

GREYHOUND GENERAL: A MILITARY BIOGRAPHY OF

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN G. WALKER, CSA

by

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A THESIS

IN

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## PREFACE

In the world of American history perhaps no other field has been studied more thoroughly than the American Civil War. While most of the major campaigns and important figures have been covered in detail, a few topics remain relatively unexplored. One such figure is Major General John G. Walker. Walker's famous division of Texans has been researched in fine detail, but no work of any length exists about the man who led these troops in battle. This thesis is an attempt to shed light on Walker and his military career.

This document will explore Walker's early military career and experiences in the War with Mexico and his service with the U.S. Mounted Rifles on the American frontier. When the Civil War began in 1861, Walker joined the Confederate army and served with the Army of Northern Virginia. The thesis examines the important role Walker played during the Maryland Campaign of 1862. Later chapters follow Walker to the Trans-Mississippi West and explore his time at the head of the Texas division and various districts commands in the department.

The ultimate purpose of the work is to examine and provide readers a look into Walker's experiences, decisions, campaigns and battles, and the relationships he had with his superiors and the troops that served under his command. Such an examination will provide a better understanding of Walker as a person and as a soldier in the crucial events of America's past.

## CHAPTER I

### WALKER IN THE WAR WITH MEXICO, 1846-1848

The war between the United States and Mexico from 1846 to 1846 resulted from numerous long standing disagreements and increased friction between these two countries. American expansionist feelings or manifest destiny stimulated much of this tension. Many Americans believed it was the natural fate of the United States to stretch unimpeded from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. The desire to bring political and economic control to the untamed west led the United States in to conflict with its neighbor to the south. Like many young officers in the U.S. Army, John G. Walker learned the rudiments of military life and gained his first experiences of campaigning and combat in this conflict. As a member of a newly organized regular army regiment, Walker participated in Winfield Scott's campaign to capture Mexico City and found his calling as a professional military officer.

The cause of the war between the United States and Mexico can be traced to several long term sources of conflict between the two nations. There had been much quarreling over the settlement of claims by the U.S. against Mexico for losses incurred during Mexico's frequent revolutions. In 1841 a neutral claims commission supported by both countries determined Mexico would pay two million dollars in damages to the United States. Mexico recognized the debt, but only made three of its proposed twenty quarterly payments to the U.S. government. It was the responsibility of the American government to press Mexico to make the necessary payments or find other means of

compensation. Many Americans thought a reasonable alternative would be the cession of Mexican lands to the United States in return for America picking up the tab on the payments.<sup>1</sup>

Expansionist Americans, especially President James K. Polk, expressed interest in California as the natural western boundary of America. Mexico had reasons to be suspicious of American intentions with California. The U.S. government had wished to beat Britain to any conquests on the west coast and forced negotiations with the British over the boundaries of the Oregon territory. By the 1840s, Mexico had almost lost control of California, because of its remote location to the Mexican capital. Also interfering with Mexican control, large numbers of Anglo settlers moved illegally into California, often joining disgruntled locals in pushing Mexican troops out of the region. Several other incidents fostered Mexican concern over its western territory. From 1842 to 1845, John C. Fremont led three military backed expeditions to California. In October, 1842, Commodore Thomas Catesby Jones led American naval forces to California and captured Monterey, falsely believing war had broke out between the United States and Mexico. To the Mexicans, such events foreshadowed American intentions to wrestle land away from Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most potentially explosive issue of the time concerned Texas annexation to the United States. Since gaining independence from Mexico in 1836,

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<sup>1</sup> K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), 10; John Edward Weems, *To Conquer a Peace: The War Between the United States and Mexico*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 12-13; Weems, *To Conquer a Peace*, 26-27; Douglas V. Meed, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13-16.

Texas had spent almost a decade as a fledgling republic in the face of a menacing Mexico that never acknowledged its independence. Mexicans also garnered dislike of the United States for what it saw as a violation of American neutrality during the Texas Revolution. Americans supported their Anglo brethren in Texas with arms, munitions, and volunteers, and U.S. General Gaines led a substantial American force into Texas territory as far as Nacogdoches. In the decade following the revolution, Texas and Mexico remained embroiled in a quasi-border war, with each side occasionally raiding onto the other's land. In 1841, Texans tried to enforce their claim on land in New Mexico and marched an expedition to Santa Fe that eventually collapsed in the face of Mexican opposition. From 1836 to 1843, Mexican ships attempted to blockade Texas coastal ports and in May, 1843, Texan and Mexican ships fought two stalemated naval battles.<sup>3</sup>

The Polk administration had brought the issue of Texas annexation to the forefront during the presidential campaign of 1844, having won the presidency that year, as well as a majority in both houses of Congress. With the approval of the annexation resolution and the support of the Texas Congress, Texas became the twenty-eighth state of the Union in 1845. Although politically divided, Mexican officials were unanimous in their desire to stand up to the United States and refused to give up any territory to the Americans. Annexation appeared to Mexico as an act of aggression and Mexican president Jose Joaquin de Herrera reiterated Mexico's claims to Texas and vowed to defend its territory by force of arms. Rumors spread of a buildup of Mexican state and

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<sup>3</sup> Meed, *The Mexican War*, 13-16; John S. D. Eisenhower, *So Far From God: The U.S. War with Mexico, 1846-1848*, (New York: Random House, 1989), 198-199; Nathan C. Brooks, *A Complete History of the Mexican War, 1846-1848: Its Causes, Conduct, and Consequences*, (Albuquerque, NM: Gilbert Espinosa, 1849, reprinted by Rio Grande Press, Chicago, 1965), 9-10.

federal forces near the disputed no man's land between the Rio Grande and the Nueces River. Polk responded with a plan for a graduated military build-up near the Texas border that would eventually pressure the Mexicans to negotiate rather than risk war with the United States. In June, 1845, U.S. General Zachary Taylor and 3,000 troops moved into Texas.<sup>4</sup>

Polk sent John Slidell to attempt negotiations with Mexico. He offered that the U.S. would assume the claims payments in return for the southern boundary at the Rio Grande and the acquisition of the eastern half of New Mexico. Polk also wanted to purchase the western half of New Mexico and California. At that time, Mexican General Mariano Paredes overthrew Herrera and refused to accept Slidell or any negotiations at all. Polk ordered Zachary Taylor and his forces down to the Rio Grande in March, 1846 in preparation to repel any potential Mexican invasion and counterattack the enemy if possible. The concentration of military forces within the disputed area resulted in the inevitable brushing together of enemies, as Mexican forces ambushed U.S. troops in April, 1846. Taylor defeated the Mexicans under General Mariano Arista at the battle of Palo Alto in May and followed up with another victory at the battle of Resaca de la Palma, sending the Mexicans fleeing toward Matamoros. On May 11, 1846, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 173 to 14 and the Senate voted 40 to 2 in favor of Polk's war recommendation, officially starting the war with Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 4-10, 17, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 23-24, 26, 37-38, 59-62; Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 67-68.

With the commencement of hostilities, the United States government began the task of building up its armed forces for the struggle. To supplement the American army, numerous regular and volunteer regiments were recruited into service. On May 19, 1846, Congress authorized the creation of the U.S. Mounted Rifles. The formation of this unit, in particular the appointment of its officers, became a controversial issue. Numerous regular army officers put in for transfer to the new unit, but Polk already had made up his mind to personally appoint all the officers himself. All the new officers received commissions directly from civilian life, which caused much discontent among those men who wished to transfer to the rifles. Polk had politics in mind when choosing the new officers. According to historian Richard Bruce Winders, “Polk’s image of the army as a marriage of aristocrats and hirelings shaped his actions throughout the war. The creation of new regiments allowed him to bypass the established hierarchy by appointing men directly from civilian life. Thus he attempted to break the monopoly of the officer corps that West point graduates had begun to develop. He planned for the new rifle regiment to be officered by westerners.” By appointing the officers of the new regiments, Polk could also select fellow Democrats and increase party loyalty among these new units.<sup>6</sup>

Among the officers appointed to the Rifles was Persifor F. Smith as Colonel and John C. Fremont as Lieutenant Colonel. These men would spend little time with the unit as Smith received a brevet to brigade command for much of the war and Fremont served in California. The senior captain, William W. Loring, received promotion to Major and

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Bruce Winders, *Mr. Polk’s Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War*, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1997), 57, 64, 192; Richard Bruce Winders, “U.S. Mounted Rifles,” in *The United States and Mexico at War*, Donald S. Frazier, ed., (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 278.

would lead the Rifles throughout most of the war. Charles F. Ruff received appointment as Captain of Company I and John G. Walker became First Lieutenant of Company I on May 27, 1846.<sup>7</sup>

The new companies comprising the Rifles gathered at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, twelve miles below St. Louis on the Mississippi River. As westerners became the regiment's officers, the enlisted men also came from the west. Brevet Second Lieutenant Daniel Frost later wrote, "The rank and file had been gathered mainly from the farmer classes of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee and constituted the finest body of raw material for soldiers that I ever saw before or since." Walker and the other officers and non-commissioned officers set to the task of drilling their companies in the tedious instructions prescribed in nineteenth century drill manuals. The new recruits showed great proficiency for learning the art of soldiering. Lieutenant Frost wrote about his Company B, "Having thus started my men on the right road, their progress in drill and discipline was so rapid that in a few weeks by drilling them four to six hours a day, they became nearly perfect in the marchings and facings – then obtaining our rifles, the manual of arms was taken up with equal energy and success so that at the end of six weeks I considered that as a cavalry company they were sufficiently versed in infantry exercises and as our horses had not arrived so that we could begin the cavalry drill."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Winders, "U.S. Mounted Rifles," 278; Mexican War Pension File. John G. Walker. Microcopy T317, Roll 13. Record Group 15. U.S. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Frost, "The Memoirs of Daniel M. Frost," Dana O. Jensen, ed., *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, 26, no. 3 (1970): 200-226.

With the school of the soldier mastered, wearing dark blue dragoon jackets and trousers, and armed with sabers, Colt pistols, and the 1841 model rifle, the regiment went down the Mississippi to New Orleans in the fall of 1846. The troops embarked on the passenger steamer *Alabama* for Point Isabel at the mouth of the Rio Grande. Walker did not travel with the Rifles at this time, however, having been assigned to recruiting service in the states as his regiment moved closer to war.<sup>9</sup>

The war had been going very successfully for the United States since it began in the spring of 1846. The Northern Mexico Campaign under General Zachary Taylor saw Mexican forces driven southward after stunning American victories during the Monterrey campaign in July-September, 1846 and at the battle of Buena Vista in February, 1847. Simultaneously, Stephen W. Kearney's command had capture the New Mexico territory and successful expeditions were sent west to California. Despite these successes, the American government sought a quick way to end the war. Although Taylor's campaign had been successful, it was believed a direct march against Mexico City would bring a faster end to the conflict. General Winfield Scott proposed an amphibious landing on the Mexican coast at the port city of Vera Cruz from where the U.S. Army could launch a campaign inland toward the Mexican capital.

Scott based his concept for the invasion at Vera Cruz on several ideas. He felt Mexico City must be approached from Vera Cruz rather than from Taylor's position in the north. Scott also stressed speed in the execution of the landing because of the danger

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<sup>9</sup> Winders, "U.S. Mounted Rifles," 278; Frost, "The Memoirs of Daniel M. Frost," 200-226; Walker Pension File, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

of the seasonal vomito or yellow fever that plagued the coastal region near Vera Cruz. As Scott reasoned, this need for speed in operations voided the use of any other landing area other than Vera Cruz. The invasion force would have to bypass the island Fort San Juan de Ulloa, protecting Vera Cruz from the sea and land some distance away from the city, out of artillery range. The army would then have to reduce the Vera Cruz defenses with an assault or by laying siege.<sup>10</sup>

As Scott planned the expedition, he requested 4,000 regulars, 10,000 volunteers, 1,000 Marines and sailors, fifty 500 to 750 ton transports, and 140 flatboats. The Mounted Rifles were among the troops assigned to Scott's army. After embarking from New Orleans, the Rifles, aboard the *Alabama*, headed for Lobos Island, rendezvoused with the other troop ships and sailed south toward Vera Cruz. Two days after leaving Lobos, the Rifles came within sight of San Juan de Ulloa, guarding Vera Cruz. The fleet slipped by the fort between a sand island and the mainland about three miles below the fort. Reconnaissance allowed Scott to land his army of 12,000 men without resistance at Collada Beach on March 9, 1847.<sup>11</sup>

The Mounted Rifles received assignment to the brigade commanded by their original commander, Brigadier General Persifor F. Smith. Smith's brigade became part of Brigadier General David E. Twiggs' division. Along with Twiggs' men, two other divisions served under Generals William J. Worth and Robert Patterson. Scott determined to march his troops overland and encircle Vera Cruz. Twiggs' division would

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<sup>10</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 253-254.

<sup>11</sup> Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 233-235; Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 259; Frost, "The Memoirs of Daniel M. Frost," 200-226.

occupy the northwest part of the line, anchoring their flank of the small town of Vergara on the opposite side of Vera Cruz. The Rifles would have to march overland to Vergara as they lost most of their horses at sea. The regiment would have to fight as infantry.<sup>12</sup>

The Rifles and the rest of Twiggs' division marched out for Vergara on March 10, 1847, crossing difficult terrain, enduring inclement weather, and packing all their personal equipment. Mexican lancers and skirmishers posed the greatest threat during the march. Throughout the three day encirclement of Vera Cruz, the Rifles fought several small skirmishes with the enemy. The Rifles finally reached Vergara, completing the seven mile long semi-circle around Vera Cruz, known as Camp Washington. Over the next few weeks the regiment endured a rather uneventful siege except for the occasional skirmish and artillery bombardments.<sup>13</sup>

After constructing siege lines and battery emplacements, General Scott called upon the city to surrender on March 22. The Mexican commander, General Juan Morales, refused and the American guns opened fire that evening. Scott brought more artillery into action and by March 25 the Americans had ten 10-inch mortars, four 24-pounders, two 8-inch siege howitzers, three 32 pounders, three 8-inch Paixhams, and numerous naval ships bombarding Vera Cruz. Mexican guns returned fire but could not compete with the American firepower. Under pressure from foreign consuls within Vera

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<sup>12</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 257, 260; Winders, "U.S. Mounted Rifles," 278.

<sup>13</sup> Brooks, *A Complete History of the Mexican War*, 301-302; Jeanne T. Heidler, "The Military Career of David Emanuel Twiggs," Ph.D. Dissertation, Auburn University, 1988, 109-110; William B. Lane, "The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen," or "From Puebla to the City of Mexico," *The United Service* 14, no. 4 (October 1895), 301-313.

Cruz to surrender, General Morales turned over command to General Landero, who consented to meet with U.S. representatives. The Mexican garrison at Vera Cruz surrendered on March 29. Dabney Maury, a member of the Rifles, remembered the surrender: “When the white flag was shown by Vera Cruz we were overjoyed and greatly comforted, for we had been nearly three weeks in the sand hills without a change of raiment, our opportunities for bathing were very limited, and the fleas swarmed over us.”<sup>14</sup>

With the surrender of Vera Cruz, Scott could move inland away from the yellow fever area and closer to the Mexican capital. Scott chose to send his army up the national Highway by way of Jalapa and Puebla en route to Mexico City. Twiggs’ division, closest to the road, marched out at the head of the army. By March 30, Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna had learned of the surrender of Vera Cruz, and entered Mexico City to take command of its forces, amid intense nationalism among the populace. Santa Anna moved a large force of about 10,000 men eastward along the National Highway and deployed his soldiers at a pass in the road near the village of Cerro Gordo. At this pass, Santa Anna had his left flank protected by hills and his right flank protected by a stream called Rio del Plan. Just to the right of the road sat a thousand foot high hill called El Telegrafo with a plateau a half mile to the northeast called La Atalaya. Santa Anna placed most of his force atop these two natural rises and awaited the advance of the American forces.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Dabney H. Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian in the Mexican, Indian, and Civil Wars*, (New York: Scribner & Sons, 1894), 34.

<sup>15</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 267-274.

The Mounted Rifles and the rest of Twiggs' division, totaling 2,600 men, left Vera Cruz on April 8, 1847 and marched west on the National Highway. On April 11, the division arrived within four miles of Cerro Gordo. Twiggs, learning of the Mexican force up the road, halted and sent reconnaissance parties to search out the enemy, but decided to wait for Scott and reinforcements. Scott arrived on April 14 and immediately sent Captain Robert E. Lee of the engineers to scout the enemy position. Lee found a route around the Mexican left flank that could be used to maneuver around the two hills occupied by the Mexicans. Soon Worth's division arrived, giving Scott about 8,500 men to assault the Mexican army.<sup>16</sup>

Early on April 17, Twiggs' division moved down the trail and towards La Atalaya. U.S. troops easily drove back Mexicans atop the plateau, but faced a large enemy counterattack from the direction of El Telegrafo. Troops from the Rifles moved forward to support the Seventh Infantry and together the Americans pushed back the Mexican counterstroke. The U.S. troops chased the Mexicans halfway to El Telegrafo before being halted by Mexican fire from the hill and pinned down until darkness allowed them to slip back to Atalaya.<sup>17</sup>

The next day, April 18, Scott issued orders for the main assault on El Telegrafo. Twiggs' men would lead the advance and try to reach the position where the National Highway passed the Mexican rear. Smith's brigade, temporarily commanded by Colonel W.S. Harney, formed a storming party with the Seventh Infantry on the right, the Third

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 274-278.

<sup>17</sup> Frost, "The Memoirs of Daniel M. Frost," 200-226.

Infantry on the left, and artillery covering the front and rear. Harney spied a Mexican column moving to reinforce El Telegrafo and detached the Rifles to halt this force while the rest of the brigade attacked uphill. The Rifles suffered under a heavy fire from Mexican artillery, but beat back the enemy advance. As the Rifles held off the Mexican reinforcements, the rest of the brigade attacked up the hill, driving back the enemy and capturing the lower entrenchments. The Rifles joined the assault as the Americans pushed toward the crest of El Telegrafo and met the defenders in fierce hand to hand combat. Outnumbered and almost surrounded, the Mexicans retreated down the back slope of the hill.<sup>18</sup>

Twiggs sent the brigade of Brigadier General James Shields to cut the National Highway at Cerro Gordo. The Mexican reserve repulsed Shields and only with help from troops of Riley's brigade, did the position collapse. Santa Anna and the surviving Mexicans fled from the field. Scott would commend the Rifles and their brigade in his report: "The brigade ascended the long and difficult slope of Cerro Gordo, without shelter and under the tremendous fire of artillery and musketry, with the utmost steadiness, reached the breastworks, drove the enemy from them, and planted the colors of all units with the enemy flag still flying. After some minutes of sharp fighting, they finished the conquest with their bayonets."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 280; Brooks, *A Complete History of the Mexican War*, 330; William L. Wessels, *Born To Be A Soldier: The Military Career of William Wing Loring of St. Augustine, Florida*, (Ft. Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1971), 14-15.

<sup>19</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 280-283; Wessels, *Born To Be a Soldier*, 15.

Shortly after the battle at Cerro Gordo, Scott's army once again moved west along the National Highway toward Jalapa, about four miles away. The men of the army felt exhausted as Lieutenant Frost attested, "After more than thirty-six hours of marching, fighting, and what was worse than all, charging up and down steep and rocky hills, covered with every species of thorn bush, it required no order for us to drop on the ground and immediately close our eyes and sleep." Scott did face one important issue at Jalapa as the twelve month enlistments of many of the regiments were about to expire. Scott chose to send these men away before pressing forward, and seven regiments left under General Patterson, leaving Scott with only 7,000 troops. Also at Jalapa, on May 20, 1847, Lieutenant John G. Walker joined his already battle hardened regiment for the march to Mexico City.<sup>20</sup>

The army left Jalapa on May 22 and headed west for Puebla. On the march through desert country the men suffered greatly, many straggling out of the column. Lieutenant Frost described the march as uneventful, except for the scarcity of drinking water and the "mirages of lakes" that teased the soldiers. The entire army reached Puebla by May 28, and would spend the next three months there. Frost commented about their stay in the town: "Owing to its great elevation the climate of Puebla was very agreeable, even in the months of June and July, whilst the nights were always quite cool. We had abundance of delicious fruits and provisions of every kind and occupied comfortable

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<sup>20</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 295-296; Frost, "The Memoirs of Daniel M. Frost," 200-226; Walker Pension File, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

quarters in the public buildings but still got very tired of the uneventful sameness of our existence and longed for the order to move.<sup>21</sup>

To occupy boredom, the soldiers did much sightseeing, and of course drilled to keep an edge on their military skills. Twiggs put his division through drill maneuvers six days a week and it outperformed all the other units during a July 19 review of the army. Despite the tranquility of the stay at Puebla, Mexican bandits and deserters from Santa Anna's forces harassed the American supply line back to Vera Cruz. Some of the Rifles received orders to deal with the pesky bandits, including Captain Ruff's company of which Lieutenant Walker was a member. On July 30, 1847, Ruff, Walker, and eighty-two of the Rifles attacked about three hundred Mexican guerrillas and infantry entrenched in houses and in a church at San Juan de los Llanos. The Rifles drove off the enemy with a loss of one man wounded, while the enemy lost an estimated seventy to ninety men as casualties. For his part in the skirmish, Walker received a brevet to Captain for "gallant and meritorious service" on August 1, 1847.<sup>22</sup>

While at Puebla, Scott's army did receive reinforcements in July and prepared to continue the drive towards Mexico City. On August 7, 1847, Twiggs' division led the march west out of Puebla, with a division following each consecutive morning. After leaving Puebla, Twiggs' men made good time as they no longer marched through the desert. The division arrived at San Martin on August 8, at Los Melucos on August 9, and

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<sup>21</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 302; Heidler, "The Military Career of David Emanuel Twiggs," 119-120; Frost, "The Memoirs of David M. Frost," 218-219.

