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MAKING A GOOD SOLDIER: A HISTORICAL AND QUANTITATIVE
STUDY OF THE 15th TEXAS INFANTRY, C. S. A.

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Blake Richard Hamaker, B.S.

Denton, Texas

December 1998

RGL

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In late 1861, the Confederate Texas government commissioned Joseph W. Speight to raise an infantry battalion. Speight's Battalion became the Fifteenth Texas Infantry in April 1862, and saw almost no action for the next year as it marched throughout Texas, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory.

In May 1863 the regiment was ordered to Louisiana and for the next seven months took an active role against Federal troops in the bayou country. From March to May 1864 the unit helped turn away the Union Red River Campaign. The regiment remained in the trans-Mississippi region until it disbanded in May 1865.

The final chapter quantifies age, family status, wealthholdings, and casualties among the regiment's members.

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I would also like to thank my parents, Harley and Celeste Hamaker, for their encouragement and wisdom, as well as for the use of their home office and computer. To my in-laws, Hurshel and Pat Debord, thank you for all the help you have offered me and my family as I completed this thesis. Finally, to Michele, my wife, and Brittany, our daughter, thank you for the love and support you have shown me. I would not have made it without your help.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

To many of those interested in the American Civil War, it was a conflict decided by the eastern armies of Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee. Much less attention has been given to the struggle that took place in the regions west of the Mississippi River – Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Missouri, and the Indian Territory. From 1861 to 1864, however, the Union and Confederacy grappled for control of this huge region. The Confederate soldier in the trans-Mississippi did not sit idly by and listen to stories of the glorious victories and crushing defeats east of the Mississippi; instead, he fought the enemy, suffered from lack of supplies, missed his home and family, and faced boredom, hunger, disease, and death. Ultimately, his contributions helped to prolong the life of the Confederacy and ensure the safety of Texas.

For many years the trans-Mississippi region remained a theater almost forgotten by historians. The only two well-known battles to take place west of the Mississippi River were Wilson's Creek in Missouri and Pea Ridge in northern Arkansas; and the only other expedition of any significance, Banks' Red River campaign, occurred late in the war. Though writers and historians eventually produced thousands of works on the eastern and western theaters, studies of the Confederate trans-Mississippi remained few and far between. Two early accounts that focused on the region, both by Confederate veterans,

were W. W. Heartsill's *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days in the Confederate Army* (1867) and Joseph P. Blessington's *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division* (1875). In addition, Confederate general Richard Taylor, commander of the District of Western Louisiana, left his memoir, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (1879), for later generations. Still, for nearly a century after these, very little else was produced.

With Kirby Smith's *Confederacy: The Trans-Mississippi South, 1863-1865* (1972), Robert L. Kerby provided the most complete overview of the theater to date. *The Civil War in the American West* (1991), by Alvin M. Josephy, is a more recent work and deals heavily with the campaigning in New Mexico, but it does devote some space to the Red River Campaign. Another recent work that looks at the contributions made by Texas during the war is Ralph A. Wooster's *Texas and Texans in the Civil War* (1995). Histories that focus on events in Louisiana include Ludwell H. Johnson's *Red River Campaign: Politics and Cotton in the Civil War* (1958), and John D. Winters' *The Civil War in Louisiana* (1963). Alwyn Barr has produced several accounts of Texan involvement in the trans-Mississippi region, including *Polignac's Texas Brigade* (1964).¹

Though the histories of armies and campaigns need to be studied, the individual soldier should not be overlooked. The publication of Bell I. Wiley's monumental work *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (1943) and its

¹ Anne J. Bailey, "Trans-Mississippi Theater," in *The American Civil War: A Handbook of Literature and Research*, ed. Steven E. Woodworth, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 287-88, 291-293, 295.

follow-up *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (1952) made it clear to many historians that much could be gained from such insight. Initially ignored by many scholars in favor of broad campaign analyses, these focused studies have gained increasing favor with several recent and important publications. Included among these are James I. Robertson's *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (1985), Reid Mitchell's *Civil War Soldiers: Their Expectations and Their Experiences* (1988), Larry J. Daniels' *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee* (1989), and James M. McPherson's *For Cause and Comrades* (1997). All of these works favored the use of letters, diaries, and personal narratives to flesh out the reader's understanding of the typical Civil War soldier.²

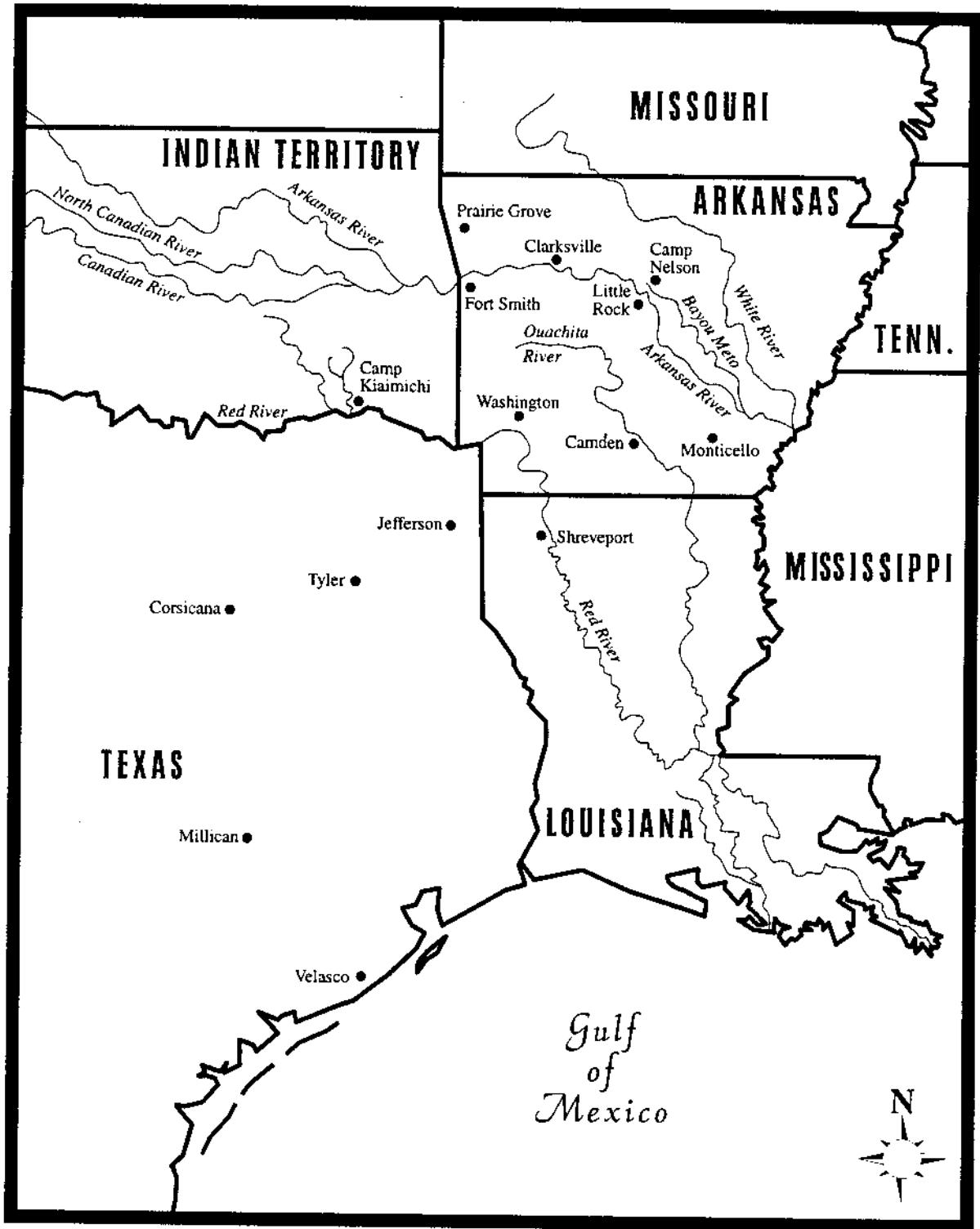
One Texas unit that saw hard service during the war was the Third Texas Cavalry. In his article, "The Third Texas Cavalry: A Socioeconomic Profile of a Confederate Regiment" (1989), as well as the larger study, *The Third Texas Cavalry in the Civil War* (1993), Douglas Hale provided a socioeconomic analysis, or quantified picture, of the unit as a whole in addition to a narrative account. This application of quantitative analysis to a particular unit is now regarded as a useful way of gaining a better understanding of a unit, its men, and its region of origin, thereby enriching the overall picture of the soldiers of the Civil War. With this type of study certain questions concerning the background of the typical soldier can be answered. What occupations did soldiers follow? What was the landholding and wealthholding status of the average soldier? What advantages, if any, did one's wealth have for his mobility within the ranks and his likelihood of avoiding injury

² William Garrett Piston, "Enlisted Soldiers," *ibid.*, 454-55, 458, 460-61.

and disease? What effect did community have on the enlistees? By supplying the quantified data of such characteristics as age, residence, and wealth, researchers can add to the overall picture of the war. Numerical averages and statistical profiles provide only part of the story, however. With the combination of narrative and statistical studies of trans-Mississippi soldiers, historians can provide a more complex and realistic portrait.

This is a study of the 15th Texas Infantry Regiment. The men of this unit became quite familiar with the hardships of war while serving in the Confederate Trans-Mississippi Department. From 1862 to early spring 1863, they experienced the boredom and monotony of camp life in Arkansas and the Indian Territory. The excitement and horror of battle in southern Louisiana followed in late 1863. In the spring of 1864, when Union forces under General Nathaniel P. Banks launched the Red River Campaign in hopes of occupying Texas and northwest Louisiana, the 15th Texas helped stop the invaders at Mansfield, Louisiana. The Texans then played a crucial part in pushing the Federal army south the length of the Red River, thus ending the Union threat to Texas for the time being. Finally, in 1864-1865 the men could do very little but sit and read battle accounts as Union armies concentrated their efforts in the East. The goal of this thesis is twofold: first, to provide a narrative history of the 15th Texas; second, to analyze the socioeconomic background of the men in the regiment. The result should contribute to a deeper understanding of the war in the trans-Mississippi region.

TEXAS, ARKANSAS, and INDIAN TERRITORY, April 1862 - April 1863



CHAPTER 2

THE SICKLY SEASON

APRIL 1862 - APRIL 1863

The formation of the 15th Texas Infantry took place over several months and involved several Texas counties. Prior to April 1862 the regiment was known as the First Texas Battalion, but it was most often referred to as Speight's Battalion, named after its colonel, Joseph Warren Speight. Born on May 31, 1825, in North Carolina, Speight was the son of United States Senator Jesse Speight. After his family moved to Mississippi, Joseph Speight studied law and gained acceptance to the state bar in 1847. Seven years later he moved to Waco, Texas.¹

Active in the public life of his new hometown, he achieved a reputation in the legal field and in community service. A member of the planter class, Speight owned thirty-three slaves and an estate worth \$76,980 in 1860. He was in a good position to affect the affairs of Waco. In the local Masonic Lodge he served as Worshipful Master of Waco Lodge, No. 92, for sixteen of the years between 1854 and 1881. After the war Speight acted as director of the Waco Bridge Company, which constructed the world's longest suspension bridge at the time, across the Brazos River. From 1871 to 1872 he served as

¹ Dayton Kelley, ed., *The Handbook of Waco and McLennan County, Texas*, (Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1972), 250.

president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Furthermore, he was chairman of the board of trustees for Waco University, which would later become Baylor University. The land where Speight's home stood became the campus of Baylor University. In 1861 Speight offered his assistance to the new Confederate government. Commissioned by the state to raise a battalion for service in the defense of Texas, he vigorously recruited from the counties of north-central Texas.²

Speight's Battalion formed at Camp Crockett, near Millican, Texas, ninety miles northwest of Houston, in February 1862. With only three complete companies, A through C, the battalion remained at Millican while the remaining companies continued to be filled. In April 1862, however, Speight's battalion took part in a transfer of companies involving three Texas units. Speight's Battalion retained Companies A, B, and C, but the incomplete companies were transferred to the 1st Regiment, Texas Heavy Artillery. From the 13th Texas Infantry, Speight's Battalion received Companies F, K, and M, which were redesignated (2nd) Companies D, F, and H, respectively. Reenlistments from multiple companies of the 13th Texas formed (2nd) Company G, Speight's Battalion. The remaining companies of Speight's unit, (2nd) Company E and Companies I and K, were filled primarily with new recruits. Speight's Battalion was designated the 15th Texas Volunteer Infantry Regiment, C.S.A., on April 16, 1862.³

² Ibid.

³ Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (microfilm M323, reels 376-380), hereafter cited as CSR. Though there are multiple companies in Speight's regiment to be the second company with its letter designation, for example, (2nd) Company D, for this study, except on a few occasions, the (2nd) will be dropped.

Speight's regiment was not put together by one man, though. Several individuals, all leaders in their communities, were instrumental in the recruiting and formation of companies. These men all had reputations and positions that allowed them to influence the conception of the 15th Texas and its companies. Included among this group were such men as James Edward Harrison, George Bernard Erath, Richard Coke, and Rufus C. Burleson, to name a few. Most of these men were instrumental in the foundation of Texas Baptists' institutions, such as the state convention and Baylor University, and some figured prominently in public education in the state. All of these men had very strong ties with the town of Waco.

James Edward Harrison (1815-1875), the lieutenant colonel of the regiment, left a political career in Mississippi when he moved to Waco in 1857. Purchasing six thousand acres on the eastern bank of the Brazos River, eight miles below Waco, he built his plantation "Tehuacana Retreat" and devoted two thousand acres to the cultivation of cotton. A native of South Carolina, it is not surprising that Harrison was one of the first to call for Texas secession after Abraham Lincoln's election. He served as a delegate when the secession convention met in Austin. After secession Governor Edward Clark appointed Harrison to establish treaties with the nearby Indian nations in west Texas, no doubt because Harrison could speak the languages of the Choctaw and Creek. Harrison joined the Confederate army in October 1861 and recruited in McLennan and Navarro Counties during the 15th Texas' enlistment drives in March and April 1862. During the war he eventually reached the rank of brigadier general. After the war he resumed cotton growing on his plantation, with his "former slaves remaining as share-croppers." Harrison

served as the first president of the Baptist General Association of Texas and as a member of the Board of Trustees for Waco University.⁴

George Bernard Erath (1813-1891), was born in Vienna, Austria, moved to the United States in 1831, and later to Mexican Texas in 1833, where he began his career as a land surveyor. He was with Sam Houston when the Texas revolutionaries defeated Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. He served as the representative of Milam County in the Congress of the Republic from 1842 to 1845 and was elected to the first state legislature in 1846. As a surveyor, he laid out the new town of Waco Village at the site of old Waco Indian Springs in 1849.⁵ With the outbreak of war in 1861, Erath helped raise and became the first captain of Company I, 15th Texas, but his age and failing health soon compelled him to return home. Instead, he continued to serve as a major in the ranger force protecting the frontier. It was said that Erath was “more familiar with the geography of central Texas than any other living man,” and he was referred to as “the walking dictionary of the Texas Land Office.” In 1873 he was elected to the state senate and served one term. He would eventually have a Waco street, a town near Waco, and a central Texas county all named in his honor.⁶

Richard Coke (1829-1896), born in Williamsburg, Virginia, moved to Waco in 1851 and established his legal practice. As a representative of McLennan County, Coke

⁴ Kelley, *Handbook of Waco and McLennan County*, 123-24; Richard N. Current, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, 4 vols. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 2:748-749.

⁵ Eventually “Village” was dropped from the name and the town was simply called Waco.

⁶ Kelley, *Handbook of Waco and McLennan County*, 98-99; *A Memorial and Biographical History of McLennan, Falls, Bell, and Coryell Counties, Texas* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1893), 97-100.

attended the secession convention in 1861. He joined the Confederate army as a private but was elected captain of Company K, 15th Texas. After the war Coke gained notoriety as an associate justice of the Texas Supreme Court. Declared an “impediment to reconstruction,” Coke was removed from office by General Philip Sheridan. This only bolstered his popularity in Texas, and in 1873 the people elected him governor. His administration saw the end of Reconstruction in the state as well as the creation of Texas A&M University and the provision of lands for public schools. He was elected to the United States Senate in 1875 and served until his voluntary retirement in 1895.⁷

Rufus C. Burleson (1823-1901), born in Alabama, studied theology in Tennessee during the 1840s. He originally came to Texas as a missionary in 1848 and established what would become the First Baptist Church of Houston. In 1851 he became president of Baylor University at Independence, Texas, and served for ten years.⁸ In 1854 Burleson baptized General Sam Houston in Rocky Creek near Independence, Texas. During the Civil War he served as chaplain to the 15th Texas with the rank of captain. Afterward Burleson was instrumental in forming the Baptist General Association of Texas at Tyler, was involved in the Texas State Teachers Association, and aided in the creation of Texas’ public school system. In 1886 he became the first president of the new Baylor University.⁹

⁷ Johnson, Sid S., *Texans Who Wore the Gray* (Tyler, Texas: By the author, 1907), 82-83; Kelley, *Handbook of Waco and McLennan County*, 64.

⁸ This institution was not the Baylor University in Waco today. However, it did combine with Waco University in 1886 and became Baylor University as it now exists.

⁹ Johnson, *Texans Who Wore the Gray*, 60-61; Kelley, *Handbook of Waco and McLennan County*, 43.

Recruiting for the 15th Texas also involved several counties (see Table 1 on page 13). The vast majority of the unit's members came from a line of eleven Texas counties extending from Smith County in the east to Coryell County in the west, and included the counties of Bosque, Ellis, Falls, Henderson, Hill, Limestone, McLennan, Navarro, and Van Zandt (see map on following page). McLennan, Smith, Navarro, and Henderson Counties provided the most volunteers, at least 60.4 percent of the men who served in the 15th Texas Infantry. The other counties in this line provided 25.7 percent of the regiment. The remaining soldiers came from 43 other counties throughout Texas (from San Patricio to the south, Orange to the east, Red River to the north, and Comanche to the west), and over a quarter of these came from three counties: Anderson, Burleson, and Brazos. Anderson County lies just below Henderson County and had volunteers in the former 13th Texas Infantry companies. Burleson County borders Brazos County, which includes the town of Millican, the site of the regiment's organization, and these two counties most likely contributed during the regiment's stay at Camp Crockett. One man came from the state of Missouri.¹⁰

Between October 1861 and January 1862, before the company transfer that placed them in Speight's Regiment, most of the men originally with the 13th Texas had enlisted for twelve months. The Confederate Conscription Act of April 1862 required that all soldiers

¹⁰ These percentages are based on the knowledge of county of residence for 742 individuals, or 67.8 percent of the regiment; 32.2 percent of the regiment could not be located in the 1860 Census, and their counties of residence are unknown. See Table 1 for a picture of the regiment's formation. All information for the following paragraphs and Table 1 concerning numbers, dates, or officer elections during the recruiting period was found in CSR or compiled from the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Schedule I (Free Inhabitants), Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (microfilm M653, rolls 1287-1308), unless noted otherwise.

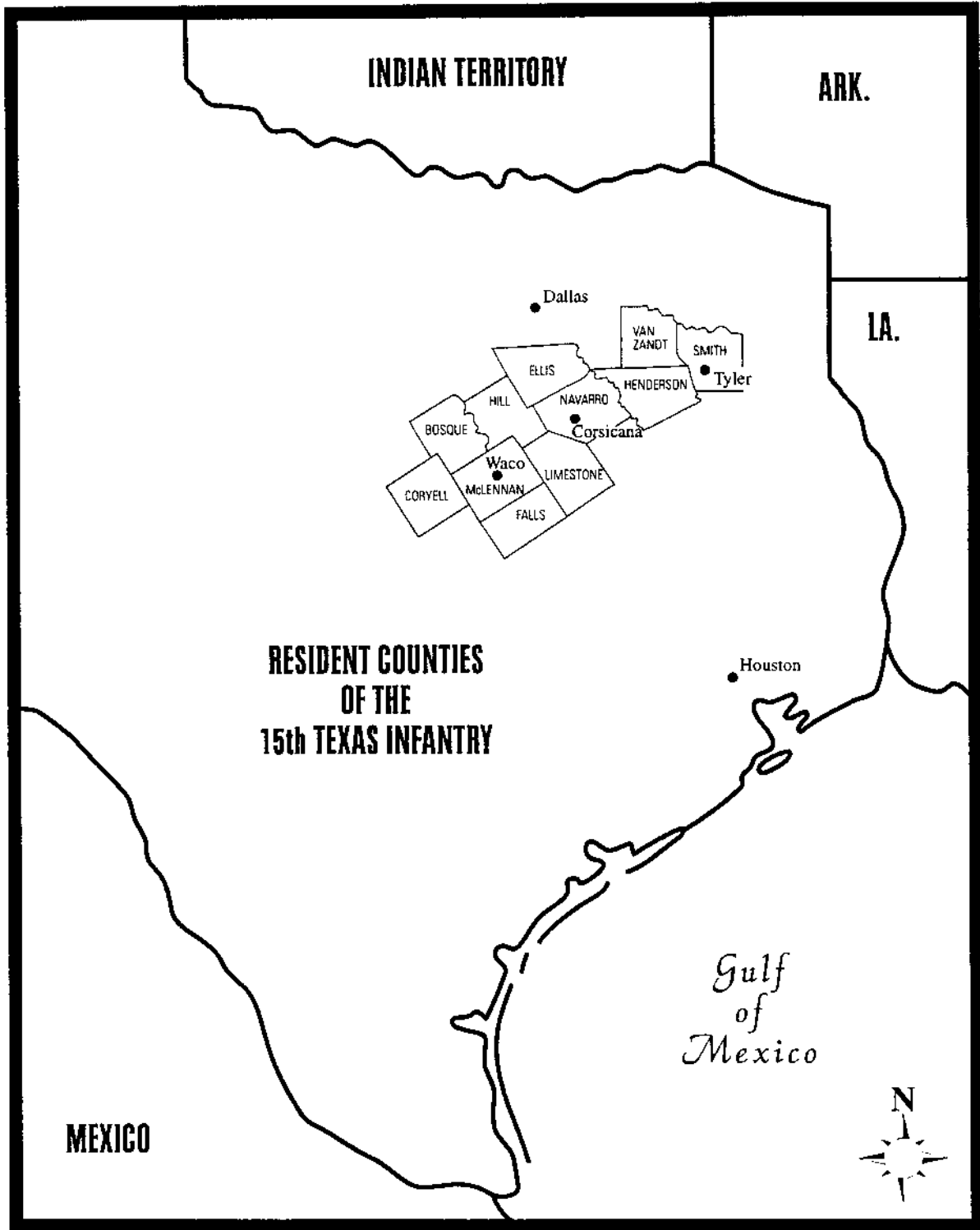


TABLE 1: Formation of the 15th Texas Infantry

Company	Captain	County of Enlistment ^a	Number on Muster Roll	Enlistment Periods ^b	Original Unit
A	E. M. B. Sawyer	McLennan	95	1862, Jan. 1, Mar. 1	1st Texas Battalion
B	Marcus D. Herring	Coryell, Limestone, Falls, McLennan, Burtleson	98	1862, Jan. 4, Jan. 15-28, Mar. 1-28	1st Texas Battalion
C	John W. Sedberry	McLennan, Bosque	106	1862, Jan. 15, Feb. 1-28, Mar. 1-29	1st Texas Battalion
D	Jonathan Lewter	Smith	140	1861, Oct. 28, Dec. 26; 1862, May 1	13th Texas Infantry
E	Joshua L. Halbert	Navarro, Ellis, Hill	109	1862, Mar. 14, Mar. 24	new recruits
F	James A. Goodgame	Henderson, Van Zandt	109	1861, Nov. 2, Dec. 3; 1862, May 1, 10, 15	13th Texas Infantry
G	Clinton Fouty	Navarro	91	1861, Oct. 13; 1862, Jan. 18-29	13th Texas Infantry
H	John B. Mays	Smith, Van Zandt	120	1861, Dec. 23, Dec. 26; 1862, Jan. 1-8, Apr. 1, May 1	13th Texas Infantry
I	George B. Erath	McLennan, Coryell, Bosque, Brazos	95	1862, Mar. 22, May 1-21	new recruits
K	Richard Coke	McLennan, Bosque	109	1862, Mar. 1 Mar. 29, May 1-15	new recruits
Regimental Officers and Staff			23		
TOTALS			1,095		

^a Lists greatest contributing county first, then only those counties contributing at least ten percent of a company's enlistment.

