

GENERAL FRANZ SIGEL

IN THE CIVIL WAR

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PARCHMENT

G. U. S. A.

## CHAPTER I

### THE YEARS BEFORE

When the Civil War began in April 1861 there were thousands of foreigners in the United States who were willing to serve in the armies of their adopted country. The question uppermost in their minds was "How shall we serve?" Many well-meaning and loyal citizens sincerely believed to field a well-disciplined combat force would be no problem at all. It was to the contrary a tremendous task because the citizenry was without the assistance of enough regular army men and enough trained and educated officers from which to draw the necessary leaders to train the recruits.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the refusal of regular army officers and men to break up their regular units and form cadres of volunteer and militia outfits was a contributing problem.

In the North the job of training men was far greater than in the South, because in the North there existed a larger proportion of untrained soldiers in relation to trained soldiers. Many Americans in the North looked upon men who had had previous military training--and particularly those who had seen combat service--with misgivings.

The Union could secure the services of only a few soldiers who had seen combat in the Mexican War. Therefore, at the start of the Civil War, the people in the North were prone to think of the immigrant

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<sup>1</sup>Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 175.

participants in the continental revolutionary movement of 1848 as a blessing in disguise. In fact, the beginning of the Civil War turned out to be a blessing to some of the Germans whose ambitions had been checked by the rebellion in Germany, especially those Germans from Prussia.<sup>2</sup> These new United States citizens had been trained to be professional soldiers, and even a fair understanding of military know-how was then of much help to the Americans, who knew very little about the science of war. There were some former army men in the Revolution of 1848 whose prestige and military skills were sometimes exaggerated by their fellow countrymen in the United States, but some of them immediately achieved high rank. At the outbreak of the Crimean War England granted rank to foreigners in its army equal to the rank previously held by them in their native countries; when the crisis came in America, the Federal authorities similarly recognized the military rank previously held by foreigners who had come to this country to live.

This brings General Franz Sigel into the picture. Of the large number of highly educated Germans who came to this land in consequence of their identity with the Revolution of 1848, Sigel had, over and above, the most outstanding reputation as a soldier. A thin, dark, nervous man with a rather gloomy appearance, he was revered by a large number of Germans in this country for the record he had made in Europe.

He was born at Sinsheim, Baden, Germany, on November 18, 1824, the son of Franz Moritz and Anna (Lichtenauer) Sigel. His father was the chief public official of the district.<sup>3</sup> He entered school at the Gymnasium

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>3</sup>John McElroy, The Struggle for Missouri (Washington: The National Tribune Company, 1909), 142.

of Beuchsal, completed the course, and then enrolled in the Military Academy at Karlsruhe. He graduated there in 1843 and was commissioned a lieutenant; then he entered the army of the Grand Duke of Baden. He advanced so rapidly that by 1847 he had achieved the rank of adjutant, and was considered one of the most proficient artilleryists in Germany. His views of free government conflicted with the existing authority. An additional complicating factor occurred in 1847 when he had a duel with another German soldier, wounded his opponent, and quit the army.

In the rebellion at Baden in 1848 he was a companion of Frederick Hecker, one of the liberals. He assumed command of one of the liberal armies and led a group of 4,000 revolutionists against the existing regime, but lost and had to escape to Switzerland.<sup>4</sup> The following year the liberal forces were successful in re-establishing a government, and Sigel went back to Germany to become minister of war for the rebellious regime. He again led an army onto the field, this time in a successful battle against the Prussians. He made a name for himself in a number of encounters.

In one battle, commanding only thirty thousand troops, he opposed a force nearly eighty thousand in number and made a successful retreat without losing any men or artillery. He was again compelled to flee to Switzerland, staying there until the government of Switzerland expelled him. In 1851 he went to England, remained there a short while, and then came to America. It was the skill manifested in these short engagements that gave him immeasurable prestige with the Germans in this country.

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<sup>4</sup>Samuel J. Heidner, "Franz Sigel," in Dumas Malone and others, eds., Dictionary of American Biography (22 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1944), XVII, 153.

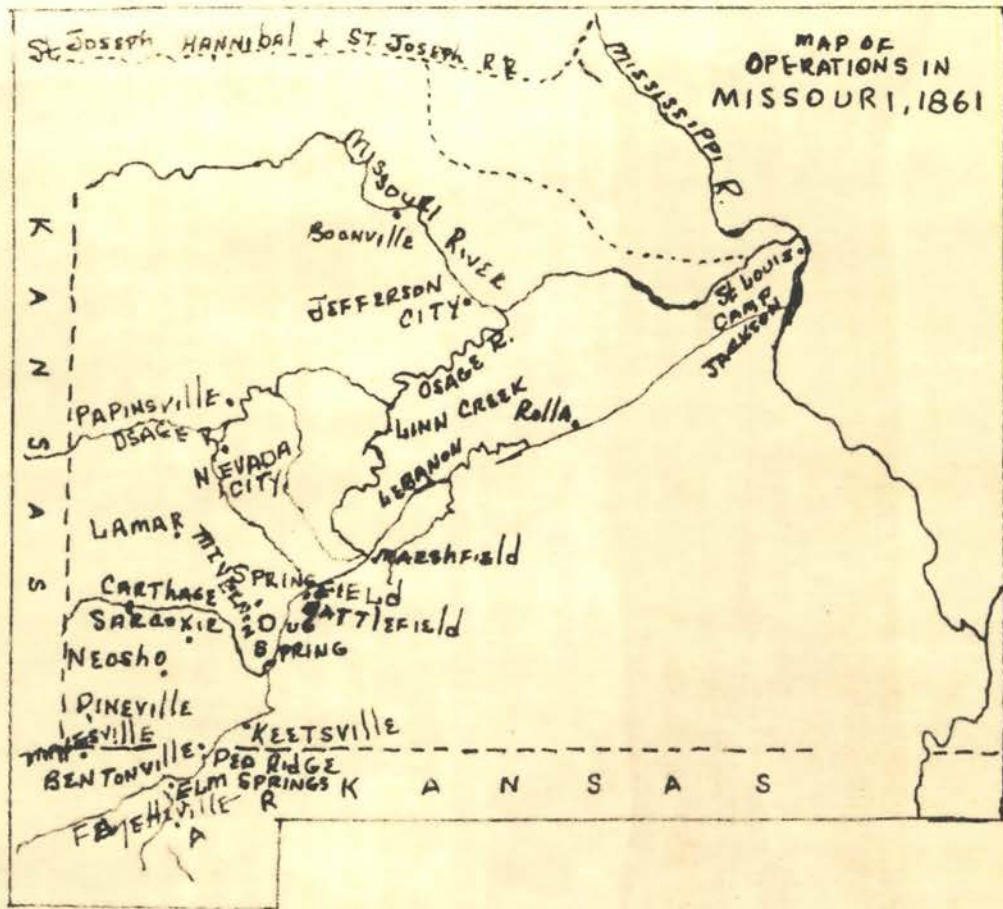


He arrived in New York in 1852. There he became for a number of years an instructor of mathematics in the private school of Dr. Rudolph Dulon. While teaching in that city he was affiliated with the Fifth New York Militia, in which he held the rank of major. In 1854 he married Eloise Dulon, the daughter of his first employer. In 1857 he accepted a position in the German-American school of St. Louis as a teacher of mathematics and history, and in the fall of that year became director of the public schools in that city.<sup>5</sup> It was the call of this job that placed him in the strategic state of Missouri when President Abraham Lincoln issued the call to arms in April 1861.

The years from 1861 to 1865 found many foreigners in the service of the United States. During the winter of 1862-63 the Eleventh Army Corps contained twenty-seven regiments of infantry and six batteries of artillery. The corps was sometimes referred to as "the foreign contingent" of the Army of the Potomac because of the large number of German-speaking commanders within it. There were fifteen so-called "foreign" regiments in the corps, about eleven of which were predominantly German, and they included about 4,500 soldiers; the other four regiments contained other foreign nationalities, numbering 2,500 soldiers altogether. There were many other civilians who had been born in Germany or who were of German descent in the North when the war began. Figures indicate that approximately 190,000 soldiers who were born in Germany signed up during the crisis. The Eleventh Corps had the greatest number of any single unit. Probably three-fifths of its command were born in other countries. Some of its outstanding men were Sigel, Carl Schurz, Prince Felix zu Salm Salm, Adolf W. A. F. Baron Von Steinwehr, Frederick Hecker and Emil Frey.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 154.



Sigel was indirectly responsible for many of the Germans who enlisted in the Federal armies, for a number of them admired him to the point of obsession, and the high esteem in which they held him served to influence many of them to volunteer for service. It was therefore a decided asset for the Union to have Sigel on its side.<sup>6</sup>

A love for free government had long been a ruling motive in Sigel's life and undoubtedly found focus in the effort to preserve the Federal government. His prompt and ardent support of the Union cause was activated in part by his dislike of slavery. In addition, Sigel's life in the United States was spent in areas essentially northern in sentiment and culture. That he should take up military life at the outbreak of the war seemed but normal for a man who was in the uniform of a professional soldier in Germany and a major in the Fifth Regiment of the New York Militia.

Soon after Sigel moved to St. Louis the German gymnastic societies in that city had assumed semi-military status in defense against anti-foreign riots. At the outbreak of the war public places in St. Louis owned by a few German leaders were opened to recruit other Germans for the Union army. Sigel himself had financial interest in a beer hall which was loaned without a rental fee for recruiting purposes.

Although many volumes have been written about such leading generals as Ulysses Simpson Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, Philip Henry Sheridan, and Robert Edward Lee, little attention has been given to Sigel. He has not been the subject of a complete biographical study. This is the first attempt to evaluate the Civil War activities of this important German-American military leader.

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<sup>6</sup>Hartwell Osborn, ed., "On the Right at Chancellorsville," Military Essays and Recollections (4 vols., Chicago: Cozzens and Beaton Company, 1907), IV, 174.

## CHAPTER II

### CIVIL WAR IN MISSOURI

Sigal immediately responded to the service of his new homeland. At the outbreak of the crisis his initial acts included rallying the Germans to the cause of the Union and organizing the first regiment of volunteers in Missouri—the Third Missouri Infantry. Being an artillerist, he could not omit a battery of artillery. The Germans of New York wanted him to become a general of a command in that state, but he refused because he felt that Missouri offered more opportunities for his service and because he did not care to leave the faithful Germans of that state.<sup>1</sup>

During the war in Missouri he not only established his skill in military science on a number of occasions, but he also showed that he had the ability to command. He assisted General Nathaniel Lyon in saving St. Louis, with its important arsenal, for the Union and helped Lyon take Camp Jackson; by leading successfully a column of men in an assault on Camp Jackson he proved himself a virtual genius in military tactics. He was immediately authorized by Lyon to command the Second Missouri Brigade, and attained the rank of brigadier general of volunteers on May 17, 1861. In the summer of 1861 he took part in the

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<sup>1</sup>A. E. Zucker, The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 187.

battle of Carthage and the battle of Wilson's Creek, both in southwest Missouri.<sup>2</sup>

In the first year of the war in Missouri, the Union and the Confederate authorities worked to control the state's three strategic cities: St. Louis, Jefferson City and Springfield. The Union armies drove the Confederates from St. Louis and Jefferson City, and occupied Springfield. Because of this, the Confederates massed their troops to attempt to capture Springfield.<sup>3</sup>

John C. Fremont, who was appointed commanding general of the Department of the West by General Winfield Scott, arrived in St. Louis from New York, July 15, 1861, and at this point Fremont set up his headquarters. Lyon had previously come to St. Louis from Fort Riley, Kansas, on February 6, 1861, and early recognized that the place to fight for St. Louis and Missouri was in the neighborhood of Springfield. From Springfield, Lyon also planned to carry his fight into Arkansas.

Although a community of only three thousand citizens, Springfield was important because it was not only the center of a rich farming area but because it also served as a link between northern and southern Missouri and was the gateway to Arkansas. Because of the town's importance, Confederate General Claiborne F. Jackson of Missouri sent troops to Pool's Prairie, Neosho, and Sarcxie (Neosho is located about twenty miles southwest of Sarcxie) to launch a big drive in the summer of 1861 in an effort to capture Springfield. Meanwhile, Union troops were slowly moving into the vicinity of Springfield from points as far as a hundred and twenty miles away, in order to defend it from the Confederates.

To assist in accomplishing this, Sigel arrived in Sarcxie, about

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<sup>2</sup>Lonn, Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy, 177.

<sup>3</sup>McElroy, The Struggle for Missouri, 149.