<sup>22</sup> Heidler, "The Military Career of David Emanuel Twiggs," 122; Justin H. Smith, *The War With Mexico*, Vol. 2, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), 427; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 274; Walker Pension File, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

continued to Ayotla, where it halted on August 11 to await the rest of the army and further orders from General Scott.<sup>23</sup>

As Twiggs' men posted up in Ayotla, fifteen miles from Mexico City, the other divisions moved into positions around Chalco and Chimalpa. Scott's army, after being reinforced at Puebla, numbered about 14,000 men in four divisions under Twiggs, Worth, Pillow, and Quitman. Between 25,000 and 30,000 Mexicans in three different armies faced the Americans. North of Mexico City at Guadalupe Hidalgo sat the Army of the North. The Army of the South sat in position just south of the city and the Army of the East took up position in the capital itself.<sup>24</sup>

Almost as imposing as the military defenders was the natural geography of the area surrounding the capital and its approaches. Lakes and extensive marshlands surrounded the city. North and east of the city lay Lake Texcoco and southeast of the city sat two more lakes, Chalco and Xochimilco. The only routes across these water barriers ran over causeways, each one protected by a heavily defended gate. Along the National Road, the eastern approach for Scott's army, sat a hill called El Penon on which Santa Anna had placed 7,000 troops and thirty cannons. This route would be almost suicidal for Scott to take. A northern approach to the city would require Scott to take a difficult forty mile detour around the lakes and still have to confront the Mexican forces at Guadalupe Hidalgo. Scott had a third route that branched off the National Highway and

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<sup>23</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 310; Heidler, "The Military Career of David Emanuel Twiggs," 123-124.

<sup>24</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 307; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 274; Weems, *To Conquer a Peace*, 387.

headed south for the village of Mexicalcingo where Scott could turn north toward the city. Mexican force also occupied this village.<sup>25</sup>

Scott sent Captain Robert E. Lee to reconnoiter the defenses at El Penon, which Lee recommended they avoid. Lee also inspected the road that led south off the National Highway before reaching El Penon and found it in good shape. The road went around the bank of Lake Chalco and linked with the Acapulco road at San Agustin south of the city. Scott chose this southern route as his line of advance on the Mexican capital. On August 15, Scott left Twiggs' men to feint in front of El Penon, while the other divisions moved south along the road. Twiggs then followed the other units south the next day. In response to the movements of the U.S. forces, Santa Anna shifted the Army of the North under General Gabriel Valencia south to the vicinity of Padierna and Contreras. Troops from El Penon also shifted south and set up a defensive line about five miles behind the Churubusco River running southeast from Mexicalcingo to the town of Churubusco.<sup>26</sup>

Worth's division reached San Agustin, about nine miles from the city, on August 18 and came under fire from Mexican batteries at a hacienda called San Antonio. The guns could not be flanked as a lava field known as El Pedregal lay to the west. Once again Captain Lee reconnoitered the lava field and found a trail along its southern edge that could be used to move across the field if it could be widened. On August 19, Scott dispatched troops from Pillow's division to work on the trail while Twiggs' men would provide protection. Twiggs' men, camped two miles away at San Juan, moved up to

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<sup>25</sup> Weems, *To Conquer a Peace*, 387-388, 394.

<sup>26</sup> Weems, *To Conquer a Peace*, 394-398; Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 312-316.

cover the working parties. At about noon, the advance ran into Mexican pickets. Major Loring and some of the Rifles went forward and drove the enemy out of the path.<sup>27</sup>

Valencia's artillery opened fire upon Twiggs' guns and Riley's brigade moved across the pathway to San Geronimo along with a brigade from Pillow's division. The Rifles and the rest of their brigade followed and set up a defensive position as they risked being caught between Valencia's force at Contreras and a large force of Mexicans moving south. For unknown reasons, this Mexican force soon pulled back. Engineers found a way around Valencia's flank through a ravine and the Rifles brigade commander, Persifor Smith, decided on an attack from three sides against the Mexicans at Contreras.<sup>28</sup>

At 3:00 a.m. on August 20, Riley's brigade of Twiggs' division and Cadwalader's brigade of Pillow's division moved in front of the Mexican entrenchments while Smith's brigade moved around the Mexicans through the ravine. At 5:00 a.m., the forces in front made a diversionary assault upon the startled Mexicans and drew their attention to the front. The Rifles and the rest of Smith's men then appeared in the rear of the Mexicans, fired a volley, and with bayonets charged the panicked enemy. The Mexicans at Contreras fell back confused after a seventeen minute battle and the forces at San Antonio and Mexicalcingo withdrew as well. The main roads that led to the Churubusco River lay open. Santa Anna chose to pull all his forces back to the capital. He ordered Major General Manuel Rincon to defend the bridge at Churubusco that crossed the river. About 1,500 to 1,800 Mexican troops defended the riverbank at the tet-de-pont and the

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<sup>27</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 316, 319-320; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 292; Brooks, *A Complete History of the Mexican War*, 366.

<sup>28</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 320-321.

San Mateo convent. The Mexicans would not have long to wait as the Americans came up the road in pursuit of the fleeing enemy.<sup>29</sup>

The pursuing U.S. forces reached Churubusco at around noon and immediately attacked. Pillow's and Worth's men led the main attack on the Churubusco bridge while Twiggs' division attacked the San Mateo convent. To the north, Shields' and Franklin Pierce's brigades sought to turn the Mexicans at the village of Portales. The entrenchments at tet-de-pont fell first as the Americans took them at bayonet point. Worth's men then shifted to fire on the convent as Twiggs' men went over the rampart and caused the defenders to surrender after a hand to hand engagement. To the north, Shields and Pierce met stiff resistance and not until Scott sent the Rifles and a company of dragoons, did the Mexicans finally retreat. The fight lasted two and a half hours and afterward, Scott called off the pursuit as his troops had fought two consecutive battles almost at the same time. In the fights at Contreras and Churubusco on August 20, Santa Anna lost approximately 4,000 in total casualties while Scott's army lost 133 killed and 865 wounded.<sup>30</sup>

Scott called a short truce on August 22 for negotiations that proved futile and hostilities recommenced on September 7. During the truce, the army camped in a rough arc south of Mexico City with Worth's division at Tacabuya, Pillow's at Mixcaoc, Twiggs' division at San Angel, and Quitman's division at San Agustin. On the day the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 321-325; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 296; Adrian G. Traas, "Contreras and Churubusco," in *The United States and Mexico at War*, ed., Donald S. Frazier, (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 113.

<sup>30</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 326-330; Traas, "Contreras and Churubusco," 113.

truce ended, Scott learned of a supposed foundry where it was reported the Mexicans were melting down church bells to cast cannons. The place, called Molino del Rey, included a group of stone buildings that formed the western end of the Mexican fortifications that included the castle Chapultepec, about 1,000 yards away. About six hundred yards from Molino del Rey lay another defensive position called Casa Mata. Santa Anna posted five brigades and artillery to defend these two positions. Scott decided to send Worth's division to attack the Mexicans because his men were the closest.<sup>31</sup>

Worth advanced on the morning of September 8, 1847 with one brigade to attack the Molino and another to attack Casa Mata. The assaulting forces suffered heavy casualties from the undetected Mexican forces. The storming parties were thrown back by counterattacking Mexicans. Brevet Captain Walker's company of the Rifles formed one of the units sent to reinforce Garland's brigade against the Molino. In the renewed assault, Walker fell severely wounded, but the Americans muscled their way through the works, and caused the Mexicans to retreat. Worth focused his artillery on Casa Mata and weakened the defenders until they broke in the face of another attack. The battle lasted about two hours and took a heavy toll on Worth's division, costing him 116 dead and 671 wounded. After capturing Molino, the Americans discovered that it contained no cannon foundry.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 330-334; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 308.

<sup>32</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 335-335; Neal Mangum, "Battle of Molino del Rey," in *The United States and Mexico at War*, Donald S. Frazier, ed., (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 268; Walker Pension File, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Scott followed up the victory at Molino del Rey with reconnaissance of the area in front of the enemy. The routes to the gates at Piedad, Nino Perdido, San Antonio, and Paseo de La Viga he considered too easily defended and had difficult natural obstacles such as bogs and water filled ditches. The American army still had two other possible routes that led into the city. One came from the west around San Cosme gate and the other from the southwest at Belen gate, both heavily fortified. The roads leading to both gates passed near the fortress of Chapultepec, whose guns could sweep either route. Still, Scott felt that Chapultepec should be captured, hoping its fall might entice peace negotiations without his army having to fight its way into the city.<sup>33</sup>

On September 12, Scott ordered an artillery bombardment of Chapultepec to last throughout the day until the next morning, after which Pillow's division would attack from the west from the captured Molino del Rey, led by a storming party from Worth's division. Quitman's division would attack from the southeast, led by a storming party from Twiggs' division. The remainder of Worth's and Twiggs' divisions would be held back in reserve. The bombardment continued until the next morning and ceased as the attack commenced.<sup>34</sup>

Pillow's and Quitman's troops fought their way over the defended walls of the outlying gardens and up to the base of the castle walls. Here the troops became intermingled as they ducked under the fire from Mexican troops above. As Quitman's troops stalled, the Rifles and their brigade under Smith moved forward as support.

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<sup>33</sup> Brooks, *A Complete History of the Mexican War*, 411; Weems, *To Conquer a Peace*, 420.

<sup>34</sup> Eisenhower, *So Far From God*, 339-340.

According to Smith's later report, the main batteries of the enemy stood at the foot of a hill near the aqueduct that led down the Belen causeway. By extending his brigade in that direction, the Rifles found themselves behind the storming party of the Seventh Infantry. When the attack pressed forward, the Rifles entered the battery along with the storming party and captured a second battery along with many prisoners.<sup>35</sup>

In the meantime, scaling ladders arrived and the assaulting troops forced their way over the castle walls in brutal hand to hand combat. When the Chapultepec fortress fell, Quitman's troops and Smith's supporting brigade veered off down the causeway toward the Belen gate. Following an eight-inch howitzer, commanded by a Captain Drum, the Rifles and the South Carolina Regiment advanced under shelter of the arches of the aqueduct toward a Mexican battery situated across the causeway midway between Chapultepec and the Belen gate. Fire from Drum's gun and supporting fire from the San Cosme road provided enough cover for the Rifles to dash forward and route the enemy position. The Rifles and the South Carolinians regrouped and once again wended around the arches and crept toward the Belen gate.<sup>36</sup>

As the Rifles neared the battery protecting the Belen gate, an additional artillery piece came up. After firing a few rounds, the Rifles and South Carolinians again dashed forward and routed the Mexicans at the gate, triumphantly waving the Palmetto flag and the green banner with the gold eagle of the Rifles. Those troops that advanced past the gate soon pulled back and the Rifles occupied the buildings around the Belen gate. The

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<sup>35</sup> Lane, "The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen," 307.

<sup>36</sup> Brooks, *A Complete History of the Mexican War*, 421-422; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, 410-411.

next morning on September 14, the Rifles advanced into the grand plaza of Mexico City and raised the national colors.<sup>37</sup>

As more U.S. troops entered Mexico City from one side, Santa Anna and the troops he had left marched out of the other. However, the violence was not over. Lieutenant Frost wrote, “Whilst waiting here for the proper authority to designate the quarters to be occupied by the different Regiments, the lower class of the Mexican populace, instigated by a number of Santa Anna’s soldiers who had abandoned him as he marched out of the city, began a desultory system of assassination upon all soldiers who strayed from the ranks.” William Lane of the Rifles commented, ‘Fighting in the streets, and on the house tops began almost immediately on entering the plaza, and continued more or less severe during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, an, as usual, the Rifles took a prominent part, losing several men in killed and wounded.’ As a result of the potential threats and the need to keep order, Scott instituted martial law over the city and the Rifles spent the next several months doing provost and police duties.<sup>38</sup>

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed February 2, 1848, ended the Mexican War. However, the Rifles and many other troops remained in Mexico City until the summer of 1848. The Mounted Rifles finally left Mexico, embarking from Vera Cruz on July 7, 1848 and reaching Jefferson Barracks on July 24. Their tour of duty in Mexico lasted a little more than a year, but the regiment engaged the enemy on eighteen different

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<sup>37</sup> Lane, “The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen,” 307-308; Smith, *The War With Mexico*, 160; Wessels, *Born To Be a Soldier*, 18

<sup>38</sup> Frost, “The Memoirs of Daniel M. Frost,” 225; Lane, “The Regiment of Mounted Riflemen,” 310; Wessels, *Born To Be a Soldier*, 20.

occasions and suffered substantial losses. The Rifles suffered fifty-four battle deaths and 178 disease and accident related deaths for a total of 232, while Walker and around 200 more suffered wounds in combat. The regiment saw extensive action in some of the fiercest fighting of the war and was one of the first to reach and plant its flag in Mexico City.<sup>39</sup>

In his study of the American army in Mexico, Richard Bruce Winders discusses the common animosity between regular and volunteer soldiers in the military at that time. With the founding of West Point in 1802, the academy often faced challenges from critics who saw the institution as a threat to the idea of the American citizen soldier. West Point graduates, often seen as an elitist group in society, felt that their success in the war could be traced to their professional and military training at West Point. Many officers believed the U.S. victory would vindicate the existence of the United States Military Academy. Despite the claims of West Pointers, Walker and the officers of the Mounted Rifles proved their abilities to perform effectively and lead their men in battle without a formal military education. Walker and the other Rifles such as William Loring and Dabney Maury would continue to serve and eventually become generals in the Confederate army. The Rifles won great praise from many officers, but the most noteworthy came from General Scott himself who said, “Brave Rifles, you have gone through fire and blood and come out steel.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Wessels, *Born To Be a Soldier*, 19-20.

<sup>40</sup> Winders, *Mr. Polk's Army*, 54-55, 145.

CHAPTER II  
OUT WEST WITH THE RIFLES, 1849-1861

In August, 1848, Oregon became a territory of the United States. Shortly thereafter, gold was discovered in neighboring California and later in Oregon itself. What would be remembered as the gold strike of 1849 saw thousands of hopeful prospectors blaze trails across the great plains and the Rocky Mountains to seek their fortunes in the gold mines of the west. As the emigrants settled in their new homes, the encroachment of white men on Native American lands increased. In response, the United States government established military posts in California and Oregon to protect settlers from Indian and to aid in the negotiation of treaties with the local tribes. John G. Walker and his regiment the Mounted Rifles, marched west to man Fort Vancouver in Oregon.<sup>41</sup>

The Mounted Rifles reenlisted after being mustered out of service following their return from Mexico. The regiment received orders to follow the Oregon Trail, which began near Independence, Missouri and went north and westward through parts of present day Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Idaho before reaching Oregon and California on the west coast. Brevet-Colonel Loring spent much of the fall in 1848 and the spring of 1849 gathering up men and supplies for the roughly two thousand mile journey. Five companies of the Rifles gathered at Camp Sumner about five miles west of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. A train consisting of seven hundred horses, twelve hundred

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<sup>41</sup> William L. Wessels, *Born To Be a Soldier: The Military Career of William Wing Loring of St. Augustine, Florida*, (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1971), 26.

mules, a large quantity of oxen, and one hundred seventy wagons accompanied the regiment. The Rifles marched west from their camp on May 10, 1849.<sup>42</sup>

The first leg of the expedition saw the Rifles headed west toward Fort Kearney, Nebraska, on the Platte River, about three hundred miles distant. The column had a very difficult experience during the march to Fort Kearney. Loring later wrote, “In consequence of the recent rains, later than usual, the road in places had become almost impassable, the streams much swollen, and many of them had to be bridged, occasioning delay on the march. Our animals were in a weak state, many of them unbroken, the wagons overloaded and poorly equipped, and in part driven by soldiers and inexperienced citizens. This made the commencement of the march a very arduous one.” The regiment pushed on and arrived at Fort Kearney on May 31.<sup>43</sup>

At Fort Kearney, Walker’s company joined with the rest of the command for the trek west. Before resuming the march, Loring decided to divide up the command into three divisions for the rest of the expedition. Traveling in front of the Rifles were thousands of emigrants moving west to seek their fortunes in the gold mines. He determined that finding adequate pasturage for his large command traveling across the countryside in the wake of such a large migration of people required the column to move in smaller groups. The Rifles left Fort Kearney on June 3 with Brevet-Major Stephen

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<sup>42</sup> Report of William Loring, October 15, 1849, *The March of the Mounted Riflemen: From Fort Leavenworth to Fort Vancouver, May to October, 1849*, Raymond W. Settle, ed., (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 331.

<sup>43</sup> Loring Report, *The March of the Mounted Riflemen*, 331.

Tucker leading the first division, Major George B. Crittenden leading the second division, and Brevet-Lieutenant Colonel Jacob Backenstos leading the third division.<sup>44</sup>

As the column moved farther west, it encountered the first deadly challenge to its progress, cholera. All along the trail, evidence of the disease and its effect on the emigrants ahead of the Rifles became apparent. Major Osborne Cross wrote, “Much fear was entertained that the cholera would increase. We certainly had every reason to suppose so, from the many deaths among the emigrants along the road and their present helpless condition. Within the last four days the command had lost several men by cholera, and it had every indication of increasing among them.” The army kept the disease from spreading however, “by timely aid and proper precaution on the part of the surgeons.” The Rifles arrived at South fork on the Platte River on June 13 and continued along its path to Fort Laramie, Wyoming, arriving on June 22. After a brief rest, the command moved out two days later.<sup>45</sup>

The Rifles reached the North fork of the Platte River on July 2. Rains and melted snow swelled the stream, causing the command to have to ferry itself across the water. Loring later commented, “I would recommend that future expeditions be provided with boats or pontoons for ferrying wagons, not only for use at this stream, but at others on the route,” Moving along, Loring made notes about possible areas for future military forts, describing places near Horseshoe and Deer creeks as ‘having advantages for military posts; the lands are good with great abundance of pasturage and timber.’ The Rifles

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 331-333; Journal of Osborne Cross, *The March of the Mounted Riflemen*, 74.

continued on to the distinct landmark of Independence Rock, near the South Pass in western Wyoming.<sup>46</sup>

As the regiment neared the cut-off to the trail that led to California, it faced the problem of desertion amongst the rank and file. Osborne Cross expressed his concern over the recent desertions: ‘Four men ran off last night, taking a complete outfit with them. This was not very unexpected to us when we considered the material of which the regiment was composed. Many men merely enlisted, it is well known, for the purpose of getting comfortably transported to California at the expense of the government, and not from any partiality for the profession of a soldier.’ To deal with this threat to the command, Loring issued a decree on July 8 offering a \$200 reward for the capture of deserters. The notice had the desired effect as Loring later wrote: “Many had already deserted, and I had certain information that large numbers were to follow. Every exertion had been made to avert it, and frequent pursuit and all other means had been resorted to without avail. Upon publishing the notice desertions immediately ceased, and although we passed several roads leading to California few or no attempts were made.”<sup>47</sup>

The Rifles marched along the Platte River until they reached the South Pass on July 16. The regiment had advanced almost a thousand miles since leaving Fort Leavenworth. The men faced many difficulties and hardships along the journey. The columns could almost never find adequate wood for fires. Cross wrote that they had reached a part of the country where “a tree might be looked on as a curiosity.” The

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<sup>46</sup> Loring Report, *The March of the Mounted Riflemen*, 333-334.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 335; Journal of Osborne Cross, *The March of the Mounted Riflemen*, 69.

animals were often without sufficient forage because of the large groups of settlers traveling along the same route. Major Cross estimated that eight to ten thousand wagons and their teams had passed before the regiment. Lack of grazing caused the soldiers to send their horses and mules up to ten miles off the trail to find pasturage to preserve the strength of the animals and prevent starvation. The Rifles also had to contend with nature as storms pelted the men with rain causing flooded streams and mud, wind blew through mountain passes, sending dust mixed with alkali into the soldiers' eyes, the temperature was hot during the day and chilling at night, and lightning continuously posed the threat of stampeding the animals.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the hardships of the expedition, the Rifles did experience many firsts during the march to Oregon. Many of the men saw buffalo and antelope for the first time in their lives. Hunting these animals became a favorite pastime while on the march. According to Major Cross: "Today buffalo were seen for the first time, which created no little excitement. We had been hoping for several days to be gratified with a sight of them, for the road was entirely destitute of interest, and we were much pleased on hearing the news that game was so near us. We were now getting into a section of the country where it is generally found abundantly in the spring, and looked forward to something in the way of sport to divert us from our monotonous life for a time. A journey over a prairie affords no pleasure except that of hunting, and when that cannot be found any

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<sup>48</sup> Journal of Osborne Cross, *The March of the Mounted Riflemen*, 71, 80-81, 109, 125.

other scenery if more preferable.” The Rifles also saw their first Indian war party, a group of Sioux under Bull Tail, searching for the Pawnee.<sup>49</sup>

The columns ferried across the green River on July 21 and marched along the Big Muddy River, descending into the Bear River Valley before reaching Fort hall, in the Portneuf River Valley of modern Idaho in early August, 1849. While near Fort Hall, Loring made note of the countryside to suggest future posts and routes in that portion of the country. He wrote: “There will no doubt be a better and nearer road to Oregon and California by way of Cache Valley or the Salt Lake. In that event the Cache Valley or the Salt Lake will be the most desirable points for the establishment of a post.” Loring detached Company F for duty at Fort hall, reducing the size of the train. Loring reorganized the regiment from three divisions into two divisions under Tucker and Backenstos. The command left Fort Hall on August 7 and 8.<sup>50</sup>

The columns reached the first crossing of the Snake River on August 17 and marched to Fort Boise, Idaho near the second Snake River crossing on August 29. With the horses and mules severely weakened from traveling through the rocky and hilly country, the command stopped at Malheur Creek, fifteen miles from Fort Boise. Here the soldiers dismounted and drove the horses for the rest of the march. Some of the troops advanced in front with baggage and provisions while the remainder of the train, the weaker animals, and one company followed with shorter, easier marches.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 69-70; Wessels, *Born To Be A Soldier*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> Loring Report, *The March of the Mounted Riflemen*, 336-337.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 338-339.