^b Includes only those dates on which at least ten percent of company's membership enlisted, in calendar order.

already enlisted for twelve months must instead serve three years from their original date of enlistment. These 13th Texas infantrymen were then reorganized into the 15th Texas and allowed to elect new officers. Another recruiting drive in early May helped fill the rolls of Companies D, F, and H.¹¹ Originally serving in the 13th Texas was Private James Allen Hamilton, who left behind a diary detailing his daily travels during his service in the 13th Texas, beginning October 4, 1861, and then in Company G, 15th Texas Infantry, until July 7, 1864.¹²

Another individual who left behind several letters written during his service in the 15th Texas was Captain Joshua L. Halbert of Company E. An attorney before the war in Corsicana, sixty miles south of Dallas, he penned a number of letters to his wife from 1862 to 1864.¹³ After traveling 135 miles from his home, Halbert wrote his first correspondence soon after his company marched into Millican on April 1, 1862.

Our walk for the first two days was quite tiresome, and after that we became more accustomed to marching and got along better. Some of my company had their feet blistered, but not seriously. My own escaped unhurt.¹⁴

¹¹ Current, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, 1:396; Alwyn Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1964), 11; CSR, 15th Texas Infantry (reels 376-380); James Allen Hamilton Diary, October 24, 1861, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, hereafter cited as CAH.

¹² Hamilton Diary, October 4, 1861 - July 7, 1864.

¹³ Many of these letters still exist and are located in J. L. Halbert Special Collection, 15th Texas Infantry File, Confederate Research Center, Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas. Halbert's writings provided an excellent picture of the troops' conditions throughout the war.

¹⁴ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife and Babe, April 3, 1862, Halbert Collection.

Evidently some of his company brought their horses from home, and Halbert was no doubt relieved to receive the assurance of Lieutenant Colonel Harrison “that my men may ride to Arkansas and then continue on afoot as Infantry.”¹⁵

In the spring of 1862 the life of a trans-Mississippi soldier, Federal or Confederate, was filled with the dread of war and the hope of future glory. His day-to-day schedule, however, was usually one of tedium and boredom. Moreover, the soldier had to deal with the fact that he had very little, if any, input when it came to important decisions. He had placed his service in the hands of his commanding officers and had given up his privilege to control his destiny. A lack of reliable information created anxiety in the camps, and life was generally uncomfortable and crowded as new recruits adjusted to military life. For the 15th Texas at Camp Crockett, outside Millican, the mood was no different.¹⁶ For many soldiers, leaving home created strong emotion and sadness. “So true is the old addage [*sic*] that ‘blessings brighten as they take flight,’ and so much did I realize it when my face was turned from my home and its dear inmates, on the morning we parted, that I realized fully that that was the darkest day of my life,” wrote Captain Halbert to his wife.¹⁷

The spring weather that year in southeast Texas was typical. Sixteen-year-old Private Edwin P. Erath, son of Captain George Bernard Erath of Company I, sent a letter home on April 11, 1862, to let his family know that the camp had already been through

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Camp Crockett was also referred to as Camp Speight in many letters.

¹⁷ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife and Babe, April 3, 1862, Halbert Collection.

three storms that “blew a good many trees down around us[. W]e had a storm last night which blew down a good many tents and blew a tree across our tent.”¹⁸

During this “sickly season” the soldier also had to deal with disease and illness.¹⁹ At Camp Crockett there was a “great deal of sickness.” Captain Erath relayed to his wife in a letter that “we have many sick here 9 or 11 this morning from my company on the sick list . . . several others are getting well there has been much rain here and expect more. . . .”²⁰ As might be expected, the temperament of the soldiers was greatly affected by their health. For those men suffering from disease and illness, camp life did very little to strengthen and restore their bodies.

Yet for those troops lucky enough to avoid the hospitals and disease, camp life, though not a paradise, was tolerable. Edwin Erath reassured his mother that all was well for the troops at Camp Crockett, with some exceptions. “[W]e have everything we want except one thing and that is good water.”²¹ This points to one aspect of this early experience with camp life: contrary to conditions later in the war, food appeared to be plentiful, and the soldiers were apparently well fed. “We do well here in the eating line we have plenty of flour and bacon such as it is and sassafras tea for coffee.”²² This would not be true in the latter stages of the war when many soldiers had to do without for long periods of time.

¹⁸ E. P. Erath to Dear Mother, April 11, 1862, Erath (George B.) Family Papers, CAH.

¹⁹ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife and Babe, April 3, 1862, Halbert Collection.

²⁰ G. B. Erath to My Beloved Wife, April 22, 1862, Erath Family Papers.

²¹ E. P. Erath to Dear Mother, June 6, 1862, *ibid.*

²² E. P. Erath to Dear Mother, April 11, 1862, *ibid.*

It is a fact of army life that the rank-and-file are left to the whims of rumor when trying to figure out what their future movements or actions will be. Edwin Erath revealed this when he wrote, "Some think we will go to the Bosque Springs and camp and some think we will go to another place but I think we will stay here where we are."²³ The lack of reliable information and the drudgery of living day after day with the sick also took their toll. George Erath confided to his wife:

all seems to go in a lifetime here we're sick dying burying everything is dull here no news can be had to rely on and the hour is dark indeed the certain information of a battle or of foreign interference [*sic*] would strike[?] new life in all of us . . . but there is less to be learned here to rely on than anyplace I ever saw²⁴

Despite the soldier's creed that it is his right to complain, the theme of many of the letters written home was reassuring in nature. Concern for the welfare of loved ones and households left behind is clear in a number of letters written by soldiers at Camp Crockett. Captain Halbert of Company E wrote to his wife with instructions for caring for the crops and land, instructing his wife to have their slaves, Brister and George, "bring in plenty of wood now" so they could be hired out in order to assist in "saving the grain crops."²⁵ George Erath consoled his wife throughout his writings, pleading with her not to grieve over his absence. Edwin Erath wrote with concern for the branding and birthing of livestock.²⁶

²³ E. P. Erath to Dear Mother, June 6, 1862, *ibid*.

²⁴ G. B. Erath to Dear Wife and Children, May 2, 1862, *ibid*. No punctuation was used in the original letter; therefore, in order to preserve the spirit of the original, none was added.

²⁵ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife and Babe, April 3, 1862, Halbert Collection.

²⁶ G. B. Erath to My Beloved Wife, April 22, 1862; G. B. Erath to Dear Wife, July 20, 1862; E. P. Erath to Dear Mother, June 6, 1862, all in Erath Family Papers.

In their letters and diary entries, the soldiers said little about their reasons for joining the army. There were no impassioned defenses of slavery or statements of white supremacy or denunciations of Yankee interference. J. L. Halbert wrote his wife that “nothing . . . sustained me in leaving but the knowledge that I was treading in the path of duty.”²⁷ G. B. Erath explained to his wife that he could not allow their neighbor’s sons and husbands, as well as his own son, to risk their lives while he remained at home.²⁸ It seems that duty and honor played an important role for these men in the decision to go off to war.²⁹

Speight’s Regiment left Camp Crockett on June 29, 1862, for Camp Harrison, two and one-half miles outside Corsicana.³⁰ The regiment remained near Corsicana from July 6 to July 23 to fill its rosters and then took up the march for Camp Daniel near Tyler, in east Texas. While at Camp Daniel the regiment was reviewed by Brigadier General Henry E. McCulloch and was the honored guest at a barbecue hosted by the local citizens. The local paper reported the “whole affair passed off well. . . . Speight’s regiment enjoys an

²⁷ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife and Babe, April 3, 1862, Halbert Collection.

²⁸ G. B. Erath to My Beloved Wife, April 22, 1862, Erath Family Papers.

²⁹ This conclusion is based on only a handful of letters written by two or three individuals. In a recent study by James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), the author undertook an infinitely more thorough examination of 25,000 letters and 249 diaries by Civil War veterans (both North and South) to answer the question “What made these men make such sacrifices?” McPherson was more interested in answering the question as it applied to a soldier’s going into actual battle. It can equally apply to the 15th Texas at the time of enlistment, however, because by that time the true nature and cost of going into the army was apparent to most men. McPherson quoted John W. DeForest, a novelist and veteran of the Civil War, who stated, “The man who does not dread to die or to be mutilated is a lunatic. The man who, dreading these things, still faces them *for the sake of duty and honor* is a hero.” McPherson found that “duty and honor were indeed powerful motivating forces,” even more so than religious fanaticism, ethnic hatred, or even military discipline.

³⁰ G. B. Erath to Dear Wife, July 20, 1862, Erath Family Papers.

excellent reputation for good behavior and the exhibition of all those characteristics which go to make the good soldier.”³¹

The regiment remained outside Tyler for nearly six weeks while more groups of soldiers trickled into camp.³² With all of its companies filled, the regiment left Camp Daniel on September 9, 1862, with orders to march the 350 miles to Little Rock, Arkansas, where it and other regiments would be organized into brigades and divisions.

After a short stay in Little Rock, the 15th Texas again took up the march, crossed Bayou Meto, and arrived at Camp Nelson, approximately thirty-five miles northeast of Little Rock, on October 19. At Camp Nelson the regiment was assigned to a brigade commanded by Colonel Horace Randal, in Henry McCulloch’s Division. Along the way, many troops and officers succumbed to disease, obtained dismissals, or resigned due to age, ailments, or any one of several other reasons. Moreover, the conditions at Camp Nelson were deplorable. The drinking water was shared with the animals and was downstream from the camp latrines. All the regiments at Camp Nelson suffered losses from rampant disease caused by the close quarters and lack of sanitary measures.³³

The men of the trans-Mississippi theater had suffered for other reasons during the summer and fall of 1862. A heated struggle between theater commander Major General Thomas C. Hindman and his subordinate Brigadier General Albert Pike, commander of Fort McCulloch, Indian Territory, over troop movement and the best defense of the

³¹ *Tyler Reporter*, August 21, 1862.

³² Hamilton Diary, July 29 - September 9, 1862.

³³ Hamilton Diary, June 29 - October 19, 1862; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 11.

region, did very little to boost the confidence of the Confederate troops. Pike eventually resigned his command in mid-July 1862. A reorganization of the trans-Mississippi theater quickly followed in August. Major General Theophilus Holmes was the new commander, and Hindman was placed in command of the District of Arkansas. This change in the command structure so early in the war experience of the trans-Mississippi soldier did not effectuate an increase in confidence, either. Furthermore, following his reassignment Hindman had sought to drive back Union forces at the Battle of Prairie Grove in northwest Arkansas on December 7, 1862. Failing to do so, Hindman's army fell back to Van Buren, Arkansas, just north of Fort Smith.³⁴

During this time the 15th Texas had remained at Camp Nelson doing very little other than training and getting sick. An aborted march to reinforce troops at Vicksburg was followed by the call to march west and give support to the troops falling back from Prairie Grove. Speight's Regiment met Hindman's retreating force on New Year's Day, 1863, and fell back with it to Clarksville in western Arkansas. On January 7 Speight's regiment was brigaded with the 20th, 22nd, 31st, and 34th Texas Cavalry units, all dismounted.³⁵ This new brigade, under the command of Speight, was ordered by Holmes to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to aid in the defense of the Indian Territory, now under the command of Brigadier General William Steele. Trudging through eight to twelve

³⁴Thomas W. Kremm and Diane Neal, "The Hindman/Pike Controversy over the Defense of the Trans-Mississippi District," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 70 (Spring 1992): 28, 33, 38.

³⁵Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 13.

inches of snow, Speight's brigade stumbled into Fort Smith on January 15, hungry and cold. Steele described Speight's situation:

His animals are completely broken down, and there is not a particle of forage to be had in the vicinity. . . . Colonel Speight may find it impossible to move in several days, certainly so unless there is a very great improvement in the condition of the roads. It is needless to say that there is an utter impossibility of procuring supplies of any description in this part of the country.³⁶

Speight's brigade endured much during its short stay at Fort Smith. Suspected of disloyalty and having connections with Unionists in north Texas, the men of the 22nd and 34th Texas struggled daily with desertions and abysmal morale. Food was scarce, clothing and shelter were lacking, and the cold was unrelenting. Unable to acquire subsistence for the brigade at Fort Smith, Steele was forced to move Speight and his men to winter quarters at Camp Kiamichi, near Doaksville, in the southeast corner of the Indian Territory, leaving only the 20th Texas at Fort Smith for minimal defense. The march to Camp Kiamichi was costly, as soldiers and animals succumbed to the cold. Serving in the 34th Texas, Alfred T. Howell wrote:

Men died every day. They laid themselves down. They would not move and they died. Men died on the wagons. From Fort Smith to the Mouth of the Kiamichi where we camped, our trail was a long graveyard. The bones of dead horses and mules, with destroyed and castaway wagons, would have made almost a turnpike.³⁷

³⁶William Steele to R. C. Newton, January 15, 1863, *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), series 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, pp. 773-74, hereafter cited as *O.R.*

³⁷Quoted in Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 13-16.

The march from Fort Smith to Camp Kiamichi covered two hundred miles and took a month to complete. During the march the troops also had to deal with attacks along their rear guard by jayhawkers. Lieutenant Colonel James Edward Harrison of the 15th Texas led a detachment that was successful in halting these guerrilla attacks. Eventually, the 15th Texas and the other regiments reached their winter camp on February 15, 1863.³⁸

At Camp Kiamichi, Speight granted several furloughs and, leaving the brigade under the command of Colonel Almerine M. Alexander of the 34th, returned to Waco because of poor health. Lieutenant Colonel Harrison stayed with the 15th Texas, drilling the troops daily to ensure battle readiness. The experience of the 15th Texas for the remainder of the winter and early spring consisted of indecision and uncertainty as Brigadier General Steele tried to counter Union forces in northern Arkansas. Steele and Holmes debated sending Speight's brigade east of the Mississippi River so it could receive discipline that "cannot be enforced while they are so convenient to their homes."³⁹ They finally decided against it, however, due to the shortage of available troops and able officers in their own region.

An order from General Steele to march north to Fort Smith came in April 1863. The 15th Texas reached Johnson's Depot, some one hundred miles from Camp Kiamichi, on April 27. But before the Texans could push on to Fort Smith, orders came from Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith, newly appointed commander of the Trans-

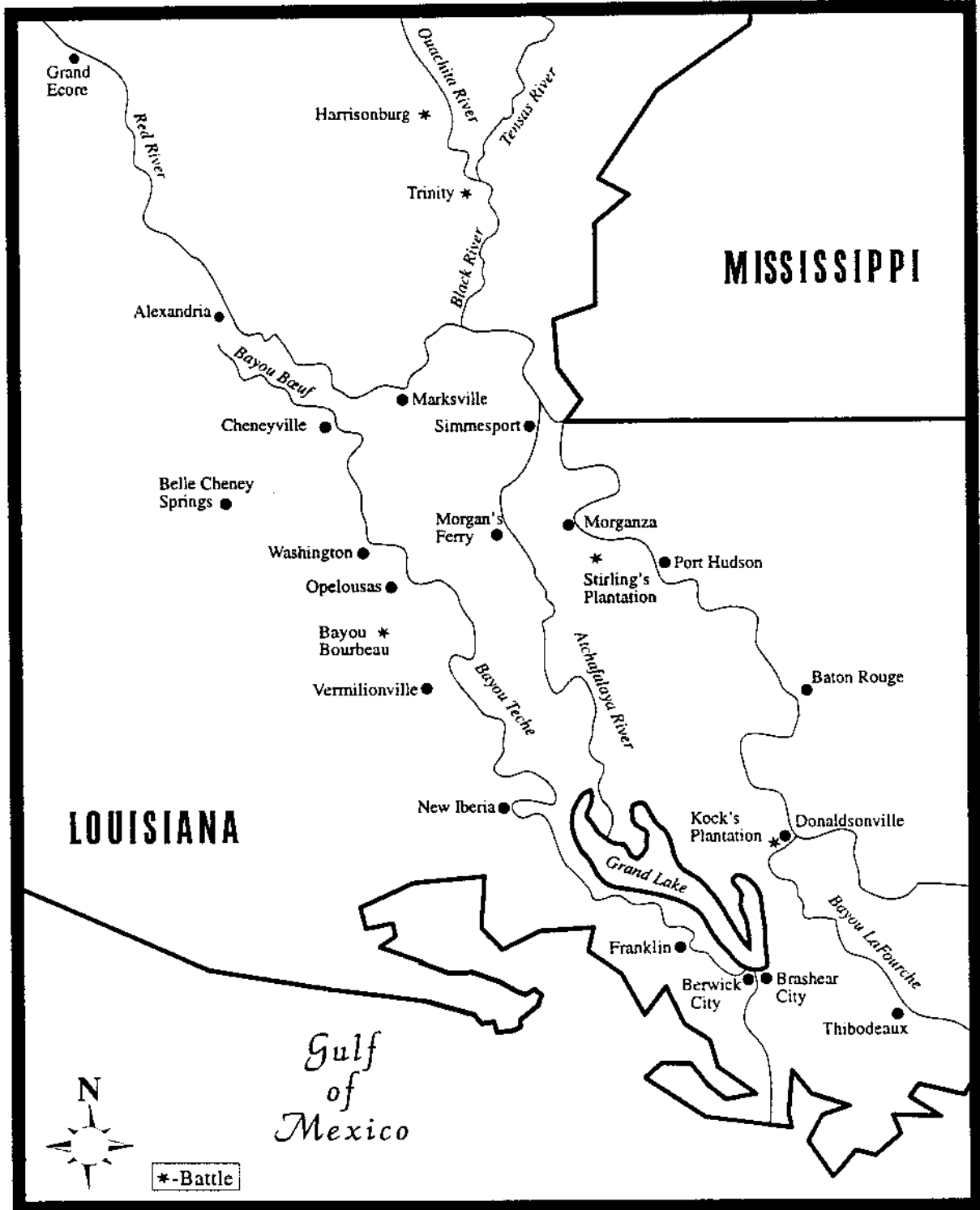
³⁸ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 14; Hamilton Diary, January 13 - February 15, 1863.

³⁹ Wm. Steele to T. H. Holmes, March 31, 1863, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, pp. 809-810.

Mississippi Department, instructing the regiment to turn around and march south to reinforce the beleaguered army of Major General Richard Taylor in Louisiana. The regiment's first taste of combat was now only a few weeks away.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 17-18; Hamilton Diary, April 27, 1863.

SOUTHERN LOUISIANA, June 1863 - February 1864



CHAPTER 3

INTO THE FIRE

APRIL 1863 - MAY 1864

Major General Richard Taylor, son of former President Zachary Taylor, had been given command of the District of Western Louisiana. Taylor's primary objective as district commander was the defense of western Louisiana. Yet, in the summer of 1863, he faced a precarious situation. General Benjamin F. Butler and his Federals were already well established in New Orleans. On July 4, 1863, Vicksburg fell to General Ulysses S. Grant's army. This was soon followed by the Confederate surrender at Port Hudson on the Mississippi River, one hundred miles northwest of New Orleans. Union forces could now move freely along the entirety of the Mississippi. General Taylor's army lay on the western side of this Union wall, cut off from the rest of the South.¹

The 15th Texas Infantry had spent the spring of 1863 unsure of its next move. General Steele had hoped to use the regiment to help defend Arkansas and the Indian Territory from Union troops in Missouri and northern Arkansas. He also knew the regiment's presence reassured Indian troops of the Confederacy's protection. Nevertheless, General E. Kirby Smith determined that Speight's Brigade would be most

¹ Ludwell H. Johnson, *Red River Campaign: Politics & Cotton in the Civil War* (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins Press, 1958; reprint, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993), 86.

useful in Louisiana. When Speight received orders from Smith to march his brigade 210 miles southeast to Shreveport, Louisiana, he discovered he was in a tenuous position.²

Speight understood Smith's orders as applying to the entire brigade, which now included the recently attached field battery under the command of Captain H. C. West. Steele, however, believed it imperative that West's battery remain in the Indian Territory and subsequently ordered as much, because the battery was the "only one [Steele had], and probably was not contemplated in General Smith's orders."³ Despite reassurances from Brigadier General W. R. Boggs, Chief of Staff, Trans-Mississippi Department, that Speight was correct in keeping West's battery, when Speight did not comply to Steele's order and continued along with West's battery, the exasperated Steele put pen to paper and expressed his anger.⁴ In a letter addressed the same day Speight's brigade arrived in Shreveport, Steele reported that

Colonel Speight chooses to disobey this order [to return West's battery], for which disobedience I wish him arrested and brought to trial. I have been treated with indignity in having troops taken away from me which were essential to the plans in progress of development, by an order direct to an inferior, without the slightest notice to me on the subject. In addition, my orders are treated with contempt. I certainly cannot submit in silence to have my rank entirely ignored.⁵

Smith, however, overruled Steele's complaints in favor of the strategic importance of defending the Confederate positions along the Mississippi River.⁶

² Wm. Steele to S. S. Anderson, May 1, 1863, *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), series 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, pp. 833-34, hereafter cited as *O.R.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ W. R. Boggs to T. H. Holmes, May 11, 1863, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 22, pt. 2, p. 837.

⁵ Wm. Steele to W. R. Boggs, May 14, 1863, *ibid.*, p. 839.

⁶ Wm. Steele to W. R. Boggs, June 8, 1863, *ibid.*, p. 862.

The 15th Texas crossed the Red River at Camp Kiamichi into northeast Texas on May 5, 1863. The regiment then marched through Clarksville, Mount Pleasant, and Daingerfield, arriving at Jefferson, Texas, on May 13. Boarding steamboats at Jefferson, the troops continued southeast to Shreveport, Louisiana, arriving on May 14.⁷

At Shreveport the 15th Texas was part of a brigade inspection by Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith. Appalled by the condition of the 22nd and 34th Texas, both decimated by desertions, Smith split the brigade. With the 22nd and 34th remaining in Shreveport for drilling and disciplining, Speight's brigade, now made up of the 15th Texas Infantry and 31st Texas Cavalry (Dismounted), boarded steamboats on the Red River and left Shreveport for their new station fifty miles downstream at Grand Ecore on May 16. From Grand Ecore, the units continued by steamboat down the Red River, eventually arriving at Marksville in central Louisiana on May 30. The troops then made a forced march to Simmesport, on the Atchafalaya River twenty-five miles to the southeast, where they remained for two weeks.⁸

While at Simmesport, Speight's command took part in some peculiar skirmishes. On June 3 the Texans were attacked by a Union gunboat floating on the Atchafalaya. After a forty-five-minute battle the Confederates eventually forced the gunboat to withdraw. This minor victory was short-lived, though; the men were again attacked on June 4 by an ironclad gunboat and forced to withdraw. Shortly after these skirmishes the

⁷ James Allen Hamilton Diary, May 5-14, 1863, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, hereafter cited as CAH.

⁸ Alwyn Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade* (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1964), 19; Hamilton Diary, May 16-31, 1863.

