, from further duty," of trying to rid Kansas regiments of officers not politically allied with the governor.[1] Robinson was indeed attempting to clean his political enemies out of Kansas regiments, but Blunt, as evidenced by his comment, took the governor's efforts too personally.

In fact Robinson's actions were more of a lashing out at his old political enemy, James H. Lane, than against the cadre of field commanders to which Blunt belonged.

Robinson and Lane had been enemies since the days before Kansas statehood when their respective conservative and radical sections of the Free State Party (later the Republican Party) vied for control in the state. The two men's contempt for each other turned to pure hatred when they campaigned for one of Kansas' first two senatorial seats in 1861. Lane won, but only through last-minute political realignments and a wild day of voting that saw the ninety-eight members of the Kansas state legislature present cast 297 different ballots. Lane joined Samuel C. Pomeroy, who captured Kansas' other senate seat, in Washington D. C., and Robinson remained in the governor's office. Their feud continued. After the war began Lane, whose own military career was limited but nonetheless served as the basis for his political success, claimed a brigadier-general's commission from the United States War Department. Upon hearing of Lane's new title Robinson declared his senate seat vacant, explaining that Lane should have given up his senatorship when he accepted the commission. Robinson sent a replacement senator, Frederick Stanton, to Washington D. C. but rather than force Lane out of the senate chamber Robinson's action only caused Lane to relinquish his general's commission. Undeterred, Lane secured a brigadier's commission from Oliver P. Morton,

governor of Lane's old home state of Indiana. This commission enabled Lane to return to Kansas, both as a senator and general, and recruit the Lane Brigade.[2]

On April 1, 1862, Robinson scored a minor victory over Lane when he asserted his powers as governor over state regiments. Robinson ordered the break-up of the Third and Fourth Kansas Regiments with the transfer of some troops to other regiments and the consolidation of others into the Tenth Kansas Regiment. Since his own politics leaned toward the radical faction and Lane had become his political-military mentor, Blunt rightly feared for his colonelcy and prepared to leave the army after a brief and relatively unspectacular career.[3]

Once again, though, James Lane stepped in and kept Blunt's military career on track, this time with a brigadier-general's commission and command of the vast Department of Kansas. Blunt claimed that he never sought the position and was completely surprised when he received notice of his promotion. He was not the only one surprised. The Leavenworth Daily Times recorded disbelief on May 6, 1862, when it said it knew nothing of Blunt (apparently ignoring or forgetting the fact that he was one of the signers of the state's Wyandotte Constitution) except that he had been a lieutenant-colonel and was now a brigadier-general. "He may have all the qualities requisite for skillful administration of the affairs of the Department, he may be a thorough soldier . . . we simply

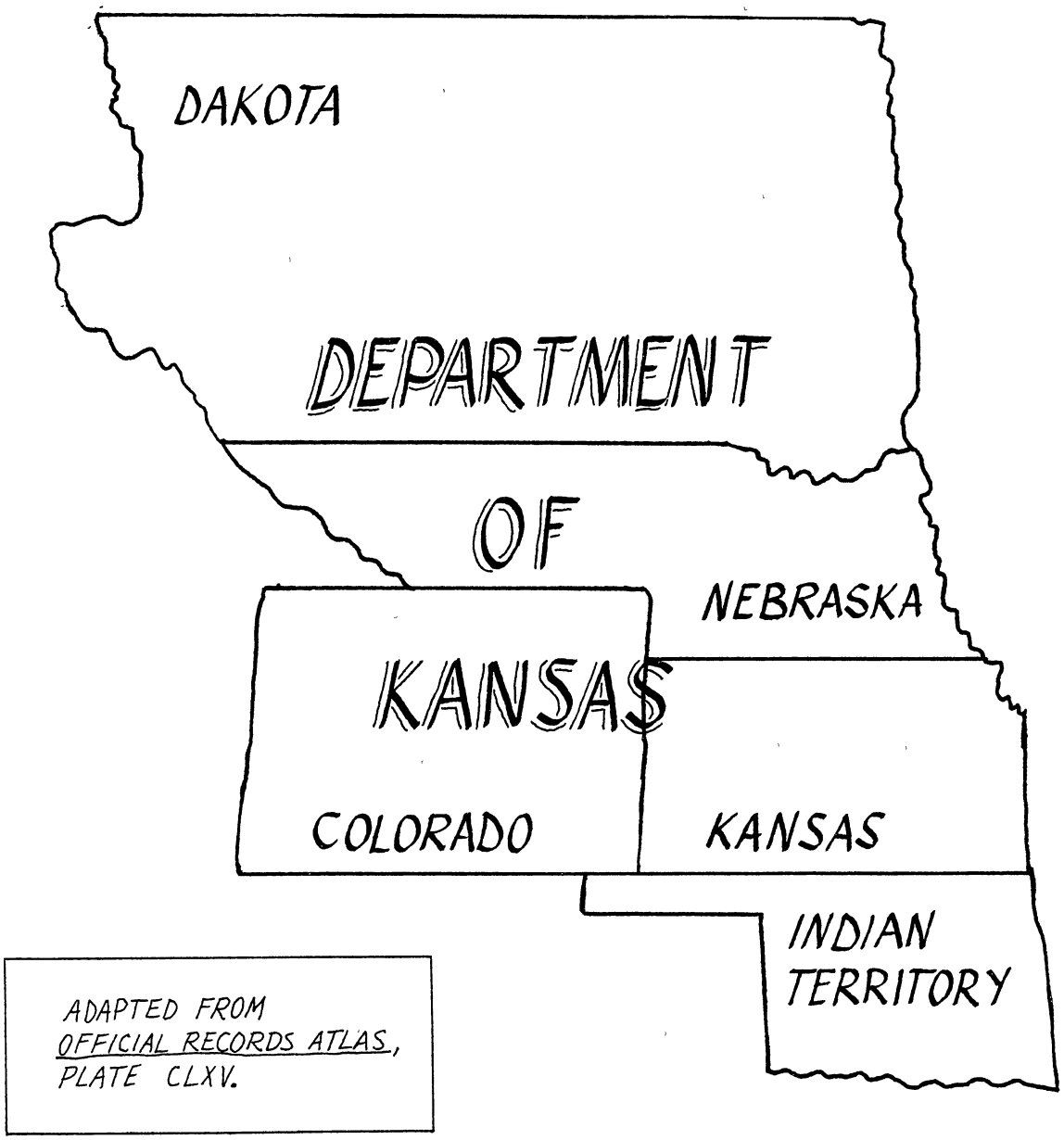

Figure 2. Department of Kansas, 1862

say we don't know it." Governor Robinson, visiting Washington D. C. when he heard the news, was naturally appalled at Blunt's appointment, which he said should be "condemned almost as an insult to Kansas troops."[4]

The Department of Kansas of which Blunt assumed command May 5, 1862, was massive. Along with the Department of the Missouri, it was carved out of the old Department of the Mississippi and included all of Kansas, Colorado, what is now Nebraska, the Dakotas, and parts of Wyoming and Montana. That a man of Blunt's limited experience, especially in military administration, should command such a department was absurd. It is likely that Lane supported Blunt for the position because Lane believed he could control Blunt and thus solve his problem of how to be a general in Kansas while serving as a senator in Washington D. C.[5]

In securing Blunt's commission and assignment Lane capitalized on a political alliance with Abraham Lincoln that he had spent several years cultivating. Lane escorted Lincoln on a Kansas visit in 1859, campaigned for him during the 1860 presidential election, and offered to provide Lincoln with a bodyguard on the president-elect's trip to Washington in 1861. As a senator Lane arrived in the capital just after the fall of Fort Sumter. When fear of a Confederate invasion gripped Washingtonians Lane gathered Kansans (most of whom were in the city seeking patronage appointments from Lane and Pomeroy) into the

"Frontier Guards" and protected the Potomac River bridge, winning Lincoln's gratitude.[6]

In agreeing to Lane's suggestion of Blunt for department command Lincoln showed the extent to which he wanted to secure broad political support for his prosecution of the war. Lincoln's approval of Blunt's commission and promotion secured prominence and political recognition of Lane's radical abolitionist faction, a group to which Lincoln certainly did not belong. Lincoln not only tapped radical Republicans for generals but also Democrats as well. While Major-General George B. McClellan is one of the most notable Democratic general to serve in the Union army during the Civil War his appointment to command, first as chief of the Department of the Ohio, then commander of the Army of the Potomac and briefly as general-in-chief of the whole United States Army, was neither surprising nor questionable given McClellan's military background. He was a graduate in 1846 of West Point and a Mexican War veteran. The Army sent him to Europe to observe the Crimean War and later he achieved fame with the United States dragoons as the inventor of the McClellan saddle, which was light and comfortable to both horse and rider. Despite McClellan's performance later in the war, Lincoln's initial appointment of the young man (he was thirty-four at the time, a few years younger than the average age of Union generals, thirty-eight) had sound military basis. But Lincoln also chose Democratic generals

for no other reason than political necessity. He named Illinois Democrat John A. McClernand a brigadier-general only to secure southern Illinois in the Union. McClernand participated in Ulysses S. Grant's February 1862, campaigns against Forts Henry and Donelson in Tennessee and fought in April 1862, at Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee, but did more to establish himself as an egotist and self-promoter than an able commander. He performed poorly at Fort Donelson and later, with no particularly grand military laurels to point to, McClernand pleaded with Lincoln to give him independent command of an expedition against Vicksburg, Mississippi, the key to control of the Mississippi River. Such a command would allow him to recruit more southern Illinois Democrats for the war effort, he argued, and Lincoln agreed. Generals Halleck, Grant, and William T. Sherman, all convinced of McClernand's incompetence, maneuvered to start the campaign under Sherman's supervision while McClernand was away. McClernand was angry but went along with the expedition, still as a subordinate. When he perceived that Grant had decided on siege warfare to capture Vicksburg, McClernand wrote an inflamatory letter to his troops, calling upon them for aggressive action in an attempt to establish himself as the true Union fighter on the Mississippi River in case Grant's efforts failed. Grant got wind of the letter, charged McClernand with insubordination, and relieved him of command. Lincoln did not help McClernand, for to do so

would be to risk losing Grant. Nevertheless, Lincoln had gotten all of the political use he could out of McClernand.[7]

That Blunt had no experience commanding a large force also made no difference in obtaining Lincoln's approval. He had set such a precedent before when he approved Major Irvin McDowell's brigadier-general's commission and appointment to command of the Army of Northeastern Virginia in 1861. Lincoln made the appointment largely at the behest of McDowell's political sponsor, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase. Even though McDowell was a graduate in 1834 of West Point graduate and a twenty-three-year regular army veteran, he had never led any large force. McDowell presided over the first significant Union defeat at First Bull Run, July 21, 1861.[8]

Thus Blunt was certainly not the only inexperienced, political general whom Lincoln appointed. In the first year of the war the president commissioned sixteen generals who possessed no military background. At the end of 1861 12.7 percent of the Union's generals, compared to 7.9 percent of the Confederacy's, had no martial training. And, out of forty-four political appointments Lincoln made in 1861, only seven of them were West Pointers.[9]

Blunt knew that he did not have the experience or education to handle his new appointment which, he said, "brought me into a new field, and imposed upon me greater

responsibilities than I would voluntarily have assumed." Blunt said he accepted the job as he believed it was the first duty of a soldier to obey orders. Even so, he commented that department command put him in "an unpleasant and embarrassing position."[10]

Given the obvious handicaps he carried into the new job, Blunt hoped to rely on the "indulgence and cooperation" of both Kansas civilians and soldiers in the execution of his duties. But almost immediately Blunt was in the middle of the political turmoil so characteristic of the Kansas military. Blunt said his assignment to command was "the signal for a combined attack of all my personal and political opponents," not the least of whom was Governor Charles Robinson. Robinson, again trying to thwart Lane's military control in Kansas, attempted to load Kansas regiments with officers of his own choosing, often issuing two or three commissions for one position to friends and patronage-seekers. Blunt correctly deduced that Robinson's plan was to foist upon the new general so many conservative commission claimants that Blunt would be unable to extract himself from a political quagmire, and thus either have to resign or be relieved. Blunt ordered the post commander at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to deny the muster of any officer holding a Robinson commission until Blunt himself approved it and went so far as to warn state officials against "tampering" with troops in United States service. Blunt's parry of Robinson's maneuver was

successful. If Lane told Blunt how to respond it is not recorded but no doubt the end result pleased the senator.[11]

With his command just over a week old, Blunt became the subject of a fellow Union general's ire. On May 13 Ben Loan, Missouri State Militia brigadier-general and commander of the District of Northwest Missouri, complained about Blunt to Brigadier-General John M. Schofield, commanding the Missouri State Militia, charging him with sanctioning renewed border violence between Kansans and Missourians. Loan's allegations stemmed from an incident in early May when a man named Atchison and a woman named Boyer, both Kansans, went into Missouri looking for a horse stolen from Boyer's husband (whom Missourians believed to be one of Charles Jennison's men in the old Lane Brigade). They found the horse near Farley, Missouri, with William Walker and when the Kansans took the horse, Walker summoned his neighbors for help. The Farley men caught Atchison and held him for trial in Platte City, Missouri, but before the hearing could begin a federal contingent from Fort Leavenworth rode into town and demanded the arrest of all connected with Atchison's arrest. The Kansas troops claimed Blunt sent them. Not knowing the validity of the orders the Missourians allowed the Kansas soldiers to arrest five of the Farley men.

Loan demanded an explanation from Blunt, who replied through his assistant adjutant-general Thomas Moonlight.

Moonlight said the case was pending at Fort Leavenworth but that Missourians who had visited the fort had failed to prove the horse belonged to Walker, intimating that a hearing would find in favor of Atchison and Boyer. Moonlight said it was Blunt's intention to prevent border trouble and as such would try to keep Kansas raiding parties from crossing into Missouri. He also warned Missouri border raiders crossing into Kansas that federals would catch them and try them before a military committee.[12]

While it may have been Blunt's professed intention to halt border trouble his actions nonetheless appear like an extension of the old Kansas-Missouri border war. An order he issued on June 26, 1862, indicated that Blunt was more concerned with catching and punishing Missourians who might break the peace rather than Kansans guilty of doing the same. He condemned guerrilla warfare and seemed to classify it as a purely Confederate tactic. He described "bushwhacking" as warfare where "rebel fiends lay in wait for their prey to assassinate Union soldiers and citizens." Blunt ordered that any bushwhacker captured not be treated according to the rules of war but rather be tried by drum-head court martial and if found guilty be immediately shot or hanged. "No punishment can be too prompt or severe for such unnatural enemies of the human race," he said. Blunt also was involved in the creation of the notorious group of Kansas guerrillas known as "Red Legs" for the red

leggings they wore. Blunt and Brigadier-General Thomas Ewing, Jr., of the Eleventh Kansas Regiment created the group as border scouts to warn of raids by Missourians. Eventually the Red Legs earned a reputation as robbers and murderers both in Missouri and Kansas, and Blunt later condemned the organization.[13]

Blunt's policy of severe treatment for Missouri bushwhackers no doubt stemmed in part from the Kansas notion that all Missourians were pro-slavery secessionists. It was also a manifestation of the abolitionist zeal that led him into the political circle of James H. Lane's radical Kansas Republicans (and as far as any Blunt-initiated administrative policy is concerned one must always question to what extent it was inspired by Lane himself). But it was as typical of Blunt's aggressive nature, which had already exhibited itself in forced night marches and would play an essential role in his field generalship.

But Blunt's aggressiveness often turned on him and sparked childish, often protracted arguments with his superiors. Soon after he had assumed department command the War Department requested that Blunt send five thousand troops from Kansas to help Major-General Henry Wager Halleck, who was then threatening Confederates at Corinth, Mississippi. Blunt obeyed but when he learned that Halleck had let the rebels slip away Blunt became furious. He railed at Halleck for taking Kansas troops on a failed

mission. In fact, Blunt became so angry at Halleck that he refused to communicate in the future with the general, even when the latter became United States Army general-in-chief. While he remained a department commander, Blunt corresponded only with Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton.[14]

Blunt's encounter with Halleck, as well as the way he handled the run-in with Governor Robinson, showed that Blunt, at least in dealing with administrative problems, was very characteristic of his name--blunt. He had little finesse in handling people. Even though Robinson was governor of the state that sent the largest number of troops to Blunt's department, the general made no attempt to appease him, but just assumed he could do his job and ignore the former. The same with Halleck. Blunt displayed the type of hard-nosed personality that, when faced with a personal affront or slight, would not let him seek some sort of workable agreement with the offender. Instead it forced him to turn away from them in a huff and pretend that by ignoring them he had made the problem go away. For a man attempting to administer an entire military department this was a critical personality flaw and one made worse by his lack of military education.

Blunt's single-minded attitude made him much more adept at actual military campaigning, and while he initiated his first large-scale campaign barely a month after assuming department command, his administrative

duties kept him from its head. It was a campaign into rebel-held Indian Territory south of Kansas and was the first Union expedition into that area since federals abandoned it in April 1861. It was the only campaign which Blunt originated but did not accompany and it met with only marginal success.

Blunt's purpose in mounting the Indian Territory expedition was three-fold: to disperse small Confederate bands operating in the territory; to restore Unionist Indians --whom Confederates had driven into Kansas--to their homes; and to cover Kansas and southwest Missouri from rebel attack. Keeping in mind the nine principles of warfare Blunt's objectives outlined the expedition well, but he faltered when he selected a leader for the campaign. He picked former Wyandotte, Kansas, lawyer and Lane Brigade regimental commander Colonel William Weer. Fellow officers considered Weer a capable commander, at least when he was not drunk.[15] Blunt offered no explanation for his selection of Weer to lead the mission but it is possible that Weer's old affiliation with the radical Lane regiments had a bearing on his decision.

The major accomplishment of the Indian Territory expedition was the organization of refugee Indians into fighting Union regiments. They were the First (Creek) Regiment, Third (Cherokee) Regiment, and Second (mixed) Regiment; Weer assumed the task of organizing them. He found it no easy job. On June 5, 1862, Weer complained

that his Indians were in want of everything from clothes to wagons and he had to call back some of the expedition's white troops, under the command of Colonel Charles Doubleday, who had already marched for the border. As the expedition was intended in part to restore the Indians to their homes, Weer told Doubleday he did not think it wise for the command to march without them. On June 13 Weer's supplies were en route to him but he wrote to Blunt's adjutant, Thomas Moonlight, that training the Indians caused him a "thousand and one difficulties." They wanted to know if they could take the property of rebel Indians in the territory, they wanted revolvers to fight with and, naturally, they wanted to know what they would do when the expedition concluded. Their inquisitiveness was simply a display of their desire to get under way. "To-night they have a grand war dance," said Weer. "They have all taken their medicine and consider themselves bullet-proof."[16]

With his Indians confident in their war-medicine Weer ordered the six thousand man force to leave June 14. They crossed into Indian Territory on an old military road leading to Fort Gibson, the major army post in the territory. Weer learned of a Confederate force twenty miles in front of him and he split his force on both sides of the Grand River, sending his supply train down the west side so that the river itself formed a barrier between the train and the rebels. Weer scored the one victory of the expedition when he surrounded a unit of Missourians at

Locust Grove and captured 110 of them along with their baggage, powder, and sixty wagons.[17]

Weer then moved his command to within twelve miles of Fort Gibson, when the Indian Territory expedition fell apart. Weer refused to move further and his commanders began to believe that rebels had cut them off from the supply train. Troops sweltered in the July heat. Fearing for their safety in the advanced position Weer's officers revolted and arrested him. Colonel Frederick Salomon of the Ninth Wisconsin Regiment took command of the expedition and reported to Blunt that Weer had been "abusive and violent" to his officers and "notoriously intemperate." Salomon said the column remained idle near Fort Gibson for ten days and Weer made no attempt to re-establish his communications. Rations had dwindled to a three-day supply when the officers rebelled. Salomon said he assumed Weer was either "insane [or] . . . his grossly intemperate habits had produced idiocy." Salomon said Weer's arrest was the only alternative open to him. Now that the column was under his command he ordered it back to Kansas, intending to leave only the Indian regiments in the territory.[18]

Salomon's withdrawal outraged Indian agents. E. H. Carruth and H. W. Martin wrote to Blunt that the retreat of the column left Unionist Indians in the territory in a dangerous position. They believed the three Indian Regiments would not be enough to protect the Indians and

white missionaries who had proclaimed their loyalty when Weer's column entered Indian Territory. Such people, they said, would be "ruthlessly murdered . . . by the gangs of cut-throats which will infest the country."[19]

The commanders of the three Indian regiments were not as skeptical as the Indian agents, though. Colonel R. W. Furnas, commander of the Indian Brigade and the First Indian Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel D. B. Corwin, commanding the Second Indian Regiment, and Colonel William Phillips commanding the Third Indian Regiment, consolidated their troops for protection and secured a section of artillery from Salomon's retreating column. With this force (the Second Indian Regiment was depleted by desertions following Weer's arrest), the commanders occupied all of the Indian Territory north of the Arkansas River. "I have no doubt but I can hold the Indian country and protect the loyal people from pillage and murder," Furnas told Blunt.[20]

Blunt sent orders to Salomon to halt his column where ever he received the order. Then Blunt rode for Fort Scott. But when he arrived there, much to his chagrin, he found Salomon who had ignored Blunt's order and continued his retreat. Blunt convened a court martial to investigate the apparent mutiny in the field, but, recognizing that virtually all of the officers accompanying the expedition were involved in some way, the general dissolved the court and reorganized the command.[21]

Blunt considered the expedition successful since it had encouraged John Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, to reaffirm his allegiance to the Union. The Cherokee had split when the war broke out and Blunt had long believed a Union presence in the territory would bring many Cherokee back under federal aegis.[22]

When compared to Blunt's plans for the expedition, though, the campaign failed. Before he stopped moving, Weer was almost one hundred miles into Indian Territory but after the retreat (caused by Salomon alone and not by enemy resistance) the Indian Brigade clung tentatively to their hold on the territory, occupying it only from the safety of the Kansas border. Certainly the brigade would not be able to fight any rebel army that might mass before them much less guard Kansas or southwest Missouri from a determined Confederate attack. The expedition did not relieve the problem of the refugee Indians either. Those who accompanied the force did not return to their homes and as late as November, 1862, Blunt still sought to restore them to their homes.

The failure of the mission, at least in part, was Blunt's fault. He chose a known alcoholic to organize and lead the mission, and he was tardy in ordering supplies to its units. Weer was not able to operate 160 miles south of his base of operations, Fort Scott, Kansas, and almost one hundred miles inside enemy territory and still maintain his composure. It is not surprising that, in so dangerous a

position, the expedition's commanders panicked when they saw Weer acting strangely.

Whether the mission would have been successful with Blunt at its head we can only speculate. Blunt did have a clearly defined set of objectives and from Weer's comments before embarking he apparently communicated them effectively to the colonel. Blunt's mistake was in picking Weer to lead the expedition. While Blunt learned a hard lesson about picking the wrong commander for a campaign, he apparently also learned to trust no one but himself at the head of his armies. His unwillingness to delegate large responsibilities went hand-in-hand with his condemnation of other officers, such as Frémont and Halleck, and created the impression that he believed he was the only commander in the immediate theater who could lead an army. In any event the Indian Territory campaign was the first and last expedition under Blunt's supervision that operated without him as its leader.

Following the marginally successful Indian Territory campaign, Blunt began to enter another group of political Union generals, that of abolitionists. Again Blunt was not able to exercise his new military influence in this area without the aid of Senator James H. Lane.

Blunt had been a devout abolitionist since his days as a young physician in Ohio. His anti-slavery activities began in earnest on the frozen banks of the Ohio River outside Cincinnati in the winter of 1855-56. There a group

of slaves from nearby Newport, Kentucky, used the frozen river as a bridge from slavery to freedom. Cincinnati Negroes asked local abolitionist and Underground Railroad leader Levi Coffin to help the slaves effect their crossing and when he arrived at a Negro home where the fugitives were to rendezvous he brought along a friend--Dr. James G. Blunt. Blunt was eager to accompany Coffin. "I have never had the pleasure of seeing a fugitive slave, and I would like to see one," said Blunt. He noted that there had been runaways near his home in New Madison, Ohio, but he had never seen them. Before the fugitives proceeded north Underground Railroad conductors gave them weapons and ammunition. Seeing the armed negroes Blunt became excited and emotional and delivered to them an impromptu speech. "Let your watchword be liberty or death," he said. "Die in your tracks, boys, rather than be taken back to slavery." Then Blunt emptied out his pockets and gave the runaways all the money he carried, save for a little he needed himself to return home.[23] Blunt followed his abolitionist ardor to Kansas in the midst of the pro-slave/free-state struggle and consequently to the acquaintance of James H. Lane and a subsequent military career.

Abolitionist generals were not a novelty during the Civil War and they began to make news very quickly. Major-General Benjamin F. Butler (himself a political general with a limited militia background whom Lincoln

found it politically expedient to grant a major command) first took action on the slavery question on May 23, 1861. That day three slaves ran into Butler's lines at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Butler refused to return them to Confederates, labeling the blacks "contraband of war." Butler's action eventually led to the use of "contrabands" within military lines. Major-General John C. Frémont, commanding the Western Department at St. Louis, Missouri, in August, 1861, issued a proclamation which declared martial law in Missouri, confiscated the property of anyone in rebellion against the United States, and freed their slaves. President Lincoln disavowed Frémont's action, not yet wanting to put the war on an anti-slavery footing, and certainly took Frémont's proclamation into consideration when he removed the general from command in November. Still the incident marked the second time that the slavery question had been broached by generals in the field. Major-General Samuel R. Curtis, a West Point graduate and old regular army officer, took no such specific action with regard to slaves, but Lincoln deemed him radical enough in his abolitionist beliefs that he had to remove him from command of the Department of the Missouri in 1863. Lincoln was almost apologetic about removing Curtis, saying the general did not appear able to work with conservative Missouri governor Hamilton Gamble, who had been instrumental in keeping that state in the Union.[24]

In August 1862, James H. Lane returned to Kansas ready

to enlist blacks into United States military service. Lane brought with him permission to open a recruiting station at Fort Leavenworth, claiming his recruiting commission gave him the right to enlist blacks as well as whites. Even though Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck denied that Lane had such authority, the senator-general persisted. Naturally Blunt offered his help.[25]

Their task was not easy. While it is likely that men of the Lane Brigade stole Missouri slaves and brought them back to Kansas for military service, there was only a small pool of free blacks in Kansas from which to draw recruits. "They [Lane and Blunt] had great difficulty in getting the niggers to enlist," said Benjamin F. Van Horn, a friend of Lane's and Kansas state representative from Madison County. Van Horn furnished beef to the refugee Indians in southern Kansas and discovered that the Indians had brought with them about one hundred blacks when they fled rebel occupation of the Indian Territory. The blacks were on short rations, though, as the government did not contract for their food. They ate only what the Indians gave them.[26]

Lane and Blunt became very excited at Van Horn's news and they insisted, as he was familiar with the blacks, that Van Horn recruit them for federal service. When Blunt fetched him pen and paper to make a requisition list for a new company of blacks Van Horn protested. "I did not know

anything more about what I would want than the man in the moon," he said, but Blunt simply filled out the requisition himself and soon Van Horn found himself fitted out with enough equipment for an eighty-man company. The supplies included cooking utensils, rations, wall-tents, wagons and teams, and rifles and ammunition. The fact that Blunt and Lane readily armed the blacks ran counter to Lane's promise to Congress that he would not give them weapons.[27]

Carrying a recruiting lieutenant's commission, Van Horn left Fort Leavenworth and within twenty-five days had his black company filled and marching to Fort Scott. "When I got their old rags off and [them] all dressed in new uniforms . . . they were as proud as a little boy with a red wagon," said Van Horn. His company became part of the First Kansas Colored Infantry.[28]

Lane's and Blunt's stubborn recruitment of blacks was an extension of their abolitionist zeal but it caused trouble for the First Kansas Colored in 1863. Without proper federal sanction, the troops seldom got paid. Men became disgruntled and left the regiment. In April 1863, regimental commander Colonel James Williams suspended work at Camp Emancipation, Kansas, to let the tempers of his troops cool. With the organization of the United States Bureau of Colored Troops in May 1863, federal authorities finally authorized the First Kansas Colored and reorganized it as the Seventy-Ninth U. S. Colored Infantry, but not until 1864 did the men get paid.[29]

Despite his pro-black, abolitionist background and the fact that he later also helped raise the Second Kansas Colored Regiment and Eleventh United States Colored Regiment, General James G. Blunt did little to promote the use of blacks in combat. Now, in mid-August, he was ready to embark on a series of campaigns that would win him military recognition. He took with him no black troops.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 218.