Resuming the march, the Rifles reached the Grande Ronde River on September 8 and 10. Here the troops met several chiefs of the Cayuse and Nez Perce Indians, described a “friendly and intelligent.” The Indians possessed exceptional horses known for their strength and endurance. Loring commented: “In the absence of American horses they would answer for cavalry, and may be had very reasonably.” Leaving the Grande Ronde on September 10 and 13, the command ascended the Blue Mountains and entered the Umatilla River Valley. The columns continued until reaching the Columbia River on September 16 and the Dalles of the Columbia River on September 22 and 26. In an effort to reach its final destination before the onset of the rainy season, Loring split up the command, with a detachment of men to move on the trail along the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver, a lightly loaded wagon train to move over the Cascade Mountains, and the remainder of the command with the baggage to be transported on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers to Oregon City. The small detachment reached Fort Vancouver on September 30 and then the regimental headquarters in Oregon City on October 2. The remainder of the regiment arrived in Oregon City on October 8 and 9.<sup>52</sup>

Walker and his unit had marched over two thousand miles through some of the most difficult country and very harsh conditions. Despite the danger, the Rifles could proudly acknowledge they had successfully made the journey with relatively few losses. More importantly, the regiment learned what to expect on such an expedition and could report its experiences to the War Department. The men learned about the nature of the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 339-340.

terrain, the weather, the Indian inhabitants, the best routes, locations for future posts, and the logistical necessities for a safe expedition across the western United States.

The arrival in Oregon did not see the end of the problems faced by the Mounted Rifles. Gold was discovered in the Pogue and Klamath Rivers in late 1849 and early 1850. In March, 1850, one hundred twenty men from the regiment deserted en masse to seek quick wealth. According to a member of the regiment, it proved hard to keep men in the rank and file with eight dollars per month, when civilians nearby could make twice that amount in a single day. On March 12, the Rifles sent a party including Walker and almost one hundred men to hunt down the deserters. The force crossed the Calapooya Mountains and captured fifty-six of the fugitives in the Umpqua Valley. Here the Rifles met a civilian search party led by Governor Lane. The Rifles turned the prisoners over to Lane and moved on, rounding up seventeen more deserters at the Klamath River. For almost thirty days the search party tracked down the escapees until most were caught in a poor state, described as “hungry, cold, barefoot, threadbare, lost, and disheartened.”<sup>53</sup>

To avoid desertion problems, Loring moved the headquarters of the eleventh Military District from Oregon City to Fort Vancouver. He kept the men of the regiment occupied with building the barracks and the other buildings for the fort. One soldier commented of the stay in Oregon, “There was no actual service to occupy us, nor any

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<sup>53</sup> Wessels, *Born To Be A Soldier*, 36; Anonymous Soldier, “Recollections of the Rifles,” *Southern Literary Messenger*, 33, no. 17 (1861), 371-380.

prospect of it. On the contrary, we were almost exclusively engaged as day-laborers, in constructing houses, etc. at the various posts.”<sup>54</sup>

Walker and the Rifles would not stay long in Oregon as orders requested their return to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri in May, 1851. Walker received promotion to captain on June 30, 1851 and was chosen to assist Captain Phil Kearney and Lieutenant James Stuart in transferring the horses to the First Dragoon regiment before departing from California. The officers and non-commissioned officers returned to Missouri on ships and reached the barracks in July. The regiment mustered out and then re-enlisted for service on the Texas frontier.<sup>55</sup>

The Rifles then marched into Texas where the companies were detached to various posts along the border and frontier to confront threats from marauding Indians. Life on the frontier proved very rough on the Rifles. The troops lived in crudely constructed military posts in Texas, of which one trooper later commented, “The quarters for the troops were insufficient for the preservation of health, or the promotion of their comfort. And except our tents, we were without shelter for the most part of our Texas service.” The same soldier however felt that service in Texas conditioned the men into rugged outdoorsmen and good hunters. The regiment also learned new tactics for mounted troops, that introduced using the revolver and the rifle to fight dismounted and in single rank formations.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Wessels, *Born To Be A Soldier*, 36; Anonymous Soldier, “Recollections of the Rifles,” 376.

<sup>55</sup> Dabney H. Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian in the Mexican, Indian, and Civil Wars*, (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1894), 57-58; Wessels, *Born To Be A Soldier*, 37.

<sup>56</sup> Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian*, 95-96; Anonymous Soldier, “Recollections of the Rifles,” 378.

The Rifles did see a significant amount of action while in Texas. Soon after their arrival, some of the troops engaged a small Comanche band attempting to cross the Rio Grande following a raid. Several other small, but successful encounters with Indians occurred. In one incident, a captain named Van Buren and a small group of Rifles tracked Comanches for five days before routing them near the Precenios.<sup>57</sup>

In 1854 General Persifor Smith led an expedition into New Mexico. Smith had an escort of one hundred men, composed of ten men from each company under the command of Walker and a mountain howitzer and crew commanded by Lieutenant Dabney Maury. The column and its wagon train marched almost thirty miles per day, making stops at Wild Rose Pass and Fort Davis, both on Lympia Creek. The column then moved toward the Rio Grande and then on to El Paso. At Eagle Spring the column came upon a man named Campbell who told the troops that Indians had stolen about fifty of his cattle. Walker and about forty Riflemen pursued the Indians through the mountains for three days. On the morning of the third day, Walker and his command surprised and attacked an Indian village of about fifty lodges. In the ensuing fight, the Rifles killed an Indian chief and twelve of his warriors while Walker lost only one man killed and several wounded. The cattle had already been butchered, so Walker and his men destroyed the lodges and supplies and returned to Smith's column a few days later. The column marched to El Paso and Fort Filmore then retraced its route back to San Antonio.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Anonymous Soldier, "Recollections of the Rifles," 378.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 378-379; Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian*, 84-93.

In the summer of 1856 the army transferred the Rifles to New Mexico and the regiment once again scattered across the frontier with its headquarters posted at Fort Union. The fort stood in stark contrast to the dwellings of Texas. The walls made of thick adobe kept the rooms cool in the summer and warm in the winter. In the middle sat the parade ground surrounded with the enlisted barracks on one side and officer quarters on the other. As in Texas, the Rifles had numerous encounters with Indians. The most memorable engagement occurred when eighty-five Riflemen engaged a large Comanche force two days from Fort Union. The Rifles pursued the Indians vigorously through unknown territory, over mountains and rough roads in extremely cold weather. On the morning of the eighth day of the pursuit, the Rifles attacked the Comanche camp of about one hundred fifty lodges. The Rifles caught the Comanches by surprise and after a sharp fight chased them into the nearby mountains, killing thirty-five of their number and losing only four wounded.<sup>59</sup>

In 1857 and 1858, the Mormon War broke out between the Mormon followers of Brigham Young and the United States government. The Mormons expressed anger over President James Buchanan's appointment of Alfred Cummings, who the Mormons considered a "gentile," as governor of Utah. Brigham Young threatened to forcefully resist any U.S. troops sent into Utah to enforce the appointment. The U.S. soldiers en route to Utah sent a small detachment to New Mexico to obtain supplies. Loring offered a company of Rifles under Captain John Marcy to escort the supplies to the column and

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<sup>59</sup> Anonymous Soldier, "Recollections of the Rifles," 379; Maury, "Recollections of a Virginian," 118-119.

protect it from Mormons who might attempt an ambush. On April 15, 1858, Loring ordered Walker and eighty-five Riflemen along with two hundred infantry to join Marcy. After assembling on the Red River, the column marched west, arriving at the camp of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston in June. As the Rifles marched the Mormons and the U.S. government resolved their differences and Governor Cummings was permitted to stay.<sup>60</sup>

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, Navajo Indians launched raids in northwest New Mexico and northeast Arizona and were a serious threat to Mexicans and Pueblo Indians in the region. The U.S. Army launched expeditions against the Navajo during the Mexican War and later in 1849, resulting in treaties. The treaties did not have a lasting effect as the Navajo lived in small bands that had relatively little influence or control over each other. The raids continued and New Mexico congressman Hugh Smith reported in 1850 that between October 1, 1846 and October 1, 1850, the Navajo and Apache had stolen 12,887 mules, 7,000 horses, 31,581 cattle, and 453,293 sheep from the settlements.<sup>61</sup>

Pressure from New Mexico politicians and ranchers and the need to better protect New Mexicans from Indians led to a reorganization of the Army of the West. Colonel Edwin V. Sumner took command of the New Mexico troops. Sumner built Fort Defiance at Canon Bonito, six miles north of present-day Window Rock, Arizona where the Bonito

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<sup>60</sup> Wessels, *Born To Be A Soldier*, 46-47.

<sup>61</sup> From the foreword by L.R. Bailey of *The Navajo Reconnaissance: A Military Expedition of the Navajo Country in 1859*, by Captain John G. Walker and Major O.L. Shepherd, (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1964), 1-3.

Creek joins the Black Creek. The presence of the fort made the Navajos less of a threat, but the Indian agent to the Navajos, Henry Linn Dodge, proved more effective. The dedicated Dodge kept the Navajos tranquil for close to three years. Unfortunately, Indians kidnapped and murdered Dodge in November, 1856. Less successful Indian agents could not pacify the Navajo, who launched more raids in the spring of 1858. On July 12, 1858, Navajo killed a black servant belonging to the commandant of Fort Defiance. The commander, Major W.T.H. Brooks, demanded the Navajo leaders turn over the killer or risk military action. The Navajo instead turned over the corpse of a Mexican slave, further infuriating the Americans.<sup>62</sup>

On September 9, 1858, Colonel Dixon S. Miles and three hundred ten men from the Third Infantry and the Mounted Rifles marched from Fort Defiance toward the Canon de Chelly in an unsuccessful expedition to locate Navajo. Another expedition in October resulted in nothing as the Navajo disappeared into the Red Rock country. A treaty issued in December, 1858, however, required the Navajo to pay compensation for property taken from the settlements earlier in the year. The Navajo would also release Pueblo and New Mexican captives and the entire Navajo tribe would be responsible for any future depredations committed. The treaty established a new boundary running west from a place fourteen miles west of Zunni Pueblo, moving through Bear Springs north to the juncture of the Chaco and San Juan Rivers. The boundary denied the Navajo of much of

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<sup>62</sup> L.R. Bailey's foreword, *The Navajo Reconnaissance*, 3-6.

the best grazing and planting land east of the Chuska-Tunicha Mountains. Of course, many of the Navajo could never submit to such regulations.<sup>63</sup>

Throughout the spring of 1859, many Navajos tried to honor the terms of the treaty, but many continued the raids. On May 13, 1859, a prominent rancher named Henry Connelly informed the Superintendent of Indian Affairs James L. Collins that Indians had stolen two thousand sheep and left two herders dead. The army determined that the treaty had no influence over the Indians and the situation required military force. Major John S. Simonson of the Mounted Rifles led an expedition to show U.S. military force without causing an actual conflict between soldiers and Indians. The expedition would explore the Navajo country to seek out grazing spots, planting grounds, and places of Navajo dwellings. The information obtained would be used to prepare the army for any future operations against the Navajo in the event of war.<sup>64</sup>

On June 12, 1859, major Simonson led Walker and a force of seven hundred men to Fort Defiance, reaching the post around the first of July. From July 5 to July 14 Simonson held three councils with Navajo headmen to negotiate reparations for stolen or destroyed property. Simonson also issued Orders No. 8 that authorized explorations of Navajo territory. Walker organized an expedition four days later, consisting of Companies C and G of the Third infantry, and his own Company K and a detachment of Company E from the Mounted Rifles.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

Walker's command assembled at Camp La Joya near Fort Defiance on July 18 and marched north, camping the next day near the mouth of Canon de Chelly, twenty-eight miles from Fort Defiance. On the morning of July 20, the column entered the canyon about a half mile below the mouth of present-day Wheatfield Creek. In his report, Walker described his motive for exploring the canyon: "The common belief is that it is in this canyon that the Navajos take refuge with their flocks and herds upon the first alarm of war, as well as the extraordinary accounts given to its natural features by the few whites that pretend to have explored it, rendered it highly desirable that this mysterious chasm should be thoroughly explored." Canon de Chelly is formed by the union of three small streams, the Estrella or Cienega Negra on the southeast, the Pala Negra or Chelly on the northeast, and the Cienega Juanica on the northwest. The command descended the slope of the canyon about a half mile below the mouth of the Cienega Juanica. The side of the canyon consisted of broken sandstone boulders that permitted the column to "zigzag down the face of the precipice," which Walker estimated to be no less than six or seven hundred feet high.<sup>66</sup>

According to Walker, the canyon ran nearly east to west with a width of from two hundred to three hundred and fifty yards. As the column moved along the canyon floor they saw what Walker described as giant cathedrals and fortification castles created in the sandstone walls. Walker noted that the soil was sandy, but could support underbrush growth and some crops as the troops passed corn and wheat patches. The column found

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 11-12; Report of Capt. John G. Walker, August 3, 1859, *The Navajo Reconnaissance*, 37-39.

water running the entire length of the canyon, but were informed by guides that water must be dug for in the dry seasons.<sup>67</sup>

Walker's command continued through the canyon and came to an ancient dwelling partially built in the side of the canyon wall. Walker commented upon the apparent civility of its creators, mentioning the structure contained numerous rooms, doors, windows, and fireplaces, with wooden supports in an almost pristine preserved condition. Walker believed the building had to have been repaired within the year. He also noted the excellent craftsmanship of several masonry artifacts found near the ruins. Walker believed that the ruins were built by Moqui Indians years before, due to the similarity of building style with other Moqui villages he had previously seen. Walker's command also discovered a series of steps carved in the sandstone walls of the canyon from top to bottom, perhaps six or seven hundred feet high. After traveling about twelve miles, Walker camped the column near Canon Alsada.<sup>68</sup>

The next day, Walker took a group of Riflemen down the canyon on foot a distance of about three and a half miles. There he examined the mouth of Cienega Negra, which enters about three miles below the heart of the Chelly. Walker then proceeded to near the mouth of the Cienega Juanica and to within a half mile of the place where the command first entered the canyon two days before. With the reconnaissance complete, Walker determined the canyon to be about twenty-four to twenty-five miles in length.

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<sup>67</sup> Report of Capt. John G. Walker, August 3, 1859, *The Navajo Reconnaissance*, 39-40.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-44.

After seeing the length of Canon de Chelly, Walker believed the canyon to be of little use to the Navajo in time of war, as he stated in his report:

Our reconnaissance of the Chelly I think explodes the notion so long prevalent, that it could afford a refuge for the Navajos, and their numerous flocks and herds for any length of time in a war with us. The destitution of pasturage in the canon would itself force them out. Besides, now that the Navajos are aware of our acquaintance with the Chelly, it is not probable that any number of them would rely upon it in time of war as a place of concealment and refuge. Should they do so, a column of mounted men in the canon, supported if thought necessary by a flanking force of infantry on the table to the east of the mouth of the Trigo, and on the north of the Chelly would in two days time sweep the canon from one end to the other.<sup>69</sup>

Walker's orders wanted him to continue to explore and visit the tribes of Indians, raking not of their numbers, location, herds of horses and cattle, flocks of sheep, grazing grounds, and watering holes. Walker hoped to explore the unknown areas around the Trigo River, but lack of time and provisions hastened his return trip. Walker planned to reach Rio San Juan near the Canon de Chelly and return to Fort Defiance by crossing the Tunicha Mountains on an unexplored trail, said by his interpreter to have plenty of water and pasturage.<sup>70</sup>

Walker's column left on the morning of July 22 and followed the Rio Chelly north. The soldiers went through a valley with large corn fields, some of them forty to sixty acres in size. Walker believed this area to be the most populous area in the Navajo country. The people possessed few animals and survived predominantly on agriculture. Walker noted that the Indians were very peaceful toward them and any warfare would

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 44-46.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

probably destroy their crops and starve them. The column halted for the day after covering a distance of seventeen miles. On July 23, the column marched north eighteen miles, following dry arroyo for several miles and passing the rock known as “Piedra Rodia.” Over the next three days Walker and his men marched north and east, thirty-eight miles over mountains, ridges, and sandy mesas, past “Bosque Redondo” cottonwood grove and arrived at the Rio San Juan on July 26.<sup>71</sup>

Walker resumed the march on July 28 and followed the river ten miles to the Arroyo Colorado before stopping to rest five miles below the mouth of the river where the grass was good. Walker then headed south along a river branching off the San Juan and camped after traveling about nine miles. The next day the column went south toward “Sierra Aguila” and followed a trail across a sandy arroyo before entering the Mesa Colorado plain at the base of the mountain. Walker crossed the plain and camped near rocks with good grass and water. On July 30 Walker headed south by west over hilly country and passed abandoned Navajo fields and huts. The Navajo had left to avoid the Utah Indians. The column then proceeded up a good mountain road that Walker believed to be the main Navajo road across the mountains. The column passed a small lake and descended into a wooded ravine for several miles before camping near the “Junta de los arroyos.” The march covered twenty miles. Walker provided a good description of the countryside:

From Washington’s Pass to the Carizo range, the Tunicha Mountains might be compared to an open hand, the fingers separated. The back of the hand with the knuckles vertical would represent the northern slope and

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 47-50.

the highest ridge – the fingers a series of lateral spurs running off toward the south and tapering down towards the plains, and the space between the fingers, the wooded ravines and fertile and well watered valleys that abound through these mountains, which afford excellent summer pasturage for great numbers of horses and sheep.<sup>72</sup>

The column marched southwest down the Arroyo Tusa and out of the mountains before turning southeast and crossing the “Mouton la Jara” and the Cienega Juanica. The column arrived back at its camp of July 19 near the mouth of Canon de Chelly, and camped a half mile beyond at a spot with good grass and spring water after marching sixteen miles. The next day Walker marched twenty-one miles through country south of the Tunicha Mountains until he and his command arrived back at Camp La Joya. After his exploration of the Navajo country Walker felt the Navajos would only suffer tremendously in any conflict with U.S. troops. His report summed up his sentiment:

I am not prepared to say what would be the better tone of policy towards them, but there is no doubt that a war made upon them now by us would fall heaviest upon the least guilty – would transform a nation which has already made considerable progress in civilized arts into a race of beggars, vagabonds, and robbers. What consideration such views should have on the settlement of our difficulties with the – difficulties based upon exaggerated demands – which every animal in the Navajo country would scarcely be sufficient to satisfy, is not for one to suggest, but before severe measures are resolved on and a course of policy initiated that would entail poverty and wretchedness upon the entire tribe, it may be some little forbearance might be the part of true wisdom.<sup>73</sup>

About a month after the completion of Walker’s reconnaissance expedition, Major Simonson authorized Walker to conduct another exploration. On September 1, 1859, Orders No. 14 directed Walker to take the same troops from his previous

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 50-53.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

expedition and march to the Mesa de la Vaca, Mesa Calabaza, and on to a mountain beyond, believed to have canyons that were the home of Navajos and their flocks. The orders instructed Walker to examine these canyons, visiting all Navajos encountered along the route, and taking note of their numbers, locations, herds and flocks, and grazing areas, while respecting their property and land.<sup>74</sup>

Walker's column set out over the Moqui road on September 5, traveling over thirty miles in the first two days. The column passed the Rio Pueblitas, changed course northwest, and marched across a plain between the hills of the Pueblitas and the east and a range of hills known as Mesa de la Vaca on the west. Walker camped his troops after accomplishing seventeen miles. On September 8 Walker marched northwest to the foot of Mesa de la Vaca, believed to be about twelve miles from Canon de Chelly. The column entered a valley of broken hills and marched ten miles before halting to camp at a rock called Piedra Santana. Walker continued northwest the next day over the broken mesa and descended into an uncultivated valley. Walker had only seen one crop of corn since entering Mesa de la Vaca. The column moved eight miles up the valley and camped.<sup>75</sup>

Walker's command spent the next couple of days marching in and out of several valleys, passing bituminous coal that cropped out at several places in the arroyos. On September 12, Walker saw smoke rising in the air some miles off that was at first thought to be from Navajo camps. Instead the smoke came from a burning bed of bituminous

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<sup>74</sup> From Orders No. 14, Headquarters, Navajo Command, Fort Defiance, NM, September 1, 1859, *The Navajo Reconnaissance*, 69-71.