15th and the 31st were joined by a brigade of Louisiana infantry under the command of General Alfred Mouton.⁹

Mouton, born in 1829, was the son of Alexander Mouton, Louisiana governor and U.S. senator. The younger Mouton graduated from West Point in 1850 but resigned his commission soon thereafter. During the 1850s he worked for a brief time on his father's railroad, the New Orleans and Opelousas. He became a brigadier general in the Louisiana militia in 1856 and led a *comité de vigilance* against local lawbreakers. With the beginning of war, Mouton raised and was elected colonel of the 18th Louisiana Infantry. He gained the recognition of General P. G. T. Beauregard at Pittsburg Landing in February 1862 and again at the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862. Severely wounded at Shiloh, he resigned his command, but he returned to action in the fall of 1862. Offering his services in the trans-Mississippi region, he was promoted to brigadier general on April 16, 1863, serving in General Taylor's army in Louisiana.¹⁰

While at Simmesport, Speight's and Mouton's brigades received orders to continue south twenty-five miles to Morgan's Ferry, located along the banks of the Atchafalaya River. The two brigades arrived on June 15. Then in an effort to assist the Confederate garrison at Port Hudson, now under siege by the Union troops of General Nathaniel P. Banks, Speight's brigade crossed the Atchafalaya and marched to within five miles of the Mississippi River. Meanwhile, Mouton's brigade continued traveling south,

⁹ Hamilton Diary, June 3-4, 1863; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 19.

¹⁰ Richard N. Current, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, 4 vols., (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 3:1092.

following the Atchafalaya. For some reason the Texans never crossed over the Mississippi River, and on June 17 Speight's men turned back. Having failed to assist Port Hudson, the 15th Texas crossed over to the west side of the Atchafalaya in order to rejoin Mouton. However, Mouton had gone south to Brashear City below Grand Lake, approximately 150 miles downstream, and started preparations for an offensive into the Bayou LaFourche region of southern Louisiana.¹¹

The 15th Texas marched west and crossed Bayou Teche, then marched south, passing through the towns of Washington, Opelousas, Vermilionville (present-day Lafayette), New Iberia, and Franklin. On June 26 the Texans went into camp at Berwick City. Just across the Atchafalaya River at Brashear City, the combined strength of Mouton's infantry and cavalry under the command of General Thomas Green had recently captured that small town, which provided the Confederates with "twelve guns . . . , seventeen hundred prisoners, with many small arms and accouterments, and great quantities of quartermaster's, commissary, ordnance, and medical stores. . . ." Though the Confederates would soon lose the artillery, the remaining supplies would be of great importance for the next year.¹²

Still hoping to relieve the Confederates at Port Hudson, Taylor and Mouton planned to advance their troops through the LaFourche region in the direction of Union

¹¹ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 20; Hamilton Diary, June 15, 1863. In many of the letters and records, Brashear City is often referred to as Berwick City. Brashear City is actually located on the eastern bank of the Atchafalaya across the river from Berwick City.

¹² Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1879; reprint, New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 158, 164; Hamilton Diary, June 15-26, 1863; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 20.

forces on the Mississippi River. Bayou LaFourche branches off the Mississippi River at Donaldsonville, some sixty miles northwest of New Orleans. From there it maintains a southerly direction until ultimately emptying into the Gulf of Mexico. The region, dedicated to the production of sugar and rice, was described by General Taylor as a “tropical Holland,” lying below flood level and marked by numerous canals, ditches, and protective levees. There existed only a single railroad line for the transportation of men and supplies. Populated by French-speaking Acadians, descendants of the original French colonists, the area was a contrast to the Anglo populated portions of Louisiana lying north of the Red River. Mansions and large plantations graced the shores of the bayou.¹³

Taylor thought that a Confederate military presence near New Orleans would create such a furor among southern sympathizers in the region that Federal soldiers would have to be pulled away from the siege of Port Hudson. Before this advance could begin though, General Taylor left for Alexandria to bring down General John G. Walker’s Texas infantry division and turned his command over to Mouton. Placing his brigade under the leadership of General Green, Mouton ordered it and Speight’s brigade east. The 15th Texas again crossed the Atchafalaya River on June 29 and proceeded by rail, thirty miles eastward, to Thibodeaux, Louisiana. This offensive would prove to be short lived, however. When Port Hudson fell to the Federals on July 9, General Banks was able to turn his full attention to the Confederates in the LaFourche region. Taylor and Mouton

¹³ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 116-117. Ludwell H. Johnson described the Acadian people as the “provincial of provincials, illiterate, speaking nothing but his own patois, cultivating a few acres of corn, sweet potatoes, and cotton, and grazing his herds of cattle and ponies,” *Red River Campaign*, 99.

now decided it would be better to save their small army and looked for ways to gain some time.¹⁴

Mouton ordered Speight's and Green's brigades to form into a defensive position at Donaldsonville, upstream on Bayou LaFourche. The brigades reached Donaldsonville with little incident and commenced digging rifle positions on July 12, all the while receiving reports of advancing Federals. The next day, at Kock's Plantation, Lieutenant Colonel James E. Harrison readied the men of the 15th Texas.¹⁵ Green's original plan called for his dismounted cavalry to act as bait, enticing the Union soldiers into a position where Harrison and his troops would be waiting in ambush. Instead, Green chose to lead his men in a direct attack against the Union positions and managed to drive them off. This victory bought Taylor and Mouton the time they needed and allowed them to remove their Confederate forces northwest to safety at Vermilionville and Alexandria. On July 21, after returning from Kock's Plantation to Brashear City, the 15th Texas withdrew and journeyed by steamboat up Bayou Teche to New Iberia. From there the Texans marched the remaining twenty miles to Vermilionville where they would stay until September.¹⁶

While at Vermilionville the Confederates looked forward to taking advantage of the "pleasant and pretty camp" to relax and heal. This hope was dashed, though, because sickness and disease soon took over the camp. The poor state of the troops eventually

¹⁴ John D. Winters. *Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 290; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 158; Stephen S. Michot, "In Relief of Port Hudson: Richard Taylor's 1863 Lafourche Offensive," *Military History of the West* 23 (no. 2, 1993): 106.

¹⁵ Kock's Plantation is also referred to as Cox's Plantation.

¹⁶ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 20; Hamilton Diary, July 12-25, 1863.

earned the site the nickname of “Camp Diarrhea.” Also during this time Colonel Speight had returned to Texas due to poor health, leaving Lieutenant Colonel Harrison in command of his Texas brigade. Harrison became so concerned with the increasing number of sick among his men that he finally had to send his own son back to Texas in an effort to obtain quinine for the regiment.¹⁷

A mile outside of Vermilionville, the Confederates convened a general court martial in late summer 1863 in order to “try all offenders [s]outh of the Red River.” Serving on the court from the 15th Texas Infantry were Captain Halbert of Company E and Captain Richard Coke of Company K. In early August, Halbert wrote home to his wife to let her know “[w]e have all class of offences [*sic*] and all grades of offenders from Lt. Col. down to private, to try. Whether we will prove to be a bloody court yet remains to be seen.” Halbert noted that the sickness of the judge advocate resulted in the court’s slow progress, and the captain therefore, spent much of his time in leisure. Halbert and Coke, staying at the residence of a Monsieur Bodreau, whiled away their time talking to each other, as their hosts spoke only French, and listening to two “very nice young ladies” play the piano.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Speight’s brigade, still under the command of Harrison, received the remnants of two Texas units. The “dismounted, demoralized,” and utterly dysfunctional Second Texas Mounted Rifles joined Speight’s brigade in August 1863. These troops,

¹⁷ Harrison to Dear Ballinger, August 31, 1863, photocopy, Harrison (Guy Bryan, Jr.) Collection, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, hereafter cited as TXC; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 22-23.

¹⁸ Halbert to My Dear Wife, August 3, 1863, J. L. Halbert Special Collection, 15th Texas Infantry File, Confederate Research Center, Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas.

quite fond of mass desertions, suffered from a lack of leadership, as most of their officers were on sick leave in Texas. Eventually, General Taylor would order the few remaining soldiers from this unit back to Texas because of their continued strain on the 15th Texas and its officers. Also attached to the brigade at this time were three companies from the 11th Texas Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ashley W. Spaight, no relation to Colonel Joseph W. Speight. With the addition of these new troops, the Texans prepared for the autumn.¹⁹

Word of a Union presence at Morganza, approximately fifty miles to the northeast of Vermilionville, prompted General Taylor to send the 15th Texas, along with other Confederates at Vermilionville, to repel any enemy advances. On September 7 this rebel force, commanded by General Thomas Green, marched out of camp and traveled north through Opelousas and Washington. North of Washington, at Bayou Bœuf, Green's column turned east and marched twenty-six miles to Morgan's Ferry on the banks of the Atchafalaya. On September 18, with their pickets driven in, Green's Confederates awaited an expected attack by Union troops, but it never came.²⁰

The Texans withdrew from Morgan's Ferry the next day with the intent of returning to Vermilionville. On the very next day, however, and after twenty-two miles of marching, the troops discovered they were being ordered to return to their just abandoned positions on the Atchafalaya. Speight's men would remain at Morgan's Ferry for the next

¹⁹ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 23.

²⁰ Hamilton Diary, September 7-11, 1863.

week. Fortunately, the presence of pleasant weather plus improved health among the Confederates served to bolster the morale of the Texans.²¹

On September 27 Green and his commanders received orders to cross the Atchafalaya and make preparations to repel an advance of Indiana and Iowa Federal regiments at Stirling's Plantation on Bayou Fardoche. The only means for crossing the river at Morgan's Ferry at the time were "two small ferry-flats, [capable of] carrying together 18 horses or 80 footmen."²² At 3 p.m., September 28, Green began sending his two-thousand soldiers across. That night and under a constant rain, Speight's and Mouton's brigades finally crossed the river and the next morning marched eight miles through mud and swamp to the rear of the enemy position. Colonel Henry Gray of the 28th Louisiana Infantry commanded Mouton's and Speight's brigades and positioned Mouton on the road to Morganza as a buffer against possible Union reinforcements. Gray then ordered Speight's brigade to begin the attack.²³ A man of few words, Private James Allen Hamilton of the 15th Texas described the day's action in his diary:

... attacked the enemy on Bayou Fardoche where they were about 600 strong. Speight's Brigad fought and whiped them. With a loss on our side of 23 killed, 52 wounded, and 3 missing. The Enemy lost some killed, 461 prisoners among them 1 Col. [and] 1 Lt. Col. We returned to our old camp the same knight.²⁴

²¹ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 24; Hamilton Diary, September 7-28, 1863.

²² Thomas Green to Major Louis Bush, October 2, 1863, Spaight (Ashley W.) Papers, CAH.

²³ *Ibid.*; *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 9, 1863; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 297; T. Michael Parrish, *Richard Taylor: Soldier Prince of Dixie*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 308.

²⁴ Hamilton Diary, September 28, 1863. This battle was also referred to as Bayou Fardoche, Sterling's Plantation, or Sterling's Bridge.

The Federals, 854 strong, had been trapped between Green's cavalry to the north and the combined infantries of Speight and Mouton from the south. Crossing a levee, the 15th Texas, commanded by Major John W. Daniel, led the way and was followed by the 31st Texas and the 11th Texas Battalion. The six hundred Texans rushed the enemy positions, and the Federals responded with a barrage of minie balls. "Speight's brigade . . . attacked them furiously and suffered pretty severely."²⁵

In the 15th Texas, Hiram E. Lee fell dead, Private J. R. Kuttner was shot through the abdomen but survived, Champe Carter had a minie ball lodge in his forearm, and Sergeant Theodore Bright received a severe head wound. Several other 15th Texans earned their battle scars with wounds in the legs, thighs, hands, and arms. The fighting proceeded from the plantation house, through the slave quarters, over levees, across a plowed field, and finally to a neighboring house a mile away. After an hour of intense fighting, the Texans defeated the scattered Federals. Union losses were 16 dead, 44 wounded, and 453 captured. The 15th Texas suffered the brunt of the Union fire, reporting 15 dead and 52 wounded; among the latter was Major Daniel wounded in the leg. The wounded were eventually transported west to the hospital at Washington where "the Ladies . . . [were] truly good Samaritans visiting and doing all they [could] to relieve the Suffering of the wounded."²⁶ Harrison, Daniel, and all the men of the 15th Texas

²⁵ *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 9, 1863.

²⁶ [J. Henry Carter] to My Dear Hennie, October 18, 1863, Carter-Harrison Family Papers, TXC; *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 9, 1863 (also contains a detailed list of the Confederate killed and wounded at Stirling's Plantation).

received praise for gallantry and courage under fire in General Green's official report. The regiment then returned to its position at Morgan's Ferry.²⁷

On October 5 rumors of a Federal advance up Bayou Teche sent Speight's brigade marching west toward Belle Cheney Springs. Passing through Washington, the Texans reached the town on October 9 and camped for the night in the piney woods two miles to the northwest. As rumors of advancing Federals continued, the Texans marched throughout the region bordered by Bayou Teche, Bayou Bœuf, and Belle Cheney Springs. On October 13, "a beautiful clear day," Colonel Speight returned from Texas and resumed command of his regiment and marched it south along Bayou Bœuf, until halting his men at Moundville, near Washington, on October 15 for rest and to await orders.²⁸

Meanwhile, civilians in the area began to prepare for the possibility of an invasion. "[A] great many are moving off their negroes today . . . the Yankees have been through this country and stolen many negroes. . . ." ²⁹ The Federals did not so much steal slaves as simply move into an area whereupon the slaves fled their owners for the Federal lines. A confiscation act enacted by the United States Congress in July 1862, stated that slaves found behind enemy lines "shall be deemed captives of war and shall be forever free," and

²⁷ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 26; John W. Spencer, *The Confederate Guns of Navarro County* (Corsicana, Texas: The Texas Press, 1986), 26; Thomas Green to Major Louis Bush, October 2, 1863, Spaight Papers; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 297.

²⁸ Your Devoted Henry to My Dear Hennie, October 13, 1863, Carter-Harrison Papers; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 27.

²⁹ Your Devoted Henry to My Dear Hennie, October 13, 1863, Carter-Harrison Papers.

whether or not bondsmen knew about this measure, many no doubt saw an approaching Federal army as a means to gain their freedom.³⁰

Throughout the summer and autumn months of 1863, General Taylor had repeatedly asked Trans-Mississippi Department commander Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith to send along reinforcements. In October, Smith finally provided Taylor with the 22nd and 34th Texas Cavalry, both dismounted and earlier left behind when Speight's brigade had passed through Shreveport the previous spring, and the 17th Texas Consolidated Cavalry (Dismounted). These three regiments formed the nucleus of a new brigade of seven hundred men under the command of Brigadier General Camille Armand Jules Marie, Prince de Polignac.³¹

Polignac, a French nobleman, was a peculiarity in the Confederate army. Born in France to the last prime minister of Charles X, Polignac would grow up to serve his country well in its armed forces. When hostilities between the states erupted, however, Polignac availed his services to his good friend Pierre G. T. Beauregard. Perhaps to gain favor from France's leaders for the Confederacy, Beauregard accepted the nobleman's proposition and offered Polignac a high position on his staff. Polignac arrived in New York on June 12, 1861. Though eleven states had already seceded by June 12, there existed no travel restrictions between the northern and southern states, thus allowing Polignac to travel to the aid of the Confederates in Richmond, Virginia. Upon his arrival

³⁰ James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1982), 271.

³¹ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 178.

in Richmond in July, Polignac received the rank of lieutenant colonel and an assignment on Beauregard's staff.³² The sight of Polignac among the Southerners most assuredly brought many soldiers to a halt. In his sketch of Polignac, author Roy O. Hatton gave this description:

The 29-year-old prince presented a striking figure. Though he was a short man, only 5 feet, 6 inches tall, his exceptionally deep blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and auburn hair complimented his fair complexion. And he sported a two-pointed hat "a la Napoleon," which along with his almost red Napoleonic beard brought many stares and jokes as he rode past raw Rebel troops.³³

After distinguishing himself during the Confederate invasion of Kentucky, Polignac was transferred to the Trans-Mississippi Department in the summer of 1863. Despite Beauregard's approval and the prince's flowery title, Polignac would not easily gain the trust of the suspicious Texans. The outcry was such that Taylor promised to remove Polignac if he was found lacking by the infantrymen, many of whom referred to the foreigner as that "damn frog-eating Frenchman" and "General Polecat." Eventually though, the latter derision would become a title of affection as the Texans became quite fond of this "Lafayette of the Confederacy."³⁴

While still encamped at Moundville, Speight's brigade was consolidated with the new brigade under Polignac. Due to his rank, Polignac received command of the

³² Roy O. Hatton, "Camille Polignac's Service: The Prince and the Confederates," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 19 (May 1980): 9-10.

³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-13; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 320; Parrish, *Richard Taylor*, 327-328.

consolidated brigade, and despite having just rejoined his regiment, Speight once again returned to Texas because of poor health.³⁵

During this time a religious revival swept through the ranks of the 15th Texas as preaching and praying became popular pastimes for the troops. Private J. Henry Carter of Company E, so moved by the sermons of other soldiers, wrote his wife:

Bro [William S.] McCraw [of Company H] came over from his camps and preached[,] it seemed as if the Spirit of God was among us; he . . . called up mourners when about 25 went up to be prayed for[, Lieutenant Colonel James E.] Harrison among the number[,] and expressed conversion. . . . God grant [the revival] may continue and deffuse [*sic*] itself throughout the whole camps until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess the power of the true and living God[.] My precious wife I feel as if I have been near the throne of God today and held sweet commune with our Heavenly Father[.] I wish I could always feel so and not busy myself so much about the affairs of this world for all is vanity and the pleasures are but for a day. . . .³⁶

Nevertheless, continued reports of 25,000 Federals advancing from Vermilionville would not allow the rebels to forget the “affairs of this world.” The Union evidently had plans for Louisiana and its neighbor to the west.³⁷

Long recognized as an ideal region for cotton production, Texas was coveted by northern textile mill owners once the war began and southern cotton was no longer available. When the war began and northeastern mills were forced to shut down and send workers home, these textile mill owners, men such as Edward Atkinson and Amos Lawrence, saw Union occupation of Texas as an ideal means for returning wealth to the

³⁵ Hamilton Diary, October 15, 1863; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 29.

³⁶ [J. Henry Carter] to My Precious Wife, October 19, 1863, Carter-Harrison Papers.

³⁷ Hamilton Diary, October 15, 1863.

mill towns of New England as well as their own pockets. Hand in hand with the textile producers came the politicians. In 1862 Governor John A. Andrew of Massachusetts and a delegation of Bostonian manufacturers traveled to Washington to press for the establishment of an open route to Texas cotton. Other politicians to call for a Union expedition to Texas included Edwin M. Stanton, President Lincoln's Secretary of War, and Major General Benjamin Butler. Butler, who would later become infamous as the commander of Union occupied New Orleans, and Stanton had hopes of "liberating" the German population of the Texas hill country and leading them east, but never saw their plans come to fruition. In the five years before the war, abolitionists and anti-slavery authors such as Fred Olmsted, W. H. Seward, and the German editor Adolf Douai of San Antonio, hoped to colonize Texas with northern farmers and squelch the spread to slavery in the state. After Texas' secession these men saw a military occupation of the Lone Star state as a means to advance these plans.³⁸

To further complicate matters, in the summer of 1863, France had established a puppet government in Mexico under Archduke Maximilian. Frightened by French involvement in North America, a violation of the Monroe Doctrine, and hearing rumors of a Franco-Confederate alliance or of French annexation of Texas, Louisiana, and the Arizona Territory, many Northern politicians and generals believed that the Union army must establish a strong presence in Texas. As a result of this development and the wishes

³⁸ Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 5-14; Richard Lowe, *The Texas Overland Expedition of 1863*, Civil War Campaigns and Commanders Series (Fort Worth: Ryan Place Publishers, 1996), 14-17; David C. Edmonds, *Yankee Autumn in Acadiana* (Lafayette, LA: The Acadiana Press, 1979), 5.

and desires of Northern interests, and despite its isolation from the principal battlefields and campaigns east of the Mississippi River, Texas would find itself the target of Federal guns in 1863.³⁹

Throughout September 1863 General Banks had amassed a seemingly invincible Union force at Brashear City with the intent of planting the Stars and Stripes on Texas soil. A failed naval attempt to land troops at Sabine Pass in September 1863 convinced Banks to attempt an overland invasion through Louisiana. To do so, Banks called on the experienced midwestern troops of the Thirteenth Army Corps, under the leadership of Major General Cadwallader C. Washburn, and the northeastern troops of the Nineteenth Army Corps, under the leadership of Major General William B. Franklin. The Thirteenth Corps, coming off their successful campaign at Vicksburg, made up the largest portion of Banks' army. Meanwhile, the men of the Nineteenth Corps, victorious at Port Hudson, were familiar with the Teche region after campaigning in the area the previous spring. Banks further strengthened his force with the addition of a cavalry division, under the leadership of Brigadier General Albert L. Lee. These horsemen consisted mostly of midwesterners but also included a regiment of Unionist Texans. With this army, Banks hoped to march northward through the Teche region of Louisiana, and if successful, he would then decide whether to turn west directly to Texas or continue north and advance toward Shreveport.⁴⁰

³⁹ Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 34-35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 39; Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 30-35.

On October 3, 1863, General Banks, from his headquarters in New Orleans, ordered the forward units to begin the arduous march northwest in the direction of Alexandria. After leaving Brashear City, the Federals arrived at Vermilionville on October 9 and brushed aside the small Confederate force left in defense of the town. Meanwhile, the Confederates carefully watched this Union train of 19,500 troops as it inched northward, continuously falling back until Federal intentions could be surmised. Taylor and theater commander Kirby Smith could not believe that the Union would devote this much effort to their region. Surely more important targets were east of the Mississippi River.⁴¹

Nevertheless, General Tom Green's Confederate cavalry would engage their Union counterparts from time to time, fighting a small battle north of Vermilionville at Buzzard's Prairie, but never inflicting nor receiving much damage. Still, the Federal troops continued their slow progression through the bayou country. As the Union army advanced to Opelousas and Barre's Landing (present-day Port Barre) on October 21, Polignac's brigade abandoned its nearby camp at Moundville and retreated fifteen miles in the direction of Alexandria. On October 25, as Union troops occupied and began looting Washington, the Texans fell back to Cheneyville, twenty miles south of Alexandria.⁴²

At this time, though, the invading Union army, under the command of Major General William B. Franklin, halted its advance and eventually began to fall back in the direction of New Iberia. Franklin, ever tentative, lacked the confidence to move his army

⁴¹ Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 36-48; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 298.

⁴² Hamilton Diary, October 21-26, 1863; Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 49-58.

through central Louisiana without orders from his superior, General Banks. Moreover, he had been abandoned, so to speak, by Banks while the latter launched another, and this time successful, amphibious attack on Texas via the Rio Grande. Added to this was the fact that the Teche region was utterly devoid of any provisions with which to supply Franklin's large army. By falling back he hoped to find supplies for his troops as well as ascertain an easier route to Texas.⁴³

On November 1 Franklin ordered his Federal troops to withdraw to the south, with the bulk of his army going as far as Carrion Crow Bayou (present-day Carencro). Acting as rearguard, one brigade of the Thirteenth Corps would travel only as far as Bayou Bourbeau, a few miles north of Carrion Crow Bayou. This infantry brigade consisted of the 60th and 67th Indiana, the 83rd and 96th Ohio, and the 23rd Wisconsin, with the additional support of the 17th Ohio Battery, a section of the 2nd Massachusetts Battery, and Union cavalry. This combined rearguard totaled nearly 1,800 men. Separated from the bulk of the Union army, however, this brigade would prove to be a tempting target for the Confederates.⁴⁴

Two days earlier, on October 30, Speight's regiment had been temporarily detached from Polignac's brigade and ordered south toward Washington to join Walker's Texas division, then shadowing the withdrawing Federals. The regiment passed through Washington on November 2, and went into camp at Opelousas to the south. That same

⁴³ Report of N. P. Banks, April 6, 1865, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 26, pt. 1, pp. 19-20; Edmonds, *Yankee Autumn in Acadiana*, 263-264; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 298; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 39.