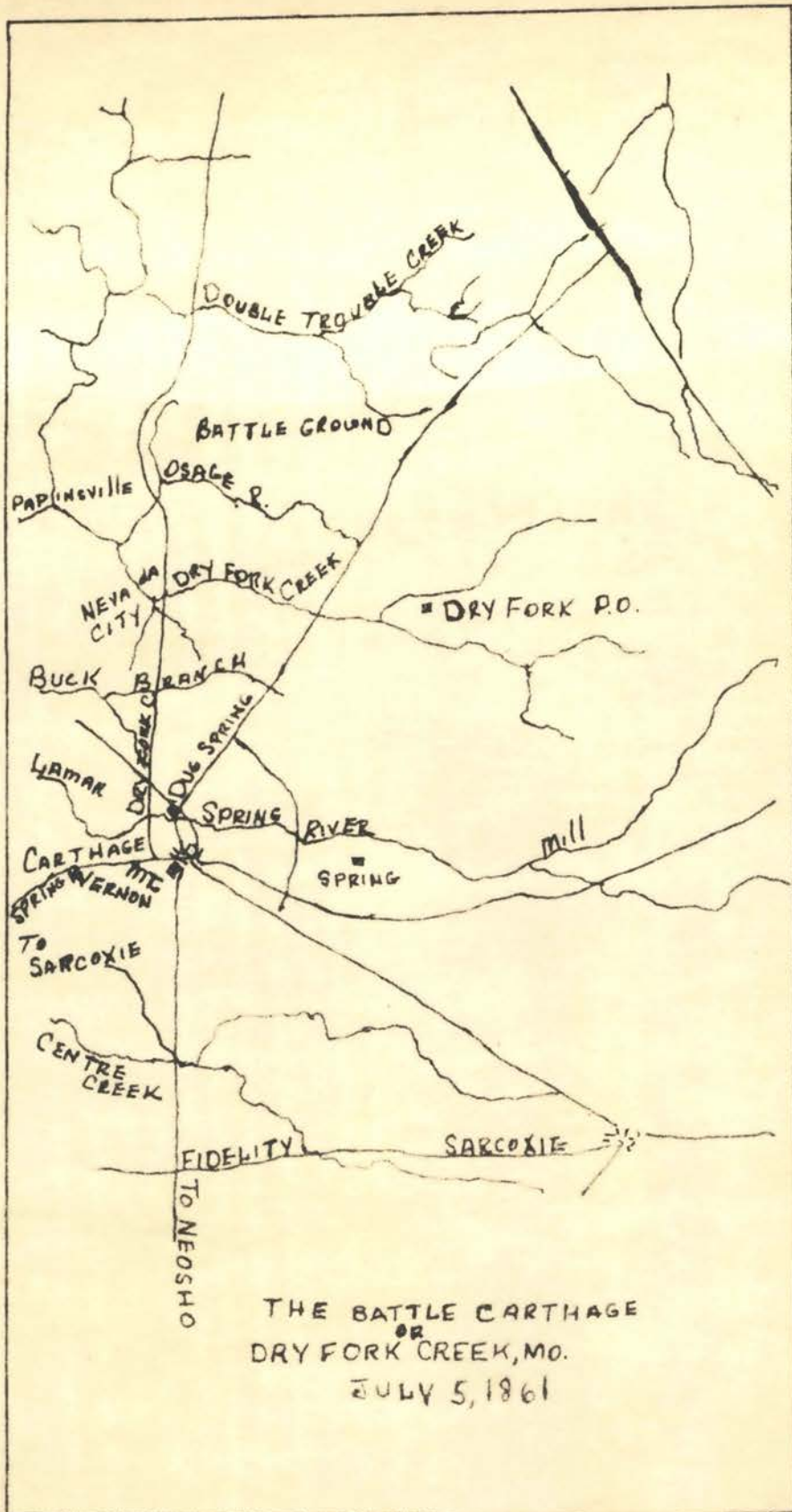
forty-four miles southwest of Springfield, at approximately five o'clock in the evening of Friday, June 28. Then he was told by Union scouts who had gone in advance that a Confederate force of approximately seven hundred or eight hundred men had assembled at Pool's Prairie, about six miles south of Neosho, and that the force was under the command of General Sterling Price. Sigel was also informed that on Thursday and Friday, June 28 and 29, General Monroe M. Parsons was in command of Jackson's troops, encamped about fifteen miles north of Lamar. He was also told at the same time that Price and Parsons had learned that some Union troops were encamped in and around Springfield. Sigel also had a report that General James E. Rains was marching westward and had passed through Papinsville on Thursday, June 27, just one day after the report that Jackson was in that area.

Sigel formed his troops to march against the enemy, planning to attack the Confederates first at Pool's Prairie, and then to march north and attack the troops of Jackson and Rains. By this operation he planned to open his line of communication with Lyon's troops, which he learned had a small engagement on June 28 at Ball's Mill, located on the banks of the Little Osage River, about fifteen miles north of Nevada City. Sigel dispatched several scouts to try to make contact with Lyon's troops, but only one scout returned. And the one who did return was devoid of reliable information.<sup>4</sup>

Scarcely had Sigel's troops left Sarcoxie on their march to Pool's Prairie, June 29, when he received information that the camp at Pool's

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<sup>4</sup>Sigel's Report, July 11, 1961, United States War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. III, 16.



Prairie had been evacuated on the morning of that same day and that the enemy was moving toward Elk Mills, located thirty miles southwest of Neosho, in the direction of Camp Walker, close to Maysville, not far from the southwest corner of Missouri.

Sigel then felt it his responsibility to turn his attention to the enemy forces in the northern part of the state. Thinking it possible that the opponent might be trying to make his way into Arkansas, he ordered a detachment of two companies and two pieces of artillery, under the leadership of Captain John F. Graner, to Cedar Creek and Grand Falls where they were not only to occupy the Military and Kansas line road, but also to obtain all possible knowledge about the northern strength of the enemy. Sigel instructed the battalion commanded by Colonel Max Solomon, who was on a march from Mount Vernon to Sarcoxie, (Mount Vernon is located about twenty miles northeast of Sarcoxie) to merge with the troops under Sigel's command at Neosho, arriving there by means of forced marches. No sooner had this battalion reached Neosho than Sigel diverted them from Neosho and Grand Falls to Diamond Grove, about seven miles south of Carthage, where they assembled at noon and advanced in a northerly direction.

Sigel ordered one company under Captain Augustus Hackman to move from Mount Vernon to Sarcoxie. He directed Captain Cornelius Conard, of Company B., Rifle Battalion, Third Regiment, to remain in Neosho as a garrison force to guard its Union citizens against bands of Confederates; he instructed the regiment to retreat to Sarcoxie should they find it necessary. He had sent two companies to Grand Falls and the company under Captain Joseph Inest had not returned when the Carthage engagement started. On the evening of July 4, after a hike of about twenty miles, the troops encamped on the southwest side of Carthage, behind the Spring



River. Sigel now learned that the troops under Jackson, reported to be 4,000 strong, were about nine miles from them. Enemy scouts were seen everywhere on the large plateau north of Carthage, a village located about seventeen miles northwest of Sarcoxie.

The troops in action under Sigel on July 5 were the following: nine companies of the Third Regiment, with a total effective strength of 550 men; seven companies of the Fifth Regiment, numbering 400 men; two batteries of artillery, with four pieces in each. Commanding these soldiers, Sigel moved slowly toward the enemy, his advance guards attacking the mounted riflemen of the Confederate's advance guards. The Union wagon train, carrying the troops' baggage, followed at a distance of approximately three miles.<sup>5</sup>

Sigel crossed Dry Fork Creek six miles above Carthage and advanced three miles farther up the creek, when he discovered the enemy commanded by Jackson drawn up and ready for battle on the high ground which gradually sloped upward from a rivulet about a half mile from him. He could see that the Confederate's first line consisted of three regiments deployed with the proper intervals between them. Two regiments, forming the wings of this combat formation, consisted of cavalry; the center of infantry, cavalry, and two pieces of artillery. Two other artillery pieces were posted on the right, and there was also one piece of artillery on the left wing. Sigel could see that the whole enemy force immediately in front of him numbered possibly 3,500 soldiers besides a probable strong reserve in the rear.

His advance guards had already attacked the enemy. He sent two pieces of artillery and two companies of the Third Regiment ahead to

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 17.

help them. One piece of artillery and one company of the Third Regiment of infantry he stationed behind the creek as protection against activities of the mounted enemy troops against his rear, where his supplies were located. The remnant of his force he deployed as follows: battalion number two of the Third Regiment, commanded by Major Henry Mischoff, was in close column on his left, with four pieces next to them; covering the middle was the Fifth Regiment, now divided into two battalions, one commanded by Colonel Edward Salomon and the other by Lieutenant Colonel Christian Wolff; three pieces of artillery were on his right under the command of Captain Christian Essig; and Colonel Francis Hassendeubel was in charge of the Third Regiment on the left.<sup>6</sup>

After these arrangements were completed, and after he had advanced several hundred yards, Sigel instructed Major Frank Backof, with several pieces under his command, to open fire on the Confederates. The enemy returned the fire immediately. And when Sigel looked around he saw two mounted regiments preparing to turn his right flank. The enemy circled the left flank, but left big spaces between themselves. Sigel observed these intervals and immediately ordered all of his artillery to fire on the enemy's right flank, with the result that the Confederates soon commenced to withdraw from this attack.

Sigel now formed a chain of troops between the pieces of his artillery, directing two pieces of artillery of Essig's battery from their position on the right wing to a position of the left wing. Sigel then informed his commanders and men that his plans were to secure the heights by moving his left flank and by gaining ground on the right flank of the enemy's center. In the midst of the action Captain

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 18.

J. A. Wilkins informed Sigel that his men were out of ammunition and that they were unable to advance. No time could be spared. A part of the troops on both his left and right were already fighting mounted troops, and to advance the infantry without the help of Wilkins' artillery would probably result in defeat. The adverse morale effect of the Confederate's mounted regiment behind Sigel's lines, although not readily apparent, could not be denied. The possibility of losing all of his supplies was another important consideration. It was only after serious deliberation that Sigel ordered all available men into the battle, with the exception of four pieces of Captain Wilkins' battery, authorized to guard the baggage train.

Finally, on July 5, after all hopes of complete victory for Sigel had vanished, he ordered his troops to retreat toward Dry Fork Creek. The enemy followed him slowly, so Sigel soon decided to make another stand. It was at this time that his troops resisted the enemy's entire force of about 4,000 troops for two hours, inflicting the severest losses of the battle on the Confederates.

By this time the enemy's flag had been twice shot down by Sigel's troops, much to the elation of all his men. Meanwhile, the huge bodies of the enemy's mounted troops had not only completely encircled him, but had also assembled into line against his rear guard. They had concealed themselves behind a tiny stream called Buck's Branch, which Sigel had to pass. In order to engage the enemy, he left his position on Dry Fork Creek and directed the four pieces of artillery of his reserve baggage train to protect his right and left flanks. Assisted by parts of the Third and Fifth regiments, he posted the remaining artillery and regiments at strategic points against the main body of the enemy and ordered his other troops to move from Dry Fork. After a single round of fire from

his entire line, his infantry moved up quickly toward the Confederates and routed them. The enemy fled, their flight accompanied by reverberating cheers from Sigel's force.

Sigel's men and supplies crossed the creek and retreated unharmed to the hills on the north side of Carthage, in front of Spring River. Here he again made ready for battle. The enemy followed slowly, moving up their infantry first, then their cavalry, all the while trying to encircle Sigel and thus bar him from the Springfield road. Sigel knew that he must keep his avenue of communication open to Mount Vernon and Springfield. So he commanded Wolff with two pieces of artillery to move to Carthage and protect the town's eastern heights on the Sarcoxie road. Cramer, with two companies (Indest and Zeis), had gone along with him, and they were to guard the west side against any activities of the Confederates. He ordered his rear guard to take possession of the community and to stand guard while the remainder of his force was permitted to rest.

Sigel's forces, after a march of twenty-two miles on July 4 and eighteen miles on July 5, had been in action since nine o'clock in the morning and had been exposed to high temperatures while having very little to eat or drink. The enemy's cavalry crossed Spring River at different places and scattered themselves in the forest, some of them on foot, after which they molested Sigel's soldiers from all sides. Sigel therefore commanded a retreat toward Sarcoxie, under the guard of infantry and artillery, securing the first vantage point on the heights in back of Carthage. He then held the opening of the path to Sarcoxie which led into the woods two and one-half miles southwest of Carthage. From this place his men marched unharmed to Sarcoxie. The losses of all the troops under Sigel's command for that day were thirteen killed and

thirty-one wounded. Among the losses were Captain John E. Strodtmann, Company E, Third Regiment, and Bischoff, Company B, of the same regiment. The First Battery lost nine horses, the company of Bischoff, one horse. One baggage wagon was lost in Carthage for want of horses to move it.<sup>7</sup>

From the information that Sigel could gather from dependable sources, he learned that the Confederates' losses were somewhere between three hundred and four hundred killed and wounded. One of the enemy's artillery pieces exploded and one wagon broke down. Sigel reported that one of his captains, along with his company of ninety-four men, was captured at Neosho on July 5. They were given their freedom after vowing that they would not again take up arms against the Confederate States.

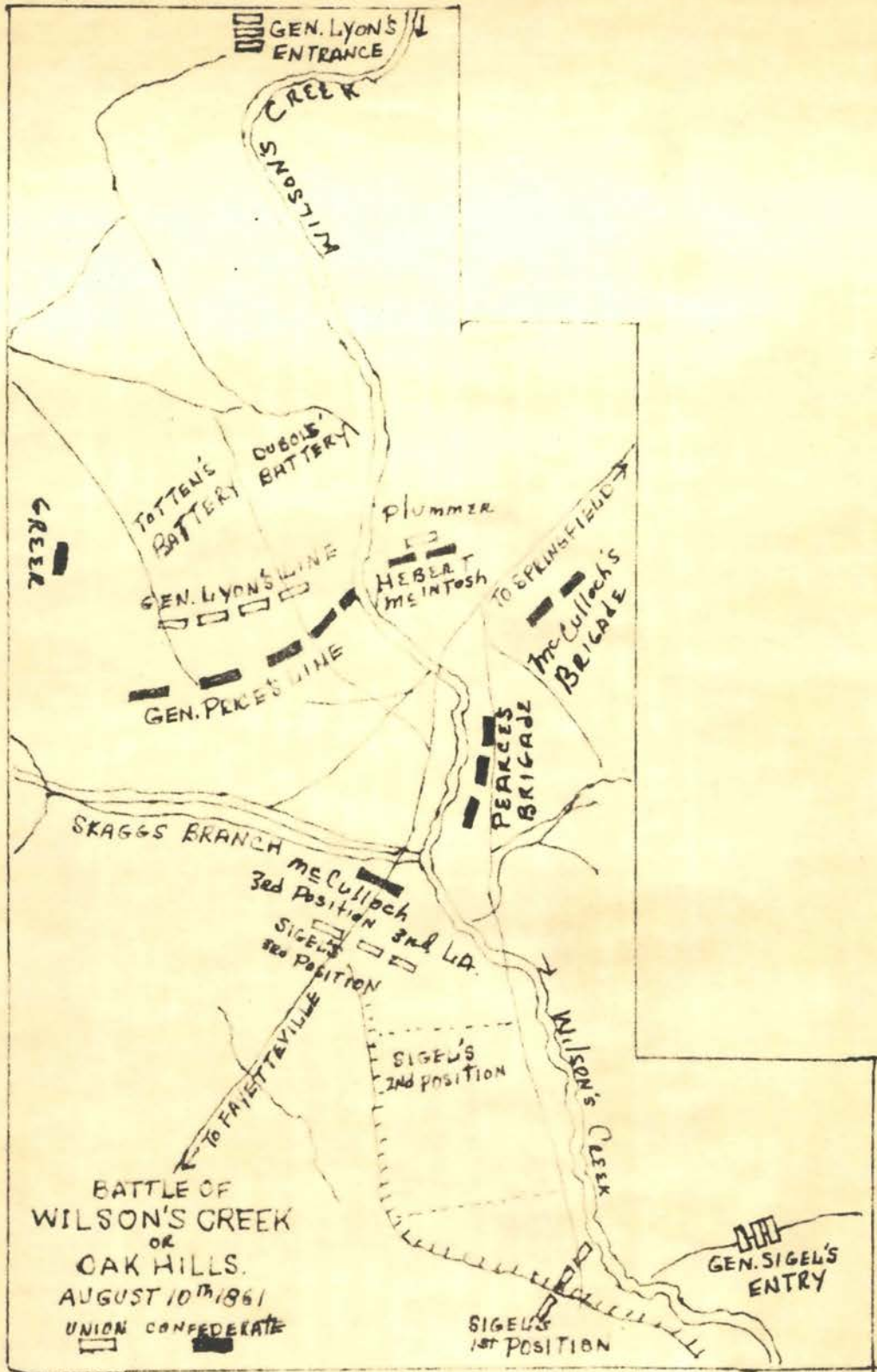
The Confederate victory at Carthage produced great rejoicing among Sigel's enemy. They had pierced the Union line and forced Sigel to retreat. Sigel, however, drew praise for his masterful retreat and for the skillful handling of his artillery. For instance, one of Sigel's batteries would sometimes detain the enemy while another battery would be placed at a strategic position behind. This maneuver would be repeated when needed. At various times during this battle the batteries were cunningly concealed, and the enemy would charge up to the muzzle only to receive a death blow in the face.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of the battle Sigel praised his officers and men, stating that he was well pleased with the skill, the courage and the bravery his men displayed. He cited examples of the bravery of his men and pointed to the troops' action. One of the things mentioned was that his men had fought against overwhelming odds, sometimes being forced to

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>8</sup>McElroy, The Struggle for Missouri, 141.



withdraw, but always returning and fighting like veterans, defending one position after another without one soldier forsaking the line of battle. He had special praise for some of the regiments and their commanders.<sup>9</sup>

With those few days of combat added to the record Sigel waited anxiously for more action, destined to come next at Wilson's Creek. Slightly over a month, however, passed between the battles of Garthage and Wilson's Creek (July 5 - August 10). The intervening days were not wasted, for they were spent in making careful plans of action to be taken against the enemy and in analyzing the probable strength of the opponent, as reported by scouts and other observers. By August 10 Sigel's troops had had a month's rest and were in fine shape again to do battle.