[2]Castel, Frontier State, 17-36; 48-49.

[3]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 218.

[4]Ibid.; Leavenworth Daily Times, May 6, 1862; Charles Robinson to Sara Robinson, April 14, 1862, Charles Robinson Papers, Kansas Historical Society Archives, Topeka, Kansas.

[5]Castel, Frontier State, 83; General Orders Number 1, May 5, 1862, War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies [hereinafter cited as O. R.] (70 vols., 128 books, Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), 1st ser., vol. 13, 370; Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1891), plate 165.

[6]Castel, Frontier State, 34-35.

[7]Hattaway and Jones, How the North Won, 30, 77, 163, 293; T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1952), 217-224, 230-32; William S. McFeely, Grant, A Biography (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1981), 99-100, 132, 136.

[8]Hattaway and Jones, How the North Won, 30-31.

[9]Ibid., 30.

[10]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 218-19.

[11]Ibid., 219-20.

[12]Brigadier General Ben Loan to Brigadier General John M. Schofield, May 13, 1862, Major D. Dale to Loan, May 8, 1862, Loan to Blunt, May 9, 1862, Schofield to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, May 20, 1862; Loan to Schofield, May 18, 1862; Assistant Adjutant General Captain Thomas Moonlight to Loan, May 15, 1862; O. R., 1st ser., 13: 387-89, 392-93.

[13]Ibid., 451; Stephen Z. Starr, Jennison's Jayhawkers, A Civil War Cavalry Regiment and its Commander (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 214-15.

[14]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 221.

[15]Ibid., 223; Britton, Indian Brigade, 62.

[16]Blunt to Secretary of the Interior Caleb B. Smith, November 21, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D. C.; Colonel William Weer to Moonlight, June 5, 1862, Weer to Colonel Charles Doubleday, June 6, 1862, Weer to Moonlight, June 6, 1862, Weer to Moonlight, June 13, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 13: 418-19, 430-31.

[17]Britton, Indian Brigade, 64.

[18]Ibid., 66-67; Colonel Frederick Salomon to Blunt, July 20, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 484-85.

[19]E. H. Carruth and H. W. Martin to Blunt, July 19, 1862, ibid., 478.

[20]Colonel R. W. Furnas to Blunt, July 25, 1862, ibid., 511-12.

[21]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 224.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Coffin, Reminiscences, 471-74.

[24]Hattaway and Jones, How the North Won, 30, 34, 97; E. B. Long, The Civil War Day by Day, an Almanac, 1861-8165 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), 101, 112.

[25]Ira Berlin, ed., The Black Military Experience, Freedom, A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, ser. 21, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 44; Wilder, Annals, 350.

[26]Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 161; Hondon B. Hargrove, Black Union Soldiers in the Civil War (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1988), 54; Benjamin F. Van Horn Papers, Kansas Historical Society Archives, Topeka, Kansas.

[27]Van Horn Papers.

[28]Dudley Taylor Cornish, The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 71.

[29]Berlin, Black Military Experience, 45.

CHAPTER III

BLUNT TAKES THE FIELD

1862

The best political generals of the Civil War always found a way to distance themselves from their political sponsors or motivations and fight Confederates. Ulysses S. Grant is a prime example. Grant, a Democrat, can be classified as a political general as Lincoln commissioned him at the urging of Illinois congressman Elihu B. Washburne. From then on, though, Grant was a fighting general initiating an attack on Belmont, Missouri, as early as November 1861. He always kept any political views he may have had to himself and made Lincoln's policies his own. The worst political generals, McClernand and Fremont among them, could not distance themselves from their political agenda. As bad as their generalship was and as sparse as their military accomplishments were, both men persisted in making themselves political thorns in Lincoln's side as they knew they brought to the war effort the support of War Democrats and Radical Republicans.[1]

In order for Blunt to make any effective contribution to the Union fight and earn a military reputation for himself, it was necessary for him to distance himself,

physically if not philosophically, from James H. Lane. Blunt saw his chance in early August, 1862, and he took it. Once he placed himself in the field Blunt became a general in the Ulysses S. Grant mold, abandoning political concerns and taking a battering ram approach to his main goal--whipping rebels.

Blunt's opportunity to take charge of his military fortunes came when a thousand-man force of Confederate irregulars pushed into western Missouri and began enlisting recruits for a march to the Missouri River. Brigadier-General E. B. Brown of the Unionist Missouri State Militia sent an urgent message to Blunt on August 6, asking if the Kansan could cross the border and occupy Newton and Jasper Counties in Missouri. Blunt had to reorganize his command in the wake of the failed Indian Territory mission, but he wasted little time. By August 11 he was ready to mount his expedition, with himself at its head, and the ensuing campaign likely saved Kansas from a rebel invasion.

Blunt still carried with him into the field very little in the way of military experience and the plan he devised was characteristically uncomplicated. He intended using his and Brown's armies as the jaws of a pincers and trap the invading Confederates between them. Blunt realized speed was of the utmost importance and speed was something that Blunt could deliver. He had done so in his hunt for the guerrilla Mathews and again in his

reconnaissance out of Kansas City for Jim Lane. He could no doubt do it again, but just to make sure his infantry did not slow down his cavalry and horse-drawn artillery, Blunt put the foot-soldiers into wagons, a form of early-day personnel carriers. Blunt's counter-invasion was fast, but not quite fast enough: by the time he struck the Confederate trail it was a day old. Blunt stopped near Johnson, Missouri, and rested his men, but only for three hours. Then he marched day-and-night northbound, hoping to catch the rebels before they crossed the Missouri. Sixty hours and one hundred miles after leaving Fort Scott Blunt caught up with his quarry at Lone Jack, Missouri, on August 17.[3]

Despite Blunt's hell-bent-for-battle pursuit he had been a day too late to prevent thirty-two hundred rebels under Colonels Vard Cockrell and John T. Coffee from defeating eight hundred Missouri militiamen at Lone Jack. The five-hour battle was particularly bloody, with Confederates killing or wounding nearly every Union officer. The battle swirled around the militia's two-gun battery which was captured and retaken twice. Rebels killed or wounded two-thirds of the battery's service crew. Finally, their horses dead or scattered, the militiamen spiked their guns and ran. The total Union loss in killed, wounded, and missing was 272, or almost one-third of the troops who went into battle.[4]

But now Blunt was on the field with four thousand men

and he intended to destroy the Confederates. Even before his whole command was on hand, Blunt threw out skirmishers to probe the rebel line, indicating not only his haste to bring the enemy to battle but also that he had learned some battlefield tactics during his year in the army. The almost automatic deployment of skirmishers by Civil War generals was a relatively new tactic, necessitated by widespread use of rifled shoulder arms. A rifle's kill range (about five hundred yards compared to a smooth-bore musket's one hundred yards) forced Civil War commanders to form their armies farther apart, to stretch their battle lines, and reduce the density of men in a combat zone. Skirmishers, advancing in widely spaced ranks, could occupy a wide area more safely than a densely packed line. Skirmishers could cover an advance as well as disrupt an enemy line in a way that artillery no longer could. Fieldpieces had not advanced in step with rifled shoulder arms. Most were still smoothbore and did not have the effective range of rifles. Consequently, riflemen could kill artillerists before the latter were in effective range. This situation made Civil War artillery more valuable to defenders than attackers.[5]

As the van of his army came on the field Blunt prepared his attack but an August thunderstorm halted his assault. Under darkness the Confederates took refuge in a six-mile expanse of timber, slipped around Blunt's right, and escaped.

The storm and nightfall prevented Blunt from pulling his men out of line and giving immediate pursuit, but at daybreak he had his army dogging the Confederate rear. Blunt's column pressed their enemy so relentlessly that rebel horses died from exhaustion, their riders taking to the brush for cover. Blunt's advance guard led by Colonel William Cloud skirmished with the rebels on August 19, killing a handful of them. They followed the raiders to Carthage, in southwest Missouri, where Blunt broke off the chase, his men and stock exhausted. As Cloud's advance returned to the main body of Blunt's force, stopped at Montevallo, Missouri, they bumped into a group of Confederate riders led by guerrilla chieftain William C. Quantrill and Colonel Joseph Oliver "Jo" Shelby, a cavalry leader who styled himself after General J. E. B. Stuart, even to the point of wearing a plume in his hat. They outnumbered Cloud's three hundred men almost four-to-one and after a brief skirmish in which he lost five men killed and fifteen wounded Cloud abandoned the fight and resumed his march. Blunt's command was back at Fort Scott, Kansas, by August 26; the Lone Jack expedition over.[6]

Blunt's first campaign was a success, albeit a qualified one. The major characteristic of the mission was the speed and determination with which Blunt carried it out, a characteristic the general had displayed before and would display again. From the time Blunt left Fort Scott to the time he broke off the chase five days later, his men

marched two hundred miles, an average of forty per day. Blunt's use of wagons facilitated this type of forced march, though it was unlike rebel General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's famed "foot cavalry" who often achieved the same rate of march on foot alone. Blunt prepared the expedition with little notice and his men took the field without tents or sufficient rations. The last two days of the outing they lived off enemy forage.

In the Lone Jack campaign Blunt exhibited an eagerness to fight. When a fight at Lone Jack did not develop he did not hesitate to trail the enemy and try to bring on another. While this campaign is insignificant compared with Ulysses S. Grant's attacks on Forts Henry and Donnelson earlier in the year, Blunt and Grant shared some of the same personal characteristics. Neither man shied from a fight. Blunt was certainly willing to fight in a summer storm and Grant captured Henry and Donnelson in winter, a time when most commanders preferred to be in camp, and marched his men through February snows to do it. Grant was a West Pointer and Mexican War veteran and used his experience coupled with common sense to trap Confederate General John B. Floyd at Fort Donnelson. Had Blunt possessed more experience he might have been able to anchor off the six-mile width of woods on the Lone Jack battlefield and prevent a rebel escape. Certainly courage and aggressiveness had to take their places alongside military skill in a general's make-up. At Lone Jack Blunt showed he definitely had the first two.[7]

After resting and regrouping at Fort Scott, Kansas, Blunt sent brigades under newly-commissioned Brigadier-General Frederick Salomon, the man who aborted Blunt's Indian Territory expedition, and Colonels Weer and Cloud back into Missouri to guard against a large rebel force federals believed to be in the southwestern part of that state. As Blunt prepared to join the commanders in the field word arrived that he was no longer commander of the Department of Kansas. In fact, the department no longer even existed. Major-General Samuel R. Curtis, the abolitionist and victor of the March 1862, Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, sent news to Blunt that the War Department had consolidated the Kansas department with the Department of the Missouri and had given Curtis command of the larger unit, which retained the title of Department of the Missouri. The War Department offered Blunt command of the smaller District of Kansas and he accepted it without a fuss. Judging from his comments upon assuming command of the department, he was no doubt glad to leave the job. He had accomplished little as department commander and his best military success came on the Lone Jack expedition where he was in the field leading his army. Blunt's new position detailed him to return to the field. His orders were to take his troops, now known as the Army of Kansas, into Missouri and link up with militia leader Brigadier-General John M. Schofield's Army of Southwest Missouri. Curtis decreed that this collective force would

be called the Army of the Frontier and Schofield would be its commander. Under this arrangement Blunt's Army of Kansas would also be known as the First Division, Army of the Frontier.[8] With this reorganization Blunt became essentially a division commander, a position more in line with his experience. Blunt's political sponsor, James H. Lane, was silent on the change. He doubtless did not care as Blunt still directly commanded Kansas troops and General Curtis was radical enough in his abolitionist views to fit Lane's philosophical criteria.

On October 1 Blunt left Fort Scott. At midnight he learned that six thousand rebels under Generals Douglas H. Cooper and Jo Shelby had engaged Frederick Salomon and the Army of Kansas' advance guard near Newtonia, Missouri, and had driven them back to Sarcoxie, Missouri. Blunt rode on to Sarcoxie where he met Schofield and the two generals planned to fight the enemy at Newtonia.[9]

Schofield was a graduate in 1853 of West Point and had served on garrison duty in South Carolina and Florida, and as assistant professor of natural and experimental philosophy at West Point and professor of physics at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. He had no combat experience until the Civil War started. Then Brigadier General Nathanial Lyon, the abolitionist who successfully fought to keep Missouri from seceding, made Schofield his chief of staff in the summer of 1861. Schofield fought with Lyon in actions at Dug Springs,

Missouri, on August 2, and Curran Post Office, Missouri, August 3-4, and at the battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri, on August 10, where rebel gunfire killed Lyon. As such, Schofield's actual combat experience was limited to a span of just over a week.[10]

Assuming Cooper and Shelby expected a frontal attack, Schofield and Blunt decided to smash simultaneously into the Confederate flanks. The plan called for flawless orchestration of the two armies which no doubt put a strain on the two Union generals of limited battlefield experience. Blunt was to move through Granby, Missouri, to the enemy's left flank. Schofield would move by a less circuitous route to the east of Newtonia and assail the rebel right. At twenty-five miles Blunt's route of march was five miles longer than Schofield's, but one which, given his propensity for speed and hard marching, he was well qualified to make. Each man would fire a signal gun when his troops were in position and ready to attack.[11]

Schofield and Blunt led their armies out of Sarcoxie early on October 4. Before his army even reached Granby, Blunt's advance guard encountered stiff resistance from rebels in a narrow defile who succeeded in stalling Blunt's march for what he called "a considerable time." Blunt's soldiers finally brushed the Confederates aside and pressed on, only to encounter a regiment of rebel cavalry at Granby, six miles from Newtonia. The horsemen fell back but the delays had put Blunt behind the mission's time

schedule and destroyed his element of surprise. Blunt could see Cooper's and Shelby's men before him and he assumed Schofield was on the other Confederate flank, itching to start the battle. Blunt drew up on the rebel position and fired his signal gun. There was no reply. Schofield was not in position and Cooper and Shelby were preparing to run. Blunt was sure that his army was big enough to beat the Confederates (as was Schofield's; the generals had agreed on the pincers movement to prevent the possibility of a rebel escape) and he opened fire in an attempt to bring on a battle. The Union volley only hastened the Confederate retreat.[12]

What could have been a brilliant capture of nearly six thousand Confederates turned into a dismal failure. After Newtonia Blunt severely criticized Schofield for his tardiness and came to hate him bitterly. "He had five miles less distance to march than I had, did not encounter even a picket, and yet failed to carry out his part of the arrangement," Blunt complained. Schofield offered Blunt no explanations and the incident sparked a venomous feud between the two generals that would last through the remainder of the war.[13]

Schofield mounted a pursuit of the Confederates but it was slow and hampered by rains. The Army of the Frontier travelled only forty-five miles in ten days, reaching Pea Ridge in northwest Arkansas on October 15. Blunt condemned Schofield's inactivity "while the enemy kept just far

enough in our advance to avoid danger." When the Army of the Frontier went into camp at Pea Ridge, Cooper and Shelby camped only twenty-five miles away at Elm Springs. There another six thousand troops under West Point graduate General John S. Marmaduke reinforced them. Diligent campaigning on Schofield's part could have prevented such a union and possibly beaten the Confederate forces piecemeal. Blunt claimed that Schofield spent all this time making a "geographical and topographical" survey of the country. He said Schofield consulted him for the first time since Newtonia on October 20 when he learned that the rebels had split their force, with one-half moving into the Indian Territory, and the other moving east. General Cooper led the army entering Indian Territory and he appeared to be planning an attack on Fort Scott, Kansas. Marmaduke led the east-bound army.[14]

Blunt suggested that Schofield let him take the Second and Third Brigades of his First Division and follow Cooper into Indian Territory. He would leave his First Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Frederick Salomon, in the rear to guard supplies if Schofield would take the other two divisions, under Generals James Totten and E. B. Brown, in pursuit of Marmaduke. Whether it was Blunt's or Schofield's idea, it was a convenient plan: Blunt and Schofield would be rid of each other and Blunt would be rid of Salomon, the man who scuttled the Indian Territory campaign four months earlier. Schofield put the plan in the form of orders that same day.[15]

Blunt lost little time putting his army in motion. In so doing he began six weeks of campaigning that would include three major fights, ending with the signal battle of his career at Prairie Grove, Arkansas. The very day Schofield penned the orders Blunt took his thirty-five hundred men five miles to Bentonville, Arkansas, and bivouacked there October 21 while his supply train closed up.[16]

Scouts brought Blunt word that Cooper and rebel General Stand Watie, the Cherokee Indian who had gone south when the tribe split in 1861, were camped with from four thousand to seven thousand men at Old Fort Wayne, near Maysville, Arkansas, on the Arkansas-Indian Territory border twenty-five miles away. Determined to defeat the Confederates the next day, Blunt put his army on the road the evening of October 21, directing his supply train to rest a few hours, then follow at daylight. Blunt again set a rigid marching pace, speed again being a lynchpin of his plan. But travel in Arkansas was rougher than in north-central Missouri where he had marched to Lone Jack. The route of march to Old Fort Wayne went up and down hills and through dense woods. When the command stopped briefly at 2 a.m. many soldiers fell asleep at the side of the road. Blunt let them rest only thirty minutes.

After marching another five miles the command came to an open prairie of about five miles in length. Blunt saw that he would have to order his men across the prairie if

he intended to reach the rebel camp, but he hesitated to expose his troops without better knowledge of enemy positions. Seeing a house at the edge of the prairie Blunt conceived a clever idea for getting the information he wanted. Blunt and three other men disguised themselves as rebels and rode to the house. There they found a woman who was in the house alone, her husband having joined the Confederates a few miles away. Blunt told her he and the three men were Confederates themselves and had just escaped from the advancing Yankees. They wanted desperately to reach the safety of Cooper's army, he said, asking if she knew where it was. The woman fell for the trick and told Blunt where Cooper had posted his pickets, where he had made camp, and the strength of his army, which she placed at seven thousand men. She told Blunt that two Texas regiments had reinforced Cooper the previous day.

Blunt wanted to pitch into the Confederates at daylight but the first phase of the engagement did not go as well as his earlier reconnaissance effort. He sent two companies of the Second Kansas Cavalry to circle Maysville, enter the town from the rear, and drive in Cooper's pickets. But the pickets heard the troopers approaching and scampered back to their camp. Then Blunt discovered that, of his two brigades, only three companies of the Second Kansas Cavalry had made it to this advanced position with him. The rest of the force was seven miles behind him. Blunt could do nothing but send back a messenger to

hurry them up, then go to Maysville with the one remaining company of cavalry.

There he discovered that his element of surprise was gone. Fearing a repeat of Newtonia, Blunt decided he would not wait for the rest of his force to come up, but would engage Cooper's seven thousand with his three companies instead. But Cooper's men camped near a prairie surrounded by a tangle of woods. Blunt found a Negro--an "intelligent contraband," he called him--to whom he promised his freedom if he served as a guide. The slave's owner was with Cooper so the man knew the area. This one incident was the only sign Blunt showed of his old abolitionist ardor since he had helped Jim Lane recruit black troops in Kansas.

Rebel pickets hid across the prairie, about three and one-half miles from Blunt. Committed to his plan even though the absence of most of his troops severely depleted his attack force, and without attempting to probe the enemy line, Blunt spurred his three companies of cavalry across the prairie and engaged the pickets, driving them back through the woods. Just at that time the bulk of the federal Second Kansas Cavalry, bringing with them two mountain howitzers, galloped onto the field.

Lieutenant-Colonel Owen A. Bassett of the Second dismounted his troopers (another tactic that rifles had forced as they could cut down shock cavalry attacks before they were effective) and sent them into the woods to skirmish with the rebels. Then he found an opening in the

timber through which he saw the Confederates, now being led solely by Stand Watie who took over when Cooper fell sick, positioned on a road south of some fields. He reported this to Blunt, who ordered the Second Kansas Cavalry to assault the enemy troops before they fled. By the time Bassett's men were in line, so were the Confederates, two fences and a few hundred yards separating the forces. Blunt ordered the two mountain howitzers to within two hundred yards of the enemy line where they opened fire, drawing return fire from Cooper's three six-pounder smooth bores and one twelve-pounder howitzer. Blunt told Bassett again to dismount his cavalrymen and advance them through the fence toward the enemy. The men fired volley after volley into the Confederate ranks, driving them from their first position within five minutes.

Cooper's men formed another line and began a fifteen-minute cannonade in an attempt to cover a flanking move on the federal left. Bassett's sharpshooters scattered the rebel gunners and the Second Kansas Cavalry moved up to the cover of another fence. Then, their rifles loaded and capped, they jumped over the fence, drove the rebels from their second line and chased them into the woods, capturing the battery as they went. The rest of Blunt's brigades arrived just as the battle was ending. The Second Indiana Battery opened fire on the retreating Confederates and Blunt sent the Sixth Kansas and Third Cherokee regiments in pursuit. They skirmished with the

rear of Cooper's column for seven miles then gave up the chase.

Casualty reports for the battle at Old Fort Wayne vary wildly. Blunt reported he lost five dead, one killed outright and four who died from mortal wounds, and another four wounded. He estimated rebel killed and wounded at 150. Cooper (who was sick at the time of the fight and claimed he lost because he was outnumbered and unable to consolidate his poorly provisioned Indians) placed his own losses at only three killed, twenty-five wounded, and thirty-five missing. He said Blunt's losses were "three or four times" that number. Confusing casualty reports, however, were one characteristic of battles in the trans-Mississippi theater.

Cooper's claim that he was outnumbered was true at the end of the battle, but not at the beginning. When Blunt attacked with only parts of the Second Kansas Cavalry the forces were about equal and remained so for the bulk of the fight. Before arriving at Old Fort Wayne Cooper lost his four Texas regiments in a command reorganization. Cooper planned to meet the remaining Indian regiments at Old Fort Wayne before the advance on Fort Scott, yet when Cooper arrived at the meeting place October 17 he found the various regiments scattered. They reassembled slowly and piecemeal. In his report of losses Cooper said he had only the First Cherokee and Second Creek Regiments and only one battery of artillery on the field when Blunt attacked.[17]

Neither Blunt nor Cooper knew how many men his army faced that day. Blunt, acting on the information he gained from the Confederate woman, believed he was attacking seven thousand, which makes his attack with three companies of cavalry all the more incredible. Cooper believed a whole federal division was about to hit his three regiments.

Interestingly, even though pickets sounded Blunt's arrival at Old Fort Wayne, Confederates did not entrench to repulse his attack. In fact, Blunt's enemies in 1862 and 1863 never entrenched even though the benefits of defensive works, coupled with the use of the rifle, had been well illustrated at such places in the eastern theater as Malvern Hill, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg. Fighting in the trans-Mississippi theater, however, was sporadic and fluid without much of the military posturing that accompanied battles in the east. Hence, opposing generals rarely had time to complete defensive works even if they were inclined to do so, which they were not. The building of complicated works and the digging of elaborate trenches was to an extent a manifestation of military education, especially for West Point graduates, many of whom were engineers. The war in the trans-Mississippi west was an amateur's war, with largely untrained commanders leading armies (of both sides) in the field. Thus it is not surprising that soldiers did not immediately begin "digging-in" when they occupied a position.[18]

It is fortunate for Blunt that his enemies never learned to entrench, for his tactics were similar to those

which some historians believe wrecked Confederate armies when used against defensive works. Blunt preferred to take the offensive at all times and, with the exception of isolated instances during combat, he did maintain the offensive. In their book Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage, authors Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson state that this need to seize and hold the offensive bled the Confederacy to death. By examining casualty lists McWhiney and Jamieson conclude that "Confederates destroyed themselves by making bold and repeated attacks." Rebels were on the offensive in ninety-one percent of the battles in which they suffered heaviest and were on the defensive in eighty-nine percent of the battles in which they suffered least. Certainly McWhiney and Jamieson do not claim that southerners were the only ones who suffered in offensive charges, for in a study of twelve major battles United States troops took the offensive in five of them, the most notable being Fredericksburg, Virginia, in December, 1862. There federals assailed rebel defensive works atop Marye's Heights and lost 10,884 of 100,007 men engaged. Rebels lost only 4,656 out of 72,497 men engaged. Using such data McWhiney and Jamieson maintain that southerners would have had a better chance at winning the war had they stayed on the defensive, behind works or in trenches, and let the Union make the assaults.[19]

McWhiney and Jamieson claim that southerners' fondness

for frontal assaults was due to the South's Celtic (Scotch, Scotch-Irish, Welsh, Cornish, and Irish) heritage. They argue that the Celtic experience was warlike and that heritage imbued the South with a glorification of war which made it unthinkable for tradition-bound southerners to fight a war for their own independence from a trench.[20]

But James G. Blunt came from New England, where ideas of warfare were not so gallant, according to McWhiney and Jamieson. Blunt's affinity for the offensive was an extension of his bull-headed personality and the fact that he was an amateur volunteer soldier. Without formal military training Blunt appears to have known no other tactic than to seize the offensive and assault his enemy. Blunt realized a large measure of success with this simple tactic because, in the Trans-Mississippi, he and his men fought other commanders and soldiers who had equivalent training -- little or none. Relatively light casualty statistics in the theater indicate that both Confederate and United States troops in service there were poor shots, thus Blunt and his enemies may have never fully realized the deadly capabilities of the rifle. If so Blunt never had any real incentive to abandon the offensive and rebels never had any real reason to entrench.

Even though it was small, Old Fort Wayne was James G. Blunt's first major battle; at Lone Jack he had deployed but not fought, at Newtonia the enemy had slipped away. As such Blunt made mistakes. Certainly he had defined his

objective--to defeat Cooper and forestall the possibility of a Kansas invasion--and achieved it by capitalizing on his army's mobility and his fondness of hard marching to hit Cooper before the southerner could consolidate his command. Once on the battlefield Blunt brought the mass of his combat force to bear on Cooper by delivering an uncomplicated hammer blow to the Confederate line. But in allowing the bulk of his army to lag seven miles behind him Blunt broke the battlefield principle of security. Had Cooper been better prepared, and had scouts been watching Blunt's approach, he could have conceivably slipped between Blunt and the rest of his force and defeated them one by one. Blunt also erred in his collection of intelligence. Had he relied on his spies he might have known that Cooper's seven thousand troops were scattered, and that those individual rebel units posed a potential threat to his own flanks or rear. Nevertheless, the fact that Blunt attacked when he assumed he was outnumbered proved his courage on the field, unlike Major General George McClellan whose intelligence information on his approach to Richmond, Virginia, the previous spring also erred on the inflated side. Rather than attack, though, McClellan let the intelligence intimidate him into inaction. Old Fort Wayne was a skirmish by eastern theater standards, but there, for the second time in three months and in a rough, self-taught fashion, Blunt prevented Confederate regulars from invading Kansas.