<sup>75</sup> Report of Capt. John G. Walker, September 20, 1859, *The Navajo Reconnaissance*, 79-81.

coal, pouring out of two crevices on a hill, some forty to fifty feet above the valley. Walker's guide informed him that he had seen such fires in many places as the country had a large quantity of such coal. The column proceeded northwest to the summit of Mesa de la Vaca then descended into the west side of the valley until it came to a ruin much like the ancient building found in Canon de Chelly. Here Walker camped the men for the night. The next day, Walker marched east down the valley to a canyon called la Puerta Limita that was the home of a band of Pah-Utah Indians. The column descended into the valley and came to a permanent laguna of water then headed northeast into a valley containing a dark rock called Sana Negra, that Walker said resembled a "vast gothic cathedral." The column continued northeast and camped at water near some red hills.<sup>76</sup>

Walker moved along the base of the Mesa de la Vaca over the next two days and arrived at the Arroyo de Chelly on September 16. The next day the column marched up the Arroyo de Chelly, passing several corn fields and Navajo huts with a large number of occupants. The Navajo had corn, sheep, and a quantity of horses. Walker stated that the people expressed good will towards the troops. The column continued several miles to the mouth of the canyon and camped. On September 18 Walker and his command traveled east along the southern brink of Canon de Chelly for several miles before turning on to a principle Navajo road that went from the head to the mouth of the canon de Chelly. After traveling about sixteen miles, Walker came to a vast pine forest that was about twenty-five miles in width from east to west and some eighty miles from north to

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 81-85.

south. The command came to a hill east of the head of an unknown canyon that interested with Canon de Chelly. From this vantage Walker could see how the terrain could be used by the Indians. He stated, “The nooks and angles between the Canon de Chelly and the two side canons mentioned are doubtless numberless, and being thoroughly known to the Indians and not at all to us, we could have but little chance to ferret them out in time of war.”<sup>77</sup>

On September 19, Walker marched southeast ten miles to Ewell’s Hat Camp and then nine miles back to Fort Defiance. Walker found no Mesa de Calabaza nor any mountain beyond where Navajo were supposed to inhabit. Walker did learn much about the terrain of this region, its fertility, water sources, and where the inhabitants lived. More importantly, Walker’s expedition discovered the coal fields that seemed to abound throughout the region. Major Simonson expressed his elation, stating in a letter, “The immense coal beds discovered are of great importance, in view of future railroad construction, being nearly intermediate between the Mississippi and Pacific termini.”<sup>78</sup>

Walker also learned of the difficulty of the geography in the mountains and valleys of the area and how efficiently the Indians could use them to hide in the event of war. He stated, “Discovering their hiding places would be as difficult as it was to discover Seminoles in the hummocks of Florida.” Walker learned during his second exploration that war could be a serious threat. As his command camped near the Colorado Chiquito and San Juan Rivers, eighty miles west of Canon de Chelly, Walker

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 86-88.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 88-90; Letter of Major John S. Simonson, September 23, 1859, *The Navajo Reconnaissance*, 73.

encountered a party of Pah-Utahs who gave him startling information. The Indians told Walker that Mormons had conversed with them and many others en route to Canon de Chelly to make peace with the Navajos. The Mormons expressed desire to see peace among all the Indians so they could untie in their resistance to U.S. government led white encroachment on Indian lands. The Mormons wished to hold a meeting at Sierra Panoche with the Indian tribes and form an alliance against the government in which the Mormons promised to give arms and ammunition to those tribes that would consent to the alliance.<sup>79</sup>

In his report, Walker stated his belief in the rumors. The Pah-Utahs confirmed their story by showing him various presents from the Mormons that included new shirts, beads, and powder. Walker felt his opinion further confirmed by seeing a Pah-Utah that had in his possession a letter from a Mormon bishop, stating that the bearer was a baptized member of the Church of Latter Day Saints. Walker summed up his suspicion in the report:

From this there seems little doubt that these fanatics are endeavoring to combine all the wild tribes of this region against the people and government of the United States, and it is to be found that their intrigues will cause much trouble, unless the government takes prompt and effective measure to counteract them. It has already been ordered that the Navajos since the Mormon emissaries came among them are growing discontented and sullen, and should a war break out between our troops and the tribes I believe it will have been brought about in no inconsiderable degree by Mormon influence and intrigue.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Report of Capt. John G. Walker, September 20, 1859, *The Navajo Reconnaissance*, 91-93.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

Major Simonson felt that the majority of Navajos wanted peace after Walker's explorations and two other expeditions by Captain O.L. Shepherd. Simonson felt that the animals observed during the exploration were sufficient for the Navajos to pay the reparations to settlers as negotiated in the treaty the previous December. The Indians only grudgingly gave over animals to Fort Defiance. By the end of the indemnification period on October 25, 1859, the Indians had only turned over nineteen horses and one hundred thirty sheep, amounting to about one-tenth of the \$14,000 claim.<sup>81</sup>

Early in November an Indian agent named Kendrick and an escort took the livestock turned over by the Indians to Albuquerque to be sold or delivered to those who had lost property at the hands of the Indians. During the trip, Navajos stampeded most of the horses. An Indian sent by Kendrick to inform Shepherd about the incident was then flogged. The flogging only further hurt relations with the Indians as the man belonged to a tribe friendly with the whites. In January, 1860 Shepherd received word that Navajos planned to attack a military herd. Shepherd sent reinforcements that arrived in time to beat off an attack from several hundred Navajos on January 17. On the same day smaller detachments of U.S. soldiers faced attacks and the Navajos harassed the quartermaster train sent out of Albuquerque. Shepherd ended any remaining goodwill among the Navajo three days later when he refused to allow a Navajo headman to enter Fort Defiance to consult with the Indian agent. As the Indian left, Shepherd ordered him fired

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<sup>81</sup> L.R. Bailey's foreword, *The Navajo Reconnaissance*, 16-17.

upon. Raids continued near the fort throughout the spring ending in a Navajo attack on Fort Defiance on April 30, 1860.<sup>82</sup>

Walker and the Mounted Rifles would spend the rest of the year conducting patrols and raids against the Indians just as they had done in Texas. Their attention focused back east, however, as the country became gripped with the secession crisis. After Abraham Lincoln's election as president, South Carolina seceded from the Union in December, 1860, soon to be followed by six other deep South states. On April 12, 1861 Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. In response, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the rebellion. This act prompted four upper south states to leave the Union.

Walker, a native of Missouri, shared southern sympathies as did many of the men serving with him. Dabney Maury, an officer in the Mounted Rifles, future Confederate general, and friend of Walker, reflected upon his difficult, but heartfelt decision to follow his beloved home state:

The great war which was to bring to us and to our people ruin and desolation was upon us, and we must go and meet it. It was in no light or unappreciative mood that we sat looking at each other in the silence which followed the reading of the telegrams; for we realized the greatness of the sacrifice expected of us, and it was with sad hearts that we turned our backs upon the friends and associations of a happy past, and faced the issues of a future which had little to offer us save the consciousness of duty loyally performed.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 17-25.

<sup>83</sup> Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian*, 129.

Walker too made the difficult decision to leave the army that had been his livelihood for the previous fifteen years. From his appointment in 1846, he had been with the Mounted Rifles through the trials and tribulations of army life. In the bloody battles for Mexico City, the arduous two thousand mile journey across the Oregon Trail, and the rugged campaigns against hostile Indians on the frontier, Walker had learned the tools of his trade as a soldier, both as an officer and a leader. He would now put them to able use in defense of the southern cause. He resigned from the army on July 31, 1861.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: The Lives of the Confederate Commanders*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 319-320; Compiled Military Service Records, General and Staff Officers. John G. Walker. Microcopy M331, Roll 257. Record Group 109. U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER III  
THE CIVIL WAR IN THE EAST, 1861-1862

Upon his resignation from the United States Army in July, 1861, Walker returned east and offered his military services to the newly formed Confederate government. Like many men with prior military training, the infant Confederate army quickly recognized Walker as a valuable addition. On September 13, 1861, Walker received appointment to the rank of colonel and was sent to serve in the Department of North Carolina under the command of Major General Theophilus H. Holmes. Holmes assigned Walker to command a small brigade of three infantry regiments as he desired the services of ‘an experienced and competent officer.’ Walker’s brigade consisted of the 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas, 2<sup>nd</sup> Tennessee, and 12<sup>th</sup> North Carolina regiments and was posted near the town of Evansport in the Aquia District of Virginia, located between the James and Cape Fear Rivers. On December 21, 1861, Walker also received nomination as a major of cavalry in the regular Confederate army to rank from March, 1861. On January 9, 1862 Walker received promotion to brigadier general and command of the 4<sup>th</sup> brigade in Holmes district. His new brigade consisted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas, 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia, 27<sup>th</sup> North Carolina, and 46<sup>th</sup> North Carolina regiments, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Georgia Battalion.<sup>85</sup>

In the meantime, union General George B. McClellan had been planning his spring offensive to defeat the rebel army and capture the Confederate capital of

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<sup>85</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 128 vols., (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), LI, pt. 2, 357-358; Norman D. Brown, “John George Walker,” in *The Confederate General*, ed., William C. Davis, (National Historical Society, 1991), 88-89.

Richmond, Virginia. McClellan decided to bypass the Confederate army under General Joseph E. Johnston positioned near Manassas and Centreville, Virginia by taking his army by ship and landing it on the peninsula between the York and James Rivers. McClellan hoped this strategy would place his army away from the Confederate defenses in northern Virginia, give it a direct route to Richmond, and draw the rebels away from Washington. The Union army embarked for the peninsula on March 17, 1862. Johnston, however, had already moved the Confederate forces from Manassas to an area south of Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock River on March 8 and 9. Johnston therefore denied McClellan the flanking opportunity the peninsula landing was to give the Federals.<sup>86</sup>

The Union army started up the peninsula in early April headed west towards Yorktown and the Confederate defenses posted along the Warwick River. The ever cautious McClellan felt himself outnumbered by the rebels opposing him and settle down for a month long siege. Johnston favored pulling the Confederate forces back closer to Richmond, but Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his military advisor General Robert E. Lee refused. Johnston believed his army could not stand up to a siege and ultimately evacuated his line at Yorktown on May 3 and 4, leaving a small force to act as a rear guard at Williamsburg. After a small engagement at Williamsburg, the rest of Johnston's army moved west. By May 17, most of the Confederate army assumed a position just west of the Chickahominy River, only seven miles from Richmond.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Clifford Dowdey, *The Seven Days: The Emergence of Robert E. Lee*, (New York: The Fairfax Press, 1978), 30-31, 37-38.

<sup>87</sup> Brian K. Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances: The Seven Days Battles*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 6-7.

General Lee brought Walker's brigade and Brigadier general Robert Ransom's North Carolina brigade to Richmond and soon after assigned them to Petersburg and Drewry's Bluff south of Richmond along the James River. Walker's brigade spent its time at Drewry's Bluff providing support for the artillery batteries positioned there, as well as drilling and building breastworks. To the north Johnston learned that the Federals were vulnerable to attack near the Chickahominy. He attacked with his army at Seven Pines on May 31. The battle accomplished little except for casualties with Johnston himself becoming the most important casualty. On June 1, 1862 Jefferson Davis assigned his advisor Robert E. Lee to command the Confederate army. When Lee took command he moved Ransom's brigade to Major General Benjamin Huger's division to replace the brigade of Brigadier General Henry Wise, which was detached south of the James River. Walker's command and Wise's men joined another North Carolina brigade under Brigadier General Junius Daniel to form a division under Theophilus Holmes.<sup>88</sup>

As McClellan trudged slowly through the rainy weather, Lee devised a plan to avoid a possible siege of Richmond and draw the Union army away from the southern capital while obtaining maneuverability for his own army. General Jeb Stuart's ride around the Federal army informed Lee that McClellan's right flank and rear were exposed to attack. Lee hoped to hit the Union flank and roll it back, threatening McClellan's line of communications and supply base at White House Landing, and forcing him to move away from the capital. The Union army had only one corps and a division north of the

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<sup>88</sup> Dowdey, *The Seven Days*, 125; James A. Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," in *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-1865*, Vol. 2, ed., Walter Clark, (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brother Book and Job Printers, 1901), 428.

Chickahominy River. Lee decided to leave only the four divisions under Huger and Magruder to face four Federal infantry corps south of the Chickahominy while he marched the remaining six divisions of the army to the north bank of the river. Troops under Generals James Longstreet, A.P. Hill, and D.H. Hill would attack the Federals on the north bank while Stonewall Jackson's command turned the enemy flank and rear.<sup>89</sup>

The first combat in what would be remembered as the Seven Days battles occurred on June 25, 1862 when troops from the Union Third Corps advanced against Huger's division south of the Chickahominy in an attempt to shorten communications with FitzJohn Porter's Fifth Corps and force the Confederates back into their defensive lines around Richmond. This battle, called Oak Grove, achieved nothing but casualties for both sides. The confrontation only increased McClellan's fears about the size of the rebel army. Perhaps an even greater threat to the Union commander became the rumors about Stonewall Jackson. Jackson's whereabouts remained unknown to McClellan, who correctly believed Jackson was bearing down on his flank and rear. McClellan decided to place his troops north of the Chickahominy into a defensive line behind Beaver Dam Creek to face the expected threat.<sup>90</sup>

On June 26, A.P. Hill's rebel division attacked porter's corps at Mechanicsville. When the Confederates were repulsed, McClellan learned of Jackson's presence and his threat to the Union supply line. The Union commander moved some troops north of the river back south and placed them in the Boatswain Swamp line to protect a crossing of

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<sup>89</sup> Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances*, 10-30.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-57.

the Chickahominy. McClellan also decided to move his supply base farther south. On the opposite bank Lee instructed Huger to hold his line and request reinforcements from Holmes' command at Drewry's Bluff if needed. In response, Holmes ordered Walker's brigade north from the bluff to support Huger's line in front of the capital.<sup>91</sup>

After Mechanicsville, the Confederates followed the Federals through the night as they retreated south towards the river. On June 27 the Confederates attacked Porter once more at Gaines' Mill. The rebels charged against the prepared defenses of the Union troops only to be thrown back. Finally determined attacks shortly before dark pierced the Federal line. Only darkness and the arrival of Union troops from across the river allowed the Federals to stabilize their line. McClellan feared this portion of his army could be destroyed and pulled them across to the southern side of the Chickahominy during the night. With his army united, McClellan would move south to establish a new supply base near the James River. The next morning Walker's brigade arrived from Drewry's bluff and was sent over to the north bank of the Chickahominy so Lee could have fresh troops on hand. Walker had missed the action of the previous day, however, and no contact with the enemy seemed probable as the Confederate army rested and the Union army retreated.<sup>92</sup>

As the Federal force moved south, Lee devised his next plan of action. The southern commander determined he had two objectives. He intended to slow down the Union army as it moved south and get a substantial portion of his army to the vital road

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-82; *O.R.*, XI, pt. 2, 915.

<sup>92</sup> *O.R.*, XI, pt. 2, 915; Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances*, 92-137, 149, 174.

intersection near the town of Glendale and Malvern Hill farther south. If Lee could occupy the area he would have the Federals caught between two large forces and cause McClellan to have to fight his way in any direction he moved. Lee ordered Huger and Magruder to harass the Federals and try to slow their southward movement by holding the enemy rear guard in place. Simultaneously, Longstreet and A.P. Hill would take their troops and march for the Glendale area. Magruder hit the Federals on June 29 in an artillery skirmish at Allen's Farm and later in the day in a bloody encounter at Savage's Station. Both fights resulted in a draw and the Union troops continued to move south.<sup>93</sup> Lee next decided to send three columns down different roads to converge on the Glendale intersection. Huger's command would advance in one column, Longstreet, A.P. Hill, and Magruder in another, and the third would be Jackson's men. Lee hoped Huger and Jackson could put pressure on the enemy and prevent the Federals from sending reinforcements south while Longstreet and A.P. Hill would attack and break through the enemy at Glendale. On the night of June 29 Walker and his brigade returned from the north bank of the Chickahominy and rejoined Holmes' division. Holmes had moved his division from Drewry's Bluff on the James River to Petersburg on June 28, then crossed Junius Daniel's brigade, two artillery batteries, and three cavalry companies over the James on June 29. After joining Holmes, Walker's and Daniel's troops marched from Cornelius' Creek to the New Market Road on the morning of June 30. The command advanced down the road to its junction with the Long Bridge Road, arriving at about 10:00 a.m. At this place Henry Wise joined Holmes with two Virginia regiments and two

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<sup>93</sup> Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances*, 180-190, 216-221.

artillery batteries, giving Holmes about 6,000 infantry, 130 cavalry, and six batteries.

Holmes ordered the troops into a defensive position at the junction of the River and Long Bridge roads.<sup>94</sup>

McClellan posted his rear guard in the area between White Oak Swamp and the Willis Church, covering all the key routes of the Confederate advance towards Glendale. More importantly, the Federals occupied Malvern Hill, the most superb defensive position in the region. By June 30 Lee realized he could not stop McClellan from reaching the James River and that the Federals controlled Malvern hill, but he still hope to destroy the enemy rear guard at Glendale. The brigades of Longstreet and A.P. Hill attacked the Federals at Glendale on June 30 in a bloody, seesaw fight characterized by hand to hand combat and volleys fired at brutally close ranges. The Confederates broke through the Union line in three separate places but could not exploit any breakthrough. Like many engagements, only darkness ended the struggle. Union artillery at White Oak Swamp kept Jackson from the fight. Lee had failed to reach the Willis Church Road south and cut off the Federal line of retreat.<sup>95</sup>

As the fight at Glendale raged, lee decided to use Holmes' command to harass the Federal wagon train headed south near Malvern Hill. Holmes sent forward the rifled guns of Captain James R. Branch's Virginia battery, Captain Thomas B. French's Virginia battery, and Captain T.H. Brem's North Carolina battery, all under the command of Holmes' artillery chief Colonel James Deshler. The 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia of Walker's brigade

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<sup>94</sup> *O.R.*, XI, pt. 2, 906-907, 915; Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances*, 231-234.

<sup>95</sup> Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances*, 251-257, 275-299.

advanced in support of the guns. From atop Malvern Hill, twenty-five or Thirty Federal artillery pieces opened fire upon the rebel guns. Two Union gunboats, *Aroostook* and *Galena*, on the James River joined the action and hurled shells at the Confederates. In response, Holmes ordered forward the 45<sup>th</sup> North Carolina from Daniel's brigade. Heavy fire from the enemy artillery quickly dispersed the North Carolinians. Deshler kept up fire until too many gunners and horses fell as casualties.<sup>96</sup>

Holmes lost fifteen gunners wounded. Daniel's brigade lost two killed and twenty-two wounded and Walker suffered twelve wounded of which one man later died. The Federals on Malvern hill and the gunboats on the James River had Holmes seriously outgunned. At 9:00 p.m. Holmes decided against any further moves in the face of the enemy and withdrew his command a few miles back up the road near his previous position at the Long Bridge River road junction for the night.<sup>97</sup>

July 1 saw the Union army consolidated atop and in the vicinity of Malvern Hill. Fifty-three thousand Union troops and nearly 170 cannon awaited the movements of Lee's army. Longstreet devised a plan to bring a large number of Confederate guns to bear upon the Federal artillery opposite Jackson's position on the left of the Confederate line. As these guns were under fire, Jackson could storm the hill. The Confederates could not bring enough guns to bear, however, as many remained behind the army on clogged roads. Those pieces that made it up to the front were quickly driven off the field by superior fire power from Federal guns. Lee still felt optimistic about the situation.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 268-271; *O.R.*, XI, pt. 2, 907-908, 910-911, 915; Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," 428.

<sup>97</sup> *O.R.*, XI, pt. 2, 908.

His hopes increased as he received a report about an apparent rebel success against the Union line on the Confederate right. The brigade of Confederate Brigadier General Lewis Armistead had advanced and driven a Federal picket line back to the hill. Lee also mistook McClellan's shifting of batteries along his line as a sign of withdrawal. The southern commander felt that additional pressure just might route McClellan off of Malvern Hill.<sup>98</sup>

Confederate troops from Magruder's command, D.H. Hill's division, and Jackson's force advanced against Malvern hill in a series of uncoordinated assaults that were ripped apart by the Union artillery. The attacks halted lasted until dark, but the Federals could not be budged from their strong position. Late in the afternoon, Holmes brought his division back down the River Road to the area it occupied the day before, but advanced no further. That same day the 48<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Infantry from Ransom's brigade received assignment to Walker's brigade after some "unpleasantness" between Ransom and Colonel Hill of the 48<sup>th</sup>. With the additional regiment, Walker's men moved into a position in a skirt of woods on Warren's Hill at the edge of the battlefield where they remained until the battle ended. An officer of the 27<sup>th</sup> North Carolina of Walker's brigade later wrote, "Though not actively engaged, we were in a position equally trying, as we got the benefit of the shells of the enemy which passed over the heads of the troops engaged, and burst among the trees under which we were lying and we were expecting every minute to be ordered forward to take part in the dreadful carnage."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances*, 306-309, 314-319, 330.

During the night of July 1 McClellan moved the Union army south to his new supply base at Harrison's Landing on the James River. The next day Confederates under Longstreet began a feeble pursuit of McClellan through the rain and mud, but ended the chase after advancing only two miles. Lee realized the fighting was over and ordered his army to withdraw north towards Richmond on July 8. Throughout the month Lee placed the army in camps between Berkeley and Richmond and began reorganizing his forces. On July 7, he sent Ransom's brigade back to join Walker and the rest of Holmes' command. Soon thereafter the Federal army crossed to the other side of the James River which led to orders sending Holmes' division back to Drewry's Bluff. The division then moved to Petersburg and on to Fort Powhatan on the James River below City Point to guard the river.<sup>100</sup>

Walker's brigade and the troops of Holmes' division spent the rest of the summer picketing up and down the James River. To the north Union General John Pope and his Federal Army of Virginia threatened to advance against Richmond. Lee faced a problem as McClellan's force still sat on the peninsula as a possible danger to the southern capital. At the same time, Lee could not sit idly by as Pope menaced northern Virginia. Lee decided to leave four divisions of the Confederate army to watch McClellan at Harrison's Landing while he moved with the larger portion of the army to face Pope. Holmes' division and Walker's brigade remained on the James River. Holmes received a transfer

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<sup>99</sup> *O.R.*, XI, pt. 2, 915; Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances*, 332-348, 357; Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," 429; W.H.H Lawhon, "Forty-eighth regiment," in *Histories of the Several Battalions and Regiments from North Carolina*, 116.