⁴⁴ Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 61-68.

day, Green's Confederate cavalry instigated a minor skirmish with the Union rearguard at Bayou Bourbeau to determine its vulnerability. In the pre-dawn hours of November 3, the 15th Texas, with only 275 officers and enlisted men, was temporarily attached to Walker's division and, along with the 11th and 18th Texas Infantries, placed under the command of Colonel Oran M. Roberts of the 11th Texas. A total of 950 Confederate infantrymen would attack the exposed Federal position at Bayou Bourbeau.⁴⁵

The plan developed by Green and Roberts called for the Confederates to advance south along the road from Opelousas, and as they neared the Federal camp Roberts' infantry regiments would form in a line three-quarters of a mile long through the woods to the left of the road. Roberts' own 11th Texas Infantry had yet to experience battle, and the troops of the 18th Texas Infantry had only smoothbore muskets, so the 15th Texas, with the only battle experience of the three regiments, received the most exposed position along the line, that being the rightmost anchoring Roberts' infantry to the cavalry brigade commanded by Colonel Arthur P. Bagby. To the right of Bagby's cavalry lay open prairie land, where the extension of Green's horsemen, under the guidance of Colonel James P. Major, would form in line. Green hoped that Bagby's cavalry in the center would serve as a distraction and allow Roberts' infantry wing to the left and Major's cavalry wing to the right to swoop down around the Federal flanks, effectively cutting them off.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hamilton Diary, October 30 - November 2, 1863; Report of Thomas Green, November 4, 1863, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 26, pt. 1, p. 394; Alwyn Barr, ed., "The Battle of Bayou Bourbeau, November 3, 1863: Colonel Oran M. Roberts' Report," *Louisiana History* 6 (Winter 1965): 85-86; Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 68-69, 72.

⁴⁶ Report of Thomas Green, November 4, 1863, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 26, pt. 1, p. 394; Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 75-78.

Colonel Roberts ordered Companies A and F of the 15th Texas to serve as the Confederate skirmish line. The main line, advancing along the bayou and through thick underbrush, lost its clean and straight formation as troops fell behind one another and doubled-up behind those who were ahead.⁴⁷

In the Federal camp along Bayou Bourbeau, Brigadier General Stephen Gano Burbridge anticipated a continuation of the cavalry skirmishes from the day before. By late morning, however, it seemed the Confederates were not going to make a push against the Union positions. The 83rd Ohio had left the camp at Bayou Bourbeau to forage across the bayou to the east. Many of the troops from the 67th Indiana and 23rd Wisconsin were either receiving pay or preparing their lunches. In the distance the sound of scattered firing resulted in little concern.⁴⁸

At about 11 a.m., following a brief respite in order to refresh his men and replace his skirmishers, Roberts ordered his infantrymen to make the final push toward the Union camp. As the infantry moved through the woods toward the Union right, the fire from Union pickets grew heavier. The Union officers in camp, expecting only skirmishing on the prairie, were shocked to hear the pop and crack of musket and rifle shots coming from the woods. With a resounding rebel yell, the bane of all Yankees, the Texans rushed headlong through the woods toward the enemy lines with the order to “run right over them and give them Hell.”⁴⁹ The troops in the Union camp, finally aware of what was

⁴⁷ Barr, “The Battle of Bayou Bourbeau,” 87-88; Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 79; Edmonds, *Yankee Autumn in Acadiana*, 277.

⁴⁸ Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 79.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Barr, *Polignac’s Texas Brigade*, 31; Edmonds, *Yankee Autumn in Acadiana*, 277.

happening, hurriedly gathered their rifles, cartridges, and canteens as they ran to rejoin their units. To the Union left, in the path of Major's cavalry, was the 67th Indiana. The guns of the 17th Ohio and 2nd Massachusetts made up the Union center. Lying in the path of the advancing 15th Texas were the 60th Indiana and the 96th Ohio, with the 23rd Wisconsin in the rear.⁵⁰

The Federals greeted the oncoming gray-coats with a horrific volley. In the 15th Texas, Captain Coke of Company K suffered a wound to the chest. Private Peter Alonzo, also of Company K, had his trigger finger shot off. In Company E, Private George W. Mantooth suffered a fatal gunshot wound to one of his legs. Private T. H. Storey of Company G was felled by a gunshot wound to his groin. As the 96th Ohio did its best to hold its position, however, the 60th Indiana fell back in the face of Roberts' infantry. The retreating soldiers rushed back through the 96th Ohio, confusing and frightening the Ohioans.⁵¹ The men of the 15th Texas saw their chance and took advantage of the bewildered Federals as Captain Halbert, of Company E, described:

We drove them [96th Ohio and 60th Indiana] back to a ravine where they were reinforced [by the 23rd Wisconsin] and made their final stand and for twenty minutes they stood firm and shot our men down to the right and left. The final charge however came, at them we went, they broke and fled and the day was ours. At this moment [Bagby's cavalry] came thundering down on their flank, silenced and captured their cannon, and took the prisoners. Our men (Infantry) were too much exhausted to follow up the victory. Besides at this moment the enemy cavalry attacked

⁵⁰ Report of Thomas Green, November 4, 1863, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 26, pt 1, p. 394; Barr, "The Battle of Bayou Bourbeau," 89-90; Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 82. The Battle of Bayou Bourbeau is also referred to as the Battle of Carrion Crow, Carencro, or Grand Coteau.

⁵¹ Edmonds, *Yankee Autumn in Acadiana*, 278; Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 84; [J. L. Halbert] to My Dear Wife, November 3, 1863, Halbert Collection; David C. Edmonds, "Surrender on the Bourbeaux: Honorable Defeat or Incompetency Under Fire," *Louisiana History* 8 (August 1977): 67.

our left flank; we turned and soon repulsed that. Then the enemy fled and the fight was over.⁵²

As the infantry under Roberts fought in the woods, to the west Major's cavalry had captured the whole 67th Indiana regiment in a relatively bloodless confrontation. All along the Union line, the Federal troops broke and ran for the bayou. The 83rd Ohio, hastily called back from its foraging, provided little assistance, as the Confederates maintained their momentum.⁵³

The disorganized retreat of the Federals made way for the disorganized advance of the Texans. As quickly as the Texans had routed the Federals, they seemed to lose interest. The poorly supplied Texans "clothed in rags, armed with their own muskets, knives, squirrel rifles or double-barreled shotguns . . . were in desperate need of provisions." In the wake of their retreat, the Federals had left behind "clothing, money, tents, blankets, small arms and ammunition, horses, mules, wagons" and other valuables. This booty proved too great a temptation to withstand as the Confederates gave up chasing the Union troops and began gathering the newly captured provisions. The losses on the Confederate side were 182 killed, wounded, or missing (of that number, 141 were soldiers in Roberts' infantry). The 15th Texas suffered 7 killed, 22 wounded, and 32 missing. The Federals suffered 716 killed, wounded, or captured, (the bulk being members of the 67th Indiana).⁵⁴

⁵² [J. L. Halbert] to My Dear Wife, November 13, 1863, Halbert Collection.

⁵³ Edmonds, "Surrender on the Bourbeux," 64, 71-72, 77-82. The commander of the 67th Indiana, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore E. Beuhler, would eventually lose his command and be dismissed under charges of incompetence and cowardice stemming from the Union rout at Bayou Bourbeau.

⁵⁴ Report of Thomas Green, November 4, 1863, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 26, pt 1, p. 395; Edmonds, "Surrender on the Bourbeux," 72; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 32.

Following their victory, the 15th Texas went into camp a few miles north of the battleground. Perhaps filled with the elation of victory, the Texans were fond of their new camp and its grand oaks covered in Spanish moss. The day after the battle, November 4, a fatigue party of Lieutenant Colonel Harrison, Captain Halbert, both of the 15th Texas, and Captain J. E. Hart was detailed to see to the burial of the dead on the battlefield. In the same letter to his wife in which he had described the battle, Halbert told of a “very interesting interview with some Federal Officers.” Under the white flag the Confederate party met a Union corps of surgeons tending to wounded Confederates and learned that the Union forces had buried the Confederate dead that morning. The two parties then decided that the wounded on each side would be exchanged. Later the commander of the Union detail, a Major Morgan of General Washburn’s staff, invited the Texans to stay and socialize. Halbert described the meeting.

The Major (Morgan) having an ambulance full of good things had a cloth spread on the grass in the yard, nice edibles – such as neither you or I are accustomed to getting these hard times – displayed thereon and invited us to participate with him. First however he proffered some splendid liquors (of which there was a great quantity) which being duly acknowledged (My wife knows her husband’s failings) we ate bountifully of the repast and closed the treat with the finest segars, from them also, that I have seen for more than two years. During all this time a pleasant and agreeable conversation was going on, though we poor Confederates had nothing to give them but bullets and kind words. Maj[or] M[organ] did not use the word “rebels” in speaking of us but said “Confederates.”⁵⁵

Following their humiliating little defeat, the Union troops continued to withdraw to the southeast. The army regrouped and recuperated in Vermilionville for ten days before

⁵⁵ [J. L. Halbert] to My Dear Wife, November 13, 1863, Halbert Collection.

finally arriving at their earthworks in New Iberia. Green's cavalry continued to harass the Federals for a time, but for the most part, Taylor's Confederates left the Federals alone. Because of the failure of this autumn Louisiana expedition, and under constant pressure from political and economic interests, General Banks and his troops would undertake another invasion in March 1864. This second invasion, Banks' Red River Campaign, would have several repercussions for the Union and the Confederacy on both sides of the Mississippi River.⁵⁶

On November 20 the 15th Texas received orders to march east, cross the Atchafalaya, and rejoin Polignac's brigade. Speight's regiment met the brigade on November 24 at Simmesport on the Atchafalaya, near the confluence of the Red River and Mississippi River. In bitterly cold weather, the Texans crossed the Atchafalaya and camped two miles west of the Mississippi River on November 28. "We are now having very severe weather[. T]he wind [is] from the north and freezing," wrote Private J. Henry Carter of Company E. While in camp, the men "kept busy all day building up fires." Private Carter confessed to his wife that he was forced to wear three shirts and two coats to try and stay warm, but admitted "still I feel the cold." To compound the suffering "many of [the] men [were] without shoes [with] no chance of getting any in this section."⁵⁷ The Texans did not have the opportunity to wallow in their misery for long, however. For the next month the brigade proceeded through Morgan's Ferry, passed through the site of its victory at Stirling's Plantation, turned around and recrossed the

⁵⁶ Lowe, *Texas Overland Expedition*, 110-111.

⁵⁷ Your Devoted Henry to My Hennie, November 29, 1863; Carter-Harrison Papers.

Atchafalaya, marched back through Simmesport, then Mansura, marched up the Red River and arrived at Alexandria on December 19. Meanwhile, Speight, still in Texas and in poor health, praised his regiment for its role at Bayou Bourbeau and confided in Lieutenant Colonel Harrison that he feared he might have to resign his commission.⁵⁸

During the brigade's short stay in Alexandria, Colonel A. W. Spaight's 11th Texas Battalion was detached and returned to Texas, most likely due to the repeated requests of its commander. By December 23 the rest of Speight's brigade had passed through Winnfield, Louisiana, fifty miles north of Alexandria, on its way to the town of Monroe, on the Ouachita River in northeast Louisiana. After camping near the town of Vernon on the 24th, the Texans marched eighteen miles on Christmas Day.⁵⁹ After setting up camp on December 25, Lieutenant Colonel Harrison had a surprise waiting for his men.

Col. Harrison gave us a first rate dinner at 7 o'clock . . . our bill of fare as follows Turkeys, chicken, Pie, Fried Chicken, Jelly, Pickles, Sauces, Cakes, Potato Pie, Milk, and about 9 o'clock a glass of Egg Nog[. He had it all nicely cooked the day of the march sent on ahead and it was brought to camps; all passed off pleasantly; he is one of the kindest hearted men I ever met.⁶⁰

Yet, even in an apparent moment of plenty, Private J. Henry Carter still found reason to complain.

[T]here is very little through this country and the Soldiers are killing hogs all along the road[.] They have little besides Beef and Bread and with 11 Doll[ars] per month cannot afford to pay the extravagant prices that are asked for Everything we wish to buy; The greatest piece of swindling (and

⁵⁸ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 32-33; Hamilton Diary, November 24 - December 19, 1863; J. W. Speight to Lt. Col. J. E. Harrison, December 6, 1863, Tate (Mrs. Claude B.) Collection, CAH.

⁵⁹ Hamilton Diary, December 20-24, 1863; Barr, *Polignac's Brigade*, 34-35. Many letters and reports also spelled Ouachita as Washita.

⁶⁰ Henry [Carter] to My Dear Hennie, December 26, 1863, Carter-Harrison Papers.

it is what I call extortion) happened to Dr. [James] Mullens [of the 15th Texas] he had a fine Turkey cost \$3 and sent off to a woman near camps to be nicely cooked, she fool like . . . boiled it, no sauce, no butter, and you know how it was and she [had] the impudence to charge him \$4. . . . That is what I call a real Extortioner: plenty of wood, plenty of water, and no season.⁶¹

The Texans marched again on the morning of December 26 and camped three miles below Monroe in the slave quarters of a nearby plantation on December 28. Freezing temperatures, rain, and rampant sickness made conditions miserable. Harrison wrote home, "I am nearly froze up everything is freezing. . . . We have pneumonia in the Regt. and the hardships of the campaigning in [Louisiana] is beginning to tell upon my men."⁶² The brigade remained in this camp until January 18.⁶³

Sixty miles below on the Ouachita River, Confederate engineers began rebuilding batteries located at the town of Harrisonburg. On January 18 Polignac's brigade learned it was to march south in the direction of Columbia, located halfway between Monroe and Harrisonburg. At first unaware of the reason for their new assignment, the Texans soon learned they were to serve as a protective force for the engineers in Harrisonburg. The brigade reached Columbia on the 20th then marched on to Harrisonburg, arriving on January 24. For the next month the 15th Texas would make its winter quarters at Harrisonburg and Trinity (present-day Jonesville), ten miles south at the confluence of the Ouachita, Black, and Tensas rivers. The only break from the monotony of camp life came

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² J. E. Harrison to My Dear Son, January 1, 1864, Harrison (Guy Bryan, Jr.) Collection.

⁶³ Hamilton Diary, December 19, 1863 - January 18, 1864; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 34-

with a short but successful excursion to Vidalia, Louisiana, twenty-five miles east on the Mississippi River, to capture provisions and animals from the Federal garrison located there. It was during the attack on Vidalia that Polignac finally had an opportunity to lead his men in a fight, and it went a long way toward gaining their respect.⁶⁴

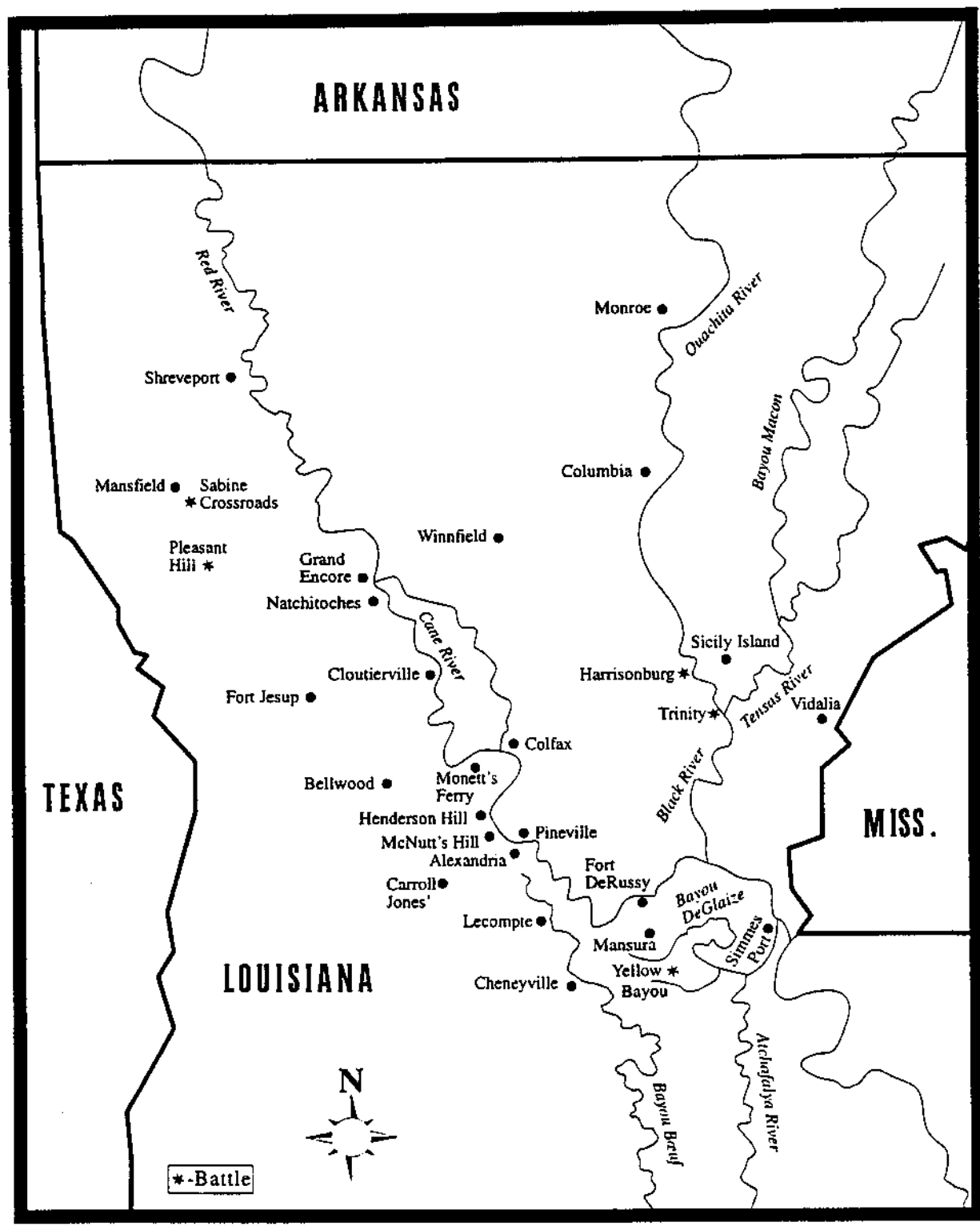
On March 1, 1864, six Union gunboats traveled up the Black River and shelled the 15th Texas encamped at Trinity. From 4 p.m. until dusk, the Federals bombarded the Confederate positions, forcing the engineers to hide three of their heavy cannons. After the bombardment the 15th Texas went on a forced march toward Harrisonburg in pursuit of the gunboats now traveling upstream. The Texans arrived at Harrisonburg, defended by the 17th Texas Consolidated Cavalry (Dismounted) and 22nd Texas Cavalry (Dismounted), in the early hours of March 2. At 9 a.m. the Federal gunboats began shelling the Confederate positions at Harrisonburg. This continued until noon when the gunboats withdrew. Polignac removed his men from the riverbanks to their camp at Harrisonburg, only to have the gunboats return at 3 p.m. and begin shelling the town again. This second time the Federals set fire to some of the buildings and houses in town before being driven out by the Confederates. The Union gunboats then moved downstream and shelled Trinity on March 3, capturing and removing the hidden cannons. This whole three-day ordeal resulted in six dead and ten wounded in Polignac's brigade. The brigade remained at Harrisonburg until March 10, having reoccupied Trinity on March 8.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Hamilton Diary, January 18 - February 24, 1864; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 35-37.

⁶⁵ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 37-38; Hamilton Diary, March 1-10, 1864.

The previous ten months had been a harrowing experience for the Texas regiment and its leaders. Marching throughout the Louisiana countryside, skirmishing with Federal boats along the many waterways, defending the state from a Union invasion, and suffering through the cold and freezing weather surely impressed on many of the soldiers that the glories and accolades of war came with a price. Their greatest test, though, would come during the next three months.

NORTHERN LOUISIANA, December 1863 - August 1864



CHAPTER 4

THE RED RIVER CAMPAIGN

MARCH - MAY 1864

Following their abortive raid toward Texas, Union troops withdrew from the Louisiana interior and wintered closer to New Orleans. Still, Federal forces maintained control of the Mississippi River, and northern interests had not yet abandoned their plans for Texas. For the South, 1863 had been a disastrous year. The loss of Vicksburg and Port Hudson on the Mississippi River had cut the Confederacy in two. The inability of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia to gain a victory at Gettysburg, which some believed might have won foreign aid from France and England, was a devastating blow. In November Union forces routed Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee at the Battle of Chattanooga. In February 1864 General William T. Sherman's Union army was able to march virtually unopposed across Mississippi from Vicksburg to Meridian. The Confederacy seemed to be disintegrating at a rapid rate, and northern leaders felt the time was right to launch a decisive series of invasions in order finally to crush the rebels. Many northerners believed that the end of the war was only a few weeks away.¹

¹ Ludwell H. Johnson, *Red River Campaign: Politics & Cotton in the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1958, reprint, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993), 79.

During the winter of 1863-1864, Banks hoped to join his troops with Sherman's army and Farragut's navy in a move against Mobile, Alabama. As the district commander, Banks had been given the task of shutting down the port of Mobile to Confederate traders by President Lincoln and Henry W. Halleck, General-in-Chief of the U. S. Army. French action in Mexico, however, prompted Lincoln to pressure Halleck to place a Union force in Texas, at the expense of a Mobile expedition. Throughout early January 1864 Halleck and Lincoln continued to suggest to Banks that he work with other Federal forces and move up the Red River against Shreveport. Halleck assured Banks that "Generals [William T.] Sherman and [Frederick] Steele agree . . . that the Red River is the shortest and best line of defense for Louisiana and Arkansas and as a base of operations against Texas."² All involved hoped that this movement would have three results. The first would be to further divide the already splintered Confederacy. Second, a Federal presence on the Red River and in Texas would isolate northern Louisiana and Arkansas from vital supplies and reinforcements in Texas. Finally, a Union controlled Red River would "open an outlet for the sugar and cotton of northern Louisiana" to flow to the Mississippi River and New Orleans.³ On January 16 Banks acquiesced to Halleck's wishes.⁴

² H. W. Halleck to Major-General Banks, January 4, 1864, *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), series 1, vol. 34, pt. 2, p. 15, hereafter cited as *O.R.*; H. W. Halleck to N. P. Banks, November 9, 1862; *ibid.*, vol. 15, p. 590.

³ H. W. Halleck to N. P. Banks, November 9, 1862, *ibid.*, vol. 15, p. 590; H. W. Halleck to N. P. Banks, August 10, 1863, *ibid.*, vol. 26, pt. 1, p. 673; Kurt Henry Hackemer, "Strategic Dilemma: Civil-Military Friction and the Texas Coastal Campaign of 1863," *Military History of the West* 26 (no. 2, 1996): 193.

⁴ John D. Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 325; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 40-47; T. Michael Parrish, *Richard Taylor: Soldier Prince of Dixie*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 307.