After the battle Blunt was eager to move south to Fort Smith, Arkansas. From there, he told Schofield on October 24, he could protect Indian Territory and encourage Unionist sentiment in western Arkansas. But Schofield wanted Blunt to move south only to a point parallel with Fayetteville to support the Army of the Frontier's Second and Third Divisions in case of attack. Blunt was already angry at Schofield, not only because of the debacle at Newtonia, but also because the latter had retreated to Fayetteville without fighting Marmaduke and Shelby. Blunt could not see any danger to Schofield's command, but decided if he had to be near Fayetteville he might as well stay at Old Fort Wayne. There was a direct road linking the two places and besides, Blunt's men were already grinding grain at an abandoned mill. Blunt's disgust with his commander flared again on November 10 when he learned that Schofield, without telling Blunt, had evacuated Arkansas and gone back to Missouri, leaving Blunt's First Division at an exposed position at Old Fort Wayne.[21]

Blunt could not imagine why Schofield abandoned Arkansas. Sarcastically he mused (in a comment that reveals some disdain for professional soldiers) that it was "part of West Point tactics for a superior officer to abandon his subordinates . . . in the face of the enemy." Alone in northwest Arkansas Blunt did what he did best--he advanced. His men were exhausting the forage near Maysville and Blunt still believed the Arkansas River should be the goal of the Union armies. Blunt sent Colonel

William Phillips and his Indians into Indian Territory to garrison Fort Gibson (which Blunt had wanted the erratic William Weer to do back in the summer), then planned to move the rest of his army south on November 11 unless Schofield specifically called him back. Blunt believed his men had milled enough flour to supply the expedition and, besides, he was waging a sort of "depleted earth" policy in Arkansas: he bought all the wheat, cattle, and forage that the could from Unionists, then sent them north with his empty supply trains; he confiscated what he needed from rebel sympathizers and left them to their own devices. "This country will afford short living for a bushwhacker when I leave it," he said.[22]

Before he left Maysville Blunt sent out scouting parties and on November 12 a detachment under Colonel William Cloud returned. They had run into three hundred rebels near Cane Hill, Arkansas, chased them to near Van Buren, Arkansas, on the Arkansas River, and captured and burned their wagons. Three days later Blunt learned more information. Five thousand Missourians and four pieces of artillery under Brigadier General John S. Marmaduke (the West Pointer whom Schofield had chased, but had not fought) were at Rhea's Mill near Cane Hill, operating salt works that Blunt's scouts had abandoned for fear of their advanced position. Blunt had no doubt that Marmaduke was preparing an invasion of Missouri and consequently an attack on his First Division. "I am prepared to meet them

and shall not retreat one inch," he said emphatically, though he hesitated to attack them himself for fear of stretching his communications too far.[23]

Blunt had apparently learned the risks of using indigenous intelligence at Old Fort Wayne. Now he made good use of his own spies and reconnaissance parties and learned that, for some reason, Marmaduke had pulled back south of the Boston Mountains, which lay between Cane Hill and the Arkansas River. But on November 26 one of the federal scouting detachments rode back into camp and reported that Marmaduke, with seven to eight thousand men and eight pieces of artillery, was back at Cane Hill. Spies whom Blunt had sent south of the Boston Mountains began returning with news that Confederate Major General Thomas C. Hindman was massing a large army of over twenty thousand men south of the mountains, preparing to join Marmaduke. Blunt suspected this rebel buildup meant an attempted invasion of Missouri. With his First Division in danger Blunt knew he had two alternatives. "[I could] follow the example of my superior [Schofield] and abandon the country . . . or . . . advance," he said. Blunt characteristically chose the latter. Cane Hill was thirty miles south and he proposed to march the next day and attack Marmaduke November 28 before Hindman could reinforce him.[24]

In opting to attack, Blunt showed he was gaining strategic skill. He realized that, camped in enemy

territory, he had no Union posts to defend. His division was compact and mobile and he did not have to worry about defending excessively long lines of communication. On the other hand, if he retreated Blunt would have to worry about defending both Springfield, Missouri, and Fort Scott, Kansas, which would necessitate splitting his forces. Such a move would not only allow Hindman and Marmaduke to consolidate but also give them a chance to defeat Blunt piecemeal. "Besides," said Blunt, "to [retreat] in the face of the enemy would . . . discourage and demoralize my own command." Blunt knew his small army could act as a strike force if he deployed it with his characteristic speed.[25]

Blunt lived up to his reputation. Early November 27 Blunt took five thousand cavalry and infantry and began the thirty-five mile march to Cane Hill. He set a steady, determined pace, yet one which was still tiring considering the rough, mountainous Arkansas terrain, and by nightfall the troops had made twenty-five miles.

Having learned to trust and use his own spies, Blunt sent some into Marmaduke's camp. When they returned they told Blunt that the rebel general was expecting the federals, and furthermore, expected them to arrive by either the Fayetteville or State Line road. As such Marmaduke had placed pickets on both roads to intercept Blunt. Marmaduke was correct in his assumption. Blunt intended to make his advance along the Fayetteville Road,

but his spies returned in time for Blunt to avoid a trap. Blunt's guides found a rarely used country road between the two main roads and Blunt quickly turned his troops down the new route. Along this road, at 5 a.m. the next day, Blunt quietly slipped his army to within one-half mile of Marmaduke's camp.

Through trial, error, and field experience, General Blunt was improving as a combat leader and, whether consciously or not, he was following most of Jomini's nine battlefield principles. Blunt's objectives were clear, if simple -- engage and defeat the enemy. He seized the offensive before the fight at Old Fort Wayne and maintained it even now on the march to Cane Hill. His ability to concentrate the mass of his combat force and achieve his objective with an economy of force was in a sense limited by the small size of his army, a characteristic of all trans-Mississippi Civil War armies which were generally of ten thousand men or less. Such small armies necessitated throwing a whole command into a battle, leaving some troops behind as a transportation guard such as Blunt did with Salomon at Old Fort Wayne and now again at Cane Hill. Trans-Mississippi generals rarely thought about the principle of economy of force: they used what soldiers they had and usually worried about having too few men rather than too many to achieve an objective. Blunt was becoming a past-master at the art of speedily moving his troops, though, and now, at Cane Hill, he had obtained the

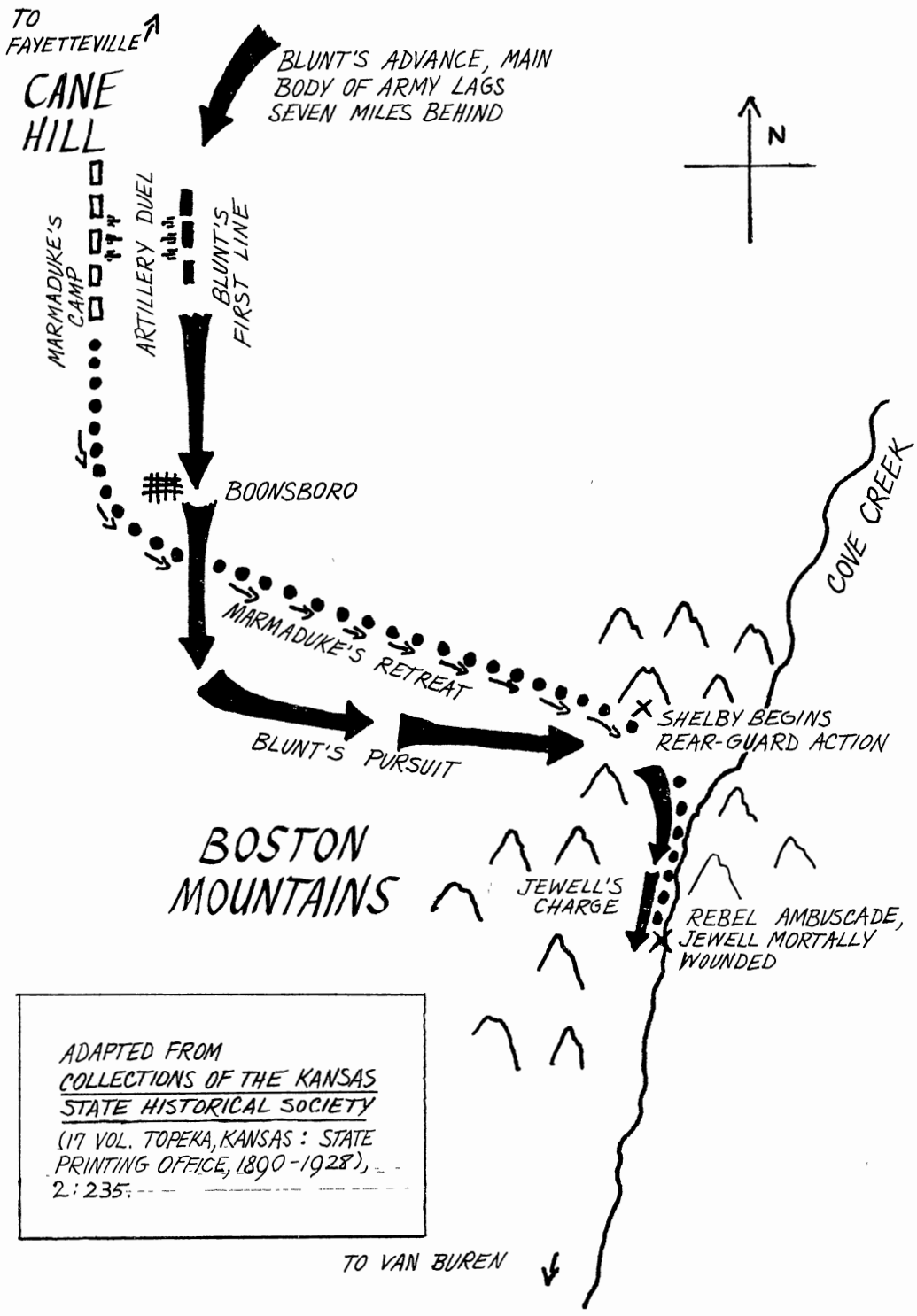

Figure 3. Battle of Cane Hill

element of surprise over Marmaduke by marching down the little-used road.

Even though Blunt was learning to use spies to improve the security of his army the fight at Old Fort Wayne a month earlier apparently failed to teach him about another aspect of security and unity of command. Just as he had at Old Fort Wayne, Blunt arrived on the battlefield at Cane Hill with the bulk of his combat force seven miles behind him. On the march Blunt allowed the hills and rough Arkansas roads to disperse his army. When he silently drew up next to Marmaduke's camp he only had with him two hundred men of his favored Second Kansas Cavalry, their two mountain howitzers, the Second Indiana Battery and his personal staff and body guard. Blunt's failure to keep his army intact was in part due to the rough terrain and to the fact that Blunt's subordinates, just as he was, were not formally schooled in warfare. But it also indicates Blunt's bulldog personality. He insisted on riding at the head of his army, a characteristic which made for popular generals in any Civil War army. But once at the front of his column, Blunt apparently never looked back. Nor did he effectively work with his subordinates to keep the marching order of the army intact, a character flaw remarkably similar to his inability (or refusal) to work with his superiors. Blunt simply assumed--and expected--that if he was able to cross rough terrain with speed the rest of his army should be able to do so as well, and that once he

arrived at their destination they would be right at his back.

The fact that his army was scattered was bad enough. But at Cane Hill Blunt committed an almost unpardonable battlefield sin, or at least it would have been had it not displayed a measure of the aggressiveness which the North so desperately needed in the fall of 1862. Without ever realizing that the bulk of his combat force was still almost an hour's march away, Blunt committed the regiments with him to an attack.

Not only did Blunt hastily go into battle, he appears to have done so without adequate battlefield reconnaissance. This seems to be another characteristic of Blunt's battlefield demeanor. Never in his battle reports does he show any indication that he probed rebel lines to find their weak spots or defensive strengths. While Blunt showed a willingness (perhaps because it was all he knew how to do) to throw his armies squarely against his foe, such a tactic was not necessarily an intelligent use of his combat force. Had he actually probed and scouted rebel defensive positions, he might have been able to use his army more creatively, by maneuvering his enemy out of position or splitting his force (which would have been risky with his small army, but not out of Blunt's character) to create a feint and then deliver a crushing blow.

Blunt may have been able to slip close to Marmaduke

without detection but the rebel general knew Blunt was coming sooner or later and as such chose high, easily defended ground on which to make camp. Marmaduke placed his camp at the end of a gorge that ran between two hills. One of the hills hid the rebels from the advancing federals and Marmaduke placed an advance guard at the throat of the gorge. When Blunt ordered an attack his troopers quickly drove in the Confederate guard, but as the Yankees dashed from behind the hill on their right they found themselves squarely facing Marmaduke's army, waiting on elevated ground with its battery aimed at the road below. An expanse of timber protected the rebel rear. Both Blunt and Colonel William F. Cloud, commander of the Third Brigade as well as the Second Kansas Cavalry, insisted they had completely surprised Marmaduke. The Confederates' disposition, and the artillery duel that commenced when Blunt's men swung into on the opposite side of the hill suggest otherwise. With most of his army still several miles behind him Blunt could do little except trade artillery rounds with Marmaduke's gunners. The cannonade lasted an hour and finally ended when fire from the Second Indiana Battery forced Marmaduke to abandon his position for another one located three-quarters of a mile farther south where he had left his reserves. Both Blunt and Cloud admitted that they could have destroyed Marmaduke's force had Blunt's First Division been consolidated at the opening of the attack.

Marmaduke's new position was just north of Boonsborough and protected by rugged terrain. Blunt placed the Second Kansas Battery on high ground and ordered the cannonade resumed. The federal shelling dismounted one of the rebel guns and forced another Confederate retreat, this time to an elevated and easily defended strip of land south of the town. Marmaduke, the West Pointer, fighting a masterful retrograde action, gave Blunt just enough time to deploy his men in line, then fell back again. Blunt's artillerists could only lob a few ineffective shells into the enemy rear.

The Confederates fled south toward the Boston Mountains on a road that alternately traversed farmland, deep ravines, and thick woods. For three miles the federals nipped at the rebels. Then, at the foot of the Boston Mountains, Marmaduke's men turned to make their stand. Marmaduke's cavalry commander, Major-General Jo Shelby, came up with the idea that thirty companies, placed individually along the line of march, could cover the rebel retreat better than a single brigade trying to form in the rugged mountains. As such he created thirty firing positions leading up into the Boston Mountains. Shelby did not expect the soldiers to hold any of the positions, but rather pester approaching federals. After one position fired it would get up and run to the southernmost end of the line, reload, and prepare to fire again as the rebel retreat sucked the federals into the Boston Mountains.

A single passage, guarded by Marmaduke's artillery, led into the mountain stronghold and Blunt could see that the terrain made his own artillery useless. Failing to see any other way to get at his fleeing enemy Blunt decided his only option was to storm the mountain. He dismounted the Second Kansas Cavalry and sent them up the mountainside, followed by Colonel William Phillips' Cherokee regiment (having returned from the Indian Territory), and the Eleventh Kansas Infantry. Blunt made the assault on the first mountain more dramatic than it probably was. He said the three regiments "with a wild shout rushed up [the mountain], contesting every inch of ground, steadily pushing the enemy before them," until the rebels fled in "disorder." Blunt never realized that the Confederates had fled, not because of anything Blunt's assault had done, but as part of Shelby's plan. The Confederate retreat turned into a three-mile shooting match, Shelby's thirty companies offering resistance at intervals along the way. Blunt rode at the head of his attackers, shooting at rebels himself with a Henry repeating rifle.

Darkness was approaching when the rebels finally descended to the Cove Creek Road, which ran through a valley toward Van Buren, Arkansas, and deployed their six pieces of artillery for a last defense, Shelby's cavalrymen standing guard one-half mile ahead of the guns. Doggedly pursuing, Blunt decided the ground was suitable for a cavalry attack. Three companies of the Sixth Kansas

Cavalry, headed by Colonel William R. Judson, Lieutenant-Colonel L. R. Jewell, and Major W. T. Campbell, volunteered for the charge. With a flash of sabres and the crackle of small arms fire they galloped into the valley and smashed into the Confederate rear guard. The Union horsemen drove their enemy back upon the artillery, waiting where the valley funnelled into a narrow passage. But the retreat of Shelby's cavalry had been another ruse to draw Blunt's riders deeper into the passage. As the federals rode in Confederates waiting in ambush on a mountainside hit them with a fierce flanking fire. Jewell fell mortally wounded.

With the Union charge stalled the Confederates poured into the valley in a counter-attack. Blunt and his commanders succeeded in rallying the Sixth Kansas Cavalry and rolling up four mountain howitzers which stopped the rebel threat. Still Marmaduke's men showed no signs of retreating further. Blunt, determined to go through the pass, ordered the howitzers and a section of the Second Indiana Battery pushed into position by hand and loaded with double canister. Here Blunt intended to use his artillery as the main part of his assault, not as infantry support. His decision to use double canister (a particularly lethal artillery round consisting of two charges which resembled coffee cans, each packed with one-and-one-half-inch diameter cast-iron shot) indicates that the armies had come close to each other, probably to

within 350 yards, as canister was designed for close combat. No doubt Blunt thought he could achieve quick, effective results with his artillery thus loaded. Blunt ordered that the artillery barrage be followed by a cavalry charge, but just as he was about to give the order to fire, a man displaying a white flag galloped from Marmaduke's lines. The Battle of Cane Hill was over.

Marmaduke's messenger requested that the Confederates be allowed to gather their dead and wounded. Thinking that some of his own wounded were behind enemy lines and might be "brutally murder[ed]," Blunt agreed to the truce. But Marmaduke (just like Mexicans who had done the same to Blunt's mentor, James Lane, in the Mexican War) used the cease-fire to gather his artillery and slip away to safety. Blunt knew he had been the victim of a "cowardly trick" but darkness and an exhausted army forced him to give up the chase.

Casualties were slight. Blunt listed his own dead at eight and wounded at thirty-two. From the debris on the battlefield Blunt estimated (probably over-estimated) rebel casualties at seventy-five dead, wounded unknown.[26]

At the end of the day, November 28, 1862, General Blunt controlled the field at Cane Hill. As such he was the victor. But his victory must be qualified. From the beginning of the day, when he let most of his five-thousand-man-army lag behind him, to the end when Marmaduke duped him with a white flag, Blunt was never in

control of the battle. Knowing they could not stand toe-to-toe with Blunt's army and win, Marmaduke and Shelby decided their military objective should be the safe removal of their army to the opposite side of the Boston Mountains where they expected General Hindman to reinforce them. If they could wear down the enemy federals in the process, so much the better. They did both and completely outgeneraled Blunt in the process. If part of Blunt's objective had been to prevent Marmaduke and Hindman from joining, he failed by allowing Marmaduke to slip back through the Boston Mountains where such as junction would be easier. In such a scenario Blunt needed to interpose his army between Marmaduke's and Hindman's. Marmaduke skillfully kept the Boston Mountains at his own back to prevent Blunt from doing just that. Blunt fought on ground of Marmaduke's and Shelby's choosing. Blunt consistently held the low ground and that, coupled with the fact that he was the attacker, put him at a disadvantage from the start. Considering Blunt's own objectives, the battle at Cane Hill very nearly equaled a federal loss. Still, at the end of the day the rebels were gone and, even though that was exactly what the Confederates wanted, Blunt claimed another victory.

Marmaduke fell back south of the Boston Mountains where he joined General Hindman's army. Blunt still stood between the mountains and the Arkansas-Missouri border, but Hindman still intended to invade Missouri. Hindman

steadfastly denied that he ever intended to launch an invasion as he had "barely ammunition enough for one battle, and not sufficient subsistence and forage for seven days at half rations." He said it was his intention to clear Blunt out of northwestern Arkansas, then fall back to the safety of Little Rock, Arkansas. Other evidence suggests Hindman did plan an invasion. Throughout the summer of 1862 Hindman covertly prepared for an invasion by giving colonel's commissions to guerrilla fighters Joseph Porter, J. A. Poindexter, John T. Hughes, Gideon Thompson, and Upton Hayes and sending them into Missouri. He ordered them to disable federal communications and put together an assemblage of southern sympathizers who would rise up when Hindman entered the state.[27]

Blunt, camped at Cane Hill, also believed Hindman plotted an invasion. On December 2 he learned that Marmaduke had joined Hindman, making their combined strength twenty-five to thirty thousand men. His information was faulty, though, as Hindman only had about eleven thousand men. Nevertheless Blunt's own First Division had only about eight thousand men. Despite what he believed was a tremendous force massing against him Blunt resolved to hold his ground. Still he knew his army was in danger and he had received no communications from his superior, Schofield. Before the fight at Cane Hill Blunt learned from a St. Louis newspaper that Schofield had put the Second and Third Division into winter quarters and

had gone to St. Louis to recover from an illness. Blunt believed Schofield was trying to secure a major-general's commission, but regardless, with Schofield absent Blunt took emergency action and assumed command of the entire Army of the Frontier. He had no intention of abandoning northwest Arkansas to Hindman and on December 3 he telegraphed Brigadier-General Francis J. Herron, commander of the Second and Third Divisions, and ordered him to march to his support. Camped at the old Wilson's Creek battleground Herron was 140 miles north of Blunt. He had no time to lose and he put his divisions on the road within hours of receiving Blunt's telegram.[28]

Meanwhile, Hindman put his army on the Cove Creek road and began his northern push. Blunt sent pickets six miles south of Cane Hill to cover the intersection of the Cove Creek road with the Fayetteville-Van Buren road. These pickets drove Hindman's vanguard back on December 5 but abandoned the intersection the next day when Hindman's troops renewed their attack.[29]

Hindman intended to use the road to flank Blunt but on the evening of December 6 he learned that Herron, who had exhibited Blunt's own style of marching and covered thirty-five miles per day, was at Fayetteville and preparing to join Blunt at Cane Hill. Hindman changed his plans. Hindman had fought at Shiloh and knew that General Don Carlos Buell's sudden reinforcement of Ulysses S. Grant at that battle had spelled Confederate defeat the previous

April and he determined to prevent Herron from joining Blunt. He planned to use the Fayetteville road to slip east of Cane Hill (Blunt's left) and get between Herron and Blunt. Then he could defeat the separated pieces of the Army of the Frontier in detail, Herron first, then Blunt.[30]

Blunt, now on the defensive for the first time since October, knew of the threat on his left and ordered 250 men of the Fourteenth Missouri State Militia Cavalry under Colonel John M. Richardson to watch the road. Richardson marched his men seventy-three miles to reach Blunt and when he offered his command for service the general gave him the guard duty. Blunt expected battle the next day and told Richardson to resist any Confederate advance "to the last extremity" and send word immediately to Blunt's headquarters. But Blunt regretted that he "committ[ed] the folly of taking [Richardson] upon his own recommendation." During the night Hindman's men slipped around Blunt. Richardson claimed he sent Blunt word that rebels were nearby early in the night, but could not offer resistance as his force was too small. Blunt said he never got word of Hindman's maneuver until 10 a.m. December 7. At least one soldier thought Hindman got around Blunt for a different reason. Blunt was either "sound asleep or sitting up with some female hangers-on," he charged.[31]

At Old Fort Wayne, Cane Hill, and now at Prairie Grove, Blunt set a dangerous pattern. At each place he

failed to apprise himself of the situation on the perimeter of his army. At Old Fort Wayne and Cane Hill Blunt's laxity resulted in his arriving at a battle site with a diminished combat force. Now at Prairie Grove it resulted in an enemy separating Blunt from his reinforcements.

Since 7 a.m. Blunt's men had been fighting what he believed to be Hindman's main advance. When he realized the Confederates had slipped by him and that the action at his front was only a feint, he sent the First Division toward Fayetteville twelve miles away. But six miles south of that town at Prairie Grove Herron's men, tired from marching, had been battling rebels for three hours.

Herron's men arrived in Fayetteville the evening of December 6. The general posted guards in front of private homes to keep his own men from looting them, but most of his soldiers, exhausted by the grueling winter march through mountainous country, fell asleep by the roadside or in homes. Their rest was short, though. By daylight Herron had his two divisions marching toward Blunt. The battle began when they ran into Marmaduke's advance guard. Herron rallied his men and forced the rebels four miles back to Illinois Creek where he ran into the whole of Hindman's army forming in line. Herron used two pieces of artillery to draw the attention of rebel gunners while he sent his own artillerymen to cut their way through a section of woods. Concealed by the timber they lined up eighteen guns opposite Hindman's center. At 10 a.m. (just

as Blunt was realizing his predicament to the south) Herron's gunners ran their fieldpieces to the edge of the woods and commenced an eight-hour artillery duel. Infantry combat began an hour later with a rebel charge. Federals repulsed the attack and captured a rebel battery in a counterattack. Infantry fighting continued until 5 p.m.[32]

At 4 p.m. Herron heard artillery fire from his right and two shells landed amongst his skirmishers. The general feared Hindman's soldiers had flanked him, but soon he realized the fire came from Blunt's army joining the battle. Herron dashed off a dispatch for Blunt's gunners to change their fire.

Blunt's arrival did in fact break up a rebel flanking attempt but his choice of tactics was questionable. The road Blunt took to Prairie Grove brought him onto the battlefield in front of the Confederate left where he found the enemy massing for attack. But by pulling into line next to Herron Blunt negated the advantage that his troops, fresh from a night's rest and a short march, had over the combatants on the field. He also gave up two opportunities to mass his combat force effectively and destroy Hindman's command. Trailing Hindman to Prairie Grove Blunt was in a good position either to strike Hindman from behind, catching the rebel in a deadly vice between the Union armies, or slam into Hindman's left flank and roll up his line while Herron held it in place for a whipping. All

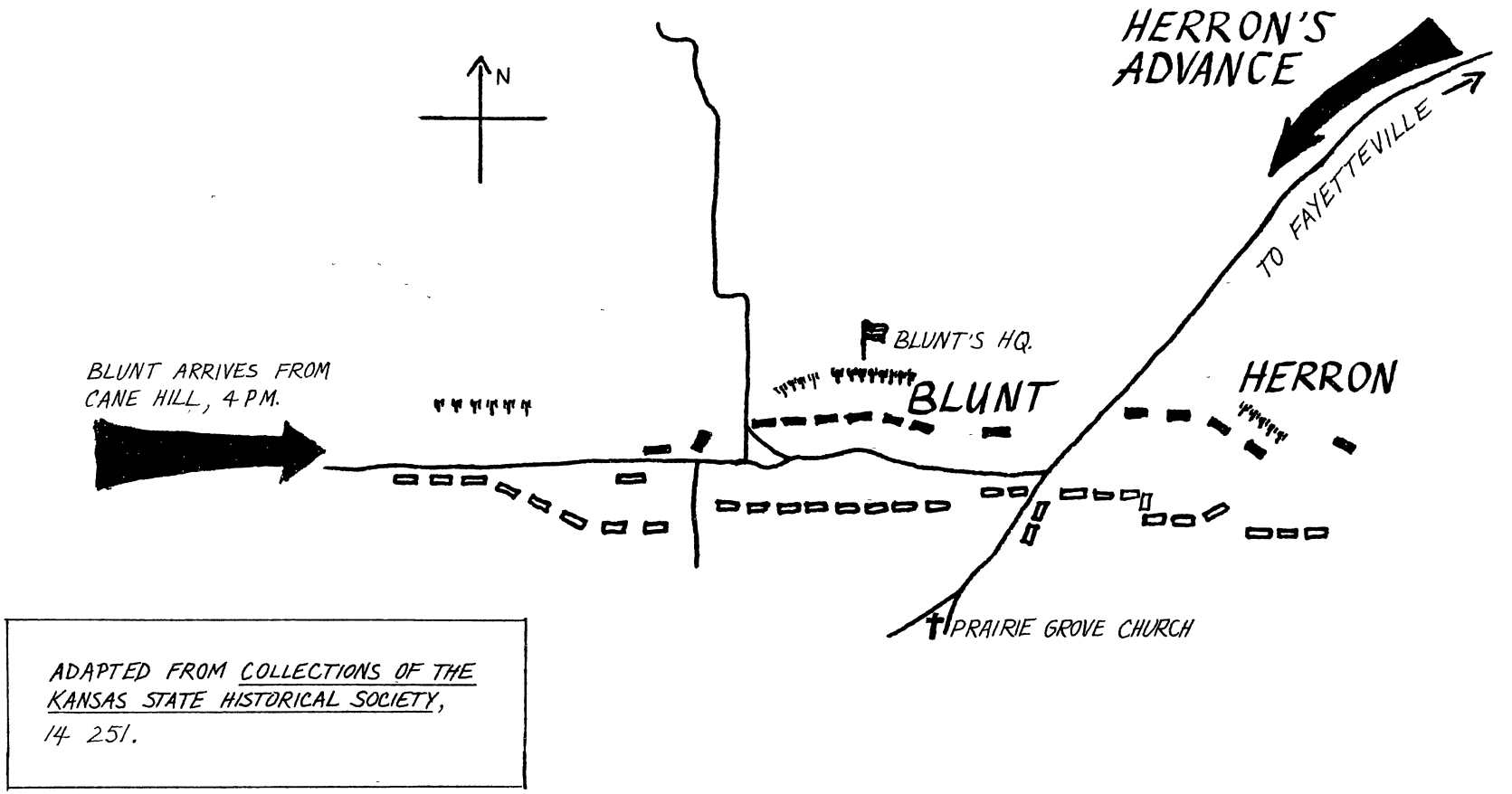

Figure 4. Battle of Prairie Grove

Blunt succeeded in doing was ignite a general engagement up and down the line.