Several days prior to the battle of Wilson's Creek Lyon knew beyond a reasonable doubt that the enemy forces had assembled on the banks of Crane Creek, thirty-five miles southwest of Springfield. They consisted of about 22,000 men led by Price, Parsons, and Rains with as many as twenty pieces of artillery. On the other hand, the Union forces numbered only about 5,000. By about August 7, the main body of the Confederates had reached Wilson's Creek. They were encamped along the creek, their forces stretching out over a distance of about three miles.<sup>10</sup>

Wilson's Creek rises in the vicinity of Springfield, flows west some five miles, and runs south nine or ten miles before emptying into the James River, a tributary of the White River. Tyrel's Creek and Skegg's Branch flow into Wilson's Creek.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Official Records: Armies, Ser. I., Vol. III, 19.

<sup>10</sup>McElroy, The Struggle for Missouri, 150.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 154.

It was on August 8 at Springfield that Lyon, the commanding officer, called a council of war in order to make plans to attack the Confederates. In the meeting the subordinate commanders agreed upon a single attack to be launched the following day. This attack had to be put off because of the inclement weather and the fatigued condition of the troops. On the morning of the day of the postponed attack Sigel had a lengthy audience with Lyon and persuaded him to agree upon a divided attack, which was attempted on August 10. Lyon authorized Sigel to take 1,400 infantrymen, two companies of cavalry and six pieces of artillery; with this force he was to march by way of the Fayetteville, Arkansas, road commencing about 1 a.m. on the night of August 9, until he should come to the right flank and the rear of the Confederates, and at the break of day assault them with all possible force. General Lyon, keeping 3,700 men and ten pieces of artillery under his command, was to advance about the same hour toward the enemy down the Mount Vernon road, launching his frontal attack on the Confederates the same morning that Sigel was due to smite the enemy's rear.<sup>12</sup>

Lyon ordered a force of 250 home guard troops, with two pieces of artillery, to stand guard at Springfield and to protect the wagon trains and public property. Sigel's men marched out at six-thirty o'clock in the late afternoon of August 9 and arrived at the break of the following day within two miles of the right and rear of the Confederate's location. Here his men proceeded to cut off and bring into camp some 40 enemy stragglers out foraging for food. These prisoners were taken in order to keep the foragers from informing their commanders about the location of the Union forces.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 159.



Lyon--along with the First, Second, and Third Brigades--departed at about the same hour that Sigel and his troops left. And by one o'clock in the morning, Lyon and General John M. Schofield, Lyon's Chief of Staff had advanced close enough to the Confederates to see their camp fires on the banks of Wilson's Creek. Interrogated by Schofield about the feasibility of the divided attack on which the army was to operate, Lyon replied briefly: "It is Sigel's plan." Sigel's judgment of war, added to his actual combat experience, were then felt to be so superior that he usually drew no criticism.

At about ten minutes past five, on the morning of August 10, the battle began. The First Kansas of Lyon's command moved up on the left of the enemy commanded by Rains, and opened a brisk fire on a Confederate battery of artillery located in the center. Price began rushing assistance to Rains until there were about two hundred Confederates on the ridge. The enemy immediately responded with fire of their own. The First Kansas and the First Missouri moved forward with great force and after a bitter skirmish lasting about twenty minutes, the Confederate resistance crumbled, and they withdrew.

There was then a brief lull. During this respite the Union men were encouraged and elated when they heard Sigel's battery blasting the Confederates approximately two miles down the line. At the head of the enemy's flank, Lyon's force pushed forward and vigorously attacked the wagon trains. There were soon signs of terror in the enemy's camp and some of the enemy's wagons were on fire.<sup>14</sup>

Price advanced his men toward Lyon's troops until they covered Lyon's entire front. Both sides showed an eagerness to fight and moved

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 168.

up to close quarters where a bloody battle, lasting about a half hour, ensued. Sometimes segments of Federal troops were momentarily thrown into disorder, but they withdrew for only a few yards before reorganizing and returning to the line. By eight on the morning of August 10, the battle had raged furiously for about two hours. At approximately nine o'clock a lull occurred in the fight. Then the enemy reinforced his troops.<sup>15</sup>

"What has happened to Sigel?" wondered the Union commanders. It was later ascertained that he had crossed Wilson's Creek and had come into line within easy range of Confederate General Ben McCulloch's headquarters. At once Captain George C. Schaeffer of Sigel's corps opened fire with his battery upon a large Confederate force of Arkansas, Texas, and Missouri troops busy eating breakfast. This fusillade of shells so demoralized many of them that they did not recover their composure during the day, taking little if any part in the rest of the engagement.

A Confederate colonel, T. G. Churchill, succeeded in rallying his Arkansas regiment, but before he could return and engage Sigel, he received urgent orders to hurry to the right and help drive Union troops from that area. Sigel's men advanced into the deserted camp, where unfortunately, they broke rank and began to plunder.<sup>16</sup>

McCulloch reassembled his force and attacked Sigel's disorganized men in the camp, driving them away. Sigel was able to rally only a small group of his men before the enemy advanced upon them. The Confederates who advanced on Sigel had obtained uniforms like those the

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 172.

Union troops wore, and, wearing them, deceived Sigel. The Confederates moved upon the Union troops until they were within ten paces of them, opening fire with such a destructive volley that man and horses toppled in front of them. Sigel's brigade was completely routed, suffering a loss of some two hundred and fifty prisoners to the Confederates. Sigel also lost a Union flag, later used by the enemy to deceive Federal troops.

This engagement was the turning point in the battle, which now went in favor of the Confederates. At the beginning of the campaign the Union forces fought against superior numbers, and with the loss of Sigel's support, the battle of Wilson's Creek slowly came to a halt. By about five o'clock in the afternoon of August 10 the main body of the Union army had gone back to Springfield. There they found Sigel, along with most of his brigade. And to Springfield scattered Union troops streamed in from all directions. This rout spelled defeat for the Union army at Wilson's Creek.<sup>17</sup>

Sigel's performance in this battle lived up to his reputation as a revolutionary commander in Germany. He retreated at times when other Union commanders thought he should have stood and fought. But Sigel followed the pattern of combat he had been trained to fight in Germany. He believed in striking his enemy a death blow and then retreating. He used this tactic because he realized fully that the enemy could easily acquire reinforcements if left unmolested. This added strength would cause his troops to be overwhelmingly outnumbered and perhaps driven from Missouri.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 175.

There was now considerable question as to Sigel's military leadership. General Lyon apparently believed the German-American to be most capable from the military point of view, for after his defeat in the Carthage engagement, he wrote:

The general commanding, having examined with care the official report made by Col. F. Sigel, commanding Second Brigade, Missouri Volunteers, of the engagement between the troops under his command and the Confederate forces on the 5th instant, takes great pleasure in expressing in his official manner his high appreciation of the generalship displayed by this able commander and of the high soldierly qualities exhibited by his officers and men. The general commanding tenders to Colonel Sigel and his command his thanks, and those of a grateful country, for their brilliant service.<sup>18</sup>

A group of Unionists of the area of Missouri that Sigel fought over apparently held him in the highest regard even after his conduct at Wilson's Creek, so they wrote General H. W. Halleck, the commander of the Union forces, a letter of commendation:

We the undersigned, citizens, residents of Southwestern Missouri, present the following resolution for your consideration: Resolved, That the people of the Southwest entertain the highest opinion of the military skill of Brigadier-General Franz Sigel, and that we respectfully petition you to send to the Southwest sufficient force to hold that part of the state.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, Sigel had his critics as well as his admirers. This is evident in the words of Schofield, who was Lyon's Chief of Staff during the battle of Wilson's Creek, where Lyon met his death. Discussing Sigel's merits as a commander, Schofield accused Sigel of leaving a single company of infantry in a small town with no manifest purpose

<sup>18</sup>Nathaniel Lyon to John M. Schofield, July 25, 1861, Official Records: *Armies*, Ser. I., Vol. III, 19.

<sup>19</sup>Missouri Committee to Henry W. Halleck, November 20, 1861, Official Records: *Armies*, Ser. I., Vol. VIII, 370-371. From November 19, 1861 to July 11, 1862, General Halleck was commander of the Department of the Missouri, including the States of Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Arkansas, and the section of Kentucky west of the Cumberland River.

except that of possible capture by the Confederates. This capture occurred on July 5. He pointed out that in the battle of Carthage Sigel retreated all day and that he advocated a divided attack for the battle of Wilson's Creek so that he could have a separate command. He also stated that in attempting to perform his assigned part Sigel not only lost his infantry and his artillery, but also fled alone, or almost alone, to Springfield, arriving there hours before the battle was concluded. Yet, said Schofield, no one in his command was wounded or killed.

Schofield insisted that Sigel made no effort to rally his troops in support of Lyon. On another occasion, mentioned Schofield, Sigel's troops were to be the advance guard. At the appointed hour Schofield said that he discovered Sigel asleep in his bunk while his men prepared to fix breakfast. Furthermore, said Schofield, it was late in the afternoon before he could get the force started. On another day, alleged Schofield, Sigel kept the main column waiting in the hot sun on a dry tract of land while some of his other men killed cows for food and cooked their breakfast. Schofield stated further that the troops became very tired and upset, and that control of the men was impossible. Therefore, almost all of the officers requested a change in command, and Major Samuel Sturgis, in compliance with the request, took command of Sigel's troops.

Schofield wrote further that his position as a high ranking officer on Lyon's staff gave him an excellent opportunity to evaluate Sigel's qualities as an officer. Schofield said that he had tried to observe his good as well as his poor qualities more fully than many others who presumed to pass judgment on him. Sigel, he said, in terms of theoretical training, was far superior to the average officer in America. Sigel, admitted Schofield, had studied with much care the science of war and seemed thoroughly acquainted with the battles of all outstanding captains

so far as the strategic movements were concerned, and also seemed conversant with the requirements of the staff. However, in some areas, such as logistics and discipline, he was, said Schofield, greatly deficient. These shortcomings, he continued, were so apparent as to make it impossible for him to gain the respect of American officers and men; these qualities therefore made Sigel fully incompetent for a high command in the Union Army.<sup>20</sup>

Sigel subsequently made these criticisms appear somewhat unfounded, for within a few months he made an outstanding reputation in Arkansas at the battle of Pea Ridge.

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<sup>20</sup>John M. Schofield to H. W. Halleck, February 13, 1862, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. III, 94.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HERO OF PEA RIDGE

The struggle at Wilson's Creek on August 10 that resulted in victory for the Confederates forced the little band of Union troops to retreat to Springfield, and from there to Rolla, where they established temporary headquarters. This memorable reversal for the Federal forces allowed Price, the military leader of the Confederate forces in Missouri, the privilege of taking possession of Springfield, the largest town and the central point of southwest Missouri.

And to recapture what was lost by the Union, another military operation—the third in eight months—was decided upon. This campaign was to be launched by the same army which participated in the battles of Carthage and Wilson's Creek, but this time the Union troops were to be led by a new commander. However, the Federal force was greatly reduced because of the many cases of sickness coupled with the above-average mortality in the camps during the winter months. In fact, the campaigns of late summer of 1861 had to be done over again in the spring of 1862.

By the last of December 1861 Sigel had not fully recuperated from a severe illness in camp near Rolla, but despite this, he was instructed by General H. W. Halleck, commanding officer of the Western Department, on December 24, to succeed General David Hunter, then in command of the troops at Rolla. Halleck told Sigel to proceed to Rolla and take charge of the troops stationed there. These troops included Sigel's own

unit, the Third Missouri Volunteers. At Rolla he was to prepare all troops for active service in the field. The German-American general arrived at his new headquarters on December 23 and by December 27 the organization of the troops was completed. Then, beginning on December 29, the troops moved from Rolla. They arrived in Lebanon by January 9, 1862. At this point they assembled all available able troops and left Lebanon February 9 for Marshfield, arriving there February 11. On February 12 the Union forces had a light skirmish with the rear-guard of the enemy's troops, and as a result of the engagement, the Union forces recaptured Springfield. Price then withdrew his troops to Arkansas to seek support from McCulloch. The Union troops pursued him, attacking his rear guard from time to time, but not overtaking his main force until March 5. By this time both sides were braced for the action soon to occur at Pea Ridge.<sup>1</sup>

On the evening of March 5 the main body of Sigel's two divisions were stationed at McKisick's farm, three and one-half miles south of Bentonville and one mile from the fork of the roads leading west to Maysville and northeast to Pineville. The Second Missouri, under Colonel Frederick Schaefer, together with one company of cavalry, were encamped at Osage Mills, sometimes called Smith's Mill, located five and one-half miles southeast of McKisick's farm, while Sigel's guards protected all the other entrances to his encampment. In order to survey the country bordering on Indian Territory and to keep the Confederates

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<sup>1</sup>Clarence C. Buel and Robert V. Johnson, eds., Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (4 vols., New York: The Century Company, 1884-1888), I, 315-316. In this title Sigel gives an excellent account of the battle of Pea Ridge, pointing out the significance that this Union victory had upon ridding Missouri of Confederate forces.



of southwest Missouri from going with Price's army by the State line road, Major Joseph Conrad, commanding five companies of infantry, sixty cavalry men and two pieces of Captain Martin Welfley's battery, was ordered on the first day of March to Lindsey's Prairie. He arrived in the evening at a point sixteen miles southwest of McKisick's farm. On the second day he arrived at Maysville, and, on the third day, he returned to the Union camp at McKisick's farm.