<sup>100</sup> *O.R.*, XI, pt. 2, 908, 915; Burton, *Extraordinary Circumstances*, 366-385; Dowdey, *The Seven Days*, 348, 352; Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," 429-431.

to the Trans-Mississippi Department, however, to take command of that theater of operations. Walker gained promotion to command of the division consisting of his own brigade, and those of Ransom and Junius Daniel.<sup>101</sup>

On August 3, Union Army Commander in Chief General Henry Halleck ordered McClellan to move his army away from the peninsula to Aquia Creek where the army would be transferred back to Washington. As Lee moved towards Pope, Walker ordered his infantry to form as support for artillery moving up to the James River across from McClellan's camp at Harrison's Landing. Walker's men remained about a mile behind the artillery as it opened up on the Federals on the night of August 15. Walker's infantry marched back to Petersburg at daylight the next morning. Lee continued to move towards Pope and caught up to his force on the old Manassas battlefield from the previous year. In a two day fight on August 29 and 30, 1862, Lee soundly defeated Pope and sent his demoralized army retreating towards the safety of the Washington defenses.<sup>102</sup>

After all Union forces were removed from Virginia, Lee remained in the northern portion of the state. He camped his force in Fairfax County. Lee realized that he could not keep his army in Fairfax County as it had been ravaged by the occupying Federal troops and lacked sufficient subsistence and forage for his army. Lee also did not desire to move his army south or west as such a move would surrender ground previously won from the enemy. With the fragments of two Union armies presently demoralized and

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<sup>101</sup> Dowdey, *The Seven Days*, 352-353; Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," 429-431; Brown, "John George Walker," 88-89.

<sup>102</sup> Dowdey, *The Seven Days*, 354; Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," 431.

disorganized within the defenses of Washington, Lee did not want to give the Federals time to rest. He desired to keep the enemy on their heels and press forward with his army's high morale and new momentum. Lee sought to destroy the northern will to continue the war. To do this he decided to cross the Potomac River and invade Maryland. Lee would threaten Washington and Baltimore to draw out the Federal army from its defenses. After that Lee would move into western Maryland and threaten Pennsylvania, forcing the Union army to extend its supply lines while making itself open to a campaign of maneuver.<sup>103</sup>

Lee ordered all divisions of the Confederate army to converge on Leesburg, Virginia. On August 25 the Confederate War Department had ordered the reserve or reinforcement wing of the army to move from the area around Richmond and reinforce Lee. Walker's division moved forward as part of this reinforcement effort. Walker under orders left Junius Daniel's brigade on the James and proceeded to join Lee with his two remaining brigades. One of Walker's brigades led by Brigadier general Robert Ransom, Jr. included the 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup>, and 49<sup>th</sup> North Carolina regiments as well as Branch's field artillery battery. Colonel Van H. Manning led the other brigade which was Walker's former command. The brigade contained the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas, 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia, and the 27<sup>th</sup>, 46<sup>th</sup>, and 48<sup>th</sup> North Carolina regiments with French's battery as artillery support. Walker's men boarded trains in Richmond on August 26 and arrived at Rapidan Station,

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<sup>103</sup> Joseph L. Harsh, *Taken at the Flood: Robert E. Lee and Confederate Strategy in the Maryland Campaign of 1862*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999), 19-25, 84.

Virginia the next day. Here Walker waited four days for his wagons to catch up. On September 1 Walker commenced marching for Leesburg.<sup>104</sup>

The Army of Northern Virginia began crossing the Potomac River into Maryland on September 4, 1862. Jackson's command crossed at White's Ford and proceeded to Frederick, Maryland. Longstreet crossed the next day with the divisions of Lafayette McLaws and Richard H. Anderson. By September 6, Lee had ninety percent of his army across the Potomac. At the same time Walker's division marched from Rapidan Station toward Culpepper, Virginia, where it camped on the battlefield of Cedar Run. The division then marched to Warrenton, Virginia and passed over the battlefield of Second Manassas, where hundreds of dead still lay from the battle just a week before. Walker moved on to Leesburg, Virginia on September 6 and crossed the Potomac at Cheek's Ford, across from the mouth of the Monocacy River on the morning of September 7. Walker then camped his troops at Buckeystown, Maryland.<sup>105</sup>

The Union army in the Washington vicinity became aware of the Confederate invasion, but confused and conflicting reports forbade the commanders from knowing the rebel army's location or objectives. McClellan, once again in charge of the Army of the Potomac, placed his forces in a ten mile arc north and west of Washington. By September 8 the Union army began advancing along a sixteen mile wide line that extended from the Potomac River on the south to almost the Maryland-Pennsylvania

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 37; John G. Walker, "Jackson's Capture of Harper's Ferry," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* Vol. II, eds., Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1956), 604.

<sup>105</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 85-86, 108; Waddill, "Forty-sixth regiment," 66-67; Walker, "Jackson's Capture of Harper's Ferry," 604.

border to the north and already twelve miles outside Washington. McClellan advanced on this broad front to protect major cities and communications from the unknown presence of the enemy. Lee likewise remained unsure of the Federal positions. Due to faulty intelligence and maps, Lee was not aware of the rapid Federal march west towards his army at Frederick.<sup>106</sup>

While the Confederate army camped around Frederick, Lee determined that the area did not provide adequate supplies for his army. He decided that the army could not remain east of the mountains and that a westward movement would require a new line of communications to Virginia. Lee hoped to move his new line of communications through the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, by way of Staunton, Harrisburg, and Winchester, and crossing the Potomac at Shepherdstown. Lee however had a major obstacle to overcome. The Union garrisons at Harper's Ferry, Virginia and Martinsburg, Virginia had not responded to the Confederate invasion as Lee had hoped. Rather than withdraw toward Washington, the garrisons held firm. These Federal troops would pose a threat to Lee's new line of communications and the southern commander realized he would have to move directly against the garrisons.<sup>107</sup>

Lee met with his senior commanders Stonewall Jackson and James Longstreet on the afternoon of September 9 and discussed the situation. After conferring with his generals, Lee devised Special Orders No. 191. Jackson's two divisions, McLaws' division with R.H. Anderson's division, and Walker's division would all advance toward Harper's

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<sup>106</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 108-109, 119-121, 129-131.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 133-134, 145-147; Paul R. Teetor, *A Matter of Hours: Treason at Harper's Ferry*, (Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Press, Inc., 1982), 90-91.

Ferry and capture the garrison. Longstreet's divisions and D.H. Hill's division would march over South Mountain and take up positions at Boonsboro, Maryland. Jeb Stuart and his cavalry would remain east of the mountains to observe and possibly hinder the Union advance. By September 9 the Union army had moved seventeen miles from Washington. By the next day Union Major General William B. Franklin and his Sixth Corps arrived twelve miles southeast of Frederick while Major General Edwin V. Sumner's Second Corps sat only fourteen miles away.<sup>108</sup>

On the morning of September 9 Lee had instructed Walker to take his division and march to Monocacy Junction and on to the mouth of the Monocacy River. Here Walker was to destroy the aqueduct of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Walker arrived and found the aqueduct occupied by enemy pickets. His troops easily chased off the Federals and began their attempt to demolish the aqueduct. Walker wrote in his report: "Working parties were at once detailed, and sent to work to drill holes for blowing up the arches, but, after several hours of labor, it was apparent that, owing to the insufficiency of our tools and the extraordinary solidarity and massiveness of the masonry, the work we had undertaken was one of days instead of hours." Walker abandoned the task of destroying the aqueduct and rested his men. Later in the day, he received a copy of Special Orders 191 which instructed him to cross the Potomac at Cheek's Ford and march to Harper's Ferry where he was to seize Loudoun Heights and cooperate with Jackson and McLaws in the capture of the Federal garrison posted there. Walker later commented upon the magnitude of such an order and to its importance in secrecy. He wrote, "On

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<sup>108</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 149-151, 166-167, 181.

receiving my copy of the order I was so impressed with the disastrous consequence which might result from its loss that I pinned it securely in an inside pocket. In speaking with General Longstreet on this subject afterward, Longstreet remarked that the same thought had occurred to him, and that as an absolutely sure precaution, he memorized the order and then “chewed it up.”<sup>109</sup>

On the morning of September 10 Walker observed a substantial enemy force with artillery commanding the aqueduct over the river and Cheek’s Ford where he was to cross the Potomac. Walker decided it would be safer to cross the Potomac at Point of Rocks and moved back towards Buckeystown. The division crossed the Potomac at Point of Rocks on the night of September 10 and on the morning of September 11. The crossing proved difficult as the bridge over the canal had been destroyed and the banks of the Potomac were steep. Walker bivouacked his men on the 11<sup>th</sup> as they had marched two days and nights without sleep or rest. The next day Walker marched seven miles to Lovettsville. A bad road caused him to go down the Berlin Turnpike south, but allowed his division to approach Loudoun Heights from the opposite direction. He advanced toward Key’s Ford on the Shenandoah, which gave the division a better chance to block the enemy escape routes from Harper’s Ferry. Walker camped his troops at Hillsboro on September 12, eight miles from Loudoun Heights.<sup>110</sup>

On September 13 Walker moved south through Hillsboro and then west on the road from Leesburg. Because Walker was unaware of the situation he might encounter as

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<sup>109</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 912-913; Walker, “Jackson’s Capture of Harper’s Ferry,” 607.

<sup>110</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 913; Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 204-205.

he advanced his column to Harper's Ferry, he decided to mask his approach from the enemy. He stopped short of Vestal Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains and headed north on the road running between the Blue Ridge and the Short Hills. The column passed through Neersville and reached the eastern foot of Loudoun Heights at around ten o'clock. Walker placed six of his regiments in camp at the base of the heights while the 48<sup>th</sup> North Carolina was sent to guard the road between the mountain and the Shenandoah River. Walker ordered Colonel John R. Cooke with his 27<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and the 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia of Manning's brigade to secure the crest of Loudoun Heights. The terrain of the mountain proved difficult as attested by a member of the 27<sup>th</sup> North Carolina: "Tired as we were this ascent was very difficult, as we had several times to leave the road to avoid being seen by the Federal troops in and around Harper's Ferry, and make our way through the thick mountain undergrowth, oftentimes having to clear a way with hatchets or knives."<sup>111</sup>

As described in Special Orders 191 Jackson would march the three divisions under his command across the Potomac at a ford near Sharpsburg, Maryland on September 12, take possession of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, capture the Federal garrison at Martinsburg, Virginia, and occupy Bolivar Heights to the south of Harper's Ferry. McLaws, with his own and R.H. Anderson's division, would depart from the army near Frederick, march by way of Middletown, Maryland, and occupy Maryland Heights on the north side of Harper's Ferry across the Potomac River. Jackson left Frederick on

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<sup>111</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 913; Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 226; Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," 432-433.

September 10, passed through Boonsboro, and crossed the Potomac near Williamsport the next day. He reached Martinsburg only to learn the garrison had abandoned the town and retreated to Harper's Ferry. On September 10 McLaws turned off the national Road at Middletown and marched to Burkittsville on the east side of South Mountain. The next day his command marched through the Brownsville Gap into Pleasant Valley and then southward along the spine of Elk Ridge, driving Federal pickets back as they advanced. By September 12 McLaws reached the base of Maryland Heights.<sup>112</sup>

About 12,000 Union troops, largely untested in combat, defended Harper's Ferry. The Union commander of Harper's Ferry, Colonel Dixon S. Miles, organized his troops into four brigades and positioned them on the strategic points of Bolivar Heights, Maryland Heights, and Camp Hill. Bolivar heights, located two miles west of Harper's Ferry, ran north and south between the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. Atop Bolivar Heights, Miles posted two brigades, but left their right flank weak and their left flank completely exposed. He posted his weakest brigade on top of Maryland Heights to the north, the most important geographical feature to the Ferry's defense. Miles also posted no artillery on Maryland Heights. He held his fourth brigade in reserve behind Bolivar Heights on Camp Hill. Miles assumed that that Loudoun Heights, 1,200 feet above Harper's Ferry across the Shenandoah River, was too difficult for the placement of artillery or fortifications and left the rise undefended. As Walker would learn, however, any cannon on top of Loudoun could look down on the rear of Camp Hill.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Teetor, *A Matter of Hours*, 99-100, 114; Chester G. Hearn, *Six Years of Hell: Harper's Ferry During the Civil War*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 140-154.

<sup>113</sup> Teetor, *A Matter of Hours*, 58, 65; Hearn, *Six Years of Hell*, 129-138.

Having pushed back Federal skirmishers to Maryland Heights, McLaws ordered two of his brigades up the slope of the mountain on the morning of September 13. The South Carolina brigade of Brigadier General Joseph Kershaw pushed the Federals back from an abatis defensive work and into a breastwork. The Mississippians of Brigadier General William Barksdale's brigade maneuvered their way to the flank of the Federals and fired a volley that sent the green 126<sup>th</sup> New York scurrying down the back slope of the mountain. One by one the Union regiments retreated off Maryland Heights. McLaws now controlled his objective as prescribed by S.O. 191. By dusk on September 13, Jackson camped just three miles from Bolivar Heights. The envelopment of Harper's Ferry was complete.<sup>114</sup>

As Walker, Jackson, and McLaws converged on Harper's Ferry, the Union army advanced ever closer to the small column left under Lee's immediate command. On September 12 Union Major General Ambrose Burnside's Ninth Corps occupied Frederick and chased Jeb Stuart's cavalry from the town. The Union First, Second, Sixth, and Twelfth Corps all closed in on the immediate area. The Union Fifth Corps also marched from Washington to bolster the Federal army. By the next day the Federals reached the foot of South Mountain. At Frederick on September 13 the Federals found a copy of Lee's S.O. 191 and gave it to McClellan. McClellan learned that the Confederate army was split into two parts. McClellan worried about being caught between two parts of Lee's army and moved with more speed. He decided to avoid the rebel pincers by

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<sup>114</sup> Hearn, *Six Years of Hell*, 157-159, 167.

attacking at South Mountain to threaten Lee's portion of the army and also the rear of McLaws on Maryland Heights, hoping to possibly lift the siege on Harper's Ferry.<sup>115</sup>

At daylight on September 14 Walker sent Captain French with three Parrot guns and two rifled guns of Branch's battery under Lieutenant M.A. Martin up Loudoun Heights and informed Jackson of his readiness to open fire. Jackson relayed a message to Walker and McLaws instructing them to wait to fire until all batteries were ready on both sides of the river, except if they should find it necessary to open fire. The judgment would be left up to them. By this time, the Federals could be seen advancing towards the passes that led into Pleasant Valley and McLaws rear. Walker later wrote that he was concerned about the sounds of firing in McLaws rear and intentionally advanced two of his regiments to draw fire from the Union guns in Harper's Ferry. Whether Walker advanced in defiance of Jackson's order not to fire is uncertain. What is certain is that Walker's men did attract the attention of the Union gunners and an artillery barrage began at about one o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>116</sup>

Walker's guns opened fire on the Federal batteries and troops on Bolivar Heights and Camp Hill. Walker remarked about the bombardment: "Our guns were served admirably and with great rapidity, and in two hours we had silenced an eight gun battery near the Barbour House, except one gun, which was so close under the mountain that we could not see it. What other effect our fire had we could not tell, but it evidently produced great consternation and commotion among the enemy's troops, especially the

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<sup>115</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 210, 240-241.

<sup>116</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 913, 958; Walker, "Jackson's Capture of Harper's Ferry," 609.

cavalry.” Jackson’s and McLaws’ artillery also bombarded Bolivar Heights and Camp Hill on September 14 which proved demoralizing for the green Union troops. The Federal batteries returned fire but did relatively little damage. At 3:00 p.m. on September 14 Jackson advanced Major General A.P. Hill’s division against the weak Union left flank on Bolivar Heights. Bolivar Heights could fare well against a frontal assault, but not on its weak flanks. Three of Hill’s brigades pushed the Federal skirmishers back to Camp Hill. Only reserve regiments from Camp Hill checked Hill’s rebels and the Union line barely held intact.<sup>117</sup>

Like Walker, Lee also felt concern about the Federals approaching McLaws’ rear. Lee sent forward the division of Major General D.H. Hill to defend the passes in South Mountain on September 14. In fierce fighting the Union troops of the Ninth Corps attacked and forced the Confederates out of Fox’s Gap. A Federal division from Franklin’s Sixth Corps advanced against Crampton’s Gap on the south end of the mountain. McLaws sent some of his brigades along with Stuart’s cavalry to stop the Federal troops. The Union troops overpowered the rebels and pushed them out of the gap. For the fortunate Confederates, the Federals halted in the gap rather than continuing their advance. As darkness ended the fight at South Mountain, the Union troops held Crampton’s Gap, had cleared Frostown Gap, Fox’s Gap sat open, and they were near Turner’s Gap in the center of the Confederate line. On the night of September 14, Lee retreated with his small force to Keedysville.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 913-914; Hearn, *Six Years of Hell*, 175; Teetor, *A Matter of Hours*, 160-161.

<sup>118</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 257, 287, 293-295.

On the morning of September 15, Jackson brought up fifty guns and opened up on the Federal defenders with help from Walker and McLaws. Walker's guns did not open fire until past eight o'clock in the morning because of a heavy mist that concealed Harper's Ferry from view. The artillery duel did not last long as the Union guns quickly used up all their ammunition. At about 9:30 a.m. Walker observed a white flag displayed from a brick building in the upper town and the batteries ceased fire. Harper's Ferry had surrendered. Jackson met with McLaws and Walker in Harper's Ferry at noon and decided that he and Walker would advance along the roads on the Virginia side of the Potomac to Boteler's Ford. At 1:00 a.m. on September 16, Walker and his brigades left Harper's Ferry following the division of John. R. Jones. They joined with Jackson and the division of Alexander Lawton at the junction of the Shepherdstown and Boteler's Ford roads and headed towards Lee's army. McLaws' and Anderson's divisions crossed a pontoon bridge over the Potomac and bivouacked at Halltown, Virginia, to follow Jackson and Walker to Boteler's Ford. Jackson left A.P. Hill and his command to handle the parole of the Union prisoners while he placed all other commands on a forced march to reinforce Lee's portion of the army.<sup>119</sup>

After his troops fell back from South Mountain, Lee decided to fall back to apposition near Sharpsburg, Maryland on the western side of the Antietam Creek. Lee placed his army in a bend of the Potomac so he could anchor his flanks on the river. Within Lee's line sat Boteler's Ford by which the army could cross over the river into Virginia to retreat of the troops from Harper's Ferry could cross the river to reinforce

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<sup>119</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 914; Hearn, *Six Years in Hell*, 183-184; Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 319-320, 328.

Lee. Lee placed the troops at hand on defensive high ground east and south of Sharpsburg. To Lee the Hagerstown Pike, which led north from the town for several miles, formed an important feature. Lee hoped this road could provide him with an “avenue of escape without retreat” to regain maneuverability for his army. Lee learned of the surrender of Harper’s Ferry on September 15 and decided to hold at Sharpsburg until the whole of his force reunited and the campaign could resume. By the same day McClellan’s army had advanced to the Sharpsburg/Antietam Creek area with six infantry corps.<sup>120</sup>

As McClellan’s army deployed in the vicinity of the Antietam, Jackson and his two divisions arrived at Sharpsburg at daybreak on September 16. Jones’ and Lawton’s divisions camped west of Sharpsburg. Walker crossed the Potomac at around noon and bivouacked his brigades west of Jackson halfway between Sharpsburg and the Potomac. After contemplating the dire risks Lee had taken with S.O. 191 by dividing his army, Walker later expressed his feelings about the army’s situation: “The thought of General Lee’s perilous situation, with the Potomac River in his rear, confronting, with his small force, McClellan’s vast army, had haunted me through the long hours of the night’s march, and I expected to find General Lee anxious and careworn. On the contrary, he was calm, dignified, and even cheerful.” The imminent reuniting of his army had given Lee back his confidence in the campaign and the impending battle.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 301-308, 314.

<sup>121</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 334-337; John G. Walker, “Sharpsburg,” in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* Vol. II, eds., Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1956), 675.

Throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of September, McClellan's artillery had probed the Confederate positions around Sharpsburg. The Union commander finally planned his attack for the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup>. The Federals would move against Lee's flank in an attack that would serve two purposes: it would decide without a deadly frontal assault if Lee would make a determined stand near the town. If Lee stood firm, the attack would make him weaken the other part of his line by shifting reinforcements to the threatened flank. McClellan then planned to launch secondary attacks against the weakened portions of Lee's line. McClellan decided to attack the Confederate left flank as here he could move troops across the Antietam without them being subjected to enemy fire. McClellan also thought the Confederate right wing too strong, at least until Lee had shifted some troops away from it. The second attack would fall on the Confederate right and capture the bluffs beyond the lower bridge spanning the creek before turning north toward the town.<sup>122</sup>

McClellan ordered Major General Joseph Hooker's First Corps to conduct the attack from the north upon the Confederate left flank. He received support from the Twelfth Corps under Major General Joseph Mansfield. The attack against the Confederate right would be led by Major General Ambrose Burnside's Ninth Corps. The Second and Fifth Corps held McClellan's center with the Sixth Corps ordered to join the army as the reserve.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 347-348.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 348-353.