Banks did so with an agenda of his own, however. He had been strongly urged by President Lincoln to bring Union-controlled Louisiana back into the Union by holding a constitutional convention as soon as possible. Banks, who dreamed of a future presidential nomination for himself, feared that failure would result in his removal from command, thus damaging his political goals. In addition, Banks heard that tens of thousands of bales of cotton were being stored in northwestern Louisiana. If he could capture these for the Union, its prominent textile-mill owners would owe him a great deal if he were to run for office. Furthermore, General Sherman promised to provide Banks with the Sixteenth Corps, commanded by Brigadier General Andrew J. Smith, from his army in Mississippi whenever the campaign started. With these details in mind, Banks finally agreed to a campaign up the Red River.⁵

For the Confederates during the winter of 1863-1864, Confederate Generals E. Kirby Smith and Richard Taylor were stumped as they tried to determine the most likely action by Banks in New Orleans. Both believed that the Federals would move against Shreveport as soon as water levels reached a point on the Red River to allow for Union gunboats. Sherman's February march to Meridian, however, made both wonder if the enemy would move against Mobile, Alabama, and not Shreveport. On March 13 Smith wrote to Taylor, "I still think the enemy cannot be so infatuated as to occupy a large force in [the Trans-Mississippi] department when every man should be employed east of the

⁵ Report of A. J. Smith, September 25, 1865, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p. 305; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 45-47, 84; Hackemer, "Strategic Dilemma," 189-190.

river. . . .”⁶ Smith and Taylor could not ignore the fact, though, that no action was being taken against Mobile, and Banks had begun amassing a huge army at Berwick Bay. An early March conference between Sherman and Banks in New Orleans also alerted Smith and Taylor to a possible invasion. As a precaution, General Taylor, headquartered at Alexandria, began to consolidate his forces spread throughout Louisiana. He had very little to work with, though.⁷

Federal operations along the Texas coast in previous months had prompted E. Kirby Smith to take General Tom Green’s cavalry away from Taylor and send it to Galveston, leaving Taylor with only three cavalry regiments. Polignac’s brigade, weakened by the casualties of camp life, had not received any new recruits in the winter months. Furthermore, and to the objection of Taylor, Smith continuously depleted the army by detailing men from the ranks to fill his staff in Shreveport, a staff that, in Taylor’s opinion, was “on a scale proportioned rather to the extent of [Smith’s] territory than to the smallness of his force.”⁸ Taylor still had General Walker’s Texas division, but it was operating in the Avoyelles prairie, a region bordered by the Red and Atchafalaya rivers, Bayou Teche, and the many bayous between Simmesport and Cheneyville. Walker’s division was occupied with the defense of Fort De Russy, an incomplete fortification on the Red River between Alexandria and Simmesport, which Smith hoped would serve as a

⁶ E. K. Smith to Richard Taylor, March 13, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p.494; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 87.

⁷ Report of Richard Taylor, April 18, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p.560; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 86-87; Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1879; reprint, New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 177-180.

⁸ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 178.

“Red River Gibraltar” against the Federals. The number of Confederate troops under Taylor in March 1864 was only 6,100 infantry, cavalry, and artillery.⁹

For his Red River expedition, Banks’ army would consist of the same units used the previous fall during the failed march toward Alexandria, but with some new additions. The Nineteenth Corps received the 14th New Hampshire, the 29th and 30th Maine, and the 153rd New York Infantries, plus the 1st Delaware and 7th Massachusetts Batteries. Banks also recalled the Thirteenth Corps from winter operations in south Texas. General Albert Lee’s cavalry gained seven more regiments, pushing his total to nineteen regiments. Banks also decided to use the initial route of Franklin’s failed 1863 expedition, following Bayou Teche and Bayou Bœuf up to Alexandria. On March 13 Lee’s cavalry passed through Franklin on the road to Alexandria. Following two days later were the First Division, Nineteenth Corps, and another division from the Thirteenth Corps. The Second Division, Nineteenth Corps, traveled by steamers up Bayou Teche.¹⁰

The overall plan called for a naval force, commanded by Admiral David D. Porter, with the Sixteenth Corps’s ten thousand soldiers, to travel up the Red River and meet the Thirteenth and Nineteenth Corps at Alexandria. At Alexandria these combined forces would possess overwhelming firepower: “30,000 [soldiers] of all arms, with 90 guns,” Porter’s 13 ironclads, 4 tinclads, and 5 other gunboats, plus around 40 army transport and quartermaster boats, all mounting a combined 210 guns.¹¹ From there this Union

⁹ *Ibid.*, 177-183; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 328; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 91-92.

¹⁰ N. P. Banks to Maj. Gen. Hurlbutt, March 10, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 2, pp. 544-545; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 326; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 98.

¹¹ Report of A. J. Smith, September 25, 1865, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p. 305; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 100.

juggernaut would advance up the Red River to Shreveport where it would meet General Frederick Steele's invading Federal army from Little Rock, which would increase the Federal force to 44,000 soldiers. From Shreveport it was a short hop to Texas.¹²

In early March, Taylor started recalling his scattered Confederate troops in order to repel the coming Union invasion. On March 7 he ordered Polignac's brigade, including the 15th Texas, still encamped at Harrisonburg and Trinity, to march to Alexandria as quickly as possible. The brigade, however, did not get under way until the 10th. During this time, the 15th Texas was being commanded by Major John W. Daniel because Speight was still in Texas due to poor health and Harrison had returned home in the weeks before for personal reasons.¹³

The next two weeks brought rapid changes for Taylor's Louisiana. From March 12 to 15, A. J. Smith's Sixteenth Corps marched through the Avoyelles prairie and captured Fort De Russy, forcing Walker's division of four thousand to fall back toward Cheneyville to the west. With Porter and A. J. Smith advancing from the east and Banks advancing from the south, Taylor evacuated Alexandria on March 15. This allowed Porter's and Smith's troops to occupy the city virtually unopposed. Meanwhile, Taylor retreated to the southwest to Carroll Jones', the home of a wealthy free African American, where there was a Confederate supply depot. Polignac's Texas brigade and Mouton's Louisiana brigade had both arrived in Alexandria on March 14 and marched west to the

¹² Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 325-326, 334.

¹³ Alwyn Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade* (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1964), 38.

supply depot when the city was evacuated. There in the piney woods of central Louisiana, Polignac's brigade and Mouton's brigade were organized into a new division with Mouton commanding. Colonel W. G. Vincent's 2nd Louisiana Cavalry, which had been watching Banks' advancing army on Bayou Teche, joined the Confederates at the depot on March 19 and was quickly forwarded to Bayou Rapides, twelve miles north, to skirmish with Smith's Federals.¹⁴

On March 20 the first portion of Banks' column, General A. L. Lee's cavalry, rode into Alexandria. A cold and rainy day on March 21 did little to help the Confederates. In order to aid Vincent's cavalry, now located twenty miles upstream from Alexandria on the heights of Henderson Hill, Taylor sent him a four-gun battery, commanded by William Edgar, on the morning of the 21st. By that evening Edgar's battery could be heard firing at the advancing Union army. That night the Federals surrounded and overran the Confederate position at Henderson Hill, capturing Edgar's four guns, 250 soldiers, and many horses. That same day Taylor began withdrawing his 6,100 soldiers toward Natchitoches, located on the Cane River, about five miles west of the Red River, halfway between Shreveport and Alexandria. On March 25 Porter's fleet and the Sixteenth Corps were finally joined by the Thirteenth and Nineteenth Corps at Alexandria, seven days later than promised.¹⁵

¹⁴ David D. Porter to W. T. Sherman, March 15, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 2, p. 611; Report of Richard Taylor, April 18, 1864, *ibid.*, pt. 1, p. 561; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 181-183; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 96-97; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 327, 329.

¹⁵ Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 97-98; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 183-184; Parrish, *Richard Taylor*, 330; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 335.

From March 22 until April 7, Taylor's troops continued falling back as the enemy advanced. Speight's regiment passed through Beasley's, another supply depot twelve miles northwest of Carroll Jones', on March 23, camped at Bellwood on March 29, and Fort Jesup on March 30. April 1 found the Texans camped at Pleasant Hill, twenty-five miles west of Natchitoches. That same day, General Green's cavalry, hastily called back from Texas, rejoined Taylor's command. The next day Polignac's Texans marched three miles east out of Pleasant Hill on the Natchitoches road, and that night remained in a line of battle in anticipation of a Federal attack. The attack never came, and on April 3 the brigade rejoined Taylor's retreating army. On April 4 Speight's regiment, under the direction of Major John W. Daniel, passed through Mansfield and camped four miles above the small town, only thirty-five miles south of E. Kirby Smith's Trans-Mississippi Department headquarters in Shreveport. The Texans would rest there until April 7 while Green's cavalry skirmishers kept the Federals occupied.¹⁶

Even though the Confederates retreated rapidly, the Federal advance had not gone smoothly. First of all, Porter's naval force had a problem as soon as it arrived in Alexandria. The annual rising of the Red River, which usually occurred in December or January, did not begin until the first week of March in 1864. Because of this late rise, it seemed very unlikely that Porter's ironclads would be able to travel past the falls above the city. When Porter did try to send his armada upstream, upon Banks' insistence, he

¹⁶ Barr, *Polignac's Brigade*, 38-39; James Allen Hamilton Diary, March 29 - April 4, 1862, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, hereafter cited as CAH; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 184-185.

foolishly sent first the *Eastport*, his heaviest ironclad, and it quickly ran aground on the rocks. This delayed Porter's movements by three days. It was not until April 3 that the *Eastport* eventually made it above the falls along with twelve other gunboats and thirty transports. Several other vessels could not pass above the falls, however. These vessels returned to Vicksburg to aid in the defense of the Mississippi River, reducing Banks' force by three thousand men.¹⁷

For the ground forces, Lee's cavalry began the Union advance on March 26 as it marched out of Alexandria toward Natchitoches, followed by the Sixteenth Corps on March 27 and 28. This large invading army would have to be fed, and Banks had hoped to use Porter's fleet as a supply line. The low water, however, made a land-based supply line necessary, and this required the maintenance of a strong Union presence in Alexandria. General C. C. Grover's division of the Nineteenth Corps stayed behind in Alexandria to serve as guards and laborers for this supply line. This fact reduced Banks' effective fighting strength by another 3,600 men. On March 26 Banks further learned from General Ulysses S. Grant, recently made General-in-Chief, U. S. Army, that he would have to return A. J. Smith and his ten thousand troops to Vicksburg by the end of April, regardless of the situation in Louisiana, so they could be available for the summer campaigns east of the Mississippi River. This placed a strict deadline on Banks' goals,

¹⁷ Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 106-108.

which included not only the capture of Shreveport but the prospects of military glories he could use in political arenas. He could not afford to waste time.¹⁸

The Thirteenth Corps and the Nineteenth Corps' remaining division, under the combined command of General William B. Franklin, marched out of Alexandria on March 28. Five days later, Banks' headquarters boat, the *Black Hawk*, began its upstream journey on the Red River. After their slow start, the Federals covered the eighty miles between Alexandria and Natchitoches in four days. Four miles above Natchitoches at Grand Ecore, though, the Federal advance hit a snag. The road that the ground forces had been using branched away from the Red River and the protection of Porter's gunboats, and Banks was uncertain if there was another road that closely followed the river. He then decided to send the infantry and cavalry west away from the river toward Pleasant Hill along a narrow road that would require Banks' army to be stretched thin, thus leaving its supply line exposed. Banks, nevertheless still confident, believed the rebels would continue their retreat and Shreveport would be reached in a few days. From Grand Ecore, Lee's cavalry, which marched out on April 6, again led the Federal column, followed by Franklin's Thirteenth and Nineteenth Corps, with A. J. Smith's troops bringing up the rear on April 7. After leaving the river, Lee's horsemen began encountering more resistance from Green's Confederate cavalry.¹⁹

¹⁸ U. S. Grant to N. P. Banks, March 15, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 2, pp. 610-611; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 105-106; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 326.

¹⁹ N. P. Banks to H. W. Halleck, April 2, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, pp. 179-180; *O.R.*, *ibid.*, p. 427; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 110-118.

General Taylor, recognizing that the Federals had the choice of only one road to travel between Pleasant Hill and Mansfield, determined to stop Banks' army before it passed north of Mansfield where there was a choice of three roads to follow into Shreveport. At daylight on April 8, Polignac's brigade left its camp north of Mansfield and marched southeast toward an area predetermined by Taylor for the battle. Four miles south of Mansfield, near a small junction known as Sabine Crossroads, Mouton's division and Walker's division formed in a line and prepared for battle as Green's cavalry bothered the enemy's advance. The Confederate line, keeping the road to Mansfield as its center, with Mouton's division to the left and Walker's division to the right, faced south and east and extended along the edge of a wooded area. Directly in front of the Confederates lay a sloping field 800 yards wide by 1,200 yards long and bisected by a single fence line. On the other side of the field was another wooded area. Mouton's division formed with Colonel Henry Gray's brigade on the right and Polignac's brigade on the left with the added support of Colonel J. P. Major's dismounted cavalry division on the Texans' left.²⁰ Mouton's and Walker's divisions were further aided by the addition of two batteries each. Taylor's entire force numbered 8,800 men: 5,300 infantry, 3,000 cavalry, and 500 artillery.²¹

Throughout the morning Green's cavalry continued poking and prodding the advance elements of Banks' column, consisting of Lee's cavalry and an infantry brigade

²⁰ Gray's brigade was formerly Mouton's brigade before the latter was made commander of the new division created by Polignac's and Mouton's brigade.

²¹ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 187-188, 190; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 130.

from Colonel W. J. Landram's division, Thirteenth Corps. The Federals, however, seemed reluctant to make a strong push at Green and his horsemen, which would have set off the Confederate infantry waiting along the wood line. As he waited for this push, Taylor rode along the front lines of Gray's Louisiana brigade and encouraged the men to "draw the first blood" in defense of their invaded homeland.²² At around noon a large volley from across the field, coupled with reports that Green's cavalry had encountered Federal infantry (the second brigade of Landram's division) in the east woods on the other side of the field, led Taylor to believe that the Federal advance, for which he was waiting, had come. To counter, he shifted Horace Randal's infantry brigade, of Walker's division, and another cavalry regiment to the left of the road. Time passed, however, and nothing more than bursts of rifle and musket fire from across the field disturbed the rebels.²³

Nearing 4 p.m. Taylor rode along the lines of Polignac's brigade and proclaimed, "Little Frenchman, I am going to fight Banks here, if he has a million men!"²⁴ With that, Taylor ordered Mouton's division and Randal's brigade to take the fight to the Federals. The Texans and Louisianans came screaming out of the woods and swooped down across the field toward the Union positions. In the woods on the other side of the field was Landram's division, plus the support of two cavalry brigades and artillery. As the Confederates stormed across the open field, bullets and shells tore over their heads. L. J. Storey, in the 26th Texas Cavalry of Major's division, would recall decades later that as

²² Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 191.

²³ Report of Richard Taylor, April 18, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p. 564; Hamilton Diary, April 8, 1864; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 188, 190-191; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 133; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 340-342.

²⁴ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 39.

Polignac's brigade charged the Union line, he could hear their rebel yells over the din of Union bombardment.²⁵

When the Confederates tried to cross a ravine in front of the Union line, the Federals rained down a sheet of fire on the rebels, forcing them back nearly two hundred yards. General Mouton rallied his men to follow him to the Union positions in the woods. Leading the second charge, Mouton was mortally wounded when he attempted to disarm a group of Federal soldiers. As the rebel line began to falter, Polignac took command of the division and shouted, "Come on Boys, Come on, these things do make a hell of a noise but don't hurt much."²⁶ In the 15th Texas, Private James Allen Hamilton offered this brief description:

We attacked them and the battle became general. . . . With heavy losses on both Sides As there was a continual roar[?] of Cannon and Musketry all the time[.] We Completely routed them from every Position[.]²⁷

At this time Taylor ordered Walker's Texas division to attack the Union left. Walker's troops ran up on this flank and quickly overcame the 67th Indiana and 23rd Wisconsin and managed to capture three artillery pieces that were quickly turned on their former owners. Throughout this offensive J. P. Major's cavalry division had slowly worked its way through the woods and gained the right flank of Landram's position. Realizing his troops were being cut off, General T. E. G. Ransom, commander of the

²⁵ L. J. Storey to A. M. Hill, February 21, 1908, in L. J. Storey, John L. Lane, and Augustus M. Hill, "Incidents of Banks' Campaign: Mansfield and Pleasant Hill (April 1864)," CAH.

²⁶ *Ibid.*; Report of Richard Taylor, April 18, 1864, *O.R.*, series I, vol. 34, pt. 1, p. 564; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 191; Parrish, *Richard Taylor*, 346-347; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 342; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 130, 134-135.

²⁷ Hamilton Diary, April 8, 1864.

Thirteenth Corps, ordered Landram's division to fall back. This retreat occurred so rapidly that a few regiments did not receive the order to withdraw and were quickly captured.²⁸

As Landram's brigade broke and ran, it met the Federal troops of the Third Division, Thirteenth Corps, coming up from the rear. For nearly an hour, this reinforcement withstood the advancing rebels. Eventually, however, these troops were also forced to retreat in the face of the oncoming Confederates. This second retreat became a panicked flight as Union soldiers threw aside all their belongings and ran for their lives. As the fleeing infantry broke out of the woods and onto the road they found the abandoned wagons of their cavalry train blocking their retreat. Several Union artillery pieces were abandoned at that point. Some four miles from the Confederates' original position, a final stand was made by the Union troops of the Nineteenth Corps along a ridge overlooking a small creek. Tired and unorganized, the Confederates almost quit at that point, but Polignac, Walker, and Green marshaled their soldiers as nightfall approached and were able to complete the rout by forcing the Nineteenth Corps to withdraw nearly four hundred yards from the creek. By the end of the day's fighting, the rebel soldiers captured 2,500 prisoners, 20 pieces of artillery, and 250 wagons loaded with ordnance and commissary stores. The Confederates camped that night along the small creek, and the Federals withdrew a short distance away.²⁹

²⁸ Report of T. E. G. Ransom, June 11, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p. 266; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 135-136; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 192.

²⁹ Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 344, 346; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 137-139; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 192-193; Hamilton Diary, April 8, 1864.

Banks' army had been completely overwhelmed. General Taylor believed if the Federals wanted to blame anyone, they should blame their own commander. "The defeat of the Federal army was largely due to the ignorance and arrogance of its commander, General Banks, who attributed my long retreat to his own wonderful strategy."³⁰ Not expecting any opposition south of Shreveport, Banks allowed his own command to become stretched out for nearly twenty miles along the road from Natchitoches and through Pleasant Hill. When his lead units were attacked, he was unable to call up reinforcements quickly enough. As the troops in front broke and ran, those men behind them would do likewise, further exacerbating the situation. The Confederates were able to attack the Federals in three stages – Landram's brigade, the Third Division, and the Nineteenth Corps – and each time their numbers equaled those of the Union troops immediately in front. Thus, in a piecemeal fashion, Taylor's Confederates repulsed a numerically superior army.³¹

As Taylor's soldiers were fighting on April 8, Brigadier General Thomas J. Churchill's Confederate brigade of Arkansas and Missouri infantry regiments marched south out of Shreveport toward Mansfield. In the early morning hours of April 9, Churchill's brigade joined Taylor's exhausted forces as they rested in camp. Meanwhile, the Federal army spent the night of April 8 licking its wounds while Banks tried to develop a plan to salvage his Red River campaign and his political aspirations. He decided to make

³⁰ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 193.

³¹ Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 347.

a stand fifteen miles to the south, where the fresh troops of the 16th Corps were located at Pleasant Hill.³²

The town of Pleasant Hill, located atop a mile-wide plateau, is intersected by two main roads: the road to Mansfield, running generally north and south, and a second that enters the plateau from the west along College Hill, the highest point on the Pleasant Hill plateau, and continues sixteen miles east to Blair's Landing on the Red River, about twenty miles above Grand Ecore. Porter's fleet of gunboats was now, by way of the winding Red River, forty-five miles above Grand Ecore. Taylor thought that Banks might attempt to rejoin Porter at Blair's Landing. With fresh troops and a determination to take "advantage of the *morale*" gained at Sabine Crossroads, Taylor decided he would once again send his soldiers against the enemy on April 9.³³

Churchill's brigade marched out of the Confederate camp at 3 a.m., leading the column, traveling south toward Pleasant Hill. All along the road the Confederates "captur[ed] a good many stragglers."³⁴ Reconnaissance by Green's cavalry that dawn revealed that the Union line extended from northeast to southwest just before the small town. The rightmost element of Banks' army was positioned east of the Mansfield road along some wooded heights, and the leftmost element was located at College Hill. An open prairie, several hundred yards wide at the east, stretched the distance of the Union line before tapering off at the woods at College Hill. A gully separated this prairie from

³² Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 193.

³³ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

³⁴ Hamilton Diary, April 9, 1864.

another wooded area to the north. A little after 1 p.m. Churchill's infantry arrived at these northern woods, stopped, and rested for two hours as Walker's and Polignac's divisions caught up. At 3 p.m. Taylor ordered Churchill's brigade, along with two batteries and three cavalry regiments, west through the woods around the Union left. If successful, upon outflanking the enemy, Churchill would attack from the southwest, below the Sabine road. Keeping the cavalry to his right, Churchill would be further aided by Walker's division on his left. Walker's infantry would stretch northeast almost to the Mansfield road, which would be fortified with artillery and General Hamilton P. Bee's cavalry. Taylor then ordered Major's cavalry east to seize the road to Blair's Landing, cutting off Banks' route to the river. Polignac's division with the 15th Texas would be held in reserve, earning this privilege because of its heavy involvement at Sabine Crossroads.³⁵

Banks positioned his forces with Colonel William T. Shaw's infantry brigade, of the 16th Corps, and artillery, on the Mansfield road in the face of Bee's cavalry. To the left, in the path of Churchill's division, was an infantry brigade led by Colonel Lewis Benedict. A half-mile behind Benedict, and stretching east through town to the rear of Shaw's brigade, was the balance of A. J. Smith's 16th Corps. The total strength of troops for the two armies was 12,500 Confederates versus 12,193 Federals.³⁶

At 4:30 p.m. Churchill believed he had progressed far enough to gain the Federal left flank and moved forward through the dense woods toward the Federal position. Meanwhile, as a diversionary tactic, the Confederate artillery on the Mansfield road began

³⁵Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 195-196; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 349, 355.

³⁶Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 146-152, 168-169.

shelling the Union line to the east. On the Confederate right, Churchill's Missouri troops, nearly three hundred yards in advance of the Arkansas troops, quickly overcame Benedict's brigade, pushing it from a thicket-covered gully, ascended the plateau, and rushed toward the town. Churchill would realize too late, however, that he had not enveloped the Union left flank.³⁷

When the roar of battle from Churchill's advance could be heard, Walker's division started its attack along the center of the Union line. At the same time, the artillery on the Mansfield road began advancing toward the village, pushing back the Union guns in its path. To the east, Major's cavalry successfully turned the enemy's right flank and seized control of the road to Blair's Landing. Assuming Churchill had already enveloped the Federal left flank, Taylor felt confident of another overwhelming victory.³⁸

Churchill, however, had not reached the enemy's left flank when he began his assault on Benedict's brigade. When the Missouri troops had advanced nearly three hundred yards ahead of the Arkansas troops, they were attacked on the right and rear by the 58th Illinois Infantry. Churchill's rapid advance quickly vaporized as his troops found themselves outflanked. The Confederates at first held their recently won ground with vicious fighting. Churchill's Missouri troops were soon turned, however, and began to roll back in the direction of the Arkansas line. As the Arkansas troops began to realize

³⁷ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 196-197; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 157-158.

³⁸ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 196.

what had happened, they too began to fall back, running into the right flank of Walker's division.³⁹

At that time, Taylor received word that Walker had been wounded and rode to inquire about his condition, leaving General Tom Green to determine action for Bee's cavalry and the Confederate center. Hearing the fierce fighting in the direction of Walker's division and witnessing the withdrawal of Union artillery along the road into Pleasant Hill, Green ordered Bee's cavalry to ascend the plateau and charge the Federal line. When Bee reached the top of the plateau, however, his horsemen were greeted by heavy enfilading fire and forced to fall back.⁴⁰

Back on the Confederate right, one of Walker's three brigades, having been impeded by the retreating Arkansas and Missouri troops, also began to fall back at this same time. When this occurred, Green had no choice but to send Polignac's division at the Union line or else face the prospect of losing their positions around Pleasant Hill. Polignac's division, by strengthening the retreating troops of Walker and Churchill, did little more than prevent a rout. By this time, though, nightfall was rapidly approaching. When night came, the two sides held the same positions they had at the start of the battle, the day's fighting ending in a stalemate.⁴¹

The battle had not had the immediate results for which Taylor hoped, that of crushing the enemy; however, it had forced the Union troops to use up the last of their

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 197; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 160.