Such was Sigel's location on the evening of the fifth, when he received instructions from General Samuel R. Curtis, his new superior, to send a detachment of mounted troops to Pineville, Arkansas. In this village there were reported to be some 200 or 300 Confederates who habitually molested and persecuted the Union people of McDonald County. Sigel ordered Major Emeric Meszaros, along with eighty soldiers, to march at ten o'clock p.m. by a northwestern route to Pineville. At the same time Captain Eugene von Kielmansegge was sent to Major Conrad at Maysville to take charge of Conrad's sixty cavalymen, one piece of artillery, and nineteen infantrymen. He arrived at ten o'clock in the night, journeying by way of Maysville to Rutledge and then to Pineville. He was to act in agreement with Meszaros. A home guard company, located between Pineville and Keetsville, was directed to take over at night the route leading to Neosho and Kent, thereby rendering impossible the escape of the Confederates in the direction of the latter two communities. Meszaros and von Kielmansegge were expected to go into Pineville from the east, southeast, and southwest. It was planned that these detachments should attack the enemy at the same time at five o'clock the next morning.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Sigel to Samuel R. Curtis, March 15, 1862, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. VIII, 208.

At a few seconds before ten o'clock in the evening, when Meszaros was about to depart from the Union camp, Sigel received news from Schaefer at Osage Mills that his guards posted in the direction of Elm Springs, near Fayetteville, were shot at by Confederates. This news was in addition to Curtis' message, which reported that not only did the enemy have troops at Fayetteville but that they also had a powerful party of cavalry moving toward Middletown about six miles east. Those dispatches caused Sigel to realize at once the unsafe location of his command. Sigel therefore instructed Schaefer not only to leave his camp immediately and to dispatch the cavalry company toward Osage Springs to protect his right flank, but also to advance with his regiment to Bentonville, leaving Osage Springs to the right and McKisick's farm to the left. And Sigel ordered all other troops, not previously instructed, to be prepared to march at two o'clock the following morning to Sugar Creek.

In consideration of the troops ordered by Sigel to Pineville, the German-American said that it was too late to revoke that movement under von Kielmansegge, as had been requested by Curtis. He therefore instructed Meszaros to start his expedition using his own detachment, and to come back to Sugar Creek as soon as he could, without running his horses, so that they could be of some service in the future campaign. Conrad was informed of Sigel's circumstances by Curtis and was ordered to join him at Sugar Creek by a roundabout route leading to the northeast.

The conclusion of this roundabout march turned out to be satisfactory, even though during the journey the troops became fatigued. When Conrad arrived, an assault was carried out according to the orders issued, and at the exact time called for. But only one captain, one lieutenant, and

fifteen men of Price's troops were found in the town, and these were made captives. The rest had departed some days before. The soldiers of Meszaros and von Kielmansegge arrived unharmed on the sixth, in the Union camp at Sugar Creek, bringing with them their captives. Unluckily, they had to smash and leave behind a printing press, complete to type, captured at Pineville. The route they traveled was too rugged for them to bring this useful material along with them.

At two o'clock in the morning of the sixth, the soldiers stationed at Sugar Creek advanced toward Bentonville in the following arrangement; the advance guard under General A. Asboth; one company of the Fourth Missouri Cavalry of Fremont Hussars; the Second Ohio Battery under Lieutenant William B. Chapman; the Fifteenth Missouri Volunteers under Colonel Francis J. Joliat. A wagon train of the First and Second Divisions accompanied the troops and was protected by detachments of their respective regiments. The First Division was led by Colonel Peter J. Osterhaus. The flying battery, the Fifth Missouri Cavalry of Benton Hussars, and the squadron of the Thirty-sixth Illinois Cavalry were led by Captain Albert Jenks.

Prior to leaving camp, Sigel sent Lieutenant John Schipper of Company A of the Benton Hussars, along with twenty men, to Osage Springs to converse with Schaefer about the activities of the enemy, and to carry the news to Bentonville as quickly as the Confederates appeared at Osage Springs. The advance guard of Asboth arrived at Bentonville at four o'clock, when Sigel directed him to halt until the enemy's railroad train had passed through the town. Sigel then instructed Asboth to follow the train into Osage Springs.

Meanwhile, the Second Missouri commanded by Schaefer and a part of the First Division had come into town. Sigel directed Schaefer's

regiment--as well as the Twelfth Missouri under the leadership of Major Hugo Wangelin, the flying battery, led by Captain Gustavus M. Elbert, and all available cavalry forces, commanded by Colonel Joseph Nemett, including the Benton Hussars, the Thirty-sixth Illinois Cavalry, commanded by Jenks, and a squad of thirteen soldiers of Fremont Hussars, under Lieutenant Fred W. Cooper--to occupy and protect the city after the Confederate train had passed through Bentonville and to remain as Sigel's rear guards.<sup>3</sup>

At eight o'clock the Confederate railroad train had passed through Bentonville and it was moving on the route to Osage Springs. Sigel waited two hours for reports from Lieutenant Schipper's scouts at Osage Springs. And at ten minutes after ten, it was reported to Sigel by Schipper's pickets that a large mass of Confederate troops, consisting of infantry, had detrained and united with their cavalry and were moving from all sides toward Sigel's front and toward both of Sigel's flanks at Bentonville.

After taking notice, Sigel had no doubt that the enemy's front guards were before him. He promptly ordered his troops to make ready for an assault. Bentonville was located on the edge of Osage Prairie, was easily accessible in front and was covered on the right, left, and rear by thick woods and undergrowth. Because of this Sigel ordered the soldiers to leave the town and to form on a little knoll to the north. Then Sigel started looking for the Second Missouri, but he learned to his surprise that it had already departed from the city because of a misinterpretation of his orders.

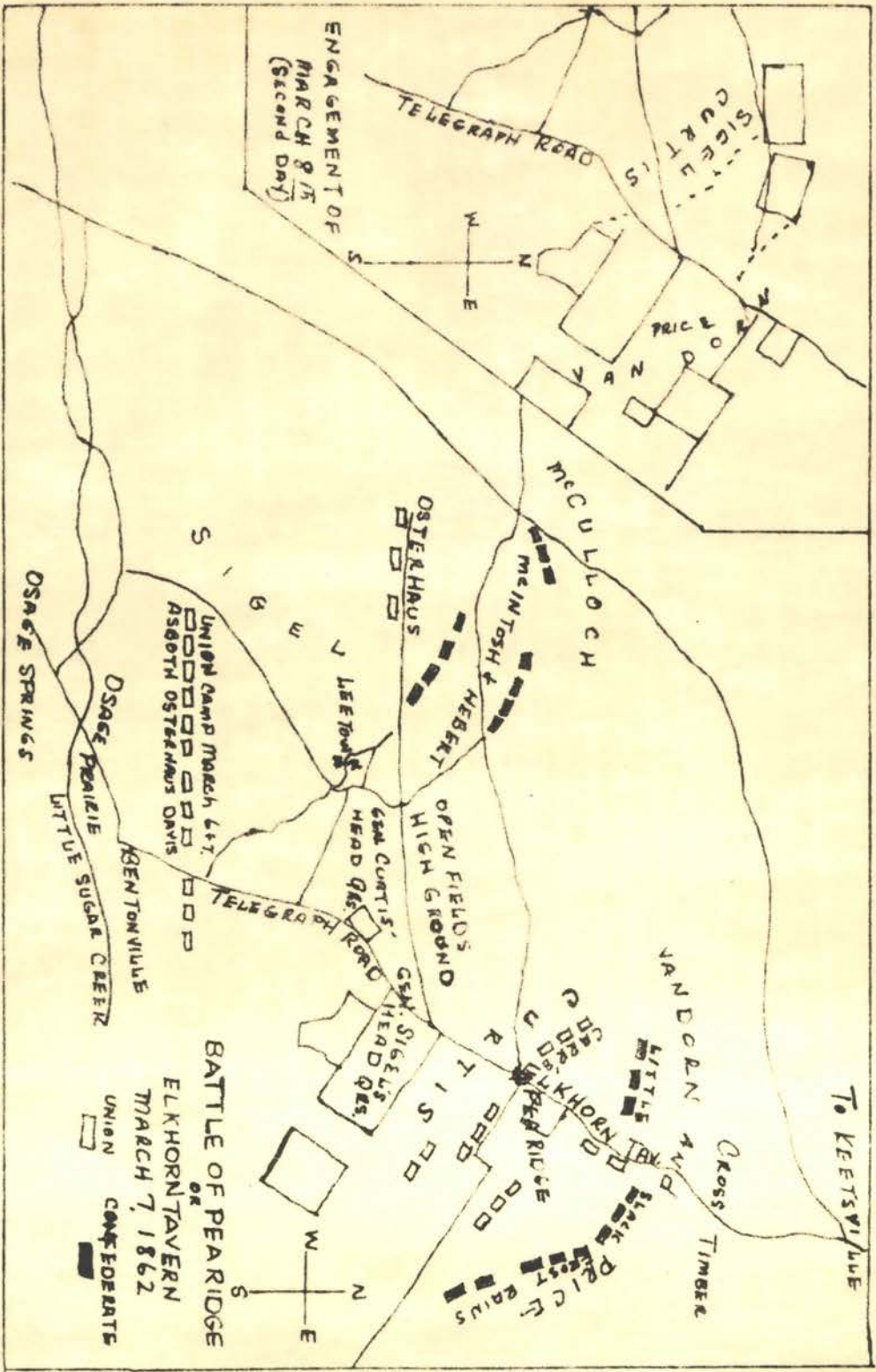
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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 209.

The soldiers now left to Sigel included about eight companies of the Twelfth Missouri, each company with the approximate strength of forty-five men, plus five companies of the Benton Hussars, and five pieces of the flying battery; in all, about six hundred troops. Sigel ordered these soldiers to advance in the following arrangement: two companies of the Twelfth at the front of the column, extended on the right and left in combat formation, followed by the flying battery; one company of the same regiment on the right and one on the left of the artillery pieces, advancing by the flank, and prepared to assault by ranks to the right and to the left; the rest of the troops were to follow behind the pieces; two companies of cavalry to support or protect the infantry on the right and left; and the rest of the cavalry, led by Nemett, with one piece of artillery, following in the rear.

In this arrangement, changed from time to time according to conditions, the troops moved forward to pierce the lines of the Confederates, who had already formed in Sigel's front and on both flanks. Sigel's troops moved forward very slowly, attacking and driving the Confederates back—in front, on the flanks, and behind—in short, wherever they formed or made a stand. When Sigel thought the battle was over, he left Bentonville, and went to aid Asboth at Osage Springs.

From the time that Sigel left the city at ten-thirty in the morning and until three-thirty in the afternoon, he did not have the benefit of his first reinforcements, apparently delayed. These consisted of the Second Missouri, the Twenty-fifth Illinois, and a few companies of the Forty-fourth Illinois. Before they arrived he had fought off three well-planned assaults and had been continuously in view and under the fire of the Confederates. When Sigel's first fresh troops did arrive, he knew then that he was out of danger and left the rest of the fight



to the Twenty-fifth and Second Missouri, afterwards ordering Osterhaus to take charge of the battle, a task handled to Sigel's satisfaction.<sup>4</sup>

On the night of the sixth, the two divisions were bivouacked on an elevated tract of land near Sugar Creek and in the adjoining valley dividing the two knolls extending along the creek. The Second Division covered the right and the First the left of the formation, fronting toward the west and southwest in order that they might intercept the Confederates should they move forward on the Bentonville and Fayetteville road. Colonel Jefferson C. Davis' division formed the center, Osterhaus covered Sigel's right, and Colonel Eugene A. Carr protected the ground on the extreme left of the Union's entire line.

Very early in the morning of the seventh Sigel received a report stating that troops and wagon trains of the Confederates had traveled all night on the Bentonville route around Sigel's rear camp and toward Cross Timbers, thereby threatening Sigel's avenue of retreat and intercourse with Keetsville. This movement by the enemy also threatened to cut Sigel off from his reinforcements and supply wagons. This message was supported by two of Sigel's guides, a Mr. Pope and a Mr. Brown, who had gone out to make a survey of the area. Sigel promptly instructed Lieutenant Louis Schramm of his staff to find out for sure if the reports were true and to observe in what direction the enemy was traveling. On Schramm's return he informed Sigel that there was no question in regard to whether the army of the Confederates was traveling in the previously stated direction. Curtis then instructed Sigel to send three pieces of the flying battery to combine with Colonel Cyrus Bussey's cavalry in an attack against the Confederates in the direction toward Leesville. Osterhaus was ordered to trail Bussey with three pieces of artillery.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 210.

At about eleven in the morning the attack began close to Elkhorn Tavern and Leesville. To ascertain how the situation stood, Sigel went to Carr's division a few paces above the tavern, where he was carrying on an energetic cannonade.

A few artillery pieces, partly incapacitated and partly without fire, were returning from the lines while others moved forward from the camp to replace them. Since the Confederates' ammunition was directed to the place where Sigel had paused, he instructed two pieces of the battery, which had gone to take position on a hill, to fire upon the enemy. After a few rounds were shot, the fire of the Confederates opposite Sigel's position slackened, and Sigel ordered two pieces of artillery forward to reinforce his battery. He then went back to supervise his own soldiers, and while moving along the road, Sigel met the Third Iowa Cavalry, which had gone in advance of Osterhaus, and which was now escorting their severely wounded lieutenant-colonel back into camp. Sigel promptly sent word to Curtis to order the Iowa Cavalry back to Leesville, a command soon executed.