Three of Blunt's batteries, including a battery of black, rifled Parrot guns, opened fire on the far right of the rebel line, raking southerners with shot and shell until they fled into the woods, opening the way for a charge by Herron's infantry. Seeking to silence the new threat Hindman turned his attention to Blunt's center and touched off renewed infantry combat that lasted another three hours. Before his men went into battle Hindman encouraged them to aim at federal officers. With that in mind some rebel sharpshooters positioned themselves in a house at Blunt's left and began firing at the general and his staff. Blunt ordered some of his artillery to shell the house. "In a few moments the house was in flames," he said.

Twice Blunt ordered his six ten-pounder Parrot guns trained on rebel infantry massing to attack across open fields. The fire from his guns was so intense it drove each assault back into the woods. Finally one Confederate assault charged through the woods only to run headlong into what Blunt called a "perfect storm of canister [which produced] immense slaughter in their ranks and compell[ed] them to again retire." It was one of the last charges of the battle as darkness brought a gradual end to the fighting.[33]

Blunt and Herron planned to resume the fight the next

morning. They ordered ammunition passed out to the men on the field and Blunt called Frederick Salomon's brigade, which he left in reserve at Rhea's Miss, to the front. But during the night Hindman's men tore up their blankets, wrapped them around the wheels of their wagons and gun carriages, and quietly began to retreat. Hindman bought extra time for his getaway the next morning when he secured from Blunt, under a truce, permission to care for his dead and wounded. Blunt said he was aware the rebels were waving the white flag at him as a trick, just as they had at Cane Hill, and that he only allowed the ruse because he had previously seen the rebels leaving the field.[34]

Prairie Grove was the bloodiest battle Blunt had yet fought. The Army of the Frontier suffered 1,251 casualties: 175 killed, including eight officers; 813 wounded; and 263 captured or missing. The casualties represented about ten percent of Blunt's force. Hindman placed his own casualties at 1,317: 164 killed; 817 wounded; and 336 missing, or about twelve percent of his army. Even though the battle was a Union victory the statistics show the armies fought to a draw. Hindman maintained that he controlled field the night of December 7 and only retreated because his men were outnumbered and exhausted.[35]

In the battles of Cane Hill and Prairie Grove Blunt thwarted Hindman's plans. Even if Hindman only intended to rid northwest Arkansas of federal occupation forces, as he adamantly insisted, he failed. Blunt's Army of the

Frontier was battered a little, but still held the northwest quadrant of the state. If Hindman intended an invasion of Missouri, as was probably the case, Blunt stopped him and destroyed any Confederate hopes of invading the state for another two years. Not until General Sterling Price's Missouri raid in September 1864, would an organized rebel force re-enter the state. Blunt's victory at Prairie Grove had affected rebel plans even more extensively than he knew. Even before he had ventured north of the Boston Mountains Hindman had received orders from commander of the rebel Trans-Mississippi Department, Lieutenant-General Theophilus Holmes, to fall back to Little Rock. The Confederate War Department was pressuring Holmes to send troops from his department to reinforce the Mississippi River stronghold of Vicksburg, Mississippi. By December, Union gunboats (under the plan originally devised by politician-general John McClernand) were already dropping down the river to attack Vicksburg. Hindman crossed the mountains and fought Blunt instead and by the time he had retreated from Prairie Grove back to the Arkansas River his army had dwindled, from casualties, skulkers, and deserters, to around four thousand men. With such a small force all that remained in Arkansas to protect Little Rock from federals on the Mississippi River, Holmes chose not to send them on to Vicksburg. Thus, in an indirect way, General James G. Blunt prevented an extra ten thousand men from reinforcing Vicksburg.[36]

Even though victory was his, Blunt blundered his way to success at Prairie Grove. While Marmaduke and Shelby outgeneraled Blunt at Cane Hill, the Kansan doggedly pursued the rebels in his own hard-nosed style. Given the mountainous terrain at Cane Hill it is doubtful that Blunt could have done anything else. But Prairie Grove was his worst battlefield performance of the war. Schofield, upon later resuming command of the Army of the Frontier, charged Blunt with bungling the battle. He may not have been far from wrong. Blunt can be credited for accurately surmising Hindman's intentions and immediately calling for Herron's help. He also understood that Hindman could cut him off from Herron when rebels uncovered the Fayetteville road. Still Blunt allowed Hindman to slip around the First Division. Whether women in his headquarters tent distracted the general or Colonel Richardson failed to guard the road does not matter. Blunt did not learn the lessons that the fights at Old Fort Wayne and Cane Hill had tried to teach him and he failed to provide for the adequate security of his army. As commander it was Blunt's mistake and one that left Herron and his road-weary soldiers alone and outnumbered thoughout most of the battle. In fact Blunt's division suffered less than one quarter of the total Union casualties at Prairie Grove.[37] When Blunt finally realized his error he marched in his own characteristic manner to Herron's aid, but he had essentially turned the offensive over to the rebels,

something he had not previously allowed. He also gave up any advantage of mass he had in a fresh combat force when he arrived on the battlefield. At Prairie Grove Blunt proved that a military education was not a prerequisite to victory, but it certainly might have made victory more complete.

Union victories were a scarce commodity in December 1862 (a month which included General Ambrose Burnside's sacrifice of federals at Fredericksburg) and Blunt gained national notoriety because of Prairie Grove. Though he and Herron both earned major-general's stars for the victory, the public granted Blunt most of the credit. In January 1863, Harper's Weekly published a detailed account of Blunt's fall campaigns, complete with a line drawing depicting the general in full beard. "Men like Blunt are in demand," praised the newspaper. "Blunt is the coming man!"[38]

In camp December 26 Blunt learned that his superior, General John Schofield, had apparently recuperated from his illness and had ordered Blunt to risk no further battle unless confident of success. Blunt, ever scornful of the man who had abandoned Arkansas, wrote a note to Department of the Missouri commander Major-General Samuel Curtis informing him of his intentions. "I am in command of the [army] and until General Schofield arrives and assumes command by general orders, I shall direct its movements," said Blunt.

But Blunt was doing very little directing of movements. Blunt did not pursue Hindman following the battle of Prairie Grove. The Army of the Frontier sat idle for almost three weeks and Blunt and Herron blamed their inactivity on winter weather, but the weather was not bad enough to prevent General Hindman and the remainder of his army from reaching Van Buren, near Fort Smith on the Arkansas River. On December 26 rebel deserters and spies informed Blunt of Hindman's location.[39]

Blunt and Herron determined to push Hindman from his new position. The next morning, with eight thousand troops and thirty fieldpieces, they began their fifty-mile journey. They marched all day and night over treacherous ground, teams of fifty or more soldiers manhandling the guns up steep mountainsides. At 3 a.m. December 28 the army arrived at a place called Oliver's Store, eighteen miles north of the Arkansas River. Reviewing new information about enemy dispositions, Blunt and Herron formed their cavalry into an advance guard and rode ahead with the troopers. Blunt showed little capacity for learning from his own mistakes. He did not bother to take any route to Van Buren except the straight one, which led him to a confrontation with rebel pickets three miles to the south. The pickets broke and fled but, just as they had done at Newtonia and Old Fort Wayne, took with them news of Blunt's approach. They ran to Dripping Springs, Arkansas, where a full Confederate regiment heeded their

warning and formed into a line of battle to wait for Blunt and Herron. When he arrived, Blunt sent his cavalry in to batter the line, which they did and sent it fleeing toward Van Buren, another ten miles away.

Blunt's vanguard pursued closely. The rebels tried three times to fight off the federals but failed each time. Herron said the cavalry covered the last ten miles to Van Buren in one hour, galloping all the way. First Lieutenant Charles Wesley DeWolf, in the midst of the chase, said Confederates discarded blankets, coats, and wagons as they ran. The Union cavalrymen gathered up one hundred prisoners and forty wagons as they pressed the Confederates. The chase continued into the streets of Van Buren, said Herron, "to the great surprise and astonishment of the citizens, who had heard nothing of our coming."[40]

From where they sat on a hill overlooking Van Buren, Blunt and Herron saw three steamboats, loaded with rebel supplies, trying to escape up the Arkansas River. Cavalry troopers sped through town to the river where they galloped along the banks in pursuit of the steamers. They finally overtook the boats and with volley of rifle fire convinced them to stop. One steamboat owner, waving a flag of truce, crossed over to the federals in a small boat to surrender. Blunt himself went back to the steamboat to take possession. That night Union troops removed as much of the sugar and supplies from the boats as the army could transport. Blunt burned the boats and the rest of the

rebel supplies, including thirteen thousand bushels of corn. Upriver at Fort Smith Hindman ordered the supplies removed from two other steamers between Van Buren and Fort Smith and the boats burned.

At about 2 p.m. rebel gunners on the banks of the river opposite Van Buren began shelling the federals in the town. Blunt and Herron narrowly escaped death in the bombardment, which Herron described as "diabolical . . . the town being full of women and children." He said rebel shells damaged at least one hundred homes but injured only one Van Buren citizen.

Hindman made good his escape from Fort Smith with only token federal pursuit as Blunt had already decided he did not want to stay south of the Boston Mountains. Ever since he marched to Old Fort Wayne in October Blunt had endeavored to capitalize on his small army's mobility by not tying it down with lines of communication and supply that stretched all the way back to Missouri. Such a tactic was daring (Major-General William T. Sherman would use it when he marched through Georgia in 1864) but it meant that the Army of the Frontier would have to live off the land. After crossing the Boston Mountains, Blunt saw that Confederates had already depleted the forage to such an extent that the federals could not long subsist in the area. For this reason he decided to leave Van Buren on December 30.

With bands playing and banners waving as the Union

army stormed into Van Buren, the capture of the town was the epitome of the romantic Civil War battle. Blunt scattered the last vestiges of Hindman's army and lost only five or six men in the process (again pointing up the poor marksmanship of trans-Mississippi soldiers). At Van Buren Blunt again took the offensive and, although his rowdy charge into the town ruined any element of surprise he may have had, his personal courage at the head of his column did much to further Blunt's popularity with his men. On December 29 as the army marched back through Van Buren, Lieutenant DeWolf noticed Blunt and Herron standing on a street corner. The appearance of the generals caused soldiers to march with a "joyous and light" step, said DeWolf. The young soldier commented on the "honest, fearless look" on Blunt's face. "His name is characteristic of the man, Blunt."[41]

Throughout the fall of 1862, from Newtonia to Van Buren, Blunt showed that personal courage, stamina, and bull-headed aggression still counted for something in battle. But it must be remembered that Blunt was an amateur soldier, a volunteer with nothing behind him except an abolitionist spirit (which had not shown itself since he promised the negro guide his freedom on the prairie at Old Fort Wayne) and a desire to whip rebels. Yet he fought men who had as little training as he. Blunt had no formally trained militarists on his staff or leading his brigades, but their counterparts, too, were equally ill-trained.

When Blunt did engage a West Pointer--Marmaduke at Cane Hill--he came out the lesser general and was only able to credit himself with a victory because Marmaduke's primary objective was escape.

Blunt was belligerent to his superiors and tended to cling to the civilian idea of doing things his own way and ignoring the military chain of command if he chose. It seemed difficult for Blunt to learn from his mistakes. While Blunt did not allow large portions of his army to lag behind him on his marches to Prairie Grove and Van Buren, it took him two fights, Old Fort Wayne and Cane Hill, to learn that lesson. Whether Blunt would have fared as well in an eastern theater, where the armies were more heavily populated with formally trained, regular soldiers, is purely speculative. At the end of 1862, in the amateur army of the trans-Mississippi west, Blunt was the hero of the hour.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Hattaway and Jones, How the North Won, 52-53.

[2]Brigadier General E. B. Brown to Blunt, August 6, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 542.

[3]Moonlight to Brown, August 11, 1862, Blunt to Colonel Warren, August 16, 1862, ibid, 558-59, 574-75; Britton, Indian Brigade, 77; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 224-25.

[4]Reports of fight at Lone Jack, Missouri, by Captain Milton H. Brawner, August 20, 1862, and Major Emory S. Foster, May 1, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 236-39.

[5]John K. Mahon, "Civil War Infantry Assault Tactics" in Military Analysis of the Civil War, 255-56.

[6]Blunt's report of expedition to Lone Jack, August 20, 1862, and skirmish with rebels, August 26, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 235-36, 257-58; Britton, Indian Brigade, 78; Daniel O'Flaherty, General Jo Shelby, Undefeated Rebel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 3-5.

[7]Blunt's report of expedition to Lone Jack, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 235-36; Hattaway and Jones, How the North Won, 70-74.

[8]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 225-26; Britton, Indian Brigade, 84, 101.

[9]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 226.

[10]George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, N. Y., (8 vols., Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891-1940), 2: 525.

[11]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 226.

[12]Ibid., 226-27.

[13]Ibid., 227.

[14]Schofield to Brigadier General James Totten, October 9, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 721; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 227; Cullum, Biographical Register, 2: 695.

[15]Schofield to Curtis, October 21, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 755; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 228.

[16]Schofield to Curtis, October 21, 1862, Blunt's report of battle at Old Fort Wayne, October 28, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 755, 325-28.

[17]Reports of battle at Old Fort Wayne by Blunt, October 28, 1862, Colonel Owen Bassett, October 24, 1862, and General Douglas H. Cooper, October 25, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 325-28, 330, 331-36; Mahon, "Civil War Infantry Assault Tactics," 264-65.

[18]Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, Attack and Die, Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 103-111.

[19]Ibid., 8-9.

[20]Ibid., preface XV, 170-191.

[21]Blunt to Schofield, October 24, 1862, Schofield to Blunt, October 25, 1862, Blunt to Schofield, October 26, 1862, Schofield to Blunt, October 27, 1862, Blunt to Schofield, October 29, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 760-61, 764, 765, 766, 768; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 228.

[22]Blunt to Schofield, November 9, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 785-86; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 229.

[23]Blunt's report of skirmish near Cane Hill, Arkansas, November 9, 1862, Blunt's scouting report, November 15, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 358, 795; Britton, Indian Brigade, 109.

[24]Blunt's report of skirmish at Cane Hill, November 26, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 37-38; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 229.

[25]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 230; Britton, Indian Brigade, 110.

[26]Reports of battle at Cane Hill by Blunt, November 29, December 2, 3, 1862, Colonel William F. Cloud December 15, 1862, and Captain Henry Hopkins, December 1, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 41-46, 47-48, 51; Britton, Indian Brigade, 111, 114-15; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 230; Topeka State Record, December 17, 1862, 5; O'Flaherty, Jo Shelby, 134-36; Jack Coggins, Arms and Equipment of the Civil War (New York: Doubleday, 1962; repr., New York: Fairfax Press, 1983), 67.

[27]General Thomas C. Hindman's report of battle of Prairie Grove, December 25, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22,

pt. 1, 139; Albert Castel, The Guerrilla War (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Historical Times, Inc., 1974), 14.

[28]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 230-35.

[29]Blunt's report of battle of Prairie Grove, December 20, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 71.

[30]Reports of battle of Prairie Grove by General Francis J. Herron, December 9, 1862, and Hindman, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 101, 140; Shelby Foote, The Civil War, A Narrative, Fredericksburg to Meridian (New York: Random House, 1963, repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 49.

[31]Reports of battle of Prairie Grove by Blunt and Colonel John M. Richardson, December 15, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 72-73, 86-88; Castel, Frontier State, 99.

[32]Herron's report of battle of Prairie Grove, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 101-108; William Baxter, Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove; or Scenes and Incidents of the War in Arkansas (Cincinnati: Poe and Hitchcock, 1864), 180.

[33]Reports of battle of Prairie Grove by Blunt and Herron, Hindman's pre-battle orders, December 4, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 69-77, 101-108, 83.

[34]Reports of battle of Prairie Grove by Blunt and Herron, ibid., 76, 101. Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 233.

[35]Report of Union and Confederate casualties at Prairie Grove, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 84-86, 138, 142.

[36]Foote, The Civil War, Fredericksburg to Meridian, 47-52.

[37]Ibid., 50; O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 95.

[38]Harper's Weekly, January 17, 1863, 45-46.

[39]Schofield to Blunt, December 24, 1862, Blunt to Curtis, December 26, 1862, Blunt's report of capture of Van Buren, Arkansas, December 28, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 867, 875, 167-68.

[40]Reports of the capture of Van Buren by Blunt, Herron, December 29, 1862, and Hindman, February 15, 1863, ibid., 168-70, 171-73; Thomas E. Wright, "The Capture of Van Buren, Arkansas, During the Civil War: From the Diary of a Union Horse Soldier," Arkansas Historical Quarterly 38 (Spring 1979): 83-84, 86.

[41]Wright, "Capture of Van Buren," 86.

CHAPTER IV

BATTLES AND MINORITY SOLDIERS

1863

For a man who had made a reputation for himself by hard campaigning, Blunt's battlefield successes in 1863 did not equal those of 1862. He took to the field only once in a major campaign during which he won victories at Honey Springs, Indian Territory, and Fort Smith, Arkansas. At Honey Springs Blunt again marched his men hard and fast, but also employed maneuvers that were more complicated, albeit only slightly, showing that he had grown in military thought since August 1862. Blunt did not end the year victoriously, however. In October 1863, he lost most of his escort to a guerrilla ambush at Baxter Springs, Kansas. During the year Blunt commanded two groups of minority soldiers, Indians and Blacks. While soldiers of both groups performed ably at Honey Springs, Blunt commended none of them for recognition and eventually came to hate the Indian troops. The fact that Honey Springs was the first and only time Blunt used a large contingent of Blacks in battle says little for his willingness to promote the cause of Blacks, even though he stood among the ranks of abolitionist generals.

Blunt departed from the Army of the Frontier in early January 1863, and returned to Kansas to take care of administrative duties in his District of Kansas that he had neglected since he left to join Schofield the previous August. One of the administrative problems he left unsolved was that of the refugee Indians. He had originally authorized the organization of the Union Indian Brigade in the summer of 1862 not only with the intention of supplying Colonel William Weer's Indian Territory expedition with extra soldiers, but also of returning the refugees to their Indian Territory homes. Weer's own men arrested him and then aborted the expedition in mid-summer, withdrawing from the Indian Territory. Consequently Blunt's problem with the refugees remained.

Blunt tried to solve the problem again as he prepared to join Schofield in Missouri prior to the fall, 1862, campaign. On September 13 he instructed Creek Indian agent George A. Cutler to prepare a list of supplies needed to remove the Indians under his supervision to their homes. Blunt said he would see that Cutler received any such supplies. "It is my design to remove all the refugee Indians to their homes with as little delay as possible," said Blunt. And he had several reasons for wanting a quick removal of the Indians. Weer's expedition, albeit curtailed, had brought a portion of the Indian Territory into Union hands. Blunt believed the Indian regiments could hold the territory themselves. They were also

anxious to return to their homes and Blunt thought they could better support themselves there. Blunt also wanted the Indians to get away from "speculating contractors" whom he said preyed on the refugees. Blunt concluded his comments to Cutler by saying he expected the agent's "hearty cooperation."[1]

Blunt's directive to Cutler, however, angered W. G. Coffin, superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior's Southern Indian Superintendency. Coffin told Blunt he was trespassing in matters where he had no business. He said Blunt certainly had the authority to give orders to Indians enlisted in the army, but not to other refugees, such as the families of Indian troops whom Blunt also wanted to remove to the Indian Territory. "I have no doubt you will discharge your duty," Coffin told Blunt, ". . . and I hope you will allow me to attend to mine."[2]

Blunt did not let the matter drop. In November he pleaded the case of the refugee Indians before Secretary of the Interior Caleb B. Smith. Blunt told Smith about Weer's expedition, adding that several thousand more Indians followed the army back out of Indian Territory, worsening the refugee situation in Kansas. He said most of the refugees gathered near Fort Scott and faced the winter with shabby clothing. "They could occupy their own house," said Blunt, "instead of passing the winter . . . without roof or shelter, and compelled half-clad to [shiver] by a log fire in the open air."

Blunt charged that government officials and speculators conspired to keep the Indians in Kansas as long as possible so they could "[rob] the Indians and the government of every dollar they could." Not only did Blunt call for an investigation into the matter but he urged Smith to authorize the removal of all the Indians before the fall so they could plant crops the next spring. If not, Blunt said, the government would have to feed them for another year and once again they would fall prey to "corrupt officials and swindling contractors." Blunt believed that Superintendent Coffin and Kansas Governor Thomas Carney, who succeeded Charles Robinson, were among the former, plotting the "wholesale plunder of the poor unfortunate Indians."[3]

Finally, in December, 1862, while he was in Arkansas Blunt addressed an appeal to the "Humane and Philanthropic Citizens of Kansas" whom he hoped would help the refugee Indians. He called attention to the "great destitution" that existed among the refugees and asked for donations of second-hand clothing. He embellished his plea with a patriotic theme, saying that "[the refugee's] husbands, fathers, brothers and sons are in the federal army, bravely battling for the Union."[4]

Blunt finally got his chance to send the Indian Brigade back into Indian Territory in February, 1863. Loyal Cherokee Indians had called a meeting at Tahlequah, northeast of Fort Gibson. Fearing that Confederate

Cherokee would attempt to break up the meeting, Blunt sent the Indian Brigade into the territory under Colonel William A. Phillips, a fellow Kansan and commander of the Third (Cherokee) Regiment during the 1862 Indian Territory expedition and in the fall, 1862, Arkansas campaign. Phillips and his three thousand men reached Tahlequah safely and protected the Unionist council while it repealed the Indians' Confederate alliance treaty of 1861. When the meeting ended Phillips moved his command to Fort Gibson near the confluence of the Arkansas and Grand Rivers, placing that military post in federal hands for the rest of the war.[5]

Phillips' occupation of Fort Gibson set the scene for the Battle of Honey Springs. In May sporadic fighting broke out around Fort Gibson after Phillips and six hundred cavalrymen broke up a Confederate Cherokee meeting at Webbers Falls. In retaliation rebel Indians tried to scatter Phillips' remuda of horses and later attacked a supply train coming from Fort Scott. Extended communications back to Kansas were Phillips' main weakness in his advanced position at Fort Gibson and one which Confederates continuously harassed.[6]

In the meantime the War Department drastically reduced Blunt's command in early June. In May President Lincoln replaced Major-General Samuel R. Curtis as commander of the Department of the Missouri with Schofield. The reason for the change was political, not military, as Schofield had

not yet scored a battlefield victory and had not participated in a major fight since Wilson's Creek, Missouri, in August, 1861. Curtis had driven Confederate General Earl Van Dorn's rebels from Arkansas at the Battle of Pea Ridge, March 6-8, 1862, but was an abolitionist whom Lincoln felt sided too much with the radical Lane faction in Kansas and against Missouri conservatives. Schofield was a conservative and his appointment implies that Lincoln was no longer concerned about keeping Jim Lane and the few soldiers he represented happy. Lincoln realized that, with Ulysses S. Grant maneuvering before Vicksburg, the fate of the Confederacy in the west would be decided on the Mississippi River, not the scattered battlefields of the Trans-Mississippi west.

Once in command, Schofield cut Blunt's District of Kansas in half. He let Blunt retain command of that part of Kansas which was below the thirty-eighth parallel, the western tier of counties in Missouri and Arkansas also below that line, and Indian Territory. This new section Schofield called the District of the Frontier. He gave the other half of Blunt's old district to fellow Missouri conservative Brigadier-General Thomas Ewing, Jr.[7]

Blunt still retained command over the Fort Gibson contingent, though, and became so alarmed by the increased activity at Fort Gibson that he sent the First Kansas Colored Infantry and a section of the Second Kansas Battery to reinforce Phillips. The First Kansas Colored was the

same regiment of Black soldiers that Blunt had helped Lane raise in August, 1862. They had distinguished themselves in action against guerrillas near Butler in Bates County, Missouri, in October, 1862, and fought another small action at Cabin Creek, Indian Territory, on their way to Fort Gibson.