Lee learned of the movement of large numbers of Federal troops over the Antietam and toward his left flank. He ordered Jackson's two divisions of J.R. Jones and Lawton to bolster the Confederate left. At 2:30 a.m. on September 17, McLaws reached the Potomac and told Lee he could be in Sharpsburg by dawn. With this information, Lee decided to send Walker's division from its reserve position to the far Confederate right flank. At about 3:00 a.m. Walker moved his troops to the extreme right of the line about one and a half miles south of Sharpsburg. He positioned his brigades opposite Snavelly's Ford crossing the Antietam. Walker's line sat on a ridge crest about five hundred yards from the creek with sloping ground to the front. The line extended from a wood on the right to a group of stables and barns on the left to cover the ford and be able to provide support to the small brigade of Brigadier General Robert Toombs, about a half mile north of Walker and guarding the lower bridge over the creek. Walker placed batteries on high ground commanding the roads that led to the ford from the east, and posted a battalion of skirmishers to the front along the wooded banks of the creek.<sup>124</sup>

At about 5:15 in the morning of September 17, the Union First Corps rumbled out of the timber of the North Woods and headed south. The assault had as its objective the plateau upon which sat Stephen D. Lee's artillery batteries and the Dunker Church. If the Federals controlled the plateau then they could attack the flank of the rebel line at the sunken road where the line turned south. The divisions of Lawton and J.R. Jones formed lines in and around the West Woods to the south and near the Dunker Church and a forty acre cornfield belonging to the Miller farm. In reserve in the West Woods stood the rebel

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 365-366; *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 914; Walker, "Sharpsburg," 675.

division of Major General John Bell Hood. The Federals of Major General George Meade's division made contact with a brigade from Lawton's division near the Mumma farm along the Smoketown Road, which led south through the East Woods and connected with the Hagerstown Road at the Dunker Church. These troops shot it out for over a half hour. James B. Ricketts' Union division advanced from the North Woods into the Miller cornfield at around 6:00 a.m. The fire from another of Lawton's brigades posted at the edge of the corn checked the lead Federal brigade. The second of Ricketts' brigades came through the cornfield and East Woods only to be hit by heavy fire from more of Lawton's troops and driven back into the woods. Union artillery fire from the East Woods and the northern side of the cornfield hit Lawton's brigades and pushed them back. Ricketts' third brigade emerged from the East Woods and was also stopped by rebel fire. The fight at the East Woods and the cornfield stalemated as the piecemeal Union attacks stalled.<sup>125</sup>

The last of the First Corps divisions under Major General Abner Doubleday advanced south along the Hagerstown Road towards the already contested cornfield. Rebels from J.R. Jones' division in the West Woods opened fire on Doubleday's troops, but not before being driven back by a Union brigade that gained a foothold in the West Woods. Doubleday's other brigades encountered rebel fire from the opposite end of the cornfield. As Lawton's survivors were about to give way, the troops of J.R. Jones' command counterattacked out of the West Woods and advanced to the Hagerstown Road,

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<sup>125</sup> Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam*, (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1983), 184-190.

firing volleys into Doubleday's troops. Jones' men only slowed the Federals and the Confederates soon pulled back to the West Woods with heavy losses.<sup>126</sup>

With Jones' and Lawton's divisions heavily battered, Hood's reserve division formed up in the West Woods. Hood's two brigades charged out of the woods and towards the Hagerstown Pike near the Dunker Church. The rebels pushed into a pasture near the cornfield and then directly at the Federals in the corn. The ferocity of the charge drove the Union troops of Doubleday's command out of the cornfield and Ricketts' men back to the East Woods. Hood's men followed recklessly and received devastating volleys of musketry on the flanks by Meade's troops. Suffering terrible losses, Hood's division fell back to the West Woods. Jackson's and Hood's commands, as well as the Union divisions, had been almost completely wrecked in the first hours of the morning in a dreadful seesaw battle on a five hundred yard front.<sup>127</sup>

The Union Twelfth Corps came forward in line stretching from the Hagerstown Road east across the Miller farm to the East Woods. The Federals met the Confederates from some of Major General D.H. Hill's brigades who had advanced to the cornfield and the area south of the East Woods. Some of the Union soldiers in the East Woods outflanked Hill's rebels from the woods and the cornfield in fierce close quarter combat. The cornfield, East Woods, Miller and Mumma farms, and all the ground east of the Hagerstown pike had fallen into Union hands. Federals of the Twelfth Corps held the fields beyond the East Woods only two hundred yards from the plateau on which stood

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 194-195.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 197-201.

the Dunker Church. The fighting on the left of the Confederate line temporarily halted and a lull settled over the fields where in just a few hours over 8,000 Union and Confederate soldiers had fallen.<sup>128</sup>

The halt in the fighting would only be temporary as the soldiers of Major General Edwin Sumner's Union Second Corps had crossed over the Antietam from the northeast. Sumner's lead division under Major General John Sedgwick advanced west through the East Woods and pressed on through the blood-drenched cornfield. The division advanced in column of brigades with Brigadier General Willis Gorman's brigade in front, followed by the brigade of Brigadier General N.J.T. Dana, and finally the brigade of Brigadier General Oliver O. Howard. Sedgwick's division pushed across the corn, over the Hagerstown Road, and into the West Woods. Only the un-bloodied Virginia brigade of Brigadier General Jubal Early and the weary remnants of three other Confederate divisions stood between the Federals and Sharpsburg.<sup>129</sup>

Soon after 9:00 a.m., Walker received an order from Colonel A.L. Long of Lee's staff to hasten his division to reinforce Jackson on the Confederate left flank. Lee ordered McLaws' and R.H. Anderson's divisions to also proceed to the aid of the left flank. Walker rapidly moved his brigades along the entire rear of the battle line and neared the West Woods with his command at around 10:00 a.m. Walker deployed his division with Ransom's brigade on the left and Manning's brigade on the right. Walker detached the 27<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas under Colonel John R. Cooke to

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 203-214.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 218-223.

guard an opening between the woods and D.H. Hill's division on Longstreet's left flank. As the Federals of Sedgwick's division entered the west Woods the front line of battle had changed from the east-west axis of the early morning fight. Sedgwick's men advanced from the east and exposed their left flank to the northward facing rebels in the wood. The Southern reinforcements attacked against this exposed enemy flank.<sup>130</sup>

McLaws' brigades charged into the woods and slammed into the unsuspecting Union troops. The rebel troops of Brigadier General Paul J. Semmes hit Gorman's and Dana's men while the troops of Brigadier General William Barksdale's brigade caught the flank of Howard's men. Joseph Kershaw's South Carolinians advanced against a Union battery posted beyond the woods. Walker's troops joined the attack, "advancing in splendid style, firing and cheering as they went." Ransom's brigade veered north and entered the woods to Barksdale's left and joined with Early's brigade in driving the Federals out of the woods. Manning with the 46<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> North Carolina, and the 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia, followed Kershaw's brigade into the woods where they routed the startled and disorganized Union troops into the field beyond. Walker remembered the heated fight: "The Federals contended for every foot of ground, but, driven from rock to rock, from tree to tree, of the 'West Wood,' after a bloody struggle of some thirty minutes, Sedgwick's forces were pressed back into the open fields beyond, and, being there exposed to the fire of S.D. Lee's artillery, broke and fled in great disorder back to the cover of the 'East Wood,' beyond the Hagerstown Road."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 223-224; *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 915; Walker, "Sharpsburg," 677-678.

<sup>131</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 915, 919-921; Walker, "Sharpsburg," 678; Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 224-228.

Sedgwick's division lost over 2,200 men in the short fight, but the killing was far from over. Two brigades of Greene's union division held a rise near the Dunker Church supported by a six gun Rhode Island battery. Kershaw's brigade advanced against these forces but was repulsed with heavy losses. At about 10:00 a.m. Manning pushed out from behind Kershaw with his three regiments until he was wounded and left the field. Colonel E.D. Hall of the 46<sup>th</sup> North Carolina took command of the brigade. Hall pushed the regiments forward through the woods and towards the enemy some two hundred yards distant. The North Carolinians and Virginians moved under enemy fire to a rail fence where they halted to return fire. The 48<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and the 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia attempted to climb the fence but were cut up by the heavy enemy fire and forced to fall to the ground before retreating. The 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia suffered tremendous losses in the charge that took them out of the fight. The two regiments fell back toward the woods and left a gap on the right of the 46<sup>th</sup> North Carolina. The Federals advanced forward and forced the 46<sup>th</sup> back to the woods. Walker and a staff officer gathered up the remnants of the 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia and attached them to the 46<sup>th</sup> North Carolina.<sup>132</sup>

The withdrawal of the three regiments under Hall allowed the Union troops to reoccupy a small edge of the West Woods near the area where Colonel Cooke with the 27<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas sat posted to support the artillery and the gap in the line. Cooke's troops "replied with spirit" to the fire of the Federals. The Union troops had better cover in the woods so Cooke withdrew his regiments back behind a rail fence in a cornfield where they kept up their fire. The intensity of the rebels' fire forced

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<sup>132</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 915, 918; Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 231-232.

some of the Federal artillerists away from their guns and two full caissons later fell into rebel hands.<sup>133</sup>

Hall moved his regiments back up to the edge of the West Woods next to Ransom's brigade and placed his troops behind a rock ledge. He threw out some of the survivors of the 30<sup>th</sup> Virginia as skirmishers but they were quickly driven back to cover. At around this time Ransom left his command to search for the 24<sup>th</sup> North Carolina of his brigade, which had moved too far to the left beyond Barksdale's troops. In his absence the Federals attacked his portion of the line. Ransom's brother Matt, colonel of the 35<sup>th</sup> North Carolina, and left in temporary command, not only repulsed the enemy but drove them out of the woods and across the field for several hundred yards before pulling back. The Union attacks on the left ended for the day, but the artillery kept up its deadly work. Walker later wrote about his men: "True to their duty, for eight hours our brave men lay upon the ground, taking advantage of such undulations and shallow ravines as gave promise of partial shelter, while this fearful storm raged a few feet above their heads, tearing the trees asunder, lopping off huge branches, and filling the air with shrieks and explosions, realizing to the fullest the fearful sublimity of battle."<sup>134</sup>

About midway through the morning as Sumner's Union troops crossed the Antietam, confusion among the Union command saw Sumner's other two divisions veer off to the southwest rather than follow Sedgwick into the fight against Jackson. These divisions, led by Major Generals William French and Israel Richardson, advanced

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<sup>133</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 915.

<sup>134</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 916, 918-919.

towards a sunken road about six hundred yards south of the Dunker Church. The sunken road, an eroded farm lane, branched eastward off the Hagerstown Pike for some distance, then turned south for about a thousand yards. In front of the sunken road stood the Roulette and Clipp farms, and behind it sat the Piper farm. The brigades of Robert Rodes and George B. Anderson from D.H. Hill's division crowded into this ready made trench and awaited the advancing Federals.<sup>135</sup>

William French moved his troops south from the East Woods and encountered Hill's pickets at the Roulette farm. French pushed his brigades forward past the farm and towards the Confederates in the sunken road. The rebels poured volleys into the Federals causing heavy casualties. The Federals returned fire but the Confederates had the upper hand, driving the enemy back to the cover of the farms. Israel Richardson's division next advanced against the sunken road and also met heavy fire. One of Richardson's brigades under General John C. Caldwell moved into a flanking position against the sunken road and broke through the line, sending Anderson's rebels racing for the cover of the Piper cornfield in the rear. Rodes' brigade still held its position in the road, but the Federals could now fire down the road on his flank. Officers of Rodes' command attempted to meet the threat, but a confusion of orders sent Rodes' men out of the road. Rodes tried to rally his troops about 150 yards from the road and the rebels attempted several

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<sup>135</sup> James V. Murfin, *The Gleam of Bayonets: The Battle of Antietam and the Maryland Campaign of 1862*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 246.

counterattacks against the Union troops now spilling over the road, but all efforts failed.<sup>136</sup>

While his command on the left clung to the West Woods, Walker went to find Cooke and the North Carolinians and Arkansans under his command. He came across General Longstreet who told him that he had sent the regiments to his front. Longstreet ordered the 27<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas to move toward the sunken road to help stem the Federal breakthrough. Cooke led the two regiments of 675 men toward the Mumma farm to hit the enemy flank. The rebels advanced over the plateau near the Dunker Church and across the fences bordering the lane that led to the Mumma farm and into the Mumma cornfield. Joined by the troops of Howell Cobb's brigade, Walker's men moved against French's Federals. Brigadier General Nathan Kimball of French's command swung the 8<sup>th</sup> Ohio, 14<sup>th</sup> Indiana, and 130<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania to face the rebels. Cooke's men drove the Union troops into the corn, and exchanged close range volleys until their ammunition ran low. Cooke said, "Tell General Longstreet to send me some ammunition. I have not a cartridge in my command, but will hold my position at the point of the bayonet." The addition of Union reinforcements compelled Cooke's men to retire to the Hagerstown Road. Cooke lost more than half of the men he led forward.<sup>137</sup>

A brigade of the Union Sixth Corps came up to the Mumma farm to prevent anymore rebel counterattacks. Three Union regiments advanced toward the Dunker Church, but were hit by volleys from Ransom's troops in the woods, causing 224 Union

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<sup>136</sup> Murfin, *The Gleam of Bayonets*, 247-258.

<sup>137</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 915-916; Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 249-250; Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," 436.

casualties. Behind the sunken road, Longstreet managed to rally the survivors of D.H. Hill's command along with reinforcements from R.H. Anderson's division and a few artillery batteries. Fortunately for the Confederates, the Federals had pulled back across the sunken road and their attacks stopped. McClellan felt more bloodshed futile. The fighting on the left and center of the battlefield died down again, but the battle was not over.<sup>138</sup>

Between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, General Jackson asked Walker if he could spare a regiment. Jackson intended to gather up a force from the shattered commands on the Confederate left and have General Jeb Stuart hit the enemy flank near the Potomac. Walker ordered the 48<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and Branch's and French's batteries to the far left to participate in the proposed assault. At about 4:30 p.m. Longstreet ordered Walker to send Ransom forward to capture enemy guns to his front. Jackson countermanded the order and told Walker to wait for the sound of Stuart's attack. Soon Jackson returned and told Walker that Stuart could not reach the enemy flank as it sat securely anchored on the Potomac with the protection of heavy artillery batteries. The fighting had ended for Walker's division as the men kept their heads down and lay in the West Woods for the rest of the day. Walker later remarked after the battle: "The men of my division, worn out by a weeks incessant marching and fighting by day and night, dropped down where they were, and could with difficulty be roused, even to take their cooked rations, brought up from our camp in the rear."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 251; Murfin, *The Gleam of Bayonets*, 260-264.

<sup>139</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 916; Walker, "Sharpsburg," 679, 681.

Late in the afternoon, the second attack in McClellan's plan began as Burnside led his Ninth Corps against the Confederate right flank. Toombs' three Georgia regiments and two light batteries pinned down the advance of the Federals in front of the lower bridge crossing the Antietam. The Union troops moved over the bridge, presenting a narrow front, which the rebels easily shot to pieces. Two Union brigades moved downriver and crossed a Snavely's Ford, where Walker's division had been posted that morning. They advanced up the opposite side of the creek and drove back skirmishers from Toombs' brigade and the Confederate division of Major General David R. Jones. At the same time, two Union regiments managed to cross the lower bridge with heavy losses, compelling Toombs to withdraw his small command. Most of the Union Ninth Corps crossed over to the western side of the Antietam and organized in attack formation for the final push toward Sharpsburg. Fortunately for the Confederates, at around 3:30 p.m., A.P. Hill's rebel division arrived from Harper's Ferry after a seventeen mile forced march to the battlefield, and attacked the exposed left flank of the Ninth Corps divisions, sweeping them back to the creek.<sup>140</sup>

Night brought an end to the terrible slaughter of September 17. All along the lines, the weary survivors of the two armies huddled in the darkness, in some places within earshot of the enemy. In the battle, almost 82,000 men fought on less than 1,000 acres of land. Of that number, 23,000 fell as casualties. The Confederates suffered a 31.4 percent loss and the Federals lost 24.4 percent of their forces engaged. Walker's

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<sup>140</sup> Murfin, *The Gleam of Bayonets*, 269-286.

command suffered grievously in the campaign, losing 177 men killed and 835 wounded in his division.<sup>141</sup>

During the night and the next day Lee and his commanders did their best to prepare their battered line for the resumption of the Union attacks they felt sure to come. All day long on September 18 the two armies stared at one another across the blood soaked fields around Sharpsburg. Except for the occasional artillery shot, the two sides remained inactive. Lee decided to retreat across Boteler's Ford on the night of the 18<sup>th</sup> and move his army west to Martinsburg, Virginia then north to Williamsport where they would re-enter Maryland and be in position to strike McClellan's right and rear, while resuming the campaign of maneuver.<sup>142</sup>

By ten o'clock a night on September 18, Lee's entire army had crossed the Potomac River. Jeb Stuart led an expedition to secure the ford at Williamsport. He found the ford defended by a Union force. In a series of skirmishes, the Federals captured all of Lee's reserve artillery. A.P. Hill's division advanced to recapture the artillery and fought a small battle against the Union troops at Shepherdstown on September 20 where most of the guns were recovered. The next day, Lee decided that the Maryland campaign was over. He camped his tired army on Opequon Creek near Martinsburg. The army stayed near Martinsburg until September 26 when Lee decided he could conduct no offensive operations. He moved the army south to more permanent camps at Bunker Hill and Winchester, Virginia. Walker's division remained in

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<sup>141</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 811; Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 423, 431.

<sup>142</sup> Harsh, *Taken at the Flood*, 423, 431, 443-444.

Winchester until the later part of October then moved via Millwood to Paris and Upperville in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Walker then moved via Salem, Virginia to Culpepper Court House, Cedar Run, Madison Court House, Orange Court House, and finally reached Fredericksburg, Virginia in November.<sup>143</sup>

On November 7, 1862 Walker received orders which relieved him of command of his division and ordered him to report to the Adjutant and Inspector General in Richmond. Robert Ransom replaced him as commander of the division. The next day Walker received promotion to Major General. On November 11 the Secretary of War ordered Walker to proceed to Little Rock, Arkansas where he was to report for duty to his old division commander, Lieutenant General Theophilus Holmes, commanding the Trans-Mississippi Department. On December 23, Walker received appointment to command a newly created division of Texas regiments currently in Arkansas.<sup>144</sup>

Walker had faithfully led his troops through the terrible battles of 1862 in the war's eastern theater. His test as a division commander became the Maryland campaign in which he skillfully handled his division and the assignments put forth by his commanders. Walker's division participated in the important capture of Harper's Ferry, eliminating a threat to the army's supply line. Walker then arrived on the scene at Sharpsburg to help blunt the attacks of the Union army upon the left flank which saved the army from defeat and possibly annihilation. For its determined service to the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 448-466, 475; Graham, "Twenty-seventh regiment," 437-438.

<sup>144</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 2, 703-704, 731; Brown, "John George Walker," 88-89.

Confederacy, Walker's command suffered grievously in the campaign, especially Walker's former brigade. The division lost over a thousand of its roughly 3,600 men.<sup>145</sup>

Lee offered a testament to Walker's valuable service to Jefferson Davis on November 6, 1862. After Walker and Stephen D. Lee were ordered to Richmond, Lee said, "I feel that I am much weakened by the loss of these two officers...but I hope the general service will be benefited." An even greater homage to Walker came from one of his men, who wrote, "The men in the Forty-sixth parted with General Walker with unusual regret, having learned, in the brief period in which he commanded the brigade, to regard him with the highest esteem, for his care of the force under his command, as well as for his courage and coolness under the most trying conditions."<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> *O.R.*, XIX, pt. 1, 811.

<sup>146</sup> Brown, "John George Walker," 88-89; Waddill, "Forty-sixth regiment," 68-69.

CHAPTER IV  
THE TEXAS DIVISION AND THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI  
WEST, 1863-1864

As Walker campaigned with Lee's army in Virginia, Confederates in Texas organized the regiments that would comprise his new command. Recruited in the winter and spring of 1862, these new regiments formed largely in response to Confederate reversals in the west in the early part of the year. In February Union armies pressed forward into western Tennessee, capturing Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee River, and later pushed the Confederate Army of Mississippi back into its namesake state after the battle of Shiloh in April. Closer to Texas, more Union forces advanced in Missouri and defeated a rebel army at Pea Ridge, Arkansas in March. To the south, Union army and naval forces captured New Orleans and began preparing for movements inland via the numerous waterways of Louisiana. These enemy threats combined with the passing of the Conscription Act by the Confederate Congress in April, 1862, led to the creation of several new regiments of Texas volunteers, determined to keep Federal armies out of their beloved home state and protect their families.<sup>147</sup>

In response to the early setbacks in the west in 1862, Confederate Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin ordered General Paul O. Hebert, commanding in Texas, to send all new Texas regiments to Arkansas as soon as possible to reinforce the Trans-Mississippi army. The regiments that would comprise Walker's new command marched

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<sup>147</sup> Richard Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division, CSA: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 9, 18-19, 27-28.

out of their training camps in June, July, and August, 1862 and headed for Little Rock, Arkansas. The regiments arrived in piecemeal fashion throughout the fall months and continued their training. After a short stay in Little Rock, the Texans marched thirty miles northeast of Little Rock to Camp Nelson, where they began preparing their winter camps. In late October, Lieutenant General Theophilus Holmes, commanding the trans-Mississippi Department, ordered Brigadier General Henry E. McCulloch to organize the fifteen new Texas units into brigades to comprise a new division. McCulloch organized the troops into four brigades. The fourth brigade, led by Brigadier General James Deshler, did not stay long with the other brigades. Deshler marched his regiments east along the Arkansas River to a small fort at Arkansas Post. The remaining three brigades, consisting of eleven regiments and one battalion, comprised the division for the rest of the war. The brigades were organized as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, led by Colonel Overton Young  
12<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry (also known as 8<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry)  
18<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry  
22<sup>nd</sup> Texas Infantry  
13<sup>th</sup> Texas Dismounted Cavalry  
Captain Horace Haldeman's Battery

2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, led by Colonel Horace Randal  
11<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry  
14<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry  
28<sup>th</sup> Texas Dismounted Cavalry  
Major Robert Gould's Dismounted Texas Cavalry Battalion  
Captain James M. Daniel's Battery (Lamar Artillery)

3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, led by Colonel George Flournoy  
16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry  
17<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry  
19<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry  
16<sup>th</sup> Texas Dismounted Cavalry

## Captain William Edgar's Battery<sup>148</sup>

Although these regiments totaled almost twelve thousand men when first mustered into service, the new division only included about half that number as disease and desertions had already taken effect. In late November, the division marched out of Camp Nelson and moved fifteen miles southeast to a prairie near Bayou Meto, about twenty-five miles east of Little Rock, near the supply line of the Memphis and Little Rock railroad. The Texans continued to drill in their camps as events of the war unfolded around them. In northwest Arkansas, Confederate and union forces fought to a stalemate at Prairie Grove, about one hundred and forty miles from Little Rock. At the same time, the Federal army of U.S. Grant and William T. Sherman advanced south along the Mississippi River towards the Confederate stronghold of Vicksburg. On December 10, McCulloch received orders that indicated a move toward Vicksburg. The division spent the next two days marching east when a new order countermanded the move and sent the Texans towards Van Buren, Arkansas to reinforce the rebels under Major General Thomas C. Hindman, retreating from Prairie Grove.<sup>149</sup>

The Texas division turned around and headed west. After several days on the march, the troops passed Little Rock and once again received orders redirecting their movement. An uncertain Holmes often marched the Texans back and forth to confront phantom enemy forces. The division marched back to Little Rock and awaited further

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<sup>148</sup> Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 29, 33, 41; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 128 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), XXII, pt. 1, 903-904.