Sigel met Lieutenant John Gassen of the flying battery and was informed that the Union cavalry had been forced back by a superior group and that three pieces of artillery were captured by the Confederates because there had been no infantry to protect them. Then Sigel instructed Meszaros and two other pieces of the flying battery to assist Osterhaus, who had advanced to Leesville. But during the time of the march, Sigel learned that Davis had been ordered to move forward to Leesville with all of his soldiers, a development that caused him to dispatch only Meszaros to that place. He also directed the two pieces of the flying battery to act as garrison. Continuing to the camp to ascertain not only what was taking place there but also to determine whether the Union



force was safe in its position, Sigel discovered the following troops: the Seventeenth Missouri and a detachment of sixty soldiers of the Third Missouri; the Twenty-fifth and the Forty-fourth Illinois; two pieces of Welfley's battery (12-pounders); two companies of the Thirty-sixth Illinois; practically all of the Second Division, comprising the Second and Fifth Missouri; Colonel W. P. Carlin's battery; and two companies of the Benton Hussars in position and ready to attack. This onslaught soon got under way and lasted for several hours.<sup>5</sup>

It was close to two in the afternoon, with the firing raging most violently, when Curtis instructed Sigel not only to aid Carr at Elkhorn Tavern but also to help Davis and Osterhaus near Leesville. Both forces, particularly those at Leesville, were, according to Curtis' dispatch, losing ground. Sigel therefore ordered Asboth, with four companies of the Second Missouri led by Schaefer and four pieces of the Second Ohio Battery under Chapman, to aid Carr. He lined his remaining force up for battle, and then ordered them to advance to Leesville.

On his march to Leesville, Sigel heard Major Augustus H. Poten's firing on the Bentonville road. Arrived at Leesville, Sigel observed that the noise ahead of him had stopped, but that it began with renewed force on his right at Elkhorn Tavern. Sigel then moved beyond the town to the battle field, which he found to be in the full possession of two of his colonels, Davis and Osterhaus. As no enemy was in view, with the exception of a small force on a distant ridge, the German-American requested Davis to support his left flank. Sigel also ordered his skirmishers and one regiment of infantry to support his right flank. Then he advanced on the route northeast of the battleground with Davis,

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 211.

the Twenty-fifth Illinois, four pieces of Welfley's battery, and Captain Louis Hoffmann's batteries. This road now offered to Sigel both ingress and egress, previously made possible by the work of Forty-fourth Illinois and the Fifteenth Missouri. After marching one mile, he saw two Confederate hospitals, but he did not stop to inspect them.

Sigel then moved along and instructed Osterhaus to follow him with the Twelfth Missouri, the Thirty-sixth Illinois, and a section of artillery, which came readily with the exception of the two pieces—twelve pounders—that remained with Davis. They moved hesitantly, and after advancing another mile, they came to an open space, and there they grouped into a protective formation. From this position they could easily see the camp-fires of the Union troops as well as those of the Confederates, both situated near Elkhorn Tavern. Then, the German-American general promptly sent a dispatch to Curtis to make known to him his position and to notify him that he was ready to work with him.

By this time darkness was approaching. Although cannons were heard on his right, Sigel could not conceive that after a hard day's work the adversary would make a final and terminating drive. Therefore, in order to camouflage his bivouac, from which he planned to advance on the morning of March 8, Sigel kept his troops under the most rigorous silence and did not permit either the building of camp fires or any movement of men further than two or three hundred paces away from camp. Sigel stayed there until about one o'clock that morning. He then felt it necessary to relocate his soldiers by using a short and accessible road that led into their common camp in order to give them rations, rest, and warm shelter to prepare them for battle.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 212.

On March 8 the Union troops fully comprehended the plans of the Confederates. It was obvious that the enemy's main army was encamped near and at Elkhorn Tavern and that he would make a determined effort to pierce the Union lines on the Fayetteville road, hoping to complete his apparent victory. Sigel therefore recalled all different detachments and soldiers of the First and Second Divisions from wherever they were located--with the exception of four companies of the Second Missouri and four pieces of artillery from the Second Ohio Battery which he sent to their original station on Sugar Creek--and ordered them to fall upon the right flank of the Confederates, should they assault or advance from Elkhorn Tavern. Early on the morning of the eighth, seven commanders, along with their squadrons and companies, were assembled at Sigel's headquarters ready for instruction.

It was about seven in the morning when the cannonading commenced on the Keetsville road on the south side of Elkhorn Tavern. Sigel was holding up the attack waiting for Osterhaus and Lieutenant Charles W. Assussen, both of his staff, who had gone out to survey the area on which he planned to advance. The Forty-fourth Illinois had already been sent in advance to form his right, and when Osterhaus and Assussen returned, the movement began. In less than half an hour all the troops were in their respective positions. In order to support and cover the movements of the left wing, Sigel opened fire on the right with a company of Hoffmann's battery, under Lieutenant Max Frank, and with five pieces of Welfley's battery. The enemy returned the fire quickly and accurately, but were soon out-maneuvered by the Union force on the left and were met by a sharp and deadly fire from Sigel's consistently accurate artillerymen.

After firing the first shots from a distance of about eight hundred

yards, Sigel instructed two of his officers to move up to about two hundred and fifty paces of the enemy and to come into close range of the opponent's position while he threw a battery of artillery forward on the right in order to cover the spaces between the battery and the Keetsville route. Schaefer, with the Second Missouri, was directed to move to the extreme left and, by forming against the cavalry, protect Sigel's left flank. The movement had a highly satisfactory effect. Sigel then instructed the center and the left to advance two hundred yards closer, and he brought the reserve forward to the position where his first line had stood. Sigel then took a battery under the leadership of Captain Martin Klauss, nearer to Sigel's right, and dispatched a message to Curtis that the route toward Elkhorn Tavern was open.

Now, after about ninety minutes of fighting, the Confederates tried to move their troops farther to the right, in order to push the Union force back and take the hill on which Sigel stood. The foe's infantry were already trapped upon the hill by the Union troops and were seeking protection behind the rocks, stones, and promontories. The Union soldiers were firing in concert with such terrific effect on the Confederates that shattered pieces of rocks and stones set in motion by Union artillery worked as effectively as the projectiles.

Inspired by the clever and brave behavior of his troops, the German-American general drew the noose a little tighter around the trapped foe. He advanced all of his regiments, batteries, and battalions, changing his positions from right to left and bringing up the reserve, the Fifteenth Missouri, and all the mounted troops to throw into this decisive blow, should they be needed. By this time the Confederates were beaten and fleeing in fear and confusion in all directions. There

was considerable exultation when Sigel and his troops met just after twelve noon on the ground where the Confederates were in formation only a few minutes earlier. Sigel was especially delighted as he viewed his victorious army marching by—the last troops commanded by him in the Southwest.<sup>7</sup>

When compared with the campaigns of larger armies in the Civil War, the operations of 1861, 1862 and 1863 in the Southwest, such as the Pea Ridge engagement, seem relatively small and unimportant. But the men who participated in them believed that for furious fighting, long and exhausting marches, as well as the privation and suffering endured, no army could present a better record, or could lay claim to more credit, than the army of the Southwest.

The battle of Pea Ridge (or Elkhorn Tavern, as the Confederates called it) was the first decisive victory won by the Union in a major battle west of the Mississippi River. And until Price's attempt to recapture the Confederates' lost ground in 1864, it was the last time the South tried to carry the war into Missouri.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 214-215.

<sup>8</sup>Buel and Johnson, eds., Battles and Leaders, I, 314. This volume contains a report of the Pea Ridge campaign by Sigel. In this narrative he discusses the strength of the Union and Confederate troops involved and he reports also the number of troops lost by each side at Pea Ridge.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN THE SECOND BATTLE OF BULL RUN

After Missouri was saved for the Union, Sigel was transferred to the East by orders from Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton dated March 21, 1862 and promoted to major-general. He again found himself serving under Halleck who apparently had a thorough hatred for him. This dislike was probably due to the unauthorized and much regretted publications of a private letter of Sigel to his father-in-law in which Halleck was severely criticized. On July 11, 1862, Halleck was ordered to Washington as General-in-Chief of the Union Army. Sigel's military destiny now lay not only with Secretary of War Stanton but also with Halleck.<sup>1</sup>

To succeed General John C. Fremont, the President appointed Sigel by orders dated June 21, 1862, as head of the First Army Corps of the Army of Virginia. The German-American troops greeted Sigel with unusual interest, a manifestation some of the native American regiments seemed also to share. He brought a generally commendable military record with him, a record built on various battle fields, and especially that of Pea Ridge.<sup>2</sup>

Sigel entered upon his field of military activity in the East under the most unfavorable conditions. As far as his personal interest and

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<sup>1</sup>Lom, Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy, 179.

<sup>2</sup>Carl Schurz, The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz (3 vols., New York: The McClure Company, 1907-1908), II, 348.

usefulness were concerned, he greatly erred in departing from the West. The very prestige he had won in the West subjected him to peculiar troubles and perils in the East. Sigel was confronted with a great deal of professional rivalry. The high-ranking personnel of the regular army, namely, the West Pointers--when they discovered so many civilian volunteers promoted to high ranks and commands were discontent. They banded together to protect or advance the ambitious ones of their group sometimes to the disadvantage of the public interest.<sup>3</sup>

In the West, only a very small number of United States Military Academy graduates obtained important commands. And since the volunteer troops predominated, the relations between these West Pointers and soldiers who did not graduate from that school assumed a more wholesome atmosphere in that section of the country. But in the East the number of United States Military Academy graduates was much larger, and the common spirit prevailing in the group was both more pronounced and exclusive. They would accept with good grace the appointment or promotion of civilian volunteers who were persons of importance in their local communities. But when a volunteer general--who was also a foreigner--was ordered from the West to the East, highly recommended as a man and a commander who could perhaps teach them some of the finer points of the military science that he was especially conversant with, they not only felt they were affronted but also considered that man to be an intruder. Consequently, such a man as Sigel undoubtedly was very likely to encounter both watchful eyes and bitter criticism from his associates.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 349. See also John McAuley Palmer, America in Arms: The Experience of the United States With Military Organization (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 93-108. Palmer claims that there was a sufficient number of Union Army officers to train the recruits, but the high ranking regular army officers did not wish to break up their units and allow themselves to be assigned to volunteer groups.

Sigel, moreover, was not well-equipped to withstand the perils inherent in such a situation. He lacked the sense of humor that disarms ill-will and that produces comradeship. He was not only aloof, but his words often seemed a bit harsh and unkind--not conscious unkindness, but rather a lack of warmth. His bearing simply kept all strangers at a distance. Although that sort of temperament is not, strictly speaking, a fault, it served, in Sigel's situation, to make the problem of his new position more difficult, especially at the critical moments. However, his future seemed to have promise enough when he began his military career in the East.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile in the eastern zone--the territory between the Alleghenies and the Atlantic--many military districts and departments had been set up, some probably for purposes of war, others perhaps for political reasons in order, for instance, to provide important commands for incompetent officers who had strong, influential supporters in the government. General Benjamin F. Butler, for example, commanded the Department of Virginia and North Carolina and had his headquarters at Fort Monroe. Sigel was in command of the Department of West Virginia. Many other commanders headed various other departments and positions.

Now, at about the first of June 1862, the tactics for the Second Bull Run campaign were being planned. General John Pope was selected commander of the Army of Virginia. Both Northern and Southern forces had begun to assemble in large numbers for this great test of strength.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Schurz, Reminiscences, II, 350.

<sup>5</sup>George A. Bruce, ed., "General Butler's Bermuda Campaign," Operations on the Atlantic Coast, 1861-1865, Virginia, 1862, 1864, Vicksburg (Vol. IX of The Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts; Boston: Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, 1912), 301.



And the setting upon which this engagement was to be fought was a high and wavy strip of ground in the Bull Run mountains of eastern Virginia where, on August 28, 29 and 30, unfolded the struggle of the Second Bull Run, or as the Confederates called it, Second Manassas. Upon this historic strip of land, long and wide mountain ranges stretched along the plateau, ranges interspersed with many wide hollows. Open fields covered two-thirds of the surface of this area. Tall and rugged oak trees containing little undergrowth canopied over the other third.

The Alexander and Warrenton Pike, running nearly west, divided the field and was the area's most useful line of communication. The pike extended over Bull Run by way of a rock bridge and continued up the valley of a stream called Young's Branch before extending smoothly between two miles of hills and ridges on its way to Gainesville.<sup>6</sup>

Both Confederates and Unionists vied for control of this route. When in June 1862 General George B. McClellan was compelled to withdraw from Richmond to Harrison Landing on the James River, the three corps of Generals Irvin McDowell, Nathaniel Banks and Sigel were combined under the command of Major-General John Pope and named the Army of Virginia. This army was ordered to advance beyond the Rappahannock River immediately to protect Washington and to relieve the pressure the enemy was placing on that city. Lee swiftly gathered his army opposite Pope, and crossing the Rapidan River, advanced one wing under Longstreet to attack Pope in front.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, on August 22, two divisions moved ten miles up the river

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 306.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 307.

to Rappahannock Station. Two regiments from each of these divisions were left to guard Kelly's Ford. At Rappahannock Station the two divisions united with the troops of McDowell and Banks. Sigel moved further up the river, and his artillery blasted in the distance all during the day. Then, later in the day, Banks moved up the river to try to establish contact with Sigel. After Banks had overtaken Sigel, both armies advanced up the Rappahannock, Banks on one side of the river and Sigel on the other.<sup>8</sup>

On August 23 General Isaac Stevens marched up the James River and was followed by General Jesse Reno's division. Stevens and Reno soon overtook Banks' troops and Sigel's wagon-train, for Banks and Sigel were moving very slowly and blocking the road. All the troops were now advancing, but Sigel's wagon-train continually interrupted and delayed the march. After struggling over the slippery, rain-soaked roads until after midnight the fatigued troops were permitted to sleep along the side of the road until morning. During the following day Sigel's guns thundered ominously from up the river, as though a pitched battle were in process. He was merely wasting ammunition on enemy scouts and single horsemen beyond the stream while his huge and poorly-regulated wagon-train retarded the progress of the rest of the army until the troops were again allowed to rest.