Continued skirmishes near Fort Gibson convinced Blunt that the situation was degenerating and that the post was in jeopardy. Characteristically he decided to take the field himself to handle the situation. Blunt gathered four companies of the Sixth Kansas Cavalry, three companies of the Third Wisconsin Cavalry, and two sections of the Second Kansas Battery and on the evening of July 5 set out on the 170-mile march to Fort Gibson.[8]

Blunt's column averaged twenty-eight miles per day and reached Fort Gibson July 11. Remembering the value of spies and scouts from his Arkansas campaign, Blunt sent them out to glean information from south of the fort. They soon returned with news that Blunt's enemy from Old Fort Wayne, General Douglas Cooper and six thousand men were camped south of the rain-swollen Arkansas River opposite Fort Gibson. Cooper expected three thousand reinforcements under rebel Brigadier-General William Cabell to arrive from Arkansas at any time. Together they intended to re-occupy Union-held northeast Indian Territory.[9]

Blunt did not intend to let the rebels recapture the territory and decided to cross the Arkansas River and

destroy Cooper's force before Cabell arrived. The river was too deep to cross on foot or horseback and Blunt ordered his soldiers to build boats for the purpose. Then the general became ill with a high fever on July 14. He said he "got out of a sick bed with a burning fever" at midnight July 15 to start the expedition. He later admitted that campaigning and the fever caused the "fat boy," as he referred to himself, to lose thirty pounds in July.[10]

Early on the morning of July 16, despite his fever, Blunt took 250 cavalrymen and some artillery and marched along the north bank of the Arkansas River on a brief reconnaissance patrol to prepare the way for the main force to cross. This is the first time prior to an expected battle that Blunt accompanied a small scouting contingent on such a mission, indicating he had learned and come to respect the value of such an endeavor. Blunt again gave up the element of surprise, though, when his troopers scattered rebel pickets thirteen miles from the fort. Crossing the river, Blunt led his cavalry down the south bank to a point opposite Fort Gibson where he met the rest of his army waiting to cross. They crossed unopposed but three of Blunt's Indian soldiers drowned in the process.[11]

By 10 p.m. Blunt's army was across the river and ready to march toward the rebel camp, twenty-five miles south on Elk Creek. Blunt led his command on another forced night

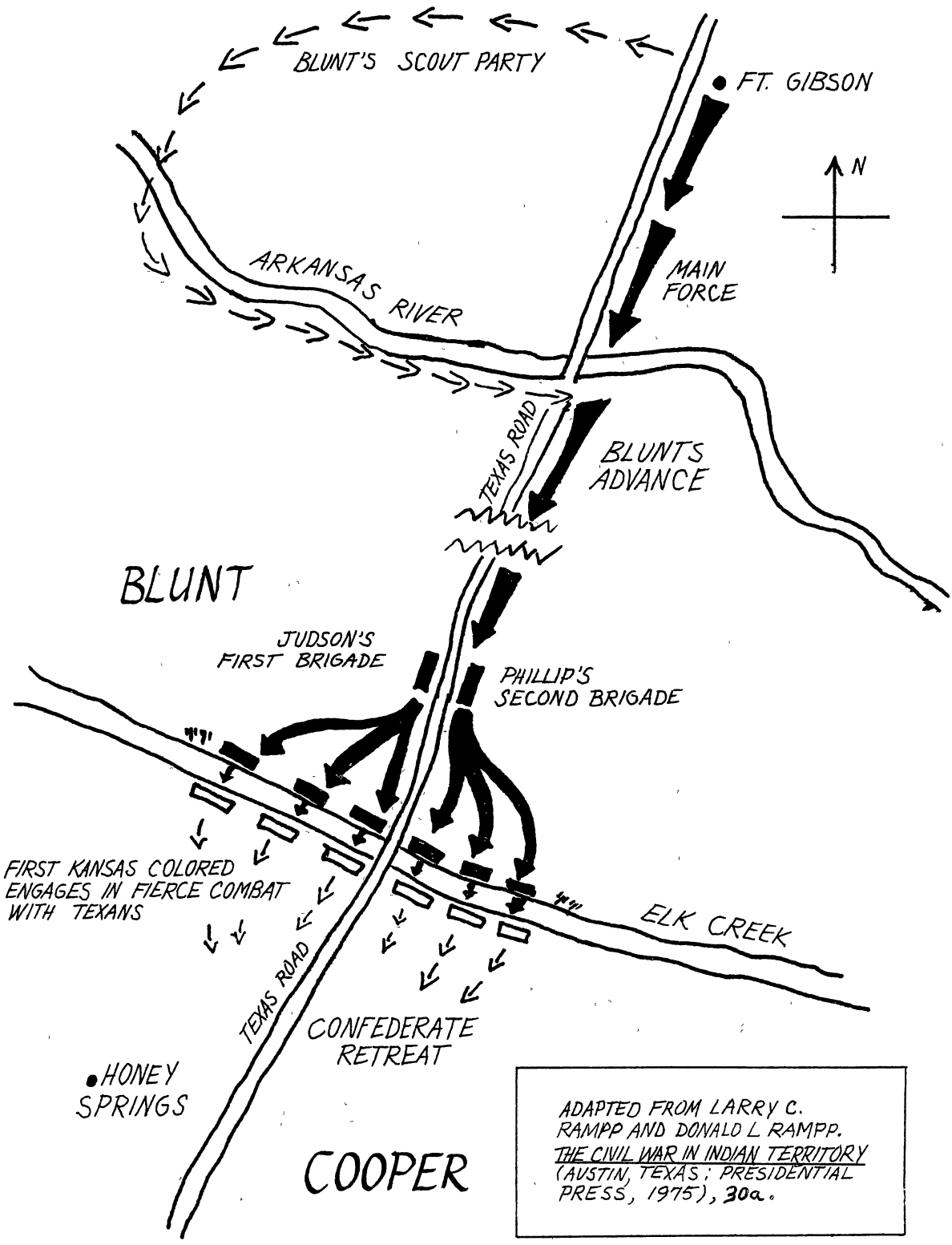

Figure 5. Battle of Honey Springs

march and encountered Cooper's advance guard five miles north of Elk Creek the next morning. Blunt ordered in his cavalry which drove the rebel guard back to their main line. Cooper claimed the federals would never have routed his guard had a heavy rainstorm not ruined his troops' paper cartridges.

Cooper had deployed his men in a one-and-one-half mile line in the timber on the south side of Elk Creek. The Confederates were so effectively hidden that Blunt could not see them, even though he approached down the Texas Road which bisected Cooper's line. For the first time in his field experience Blunt ordered a detail to scout the Confederate line. Naturally he rode along. Through his telescope Blunt could not see Cooper's artillery, but he was confident gunners would give themselves away when the battle opened. As he turned back to his small army rebel riflemen began firing at his scouting party, shooting one of its members out of his saddle.

At about 10 a.m. Blunt ordered his men into line. He divided his force into two columns and assigned the First Brigade under Colonel William R. Judson to the right of the Texas Road, the Second Brigade under Colonel Phillips to the left of the road. Blunt instructed them to maintain tight formation to disguise their small strength and only fan out into battle formation when opposite the rebel defenses. While this plan is simple it marks the first time that Blunt actually paused while within sight of an

enemy and made pre-battle dispositions. It is also important to note that all of Blunt's army arrived on the field at the same time, not piecemeal with one part lagging behind another as had happened at Old Fort Wayne and Cane Hill.

Blunt moved his men to within four hundred yards -- easy rifle range -- of the Confederates before he deployed his line. In five minutes the federals covered the entire length of the rebel line. Blunt again rode in the advance and encouraged his men, then he ordered them to attack. Again Blunt's assault was frontal and again the rebels were not entrenched. "The attack was one of the prettiest I ever witnessed," said Blunt, commenting that his men "moved up to the rebel lines as cool and steady as if going on dress parade."

Blunt anchored both ends of his line with artillery and federal gunners began firing in concert with the attack, drawing fire from the hidden rebel canon. Rebels attempted to flank Blunt's left but three dismounted companies of the Sixth Kansas Cavalry rushed into the brush where the flankers hid. Thirty minutes of fighting and a charge by the First Indian Regiment broke up the flanking attempt. Combat on the left ended when Phillips' men, under the cover of artillery fire, crossed the creek.

The turning point of the battle came at the Union center. There a group of Texans doggedly defended their ground against the approximately five hundred Union blacks

of the first Kansas Colored Infantry. Determined to stay in contact with Phillips, the blacks and the Second Indian Regiment crossed the creek as well. Colonel James Williams told his Black troops to hold their fire until he gave the command, then to "keep cool, . . . aim deliberately and below the waist." The men kept cool and marched to within forty paces of the rebel line. They were so close, in fact, that Confederates may have mistaken Williams' order to "fire" for their own as the two sides unleashed a cacophonous volley of musketry at the same instant. Williams fell with a chest wound and Lieutenant-Colonel John Bowles assumed command. Members of the Second Indian Regiment impeded his assault, however, when they marched in front of Bowles' men. He ordered the soldiers of the Second Indian to fall back out of the crossfire but again the close proximity of the armies played a part in the battle. Texas Colonel Charles DeMorse heard Bowles' order and, suspecting the Union line was crumbling, ordered his own regiment to attack. The Texans advanced "like true soldiers," said Bowles, but the Black troops held their fire, drawing Confederates to within twenty-five paces. Then they fired a volley that disintegrated the rebel ranks. Their regiment in chaos, the Texans fled, leaving their colors on the field.

The battle lost, Cooper began withdrawing his men to their supply depot at Honey Springs to the south. Blunt ordered his men to pursue. While rebels loaded what

supplies they could in a wagon train and set fire to the rest, a small squadron of cavalry covered the northern approach to the town and Cooper himself directed a group of Choctaw Indians in a charge against a federal battery a thousand yards north of the depot. "The Choctaws went at them giving the war-whoop," said Cooper, and the attack stalled the federal advance. Cooper sent his baggage train east instead of south trying to convince Blunt that Cabell was about to reinforce him. Cooper believed he had tricked Blunt when the federal commander pulled his troops back to the north but Blunt said he had always expected Cabell to arrive that day and chose to let him make the first move. Cabell, with three thousand men, did arrive about 4 p.m. Blunt bivouacked on the battlefield and chose to "risk a battle in the morning if they desired it." But Cabell did not desire it and instead fled during the night back to Fort Smith.

Blunt's losses at Honey Springs were thirteen killed, sixty-two wounded--another light casualty list considering the close proximity of combat. Cooper's losses were 134 killed and wounded, forty-seven captured. The Battle of Honey Springs was the largest Civil War battle fought in Indian Territory.[12]

At Honey Springs Blunt used the same basic battlefield technique that he had throughout his 1862 Arkansas campaign, that is, find the enemy and attack him. Again Blunt's tactics are very similar to the ones McWhiney and

Jamieson decry in Attack and Die. For Blunt they were effective but once again he attacked an enemy who had not entrenched. While Cooper anchored his line in the creek brush his soldiers dug no works. The rebels were apparently hindered by ruined rifle cartridges, if Cooper's complaints about wet ammunition were true. Both considerations gave Blunt the edge at Honey Springs, but the Kansan also displayed that experience had taught him a few lessons. For instance, he made sure that units of his Army of the Frontier kept in contact with each other on the march from Fort Gibson. At the crossing of the Arkansas River July 16 he waited until all his soldiers had crossed before starting his march. Again Blunt marched quickly and steadily, emphasizing his trademark ability to capitalize on his force's speed and mobility. The march to Honey Springs, however, also pointed up Blunt's personal drive and determination as he suffered a high fever throughout. At the battlefield the general made a pre-battle reconnaissance of Cooper's line, something he had not done previously, and while it was not the same as probing the enemy line with skirmishers, it did offer Blunt some information about rebel dispositions. Blunt's infantry assault, however, was straightforward and covered by artillery, resembling to a great degree Blunt's dispositions at Old Fort Wayne, Cane Hill, and Prairie Grove.

While the battle at Honey Springs effectively broke up

any Confederate attempt to regain Fort Gibson, it more significantly marked Blunt's first use of black troops in combat. The First Kansas Colored marched to within fifty-two yards of the opposing Texans at the center of the line and fought at that distance for twenty minutes, suffering two killed and thirty wounded, or almost forty-three percent of all Union casualties during the battle. Blunt was enthusiastic about the blacks' conduct. "I never saw such fighting . . . as was done by the Negro regiment at . . . Honey Springs," he said. Blunt commented that they were as cool and valorous as old veterans. "The question that negroes will fight is settled," he said, "besides, they make better soldiers in every respect than any troops I have ever had under my command."[13]

For a man who positioned himself among abolitionists in general and abolitionist generals in particular, Blunt's use of blacks in combat and his subsequent comments seem belated and sparse. Certainly Blunt was interested in the abolitionist cause, as evidenced by his activities in Ohio and pre-war Kansas. Blunt was also very excited at the prospect of enrolling blacks into the Union war effort, but in this regard he was only a yes-man to Senator/General James H. Lane. Blunt never set a policy of his own regarding blacks even though there were precedents for him to follow. Major-General Benjamin F. Butler, the Massachusetts politician transformed into army commander, adopted a "contraband" policy which other generals,

including John E. Wool at Fortress Monroe, Viriginia, followed. Essentially Butler refused to return fugitive slaves who crossed over the lines of his army and instead put them into Union service as army teamsters, cooks, and officers servants. The second precedent came on July 17, 1862, when Abraham Lincoln signed the Second Confiscation Act. The Act provided that the slaves of anyone who supported or aided the southern rebellion would become free when they came within Union control and the law gave the president the authority to employ blacks in combat roles. The president, however, had specifically to authorize the use of blacks as soldiers. James Lane's arming of blacks in August, 1862, and use of them against Missouri guerrillas in October of that same year was not technically within the bounds of the act. Nevertheless precedent had been set regarding blacks, but throughout Blunt's late 1862 campaigns he never mentioned using organized companies of blacks in his army, or putting fugitive slaves to use. Blunt makes no mention of his army attracting large numbers of fugitive slaves but his various commands did campaign in areas were there were significant numbers of slaves. In his August 1862, expedition to Lone Jack, Missouri, Blunt's army traversed a part of Missouri which, according to the census of 1860, contained just over fifteen percent of the state's total slave population of 114,931. In the two western tiers of counties south of Missouri River, from which Blunt's army could conceivably have drawn fugitive

slaves on the march, there were 17,563 slaves. The two western tiers of counties in northwest Arkansas above and immediately below the Arkansas River, where Blunt campaigned from October to December, 1862, held 5,003 of that state's 111,115 slaves, or about 4.5 percent. His armies, perhaps because of Blunt's penchant for speed, may not have drawn fugitive slaves, which an abolitionist general surely would have commented upon. What is important, though, is that Blunt never espoused a plan of what to do with fugitive slaves had they crossed into his lines.[14]

Blunt's use of blacks at Honey Springs, while it credits his willingness to trust blacks in a fight, is no milestone in the black military experience. Since the War Department had organized the Bureau for Colored Troops on May 22, 1863 (a move which regularized the organization of black regiments by taking the responsibility away from the states and giving it to the federal governement), black troops had already participated in several engagements. Black regiments fought under General Nathanial Banks when he assaulted Port Hudson, near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on May 27 and settled in with Banks for a seige of that place which lasted until July 8. Confederates attacked a federal garrison, including the Black African Brigade, at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, near Vicksburg, Mississippi, on June 7. Blunt's battle at Honey Springs preceded by one day the more famous battle at Morris Island, South

Carolina, just outside Charleston Harbor. There the black Fifty-Fourth Massacusetts Regiment led an attack against a rebel-held island fort. Confederates met them with deadly fire of artillery that killed or wounded 1,515 men, both black and white.[15]

Blunt's actions made his glowing comments about the blacks following their conduct at Honey Springs hollow. His abolitionist record preceding the fight was, at best, sketchy. Following the battle he did not recommend any black soldiers for commendation, even though he rated the blacks above the white soldiers who fought for him in 1862. But other officers were recommending blacks for recognition, and thirty black soldiers received the Congressional Medal of Honor during the Civil War. Congress bestowed the honor on one soldier for his gallantry at the battle of Fort Wagner, South Carolina, one day after Blunt's fight at Honey Springs.[16]

Honey Springs was not the end of the First Kansas Colored Regiment's combat experience, though its subsequent fights were not under Blunt's direction. On April 18, 1864, the regiment met units of William Cabell's and Jo Shelby's commands at Poison Springs, Arkansas. In the ensuing clash the Kansas regiment suffered its worst losses of the war with 117 dead and 65 wounded. The regiment remained in service for the duration of the war, though the Bureau for Colored Troops changed its designation to the Seventy-Ninth United States Colored Regiment as part of the agency's plan to federalize black regiments.[17]

Blacks were not the only minority group to fight with Blunt at Honey Springs. Colonel William Phillips' First and Second Indian Regiments also helped secure Blunt's line. Initially Blunt was pleased with the Union Indians. "The Indian regiments . . . have more than met my expectations as efficient soldiers," he told Secretary of War Stanton after the Indian Territory expedition in summer, 1862. By the next summer he was telling Schofield how worthless the Cherokee had become. After Indians had fought with him at Honey Springs and lost five soldiers dead and another eleven wounded, Blunt appeared to turn against them. In August he suggested to Schofield that he muster the Indians out of service, reasoning that they could no longer benefit the army since they had achieved their goal of reoccupying their homes and thus become "nearly worthless as troops." Blunt said the Indians should be released from duty to tend to their crops. A few white troops placed among them would be adequate for their protection, he said.[18]

Blunt's about-face with regard to the Indians may have been more of a reflection on Colonel Phillips, however. Phillips, a Kansan, had gained his own share of fame with his campaign through Indian Territory in early 1863. Many Kansans believed that Phillips' new popularity alarmed Senator Jim Lane and that Lane ordered Blunt to block any furtherance of Phillips' career. The same motivation may have been behind Blunt's ignoring Phillips' call for provisions that same summer.[19]

Regardless of Blunt's professed thoughts about the Indians, in October 1863, the Cherokee extended special thanks to him for his efforts in driving rebels from Indian Territory. The Cherokee credited Blunt's "bravery as a soldier and superior skill as a military commander" with his becoming a "terror to the enemies of his country." They said that they regarded any such general who campaigned as vigorously as Blunt had and who had pushed "rebels from the soil of a loyal people" as "the true peacemaker and benefactor of the land."[20]

Blunt's regard for the blacks and Indians of his command, as epitomized by the Battle of Honey Springs and its aftermath, revealed again that he was incapable of making an original political decision without James H. Lane. Lane was the backbone of Kansas black recruitment, not Blunt, and Lane may have caused Blunt's sudden dislike for the Indians who had served under him for over a year. Blunt was no politician, and, after serving two years in the politicized army of the trans-Mississippi, had not learned the skills of a politician. He had fashioned himself into a fair western army commander and, characteristically, was not content to rest on his victory at Honey Spring.

After Honey Springs Blunt took his army back to Fort Gibson where his fever finally confined him to bed. He blamed his sickness on "eating nothing for several days, and [drinking] several gallons of dirty warm water," while

campaigning. But Blunt was still sick in mid-August and he was eager to recover so he could begin another expedition. His desire to take the field peaked when he learned that Confederates were apparently ready to abandon Fort Smith, Arkansas, and he wanted to hurry them on their way. He also wanted to move to a better place of forage and hopefully capture some rebel stock as his own were dying in the Indian Territory heat, which Blunt said got as high as "ninety-eight degrees in the shade."[21]

Blunt's health recovered enough so that on August 22 he felt well enough to lead forty-five-hundred troops out of Fort Gibson, across the Canadian River, and to a point sixty miles south of Fort Gibson where intelligence reports said Confederate Generals Cabell, Cooper, and Stand Watie had united with nine thousand men. Before Blunt arrived, however, the Confederates split their command, Cabell taking three thousand men east to Fort Smith, a group of Creek Indians heading west, and Cooper and Watie taking the remainder south to the Red River. Blunt pursued the latter group and on August 26 caught up with them at Perryville in the Choctaw Nation.

As Blunt's advance guard entered the town rebel artillerists hit them with canister fire from two howitzers. Blunt dismounted the Sixth Kansas Cavalry and sent them through the timber surrounding the town to within three-hundred yards of the rebel line. Again Blunt used his favored tactic of supporting an assault with artillery.

In the small clash at Perryville Union gunners quickly dispersed the rebels, which Blunt learned were only a rear guard for the van of Cooper's and Watie's army several miles farther south. Blunt's men and stock were tired from their forty-mile chase and Blunt decided to halt the pursuit. Blunt did discover that rebels had concealed military stores in Perryville and he ordered his troops to burn the whole town.[22]

Opting to let Cooper and Watie go, Blunt turned his attention to Cabell at Fort Smith. Blunt marched his column back to the Canadian River where he sent part of the command back to Fort Gibson. Keeping two thousand troops he marched east to Fort Smith and on August 31 camped near the Poteau River a few miles from Fort Smith. Blunt knew that Cabell had twenty-five hundred men ready to defend a ford of the river and decided to attack the position early September 1. When he advanced, though, Blunt discovered that Cabell had fled. Blunt ordered Colonel William Cloud, the man who had fought with Blunt in the fall, 1862, campaign in northwest Arkansas, to take the Second Kansas and Sixth Missouri Cavalries, along with two sections of artillery, and pursue Cabell.

About noon Cloud stumbled into an ambush set by Cabell's rear guard. Cloud lost two killed and nine wounded but steadily pushed the guard back to Cabell's main line, which Cloud described as "skillfully formed" along the summit of Devil's Backbone Mountain, a landmark outside

Fort Smith. Cloud and Cabell clashed for three hours but during a lull in the fighting the Confederates retreated, leaving their dead and wounded on the field. Cloud lost fourteen men.

While Cabell and Cloud fought atop the Devil's Backbone Blunt took his staff, bodyguard, and the First Arkansas Infantry and quietly occupied Fort Smith. There were no rebels to offer resistance. "I lowered the rebel flag . . . and raised upon the same staff the stars and stripes," Blunt later wrote.

Then Blunt suffered a relapse of the sickness he had had since arriving at Fort Gibson in July. Doctors confined him to his bed and Cloud took over command of Fort Smith. On September 12, when he felt strong enough to ride in a carriage, Blunt left for Fort Scott, Kansas, where he intended to organize two new regiments and then move the District of the Frontier headquarters to Fort Smith.

Blunt captured Fort Smith with relatively little enemy contact and he did not direct the fight atop Devil's Backbone Mountain. The entire expedition required little more than personal drive, something of which Blunt had plenty. It was, however, perhaps the most significant victory Blunt had yet won. With Fort Smith in their hands, federals controlled the Arkansas River from Fort Gibson to Little Rock, which also fell to Union troops within a month. Thus federals split the state and controlled its main waterway to the Mississippi River, which of course had

been in Union hands since the fall of Vicksburg, Mississippi, July 4. The capture of Fort Smith also sparked Unionist sentiment, just as Blunt had predicted after the Battle of Prairie Grove the previous December. After Little Rock fell on September 10 Colonel Cloud began exploring the Arkansas River. Three hundred loyal Arkansans joined him in a fight with rebels at Dardanelle, where three rebel officers and one hundred men whom he had fought at the Devil's Backbone also assisted him. When Little Rock fell they deserted Cabell's army and joined Cloud's federals.[23]

Blunt's final military engagement of 1863 was not a campaign, nor was it even of his own design. At Baxter Springs in southeast Kansas near the Indian Territory border, rebel guerrillas led by the notorious William Clarke Quantrill ambushed Blunt and his small escort of about one hundred men. Eighty-seven of Blunt's men died, many shot in the head after falling wounded on the battlefield. The dead included one of Blunt's staff, Major H. Z. Curtis, son of General Samuel Curtis. Baxter Springs became Blunt's worst defeat.

After tending to district administrative duties and recuperating from the fever that had plagued him all summer, Blunt prepared to move his headquarters from Fort Scott to Fort Smith in early October. Taking with him his district records, part of his staff, and a small escort Blunt left Fort Scott on October 4. Blunt intended to

march by way of a small federal post at Baxter Springs, Kansas, located on the military road between Fort Scott and Fort Gibson in Indian Territory.[24]

Federal troops favored Baxter Springs, located one-half mile north of the Kansas-Indian Territory border, as a stopping place. It was a beautiful spot, near a spring of pure, cool water. In spite of its beauty the location was within ten miles of a wooded area, known to be a haven for guerrilla raiders who preyed upon Union supply trains that traversed the military road. Fear of attack became so great that in August, 1863, Colonel Charles Blair, commander of the District of Southern Kansas, stationed detachments of the Third Wisconsin Cavalry and Second Kansas Colored Infantry at the springs. They built a blockhouse and surrounded their camp with breastworks. In late September guerrilla activity near Baxter Springs intensified and Blair ordered Lieutenant James B. Pond to take another company of the Third Wisconsin Cavalry and twelve-pounder howitzer to the post. Pond arrived October 5 and took command.[25]

Quantrill himself was the cause of the guerrilla scare as he took six hundred of his followers south for the winter. Quantrill had been a Kansas Jayhawker but switched his sympathies when the war started, claiming that Kansans had killed his brother. He earned a reputation as a plunderer and murderer, and in August 1863, his infamy reached its peak when he sacked and burned the former free-state stronghold of Lawrence, Kansas.[26]

Quantrill's raiders wandered through Missouri and into southeast Kansas on their trek south and on October 6 discovered fifteen federals guarding a lumber train. The guerrillas attacked, captured the lumber and scattered the soldiers, whom they followed. To their surprise the guerrillas found the fort at Baxter Springs. "None of us had ever heard that there was fort there with a command of troops," said Quantrill's scout John McCorkle.

The guerrillas were a cowardly lot and a few days earlier Quantrill had allowed a federal supply train bound for Fort Scott to pass unharmed since Union guards outnumbered his own men. But Quantrill thought the post at Baxter Springs, with its small command, was ripe for attack. Part of Lieutenant Pond's cavalry were on a reconnaissance mission when Quantrill's men thundered out of the woods toward the fort, but Pond, Black soldiers, some dismounted cavalrymen, and the howitzer remained to defend the position. The rebels attacked so swiftly that they gained the interior of the fort and cut off most of Pond's command, who were eating lunch, from their weapons. Pond and his men ran, unarmed, through the enemy lines, reached their rifles and began returning fire. Here the Second Kansas Colored Regiment, just as its sister regiment the First Kansas Colored had done in July, distinguished itself in close combat with rebels. "The volleys of musketry and the yells of the enemy nearly drowned every other noise," remembered Pond. He yelled for men to help

him roll the howitzer into place but finally had to do it himself. He fired three rounds into the guerrillas and drove them from the fort. They retreated over a hill north of the camp.

But Blunt's little command was also over that hill. By coincidence Blunt had arrived at Baxter Springs just as the fighting began but he could neither see the fort, hidden by the hill, nor hear the fighting. Quantrill recognized Blunt's column as another easy mark and formed his men in line. Blunt, seeing that the line of cavalrymen wore federal uniforms and flew a Union banner (a common guerrilla tactic in the trans-Mississippi theater), let them approach unharmed. Blunt became suspicious, though, when he saw men whom he supposed to be officers riding up and down the approaching line. He rode forward himself for a better look and then could hear the firing from the fort. But it was too late and Quantrill yelled for his men to charge. A stray artillery round sailed up from Pond's gun and decapitated one of the rebels just as Blunt wheeled around to order his command to fire. But to the general's dismay and anger his troops were in full flight, galloping in retreat across the prairie.