<sup>149</sup> Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 39, 59-60.

orders. The Texans spent Christmas, 1862 on the Arkansas River, across from Little Rock. After a few days rest, the division took up line march to Pine Bluff, Arkansas. On December 31, the men once again turned around and marched fifteen miles before camping. The troops stayed at this camp until January 2, 1863. While at this place, the Texans learned that Major General John G. Walker, from Lee's army, would take command of the division and McCulloch would take over command of Flournoy's brigade. Walker joined the division on New Year's Day, 1863.<sup>150</sup>

On January 2, in response to a supposed Federal threat from the northeast, Walker marched his foot sore division back toward Little Rock and camped about four miles outside the city. After the enemy advance proved false, Walker marched his troops back to Pine Bluff. The division historian Joseph Blessington, commented about all the marching of the division: "It was generally believed amongst the troops that General Holmes was advised by the Medical Board to give Walker's Division enough exercise. This may be the object of our marching and countermarching between Little Rock and Pine Bluff." On January 10, Walker received a dispatch from Brigadier General Thomas Churchill at Arkansas post stating that eight Union gunboats and twenty-five transports had arrived on the river near the fort at Arkansas Post. Fort Hindman, located about forty miles from where the Arkansas River and the Mississippi River converged, had been built to halt Union thrusts up river towards Little Rock. Two Texas brigades and one from Arkansas, about 4,000 men, defended the post. This small force faced an estimated 28,000 Union troops under Major General John McClelland. The Federals surrounded

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 61-62; Joseph P. Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, (New York: Lange, Little & Co., 1875, reprint Austin, TX: State House Press, 1994), 66-67.

the rebel fort, prompting Churchill to ask Walker for reinforcements, because he expected to be attacked at any time.<sup>151</sup>

Walker marched his division out on January 11 toward Arkansas Post, about twenty-five miles distant. The next day, Walker learned that the post surrendered to the Federals at daylight. Walker halted his men and put them in camp along the river. He instructed the men to build breastworks as he expected to have to contest a Union advance up the river. As the Texans prepared, the weather turned bad. John Simmons of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Texas wrote about the experience: “We stopped thirty miles below the Bluff and commenced fortifying, expecting the Fed up everyday. There we lay for six or seven days without tents and with but little food, amid snow eight inches deep, with but one blanket apiece, shivering around our campfires.” The men of the division remembered this place on the river as “Camp Freeze Out.” After about a week, Walker learned the Federals had destroyed the fort at Arkansas Post and reversed course, heading back towards the Mississippi River. The division left the crude camp on January 19.<sup>152</sup>

Walker’s tired men arrived at Camp Mills, northwest of Pine Bluff, the next day and stayed in the immediate vicinity of the town for the next three months. The troops settled in for the routine experiences and monotony of camp life. At this time, many troops expressed great feelings of homesickness. Some clever soldiers attempted to fake

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<sup>151</sup> Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker’s Texas Division*, 67-68; John G. Walker, “The War of Secession West of the Mississippi River During the Years 1863, 64, & 65,” Myron G. Gwinner Collection, United States Army History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 18.

<sup>152</sup> Jon Harrison, ed., “The Confederate letters of John Simmons,” *Chronicles of Smith County Texas* 14 (Summer 1975), 31; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker’s Texas Division*, 70; Walker, “The War of Secession,” 18; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 64-65.

illness in hopes of receiving a furlough or discharge. Edward Cade, a surgeon in the division, recalled these futile attempts at trickery: “Great many are making efforts to get out of the service. Tomorrow I have been appointed to examine cases for furlough and discharges and I suppose there are no less than a hundred who wish to go. I have surgeons call at 6 o’clock every morning at which time the orderly sergeants of companies bring up their sick to me and every morning I order at least 20 on duty who are pretending to be sick.” Some soldiers, unable to achieve furlough or discharge, attempted to desert. Many who were caught faced execution. Cade also recalled, “There are two men to be shot on Tuesday next for desertion. The day to execute them was fixed tomorrow but in order to give time to prepare for eternity the execution was suspended until Tuesday. There are 8 or 10 under sentence of death and several yet to be tried who will certainly be executed.”<sup>153</sup>

The division moved to Camp Wright directly north of Pine Bluff on February 9. The camp, located on good ground, proved comfortable to the men as they had adequate tents and blankets. To relieve the angst of the troops, Walker issued orders that two men from each company in the division would be granted a sixty day furlough. Blessington wrote that the furloughs gave great satisfaction to the soldiers. Walker began to develop a strong rapport with the troops of his division. While camped near Pine Bluff in March, Elijah Petty of the 17<sup>th</sup> Texas wrote about a rumor that Walker would be replaced as division commander: “This will cause almost universal regret in our Division with officers and men. Genl. Walker has made a universally favorable impression here and is

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<sup>153</sup> John Q. Anderson, ed., *A Texas Surgeon in the CSA*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Publishing Company, Inc., 1957), 37, 39; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker’s Texas Division*, 75-77.

very much respected and I may say almost loved...” Walker and his troops remained in Arkansas throughout much of the spring season.<sup>154</sup>

As Walker’s Texans waited for the war to find them in Arkansas, Confederate Major General Richard Taylor, commanding the District of West Louisiana, occupied Fort Bisland after receiving information about increased Federal activity near Brashear City in southern Louisiana. On April 12, 12,000 Union soldiers crossed Berwick’s Bay and advanced up the banks of Bayou Teche toward Fort Bisland. Taylor’s force withstood infantry assaults and artillery bombardments, but part of the Union force moved toward Franklin and outflanked the Confederates. Under cover of darkness, Taylor moved his force out of Fort Bisland and retreated toward New Iberia. Unable to find good defensive ground, Taylor continued the withdrawal into the lower Red River Valley, reaching Alexandria, Louisiana on April 24.<sup>155</sup>

As Taylor retreated up the Red River Valley, pursued by Banks, Union forces under Major General Ulysses S. Grant attempted to move south down the Mississippi River below Vicksburg. Grant first attempted to construct a canal across the peninsula near Vicksburg to move his transports downriver without passing by the rebel guns on the bluffs along the Mississippi. When this attempt failed, Grant focused on moving his army and supplies along the west bank of the Mississippi to a point below Vicksburg where he could link with the Union fleet that had successfully passed the Confederate

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<sup>154</sup> Norman D. Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Captain Elijah P Petty, Walker’s Texas Division, CSA*, (San Antonio, TX: Institute of Texan Cultures, 1982), 150; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker’s Texas Division*, 76-77.

<sup>155</sup> Robert L. Kerby, *Kirby Smith’s Confederacy: The Trans-Mississippi South, 1863-1865*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 98-100, 104-105; Walker, “The War of Secession,” 23-24.

defenses at Port Hudson, Louisiana. With Banks' force advancing from the south and Grant moving from Milliken's Bend west toward Bayou Macon and New Carthage, Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith, now commanding the Trans-Mississippi Department, feared Taylor could get caught between two enemy forces and looked to General Holmes, commanding in Arkansas, for reinforcements.<sup>156</sup>

Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith took over command of the Trans-Mississippi Department in March, 1863. Richmond delegated Holmes to command the District of Arkansas as it was generally believed he had mishandled affairs in the department for too long. On April 14 Smith ordered Holmes to send Walker's division to Louisiana. Holmes, however, did not issue orders to Walker until April 23. The Texas division marched out of Pine Bluff at 5:00 a.m. on April 24 headed for Monroe, Louisiana via Camden, Arkansas. Theophilus Perry of the 28<sup>th</sup> Texas Dismounted Cavalry wrote about the expected move: "I suppose that we will be engaged in active operations as soon as we cross the Red river. Carry this in preparation & all in expectation of meeting the enemy. Our Division is in high spirits, and seem to speak and feel as if it will be the main dependence and stay of our army. We are composed of Texans alone & are about six thousand five hundred fighting men with three batteries – 16 guns. It is a right pretty little army of itself, and as it seems to expect great things of itself I am in great hopes they will do themselves honor." Despite the great optimism among the troops, the move quickly bogged down into a slow crawl as rainy weather

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<sup>156</sup> Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, 104-105; Walker, "The War of Secession," 22-23.

swelled creeks and forced engineers the “corduroy” the roads with logs for several miles. Not until eight days later on May 1 did Walker’s division reach the Louisiana state line, still ninety miles from Monroe.<sup>157</sup>

By May 5, Walker’s division reached Ouachita City on the Ouachita River, about thirty-five miles north of Monroe. At this place the division boarded about a dozen riverboats that moved the troops downstream to Trenton, located about two miles above Monroe. The Texans camped at Trenton over the next four days as the boats moved the regiments downstream. In the meantime, Taylor evacuated Alexandria and headed north up the Red River in the direction of Shreveport. General Smith intended for Walker’s troops to link up with Taylor’s command and move north together. On May 9 Walker’s brigades boarded transports again to steam to Alexandria. About halfway to Alexandria, as the convoy neared Harrisonburg, a courier from Taylor arrived and informed Walker that Banks’ Federals now occupied Alexandria and Union gunboats were headed upriver towards his transports. Walker immediately ordered the transports to turn around and head back to Trenton, where they arrived May 10.<sup>158</sup>

After the failure to reach Taylor by water, Walker decided to send his troops overland to the Red River valley to join Taylor at Natchitoches, about one hundred twenty miles southwest of Monroe. Walker’s first brigade, led by Brigadier General James M. Hawes left on May 10, followed thereafter by Randal’s brigade. McCulloch’s brigade stayed behind to check a possible Union advance if the enemy moved towards

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<sup>157</sup> *O.R.*, XV, 1042, 1047, 1057-1058; M. Jane Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousand: The Civil War Letters of Theophilus and Harriet Perry, 1862-1864*, (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 130; Walker, “The War of Secession,” 26; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 71-74.

<sup>158</sup> Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 73-75.

Monroe. After waiting in the Monroe vicinity for about a week, McCulloch marched his brigade out on May 16, learning the Federals halted at Harrisonburg. McCulloch's troops caught up with the other brigades near Campti, Louisiana, ten miles north of Natchitoches, on May 22.<sup>159</sup>

After pushing Taylor out of Alexandria, Banks withdrew his Federals to Opelousas for two weeks. Banks learned of Grant's disembarkment of troops below Vicksburg and his campaign inland. Grant desired for Banks to operate east of the Mississippi River in conjunction with his movement against Vicksburg. Between May 8 and 13, Grant and Banks decided on a joint campaign where Grant would capture Vicksburg, while Banks would move his force over the Mississippi River and invest the 7,000 man Confederate garrison at Port Hudson above Baton Rouge, Louisiana. On May 15, Banks broke off his push up the Red River and moved east, crossing his forces over the Mississippi River nine days later. After Banks left Alexandria, Taylor moved south from Natchitoches and reoccupied the city on May 24. Walker's troops waited at Campti for four days until transports arrived from Shreveport to carry them down to Taylor's location. The boats arrived and Walker's division embarked for Alexandria, about one hundred miles distant, on May 26. The next day, Walker's brigades arrived two miles above Alexandria and set up camp.<sup>160</sup>

At the beginning of May, Grant landed 22,000 Union troops on the east bank of the Mississippi River and pushed inland, establishing a beachhead after pushing back

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<sup>159</sup> *O.R.*, XV, 1082-1083; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 76-77.

<sup>160</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 2, 41-42; Walker, "The War of Secession," 25-27; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 77-78; Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, 107-109.

rebel forces at Port Gibson, Mississippi. Throughout May, Grant's Yankees knocked Confederate Major General John C. Pemberton's southerners back in fighting at Raymond, Jackson, Champion's Hill, and Big Black River Bridge, finally bottling up Pemberton in the Vicksburg defenses on May 17. On May 9, Pemberton wired Kirby Smith and said, "You can contribute materially to the defense of Vicksburg and the navigation of the Mississippi River by a movement upon the line of communications of the enemy on the western side of the river. To break this would render a most important service." Grant's supply line stretched sixty-three miles along the western side of the Mississippi from Milliken's Bend to Hard Times, and even Grant sensed its vulnerability. In early May, the Union general ordered a road cut from Young's Point to Bower's Landing which would shorten his line to just twelve miles. The day after pushing the Confederates into Vicksburg, Grant established contact with Federal boats on the Yazoo River at Haynes' and Snyder's Bluff. This contact with the Union fleet gave Grant a new line of communications and supply via the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers. Two days later the Federals opened a road from the Yazoo to the Union army at Vicksburg.<sup>161</sup>

At the time of Pemberton's wire to Kirby Smith, the latter seemed more concerned with his own department and protecting the military industrial complexes in northern Louisiana and east Texas from Banks' advancing Federals. After the war, Walker wrote about this missed opportunity to strike at Grant's exposed line:

The excellent division of Gen. Walker, as suggested by that General, might have rendered important service to the Confederate cause by

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<sup>161</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 3, 846; Terrence J. Winschel, "To Rescue Gibraltar: John Walker's Texas Division and its Expedition to Relieve Fortress Vicksburg," *Civil War Regiments: A Journal of the American Civil War* 3, no. 3 (1993), 42-45.

operating against Grant's communications, but the fear entertained by Gen. Smith that Banks had ulterior designs against Shreveport and North Eastern Texas, frightened him into a refusal to permit these troops to be so employed, and they were pushed forward by force marches, first through Shreveport to cover that place, and afterwards, when it was known to Gen. Smith that Banks had not advanced beyond Alexandria, to Natchitoches, on Red River where it formed a junction with the handful of Gen. Taylor's forces which the long retreat before Banks, and the consequent demoralization, had left him.

Walker continued to say:

The golden opportunity had been allowed to pass, Grant had completed the investment of Vicksburg, brushed away the obstructions to the navigation of the Yazoo River by his supply vessels, and thus rendered his line of operations and supply secure from attack, since it was along the highway of the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers, guarded and commanded by Federal fleets; thus rendering the crossing of the Mississippi by any considerable body of Confederate troops impossible.<sup>162</sup>

When Taylor reoccupied Alexandria, he received a new communication from Kirby Smith informing him that Walker and his division would join him in the next few days and he was to use the Texans in some attempt to relieve the Confederates pinned up at Vicksburg. Apparently, the Confederate commander was unaware that Grant had moved his supply line to the Yazoo River. Taylor expressed a negative opinion of any attempts to aid Vicksburg from the west. Taylor wrote, "The peculiar position of Vicksburg and the impossibility of approaching it from the west bank of the Mississippi have been stated, and were now insisted upon. Granting the feasibility of traversing the narrow peninsula opposite the place, seven miles in length and swept by guns afloat on

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<sup>162</sup> Walker, "The War of Secession," 27-28.

both sides, what could be gained? The problem was to withdraw the garrison, not reinforce it.”<sup>163</sup>

Taylor had another plan in mind. With the addition of Walker’s division, Taylor believed he could advance back down the Red River Valley to southern Louisiana, capture Berwick’s bay, and overrun the Lafourche region. In doing so, Taylor’s force would sever Banks’ communications with New Orleans and threaten the city with capture. Taylor also hoped that the presence of his force so close to New Orleans would pressure Banks into lifting his siege on Port Hudson, allowing the rebel troops there to reinforce General Joseph Johnston and catch Grant in the rear outside Vicksburg. Despite his arguments for a move south, Taylor could not change Kirby Smith’s mind. Unaware that Grant had moved his communications due to outdated intelligence and under pressure from Confederate authorities in the East for a demonstration in aid of Vicksburg, Smith told Taylor, “I know your desire is naturally great to recover what you lost in lower Louisiana and to push on toward New Orleans, but the stake contended for near Vicksburg is the Valley of the Mississippi and the Trans-Mississippi Department; the defeat of General Grant is the *terminus ad quem* of all operations in the west this summer; to its attainment all minor advantages should be sacrificed.”<sup>164</sup>

Taylor grudgingly moved Walker and his division from Alexandria to Monroe by boat. The Texans began to move from the red River area north to the landing on Little

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<sup>163</sup> Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1879), 137-138.

<sup>164</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 2, 12-13, 41; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 138; Walker, “The War of Secession,” 28; Jeffrey S. Prushankin, “A Crisis in Command: Edmund Kirby Smith and Richard Taylor in the Trans-Mississippi West,” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arkansas, 2000, 138-142.

River on May 28. Here steamers picked up the brigades and moved them along Little River through Catahoula Lake, then farther north up to the Black River where it converged with the Tensas River. The Tensas paralleled the Mississippi River about twenty miles from central Louisiana, to the lowlands west of Vicksburg. Walker's troops reached the head of the Tensas on May 30, about twenty-five miles from Vicksburg and camped on the east bank of the river.<sup>165</sup>

At one o'clock the next morning, Walker's division, McCulloch's brigade in the lead, followed by Randal's and Hawes' brigades, marched east toward a suspected Federal camp ten miles away at a plantation called Somerset, owned by the Perkins family. At the plantation camped about 300 Union soldiers of the 60<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry. McCulloch's brigade formed a line of battle in a skirt of woods adjoining the plantation. Federal pickets alerted the Union commander to the presence of McCulloch's Texans and the Federal troops retreated from their camp to the shelter of a cotton bale breastwork built behind a levee on the Mississippi River. McCulloch, with about 1,500 men, advanced through the empty enemy camp for about a half a mile when the rebel skirmishers were fired upon by Union soldiers in some woods to the right. The Texan skirmishers advanced into the woods and drove the Union troops back to the breastworks, another half mile to the rear, where the Federals formed line of battle.<sup>166</sup>

As the Union soldiers sought refuge behind the cotton bales, the Union gunboat *Carondelet*, steamed downriver to support the Indianans. Feeling the enemy position too

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<sup>165</sup> Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 138; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 82-83.

<sup>166</sup> Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 87-92; Walker, "The War of Secession," 28; Winschel, "To Rescue Gibraltar," 45-46; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 83-85.

close to the gunboat for an infantry assault, McCulloch deployed Edgar's battery of two 6 pounders and two 12 pounders, supported by the 19<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry, and began at the Federals. McCulloch kept the remainder of his infantry under the cover of a small levee and some timber near a lake. The Texan battery and the gunboat kept up fire for an hour and twenty minutes, during which time the rebel guns fired ninety-six times. During the shelling, the Union transport *Forest Queen* arrived and embarked the Yankee troops. In response, McCulloch ordered forward the rest of his infantry into line of battle to tempt the Federals to continue the fight. McCulloch later wrote in his report, "All seemed anxious to go fully into the fight, and when ordered to form line of battle in the open field, within six hundred yards of the bank of the river, in full view of the gunboats, the movement was executed with as much promptness, coolness, and courage, as it could have been done by the best troops the world has ever produced."<sup>167</sup>

The Union boats disappeared down the river, but not before firing almost two hundred rounds at McCulloch's brigade. Despite the amount of shells thrown at his command, McCulloch lost only one man killed and two wounded. After destroying the enemy's camp, Walker marched his troops back to their camp on the Tensas and spent the next day moving them across the river. On June 2, Taylor ordered Walker to move to the town of Richmond, twenty miles west of Vicksburg. Taylor moved ahead of Walker and arrived at Richmond on June 5. Immediately, Taylor set out gathering intelligence about the Federal camps at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point, both bases on Grant's

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<sup>167</sup> Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 87-92; Winschel, "To Rescue Gibraltar," 45-46; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 83-85.

former supply line. His intelligence reports underestimated Union strength at both places. Walker's troops entered Richmond at 10:00 a.m. on June 6 where they bivouacked and rested. Here Taylor informed Walker of his plan to attack Milliken's Bend and Young's Point. At the same time, a small Louisiana cavalry force would strike the enemy at Lake Providence to the north.<sup>168</sup>

Unknown to Taylor, the Union commander at Milliken's Bend had also conducted reconnaissance of his own west of the river. Scouts reported the build-up of Confederate forces at Richmond, and the federals feared an attack on Milliken's was looming. Early on June 6, Colonel Hermann Lieb, commanding the Union troops at Milliken's Bend, took the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana (Federal) Infantry, one of three African regiments posted there, and several companies of the 10<sup>th</sup> Illinois Cavalry, and scouted forward to within three miles of Richmond. Here the Federals ran into rebel pickets, prompting their immediate return to Milliken's Bend. Lieb requested reinforcements and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa Infantry came down the Mississippi on transports to bolster his position, which included the aforementioned 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana, the 13<sup>th</sup> Louisiana (African), and the 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi (African). Lieb's total force numbered 1,061 men, mostly ill-trained and armed blacks just put into the army. As support, Union Admiral David Porter sent the gunboat *Choctaw* to Lieb's position. All during June 6, the Federals reinforced their camp with cotton bale breastworks built atop levees.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 457-458; Winschel, "To Rescue Gibraltar," 45-46.