⁴⁰ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 198-199.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 199-200.

drinking water and much of their other supplies. Banks' army was not going any farther. During the night Banks retreated toward Grand Ecore. Word was sent to the Union fleet upstream on the Red River, detailing the setbacks suffered by the ground forces and requesting Porter's presence to confer with Banks about the best possibility for continuing the campaign. At Grand Ecore, Porter insisted that the river would rise and the campaign could go on, and for a brief period Banks seemed intent on continuing. Instead, the river began falling and Porter started sending his fleet back down the river to Alexandria. Banks' deadline for returning the 16th Corps to Vicksburg was also quickly approaching. Furthermore, Banks received word that General Steele's Union army from Arkansas would not be able to reach Shreveport. With these facts in mind, Banks started to worry about his army being caught deep in enemy territory and thought it better to retreat down the river to Alexandria.⁴²

For the 15th Texas the days after Sabine Crossroads and Pleasant Hill brought several changes. From April 10 to 11 Polignac led the men north to their old camp above Mansfield to rest for a few days, during which time Polignac received a promotion to major general. On April 14 the troops learned that E. Kirby Smith was ordering Taylor to split his army, sending Walker's and Churchill's infantry divisions north to fight Frederick Steele's Federals in Arkansas. Taylor ordered Polignac's division of two thousand men along with Major General John A. Wharton's cavalry (formerly Green's cavalry until his death during a skirmish with Porter's navy at Blair's Landing on April 12) south toward

⁴² Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 356, 360.

Natchitoches to assist Bee's cavalry, which was already harassing the Federals camped around the city. The Texans marched south on April 15 and camped below Pleasant Hill. That same day Colonel Speight, having been ill in Texas since the previous October, officially resigned his commission. Recently returned from Texas, J. E. Harrison was promoted to colonel and took command of the 15th Texas as it marched toward Grand Ecore on April 17. With Colonel Robert D. Stone, of the 22nd Texas, now leading the Texas brigade, Harrison's regiment marched to within seven miles of Natchitoches on April 21 as Banks' army began to retire toward Alexandria.⁴³

On April 22 Taylor, who had been in Shreveport since the 14th, joined his small army, made up of Polignac's, Wharton's, and Bee's soldiers and numbering no more than five thousand, as it moved south tailing Banks' Union force of some 25,000. Polignac's Texans, with between 1,200 and 2,000 effectives, remained between five to seven miles west of the Red River as they marched, following the Cane River.⁴⁴ The Federal ground forces made a rapid retreat between the Cane River and Red River toward Alexandria, and in doing so cut a path of destruction and desolation, "burning all houses and destroying all property."⁴⁵ Only a brief engagement with Bee's cavalry at Monett's Ferry on April 23

⁴³ R. Taylor to Boggs, April 14, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p. 533; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 41-42; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 361; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 220; Anne J. Bailey, "Chasing Banks out of Louisiana: Parsons' Texas Cavalry in the Red River Campaign," *Civil War Regiments* 2 (no. 3, 1992): 222.

⁴⁴ Report of Richard Taylor, April 18, 1864, *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p. 572; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 220. The Cane River branches from the Red River at Grand Ecore, flows southwest to Natchitoches where it turns southeast and runs parallel to the Red River for thirty miles, then turns again at Monett's Ferry before rejoining the Red River eight miles to the east. In his diary, Hamilton referred to the Cane River as Old Red River.

⁴⁵ Hamilton Diary, April 24, 1864; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 221, 223-225.

slowed the Union withdrawal. The 15th Texas with Polignac's division crossed the Cane River at Cloutierville, five miles northwest of Monett's Ferry, on April 24 and the next day made a short march and camped at the ferry.⁴⁶

Between midnight and 2 a.m., April 26, Polignac called for Harrison to ready his regiment and make a rapid march to Montgomery Landing, eighteen miles up the Red River, and there attack a grounded Union ironclad, the *Eastport*. When Harrison's regiment arrived at the designated point, the soldiers found the *Eastport*, three tinclads (the *Cricket*, *Fort Hindman*, and *Juliet*), and two transports (*Champion No. 3* and *Champion No. 5*) all afloat.⁴⁷ Harrison led his troops quietly through the thick undergrowth to a position flanking the five vessels. Forming his regiment in a line, Harrison told his troops to wait until he fired his six shooter, which would be the signal to attack.

"I [Harrison] selected a Big portly Captain sitting in a Big arm chair. When my pistol fired he tumbled out of his seat like a Turtle off a log, and through the hatch he went. My whole line opened at once. . . ."⁴⁸

The Federals were slow to regain their composure; but once they had, they positioned their vessels above and below the Confederates' position and the shells and bullets tore through the woods around the Texans. While attempting to gain a better position, the *Eastport* ran aground with no chance of being refloated, and Admiral Porter,

⁴⁶ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 42.

⁴⁷ Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (microfilm M323, reels 376-380), roll 377, service records of Clinton Fouty; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 237-238.

⁴⁸ J. E. Harrison to Dear Ballinger, April 27, 1864, photocopy, Harrison (Guy Bryan, Jr.) Collection, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, hereafter cited as TXC.

traveling in the *Cricket*, ordered her blown up. Harrison reported, "She blew up, Shaking the Earth, and scattering her large timbers in some instances for two hundred yards on The Bank."⁴⁹

Leaving behind the victorious 15th Texas minus one killed and five wounded, the remaining four vessels withdrew downriver only to be mugged five miles above Colfax by a detachment of two hundred troops from the 34th Texas and a Confederate battery. Before finally escaping the rebels, Porter lost the transport *Champion No. 3* and had his remaining vessels riddled by Confederate sharpshooters. The *Juliet*, *Fort Hindman*, and *Champion No. 5* retreated a short distance upriver; only the *Cricket* made it past the rebels and continued downstream toward Alexandria. Harrison's regiment and the other Confederates rejoined Polignac's division at Monett's Ferry that night and rested on April 27.⁵⁰

For the next two weeks the Texans and Louisianans made a general southeasterly march tailing Banks' retreating army, passing McNutt's Hill on April 29, camping along Bayou Bœuf on May 4 and 5, marching to Cheneyville on May 6, Lecompte on May 8, and through the Avoyelles Prairie from May 9 to 11. During this time Wharton's cavalry continually harassed Banks' army, which had reached Alexandria and was stuck aiding Porter's fleet as it labored to pass below the falls there. Despite the troubles of the Union fleet, when the 15th Texas marched into Marksville on May 12, they had to deal with the

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Hamilton Diary, April 25-26, 1864; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 238.

Union “Gun Boats coming [down] the [Red] River and Shelling as they come.”⁵¹ Porter’s fleet had crossed the falls, and on May 13 Banks’ army set Alexandria ablaze and resumed its retreat. On May 14 Polignac’s troops marched six miles south to a spot on Bayou de Glaize, in advance of the Federals.⁵²

The next day the rebel force of five thousand awoke to the “crackling of small arms in the Distance.”⁵³ Hurriedly, the Texans marched out of their camp on Bayou de Glaize and made a show of force as Confederate artillery bombarded the retreating Federal army marching down from Marksville toward Mansura. Private Hamilton recorded his daily entry:

At 6 O’clock we [the 15th Texas] moved out in the Prairie and formed[.] Our Skirmishers fighting [*sic*] at Manshula [Mansura] at ½ after 6 A.M. [O]ur Artillery Commenced firing and kept up a continual fire with from 10 to 25 Pieces untill [*sic*] 10 O’clock [a.m.] when we were forced [to] withdraw as the Enemy force was 4 or 5 times as great as ours[.] Theirs Supposed to be 25 or 30,000[.] This Artillery Duel is Said to be the grandest sight of the Southern War.⁵⁴

Taylor withdrew his small army back to Bayou de Glaize and allowed Banks’ retreat to continue in the direction of Simmesport on the Atchafalaya River. Little activity took

⁵¹ Hamilton Diary, April 27 - May 12, 1864, quote from May 12 entry; Barr, *Polignac’s Texas Brigade*, 44.

⁵² *O.R.*, series 1, vol. 34, pt. 1, p. 428; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 269-272. In his diary, Hamilton referred to the spot on Bayou de Glaize as “Long Bridge,” in reference to a bridge in the vicinity.

⁵³ Quoted in Barr, *Polignac’s Texas Brigade*, 44.

⁵⁴ Hamilton Diary, May 16, 1864. The Confederates actually had thirty-two guns, and the Federal army was only about eighteen-thousand strong, according to Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 273-274.

place on May 17, as Banks' army massed along the west bank of the Atchafalaya preparing to cross.⁵⁵

The next day Taylor ordered Wharton's cavalry and Polignac's division to march to Yellow Bayou and harass the rear pickets of the Federal army before it could cross to safety on the east bank of the Atchafalaya River. Hearing of this nuisance, and in order to give the rest of the army time to cross the river safely, Brigadier General A. J. Smith ordered General Joseph A. Mower to take three infantry brigades and a cavalry brigade of Smith's 16th Corps to Yellow Bayou to stop the rebels. At Yellow Bayou, Polignac's division had formed in line in a ditch behind a wall of Confederate artillery. Gray's Louisiana brigade was formed on the right and the Texas Brigade, commanded by Colonel Stone, lined up with the 15th Texas in the center, the 34th Texas to the left, and Stone's 22nd Texas to the right. The 17th Consolidated Texas and the 31st Texas remained in reserve. Not sure of the enemy's position, Wharton, as the senior commander, ordered the Texans and Louisianans to advance slowly toward what the Confederates thought were only Union pickets. Gray's soldiers moved off to the right in a flanking maneuver, thus creating a gap between the two brigades. The Texans advanced some 150 yards. Then, being slowed by thick undergrowth and heat from fires burning all around, they stopped and Stone sent out skirmishers. Harrison reported that the skirmishers "had not

⁵⁵ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 45.

advanced more than sixty steps before they were in ten feet of the 16th Army Corps, rising up in four lines and demanding their surrender.”⁵⁶

The four lines of the 16th Corps quickly advanced on the Texas brigade. Seeing the 34th Texas being overwhelmed on its left by the Union flanking column, Stone quickly ordered it back to the protection of the ditch, leaving the 15th Texas exposed to this same Union column. The 15th Texas did not budge and held its position only thirty paces in front of the enemy, all while receiving “desperate Enfilading fire” between the 34th Texas and the Union flanking column on its left. “Thy [*sic*] constantly demand[ed] my surrender. I replied with Enfield Rifles, holding them steady,” reported Harrison, “. . . the demand repeated surrender you damned Rebels or we’l [*sic*] Kill you all.”⁵⁷

The 15th Texas was saved when a Confederate company of dismounted cavalry rushed the head of the Union column in front of the Texas regiment, forcing the Federals back. Harrison’s regiment fell back to the ditch where it had formed in line earlier that morning, and, supported by artillery, maintained a constant fire on the Federals. Under the constant barrage of the two armies, the surrounding trees and thickets soon erupted into a large wall of fire between the two opponents, preventing advances from either side. Taylor ordered his troops to withdraw, and the 15th Texas camped that night along Bayou

⁵⁶ J. E. Harrison to Dear Ballinger, May 22, 1864, photocopy, Harrison (Guy Bryan, Jr.) Collection; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 275.

⁵⁷ J. E. Harrison to Dear Ballinger, May 22, 1864, photocopy, Harrison (Guy Bryan, Jr.) Collection, TXC.

de Glaize. On the other side, the Federals finished crossing to safety on the other side of the Atchafalaya River that night, finally putting to an end Banks' Red River Campaign.⁵⁸

The engagement at Yellow Bayou was costly for the 15th Texas, with 12 killed and 61 wounded, missing, or captured. The rest of the Texas brigade sustained 134 casualties, including 20 killed. Most damaging was the death of Colonel Stone, the brigade's commanding officer. With Stone's death, Harrison assumed temporary command of the Texas brigade. For the most part, the Confederate soldiers involved at Yellow Bayou thought it an unnecessary battle and the losses a total waste, as Banks' army was already retreating across the Atchafalaya.⁵⁹

On the surface Banks' Red River Campaign had little impact and minimal results, save the destruction of vast amounts of private property and the seizure of some cotton, but not the large quantities hoped for by Banks. His failure to capture Shreveport, combined with the loss of 5,412 soldiers and naval personnel killed, wounded, or missing, 57 field and naval guns, 822 wagons, at least 3,507 cavalry mounts and pack animals, and 9 navy vessels, created strong resentment among the Federal troops toward Banks, even leading some to hiss their general.⁶⁰ Banks eventually lost his overall command of the Department of the Gulf, though he retained the title and became head clerk in the staff of

⁵⁸ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 46; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 377; Bailey, "Chasing Banks out of Louisiana," 232.

⁵⁹ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 46.

⁶⁰ The Confederate losses during the campaign were 4,275 killed, wounded, or captured, 50 wagons, 700 animals, and 3 steamboats. Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 278.

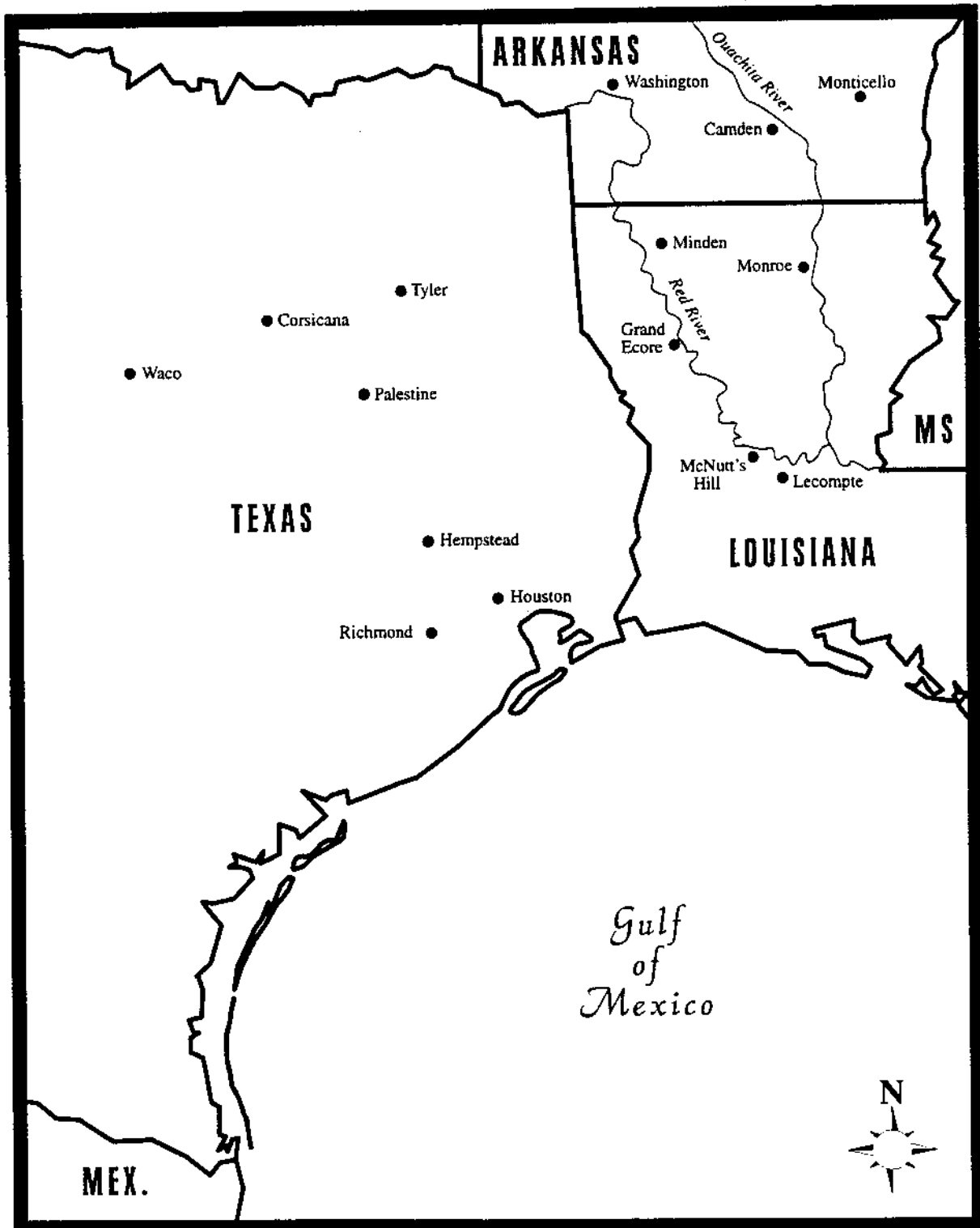
Major General E. R. S. Canby's Military Division of West Mississippi, which included the Department of the Gulf.⁶¹

Taken in context with the war as a whole, however, the Union failure in Louisiana had several effects. There is little argument that the campaign prolonged the war between the states. Because A. J. Smith's ten thousand troops had been used in the march through Louisiana and then retained as the Federal army retreated, Sherman, who planned to use these troops when he marched against Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate army in Georgia, would not have their services for his summer campaign, a campaign much more crucial to Union strategies. A ten-month delay, also precipitated by the Red River expedition, at a Union naval attempt to capture Mobile gave Confederate General Leonidas Polk time to reinforce Johnston's Army of Tennessee with an additional fifteen thousand troops. This meant Sherman would have 108,000 troops, not 118,000, and Johnston would have 65,000 troops, not 50,000. Though still overwhelming odds, the differences in potential versus actual no doubt delayed Sherman as he pushed through Georgia and the Carolinas. The success of Taylor's army may not have saved the Confederacy, but because the Union devoted so much energy to the Red River Campaign, it most certainly prolonged the life of the Confederacy by several weeks, perhaps even months.⁶²

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 283-88.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 279.

LOUISIANA, ARKANSAS, and TEXAS, September 1864 - May 1865



CHAPTER 5

A QUIET YEAR

JUNE 1864 - MAY 1865

The defeat of Banks' army spelled the end of any further Federal invasions in Louisiana. Northern attentions were turned to capturing the armies of Lee and Johnston and crippling the South's infrastructure. Louisiana and Texas, for the most part, were forgotten, and as a consequence those troops west of the Mississippi River had very little to do compared to the experiences of the past three months.

Those three months, with the long retreat, the battle at Sabine Crossroads, the long chase of the Union army, and the costly battle at Yellow Bayou, left the troops of the 15th Texas bruised and battered. Following the final engagement on May 18, the regiment returned to its camp along Bayou de Glaize to remain for the next eleven days, resting and recuperating, only returning to the battlefield on May 19 to bury the body of Colonel Stone. On May 30 Polignac's division moved its camp three miles to the shore of Alligator Lake to remain for another eleven days, the heat and humidity of the bayou country being interrupted only by showers on the evening of June 1.¹ The only "excitement" in camp came on June 1 when Harrison and the other officers of Polignac's

¹ In his diary, Hamilton referred to Alligator Lake alternately as Lake Gilam, Gilams Lake, and Gillams Lake.

former brigade presented Polignac with a horse as a symbol of their confidence in and devotion to their commander. Polignac, evidently touched by the gesture, hoped to use the “noble charger,” should the opportunity ever present itself, to ride across Texas and reunite with the men of his old brigade after the war. Some men from Harrison’s regiment were detailed to picket near Simmesport and along the Atchafalaya River for a few days, but there was little contact with the enemy.²

On June 9 the 15th Texas and the rest of Polignac’s division “Left Camp Marching in [the] Direction of Long Bridge,” their previous camp on Bayou de Glaize.³ The regiment passed through Mansura and Marksville and went into camp on Spring Bayou outside of Marksville on June 11. Private Hamilton made his entry for that same day and, evidently written with hindsight, confessed that “nothing of interest Transpir[ed] untill [sic] July The 4th, 1864.”⁴ The Texans were most likely very bored with their daily activities during this period. In order to assure readiness and maintain discipline, the troops were ordered to fall out twice a day, at 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., for two hours of drilling, a monotonous and tedious drudgery for the experienced defenders of Louisiana and Texas.⁵

On July 4 the Texas and Louisiana division marched out of camp in the direction of Alexandria. On July 5 the troops covered twelve miles and camped. The next day the

² Alwyn Barr, *Polignac’s Texas Brigade* (Houston: Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, 1964), 47; James Allen Hamilton Diary, May 19-June 6, 1864, Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, hereafter cited as CAH.

³ Hamilton Diary, June 9, 1864.

⁴ Hamilton Diary, June 11, 1864.

⁵ Barr, *Polignac’s Texas Brigade*, 47; J. E. Harrison to Dear Brother and Sister Carter, June 29, 1864, Tate (Mrs. Claude B.) Collection, CAH.

men marched another ten miles to reach Alexandria, crossing the Red River there and camping at Pineville, just across the river, that night. The next day, July 7, Private Hamilton made his final diary entry, "Recrossed R[ed] R[iver] at Alex[andria] and Camped at McNutt[s] Hill."⁶ Polignac's troops remained in the vicinity of McNutt's Hill for a week, but then came orders to take up the march. Moving southeast, the Texans and Louisianans reached Lecompte on July 16 and set up camp. While in camp, Harrison drilled his men daily and awaited further orders.⁷

During these weeks a serious falling out between General Richard Taylor and his superior E. Kirby Smith, which had been a long time in coming, occurred. Following the Confederate victory at Sabine Crossroads, Taylor had hoped to capture Banks' army, not simply force its retreat. Taylor blamed the failure of this goal on the fact that Smith had split the army after Pleasant Hill, taking Taylor's best troops to Arkansas and leaving only a minimal force with which to chase the Federals down the Red River. When Banks safely crossed east of the Atchafalaya River in mid-May, Taylor could scarcely hold his anger at his commander. He harshly criticized Smith's staff and department organizations. In a letter to Smith, dated June 5, Taylor stated that "[a]fter the desire to serve my country, I have none more ardent than to be relieved from longer service under your command."⁸

Smith quickly obliged Taylor and removed him from his command in charge of the District of Western Louisiana, naming John G. Walker as the new district commander.

⁶ Hamilton Diary, July 4-7, 1864. It is not known why Hamilton stopped making his daily entries after July 7. He continued serving, however, with the regiment until his death from typhoid fever four months later.

⁷ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 48.

Taylor was then ordered to Natchitoches to await an assignment from Confederate President Jefferson Davis. After six weeks in Natchitoches, Taylor finally learned he was to take command of Polignac's and Walker's divisions, cross the Mississippi River, and assume command of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana.⁹

To begin its new assignment under Taylor, Harrison's regiment marched out of camp on July 29 in the direction of Alexandria. After covering fifteen miles the first day, the Texans marched another ten miles on the 30th and passed through Alexandria. That evening the regiment crossed the Red River and went into its old camp at Pineville. After two days in Pineville, the 15th Texas and the rest of Polignac's division started northeast toward Trinity on the Black River. The Texans reached the Trinity area on August 5 and camped a mile below the town. The next day Harrison's soldiers marched up the Ouachita River and into the town of Harrisonburg, where the Texans and Louisianans were joined by Walker's division. The 15th Texas went into camp at the small village of Sicily Island, waiting to cross the Mississippi River.¹⁰

The mood among the Confederates was not cooperative, though. Many of the soldiers in Polignac's and Walker's divisions were greatly agitated with the prospect of crossing the Mississippi River. Private objections quickly turned into outright stubborn opposition as troops began to desert their posts by the scores. Harrison reported that his brigade had 123 desertions during this period because the men refused to cross the river.

⁸ John D. Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 380.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 380-381.

¹⁰ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 48.