That operation continued, and on August 24, late in the afternoon, the army arrived in Sulphur Springs. Stevens, who rode at the head of the troops to Sulphur Springs, was immediately approached by Sigel. He asked Stevens if he might take one of Stevens' brigades and a battery to

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 308. See also Buel and Johnson, eds., Battles and Leaders, II, 449-500, for an account of the Second Battle of Bull Run by General John Pope.

demolish a river bridge protected by enemy artillery. Stevens, surprised at this entreaty—a practical admission of both Sigel's and his own troops' incompetency—nevertheless complied immediately with the request. Then in a matter of moments, the bridge was reduced to flames, some of Sigel's artillery having fired upon it. On the twenty-fifth little action on the part of the Union troops occurred.<sup>9</sup> But on the twenty-sixth the enemy, under the command of General Thomas J. Jackson, overtook the Union forces at Sulphur Springs. Jackson captured not only some Union soldiers, but also two wagon-trains loaded with supplies.<sup>10</sup>

By the time this disaster struck the Union troops, Pope had his men well under control. McDowell and Sigel had their men gathered around Warrenton Junction where many other Federal troops had assembled. After carefully analyzing his position, Pope ordered McDowell and Sigel to Gainesville, the former to take charge of both corps, for Pope was not satisfied with the German-American's dilatoriness in marching and in obeying orders.<sup>11</sup>

Pope's right wing moved on the twenty-eighth as ordered and reached Manassas at about noon of the same day. When Pope's troops got to Manassas, they found out that Jackson and his troops had visited the place. But the Confederates had since moved out, leaving smoking ruins as evidence of their tenure. Pope's right wing continued to hike toward Centerville. But before reaching their destination, darkness set in,

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<sup>9</sup>Hazard Stevens, ed., "The Second Battle of Bull Run," Operations on the Atlantic Coast, 1861-1865, Virginia, 1862, 1864, Vicksburg (Vol. IX of the Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts; Boston: Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, 1912), 449.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 453.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 456.

and they bivouacked by the side of the road for the rest of the night. Meanwhile, Pope expected McDowell and Sigel to sweep up from Gainesville and head off Jackson on the west. However, they failed to do as Pope anticipated.<sup>12</sup>

The humiliating fiasco which McDowell and Sigel turned this movement into is one of the most unusual and discreditable occurrences of that campaign. The previous day, the twenty-seventh, the German-American had not advanced his whole corps to Gainesville as instructed, moving only the head of his column, the main part of which stretched back along the road toward Warrenton. The divisions of Generals John E. Reynolds, Rufus King, and James B. Ricketts, and all of McDowell's corps, extended their columns in the rear of Sigel's corps still further down the pike. Moreover, Sigel's wagon train of two hundred wagons blocked the route, although he had been ordered to send his troops to Catlett's Station, located on the Alexandria and Orange Court House Railroad. Here all the Union wagon trains were stationed under the guard of Bank's troops.

Sigel was also ordered to advance his corps the next day at sunrise to Manasses Junction. But he started late and at seven-thirty a.m. stopped at Gainesville where his troops built fires to cook breakfast. His wagon trains again blocked the roads. Sigel believed he had instructions to rest his right flank on the Alexandria and Orange Court House Railroad. But Sigel deviated from his course and, instead, kept to the right to Manasses Gap Railroad. That afternoon he reached the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 457. See also Henry Steele Commager and others, eds., The Blue and The Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants (2 vols., New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950), I, 170-227. This volume contains valuable contemporary accounts of the Second Battle of Bull Run.

vicinity of Manasses Junction. Beginning at this point, after he first started for Centerville and then counter-marched, he moved down the Sudley road to Groveton, the location of the head of his column, by dark. However, he still kept his wagon train. Reynolds, although Sigel's troops and wagon train greatly impeded his progress, finally pushed his way past them, passed Gainesville, and advanced up the road toward Groveton in order to gain his position on Sigel's left.

By nine p.m., Thursday, August 28, Ricketts and King held the pike from Gainesville to Groveton. Reynolds was in contact with King, who was only a short distance east of Groveton; and Sigel was in touch with Reynolds.<sup>13</sup>

Thus Pope's army was well established for a destructive attack upon Jackson, scheduled early the following morning. The assault was to have been led by McDowell and Sigel, with Pope's right flank moving up immediately to support them. Such a formation may have defeated Jackson had he chosen to fight, but he declined the unequal struggle and retreated to Haymarket to unite with Longstreet's column. Apparently Pope's only opportunity for capturing or defeating Jackson was lost on the twenty-eighth.<sup>14</sup>

On the twenty-ninth the troops of Sigel advanced to the vicinity of Henry and Chinn Hills. They were to be supported by General Carl Schurz's division and General Robert H. Milroy's independent brigade on his left. With these troops Sigel, the ranking commander on the battlefield at that time, planned a sneak attack upon the enemy. Meanwhile Pope had

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<sup>13</sup>Stevens, ed., "The Second Battle of Bull Run," Operations on the Atlantic Coast, 462.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 465.

ordered the reserve troops in that area to report to Sigel for assignment. By the time the skirmish got under way, Jackson and his men were attacking Sigel's forces so vigorously that Milroy was soon calling on Sigel both for support and for troops to plug the gap on his left.<sup>15</sup> Schurz was also asking Sigel for help, and in order to meet their requests, General Julius Stahel was hurriedly advanced by the right flank across the field to support Milroy. Stevens' division advanced up the road to the crossing of the Sudley Pike to support Schurz. At this time some of Sigel's artillery had also advanced up the Pike and the German-American could hear the roar of his guns shelling the adversary. Meanwhile, as soon as reinforcements would come in Sigel would order these new troops to reinforce those commanders who were pleading for support. Thus the troops were frittered away. As a result of this unintelligent use of troops the Confederates won the engagement.<sup>16</sup>

However, it was not an unusual scheme—as many a Civil War officer testified from experience—for commanders of troops in action to crave support, oftentimes claiming that they were out of ammunition or that their flanks were endangered. And when reinforcements reached them, they often put the newcomers in the front line and ordered their own troops to the rear. This procedure is apparently what Sigel did with the troops of the right wing as soon as they reached the battlefield. The lives of the very best soldiers in physical fitness, training, and morale were not used to the best advantage in the battle. If they had been led by their respective commanders and thrown as a unit upon the opponent they would have struck him a mighty blow. They were, however,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 466.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 467.

frittered away over the fields, having been used simply to replace other soldiers and adding little to the extent or support of the battle line. Sigel wasted 17,000 troops while depriving them of their right to serve under their own able and proven generals and used them to the least possible effect upon the Confederates.<sup>17</sup>

After the battle, General Robert C. Schenck reported to Pope that he, Schenck, must have been too far out because Reynolds had not supported his line on the left. Schenck also stated that he was unable to get any new artillery to advance his fight on the Pike. Sigel claimed that he sent Schenck instructions to retire, but that Schenck had anticipated the command. Therefore, the blame for the incorrect movement must be attached to each of them.<sup>18</sup>

Pope came on the battle field the day of this immense confusion and established headquarters behind the Sudley Road near Buck Hill. Although Pope claimed that he declined the commanders' request for reinforcements, it is clear that he neither put a stop to the wasteful use of soldiers nor attempted to combine them as a unit for an assault upon the foe.

Later in the day when Pope was receiving reports that some of his generals were retreating from Gainesville, he ordered them to halt their retreat and to pursue the Confederates to Gainesville. He further ordered them to move forward with their joint commands toward the town. He said that Generals Samuel P. Heintzelman, Sigel, and Reno were moving on the Warrenton turnpike and must not then be far from Gainesville. The commanders later arrived at Gainesville as ordered, and after a brief rest, the troops moved through the woods toward Groveton. Unable

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 469.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 472.

to stifle his impatience any longer, Pope commenced at about four p.m. to prepare orders for an all-out assault. These orders were relayed to one commander after another as soon as he could get in touch with them. The mass attack was launched immediately, and the result was complete defeat for the Union forces.<sup>19</sup>

But all was not completely settled in this war-devastated community, for August 30 was not to close without the sacrifice of more Union soldiers. Meanwhile, Union forces attacked a large Confederate force a short distance in front of Groveton, but the difference in numbers was too great for the Federal troops. The fight was vigorous, but brief. Because it was late in the evening when the battle commenced, night halted the unequal slaughter. This episode terminated the struggle of the day.

The Union armies at times fought superior numbers, being pushed back in almost every engagement. The enemy therefore gained ground on both wings and in the center. Apparently, the Federal troops could have made a better stand had it not been for Sigel's delaying tactics which consumed the morning hours and allowed Longstreet to arrive to support Jackson. Then Pope's chances of defeating Jackson were even more remote. Who was to blame for the Union defeat at the Second Bull Run? Sigel apparently drew some criticism because of his troublesome request for help that resulted in wasting away the weight of the right wing. Had Pope paid no attention to the clamors of Sigel and Schurz and instead arranged their soldiers in battle on his right, hurling them as a unit upon the Confederates, then moving Schurz and Milroy and the twenty guns which were silent into fight, Jackson might have been driven back. Instead,

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 473.



most of the Union's efforts went for naught, and with their ineffectiveness Sigel's activities at Bull Run came to an end. And with the battle of Bull Run went much of Sigel's prestige, for not until 1864 did he again command troops in a campaign of major consequence.<sup>20</sup>

Sigel's relations with his superior officers in the East had never been congenial. When vacancies in commands were filled, Sigel was overlooked, and officers his junior in rank, and with less experience were appointed. Whenever he did anything that gave the slightest chance for criticism he could count upon being blamed without mercy. Those circumstances did much to keep Sigel from being placed in an effective leadership position.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 479.

## CHAPTER V

### SERVICE IN THE EAST

From the time of the second Bull Run on August 29-30, 1862 to the beginning of the New Market campaign on May 15, 1864 there was very little actual fighting for Sigel. During this period Banks assigned Sigel to command one unnamed reserve division at Fairfax Court House, Virginia, September 15, 1862. His new assignment consisted of training troops for line duty, guarding strategic points from Confederate raiding parties, and getting all possible information about enemy activity. These duties required his services in various locations. For instance, from Fairfax Court House on September 27, 1862 he wrote to Banks, commanding the defenses at Washington, that his pickets had reported that there was no army of the Confederates at either Aldie, Thoroughfare Gap or Gainesville, with the exception of a minor group of mounted guards; that the Union pickets had entered these communities by pushing out the opponent's scouts; that it was then ascertained the adversary had ordered all reserve troops toward Paris or Ashby's Gap; and that all the disabled and stragglers had been moved to Culpeper. The weapons said to have been at Gainesville were taken from there five days before in three railroad cars journeying toward Front Royal.

Warrenton, wrote Sigel, was reported to be in the possession of two thousand soldiers, many of them ill and hurt. His pickets dispatched to Warrenton and Warrenton Junction had not returned. Sigel wrote further

that he would relay the message as to the status of the enemy troops at those places when his scouts came back. Stahel, along with six hundred horsemen, was sent to Sigel. They left Centerville on the morning of September 27 and were on their way to Brentsville. Another Union cavalry group had gone to Gainesville. Colonel Nathaniel McLean, continued Sigel, had not dispatched a report to him since he left Bristoe. However, Sigel said that he expected a report from him by September 28.<sup>1</sup>

In another dispatch from Fairfax Court House--this time from Sigel to Heintzelman--on October 2, 1862 Sigel reported that Major Charles Knox of the Union force was at Aldie the previous day with the Ninth New York Cavalry. Knox carried out an assault on the town and found a number of Confederate General J. E. B. Stuart's horsemen at a bridge in Aldie. Knox also reported to Sigel that these men were the rear pickets of Stuart's column, which had arrived in Aldie two days earlier and was then on its way from Aldie to Middleburg. They were suspected to have been the enemy troops which had come from Hopewell and had then advanced up to Aldie from the south side of Bull Run Mountain. On October 2 Sigel said that he had sent two Negroes from Winchester to Heintzelman with some important information. These Negroes said that a huge portion of Confederate artillery had moved back to Strasburg; that they had not received many conscripts recently; and that they were hungry from want of food. Some Confederate pickets had been sent at Bristoe Station on the morning of October 2.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sigel to N. P. Banks, September 27, 1862, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XIX, Pt. 2, 363.

<sup>2</sup>Sigel to H. W. Halleck, October 2, 1862, ibid., 378.

And from Fairfax Court House on October 25, 1862 Sigel reported to Banks that he received no information from Leesburg. The Union cavalry especially assigned at Aldie reported that a small Confederate party of eight men was in that community a few days before. Sigel wrote that Union troops reported seeing a bright light in the vicinity of Leesburg at eight forty-five p.m. the previous night and that the light had shone for three minutes before it was extinguished. A group of Federal troops from Gainesville, New Baltimore, Hay Market, and Thoroughfare Gap, commanded by Major William Stedman of the Sixth Ohio Cavalry, came in on the morning of October 25. Sigel further reported that a force of one hundred enemy troops was at New Baltimore. And as Stedman and his men passed through Thoroughfare Gap, they were fired upon by Confederate guerillas, who wounded severely two Union men. Stedman told the German-American that the Manassas Gap Railroad was open to Front Royal.

Sigel stated further that he ordered a survey party out on October 23, under Captain Everton G. Conger, Third Virginia Cavalry, and that they were to have gone by way of Davis' Ford to Dumfries, Stafford Springs, and Warrenton Junction with instructions to come back by way of Catlett's Station and Bristol Station to Manassas Junction, where a group of Union troops of the First Vermont Cavalry, commanded by Captain Henry C. Flint, was stationed. At the same hour, a group of the Maryland horsemen was ordered to Bristol Station. Enroute this cavalry force approached Manassas Junction at two o'clock p.m. on October 24, when almost at once, the whole Union force at Manassas Junction was pushed back by the opponent with the loss of two officers (Lieutenants Nathaniel Patterson and Algernon S. Dorsey) and fifteen men.

And, said Sigel, at four p.m., Conger was marching from Catlett's Station toward Bristoe Station with approximately forty men when a group of Confederate horsemen fired upon him about two miles south of Bristol Station. But Conger and his men routed the Confederate troops, wrote Sigel, returning by way of Manassas Junction to Fairfax Court House. Sigel said he regretted to report that he lost the service of Conger. During the attack, his horse became lame, preventing his escape from the Confederates. His brother (First Lieutenant S. B. Conger of the Third Virginia Cavalry) and one soldier of the company were also missing, Sigel said. Twelve of the Confederate cavalymen, at least, had been killed or wounded. Sigel's men captured two enemy soldiers and three enemy horses.