Sensing disaster Blunt pulled Mrs. Chester Thomas (a federal contractor's wife who had accompanied the column to Fort Smith to meet her husband) out of her carriage, put her on a horse and sent her galloping to the rear. Blunt and his assistant adjutant-general, Major Curtis, tried in

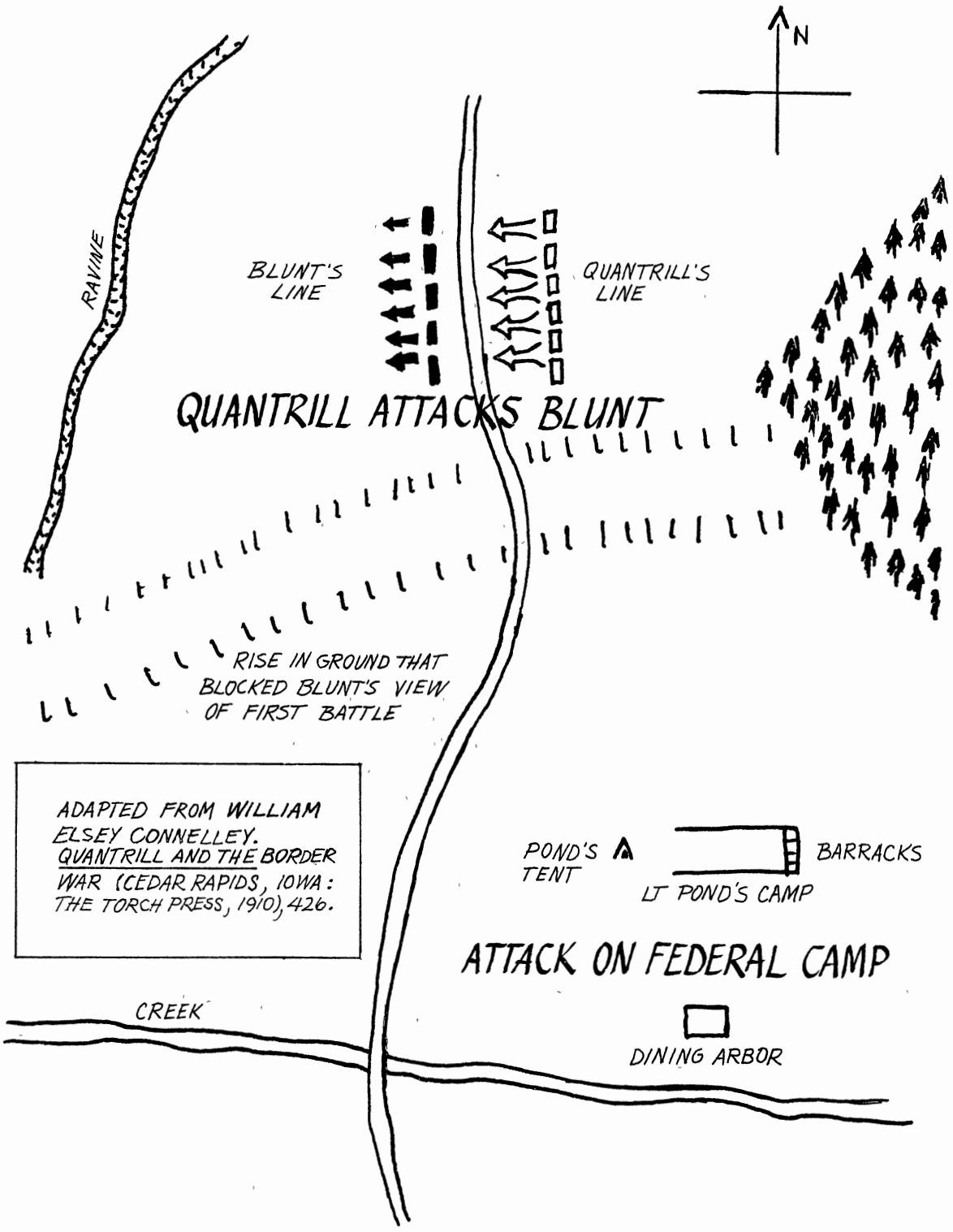

Figure 6. Baxter Springs Massacre

vain to rally the command but quickly found themselves passed by one line or rebels and hotly pursued by another. They could do nothing but flee and they put their horses in a gallop toward a deep ravine. Many federals lay dead or wounded at the ravine, shot when their horses failed to make the jump. At it started to jump the obstacle Curtis' horse fell with a bullet wound and threw the major to the ground. Blunt's horse made the jump but the landing threw Blunt out of the saddle and onto the horse's neck where he wisely rode for another mile, using the horse as cover.

Blunt's regimental band also made the trip and in the thick of the battle the fourteen band members, their civilian driver, a twelve-year-old boy who was a servant of the band leader, and James O'Neal, a correspondent for Leslie's Illustrated Weekly, tried to escape in the bandwagon. Guerrilla Bill Bledsoe rode up to the wagon and demanded the people surrender. One of the musicians instead shot him and the driver put the team to a run. As Bledsoe lay dying on the ground he told fellow guerrilla Fletch Taylor "that outfit have shot and killed me, take my two pistols and kill all of them." Taylor chased the wagon and only caught it when a wheel fell off, tossing the occupants to the ground. Taylor murdered them all. He and other guerrillas tossed the bodies under the wrecked bandwagon, then burned it.

Blunt chased the survivors of his command for over a mile before he succeeded in rallying fifteen of them. He

sent six of them to Fort Scott to get help and with the other nine returned to the battlefield. Blunt refused to leave until he knew what had happened to the federal wounded. He could not fight Quantrill but stayed hidden close enough that he could watch the guerrillas.

Quantrill was jubilant. He had captured nine wagons loaded with federal provisions, one buggy, an ambulance, Blunt's personal baggage wagon containing his sword, general's commission, and headquarter's papers, and two stand of colors. He was also confident that he had killed Blunt and reported as much to Confederate Major-General Sterling Price. He also captured a five-gallon jug of whiskey from Blunt's wagon and proceeded to get drunk on it. It was the only time Quantrill's men had seen him drink and he danced around ranting "By God, Shelby could not whip Blunt; neither could Marmaduke, but I whipped him." Obviously the name of Blunt carried some weight with the guerrilla chieftain.

Quantrill and his men finally resumed their march to the south and Blunt rode in to survey the damage. He found the remains of the band members, teamsters and office clerks, but he could not find the body of Curtis. The next day Blunt found Curtis' body near where his horse had thrown him. He had been shot through the head. Blunt sent riders ahead to warn the countryside of Quantrill's approach and vowed to "follow the hounds through the entire southern Confederacy as long as there is a prospect of

overtaking them." Then Blunt issued a stern warning to his own troops, ordering than "any man . . . who again breaks from the line . . . shall be shot on the spot."[27]

The ambush at Baxter Springs was Blunt's last engagement with rebels in 1863. Even though it ended with a defeat, the year was another winning one for Blunt and included his victories at Honey Springs, Perryville, and Fort Smith. During the Honey Springs campaign Blunt proved that he was learning more about handling an army in combat, although his basic plan of attack was still a straightforward infantry assault supported by artillery. But the campaign also pointed up Blunt's flaws. His disregard for the Indian troops after the battle at Honey Springs, probably at Senator James H. Lane's behest, indicates Blunt's inability, or unwillingness, to distance himself from a poor political mentor. His limited use and recognition of black troops also tarnished Blunt's reputation as an abolitionist general.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Blunt to George A. Cutler, September 13, 1862, Lincoln Papers.

[2]William G. Coffin to Blunt, September 28, 1862, ibid.

[3]Blunt to Caleb B. Smith, November 21, 1862, ibid.; Blunt to Lincoln, July 31, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., 53: 565-66.

[4]Blunt to the citizens of Kansas, December 2, 1862, Lincoln Papers.

[5]Larry C. Rampp and Donald L. Rampp, The Civil War in Indian Territory (Austin, Texas: Presidential Press, 1975), 19-20.

[6]Colonel William A. Phillips to Blunt, May 22, 1863, Blunt to Schofield, June 8, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 337-38, 341-42.

[7]Castel, Frontier State, 111; Cullum, Biographical Register, 2: 525.

[8]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 243; Cornish, Sable Arm, 77.

[9]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 245.

[10]New York Times, August 16, 1863, 6.

[11]Ibid.; report of battle of Honey Springs by Blunt, July 26, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 447.

[12]New York Times, August 16, 1863, 6; reports of battle of Honey Springs by Blunt, Lieutenant Colonel John Bowles, July 20, 1863, Lieutenant Colonel William T. Campbell, July 19, 1863, Major J. Nelson Smith, July 19, 1863, and General Douglas H. Cooper, August 12, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 447-48, 449-51, 452-53, 454, 455, 460; Van Horn Papers.

[13]Honey Springs Union casualty report, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 449; Van Horn Papers; New York Times, August 16, 1863, 6.

[14]Cornish, Sable Arm, 17, 24, 61, 69-78; Eighth Census, 17, 285; Long, Civil War Day by Day, 241.

[15]Joe H. Mays, Black Americans and Their Contributions Toward Union Victory in the American Civil War, 1861-1865 (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984), 36-39; Long, Civil War Day by Day, 359, 363, 381; Foote, The Civil War, Fredericksburg to Meridian, 697.

[16]Joseph T. Glatthaar, Forged in Battle, The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 275-78.

[17]Cornish, Sable Arm, 130-31, 173.

[18]Blunt to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, July 21, 1862, O. R., 1st ser., 13: 486; Blunt to Schofield, August 22, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 2, 465; Honey Springs Union casualty report, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 449.

[19]Britton, Indian Brigade, 379; Sharon D. Wyatt, "William A. Phillips," (Master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1967), 66.

[20]Cherokee leaders to Blunt, October 21, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 34, pt. 2, 790-91.

[21]Blunt to Major H. Z. Curtis, August 19, 1863, ibid., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 2, 462-63.

[22]Blunt's report of skirmish near Perryville, Indian Territory, August 27, 1863, ibid., pt. 1, 597-98.

[23]Reports of battle at Devil's Backbone Mountain by Blunt, September 3, 1863, and Colonel William F. Cloud, September 20, 1863, ibid., 601-602, 602-604; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 247.

[24]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 247.

[25]Britton, Indian Brigade, 309-10.

[26]Carl W. Breihan, Quantrill and his Civil War Guerrillas (Denver: Sage Books, 1959), 30-32; Albert Castel, William Clarke Quantrill: His Life and Times (New York: Frederick Fell, Inc., 1962), 32-45, 122-43.

[27]Reports of Baxter Springs massacre by Blunt, October 19, 1863, Colonel Charles W. Blair, October 15, 1863, and Lieutenant James B. Pond, October 7, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 1, 688-90, 690-93, 698-700; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 247-48; Blunt to Captains Tholen and Loring, October 7, 1863, Blunt Papers; William Elsey Connelley, Quantrill and the Border War (Cedar Rapids,

Iowa: The Torch Press, 1910), 421-34; John McCorkle, Three Years with Quantrill (New York: Buffalo Head Press, 1966), 88-93.

CHAPTER V

DISPUTES AND CONTROVERSIES

1863

General James G. Blunt was an able commander, albeit unschooled, while leading armies in the field. Unfortunately the same aggressive, hard-nosed attitude that earned him victories on the battlefield worked against him in his military and political relationships. Blunt was argumentative and prone to accept only one idea--his own--as the correct idea. He frequently did not communicate with his superiors and feared that they conspired against him. Blunt earned his military victories on his own but any political achievements that he gained had come by way of James Lane. Lane, though, was a poor political mentor. Aside from creating a spot for Blunt in the Kansas military and nominating him for his first general's star (to be sure, no small measures of political support) Lane had done little for Blunt since early 1862. Surely the men corresponded during the war but very few records of such correspondence remain. By and large Lane left Blunt to fend for himself in the day-to-day political arena of the trans-Mississippi west. Unfortunately that theater was as highly political

as any in the nation, even though volunteers, as untrained in the arts of war as Blunt, largely made up the military population. Blunt could not play the political games that would have enhanced the reputation he had earned on the battlefield. He frequently quarreled with his superiors instead of working with them and in late 1863 his various feuds culminated in his relief from command and eventually his banishment to an obscure Indian war in western Kansas.

Blunt's relations with the two wartime governors of Kansas were poor. As already noted Blunt ran afoul of Governor Charles Robinson soon after assuming command of the Department of Kansas in May 1862. Robinson, an anti-Lane man, and Blunt clashed when the governor tried to fill the department with officers of his own choosing. Blunt, perhaps with Lane's help, met the threat straightforwardly and ordered that no officer holding a Robinson commission be mustered into service without express orders from department headquarters. Blunt also restored officers who were thrown out of positions when Robinson issued commissions for jobs already filled. Blunt then referred the matter to the War Department and Secretary of War Stanton referred it to Attorney General Edward Bates. In June Bates upheld Blunt's action.[1]

Blunt had no further conflicts with Robinson as he was campaigning in Missouri and Arkansas for the remainder of the governor's term. When the general returned to Kansas in 1863 after the Prairie Grove campaign, Kansans had just

elected Thomas Carney as governor. "I had reason to believe [Carney] was cooperating with me for the public good," said Blunt, but the general's hopes faded quickly.

Carney, a Leavenworth, Kansas, businessman, rode into the governor's office on Jim Lane's coattails; in fact, Lane virtually secured Carney's election through the political patronage he had accrued in the organization of regiments. Carney was a political chameleon, though, and changed his color soon after the election. Instead of bowing to Lane, Carney determined to act as governor in his own right. The men squabbled over military patronage and Carney set his sights on Lane's own senatorial seat.[2]

Carney's transformation into an anti-Lane man presaged doom for any relationship he and Blunt might have. As could be expected, they quarreled. Their first fight was over the trial by a citizens' court and hanging of suspected murderers in Atchison, Kansas, in May, 1863, a result of increased attacks by border raiders. Throughout the spring guerrilla activity along the Kansas-Missouri border increased and Blunt, still in charge of the District of Kansas before Schofield divided it, attempted to counter the depredations. In March, Department of the Missouri commander General Samuel Curtis warned Blunt to put his best troops on the border since Missourians were afraid that Blunt, given his past affiliations with Kansas abolitionists and Jayhawkers, would not deal harshly with Kansas border raiders. They expressed particular concern

about whether Blunt would corral the Red Legs, which in fact he and General Thomas Ewing, Jr., created the previous year to serve as border guards. Blunt assured Curtis he would handle the Red Legs roughly. "I expect to hang a few of them soon by way of example," he said. On April 16, 1863, Blunt told Colonel E. Lynde, commander of the Ninth Kansas Volunteers, not to extend the rules of civilized warfare to any captured border raiders. "They must be treated as insurgents and shall suffer death," Blunt mandated. His orders applied especially to the Red Legs.[3]

But throughout May border raiders continued their rampage and even began attacking the stage lines running from Kansas City to Council Grove, Kansas. Blunt complained he did not have enough men to combat the guerrilla threat. "I am greatly embarrassed for want of troops," he told Colonel N. P. Chipman, Curtis' chief of staff, explaining that he did not have the manpower to support Colonel William Phillips, who was garrisoning Fort Gibson, and combat the border raids. He tried to counter his deficiency in numbers with local resources, though. Blunt authorized sheriffs in border counties to raise posses of county citizens for their own protection. The general supplied the posses with arms and directed them to cooperate with regular troops. "This is the only way that loyal people can be protected until I can have troops furnished me," said Blunt.[4]

In late May one such posse in Atchison, Kansas, caught four men suspected of robbery and murder. On May 21 Atchison County sheriff Donald Carmichael and eleven other citizens visited Blunt at Fort Leavenworth and asked the general what to do with the prisoners. They suggested that justice might be best served, in light of the scarcity of federal troops, if they turned the suspects over to the citizens of Atchison for trial. Blunt agreed. The Atchison citizens held the trial and convicted the men, jailing two and hanging the others. Blunt was pleased and said the result "[struck] terror to the evil-doers [in northeast Kansas]."[5]

But Governor Carney was not pleased. He drafted a letter to President Lincoln in which he charged Blunt with instigating a reign of terror in Kansas and with sharing in the plunder of the Red Legs. Blunt learned of the letter and on July 31, while he was in the field at Fort Gibson, drafted a vehement reply to the president. He called Carney a "thief and a liar" and a "fool for the want of brains." Blunt said Carney was trying to discredit him because of the general's allegations that the governor and Indian agent Coffin were defrauding the refugee Indians in Kansas. Lincoln wrote back to Blunt that he had no intention of acting on Carney's charges. While Lincoln expressed some concern that Blunt had allowed "Judge Lynch" to control affairs in Atchison, he planned to take no action against Blunt on that count either.[6]

Blunt was apparently justified in his suspicions about the governor. After the war Blunt met Carney and the latter agreed that Blunt's decision in the Atchison case was the correct one. Blunt said Carney admitted that he was trying to discredit Blunt and "intended to use all the weapons [he] could get."[7]

By far the bitterest of Blunt's feuds was with General John M. Schofield. In Blunt's mind Schofield became a military incompetent the moment he failed to attack in concert with Blunt at Newtonia, Missouri, in October, 1862. Blunt hated Schofield for his tardiness and had no further use for the man, even though Schofield would be Blunt's commander for over a year. Schofield came to hate Blunt also, but gradually. Schofield praised Blunt after the battle of Old Fort Wayne, October 22, 1862, saying the battle "illustrated in a high degree the energy and gallantry for which General Blunt and his division are so justly celebrated." But after Prairie Grove Schofield had nothing but contempt for Blunt. He told General Curtis that operations of the Army of the Frontier while Schofield was away sick "were a series of blunders, from which it narrowly escaped disaster where it should have met with complete success." Schofield said Blunt and Herron were "badly beaten in detail," and owed their escape to false reports that Schofield was returning to Arkansas with reinforcements. Schofield said Blunt's performance at Prairie Grove satisfied him that Blunt was "unfit in any

respect for the command of a division of troops against a disciplined enemy." Blunt never believed Schofield was sick when he left the army before Prairie Grove and as far as he was concerned, Schofield's actions before that battle earned him a reputation for "cowardice and imbecility" that would make his military record "one of infamy rather than glory."[8] As already explained the Battle of Prairie Grove, where Blunt allowed Confederates to slip around his flank and interpose themselves between two Union armies, was one of his worst battlefield performances. In his comments Schofield may not have been far from wrong.

When Schofield replaced General Curtis as commander of the Department of the Missouri in May 1863, he reorganized the department, cutting Blunt's district in half and renaming it the District of the Frontier. Blunt received his major-general's commission at about the same time and wryly commented that his command decreased in proportion as his rank increased. Blunt suspected Schofield was in league with Governor Carney in an attempt to discredit him with the Atchison hanging case, and he believed Schofield resorted to the reduction in command as a last resort to take away his power. Since Blunt planned to campaign in Indian Territory anyway, he did not object to the redistricting. He objected to the size of his army, however, which dwindled to about three thousand men. Blunt was convinced that Schofield reduced his command just as rebels in Indian Territory intensified their raids on

supply lines to Fort Gibson in order to "sacrifice this command . . . and get rid of me."[9]

Schofield came close to relieving Blunt over an argument in in late June 1863. From his new district headquarters at Fort Scott Blunt began giving orders to Major L. C. Easton, chief and depot quartermaster at Fort Leavenworth, even though Schofield's redistricting took jurisdiction over Fort Leavenworth away from Blunt. Blunt acted on General Orders No. 48, which redistricted the department and said Easton was "assigned to duty as chief quartermaster of the Districts of Nebraska, of Colorado, of the Border, and of the Frontier." In interpreting the orders, Blunt assumed that Easton was quartermaster for several districts. Easton protested, claiming Blunt did not have the right to make orders to him directly. Instead all district commanders should apply to their district quartermasters for supplies, who then should apply to the depot quartermaster if needed. Easton sent the matter to Schofield for mediation.[10]

Blunt's insistence on issuing orders to the Fort Leavenworth quartermaster may have been at Lane's urging. Lane rebelled when Schofield took over the Department of the Missouri, since he was a conservative general replacing the more radical Curtis, whose views on slavery and secessionists were in line with Lane's. President Lincoln, of course, replaced Curtis with Schofield as the latter was more apt to appease Missouri conservatives. Lane howled

once again when Schofield divided Blunt's district as it put General Ewing, also a conservative, in charge of the quartermaster's depot at Fort Leavenworth and interfered with Lane's control of commissary stores. Lane frantically marshalled Kansas newspapers, including the Leavenworth Daily Conservative, Kansas Weekly Tribune, and the Kansas State Record, and radical Missouri papers in a push to have the War Department create a Department of the Frontier with Blunt at its head. President Lincoln, however, ignored the noise Lane was making in Kansas and let the department and district commands stand as they were, again indicating that he had come to the conclusion that Lane's radicals would not be the deciding factor in the war and that he no longer had to worry about offending them.[11]

The success of political generals depended not only on their battlefield prowess, but on the support of their political sponsor as well. Blunt was a capable field general but he was inept at politics and Jim Lane was a terrible political sponsor. Lane's actions show that he only worried about Blunt to the extent that the general could help him, which explains his limited political support for Blunt in other matters. Never did Lane defend Blunt's battlefield actions, such as when Schofield so roundly criticized Blunt for the battle of Prairie Grove. Only when a situation involving Blunt affected Lane's own personal interests did the senator come to Blunt's side. Naturally opponents suspected Lane and Blunt of skimming

profits off of quartermaster's contracts, though such charges were never proven. For his part, Blunt never commented on the quartermaster situation with regard to James H. Lane.

Schofield upheld quartermaster Easton's contention that Blunt had no jurisdiction over him but Blunt did not desist. Finally, on July 5 as Blunt embarked on the Honey Springs campaign, Schofield referred the matter to General-in-Chief Henry Halleck, saying that he wanted to correct Blunt's "irregularities and abuses," upon which he did not elaborate. Blunt had a quartermaster in his district and "can no more command Major Easton than he can the chief quartermaster of the department," said Schofield. He said he did not want to restrict Blunt any further than to the proper chain of command but added that "if [Blunt] is not willing to submit to such restriction, I see no way [to make him obey] but by removing him from his command."[12]

Blunt stopped issuing orders to Easton, but he did not drop the matter. On July 26, 1863, after the battle at Honey Springs, Blunt wrote a scathing letter to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. In it Blunt addressed the "abuses and irregularities" Schofield referred to in his letter to Halleck. Blunt said he assumed such irregularities, in Schofield's view, included his successful fall campaign in Arkansas while Schofield was away from the army and his more recent victory at Honey Springs. "I believe General

Schofield has been guilty of no such irregularities since he has been in the service," Blunt said sarcastically. In the same vain Blunt wryly apologized for losing a government mule team while crossing the rain-swollen Arkansas River July 16, 1863, on the march to Honey Springs. "For this I suppose a stoppage will be made against my pay . . . [but I] have a little property I earned before the war [and] can afford to pay for the team." Blunt labeled quartermaster Easton a traitor ("baser traitors . . . do not exist within Jeff. Davis' dominions," he wrote) and again charged Kansas Governor Carney and Indian superintendent Coffin with robbing the refugee Indians.[13]

Five days later Blunt made many of the same condemnations in a letter he sent to Lincoln defending himself against Carney's charges. Blunt informed Lincoln that he was the victim of a combination by Carney and Schofield and had been sent into the Indian Territory with a small command to be "sacrifice[d]." Blunt was preparing to start the campaign that would lead to the capture of Fort Smith and told Lincoln "I have not more than three thousand effective men for duty . . . yet within forty-eight hours I will cross the Arkansas River and attack. What the result may be I know not."[14]

When Lincoln replied to tell Blunt he did not intend to act on Carney's charges, he also told the general he was displeased with his attitude. "I regret to find you

denouncing so many persons as liars, scoundrels, fools, thieves, and persecutors of yourself," said Lincoln. As for Blunt's military situation in Indian Territory, Lincoln told him not to complain. "Your military position looks critical, but did anybody force you into it? Have you been ordered to confront and fight 10,000 men with 3,000?" Lincoln said he appreciated Blunt's services, as his brigadier's and major-general's commissions indicated, but added that the government could not make more men.[15]

The argument about the quartermaster was over but in October Schofield again threatened to strip Blunt of his command. In September, 1863, Schofield sent an investigative committee comprised of one colonel and two captains to investigate the Districts of the Border and of the Frontier, Ewing's and Blunt's districts respectively. Schofield said he ordered the investigation because he continuously received reports, both official and unofficial, of "gross frauds and corruption" within the administration of those districts, and that troops within them suffered from "general demoralization." Again complaints centered on abuses of the quartermaster's and commissary stores and Schofield singled out Blunt's district. Schofield said he could not implement any reform in that district while Blunt commanded it and therefore wanted to relieve him from duty. Schofield emphasized, though, that his investigators had not been able to specifically link Blunt with frauds against the government.

Even so, Schofield wanted to be rid of Blunt in order to "reclaim the troops of that command from [their] disgraceful condition." Schofield said his investigators also found irregularities in Ewing's district, but noted that Ewing had been in command only a short time and many of the problems occurred before he arrived.[16]

Blunt learned of the investigative team (a "smelling committee" as he called it) while he was sick in bed at Fort Smith. He said he invited the committee to come and talk to him but they refused, even though they were within thirty miles of the place. "Neither did they make any inspection of my staff departments or of the troops, but their talent for drinking whiskey was remarkable," Blunt wrote.[17]

But Schofield made good on his threat. While Blunt was at Fort Scott, Kansas, October 28, refitting his command after the October 6 Baxter Springs massacre, he received orders relieving him of command. Schofield's orders had nothing to do with Blunt's defeat at Baxter Springs, but with the investigation he had just conducted and his personal dislike of Blunt. Schofield ordered Brigadier General John McNeil, formerly commander of the District of Southwestern Missouri, to "repair to Fort Smith . . . and relieve . . . Blunt." Blunt interpreted this as meaning he could not relinquish command until he, too, was in Fort Smith, thus he continued removing his headquarters to that post as he had been in the process of doing when he met Quantrill in southeast Kansas.

When Blunt left Fort Scott he took with him twelve hundred troops and three hundred wagons loaded with subsistence and quartermaster's stores for Fort Gibson and Fort Smith. Since he was still in command he did not want to be responsible for any disaster that might befall those places if he left them without provisions. But on November 2, Colonel William Weer, now commanding the Tenth Kansas Volunteers, warned Schofield that Blunt was actually hauling "contraband of war"--provisions that he intended to sell to rebel troops for personal profit. Weer accused Blunt of nothing less than treason but offered no evidence to support his charge. That such an accusation should come from Weer is unusual as it was Weer whose apparent drunkeness caused the ruin of the Indian Territory expedition in 1862. Blunt had subsequently salvaged Weer's military career by cancelling court martial proceedings. Even so, Weer urged Schofield to have Blunt's train stopped and searched. He also warned Schofield that Blunt was going to Fort Smith and Van Buren to recover buried treasure there. What the treasure was Weer never said, nor did anyone else make such accusations against Blunt but General Ewing validated some of Weer's thoughts about the wagon train. He said Blunt was carrying $100,000 worth of goods sent by Alexander McDonald, of the McDonald and Fuller Company, government contractors at Fort Scott. Ewing said Blunt had given McDonald a sutler's commission at Fort Smith and it was "commonly understood" that Blunt

would take a share of profits from the sale of the goods. Weer said Lane was also involved in the matter. The warnings were enough for Schofield to order McNeil, waiting at Fort Smith, to search Blunt's train. If Weer's accusations were true, McNeil was to arrest Blunt and send him to Schofield at St. Louis. McNeil was also to arrest Blunt if he did not relinquish command of the district. Otherwise he was to return to Fort Leavenworth as per his orders.