On August 22, however, the troops learned that Kirby Smith had suspended the infantry crossing because the Union navy had increased its gunboat activity along the Mississippi River between Vicksburg and the mouth of the Red River. Smith again relieved Taylor of his command and ordered him to send Polignac's and Walker's divisions to Monroe, Louisiana, and cross the river on his own, which Taylor did one night in a small canoe.¹¹

The Texans marched west out of Sicily Island on August 26, making only very short marches on the first few days. On August 30 Polignac's division learned that its ultimate destination would be Arkansas to assist Major General John B. Magruder, newly appointed commander of the District of Arkansas. The Texans continued west in Louisiana, reached Columbia on the Ouachita River on September 2, then turned north and marched toward Monroe. The 15th Texas went into camp five miles above Monroe on September 5 and remained there until September 13. On that day the Texans and Louisianans were ordered north to Monticello, Arkansas, Magruder's command headquarters. The troops moved out and marched north along Bayou Bartholomew on September 14 and camped along its bank that night. The next day the Texans continued marching along the bayou and crossed into Arkansas, passed through Hamburg, Arkansas, on September 17, and reached Magruder's camp on the evening of September 18. Polignac's division was joined in camp by those divisions headed by Generals John H. Forney (now commanding Walker's old unit), Mosby M. Parsons, Churchill, and Wharton.¹²

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 48-49; Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 382.

¹² Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 49.

By the time the troops reached the camp, they were in sad shape. The region was low on supplies, and there was very little for foraging. David R. Wallace, surgeon of the 15th Texas, stated that “the prospect of something to sustain man and beast do[es] not look promising . . . [and] if a campaign is attempted here, our saddle horses will starve before spring.”¹³ If the condition of the land was bad, the condition of the troops was deplorable. Captain Halbert, of Company E, reported that the march was dry and dusty and the days hot and the nights cool, all contributing to many chills and fevers within the ranks. “Every wagon has hauled from four to six and eight men. Out of my [Halbert’s] own company I report ten men for duty, there being only twenty six present.” Not only were the troops hurting physically, but also mentally as reports trickled in from east of the Mississippi River of the losses eating away at the Confederacy. Halbert empathized with his men and the Confederate cause.

You [Halbert’s wife] have doubtless heard of the sad new of the fall of Atlanta. I do not doubt it, and it is a sad blow to our cause, and will doubtless very much damage our prospects of an early peace. My hopes are not so sanguine as they were in my last letter.¹⁴

The troops remained in the area, though, and were reviewed by Magruder on September 26. Captain Halbert, who missed being in the review for health reasons, described the grand spectacle:

The pageant [*sic*] was a very imposing one – more so than any of the kind ever witnessed on this side of the Mississippi before. The number of troops on the field were said to have been about 10,000. The occasion was graced by the presence of Maj Gens Magruder, Forney, Wharton,

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife, September 19, 1864, J. L. Halbert Special Collection, 15th Texas Infantry File, Confederate Research Center, Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas.

Churchill, Parsons (of Missouri) and Polignac, and Brigadiers too numerous to mention. This 10,000 comprises only the infantry. What cavalry there is I do not know. . . . The most interesting character there (to me) . . . was a young hero of about eighteen years. He and his father and brother alone attacked, captured, pillaged and burned a Federal steamer on the Arkansas river a short time since, and brought more than their number of prisoners. They sought an advantageous position on bank and as the boat passed down opened fire on it and led the crew . . . to suppose that a strong party was attacking them. The terrified crew and guard on boat, most of them, sprang out and went ashore to the opposite side and Skeedaddled. The heroic trio then captured the rest; loaded their horses with such plunder as they wanted and then applied the torch to boat and freight. The young man . . . has been made captain for his gallantry, and doubtless merits the compliment.¹⁵

While the infantry had been in camp, Major General Sterling Price's Confederate cavalry had made a raid into Missouri and was now returning to Arkansas. Unsure of what action, if any, would be taken by the Federal army in Arkansas, now in possession of Little Rock, against Price's cavalry, Magruder ordered his infantry divisions to march west out of camp to act as a diversion for the returning riders. Under a heavy rain, Polignac's division started out on the road to Warren, twelve miles west, on October 2. Four days later, the Texans marched into Camden, another forty miles to the west. The next week found the 15th Texas marching sixty miles west from Camden to Washington and then turning around to march back to Camden as Magruder contemplated an assault on Union-held Little Rock.¹⁶

At this time the Texas brigade underwent a change in command. The brigade had been under the "temporary" command of Harrison since the death of Colonel Stone at

¹⁵ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife, September 29, 1864, Halbert Collection; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 50. Halbert never identified the "young hero."

¹⁶ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 50.

Yellow Bayou the previous May. Many of the troops in the 15th Texas, 17th Consolidated Texas, 22nd Texas, 31st Texas, and 34th Texas had hoped Harrison would officially be made the brigade's commander and throughout the summer and fall had started numerous petitions. Many of these petitions were quashed, however, by Harrison himself who desired the promotion on his own merit. But when Brigadier General Wilburn H. King was given command of the brigade, Harrison, who had also been passed over when Stone received the command, could not hold his indignation at being overlooked a second time. Harrison left his Texans in Camden, Arkansas, and started toward Richmond, Virginia, on November 1 with letters of commendation and qualifications from fellow officers and political allies in hopes of rectifying what he saw as a personal insult and winning the long deserved promotion.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the 15th Texas, commanded by Major John W. Daniel, moved into fortifications around the town of Camden. The condition of the troops continued to deteriorate due to the constant marching and lack of adequate clothing and shelter. By mid-October Polignac's entire division reported only 1,132 privates, about the size of a single regiment, as the sick lists grew longer every day. The division finally earned a much needed rest from late October to early November.¹⁸

The "health of the command" took an upswing after moving into the camps around Camden; however, many of the soldiers still suffered through icy weather with hardly a

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

coat to warm themselves.¹⁹ During this time Private James Allen Hamilton, who had so diligently recorded the regiment's actions in his diary, succumbed to typhoid on October 30, his twenty-third birthday.²⁰ Much of the time in Camden was spent strengthening the town's defenses, to the confusion of at least one individual, Captain Halbert.

I cannot tell Gen Magruder's [sic] object in fortifying so strongly when there is no enemy threatening [sic] the place and it is not particularly a strategic front, according to my views; unless it is to gratify a penchant he has to dig up the earth wherever he goes. . . .²¹

Also during this time Halbert revealed his disappointment with respect to his wages and the South's economy as a whole. Distraught at his wife's inability to acquire some luxuries back in Corsicana, Texas, he recommended she work out a credit arrangement with the seller based on gold prices which he could then repay with interest after the war. He further apologized for not sending along any money, but "alas [he could not] get it although the government owe[d him] nearly a thousand dollars. . . ." Halbert was further disgusted with the quality of command in the Arkansas district, writing that "[Magruder] has proven himself the most rigid commander we have ever been under, and we are anxious to get out of his district just as soon as the good of the service will permit."²² Fortunately, for Captain Halbert, the regiment did not have to live with this anxiety for very much longer.

¹⁹ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife, November 5, 1864, Halbert Collection.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: John W. Spencer, *The Confederate Guns of Navarro County*, (Corsicana, Texas: The Texas Press, 1986), 24.

²¹ J. L. Halbert to My Dear Wife, November 5, 1864; Halbert Collection.

²² *Ibid.*

As a result of the lack of supplies, Magruder began dispersing his forces. King's brigade was ordered to Walnut Hill on the Red River in the southwest corner of Arkansas. The Texans reached the small town on November 13 but were subsequently ordered to march south toward Minden, Louisiana, about thirty miles east of Shreveport, and more abundant supplies. Over a six-day march, the 15th Texas crossed into Louisiana, passed through Minden on November 26, and went into winter camp three miles east.²³

The winter of 1864-1865 saw very little activity for the 15th Texas. The troops experienced a short religious revival while camped outside Minden and witnessed the execution of three deserters from the 15th Texas on December 2. The only other action outside of Minden were drills twice a day. The troops remained in this camp until January 13, 1865, when they began a march toward Natchitoches. They eventually established a new winter camp at Grand Ecore on the Red River and set about fortifying the town. At about this time Polignac left his division when he was granted a leave of absence allowing him to travel to France in hopes of garnering support for the Confederate cause.²⁴

Meanwhile, Harrison had returned from his trip to Richmond with the rank of brigadier general. Now in Texas, he was to command a new infantry brigade to be created from part of King's brigade with the addition of some recently dismounted cavalry regiments. For this new unit the foot soldiers would serve as a well-trained nucleus

²³ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 51.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 52-54. The three deserters were Corporal W. F. Hufstedler, Private E. J. Thompson, and Private W. S. Wilkinson, all of Company F, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (microfilm M323, reels 376-380), reels 377, 380, respective service records.

around which a new infantry brigade could be formed from the cavalry regiments. From King's brigade, three regiments would be sent to Harrison in Houston and one regiment would remain with King. The brigade was split on February 16, with King keeping the 34th Texas, and two weeks later the remainder of what had begun as Speight's brigade marched west toward its home state. The Texans camped at Pleasant Hill on March 4 and crossed into Texas on March 8. For the rest of the month the 15th Texas continued marching, going as far west as Palestine on March 18, and then turning and marching south, reaching Hempstead, fifty miles northwest of Houston, on March 30.²⁵

Harrison had joined his old comrades on the trail on March 17, but once they reached Hempstead he returned by rail to Houston to assist Major General Wharton in dismounting the cavalry and organizing the new division that would include his brigade. On April 6 an altercation between Wharton and Colonel George W. Baylor over troop movement turned violent, and as Harrison attempted to step between the two assailants Baylor drew a firearm. Harrison reported that "Baylor killed Wharton almost immediately. . . . I came very nigh being killed myself, the Bullet passing between my arm and the Boddy [*sic*]." Harrison eventually managed to wrestle Baylor to the floor and disarm him.²⁶

Back in Hempstead, Harrison's brigade was ordered split again to form the basis of a new infantry division to be commanded by Major General Sam B. Maxey. The 15th

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ J. E. Harrison to My Dear Son, April 7, 1865, Harrison (Guy B., Jr.) Collection, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 54.

Texas would be joined by the 17th Consolidated Texas and two dismounted cavalry units to form the 1st Brigade, Maxey's Division. Harrison, in temporary command of the troops who would create this new division, was ordered to move the men to Harrisburg, a rail depot between Houston and Hempstead.

By this time, word of General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse reached the Texans, and a feeling of gloom settled over the camp. Despite the futility of their cause, the Texans remained in camp at Harrisburg through April, being joined daily by small bands of rebels retreating from east of the Mississippi River as the Confederacy began to crumble. On April 24 a meeting of officers and enlisted men of Harrison's brigade met and drafted multiple resolutions supporting the Confederacy and expressing loyalty to service and condemnation of desertion. The next day Maxey arrived at the camp and assumed command of the new division. On May 14 Harrison's brigade marched out of camp toward Richmond, thirty miles southwest of Houston, while in the east the last remnants of the Confederacy were being swept away. The brigade remained in Richmond until May 24 when Harrison issued his final order to the Texans. The regimental commanders were to march their men as near their homes as possible and there discharge them.²⁷

The remaining men of the 15th Texas marched out of Richmond, heading north for homes in Waco, Corsicana, Tyler, and numerous other small towns throughout central

²⁷ Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade*, 54-57.

and east Texas.²⁸ As they traveled, they surely reflected upon their experiences: the cold, rainy nights and hot, dusty days, the disorganization of the first summer, the skirmishing in southern Louisiana, the charges at Stirling's Plantation and Bayou Bourbeau, the long retreat up the Red River in 1864 followed by the elation of victory at Sabine Crossroads, the grandeur of the artillery exchange at Mansura, the devastation at Yellow Bayou, the relative inactivity of the next year, and, most important, those memories of friends lost to illness and in battle. For the 15th Texas Infantry the war was finally over.

²⁸ An accurate guess of the number of men still serving in the 15th Texas in May 1865 is impossible. Most soldiers in the 15th Texas had service records only as late as June 1864, and no soldier had a service record after April 1865. Of the regiment, 482 men, less than half, are positively known to have left the unit before May 1865. The best possible estimate would put the number of men still in service in May 1865 between 80 (the number of men with at least an April 1865 record) and 613 (the former 80 plus those men with neither a date for having left the regiment nor records lasting the duration of the regiment's existence).

CHAPTER 6

THE MEN OF THE 15TH TEXAS INFANTRY

What kind of men made up the 15th Texas Infantry? Were they wealthy or poor, young or old, married or single? How did the regiment compare to the region from which it was raised? How did it compare to other Confederate units? What manner of men did the regiment sacrifice for the Southern cause – was it a “rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight?” Furthermore, what, if any, were the internal distinctions within the regiment? What noticeable differences were there between the regiment’s members based on enlistment dates and property holdings? An analysis of the statistical data should provide a deeper understanding of the soldiers of the 15th Texas Infantry.¹

Texas in the mid-nineteenth century was a burgeoning state; it epitomized the phrase “land of opportunity.” From east of the Sabine River, people flocked by the hundreds of thousands to the fertile soil, mild climate, and cheap land of the Lone Star state. By 1860 the population of Texas had increased nearly 200 percent (212,592 to 604,215) from ten years prior. During the early half of the 1850s, Texas’ growing population consisted primarily of natives of the Upper South (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia),

¹ All statistical data are for the year 1860 unless noted otherwise. For an explanation of methodology, see Appendix.

and a majority of these immigrants entered Texas on its eastern border. Finding the terrain and climate to be similar to their former homes, they established a number of small villages and towns among the piney woods of east Texas. By the close of the 1850s, as the number of immigrants flowing into the state increased, new settlers started pushing westward into the Texas prairie region, home of the new towns of Dallas and Waco. This region, in fact, became the fastest growing area in Texas by the late antebellum period. Hand in hand with this expansion into the Texas prairie was a proportional increase among the state's population of natives of the Lower South (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, Arkansas, and Texas). As the 1850s gave way to the 1860s, the geographic regions of Texas had each developed their own distinct populations.²

The men of the 15th Texas came primarily from a section lying from the western counties of the east Texas piney woods (hereafter referred to as Region 1) and overlapping into the rapidly growing north Texas prairie region (hereafter referred to as Region 2).³ Of the 705 members (or 64.4 percent) of the regiment for whom place of birth is known, over half (58.6 percent) had been born in the Lower South. Alabama provided the most natives to the regiment (19.7 percent) followed by Georgia (11.8 percent), Mississippi (9.8 percent), and Texas (8.7 percent). Of the Upper South states,

² Richard G. Lowe and Randolph Campbell, *Planters & Plain Folk: Agriculture in Antebellum Texas*, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1987), 10-14; M. Jane Harris Johansson, "Peculiar Honor: A History of the 28th Texas Cavalry (Dismounted), Walker's Texas Division, 1862-1865," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Texas, Denton, 1993), 9.

³ Four regions of Texas are defined by Lowe and Campbell, *Planters & Plain Folk*, 11-12, and since much of the data for this study will be compared to Lowe and Campbell's work, it should be noted that Region 2 for this study corresponds with Region 3 of Lowe and Campbell's study.

only Tennessee made a significant contribution (17.3 percent). The remaining southern states, of which all but Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia contributed, each provided less than 5 percent of the roster. Just over 7 percent of the regiment had been born in the North, with Illinois and Indiana having the largest representations (three-quarters of the northern natives). Foreign-born members made up just 2 percent of the regiment. Interestingly enough, Norwegians made up almost two-thirds of that number.

By comparison, three other Texas units raised from the population of the piney woods region of east Texas and along the Red River had similar numbers, but with some marked differences. The 3rd Texas Cavalry, raised during the initial rush of June 1861, had the most similar percentages among its muster but with smaller percentages of northern- and foreign-born members. The 28th Texas Cavalry, raised during the same general period as the 15th Texas, had a greater percentage of Lower South natives. This in turn led to a smaller percentage for the Upper South and a negligible representation from the other two native groups. Finally, the Lamar County men of the 9th Texas Field Battery maintained nearly identical numbers to the 15th Texas for northern- and foreign-born members. Among the southern-born members, however, the numbers were the reverse of the 15th Texas, probably a result of the large proportion of Upper South natives living in Lamar County (see Table 2 on following page for comparisons).⁴

⁴ Hale, "Third Texas Cavalry," 23; Johansson, "Peculiar Honor," 16-17; John Drummond Perkins, "Daniel's Battery: A Narrative History and Socio-Economic Study of the Ninth Texas Field Battery," (M. A. thesis, University of North Texas, Denton, 1995), 62-63.

TABLE 2: Birthplaces of 15th Texas Infantry Members and Three Other Texas Units

Place of Birth	Number from 15th Texas Infantry	Percent of Regiment	3rd Texas Cavalry ^a	28th Texas Cavalry ^b	9th Texas Field Battery ^d
Lower South	413	58.6%	60.0%	68.4%	35.0%
Upper South	227	32.2%	~33.3%	29.7%	54.5%
North	51	7.1%	4.5%	1.4% ^c	7.3%
Foreign	14	2.0%	1.4%	0.5%	3.0%

^a Douglas Hale, "The Third Texas Cavalry: A Socioeconomic Profile of a Confederate Regiment," *Military History of the Southwest* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 23. In his study of the 3rd Texas Cavalry, Hale states only that "a third [came] from the Upper South."

^b Johansson, "Peculiar Honor," 16.

^c Johansson actually stated that 1.0 percent "were from the old Northwest" and 0.4 percent "were from other parts of the country."

^d Perkins, "Daniel's Battery," 62-63.

In their study *Wealth and Power in Antebellum Texas* (1977), Randolph Campbell and Richard Lowe found that Lower South natives were the dominant population group in Region 1 (51.6 percent) followed by Upper South natives (41.1 percent). For Region 2, they discovered the opposite, with Lower South natives second to those of the Upper South (27.3 percent and 58.4 percent, respectively).⁵ Because the 15th Texas originated from counties that overlapped these two regions, it is difficult to make a one-on-one comparison between the regiment and its area of origin. Still, the regiment more closely followed the example of Region 1, but with a larger gap between the Lower and Upper South natives.

⁵ Randolph Campbell and Richard Lowe, *Wealth and Power in Antebellum Texas* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 29.

In his monumental study *The Life of Johnny Reb* (1943), Bell Wiley found that based on a sample of 11,000 Confederate privates “the overwhelming bulk of the Southern Army from beginning to end appears to have been made up of persons ranging in age from 18 to 35.”⁶ An analysis of the enlistment ages for the regiment’s members shows a similar pattern. Men in their twenties made up over half of the 15th Texas. But the largest single-year age group in the regiment were the nineteen-year-olds (8.8 percent) followed by the eighteen-year-olds (8.2 percent). The youngest members were fourteen-year-old Privates Dallas K. Lewter, son of Captain Jonathan Lewter, and Newton McGee, all of Company D. There were also ten fifteen-year-olds and twenty-four sixteen-year-olds. These youngsters did not always join under the most honest conditions, however. Young McGee’s army record contains a letter from his mother in which she claims that her son was deceived into joining the army by a captain. The accused defended himself by asserting that McGee actually lied about his age. Private Charles Shook of Company K gave an 1862 enlistment age of seventeen, but was only twelve in the records of the 1860 census.⁷

TABLE 3: Enlistment Ages in the 15th Texas Infantry

Age Group	19-years and Under	20- to 29-years	30- to 39-years	40- to 49-years	50-years and Over
Percent ^a	26.1%	51.9%	17.9%	3.3%	0.8%

^a Based on data for 904 members.

⁶ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943, reprint, 1993), 331.

⁷ Compiled Service Records, rolls 378-379, service records of Newton McGee and Charles Shook.

The oldest group (fifty years and over) was represented by only seven individuals, including Hugh Jones, a 62-year-old private in Company A and the oldest member of the regiment. In *The Life of Johnny Reb*, Wiley asserted that “most men of fifty years or more who had to march in the ranks were more of a burden than a benefit. . . .”⁸ This is evidenced by the discharge of three of this eldest group by June 1862, followed by two more by March 1863. Only Edwin Watters, the youngest at age 50, may have made it to the end of the war.⁹

The mean enlistment age for the 15th Texas was just under twenty-five-years (24.87 to be exact). Generally, southern regiments with enlistment periods encompassing the weeks just before and after the Confederate Conscription Act, as was the case of the 15th Texas, tended toward older mean enlistment ages as evidenced by the 28th Texas Cavalry (27.1 years) and the Ninth Texas Field Battery (27.2 years).¹⁰ These units more than likely had a few members, possibly younger men, who volunteered well before conscription became a valid concern, and the 15th Texas was no different in this regard. The 15th Texas, however, had more than just a few. A majority of the members of Companies A, B, and C volunteered for the 1st Texas Battalion between January and February 1862. Added to this were the members acquired in the company exchange with the 13th Texas Infantry. These men had volunteered primarily in the weeks and months

⁸ Wiley, *Life of Johnny Reb*, 331.

⁹ Compiled Service Records, roll 380, service record of Edwin D. K. Watters. Watters' service record goes only as late as his February 1864 record blank, which showed him as “Present.”

¹⁰ Johansson, “Peculiar Honor,” 13; Perkins, “Daniel’s Battery,” 64. The Confederate Conscription Act of April 16, 1862, held all healthy white males between 18 and 35 liable for service (with some exceptions). Richard N. Current, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, 4 vols. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 1:396-397.

from October to December 1861. Of the 1,055 members of the regiment for whom enlistment dates are known, 501 enlisted between October 1861 and February 1862, and the remaining 554 members had enlistment dates of March 1862 or later – almost an even split. An examination of these early volunteers may help explain the younger mean age of the 15th Texas compared to other units raised at the same time.¹¹

TABLE 4: Mean Enlistment Ages: Comparison between the 15th Texas Infantry and Volunteer Groups

	15th Texas Infantry	Early Volunteers	Late Volunteers
Mean Enlistment Age	24.87	23.57	26.23

Other studies have shown that volunteers in the first year of the war were typically younger than the men who volunteered in the weeks and months following the advent of conscription.¹² Data for 467 (93.2 percent) of the regiment's early volunteers reveal a mean age almost a full sixteen months younger than that of the whole unit. Data on the enlistment age for 78.7 percent (436 of 554) of those men who were late volunteers reveal a mean enlistment age of over twenty-six-years, almost seventeen months older than the regiment as a whole (see Table 4). On average, then, the early volunteers were approximately two years younger than the late volunteers. This supports other studies that reveal the generally younger age of earlier enlistees compared to later enlistees, and most likely accounts for the younger mean enlistment age of the 15th Texas.

¹¹ For the purpose of this study, the early volunteer period is defined as 1861 - February 1862, and the late volunteer period is defined as March 1862 - 1865.

¹² Examples of these studies include: Terence V. Murphy, *10th Virginia Infantry* (1988); Robert K. Krick, *30th Virginia Infantry* (1985); and John M. Ashcraft, *31st Virginia Infantry* (1988), all of The Virginia Regimental Histories Series (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard).

A look at the 1860 familial status (i.e., head of household or not, married or unmarried, living or not living with parents) of 710 men from the 15th Texas shows that 65.5 percent of the regiment did not consider themselves as a head of a household. Almost the same proportion, 64.8 percent, were single. Finally, 56.4 percent of the regiment were no longer living with their parents.¹³ Thus, the average member of the regiment was on his own and not tied down with family responsibilities. Compared with Johansson's study of the 28th Texas Cavalry, which was raised during the same general time period, the 15th Texas has several noticeable differences. First of all, the 28th Texas roster was 61.6 percent married men, almost the exact opposite of the 15th Texas, with 64.8 percent single men. The 28th Texas had the same 61.6 percent representation for heads of household, whereas the 15th Texas was 65.5 percent non-heads of household. The only category for which the rosters of the 28th Texas Cavalry and the 15th Texas both had majorities was in members who lived away from the parents. Even in this case, however, the 28th Texas had a much larger percentage of its membership as such (73.2 percent) compared to the 15th Texas (56.4 percent). According to Johansson, the percentages for the 28th Texas Cavalry were probably a result of the regiment's enlistment period, around the time of the conscription act, as older, married men sought to avoid the stigma of being drafted.¹⁴ In his study of Confederate volunteerism in Ashe County,

¹³ It seems contradictory that a majority (56.4 percent) of the regiment no longer lived with their parents (i.e., they were on their own) yet a majority (65.5 percent) of the regiment also did not consider themselves head of a household. In other words, where did they live? Actually only 14.2 percent of the regiment were non-heads of household not living with their parents. Simple frequencies show that most were farmers (16.8 percent), farm laborers (14.5 percent), secretaries (10.7 percent), or laborers (16.0 percent), and were most likely hired hands living in the residence of their employers.