It appeared to Sigel that the Confederates proceeded from Warrenton Junction with a powerful force in order to survey the Union's advance location, sending approximately one-hundred and fifty men to Manassas Junction and one-hundred and twenty-five soldiers to Bristol Station, the whole group apparently returning to Warrenton Junction. Sigel stated that he had further learned not only from persons fleeing from the adversary but also from other dependable sources that the enemy had a group of two thousand horsemen, consisting of the Second North Carolina, the Seventh and Twelfth Virginia, and a small group of foot soldiers, with some artillery, at Warrenton. The size of their infantrymen was reported variously to be from one company to two regiments. Although there was no army, there were many scouts at Warrenton Junction, Rappahannock Station, and Fredericksburg. No new enemy troops whatsoever were dispatched from Winchester to Warrenton. The Confederates, said Sigel, were only operating two railroad trains that week to

Warrenton Junction and Warrenton. Sigel said that his pickets had been sent to different locations and that he would have more information to report when they returned. The German-American commander said that he thought it desirable to attach either a signal corps unit to his command or at least two or more signal officers.<sup>3</sup>

Again from Fairfax Court House, this time on November 18, 1862 Sigel wrote to Colonel Lewis Richmond that the men of his command corps were in the following locations: the First Division, that of Stahl, at Chantilly; the Third Division, that of von Steinwehr, between Chantilly and Germantown, ready to advance to Chantilly or Centerville, and to protect the railroads leading to Hunter's Mills and Vienna; the mounted troops were located near Gainesville, Aldie, and Leesburg. The headquarters of this group, wrote Sigel, was at Fairfax Court House. A very reliable scout reported that Confederate generals Jubal A. Early, with nine thousand troops, was near Shepard's Mill, behind the Shenandoah, and Lafayette McLaws, with nine thousand troops, was on the other side of Ashby's Gap. Jackson himself was only a three-days' march from Berryville, wrote Sigel. Colonel Thomas T. Munford's horsemen and a part of Stuart's mounted men were supporting them, and they had advanced the past day as near as New Baltimore, Rectortown, and Middleburg.<sup>4</sup>

At Stafford Court House, Virginia, on January 10, 1863, Sigel received orders assigning him to a new command. Sigel wrote that in compliance with orders in his possession from the Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac he assumed the command of the Grand Reserve Division,

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<sup>3</sup>Sigel's Report, October 25, 1862, *ibid.*, 100.

<sup>4</sup>Sigel to Lewis Richmond, November 18, 1862, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XXI, 770.

which included the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps. Stahel was then ranking officer on duty with the Eleventh Corps, and Sigel said that he understood that Stahel would assume command of that unit.

Sigel ordered the leaders of the corps under his command to mail in, with the least possible delay, reports of the strength and activities of their units and that hereafter the official reports, sent on the tenth, twentieth, and final days of the month, would be dispatched to Colonel T. A. Maysenburg, assistant adjutant general at the Stafford Court House headquarters.<sup>5</sup>

At Stafford Court House on January 21, 1863 Sigel dispatched information to Major General J. C. Parke, Chief of Staff, to the effect that his troops were guarding the most strategic roads the previous evening and were approached by a party of Confederate cavalry, fifteen or twenty, who possibly were nothing more than an intelligence force. Sigel said that he sent, at sun up, a small reconnoitering force, led by several of his captains, to open the routes on the Warrenton road, Elk Run road, and that road which extended to Stafford Springs. He ordered guards to Kellysville, to Wheatley Post-Office, and to the then unnamed Ulysses Ford. Sigel said that he could have more completely cleared all of those roads if he had a greater force under his command. He sent guards out on all the pikes besides that of his outpost, one and one-half miles on the Elk Run route. Apparently, Sigel did not suspect activity from enemy raiders. However, a change was soon made in his command.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Sigel to T. A. Meysenburg, Army Headquarters, January 10, 1863, ibid., 962.

<sup>6</sup>Sigel to John G. Parke, January 21, 1863, ibid., 991.

The Reserve Grand Division was abolished and Sigel was assigned the Eleventh Corps, earlier a part of the Reserve Grand Division. Not satisfied with the size of his command, Sigel tried to have the Eleventh Corps made larger, and not succeeding, asked on February 12, 1863 to be relieved from his assignment, expressing, however, a desire to remain in the service of the United States. In justification, Sigel said that his poor health was his reason for requesting a temporary release from service.<sup>7</sup>

On February 19, the request was referred by Halleck to Secretary of War Stanton and submitted by him to President Lincoln. The Chief Executive's action was telegraphed to General Joseph Hooker in this statement: "He has given General Sigel as good a command as he can, and desires him to do the best he can with it." But Sigel was still not satisfied. He left the army on leave, and the command of his corps devolved temporarily upon Stahel, who had held it under Sigel in the Reserve Grand Division. When Sigel returned to active duty in the summer of 1863, he was thereafter assigned subordinate commands.

Meanwhile, Sigel received personal communications from President Lincoln on the subject of making his corps larger. Lincoln dispatched this message to Sigel on January 26, 1863. The President wrote:

I have tried, in regard to General Schurz and General Stahl, to oblige all around; but it seems to get worse and worse. If General Sigel would say distinctly and unconditionally what he desires done, about the command of the forces he has, I would try to do it; but when he has plans conditioned upon my raising new forces, which is inconvenient for me to do, it is drawing upon me too severely.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Hiedner, "Franz Sigel," in Malone and others, eds., Dictionary of American Biography, XVII, 153.

<sup>8</sup>Roy P. Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. and index, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955), VI, 79.



The President followed with a letter on February 5, expressing regret for his show of impatience:

General Schurz thinks I was a little cross in my late note to you. If I was, I ask pardon. If I get up a little temper I have no sufficient time to keep it up. I believe I will not now issue any new order in relation to the matter in question; but I will be obliged, if General Hooker consistently can, and will give an increased Cavalry command to General Stahl. You may show General Hooker this letter if you choose.<sup>9</sup>

On July 6, 1863 Sigel was ordered by Secretary of War Stanton to report to General D. N. Couch for duty at Reading, Pennsylvania.<sup>10</sup> Upon taking over at Reading, Sigel wrote Stanton: "In harmony with your directive I have submitted myself to Major-General Darius N. Couch, at Harrisburg, and was assigned for service as commander of the militia and volunteers at Reading."<sup>11</sup>

Sigel found five thousand three-month soldiers, loosely organized into regiments and under instructions to march to Harrisburg. He did all he could to complete the organization of those regiments and sent every company forward as soon as it was supplied and armed. On July 13 only one organized and armed regiment was left in Reading, and this group was performing camp and provost-guard duty while two other regiments were being organized. Sigel remarked that during that week these three regiments were scheduled to leave Reading, and that for all he knew, no new enlistments were expected to arrive to replace the old troops. Sigel said that the plan to concentrate a group of two thousand soldiers there had not been accomplished. Sigel informed Stanton of that fact in

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 93.

<sup>10</sup>John S. Schultze to Sigel, July 6, 1863, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XXVII, Pt. 3, 563.

<sup>11</sup>Sigel to E. M. Stanton, July 13, 1863, ibid., 682.

order that the Secretary of War might be acquainted with his position and duties there.

On March 8, 1864, while Sigel was in command of the District of Lehigh with headquarters at Reading, Pennsylvania, President Lincoln appointed him to the command of the Department of West Virginia. Consequently, on March 10, he arrived at Cumberland, Maryland, the headquarters of the department. Since Grant had at this time assumed supreme command of the armies and initiated preparations for the 1864 campaign, Sigel found it advisable to arrange the activities of his department so that the bulk of his forces would be available as an auxiliary force in the campaign. Furthermore, it was paramountly important that the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad--the shortest line of communication between Washington and Cincinnati--be protected also. To accomplish these ends, troops were strategically stationed along the rail line, and the intrenchments at Harper's Ferry were extended and strengthened. Also, military constructions proceeded at Martinsburg, Cumberland, Grafton, and Clarksburg. Sigel authorized these activities so as to protect these places from attack by Confederate raiding parties. Furthermore, block-houses were built to command the important points on the Baltimore and Ohio, and iron-clad railroad cars, each armed with a small artillery piece, were procured. Finally, Sigel saw to it that a pontoon-bridge was built over the river at Falling Waters between Harper's Ferry and Williamsport. After rearranging the activities of his department, Sigel expected by the middle of April to have a force of about 20,000 men ready for service in the field.

However, on March 29, General E. O. C. Ord appeared at Sigel's Cumberland headquarters with a letter from Grant commanding him to

assemble immediately 8,000 infantry and 1,500 hand-picked cavalry (all these besides artillery) and to outfit them with ten days' rations at Beverly so that they could march by way of Covington to Staunton. Ord was to command these troops, which were to be ready to start within ten days. In another letter, Sigel received orders to move a large wagon train up the valley to unite with the troops of Ord and General George Crook. About a week earlier Grant had summoned Crook's forces to aid in the campaign. Accordingly, Sigel attempted to carry out his commands, but heavy rains prevented him from assembling the full quota of troops, only 6,500 being available unless he left the entire region from Harper's Ferry and Martinsburg to Columbus and Parkersburg to the mercy of enemy forces. Sigel thereupon informed Grant of the circumstances, and, at this point, Ord asked Grant to be relieved from the command of these troops. Grant complied and on April 17 Colonel O. E. Babcock assumed command.

The plans called for Crook to raid against the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad and New River Bridge with the best and strongest of the combined forces of Ord and himself while the remainder advanced into the Shenandoah Valley to a point at least as far as Cedar Creek as a diversionary movement. The diversion was to take place a few days before May 2, the date of General Crook's main attack. In conformity with the arrangements for the raid, Sigel left Cumberland on April 25 for Martinsburg, inspected the troops assembled there, and moved to Bunker Hill on April 29 and to Winchester on May 1. Crook's raid proved successful, and, after defeating the enemy in a trio of skirmishes, and after destroying a

bridge and considerable track of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, he returned safely to Meadow Bluff, arriving there on May 19.<sup>12</sup>

During the period of Crook's raid, General William W. Averill moved 2,000 cavalry against Saltville, intending to destroy the salt works there, but after skirmishes at Saltville and Wytheville, he was forced to withdraw without having completed his objective. Averill therefore followed Crook on his homeward march to the Union camp. During this time Sigel also directed diversionary forces into the Shenandoah Valley, hearing that only Confederate General George W. Imboden's cavalry and infantry—3,000 strong in total—were all that occupied the Valley. Sigel's strategy was to induce General J. C. Breckinridge to divert forces into the Valley, to assist both Crook and Averill. Accordingly, Colonel Jacob Higgins, with 500 cavalry, and Colonel William Boyd, with 300 select horsemen, were dispatched on this mission. But a detachment from Imboden's brigade routed General Edward Higgins between Wardensville and Moorefield on May 9, pursuing him north toward Romney. A Confederate force ambushed Boyd on his way from the Luray Valley to New Market on May 13, defeating him and inflicting losses of 124 men and 200 horses.

Also during the period of Crook's raid, General J. C. Sullivan's division at Winchester joined the troops at Cedar Creek on May 9 and on May 10 Sigel's cavalry, after some skirmishing, occupied Woodstock. Here, the entire telegraphic correspondence between Generals Breckinridge and Imboden and the commander of General Q. R. Gilmore's cavalry,

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<sup>12</sup>Buel, ed., Battles and Leaders, Vol. IV, Pt. II, 487. Sigel has a well written account of the battle of New Market in this volume. To the charges of incompetency leveled at his leadership in this battle, he seems, in some instances, to clear himself.

stationed at Woodstock, fell into Sigel's hands. Among a number of important dispatches intercepted was one that directed Captain Sturgis Davis, presumably at Woodstock, to watch particularly any movement on the part of Sigel's troops toward Grant's army. And another dispatch, dated Staunton, May 10, also to Davis, stated that Lee was driving the enemy before him at all points. Then to gain more information, Sigel, on May 13, ordered forward two regiments of infantry, under Colonel Augustus Moor, assisted by 500 of the First New York (Lincoln) Cavalry, under Major Timothy Quinn. This force encountered part of Imboden's troops near Mount Jackson on May 14, drove them across the Shenandoah, took possession of the bridge, and followed them as far as New Market, seven miles beyond Mount Jackson, or nineteen miles from Sigel's forces at Woodstock.

On the same day Sigel learned that Breckenridge was on the march down the Valley, and realizing the defensive merits of Mount Jackson, he ordered his troops to move at five a.m. on the following day. At about ten a.m. they arrived at Mount Jackson. During this time, both Moor and Major T. F. Long—an officer of Averill's staff temporarily attached to Sigel's headquarters—informed Sigel that they were in good position for a battle. Captain Carl Heintz, of Stahel's staff, reported to Sigel that Breckinridge was in force in Sigel's front and requested the use of two batteries of artillery. Sigel wrote that he then decided that a retreat would have an adverse effect on his troops' morale and that he fully realized the strategic value of New Market, a village commanding the road to Luray, Culpeper, and Charlottesville, as well as the road to Brock's Gap and Moorefield. Sigel therefore resolved

to hold the enemy in check until his main forces arrived from Fort Jackson. With these reinforcements he planned to give battle.<sup>13</sup>

Sigel had with him 5,500 infantry and artillery, with 29 guns and 1,000 cavalry. He estimated the Breckinridge and Imboden force at 5,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry. He hastened forward to New Market, arriving there at noon and before the enemy began to attack. He then realized that all of his troops could not reach a position close to New Market. Consequently, he ordered Moor to evacuate his position slowly, covered by cavalry, and to fall back into a new position about three-quarters of a mile north of New Market, and to the right and left of the pike leading to Mount Jackson. During this time, Sigel sent Captains Charles S. McEntee and H. S. Putnam back to General J. C. Sullivan, with orders to bring forward all his troops without delay. At the moment when Moor was approaching the new line from his position in advance, Captain Justin Pendergast, commander of Sigel's escort, reported to Sigel that all of Sullivan's infantry and artillery had arrived, the head of the column being in sight, and that they awaited orders.

Acting on this report, Sigel posted Carlin's and Captain Alonzo Snow's batteries on the extreme right of the line. He deployed Colonel Joseph Thoburn's brigade (34th Massachusetts, First West Virginia, and 54th Pennsylvania) on the left of the batteries, while he ordered Moor to form on Thoburn's left. However, only two of Moor's regiments (18th Connecticut and 123rd Ohio) came into position on the right and left of Captain Albert Von Kleiser's battery, and a short distance in advance of Thoburn's line. The 12th West Virginia and Henry Du Pont's battery took

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 488.

position behind the right of Thoburn's brigade as a reserve, and four companies of that regiment were posted behind the batteries on the right for their support. A company of the 34th Massachusetts was placed on the extreme right, sandwiched between the batteries and the river in order to observe enemy movement through the woods and along the river. Captain Chatham T. Ewing's battery was on the extreme left, and some distance behind the cavalry. Skirmishers were deployed on Sigel's front. Sigel arranged the right wing and was proceeding to the left to observe the disposition of his troops when the approaching lines of the enemy appeared on the crest of the hills opposite Sigel's front, that is, to the northwest of New Market.

Sigel's skirmishers began to fall back, and Snow's battery on Sigel's right opened fire. Sigel ordered the 34th Massachusetts to kneel and to deliver their fire by file as soon as the enemy was within effective range. Severe conflict at close range followed, the Confederates repeatedly charging with intense determination but being coolly repulsed by the 34th Massachusetts, 1st West Virginia, and 54th Pennsylvania, and the batteries. Over all the battle the skies poured torrents of rain on the troops and the wind—a Confederate wind—drove the smoke from the lines into the faces of Sigel's forces. The first Confederate charge recoiled, and cheers rang from the throats of Sigel's men.