Blunt arrived at Fort Smith December 1 and General McNeil found nothing in his train but "an ordinary stock of merchandise." Blunt relinquished command without resistance but stayed in Fort Smith as he received orders from the War Department to recruit a new regiment of black troops, the Eleventh Regiment.[18]

But Blunt found out about Schofield's orders for his arrest if necessary and went into a rage. He wrote Secretary of War Stanton another letter, detailing to him the circumstances of his arrival at Fort Smith. Blunt told Stanton that he did not intend to go to Fort Leavenworth to await orders from Schofield but would take orders from the War Department instead. And, sounding just as he had in 1862 when he decided he would have nothing further to do with General Henry Halleck, Blunt said he intended to have no more communications with Schofield "except to prefer charges against him for incompetency and cowardice in connection with his military operations in the Southwest [in 1862]."[19]

Blunt was not through. On December 11 Blunt stormed into McNeil's office and sought out Champion Vaughn, a friend of Schofield's. Blunt said he knew Schofield had sent Vaughn to watch him, and that he would "facilitate [Vaughn's] business." With that Blunt produced a copy of the letter he sent to Stanton and read it to McNeil, Vaughn, and several other civilians present. Vaughn was furious but kept his composure and later asked Schofield to give him a staff position. "I will remain with you at least till we see the end of this Blunt business," he said.[20]

The "Blunt business" was not over just yet but the general's feud with Schofield was. The War Department reorganized the Department of the Missouri on the first day of 1864, recreated the Department of Kansas and returned Major-General Samuel Curtis to its head. At his own request Schofield left for a field command. He assumed command of the Department of the Ohio and accompanied Major-General William T. Sherman on the invasion of Georgia the following summer. During that campaign Schofield's forces participated in the battles of Kenesaw Mountain and Atlanta and the seige of Atlanta. In November, 1864, Schofield won fame for himself by defeating a rebel invasion force under General John Bell Hood at Franklin, Tennessee, all of which disproved Blunt's contention that Schofield was an incompetent coward. The Department of the Missouri reorganization, though, left Blunt without a

command and when he petitioned the War Department for new orders, he was summoned to Washington D. C. (perhaps at the urging of Senator Lane, in one of the few times he tried to further Blunt's career) to discuss a possible invasion of Texas with President Lincoln. When Blunt left the capital on February 7, he did so with Lincoln's support of a Texas expedition. When he returned to Kansas in late February, Curtis put him in charge of so much of the District of the Frontier as was within the boundaries of the Department of Kansas, which included Kansas, Indian Territory, and the military post of Fort Smith.[21]

But Blunt and Curtis discovered that when the War Department redistricted the area it included only the military post of Fort Smith, not its surrounding areas, in the Department of Kansas. Consequently all troops at Fort Smith were not in the Department of Kansas, but in the Department of Arkansas under General Fred Steele. Blunt said when he arrived at Fort Smith March 8, 1864, it would be easy for him to take command for the federals from Fort Smith commander Brigadier General John M. Thayer since many of the troops there belonged to Blunt's old Army of the Frontier and were anxious for him to take command. Blunt showed a remarkable degree of control, though. He told Curtis that he would not assume command as that would put him in direct conflict with Thayer. "[I] have concluded it is better to lie quiet and await the development of matters at Washington," he said.

But Thayer became suspicious of Curtis and Blunt and wrote directly to General Ulysses S. Grant, about to become United States Army general-in-chief. He told Grant that Curtis and Blunt wanted the western tier of Arkansas counties placed in the Department of Kansas so they could command troops located there. Thayer asked Grant to advise the War Department against the request since it would leave that area of the Department of Arkansas without troops.

The next day Blunt forgot his promise of moderation and ordered all officers at Fort Smith to report to him. General Steele told Thayer that he and his officers were to obey no orders from Blunt or Curtis.

On March 14 Grant supposedly settled the matter when he advised Secretary of War Stanton that transferring part of the Department of Arkansas to the Department of Kansas was "decidedly unadvisable." But on March 29 Steele charged Blunt and Curtis with instigating the desertions of some Kansas troops from his department.

Finally, on April 15, 1864, chief of staff General Henry Halleck brought the Fort Smith controversy to a head when he recommended that the War Department strip Fort Smith and the Indian Territory from the Department of Kansas and place them in the Department of Arkansas. That had always been his intention, Halleck said, and he could see no other way of clearing up the confusion. He suggested that the War Department send Blunt, whom Halleck described as a "very quarrelsome man," back to Kansas to

report to Curtis. Grant agreed and asked for Lincoln's approval. "Let it be done," said the president, ending the controversy April 16, 1864. For his part, Blunt believed Halleck had conspired against him in the controversy as the general-in-chief did not want Blunt to mount a successful expedition into Texas.[22]

It is interesting that General Grant played a role in ending the Fort Smith controversy. Though Grant and Blunt were similar in some of their combat characteristics-- both were determined, aggressive, and not afraid to fight --they were completely dissimilar in regard to politics. Until he ran for president in 1868 Grant steered clear of politics, whether in the larger, more recognizable realm of elected offices, or in the more subtle realm of military politics. Certainly Grant owed his generalship to a politician, Illinois congressman Elihu B. Washburne. But Grant looked to Washburne for no other favors. In fact, when General Henry Halleck decried his performance at the battle of Shiloh Grant quietly prepared to the leave the army. He asked no one to help him, pulled no strings to secure his command, and only encouragement by his friend General William T. Sherman convinced Grant to stay.[23] Grant's political meekness magnified his stolid determination on the battlefield and enhanced his public image. When General John M. Schofield criticized Blunt's performance at Prairie Grove, Blunt responded like an affronted child and started the worst political feud of his military career.

Perhaps Grant stayed away from intra-military politics because he saw it only a soldier's duty to obey orders and fight the enemy. Maybe he avoided politics because he was in a conspicuous position of leadership and dealt with highly critical military matters, or perhaps he believed he did not have the temper or skills to fight and win a political battle. James G. Blunt never bothered to make such a self-appraisal. If he had he would have realized that he was impolitic, and should have either avoided military politics completely, or found a capable political sponsor.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 220.

[2]Castel, Frontier State, 94-96, 113-14.

[3]Curtis to Blunt, April 3, 1863, Blunt to Curtis, April 16, 1863, Blunt to Colonel E. Lynde, April 16, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 2, 194, 222-23.

[4]M. Cottrell and Company to Blunt, May 14, 1863, Blunt to N. P. Chipman, May 14, 1863, ibid., 280, 279-80.

[5]Blunt to Sheriff Donald Carmichael, May 22, 1863, Blunt to Lincoln, June 9, 1863, Lincoln Papers.

[6]Blunt to Lincoln, July 31, 1863, Lincoln to Blunt, August 18, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., 53: 565-66, 567.

[7]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 242.

[8]Schofield's report of activity in northwest Arkansas during 1862 [no date], O. R., 1st ser., 13: 16-21; Schofield to Curtis, January 1, 1863, ibid., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 2, 6; Blunt to Lincoln, ibid., 1st ser., 53: 565-66, John M. Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army (New York: Century, 1897), 63.

[9]Blunt to Lincoln, O. R., 1st ser., 53: 565-66.

[10]General Orders No. 48, June 9, 1863, Major L. C. Easton to General Robert Allen, June 18, 1863, Schofield to General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck, July 5, 1863, ibid., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 2, 315, 326, 327.

[11]Castel, Frontier State, 110-11.

[12]Schofield to Halleck, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 2, 327.

[13]Blunt to Stanton, July 26, 1863, ibid., 398-99.

[14]Blunt to Lincoln, ibid., 1st ser., 53: 565-66.

[15]Lincoln to Blunt, ibid., O. R., 567.

[16]Schofield to Assistant Adjutant General Colonel E. D. Townsend, October 3, 1863, ibid., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 2, 595-97.

[17]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 249.

[18]General Orders No. 118, October 19, 1863, Blunt to Schofield, October 28, 1863, Weer to Schofield, November 2, 1863, General Thomas Ewing, Jr., to Schofield, November 2, 1863, General John McNeil to Schofield, December 1, 1863, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 22, pt. 2, 666, 681-82, 689-90, 692-93, 727.

[19]Blunt to Stanton, December 9, 1863, ibid., 735-37.

[20]Champion Vaughn to Schofield, December 12, 1863, ibid., 742-43.

[21]General Orders No. 8, February 23, 1864, ibid., 1st ser., vol. 34, pt. 2, 408; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 250; Cullum, Biographical Register, 1: 492, 2: 525.

[22]Blunt to Curtis, March 9, 1864, General John M. Thayer to General Ulysses S. Grant, March 11, 1864, General Frederick Steele to United States Army Chief-of-Staff Henry W. Halleck, March 12, 1864, Grant's report, March 14, 1864, Assistant Adjutant General S. Breck to Steele, March 29,

1864, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 34, pt. 2, 537, 566, 576, 602, 751; Halleck to Grant, March 15, 1864, Grant to Halleck, March 16, 1864, ibid., pt. 3, 160-61, 178; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 250.

[23]Gene Smith, Lee and Grant, A Dual Biography (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984), 145-46, 292.

CHAPTER VI

FINAL BATTLES: THE PRICE RAID

1864

Blunt's rash action in the Fort Smith controversy cost General Curtis part of his department and Blunt his command. From April to July 1864, Blunt commanded no troops until his friend Curtis came to his aid. On July 23 Curtis created the District of the Upper Arkansas, comprising most of western Kansas to the Colorado border, and placed Blunt in command.[1] Even though Curtis kept Blunt in command of troops, the new assignment was something of an exile for Blunt. His argumentativeness and questionable dealings with army contractors tainted the military reputation he earned in 1862 and 1863 and made him unpopular with other officers. Blunt's new duties, which he accepted August 2, took him far away from the Civil War and landed him in western Kansas where he would be fighting Indians, not Confederates.

Curtis did not create the Department of the Upper Arkansas just to give Blunt a command, but to combat increased raids by the Kiowa, Comanche, and Arapaho. Reports of Indian depredations became so numerous that

Curtis toured western Kansas during the summer and found that Indians had stolen stock from Fort Larned to Walnut Creek, murdered several white men, and begun to gather within forty miles of Fort Riley, about sixty miles west of Topeka at the confluence of the Republican and Kansas Rivers. Curtis created the new military district while he was at Fort Riley and even before Blunt arrived began ordering the post quartermaster to buy horses for unmounted troopers, and requested Kansas militia colonels to send seven hundred men to the fort. Curtis himself accompanied an expedition that scared Indians away from the Santa Fe trail.[2]

Within a week of his arrival at Fort Riley, Blunt learned that Indians had stampeded government horses west of his position at a crossing of the Smoky Hill River (known, not surprisingly, as Smoky Hill Crossing). Blunt petitioned Curtis for more horses, enough to mount two companies of cavalry, and for carbines and revolvers, noting that sabers would be useless in an Indian campaign. Blunt planned to lead an expedition west as soon as possible.

While he waited, the Indian situation worsened. On August 10 the citizens of Shirley, Republic, and Washington Counties, located north of Fort Riley and not in Blunt's district, petitioned Blunt for protection against Indian attacks. Then Blunt learned that on August 6 Indians had attacked and killed four hunters about forty miles north of

Salina. The Indians scalped three of the men, then attacked an elderly man and woman in a ranch house. The old man shot one Indian and the rest fled. Following the attacks the people of Saline County held a mass meeting to discuss their own protection. On August 13 Blunt received word that a large band of Indians were on the Republican River with a herd of horses, perhaps stolen cavalry mounts, and that Indians had stolen the horses from a company of the First Colorado Cavalry near a crossing of the Cimarron River in southwest Kansas. One day later two men arrived at Fort Riley from the Republican River area and told Blunt that their neighbors were abandoning their homes and gathering at a point near the river where they intended to fight the Indians if necessary. Blunt agreed to send arms and some cavalry support to the fifty militiamen accompanying the settlers, but he knew he did not have enough men and horses to combat the growing Indian trouble. Finally Blunt received news that from one hundred to three hundred Indians had attacked seven troopers of Company H, Seventh Iowa Cavalry, en route to Smoky Hill Crossing. Indians killed four of the soldiers, and the others fled to Salina.[3]

Blunt was characteristically eager to take the field against the Indians, to "march on the red devils and give them a chastising . . . a little killing," as he told Curtis. Even though Blunt had come to dislike the Indians he formerly commanded in the old Districts of Kansas and

the Frontier, it is not likely that his feelings for the warring Indians on the frontier extended to the Unionist Indians. Blunt's comment that the Union Indians had become worthless was probably more of a slur against their commander, Colonel William A. Phillips, than the Indians themselves. Blunt also became a claims representative for Quapaw and Cherokee Indians after the war, showing that he did not harbor animosity for all Indians. Ironically the government accused Blunt of defrauding both groups, though it never proved the allegations.[4]

Blunt believed a campaign against the marauding Indians in Kansas would be an extension of his Civil War battles as he was convinced that the Indian attacks were the result of a conspiracy between Indians and Confederate agents. Nevertheless Blunt would not start a campaign until he received reinforcements. Finally, on August 25, Blunt learned from Major C. S. Charlot, Curtis' assistant adjutant-general, that at least two companies of cavalry and a wagon train with 105,000 carbine and revolver cartridges were on their way to Fort Riley.[5]

Reinforced Blunt started his expedition. He went to Fort Larned, 150 miles southwest of Fort Riley near the Arkansas River, where he acquired a detachment of the First Colorado Cavalry and some light artillery. There Blunt learned that a band of Arapaho and Cheyenne were at the head of the Smoky Hill River, about to cross the Arkansas and move south to the Cimarron. On September 21 Blunt took

his column west of Fort Larned but found no band of Indians moving south. He decided to march north, toward the Smoky Hill River, and intercept the Indians before they could reach the Arkansas. Still impressed with the necessity of scouts from his campaigns in Arkansas and Indian Territory, Blunt used Delaware Indians as guides and marched only at night since he thought it would be impossible to march undetected across the planes during the day.[6]

On the third day of his march, September 25, Blunt found an Indian lodge and some ponies about eighty miles northwest of Fort Larned on the Pawnee River. Blunt sent scouts to investigate and soon heard firing from their direction. He discovered his troopers were chasing the Indians and sent two companies of the First Colorado to their aid. An hour later, with no word from the advance guard, Blunt decided to move up the river himself with the rest of the command. One mile away Blunt found the First Colorado detachment surrounded by Indians and attempting to fight their way back. Messengers tried to take word to Blunt but Indians cut them off too. When Blunt arrived the sight of his force put the Indians to flight. Blunt's cavalry suffered one killed, one missing and presumed dead, and seven wounded. They killed nine Indians in the fight.[7]

Blunt followed the Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors up the Pawnee River for two days but, realizing the Indians had better mounts than the soldiers, gave up the chase. He

returned to Fort Larned intending to rest and prepare another expedition. But before he reached the fort a courier rode up to Blunt's column with news that ended Blunt's Indian fighting and returned him to the Civil War. Confederate General Sterling Price had invaded Missouri and General Curtis wanted Blunt at Fort Leavenworth as quickly as possible.[8]

Price launched his invasion to reoccupy Missouri from Camden, Arkansas, August 28, and for a month made his way up eastern Missouri. On September 27 Price fought twelve hundred federals under Brigadier General Thomas Ewing, who had commanded the Eleventh Kansas Cavalry under Blunt in Arkansas. Though Ewing's men held off the rebels, they retreated during the night to St. Louis which Ewing feared was Price's target. Instead Price veered to the northwest and marched for Jefferson City, Missouri's capital. Price's rebels skirmished all the way to the Missouri River, arriving at Jefferson City October 7. Here Price intended to place a new Confederate governor in power but decided to bypass the city when he saw that federals had it heavily reinforced. He continued west toward Kansas City.

Blunt arrived at Fort Leavenworth October 8, one day after Price arrived at Jefferson City. Curtis had been in Fort Leavenworth for a week, arguing with Blunt's old nemesis, Governor Thomas Carney, about the use of the Kansas militia to fight Price. Carney declared that Kansas was not in danger and would not allow Curtis to use the

militia. Senator Jim Lane arrived at Leavenworth at the same time as Blunt and both men convinced Curtis that if Carney would not cooperate, Curtis should declare martial law and assume control of the militia. After appealing to Carney again with no response, Curtis declared martial law. That same day, October 10, Curtis put Blunt in command of the District of Southern Kansas, a command of about four thousand men. The command included the Fifteenth Kansas Cavalry under Colonel Charles R. Jennison, former Lane Brigade commander, and the Eleventh Kansas Cavalry led by Colonel Thomas Moonlight, Blunt's old assistant adjutant-general.[9]

Blunt consolidated his force at Paola, Kansas, and on October 13 moved it into Jackson County, Missouri, south of Kansas City. There more reinforcements arrived, including detachments of the Fifth, Fourteenth, and Sixteenth Kansas Cavalries, part of the Third Wisconsin Cavalry, the First Colorado Cavalry, a section of the Second Kansas Battery, eight twelve-pounder howitzers, and the Fifth, Sixth, and Tenth Kansas State Militia regiments. Curtis designated Blunt's command the First Division, Army of the Border.[10]

Immediately Blunt had problems with two of the militia officers. Brigadier General J. M. Fishback and Colonel James D. Snoddy, of the Sixth Militia Regiment, refused to acknowledge Blunt as their commander and ordered their men back to Kansas. Sensing a mutiny, Blunt arrested both men and had no further problem with militia troops. Blunt said

no other militia member questioned his authority and all were "willing to advance into Missouri, or elsewhere, to meet the enemy." Fishback later appealed to Colonel Chales Blair, commanding Blunt's Third Brigade, for his release. Fishback admitted to Blair that he had been wrong in his actions and Blair agreed that the penitent Fishback would probably now do his duty. "Snoddy," commented Blair, "is better as he is. Difficulties are bred around him wherever he goes, and he lives in an atmosphere of perpetual strife and animosity." Anyway, Snoddy's own militiamen had replaced him in an election. They chose Colonel James Montgomery, Blunt's old Lane Brigade commander, as their new leader. Lane himself had volunteered as an aide-de-camp to Curtis and thus four members of the old Lane Brigade-- Lane, Blunt, Montgomery, and Jennison--waited in Missouri to help fight Sterling Price's army.[11]

For the first time in over a year Blunt began to show a trace of his old campaigning self and asked to lead a scouting expedition east of Kansas City. Curtis, preparing to defend the Big Blue River between Kansas City and Independence, Missouri, agreed and ordered Blunt to leave on October 16. Blunt took his First and Second Brigades, about two thousand men, and the next day met a band of Missouri militia and civilians retreating from Warrensburg fifty miles to the southeast. They told Blunt that rebel General Jo Shelby (the same man who had devised the clever

rear guard that had confounded Blunt at Cane Hill, Arkansas, in November, 1862) had captured Sedalia and was marching on Warrensburg. Blunt took the Missouri militia into his command and sent some of them to scout Warrensburg. They returned with news that the town was safe and Shelby had rejoined Price at Waverly on the Missouri River about eighty miles east of Kansas City.[12]

Major-General William S. Rosecrans, Department of the Missouri commander since the first of 1864, sent a division under Major General Alfred Pleasonton (former cavalry commander in the Army of the Potomac) in pursuit of Price when the rebels veered away from St. Louis. Now those troops, in brigades under Generals John Sanborn, John McNeil, and A. J. Smith, were close on Price's tail between the rebels and Sedalia. Blunt decided he would form a junction with them, then attack Price. He dispatched messengers to the generals and sent back to Kansas City for the rest of his division. Then he moved into Lexington, Missouri, defended only by a few rebel guerrillas, to wait for his reinforcements.[13]

Blunt's plan went sour, though. At Lexington on October 19 he learned that Price's army was twenty miles away but a message arrived from Curtis who said the reinforcements Blunt wanted were not coming. Governor Carney had forbidden Curtis to send the Kansas militia any deeper into Missouri. An hour later at 11 a.m. Price's advance guard collided with Blunt's pickets. Blunt

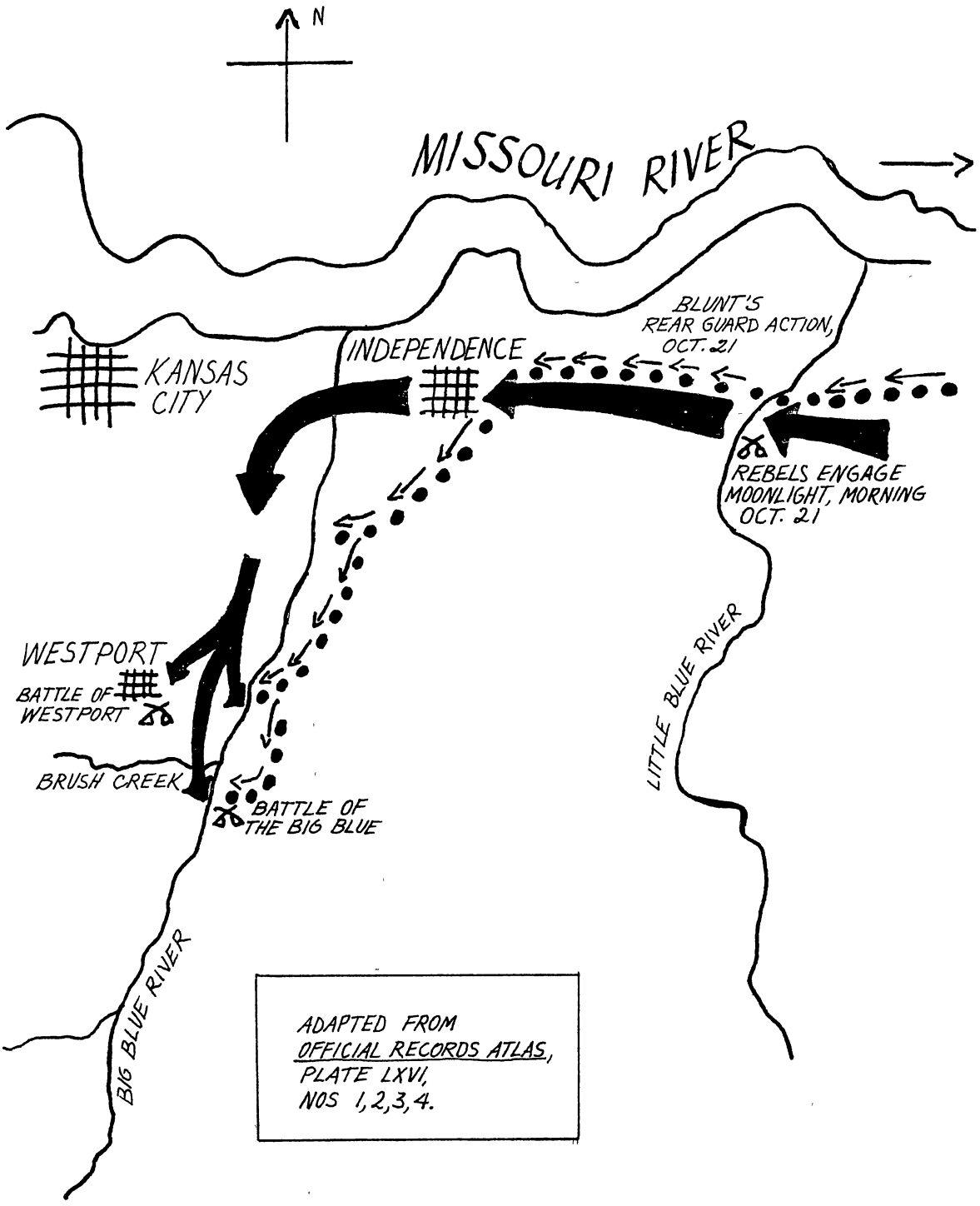

Figure 7. Battles Near Kansas City

reinforced his skirmishers while he arrayed his brigades in line southwest of Lexington. Blunt knew rebels outnumbered his force and he would ultimately have to retreat but before he left he intended to find out the strength of Price's army. The ground Blunt selected would force Price's troops out into the open where Blunt could estimate their strength. When he got a good look at them Blunt said he "became well convinced that the whole of Price's army was present." Skirmishing continued for two hours, until Price brought up his long-range artillery. As his howitzers were too small to respond and as he feared a flanking attack, Blunt ordered his men to fall back along the Independence road. Colonel Moonlight and the Eleventh Kansas Cavalry covered the retreat.[14]

Captain Henry E. Palmer, Company A, Eleventh Kansas, remembered his retreat as particularly harrowing. Blunt sent Palmer and about 250 men to hold the Dover Road leading to Lexington to guard the inevitable retreat. Palmer held the road, even though he could hear firing behind him. But by 5 p.m. the firing stopped and Palmer could tell from scattered shooting that Price had dislodged Blunt and slipped between Palmer and the rest of the federals. Palmer came up with a daring plan for his own escape. He placed seventeen rebel prisoners within his column and with twenty Union scouts dressed as Confederates taking the lead, his column marched to Lexington. Palmer discovered that seven thousand rebels occupied the town but

he boldly entered it anyway, his column riding at a trot. The rebels paid little attention to Palmer until one of his men got nervous and shot a Confederate major. The rest of the column opened fire and the troopers galloped for the Sni River bridge, three miles away. They made it through Lexington without a loss but found more rebels at the bridge between them and Blunt on the opposite bank. Palmer ordered his men to reload their weapons, then they charged the rebels at the bridge. The attack created enough confusion that Palmer's men were able to cross the river and within three minutes they reached the safety of Blunt's lines.[15]

Blunt continued his retreat, stopping at the Little Blue river nine miles east of Independence. He intended to form a defensive position there and sent to Curtis for reinforcements. Again Curtis said he could move the militia no further east because of Carney's complaining and he ordered Blunt back to the safety of the Big Blue. Blunt obeyed but left Moonlight and the Eleventh Kansas behind to guard the river.

On October 21 Blunt continued to urge Curtis to let him return to the Little Blue where he intended to hold Price until Pleasonton could arrive from the east. Curtis acquiesced and Blunt prepared to move out. But as he departed word came from Moonlight that he was under attack. Blunt hurried but he found the rebels had driven Moonlight back a mile from his original position. Blunt threw his

men into line and drove Confederates back a half-mile but flanking columns on his left and right convinced Blunt it was time to retreat. His brigades fought a retrograde action all the way back to Independence, a fight that lasted almost six hours. Blunt formed his last line east of Independence and the rebels broke off their pursuit. About 8 p.m. the federals slipped into the defenses Curtis had constructed on the Big Blue.[16]

On Saturday morning, October 22, Blunt ordered Jennison's First Brigade to go south four miles along the Big Blue and guard a crossing known as Byram's Ford. He sent Moonlight and the Second Brigade two miles south to Hinkle's Ford. The Fourth Brigade, commanded by Colonel James H. Ford and created from detachments of the Third Brigade, went along as support. Blunt wanted them to protect the right flank of the Union line from envelopment, a wise move since Price was plotting a desperate attempt to save his army. Pressed on the north by Curtis's Army of the Border, and on the east by Pleasonton's division, Price decided to carry the fight to the enemy. He sent his supply train south, out of danger, then ordered Generals Jo Shelby and James F. Fagan to turn and attack Blunt's forces. General John S. Marmaduke, another of Blunt's old Cane Hill enemies, was to protect the Confederate rear from Pleasonton. He put his plan in action that morning, touching off the Battle of Big Blue.

Blunt knew a Confederate attack was under way when he

heard firing from the extreme right, Jennison's position at Byram's Ford. He sent orders for Moonlight to reinforce Jennison, who had been hit by a detachment of dismounted rebel cavalry. Jennison hung on until Moonlight arrived but the rebels had edged into position to flank the extreme federal right. Price's men were fording the Big Blue when Jennison and Moonlight pitched into the Confederate right and stalled the flanking movement. That night the federals camped in front of the Confederates near Westport (now a suburb of Kansas City).[17]

General Curtis ordered Colonel Charles Blair's Kansas militia to support Blunt, despite Governor Carney's earlier objections. They pulled into line about 3 a.m. Blunt spent the night shuttling ammunition and rations to the First, Second, and Fourth Brigades, preparing them to assault Shelby and Fagan at daylight. During the night rebel prisoners told federals that Price had thirty-five thousand men on the field, though Pleasonton was hotly pressing them on the east.

When dawn broke on Sunday, October 23, Blunt moved his division to an expanse of timber on the south side of Brush Creek. There he collided with Shelby's advancing division, touching off the Battle of Westport. The fight soon became general but, the bulk of his cavalry militia not yet on the field, Blunt pulled his line back to the north side of the creek. Shelby's only assault was by a small force through the timber, which the Fifth and Nineteenth Militia regiments promptly beat back.

When all his militia were dismounted and in line Blunt ordered a general assault. His division surged back across the creek with a shout, the crackle of their small-arms fire punctuated by the roar of federal artillery, which Blunt said "punished the enemy severely." This was essentially the only time during the Price Raid that Blunt took the offensive and his dispositions -- infantry supported by artillery -- were quite similar to those he used over a year earlier in Indian Territory and Arkansas. Blunt kept up the pressure and by noon his men had cracked the center of Shelby's line and Confederates began flowing to the rear. The retreat "soon became a complete rout, their broken lines flying in disorder," said Blunt, who pressed his advantage with cavalry and artillery.