¹⁴ Johansson, "Peculiar Honor," 15-16.

North Carolina, Martin Crawford offered the idea that conscription “accounted for an increased enrollment of married men in 1862.”¹⁵

Why then did the 15th Texas, formed during the same general period, have such marked differences? Again the percentages for the 15th Texas are most likely due to the influence of the early volunteer group. In general, early Confederate volunteers were more likely to be single (without a wife and child, one is more apt to volunteer for a twelve-month tour of duty) and dependent upon their parents. On the other hand, those men who volunteered later in the war, under the shadow of the draft, were more likely to be married with their own family responsibilities.¹⁶ A comparison of the early and late volunteers within the 15th Texas shows the degree of variance between the two groups. More than half (53.0 percent) of the early volunteers still resided with their parents compared to only 35.6 percent for the late volunteers. More than three-quarters of the early volunteers were non-heads of household (78.5 percent) and unmarried (77.6 percent). Among the late volunteers, a majority of the men fell into these same categories as well, but at a much lower rate (see Table 5 on following page).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16; Martin Crawford, “Confederate Volunteering and Enlistment in Ashe County, North Carolina, 1861-1862,” *Civil War History* 37 (March 1991): 45.

¹⁶ Crawford, “Confederate Volunteering and Enlistment,” 43, 45.

TABLE 5: Familial Status: Comparison between the 15th Texas Infantry and Volunteer Groups

Category	Percent of 15th Texas		Percent of Early Volunteers		Percent of Late Volunteers	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Head of Household	34.5	65.5	21.5	78.5	45.6	54.4
Living with Parents	43.6	56.4	53.0	47.0	35.6	64.4
Married	35.2	64.8	22.4	77.6	46.2	53.8

The economic status of the men in the regiment is revealed by looking at the mean dollar value of their property holdings; this is also a good indicator of their social status.¹⁷ By using the mean holdings of the regiment's region of origin as a control, a comparison can be made to show the economic status of the unit's members and of the unit as a whole. The average soldier in the 15th Texas, officer and enlisted man, had \$1,208 in real property. This dollar amount is considerably less than the mean real-estate value for Region 1 (\$2,238), but on par with that of Region 2 (\$1,189). Likewise, the soldiers' personal-property holdings had a mean value of \$2,040, less than that of Region 1 (\$4,272) but closer to that of Region 2 (\$2,200).¹⁸ The regiment more closely mirrors the frontier-like counties of Region 2.

Ultimately, though, means and averages are affected by extremes. An examination of the distribution of wealthholding will offer another comparison between the 15th Texas

¹⁷ All dollar values have been rounded to the nearest dollar. Property holdings include real and personal property. Slaveownership, as a measure of wealth, will be examined later. "Estate" and "property" are used interchangeably, i.e., real estate is the same as real property.

¹⁸ Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 116.

and its area of origin and will show the 15th Texas was certainly not a club of wealthy or even moderately wealthy members.¹⁹ The mean wealthholding for the regiment was \$3,236. But as evidenced by a standard deviation of \$6,462, the range of wealthholding was broad, from zero to \$66,980. A majority of the regiment (51.4 percent) held less than \$1,000. The largest single grouping was in the \$1,000-to-\$4,999 range (see Table 6 on following page). The distribution of wealthholding values in the 15th Texas followed the same general pattern found in Regions 1 and 2 – a slow proportional increase to the \$999 range, followed by a jump at the \$1,000-to-\$4,999 range, then a rapid decline as it approached the elite classes. The regiment's most noticeable variation from patterns in Regions 1 and 2 was the number of zero-holders in the 15th Texas.²⁰ Whereas the populations of the two regions were 3.8 and 4.5 percent zero-holders, respectively, the regiment's "population" included a surprising 21.8 percent zero-holders.

¹⁹ Wealthholding is determined by combining the value of real property and personal property.

²⁰ Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 144. Zero-holders are defined as those who owned zero real property and zero personal property.

TABLE 6: Wealth Distribution: Comparison between the 15th Texas Infantry and Regions of Origin ^a

Personal Estate Value (In Dollars)	Number from 15th Texas Infantry	Percent	Region 1 (%)	Region 2 (%)
0	154	21.8	3.8	4.5
1 - 249	61	8.6	10.1	8.4
250 - 499	52	7.3	9.1	10.0
500 - 999	97	13.7	13.6	16.4
1,000 - 4,999	212	30.0	34.7	40.2
5,000 - 9,999	71	10.1	12.0	11.3
10,000 - 19,999	44	6.0	9.3	6.1
20,000 - 49,999	15	2.2	5.6	2.3
50,000 and Over	2 ^b	0.3	1.8	0.8
TOTAL	708	100.0	100.0	100.0

^a Data for Regions 1 and 2 come from Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 144.

^b Martin J. Smith (minor) with \$54,091 and Joseph W. Speight with \$66,980

The different enlistment periods represented in the regiment once again offer a chance to examine assumptions concerning wealthholding among Confederate soldiers. It has been asserted by other studies that earlier enlistees were typically wealthier (though not necessarily wealthy) than their counterparts who enlisted later. This was apparently because the earlier enlistees came from established households that would be “better able to respond to the Confederate call in 1861.”²¹ Within the 15th Texas, the early volunteers had mean real estate holdings of \$1,330, compared to only \$954 for the late volunteers. The figures for mean personal property also show a greater affluence among the early group, \$2,118 compared to \$1,848 for the late group.

Another indicator of the wealth of the regiment was the ownership of slaves. As explained in the Appendix, the collection of data concerning slaveowners also entailed the

²¹ Johansson, “Peculiar Honor,” 24.

inclusion of non-slaveowners into the statistical quantification. Slaveowning status was determined for 717 individuals. Slaveowners held an average of almost seven bondsmen each.²² The means for Texas as a whole and for the eastern piney woods run ahead of the regimental average, at 9.4 slaves and 9.9 slaves per slaveowner, respectively. However, the regimental mean surpassed that of Region 2 (5.9 slaves).²³ Still, the regiment was made up primarily of non-slaveowners, and most of those who owned bondsmen were small slaveowners. The frequency of ownership, while heavier toward the lower end of the distribution scale as compared to Region 1, closely mirrored that of Region 2 (see Table 7). As can be seen by the mean values and distribution of wealthholding and slaveholding, the 15th Texas had more than its fair share of poor to middling citizens.

TABLE 7: Distribution of Slave Property: Comparison between the 15th Texas Infantry and Regions of Origin ^a

Number of Slaves Owned	15th Texas Infantry	Percent	Region 1 (%)	Region 2 (%)
0	591	82.4	65.7	80.1
1-4	73	10.2	15.6	11.6
5-9	32	4.5	7.8	5.4
10-19	12	1.7	6.8	2.1
20-29	2	0.3	2.1	0.5
30-39	3	0.4	0.7	0.1
40-49	3	0.4	0.7	0.1
50-99	1 ^b	0.1	0.6	0.1
100 and Up	0	0.0	0.1	0.0
TOTAL	717	100.0	100.0	100.0

^aData for Regions 1 and 2 come from Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 140-141.

^bMartin J. Smith, with access to his father's 67 slaves

²² Of the "population" in the regiment for whom slaveowning status is known, 126 members (17.6 percent) were slaveowners and held 6.99 slaves per slaveowner.

²³ Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 116.

With 1,095 members, the 15th Texas could have qualified as a sizable town in antebellum Texas. As it was, the regiment's members came from a considerable number of professional backgrounds, reflecting the self-sufficient nature of the communities and villages from which the men came. For this study, occupations were grouped in eight general categories: farming, commerce, the professions, public service, manufacturing, skilled trades, unskilled labor, and miscellaneous.²⁴

TABLE 8: Occupation Distribution: Comparison between the 15th Texas Infantry and Regions of Origin

Occupation	15th Texas Infantry (%)	Region 1 (%)	Region 2 (%)
Farming	67.1	78.0	76.1
Commerce	3.6	3.0	3.1
The Professions	4.6	4.7	4.8
Public Service	1.4	0.8	0.8
Manufacturing	0.7	1.1	1.4
Skilled Trades	7.3	5.8	8.1
Unskilled Labor	12.6	6.2	5.5
Miscellaneous	2.7	0.4	0.1
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	99.9

^aData for Regions 1 and 2 come from Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 30. In their study, Campbell and Lowe used a separate category for "Overseer" (1.0% of Region 1, and 0.1% of Region 2) which for this study is included with "Farming."

A search of the census and other records divulged the occupations for 586 men (53.5 percent of the regiment). Typical of this region and time in Texas, an overwhelming majority of the men in the 15th Texas were farmers or gained a living from agriculture

²⁴ For this study the occupation categories included the following: FARMING: Farmer or Planter, Overseer, Stock Keeper, Farm Laborer, Tenant Farmer; COMMERCE: Merchant, Grocer, Contractor, Land Agent, Hotel Keeper; THE PROFESSIONS: Attorney, Physician or Dentist, Teacher, Minister, Engineer; PUBLIC SERVICE: Judge, District or County Clerk, Texas Ranger, Postman; MANUFACTURING: Carriage Maker; SKILLED TRADES: Smith, Construction Worker, Tailor, Saddle Maker, Barrel Maker, Printer, Mechanic; UNSKILLED LABOR: Secretary, Driver, Sailor, Laborer; MISCELLANEOUS: Student.

(46.0 percent claimed their occupation as “farmer” while another 21.1 percent, mostly “farm laborers,” also earned a living from the soil).²⁵ The rest of the regiment ranged widely across the professional spectrum, with the largest representations among construction workers (18), secretaries (15), merchants (14), drivers (14), and smiths (13). There were also 42 men with the generalized occupation of laborer (not to be confused with farm laborer), as well as a plethora of other professions, each represented by a small number of men.

As shown in Table 9 on the following page, farming was critical to the region from which the 15th Texas originated. This section was much less diversified and developed than today. Instead, it was crisscrossed by small dirt “roads” that quickly turned to mud pits whenever it rained. There was no railroad in the area, and the rivers in the region were too narrow or shallow for commercial travel. The distance between the area’s towns and the distant shipping cities of Houston and Shreveport made commercial travel by other means difficult. Therefore, agriculture in the region became somewhat self-sufficient, as families grew their own produce and neighbors looked after each other.²⁶ Schedule IV of the 1860 census enumerated the agricultural production of these farmers. For this study there were several instances of men found on the agricultural schedule not listing their occupation as “Farmer” on Schedule I. One reason these non-farmers with farms may have labeled themselves as something other than farmer in the census records is

²⁵ Lowe and Campbell found in their study of 10,000 1850 and 1860 Texas families, of which a representative proportion was from the piney-woods and north-central prairie regions, that 75 percent of the state’s free population was “directly engaged in farming of some type” (*Planters & Plain Folk*, 9).

²⁶ Lowe and Campbell, *Planters & Plain Folk*, 12-13.

that many of them were also lawyers, ministers, merchants, or carpenters, to name a few. Their mean number of improved acres, 45.8 acres, was almost 13 acres less than the 58.2 acres per man for those listed as "Farmer" in Schedule 1.²⁷

TABLE 9: Mean Acreage and Farm Values for Farmers in the 15th Texas Infantry

Category	Improved Acres	Total Acres	Farm Value
Farmers with Farm	58.2	354.7	\$1,511
Non-Farmers with Farm	45.8	365.8	\$2,072
All Farmers	56.0	356.8	\$1,614

These numbers by themselves are unspectacular and have little meaning, but a comparison to the regiment's region of origin can reveal how its members differed or related to their neighbors. In a study of agriculture in antebellum Texas, Lowe and Campbell determined the means of improved acres and farm value for both of these regions, and their findings offer such a comparison for the regiment (see Table 10 on following page). As shown by these comparisons, the mean farm value (or cash value of farm) among the regiment's farmers falls well below the figures for Regions 1 and 2. The regiment's farmers cultivated more land, on average, than did the farmers of the north-central prairie, but less than the farmers in east Texas. For the farming members of the 15th Texas, land cultivation was important as shown by the mean number of improved acres, but even in doing so these same farmers could not afford to purchase the best land.

²⁷ The term "non-farmer with farm" is from Lowe and Campbell, *Planters & Plain Folk*, 35. "Improved Acres" is defined as land "cleared and used for grazing, grass, or tillage, or which is now fallow." Quoted *ibid.*, 62.

TABLE 10: Improved Acreage and Farm Value: Comparison between the 15th Texas Infantry and Regions of Origin *

Category	15th Texas	Region 1	Region 2
Improved Acres	56.0	73.6	46.6
Cash Value of Farm	\$1,614	\$2,061	\$2,315

*Data for Regions 1 and 2 come from Lowe and Campbell, *Planters & Plain Folk*, 63, 65.

The purpose of these analyses of wealth and property holdings in a regiment is two-fold: 1) it allows historians to develop a picture of the soldiers' backgrounds, and 2) it enables historians to understand the role of social status among its men during a regiment's "life." A gripe among some Confederate volunteers, especially among the rank-and-file, was that "this is a Rich mans Woar But the poor man has to doo the fiting."²⁸ As shown by the holdings among the men of the 15th Texas, there were very few men of wealth, by any stretch of the term. Wealthy for 1860 Texas has been defined as any household with at least \$10,000 in wealthholdings or at least twenty slaves.²⁹ Only 8.5 percent of the 15th Texas fell into this category (as opposed to 16.7 percent for Region 1, and 9.2 percent for Region 2).³⁰ Nevertheless, there were men wealthier than others in the regiment and the assumption of "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight" can be tested by comparing the two groups. One way to determine who was doing the fighting and dying in the regiment is to examine casualty rates. The 15th Texas was

²⁸ Quoted in James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 16. The quotation, with grammar and spelling errors, is as McPherson quoted it.

²⁹ Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 39, 44, 46; Johansson, "Peculiar Honor," 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

heavily involved in four battles with Federal forces (Stirling's Plantation, Bayou Bourbeau, Sabine Crossroads, and Yellow Bayou), as well as numerous minor clashes and skirmishes with Federal gunboats and pickets. By looking at 255 men with casualties among the regiment, combined with the wealthholding of those 255, a picture will develop of the type of soldier most likely to suffer for his country.³¹

TABLE 11: Wealth Distribution: Comparison between Casualty Group and the 15th Texas Infantry

Category (in Dollars)	Percentages for Men Suffering a Casualty	Percentages for 15th Texas Infantry
0	22.7	21.8
1-249	9.8	8.6
250-499	4.4	7.3
500-999	12.9	13.7
1,000-4,999	31.4	30.0
5,000-9,999	9.8	10.1
10,000-19,999	6.6	6.0
20,000-49,999	2.4	2.2
50,000+	0.0	0.3
TOTALS	100.0	100.0

The distribution of wealthholding for the casualty group (see Table 11) shows a nearly identical progression to that of the whole regiment. Comparisons between the mean property holdings of the casualty group and the regiment have similar results, showing nearly identical numbers for the casualty group and the regiment (see Table 12 on following page). These numbers and analyses do not support the idea of a "rich man's

³¹ Casualties included: 1) killed in action; 2) wounded in action; 3) captured; 4) died of disease; 5) discharged (health reasons); and 6) deserted. Transfers, resignations, and temporary illnesses or assignments were not included for the following reasons: 1) the 15th Texas had an extremely negligible representation of transfer losses; 2) resignation applied only to officers and would have skewed any results; and 3) temporary illnesses or assignments were just that – temporary.

war and a poor man's fight" within the 15th Texas. If means and distribution of wealth and property holdings are any indicator, then the wealthier soldiers were just as likely to suffer casualties as the poorer.

TABLE 12: Mean Property Holdings: Comparison between Casualty Group and the 15th Texas Infantry

Category	Casualty Group	15th Texas Infantry
Mean Real Property	\$1,140	\$1,208
Mean Personal Property	\$2,082	\$2,040
Mean Number of Slaves ^a	6.15	6.99

^a Only slaveowners were considered.

Did wealth and social status influence a man's opportunity to earn a commission?

On the surface, evidence from the 15th Texas shows that wealth and social standing did influence a man's chances of promotion. For the regiment, thirty-four men started out as enlisted men and went on to receive positions among the regiment's staff and officers. For this group, data on twenty-nine (or 85.4 percent) were found in the census returns. The promoted men owned more wealth than the average soldier, with mean holdings greater than that of the regiment in all categories except improved acreage (see Table 13).

TABLE 13: Mean Property Holdings: Comparison between Promotion Group and the 15th Texas Infantry

Category ^a	Promotion Group	15th Texas Infantry
Mean Real Property	\$2,461	\$1,208
Mean Personal Property	\$3,220	\$2,040
Mean Number of Slaves	11.80	6.99
Mean Improved Acreage	31.2	42.8
Mean Total Acreage	293.4	255.4
Mean Farm Value	\$2,076	\$1,189

^a For slave property, acreage, and farm values, only holders of said property were considered.

It appears then that the wealthier men in the regiment had a greater chance of promotion. An analysis of the means, however, reveals the influence of a few extremely high values for this promotion group. Within the means of real property and personal property were standard deviations of \$4,359 and \$7,309, respectively, hardly indicative of a homogeneous group. Only five slaveowners received promotions, including twenty-one-year-old A. E. Loughridge (who was eighteen in 1860) with his father's forty-four slaves. If Loughridge's bondsmen are removed from the equation, the mean number of slaves among the promoted slaveowners plummets to 3.75. The means for agriculture, like those for real and personal property, are overshadowed by the large standard deviations within the representative groups.³² In light of this analysis, it seems that wealth was not an important factor in the promotion process.³³

The unit was filled with men typically poorer than their home regions in Texas, though there were a few wealthy men on its rolls. The wealthier and poorer, however, shared equally in hardship and combat. The division of the regiment between early and late volunteers allows an ideal opportunity to examine many assumptions about Confederate enlistment periods. The early volunteers, enlisting between October 1861 and February 1862 were generally younger, had a greater proportion of single men, and came from more established households than did the late volunteer group, those who

³² The standard deviations were: Improved Acreage, 47.6; Total Acreage, 524.3; and Farm Value, \$3,037.

³³ Strangely enough, native Texans had less of a chance at promotion than non-natives. Only one native Texan received a promotion in the 15th Texas, the same number as the men native to the northern states of Indiana, Illinois, and Pennsylvania.

enlisted from March 1862 through 1865. As a result of the inclusion of these early volunteers, the regiment was “younger” than other units formed at the same time.

The 15th Texas Infantry served throughout the trans-Mississippi region and fought well against two Federal invasions of Louisiana – nipping at the heels of the first at Bayou Bourbeau and helping to turn the second at Sabine Crossroads. From 1862 to 1865, the regiment never suffered a strategic loss against the enemy, though it was beaten back at Yellow Bayou. The men suffered cold winters, hot summers, and disease-ridden camps, all to serve their fledgling country. Because it operated in the relatively obscure trans-Mississippi theater, the 15th Texas has been largely ignored, but as the *Tyler Reporter* claimed early in the war, the men of the regiment had “all those characteristics which go to make the good soldier.”

APPENDIX
METHODOLOGY

The first step in analyzing the 15th Texas Infantry involved the construction of a master roll of the men serving in the regiment from the Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas (CSR). Organized by regiment, battalion, and battery, the CSR is an invaluable tool for Civil War historians. Completed over a period from the early 1900s to the 1920s, the CSR is the only systematic record available detailing the service of Confederate soldiers. Despite the importance of this source, however, some caution is needed in its use. For example, in the study of the 15th Texas Infantry this researcher found the regiment's record contained several individuals who served in the 1st Texas Battalion and then transferred to the 1st Texas Heavy Artillery, never having actually served in the 15th Texas.¹ Furthermore, there was listed a number of individuals who actually served east of the Mississippi River in the 15th Texas Cavalry. These soldiers stood out simply because the 15th Texas Infantry never crossed east of the Mississippi River, and any records showing service in Tennessee or Mississippi, for example, were obviously not of the infantry.² Ultimately, this master roll included 1,095 individuals, officers and enlisted men, who served at one time or another in the 15th Texas Infantry.

¹ These men were not included in the master roll because they were never technically a part of the 15th Texas Infantry.

² This error seemed to be common, since it was discovered in other sources as well and could have been due to the fact that the 15th Texas Infantry had horses until September 1862 and may have referred to themselves as cavalry. Furthermore, there also existed a Harrison's cavalry that operated in Louisiana during the latter half of the war when the 15th Texas was being led by its own Harrison. It is actually quite easy to confuse the three units, as this researcher did it a number of times in the early stages of the research.

The compilation of the master roll was followed by an attempt to ascertain the pre-war status of the soldiers on the rolls of the Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules I, II, and IV. From Schedule I, such data as personal and real estate, profession, literacy, and marital status were collected. Schedule I was searched with the aid of Ronald Vern Jackson, *Texas 1860 Census Index*. Organized by last names of those located on the rolls of the 1860 Census, with county of residence listed, this index made the search more efficient. Unfortunately, the index listed, for the most part, only the names of those who were heads of households. For those of the 15th Texas who had not been a head of household in 1860, this created some difficulty in ascertaining their location in the census. Generally, if the county of enlistment was known for one of these enlistees, then a search of the list of heads of households in the index with that enlistee's last name was made to find any living in that same county.³ Furthermore, if the enlistment age of the enlistee was known, then it was quite simple to match the soldier with his census record. This method was especially successful if the soldier's first name and enlistment age were known.

For those soldiers with common surnames, such as Brown or Smith, and with only a first initial listed, such as J. Smith, it was very nearly impossible to accurately find them on the rolls of the 1860 census. This researcher was able to determine county of residence for 743 members of the regiment, but some were determined by means other than Schedule I of the 1860 census, i.e. county histories, biographies, and pure luck. A few of

³ For the 15th Texas, however, many soldiers and whole companies, for that matter, enlisted in counties other than their home county. This created some problems at first, but when it became apparent that most soldiers, specifically those who had been a head of household and whose names appeared in the census index, in a given company were coming from a particular county, then that county was searched first for those soldiers of that company not listed in the index.

these, in turn, could never be located in Schedule I, even after knowing their county of residence.⁴ Ultimately, at least partial information was gathered for 708 soldiers (64.7 percent of the regiment) from Schedule I.

The ownership of slaves was determined by a search of Schedule II of the 1860 census. Fortunately, in most cases Schedule II closely followed the order of Schedule I in listing of households, giving a general idea of an individual's possible location on Schedule II. If a search of Schedule II did not produce a "hit," then this researcher assumed the individual was a non-slaveowner, thus not deserving mention in Schedule II, and noted it accordingly. The search of Schedule II, facilitated with Schedule I, led to the determination of slave ownership, or not, for 717 soldiers (65.5 percent of the regiment).

Schedule IV recorded the acreage and agricultural output of those individuals who operated farms. Only land ownership, unimproved and improved acres, was considered for this study. For a few counties, Schedule IV also recorded the number of slaves owned; however, when discrepancies arose between Schedule IV and Schedule II (and they did so frequently), this researcher held Schedule II as the standard and used its recordings. By using Schedule I to make the search more efficient, as was done with Schedule II, this search determined the status as farmer and acreage for 696 individuals (63.6 percent of the regiment).

From all these sources – CSR, and Schedules I, II, and IV of the 1860 census – a coded data list was compiled and entered into a spreadsheet software program used to

⁴ It is most likely that these individuals were away from home, or out of state for various reasons and simply were not recorded when the census enumerator made his visit.

create statistical profiles, Statistical Package for the Social Studies (SPSS). All statistical analysis and references to residence concerning the 15th Texas Infantry were based on this compiled data list aided by the use of SPSS.

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