Then, for thirty minutes, Confederate fire lashed the Union lines. When it ceased, the enemy again rose from their positions and charged, this time against Sigel's batteries. Lieutenant Ephraim Chalfant of Carlin's battery then rode hurriedly up to Sigel and blurted that he could not hold his position. Sigel immediately ordered two companies of the 12th West Virginia to advance and protect the pieces, but, to his

astonishment, they failed to respond to both entreaties and reproaches, remaining as they were. This was because the smoke from the enemy's infantry fire on the left and the batteries on the right became so dense that the soldiers could not distinguish friend from foe. Then, in a desperate effort to save his guns, Sigel determined to counter-charge his entire right wing under Thoburn's command. Shots were fired and the charge made in gallant style, but the Confederates rallied just as valiantly, received Sigel's line with a devastating fire, and shoved it back to its former position. However, before the charge was made, Sigel's extreme left wing had collapsed and two pieces of Von Kleiser's battery changed hands. Then, when Thoburn's regiments scrambled back, strewing the area with killed and wounded, the Confederates, treading upon their heels, again turned against the batteries on Sigel's right, rending the air with high-pitched screams. Then Sigel bitterly realized that the battery was lost as he saw men and horses in that area tumbling to the ground.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, Sigel reluctantly ordered Carlin to withdraw his pieces in succession, by sections from the right, and to take position on a height, a short distance in the rear. But Carlin, who acted as chief-of-artillery officer, suddenly galloped back in hot haste, his entire command trailing in his wake. Since some of the horses of two pieces were dead, the guns were abandoned to the Confederates. Sigel's entire position was not untenable, so he retreated his infantry, which the enemy pursued for a short distance. During this retreat, while the artillery was shunted across a creek, another piece was abandoned, the horses being unable to pull it through the mud. Sigel himself desperately

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 489.



attempted to save this piece, the trailing enemy skirmishers almost capturing him. Sigel restored order and rallied his troops, forming them on a line opposite the Dunker Church and west of the turnpike leading to Mount Jackson, about three-quarters of a mile from the battle field. Here, Sigel saw a dark line bristling on Rude's Hill and discovered with consternation that it was the 28th and 116th Ohio, the two regiments unfortunately not with him during the battle. Then, in half an hour, Sigel marched his troops back toward Rude's Hill, forming the entire command in line with the 28th and 116th Ohio on the extreme left.

At this time Sigel met Sullivan. They concluded not to await another attack due to the severity of their losses. Sigel's regiments that had borne the brunt of the battle were nearly out of ammunition and would have no time to resupply themselves from the wagon train to the rear and beyond the bridge. Sigel and Sullivan believed their position was not a good one, being commanded by Confederate guns posted on a hill in front of Sigel's left. Sigel and Sullivan also realized that in the event of defeat the bridge was the only escape route over the rain-swollen river. The enemy cannonaded desultorily as Sigel and Sullivan conferred, but no attack came. Then, the conference concluded, Sigel withdrew his troops over the bridge to Mount Jackson in good order.

There they would have remained, but Sigel's flanking cavalry, under Boyd and Higgins, respectively, had been soundly thumped by the Confederates. Therefore, Sigel's flanks and rear were unprotected. Furthermore, Sigel had a 200 wagon supply train with him, destined for Crook should Sigel have joined him. All of Sigel's ambulances, as well as a part of the wagon train, were filled with wounded who could not be sent back unless

Sigel dispatched a large detachment to accompany them. Therefore, Sigel thought it best to return his small army to Cedar Creek, disengage it from its impediments, receive expected reinforcements, and then—depending on the circumstances—either remain there or advance again.

Sigel arrived with all his troops behind the Shenandoah at Mount Jackson a little before 7:00 p.m. and placed himself behind Mill Creek. There they were safe, as the muddy creek was rain-swollen and could not be forded, and the enemy could not pass over it in the face of the Union line. But to be sure that the Confederates could not follow, to ensure a necessary and unmolested two-hour rest for the troops, to gain time for preparations at Cedar Creek when he arrived there, and to deceive Breckinridge in regard to a later return advance by Union troops, Sigel destroyed the bridge over the north branch of the Shenandoah. Thus, Sigel's retreat from Rude's Hill to Cedar Creek was quite orderly.

The losses on both sides in the battle were great in proportion to the forces engaged, revealing the severity of the clash. From Mount Jackson, Sigel and his troops reached Edinburg by a night's march at 7:00 a.m. on May 16, where, after two hours' rest, he proceeded to Strasburg, Virginia, arriving there at 5:00 p.m. Early in the morning on May 17, Sigel crossed Cedar Creek and encamped on the same heights he had departed a week previous.

On May 18 Sigel dispatched a detachment of cavalry, infantry, and artillery to occupy Strasburg. On the following day the news of Crook's military success reached Cedar Creek, creating, of course, much enthusiastic talk among the Union forces. Sigel then telegraphed to Crook to march to Staunton, and Grant that same day instructed Sigel himself to march to Staunton. On that same day Sigel was informed that Hunter had been

assigned command of the Department of West Virginia and would take charge of the troops. This he did at Cedar Creek on May 21. Then, after a friendly conversation, Hunter requested Sigel to remain in the department. Sigel accepted Hunter's offer the following day, taking command of the Reserve Division, which comprised all the troops at Harper's Ferry and all those along the lines of the Baltimore and Ohio. That same day Sigel said farewell to his troops and departed for Martinsburg, West Virginia, headquarters of the division.<sup>15</sup>

On May 24, 1864, while stationed at Martinsburg, Sigel wrote that in compliance with instructions from Hunter he now took command of both the Reserve Division and the troops in front of the line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad who were not included in the organization of the army in the field. But Brigadier General Benjamin F. Kelley, Sigel understood, was to take over the command of the soldiers from Sleepy Creek to Wheeling and Parkersburg, and General Max Webber those in the area from Sleepy Creek to Monocacy River. All dispatches and replies were to be compiled and forwarded to Meysenburg, the assistant adjutant general, at Sigel's headquarters.<sup>16</sup>

Again from Martinsburg, on June 20, 1864, Sigel wrote the Adjutant-General in Washington that Kelley had dispatched from Cumberland, Maryland, the news that Captain John Boggs, with a group of the Pendleton Home Guard numbering about thirty soldiers, was assaulted near Petersburg the previous day, June 19, by about sixty Confederate scouts of Captain John H. McNeill's troops led by Lieutenant Dennis A. Dolen. Sigel

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 490-491.

<sup>16</sup>Sigel to T. A. Maysenburg, Adjutant-General's Office, May 24, 1864, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XXXVII, Pt. 1, 533.

stated that the latter drove the Union pickets into the woods, took several horses, and set fire to one wagon. However, Boggs rallied his troops and recaptured the train, killing Dolen and a few of his soldiers. After being stationed at Martinsburg, West Virginia, for several days, Sigel was then ordered back to Maryland.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, from Maryland Heights, Maryland, on July 8, 1864, Sigel telegraphed to the Adjutant-General in Washington, that he had just received information from Stahel in Pleasant Valley that the opponent was advancing in powerful numbers, reportedly constituting a complete corps, in the Middleton Valley. Only a few minutes before Sigel sent a statement from Harper's Ferry reporting that his advance from Maryland Heights was halted at Antietam Creek. From all the information that he had in his possession, it appeared certain that the whole force of the Confederates was advancing to Frederick. Enemy captives confirmed this statement in regard to the disposition of the enemy army.<sup>18</sup>

While Sigel was stationed at Maryland Heights, Maryland, his troops skirmished in defense of Washington with a Confederate force commanded by Early. The following is what Early had to report about his operations against Washington:

After driving Sigel's whole force of several thousand men to Maryland Heights and demonstrating against him, I moved on the 8th of July, around his force through Boonborough, Fox's and Crampton's Gaps, and entered Frederick City on the morning of the 9th, driving the enemy's cavalry through the city.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Sigel's Report, June 20, 1864, ibid., 167.

<sup>18</sup>Sigel to T. A. Maysenburg, Adjutant-General's Office, July 8, 1864, ibid., 180.

<sup>19</sup>Jubal A. Early's Report, July 14, 1864, ibid., 347.

Meanwhile, the military authorities had by this time decided that Sigel was not sufficiently aggressive. Consequently, on July 7, 1864 Grant removed him from command for the rest of the war.<sup>20</sup> He retired to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to recover his health and work for Lincoln's reelection, but he did not separate himself from the army until the following spring.

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<sup>20</sup>Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, VII, 521.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE YEARS AFTER

On May 4, 1865, Sigel resigned his commission in the United States Army and moved to Baltimore, Maryland. Like most talented men, he was versatile in his abilities, and not long after he established his residence in Baltimore he became editor of the Baltimore Wecker, a German newspaper of that city and a far cry from the occupation of a general in the army. This post he held for two years.

Then, in 1867, he again moved, this time farther north, to New York City, where he spent the remainder of his life. But in New York City his innate ability again launched him into a new sphere of activity-- politics. For in that booming seaport metropolis, the prestige Sigel enjoyed immediately brought him to the attention of the German element of that city, and, with their support, this aloof little German-American, whose lifelong strong point had been the capacity for leadership, waged a spirited battle for the position of Secretary of the State of New York. But the polls, like Early before Washington, overwhelmed him for he was defeated in this election of 1869.

However, this many-sided man did serve as pension agent in New York City in the years from 1866 to 1869 and in 1871 he became Collector of Internal Revenue, serving under President Grant. He was also a member of a commission which visited Santo Domingo and reported to Congress in favor of annexation. After Grant's years as president, Sigel received an appointment to the position of Registrar of New York City.

Another ability of Sigel was his capacity to speak both well and interestingly before an audience, a circumstance which, along with further newspaper activities, kept him firmly entrenched in the public eye. In New York City he was also both editor and publisher of the Deutsches Volksblatt, a prominent German newspaper. Always independent minded, the little German-American supported General W. S. Hancock for president on the Democratic ticket in 1880, but in 1896 he threw his support behind William McKinley, a Republican. He was for the man rather than the party.

Yet, sandwiched among his political activities, were the lectures he continued to deliver on military and historical subjects. Furthermore, he again entered the publishing business, supervising the efforts of writers of copy for the New York Monthly from 1897 to 1900. This magazine was printed partly in English and partly in German and was devoted to the interests of German-American citizens. Sigel's linguistic skills, together with a background that embraced two continents, thoroughly qualified him for the editorship of this bi-lingual newspaper.

A love of free government had ever been the ruling passion of Sigel's life, and although his military success was not the most distinguished, his prompt and ardent support of the Union was a significant factor in uniting behind the Union ideals the large German population of the North. Finally, early in 1902, as befitted an old battle-scarred warrior, Sigel wrote reminiscences covering those troubled years of 1848 and 1849, when he was forced to flee his fatherland. These retrospections were published abroad—in his native Germany. These writings were the final contributions of significance in an eventful life, for on August 21, 1902, Sigel

died in New York City at the age of 78. He was buried in the same city on August 24. Surviving him were his wife and five children.<sup>1</sup>

Sigel's ideals, as manifested primarily in his Civil War activities, remained clear and sharp in the minds of many men. At the funeral of Sigel, Carl Schurz, a surviving contemporary of Sigel, paid a glowing tribute. Schurz spoke of his experiences with Sigel, fondly recalling the memories he had of his brother-in-arms of two wars, both of which were fought for human rights and human liberty. The first of these two wars, explained Schurz, had been an insurrectionary war in the old fatherland, fought in an attempt to achieve national unity and popular government; the second had been a war which successfully strove to perpetuate a totally different form of government, but one which upheld those same ideals Sigel had first fought for in his original homeland. Thus, the little German-American had been a consistent champion of human justice and freedom.

Schurz emphasized that these same ideals which forced Sigel to flee first Germany and then all of Europe drew him, as if predestined, to the new world and into the cause of the Union. And in America he found the realization of those inmost urges of his spirit as he wielded his sword in defense of what he believed. This same spirit, Schurz concluded, sustained Sigel through campaign after campaign and from battlefield to battlefield, pushing him farther and farther along the road of military eminence until the slogan "Fighting with Sigel" became the war cry of many proud thousands.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hiedner, "Franz Sigel" in Malone and others, eds., Dictionary of American Biography, XVII, 153.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick Bancroft, ed., Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz (6 vols., New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899-1913), VI, 196-197.



In October 1907 Sigel received his final public recognition when the veil was slipped from a majestic bronze equestrian statue of the little general. A statue skillfully fashioned by Carl Bitter, the bronze likeness constituted the focal point of attention amid those impressive ceremonies that took place on that autumn day on Riverside Drive in New York City. This final act of a grateful public seemed a fitting tribute to the fiery spirit that inevitably drew a diminutive German across the broad Atlantic and into the war that united under one government North and South.<sup>3</sup>

Sigel was an asset to the Union during those early days of trial and error when trained men needed for prominent military leadership positions were not available in sufficient numbers. Although Sigel was somewhat temperamental with his eastern superiors, he no doubt made a contribution to the Union cause in the West that probably saved many lives and shortened the fighting in that area. His early rise to the rank of major-general certified that he was considered well qualified in the science of war. With his military background, experience and popularity, his contribution to the military operations of the federal government in the West was truly distinguished. While in the East, before he was completely shelved, Sigel displayed courage and valor. When he was not leading men into battle he made invaluable contributions to the Union cause by training personnel in the science of war and keeping them available for front line duty. In whatever capacity he was called upon to serve, his devotion was unflinching. His wartime contributions, although sometimes questioned by his contemporaries, were usually sound when viewed objectively.

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<sup>3</sup>Hiedner, "Franz Sigel" in Malone and others, eds., Dictionary of American Biography, XVII, 154.

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In this collection Schurz recalls some congenial moments he spent in the company of Sigel. These volumes throw much light on Sigel's personality.

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This recent notable biography contains a good account of Lincoln during the Civil War. The material found on Sigel is brief.

Townsend, George A. Rustic in Rebellion: A Yankee Reporter on the Road to Richmond 1861-1865. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950.

This book contains material on Sigel covering the period when the German-American was under the command of Pope.

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This is an excellent military history of the Civil War used for background material on Sigel.

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This book contains detailed material on Sigel's activities in the battles of Wilson's Creek and Second Manassas.

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This volume contains information on Sigel during the time the German-American was under the command of Grant.



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