Curtis joined Blunt and the two generals rode with the pursuit for nearly two miles when they saw a line of federals on their left, formed at a right angle with their own force. It was Pleasonton's division engaging Marmaduke. Quickly Blunt rolled up twenty pieces of artillery to within eight hundred yards of the Confederate left. As the rebels launched an attack on Pleasonton Blunt's artillery opened fire, blistering Marmaduke's left and sending his men in a wild retreat. The battle of Westport was over but Curtis and Blunt spurred the First Division in pursuit, with Pleasonton's men behind them. The three generals met for the first time at a farm house, where they made plans to continue the pursuit. Pleasonton

wanted to split the federal column but Curtis, assuming command of all the federals, ordered a mass pursuit with Blunt's division still in the lead.

Blunt took up the chase again the next morning, positioning Moonlight's Eleventh Kansas Cavalry between Price and the Kansas border. When it appeared that Price was retreating into Kansas, Blunt sent Moonlight on to Fort Scott to protect that poorly defended post. Blunt followed Price into Kansas, about four miles ahead of Pleasonton. Curtis, riding with Pleasonton, ordered Blunt to stop and let the federals close up. Then, late on October 24, Curtis ordered Blunt's division to fall back, rest, and let Pleasonton spearhead the pursuit. As a result Blunt was out of the fight when Pleasonton engaged Price at Mine Creek, Kansas, October 25. The attack disrupted the Confederate retreat and federals closed in on Price's supply train, forcing him to burn about one-third of his wagons.

Pleasonton, accompanied by Curtis, took his division back to Fort Scott to rest and refit. Blunt, left in the field without orders, also went to Fort Scott where he urged Curtis to continue the chase. Curtis finally consented and put the armies back in the field October 26. Blunt again took the lead and came across Price's trail in Baton County, Missouri. He made a brief bivouack at Carthage early October 28 and at daylight moved on, finding the remnant's of Price's command camped in the timber around Newtonia.

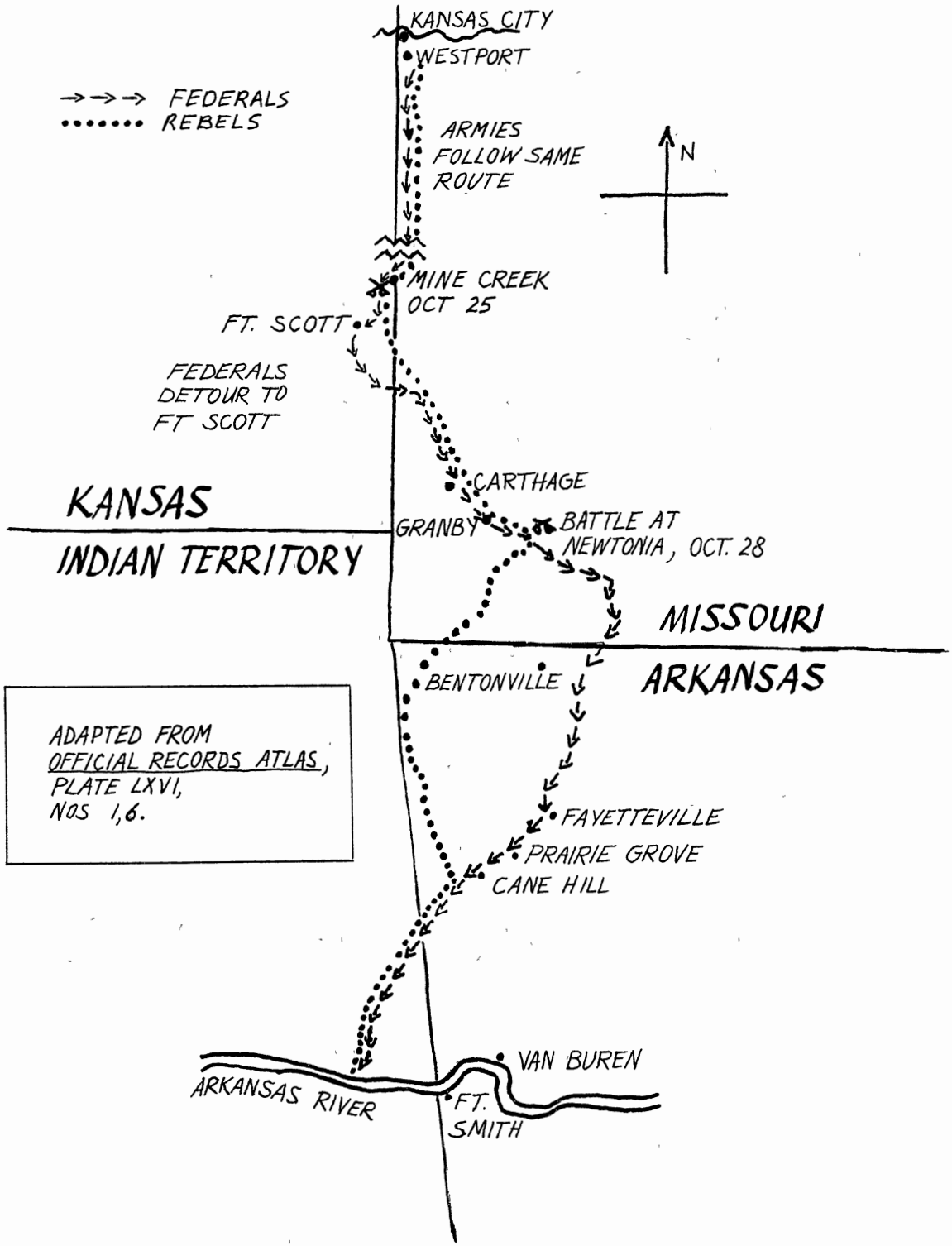

Figure 8. Pursuit of Price's Rebels

Price apparently believed the federals had given up their chase for good and dropped his guard, allowing Blunt to sneak in close. When the rebels discovered Blunt's presence, Price deployed a two-thousand-man rear guard and hastily put his force in motion. Blunt wanted to attack before Price got away but had marched ahead of Moonlight's Second Brigade, violating the same principle of security that he had at Old Fort Wayne and Cane Hill back in 1862. The fact that Blunt committed the error two years after doing virtually the same thing gives little credit to Blunt's ability, or willingness, to learn from his mistakes. Blunt sent word for the brigade to hurry up, but assuming that both Moonlight's and General Sanborn's brigades of Pleasonton's division were somewhere close enough to support him if needed, Blunt launched an attack. When Blunt made impetuous attacks without his full combat force in Arkansas two years earlier, he escaped with victory. Now, in the face of an army much larger than those he had faced at Old Fort Wayne and Cane Hill, his same impetuosity almost spelled disaster.

Blunt placed covering artillery on a ridge, then led a thundering cavalry charge out of the timber. The horsemen spurred their mounts across an open prairie and smashed into Price's rear guard. But soon a second line of rebels appeared from their wooded cover and Blunt realized he had misjudged the situation. Instead of leaving only a rear guard to protect his retreat, Price had committed his

entire force, about ten thousand men, to the fight. The Confederates drove Blunt's men, outnumbered ten to one, back five hundred yards but deadly rounds of canister from the federal artillery on the ridge stalled Price's advance.

Blunt considered leaving the field when he saw rebels sneaking through a cornfield on his left in a flanking attempt. But then help arrived. Sanborn, having marched sixty-two miles that day, came on the field and put his brigade in line on Blunt's left. His horses were exhausted and stone walls on the field hindered their movement so Sanborn dismounted his troopers and fought them as infantry. The men of the Sixth Missouri Militia Cavalry poured volley after volley into the rebels who finally fell back under the added Union weight. Sanborn's men pursued Price three miles before breaking off the chase.

General Curtis arrived at Newtonia after dark and he and Blunt planned to continue the pursuit the next morning, October 29. But during the night orders arrived from Department of the Missouri commander General William Rosecrans who said that the pursuit of Price had gone on long enough. He ordered all troops within his department to return to their own districts. Curtis had no choice but to abandon the chase and he and Blunt turned their men for Neosho, Missouri. Once there, though, they received orders from Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant to continue the chase to the Arkansas River.

Rosecrans' order had cost him two days but Blunt

eagerly resumed the hunt. By the time his division reached Cane Hill, Arkansas, they had gained a day on Price. By the time they reached the Arkansas River November 8 they were three hours behind Price but Blunt halted the chase as per Grant's orders. Price's Missouri raid was over, and so was James G. Blunt's final campaign of the Civil War.[18]

Blunt displayed a duality of character during the Price raid. In the fighting around Kansas City Blunt was an industrious division commander, making dispositions and shuttling ammunition and supplies to his brigades up and down the line. While pursuing the remnants of Price's army, though, Blunt lapsed into the reckless style of campaigning that had characterized his 1862 northwest Arkansas expedition. It must be noted, though, that Blunt's experience during the Missouri invasion was far different from any other he had had in the war. Price's raid was the closest thing to eastern-style campaigning that ever occurred in the trans-Mississippi theater. While Price had only twelve thousand invaders (and that number dwindled steadily from the time he entered Missouri) the combined number of federals that Curtis, Blunt, Rosecrans, and Pleasonton fielded reached over thirty thousand.[19] As such Blunt did not campaign on his own, as he had in Arkansas and again in Indian Territory in 1863. From Independence to Westport Blunt was part of a larger team and did not bear the burden of overall command; Curtis filled that position. Blunt worked with the knowledge that

a large Union army was approaching from the east, endeavoring to split Price's force on two fronts. In his campaigns of 1862 and 1863, out in the vast arena of the trans-Mississippi, Blunt was hindered by the fact that help (whatever the small western commands could tender) was always sixty to one hundred miles behind him along dangerously thin supply lines. And while Francis J. Herron had to execute a grueling winter march down one of those overextended lines of communication in December, 1862, to help Blunt, the great distances implicit in trans-Mississippi campaigning did not prevent Blunt from acting boldly. It did prevent him from capitalizing on his gains, though, as he had to continuously fall back to the safety of federal territory. Not until Colonel William Phillips captured Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, and Blunt captured Fort Smith, Arkansas, both in 1863, were federals able to stay in an advanced position. Around Kansas City, however, with Curtis having final say in things, Blunt had no such worries, only that he use his four thousand men efficiently. Also Blunt fought on the defensive, a situation to which Blunt was not entirely accustomed. Defending, though, relieved Blunt of trying to orchestrate an attack. He had only to wait behind the defensive works that Curtis had constructed east of Kansas City and respond to rebel thrusts.

In the pursuit of Price, though, with shattered Confederates and open field before him, Blunt returned to

his cavalier style of fighting. He rode his men hard and finally, at Newtonia, he attacked without scouting the enemy position. It is unfortunate for Blunt that the Price raid came so late in the war for it pointed up Blunt's true strengths. He served better as a subordinate, free from all the burdens of army command. With a seasoned West Pointer like Curtis directing him, Blunt's lack of a military education was less of a problem. Blunt could have had the same benefits two years earlier had he not been so quick to shun John M. Schofield.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Curtis to Major C. S. Charlot, July 23, 1864, General Orders No. 1, August 2, 1864, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 2, 369, 529.

[2]Curtis to Halleck, July 23 and August 8, 1864, ibid., 368, 610.

[3]Blunt to Curtis, August 8 and August 10, 1864, Captain Henry Booth to Blunt, August 11, 1864, Blunt to Curtis, August 13 and August 14, 1864, Blunt to Charlot, August 18, 1864, ibid., 611-12, 642, 659-60, 692, 707, 764-65.

[4]Blunt to Curtis, August 12, 1864, ibid., 670-71; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 211; Statements of James G. Blunt in Reply to the Allegations of Members of the "Peace Commission", Kansas Biographical Pamphlets, Volume A-G, Kansas Historical Society Archives, Topeka, Kansas, 1.

[5]Blunt to Captain J. H. Dodge, August 9, 1864, Charlot to Blunt, August 25, 1864, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 2, 625-26, 862-63.

[6]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 251.

[7]Blunt's report of skirmish at Walnut Creek, Kansas, September 29, 1864, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 1, 818.

[8]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 251-52.

[9]Clifton Cedric Edom, Missouri Sketch Book: A

Collection of Words and Pictures of the Civil War (Columbia, Missouri: Lucas Brothers, 1963), 129-30; Long, The Civil War Day by Day, 562-75; James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 784-88; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 252; Stephen Z. Starr, The Union Cavalry in the Civil War, vol. 3, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 510; Special Orders No. 215, October 10, 1864, O.R., 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 3, 764-65; ibid., pt. 4, 378-79.

[10]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 253.

[11]Colonel Charles W. Blair to Curtis, October 17, 1864, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 4, 57.

[12]Blunt's report of Price's Missouri raid, December 24, 1864, ibid., pt 1, 571-79.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society (17 vols., Topeka, Kansas: State Printing Office, 1890-1928), 9: 435-39.

[16]Blunt's report of Price's Missouri raid, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 1, 574-75; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 256-57.

[17]Blunt's report of Price's Missouri raid, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 41, pt. 1, 575; Jennison to Blunt, October [22], 1864, ibid., pt. 4, 165.

[18]Reports of Price's Missouri raid by Blunt, Curtis, January ___ [sic], 1865, James H. Lane [no date], and

General John B. Sanborn, November 13, 1864, ibid., pt. 1, 571-79, 464-65, 567-70, 392-93; Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 257-63; Long, The Civil War Day by Day, 582-84.

[19]Shelby Foote, The Civil War, A Narrative, Red River to Appomattox (New York: Random House, 1974, repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 575-85.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

General James G. Blunt sat out the rest of the Civil War at his headquarters at Paola, Kansas. Blunt planned to participate in only one more campaign and that following Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia in the eastern theater on April 9, 1865. Federals west of the Mississippi River sought to move against Confederates still in the field under Lieutenant General Kirby Smith and Blunt was to lead one part of the expedition. In mid-April Blunt left Kansas for Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, where he was to put together a force of ten thousand men, then operate against Smith's line near the Red River. Blunt was to support a main federal column descending on Smith from Fort Smith and Little Rock, Arkansas. The campaign never materialized as Smith surrendered before it could be fielded.[1]

Blunt's final months of service were not without controversy. In December, 1864, Blunt got involved in court martial proceedings against Colonel Charles R. Jennison, commander of the Fifteenth Kansas Cavalry and former Lane Brigade leader. Jennison's men participated in the pursuit of Sterling Price from Kansas City to Arkansas

and while on the march committed a large number of atrocities, ranging from plundering private citizens to executing not only Confederate prisoners, but also some Kansas militiamen whom Jennison's federals thought were rebel guerrillas. Once back in Kansas Blunt attempted to sub-divide his district for efficiency and give a sub-district command to Jennison. Jennison protested bitterly, claiming such a command (only five companies under Blunt's plan) was not fit for a man of his rank and insinuating that Blunt's order was a directive for Jennison to work for Kansas Senator James H. Lane, whom he ranked as a "political shyster."

Blunt grew angry and wrote a scorching letter back to Jennison in which he told the colonel it was a soldier's duty to accept his commands, regardless of the size. He also charged Jennison's men with poor discipline during the pursuit of Price but noted that little more could have been expected since the men only followed the example of their leader. In a telegram dated the same day as the letter, December 11, Blunt arrested Jennison for insubordination as well as the atrocities committed during the pursuit of Price. In the dispute Blunt again proved he was not a capable administrator. He acted out of anger, not rational thought, and the anger may have come from Jennison's condemnation of Senator Lane. A general court-martial subsequently tried Jennison, found him guilty, and ordered him dishonorably discharged from the United State Army on June 23, 1865.[2]

Blunt left the army in June, 1865. He resigned his commission as major-general of volunteers on June 3 and the War Department accepted his resignation on June 29. With that Blunt ended four years volunteer service in the United States Army.[3]

The American Civil War did not begin in the trans-Mississippi theater, and neither did it end there. Combatants fought as bitterly there as anywhere else and General James G. Blunt, brusk in manner and uneducated in the military arts, proved to be one of the most aggressive campaigners of the theater.

Blunt was a symbol of the Civil War volunteer. He joined the army to fight Confederates even though his method of fighting was rough. He still saw glory in warfare, with drummers beating out an order of march, banners flying, and cavalrymen spearheading a charge. The fact that enemy armies (hampered by the vast area of the trans-Mississippi) were seldom long in contact with one another did little to alter Blunt's perception of glorified war. He never saw the carnage of an Antietam or Shiloh. Neither his men nor his enemies regulary dug earth works to repel attack so the gritty, muddy, stinking, trench warfare that men endured at Vicksburg and Petersburg never developed in the trans-Mississippi theater. The long distances combatants had to travel in the west added to the importance of cavalry as a means of speedy movement. Blunt was effectively using cavalry almost a year before Union

commanders in the east, but it was out of necessity, not military genius. The necessity of cavalry in the west only reinforced Blunt's glorious visions of mounted pursuits with the general himself at the head of a thundering column of troopers. Blunt enacted many such chases and frequently got so carried away that he outdistanced the van of his army and arrived on the field of battle without adequate reinforcements. A prime example is his pursuit of Sterling Price through southwest Missouri in 1864. Blunt led his division competently in the fights around Kansas City but once he began to chase Price he swept headlong toward battle, almost as if he believed that cavalry sabres could still win an engagement, even in the bloody new age of the rifle.

The fact that war in the trans-Mississippi never became the full-scale modern war that Grant and Sherman waged in the east enabled men like Blunt and his opponents Shelby, Cooper, and Hindman--all volunteers with no formal training--to fight with a modicum of success. While Blunt scored victories at Old Fort Wayne, Cane Hill, Prairie Grove, Van Buren, Honey Springs, and Fort Smith, he never destroyed an enemy army. Neither did the Confederates ever destroy Blunt's army. While Blunt displayed a rashness that was a combination of his personal temperment and uneducated style of fighting, he still trusted his common sense enough to practice, albeit unwittingly, many of the nine principles of warfare. Blunt was especially

adept at using the small size of his armies, and their incidental mobility, to his advantage. In the vast arena of the trans-Mississippi armies had to move fast if they were to be effective and there were no railroads to help them along. Speed became Blunt's trademark in campaigning. His aggressive behavior led him into many battles before he had properly scouted his situation, both to his front and rear. Three times he walked into fights without the bulk of his combat force. No doubt more formidable opponents would have rewarded Blunt for such brash action with defeat. As a commander, though, Blunt was well-suited for the trans-Mississippi theater. Only once was he outgeneraled, that during the Confederate rear-guard action at Cane Hill. In the final tally Blunt was a match for any enemy he met in the trans-Mississippi.

Politically Blunt was a failure. He practiced no finesse in his dealings with other officers and was all too quick to label his superiors incompetents or cowards. He did not have the benefit of a capable and interested political sponsor. James H. Lane was too busy trying to benefit James H. Lane to aid Blunt's advancement; the senator left Blunt to his own devices. Certainly Lane should be credited for submitting Blunt's name for a general's commission and for staying out of Blunt's military campaigns. Lane would have done as well to stay out of Blunt's administrative policies, which he apparently could not do, seeking instead to use Blunt for personal

financial gains through quartermaster contracts. Blunt would have helped his own reputation if he had stayed clear of Lane's machinations, though it may be he feared for his generalship if he disputed Lane. This is doubtful, though, as President Lincoln, not Jim Lane, approved Blunt's major-general's stars and liked men who fought (as Blunt surely did) rather than play at politics.

Blunt was argumentative and took criticism personally, factors which played a key role in his political troubles. Historian Albert Castel has surmised that even during the war Blunt suffered from the mental disorder that forced him into a Washington, D. C. insane asylum on February 12, 1879. Psychiatrists, after having fully read Blunt's remaining correspondence, would be a better judge of that fact, however. There is no doubt that Blunt had a bad temper and did not work well with his superiors. In fact, with some of his superiors--like Generals Halleck and Schofield--Blunt refused to work at all. Blunt considered them incompetents and was not afraid to publicize his opinions. The only superior Blunt worked well with was Major General Samuel Curtis. They must have had a close friendship as Curtis' son, H. Z. Curtis, was on Blunt's staff until his death at Baxter Springs, and Curtis created the District of the Upper Arkansas for Blunt when the latter found himself without a command following the Fort Smith controversy in 1864. Even though there is some evidence to indicate that Blunt was unhappy with Curtis'

defense of Kansas City during the Price Raid, Blunt worked well under Curtis, indicating that he probably would have made a better subordinate than army commander. Again Blunt's theater of operations influenced his career. During most of the war he was technically a division commander, but the large area of the trans-Mississippi theater tended to make whole armies out of divisions. Thus, Blunt frequently exercised overall command. In the eastern theater, Union division commanders were always subordinate to corps and army commanders. Even though he possessed a feisty temperament, Blunt never directly disobeyed an order. Several comments that he made indicate Blunt believed it was one of the first duties of a soldier to obey orders, even though he did on occasion interpret orders to his own benefit. Blunt did just that in October 1863, when he received word that Schofield had relieved him of command of the District of the Frontier. Schofield ordered General John McNeil to relieve Blunt at Fort Smith and even though he was in Kansas, Blunt travelled all the way to Fort Smith so he could comply with Schofield's directive to the letter. Still, Blunt did not balk when General Curtis later shunted him off to western Kansas to fight Indians. The assignment briefly took Blunt out of the Civil War and the only reason Blunt had volunteered for the army in the first place was to fight the South.

While Blunt did not emerge from the war with a solid reputation as an administrator, neither did he emerge with

a sound pro-black reputation. There is no doubt that he subscribed to abolitionist philosophy, as indicated by his willingness to help runaway slaves both in Ohio and Kansas. Blunt was also eager to see blacks under arms in the United States army. But there his interest seemed to stop. Blunt used black soldiers in combat only once, at Honey Springs, Indian Territory, in July, 1863. And, although he wrote glowingly of their performance in battle, he did not put the name of any black soldier forward for commendation. Blunt would not have set a precedent had he done so, as other commanders were recognizing blacks for their efforts during the same time period. Blunt appears to have been quite satisfied to base his abolitionist reputation upon recruiting some blacks into military service, and using them once in combat.

The details of Blunt's later life are sketchy. He represented Indian claims before the government, twice facing charges of attempting to defraud both his Indian clients and the federal government. In 1867 he campaigned in Kansas for black suffrage (one of the first things he tried to do for blacks since using them in combat at Honey Springs four years earlier). He proved that he was not so progressive as to allow women to vote, joining ten other Kansas Republicans on an anti-female suffrage committee. Blunt's job as Indian claims representative led him to Washington D. C. where he eventually sickened and was placed in St. Elizabeth's government hospital for the

insane. Doctors there diagnosed Blunt as having "softening of the brain." He remained in the hospital for over two years and died there July 27, 1881, six days after his fifty-fifth birthday.[4]

Historians have never regarded James G. Blunt as one of the great generals of the American Civil War and probably never should. In fact, he usually gets only a few lines of recognition from writers who cite Prairie Grove or Honey Springs as significant battles in the trans-Mississippi theater. Blunt, however, is a fine example of the largely non-professional United States Army of the Civil War. Uneducated in the military arts, he taught himself on the battlefields of Missouri, Arkansas, and Indian Territory what he needed to know about leading armies. A study of Blunt is essentially a study of the backbone of the Union army--the volunteers. Like so many other soldiers in the Civil War Blunt learned the soldierly trade as he went along, he was resistant to authority, his fighting was rough but effective, and he joined the army out of the strength of his philosophical convictions.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 264.

[2]Jennison to Assistant Adjutant General Captain George S. Hampton, December 10, 1864, Blunt to Jennison, December 11, 1864, O. R., 1st ser., vol. 411, pt. 4, 843, 844-46, 873; Castel, Frontier State, 228-29.

[3]Blunt, "Blunt's Account," 264.

[4]Ibid., 211; Wilder, Annals, 460, 609, 680, 844, 955.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A CHRONOLOGY OF BLUNT'S MILITARY CAREER

1861

May	Blunt joins Tenth Kansas Infantry as a private.
July-August	Blunt helps recruit Third Kansas regiment; members elect him as lieutenant-colonel.
September	Blunt takes command of Fort Scott, Kansas; hunts down and kills guerrilla leader Mathews.
October-November	Blunt leads reconnaissance expedition from Kansas City; accompanies Federals to southwest Missouri.
April 8-May 5	Blunt commissioned brigadier general; given command of Department of Kansas.

1862

June-July	Blunt authorizes Indian Territory expedition; campaign subsequently aborted by troops in the field.
August 11-26	Blunt leads expedition to Lone Jack, Missouri.
October 1-4	War Department disolves Department of Kansas; Blunt given command of District of Kansas and ordered to join Brigadier General John M. Schofield in Missouri; debacle at Newtonia.
October 15-20	Blunt and Schofield enter Arkansas and split their army.

October 22	Battle of Old Fort Wayne, Indian Territory.
November 28	Battle of Cane Hill, Arkansas.
December 7	Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas.
December 28	Capture of Van Buren, Arkansas.

1863

May	Blunt commissioned major general, retroactive to November 29, 1862.
June 14	Blunt assumes command of the District of the Frontier.
July 5	Blunt starts campaign to reinforce Fort Gibson, Indian Territory.
July 17	Battle of Honey Springs, Indian Territory.
August 26	Engagement at Perryville, Indian Territory.
September 1	Capture of Fort Smith, Arkansas.
September	Schofield authorizes investigation of Blunt's district.
October 6	Massacre at Baxter Springs, Kansas.
October 28	Blunt relieved of district command.

1864

January 27-February 7	Blunt visits Washington D. C., gets approval of spring invasion of Texas.
February	Major General Samuel Curtis restores Blunt to command of District of the Frontier in newly reorganized Department of Kansas.
March-April	Fort Smith controversy.
July 23	Curtis creates District of the Upper Arkansas for Blunt.

August 28	Confederate Major General Sterling Price begins invasion of Missouri.
September	Blunt campaigns against Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians in western Kansas.
October 8	Blunt arrives at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, summoned by Curtis to counter Price's threat.
October 10	Curtis gives Blunt command of the District of Southern Kansas.
October 16	Blunt leads reconnaissance expedition from Kansas City to Lexington, Missouri.
October 19	Blunt clashes with Price at Lexington, begins retreat to Kansas City.
October 22	Battle of the Big Blue River.
October 23	Battle of Westport, Missouri.
October 28	Engagement at Newtonia.
October 29-November 8	Blunt pursues Price to Arkansas River.

1865

June 3	Blunt resigns from army.

VITA 2

Robert Steven Jones

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: GENERAL JAMES G. BLUNT AND THE CIVIL WAR IN THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Woodward, Oklahoma, July 7, 1960, the son of Bobby M. and Pat Jones.

Education: Graduated from Woodward Senior High School, Woodward, Oklahoma, in May, 1978; received Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mass Communications from Northwestern Oklahoma State University at Alva, May, 1988; recipient of Phil Noah Mass Communications scholarship, 1987, and Agnes Lebeda Writing Award, 1987, both at Northwestern Oklahoma State University; completed requirements for the Master of Arts degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1990.

Professional Experience: Reporter and chief photographer, Woodward Daily Press, Woodward, Oklahoma, 1979-1985; owner of freelance photography business, Woodward, Oklahoma, 1985-1987; editor, Woodward Phoenix, Woodward, Oklahoma, 1986-1988; teaching assistant, Department of History, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1988-1990.