<sup>169</sup> Winschel, "To Rescue Gibraltar," 47-49.

Taylor assumed the federals believed Richmond only to be occupied by Harrison's Louisiana cavalry, completely unaware that Walker's infantry were nearby. Taylor determined to attack at once. Walker ordered his troops to cook two days rations and be ready to move early in the morning of June 7, as the intense heat of the day made a night march preferable and a dawn attack lessened the possibility of gunboat involvement. Taylor instructed Walker to send one brigade to assault Milliken's Bend, ten miles from Richmond, and another to assault Young's Point, twenty miles from Richmond. The division would move down the Richmond road five miles to a point where the road forked, and the assaulting brigades would split away and head to their objectives. Walker's third brigade would stay behind at the fork as a reserve, prepared to move to either location if needed. After clearing the selected targets of the enemy, the two brigades were to march up and down the Mississippi to Duckport, nearly equidistant from Milliken's and Young's, and then along a road branching off the river, rejoining the reserve at the Richmond road fork.<sup>170</sup>

Taylor commented in his report, "Major General Walker and his brigade commanders appeared to enter heartily into this plan, and as no troops were to be engaged except their division, I deemed it proper to leave the execution of it to them." Walker selected McCulloch's brigade to attack Milliken's Bend and Hawes' brigade to attack Young's Point. Randal's brigade would be the reserve. For most of Walker's rebels, this expedition promised their first experience of combat. Except for the brief

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<sup>170</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 457-458, 471.

encounter at Perkins' Landing, none of the Texans had been under heavy enemy fire.

Joseph Blessington of McCulloch's brigade wrote of the experience:

In the evening we received orders to get ready for a night march. All the troops realized the hardship of a night march, and the forthcoming battle; yet not a man quailed or was found missing from his place. In sections four abreast, and in close order, the troops took up the line of march, in anticipation of meeting almost certain death, but with undaunted, unquailing spirits. In breathless silence, with the high and glittering stars looking down upon them, through dark and deep defiles marched the dense array of men, moving steadily forward; not a whisper was heard.<sup>171</sup>

In the darkness, Walker's troops marched east until they reached the road fork at a plantation called Oak Grove. Staying behind with Randal's brigade and the division artillery, Walker watched as his two other brigades headed in different directions. Led by a detachment of Harrison's cavalry supposedly familiar with the surrounding area, McCulloch's brigade reached a point about one and a half miles from Milliken's Bend at around 2:30 a.m. on June 7. Almost immediately, the cavalry scouts were fired upon by Federal skirmishers, causing them to reel around and head back toward McCulloch's skirmishers. The Texans mistook the cavalry for enemy horsemen and loosed a volley at them. Fortunately, the fire hit no one and only a few horses sustained injury. The rebel skirmishers then advanced and engaged the Union skirmishers, driving them back. McCulloch threw his regiments into line of battle with the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Dismounted Cavalry, 17<sup>th</sup> Texas infantry, and 19<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry in position from left to right. The 16th Texas Infantry was positioned slightly to the rear of the front line as support.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 459; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 94.

<sup>172</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 467; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 95-96; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 88.

The Texans advanced about a quarter of a mile when they encountered heavy fire from the Federal skirmishers from behind a thick hedge. The Texans drove the enemy back six hundred yards to a second hedge and then further back, fighting “hedge to hedge, ditch to ditch,” until McCulloch’s men reached to within twenty-five paces of the main Union defensive line on the levee. Here McCulloch ordered a charge. The troops ran into a large, thick hedge, which could not be passed except for a few openings. McCulloch commented in his report, “These had to be passed by the troops the best they could; never fronting more than half a company, before a line could be formed to charge the levee.” Once past the hedge, the rebels met heavy fire from the Yankees on the levee, but stubbornly pressed forward. Blessington recounted the fight: “The enemy opened with a terrible fire of musketry. After firing a volley at the enemy, we were ordered to charge them with the bayonet. Without stopping to reload, the troops on the left of the road rushed upon the enemy.”<sup>173</sup>

The Texans charged the levee, where the fight became close and savage, with bayonets being crossed and muskets fired at close range. According to McCulloch, “This charge was resisted by the Negro portion of the enemy’s force with considerable obstinacy, while the white of true Yankee portion ran like whipped curs almost as soon as the charge was ordered.” The Texans pushed the Union troops away from the levee and chased them into their camp, killing and wounding many of them. The Federals formed up behind a second levee closer to the river. McCulloch’s troops attempted another

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<sup>173</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 467; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker’s Texas Division*, 95-96; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 88.

assault, but the enemy position proved too strong, forcing the Texans to retreat to cover behind the first levee. Some officers of the brigade feared the Federals were attempting to turn their left flank, as some black troops were seen in the vicinity of some houses to the left, from where occasional musket shots rang out. A detached company quickly routed the Federals out of the houses, capturing nineteen men.<sup>174</sup>

As the two sides squared off from opposing levees, the Union gunboat *Choctaw* fired at the Texans. The firing attracted more gunboats until four total boats lobbed shells at McCulloch's men and raked the ground between the levees with grape and canister. McCulloch requested reinforcements and Walker advanced with Randal's brigade to the scene of the action. McCulloch had had enough, however, and ordered the position held until the wounded could be sent to the rear. After several hours the men felt exhausted by the lack of water. When Walker arrived with his reserve brigade, McCulloch had halted all attacks. Walker commented in his report, "Under such circumstances it would have been folly to have persisted in the attack which only could have resulted in a fearful sacrifice of life, and after making a personal reconnaissance, as far as practicable, and otherwise gaining the best information possible, I determined not to order another assault." Walker saw to the evacuation of the wounded and rested the tired and bloodied troops near the battlefield for several hours before sending McCulloch's brigade back toward Richmond and moving Randal's men back to the road to await Hawes' return from Young's Point.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 464, 467-468; Walker, "The War of Secession," 29.

<sup>175</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 459, 464.

In the first real contest faced by any of Walker's division, not to mention one of the earliest encounters between Confederate soldiers and black Union troops, McCulloch's brigade of 1,500 men lost 44 killed, 130 wounded, and 20 missing. The Federals lost 101 killed, 285 wounded, and 266 captured. Walker commented after the war that the stubborn resistance and the high losses suffered by McCulloch's brigade, 'opened the eyes of the Confederates to the consequence to be apprehended by the Federal employment of these auxiliaries.'" The large number of black casualties at Milliken's Bend caused controversy about the possible indiscriminate killing of wounded black soldiers and the question of Walker's troops issuing no quarter. Accounts of the fight reveal no concrete evidence of a planned massacre and the large number of blacks captured reveals that African-American troops received the same treatment as most Union captives. A majority of union soldiers at Milliken's Bend were black and therefore it is reasonable that more blacks than whites could be casualties.<sup>176</sup>

In the meantime, Hawes led his brigade of the 12<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 22<sup>nd</sup>, Texas Infantry regiments, numbering 1,400 men, with a cavalry detachment as a guide, toward Young's Point. Hawes wrote in his report that the guides were "inefficient and useless" to him. After parting from the rest of the division, Hawes' troops marched until 11:30 p.m. when they reached the Amos plantation, the home of his guide Lieutenant Amos, on Walnut Bayou eleven miles from Young's Point. Here they found the bridge over Walnut Bayou destroyed and no other apparent way across the swamp. Hawes learned of another bridge six miles above the Amos home and sent officers to examine its condition. After waiting

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<sup>176</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 459, 464; Walker, "The War of Secession," 29; Winschel, "To Rescue Gibraltar," 51-52; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 97-98.

until four o'clock in the morning on June 7 to hear about the bridge, Hawes learned it was suitable for their use.<sup>177</sup>

Not until 10:30 in the morning on June 7, well after the fight at Milliken's Bend, did Hawes' skirmishers hit the Federal pickets posted one and a half miles in front of Young's Point. After driving the pickets back a short distance, Hawes ordered his men into line of battle with two regiments in front and one in reserve, and advanced towards the enemy camp, 'believed to be a mile distant and approachable through woods,' according to his guide. Hawes' line moved forward a quarter of a mile, crossing several small bayous, before emerging on to an open, level field without any trees or brush, and in clear view of the enemy camp, still one and a half miles away. Hawes advanced his line a half mile across the field, making reconnaissance of the Union camp and the Mississippi River as they moved forward. The Union camp appeared to be defended by three infantry regiments and three gunboats on the river.<sup>178</sup>

Hawes pulled back his regiments and placed them in some woods to his left and rear, opposite Young's Point. The Union gunboats then began shelling the area between Hawes' brigade and Young' Point. While in the woods, Hawes learned that about five hundred of his men were down from exhaustion and excessive heat, half of which had to be moved to the rear. Hawes wrote in his report, "Knowing that General McCulloch had withdrawn from Milliken's Bend without carrying the position, and had asked for reinforcements, and that the general commanding division had marched to his assistance

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<sup>177</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 471; Report of James M. Hawes, June 8, 1863, John G. Walker Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

<sup>178</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 471.

with Colonel Randal's brigade, and that I could not carry the camp and destroy the stores there without a useless sacrifice of life, I determined to retire by the road I came." Hawes retreated and reached the bridge over Walnut bayou by 6:00 p.m. where he received orders to rejoin Walker and the rest of the division back at the road fork. After resting the brigade till midnight, Hawes reached the road junction early on June 8.<sup>179</sup>

After the affairs at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point, Walker's division remained camped near Richmond. Taylor expressed much frustration over the outcome of the expedition. He wrote in his report, "I regret exceedingly that I am unable to report results commensurate with the force employed on the expedition. Much greater loss ought to have been inflicted upon the enemy, and the store which he burned ought to have been captured for our use." Taylor also took a jab at Walker and his command for the less than spectacular outcome of events: "Unfortunately, I discovered too late that the officers and men of that division were possessed of a dread of gunboats such as pervaded our people at the commencement of the war. To this circumstance and want of mobility in these troops are to be attributed the meager results of the expedition."<sup>180</sup>

Walker defended his actions and those of McCulloch at Milliken's Bend.

Although less pleased with Hawes' performance, Walker attributed the mishap at

Young's Point to other issues. Walker said in his report:

I have only to remark that my orders to him were peremptory to attack the enemy at Young's Point. Our information of the strength and position of the enemy at that place was so recent and was thought so entirely reliable, that I did not think it necessary to attach any conditions to this order. The

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 472.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 459-460.

failure to carry out my instructions can only be defended by the existence of circumstances entirely at variance with those supposed to exist, and upon which the order was based. The loss of several precious hours in finding a bridge, which would have brought on the attack in the heat of an excessively hot day; the exhausted condition of the men, who would have gone into action under a burning sun after an almost continuous march of nearly 30 miles; the strong position of the enemy, defended by three gunboats, are the reasons assigned by Brigadier General Hawes...I am satisfied that the conviction must have been overpowering that the attack would fail after a useless sacrifice of life, or he would not have taken the responsibility he did.<sup>181</sup>

In the months following Milliken's Bend and Young's Point, Walker became incensed by Taylor's apparent criticism of him in the report and what he felt were legitimate reasons for the results of the expedition. Taylor later wrote a letter removing all blame for the mission and placing its deficiencies upon his own shoulders. Taylor wrote:

It has been brought to my attention by Maj. Gen. J.G. Walker that the language of my report touching operations near Milliken's Bend reflects upon him. He learns this from one of his staff just from Richmond. As I have not a copy of the report before me to verify the original words I used, I respectfully ask the lieutenant-general commanding to convey to the War Department the statement that nothing in the report was intended to reflect, directly, or indirectly, on General Walker. The plan was mine, and the position held by General Walker was strictly in accordance with my orders. The misconception existing at Richmond is calculated to injure unjustly a meritorious officer, and I ask that this communication be forwarded.

The greater problems with the attacks at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point can be traced to Taylor's dislike of the assignment. His strategic preference for an offensive in southern Louisiana led to his poor planning, faulty intelligence, and decision to leave

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 464-465.

field command to Walker and his brigade commanders. The original mistake can be placed on the outdated intelligence about Grant's supply line and Kirby Smith's ordering of the operation opposite Vicksburg. Either outcome of the engagements would not hurt Grant's operations. In executing Smith's strategy, Taylor made the mistake of letting Walker divide his division into three separate parts. An individual brigade had little hopes of success against Union forces in defensive positions and with gunboat support. If the entire division had advanced together with Walker at its head against either of the two positions, greater Confederate numbers might have compensated for the Union advantages.<sup>182</sup>

After the expedition opposite Vicksburg, Taylor focused once again on his plan to recapture the Teche and Lafourche regions of southern Louisiana, in hopes of reaching New Orleans. Across the Mississippi, General Johnston requested assistance from Kirby Smith to help relieve Port Hudson. Only then did Smith allow Taylor to resume his plans to reclaim southern Louisiana. With just three brigades of three thousand men, Taylor moved south to operate against the Union garrison at Brashear City. Feeling his force adequate for the task, Taylor ordered Walker to stay near Vicksburg with his division.<sup>183</sup>

Walker's division remained in the vicinity of Richmond until mid June. Grant, however, wanted to be sure that Walker's Texans could not harass his forces near Vicksburg in the future. On June 14 Union Brigadier General Joseph Mower's brigade of 1,200 troops and Brigadier General Alfred Ellet's Marine brigade of 1,300 troops left

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<sup>182</sup> T. Michael Parrish, *Richard Taylor: Soldier Prince of Dixie*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 291.

<sup>183</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 461; Parrish, *Richard Taylor*, 296; Prushankin, "A Crisis in Command," 151.

Young's Point to drive the Confederates away from Richmond. Scouts informed Walker of the large Union force advancing toward his command. Incorrectly believing himself outnumbered, Walker decided to move his division away to safety. Walker sent the 18<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry along with Edgar's battery about a mile in the direction of Young's Point to slow the Federal advance long enough to allow the passage of the wagon train to safety. The rest of the division formed line of battle at Roundaway Bayou north of town to protect the only bridge in the area.<sup>184</sup>

Colonel David B. Culberson of the 18<sup>th</sup> Texas placed his five hundred men in a ditch concealed by a hedge as the Union troops approached their position. Edgar's artillery opened fire with grape and canister, inflicting severe losses on the Federals, who approached the Texas infantrymen. When the Yankee got to within thirty yards, the rebels fired a volley that halted their advance. Culberson's troops counterattacked with the bayonet and chased the Federals back into the woods. The small engagement gave Walker enough time to remove all his wagons. The division withdrew across bayou Macon in the direction of Monroe. On June 16 Walker took up the march for Delhi, thirty-five miles east of Monroe. The division spent the next five days resting at Delhi. The men in the division presented a wild appearance after the recent campaign on the Mississippi. Joseph Blessington of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas infantry wrote:

But few of the troops shaved for weeks, and, as a consequence, there was a large...assortment of...black, gray, red, and sandy beards, as well as ferocious mustaches and whiskers – enough to rig out an army of West India buccaneers...Then as to costume, it is utterly impossible to paint the

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<sup>184</sup> *O.R.*, XXII, pt. 2, 915; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 110; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 105.

variety our division presented. Here would be a fellow dressed in homespun pants, with the knees out of them; on his head might be stuck the remnant of a straw hat, while a faded Texas penitentiary cloth jacket would perhaps complete his outfit.<sup>185</sup>

At Delhi, Walker's command received reinforcements in the form of Brigadier General James C. Tappan's Arkansas brigade. After the rest at Delhi, Walker's division spent the next three weeks marching back and forth along the bayous of northeast Louisiana, engaged in disturbing cotton plantations under the direction of Union agents enforcing northern business leases granted by the U.S. government. The Texans also interfered with the enemy's communications wherever possible, returned black laborers to slavery, capture escapees, chased Federal leasers from plantations, and burned cotton gins. On June 28, Randal's brigade and some rebel artillery surrounded a small Union fort at Goodrich's Landing, garrisoned by 113 black soldiers. The Federals surrendered rather than have the fort taken by force.<sup>186</sup>

As Walker's troops created havoc along the Mississippi River, Taylor's small force moved through the Teche region. His goal was Brashear City, the Union garrison that guarded Berwick's Bay, where Bayou Teche flowed into the Atchafalaya River, and the New Orleans and Opelousas Railroad. In a surprise attack, Taylor captured Brashear City on June 23. Taylor next decided to send the brigades of Brigadier Generals Thomas Green and Alfred Mouton to capture the towns of Thibodeaux and Donaldsonville in the Lafourche region, in hopes of moving closer to New Orleans and possibly enticing Banks

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<sup>185</sup> Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 110-111, 115; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 105-106.

<sup>186</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 466; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 112-115; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 106-107.

away from Port Hudson. Thibodeaux fell on June 24, but Taylor was repulsed at Donaldsonville on June 28.<sup>187</sup>

After his initial successes in southern Louisiana, Taylor sent word to Walker on June 30 to prepare to move south to Berwick's Bay. Before he could march, Walker received orders from Kirby Smith countermanding Taylor's order. In late June the high command considered sending Walker's division to attempt to reinforce Vicksburg. Smith sought Walker's opinion on the matter. On July 3, Walker sent a letter to Smith explaining his opposition and reasons against the using of his division in any attempt to reinforce Vicksburg. Walker explained:

In reference to your inquiry as to the practicality of throwing reinforcements and provisions into Vicksburg, I am reluctantly compelled to state that, with the force at my disposal, or within my reach, I consider it utterly impracticable. At no time since my arrival in this region has my force amounted to more than 4,700 effective men, and such has been the deleterious effect of the climate and bad weather, that in two weeks time in the three brigades I had barely 2,500 men fit for duty. Since I have been reinforced by Tappan's brigade from Arkansas, my force has not exceeded at any time 4,200 men fit for duty. To reach a point opposite Vicksburg, it would be necessary to march for 20 or 30 miles into the narrow peninsula at the eastern extremity of which the city is situated, while on the right and left, only a few miles distant, by practicable roads, overwhelming forces can without difficulty be thrown upon my rear, which could not fail to secure the capture or destruction of my command.

Walker also explained the heavy Union reinforcements in the area since the fights at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point. His troops could not approach the area without certain detection by the enemy. According to Walker, evidence of the Union strength could be found in his being attacked at Richmond the previous month. He felt his force

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<sup>187</sup> Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, 115-119; Parrish, *Richard Taylor*, 296-300; Prushankin, "A Crisis in Command," 156-157.

too small to operate against an enemy that could place a superior force almost anywhere to counter his movements.<sup>188</sup>

The Confederate garrison at Vicksburg surrendered the next day, July 4. Port Hudson capitulated to Banks' army four days later. Taylor's small force had advanced to only sixteen miles from New Orleans when he learned of Port Hudson's fall. Banks could now turn his army to deal with Taylor in southern Louisiana. The Federals reinforced Donaldsonville and pushed Taylor out of the Lafourche region by July 12. Taylor had no choice but to take his small army and retreat up Bayou Teche to avoid encirclement by the Federals. Taylor expressed his fury over the missed opportunities and blamed Kirby Smith for the losses that summer. In his memoir, Taylor cited Smith's withholding of Walker's division from his command, to his failure to reach New Orleans:

As foreseen, our movement resulted, and could result, in nothing. Walker was directed to desist from further efforts on the river, and move to Monroe, where steamers would be in readiness to return his command to Alexandria, to which place I pushed on in advance. Subsequently, General Kirby Smith reached Monroe direct from Shreveport, countermanded my orders, and returned Walker back into the region east of the Tensas, where this good soldier and his fine division were kept idle for some three weeks, until the fall of Vicksburg. The time wasted on these absurd movements cost us the garrison of Port Hudson, nearly eight thousand men; but the pressure on General Kirby Smith to do something for Vicksburg was too strong to be resisted.<sup>189</sup>

After the fall of Vicksburg, Walker expressed the most concern for his division, reduced by illness from the many summer weeks in the swampy lowlands along the Tensas and opposite Vicksburg. Walker later wrote, "The ravages of disease have

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<sup>188</sup> *O.R.*, XXII, pt. 2, 915-916; *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 466.

<sup>189</sup> Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 139.

fearfully weakened my force, and I consider it essential to its future usefulness that it should be removed from here as early as practicable.” The division dwindled from five thousand to barely two thousand effective troops due to illness. Walker attributed the sickness to the “recent overflow of the country by the Mississippi.” Walker decided to move his troops to the higher country near Monroe, forming a sick camp, or open air hospital in the pine lands. Soon thereafter, the division received orders to proceed to the Red River Valley, forcing Walker to deal with over a thousand sick men, unable to march with the column. Walker decided to move the whole number of sick by easy marches to Natchitoches on the Red River.<sup>190</sup>

With the aid of only twenty wagons and twelve ambulances, Walker’s Chief Surgeon Beall, managed to move all the sick over one hundred miles in sixteen days.

Walker described this amazing feat in detail:

The plan adopted was to take the worst cases early in the morning by ambulance and wagons, and transport then say, five, six, or at most seven miles, to the encampment for the night. The ambulances then returned for the next worse class of cases, whilst the stronger ones and the convalescents would take their own time, resting frequently under the shade of the forest through which they were passing, and reaching the camp before dark. The improvement in the condition of the sick from the first day was marked, and upon their arrival at Red River nine hundred, out of the one thousand were fit for duty.<sup>191</sup>

On July 12, Walker’s division left Monroe for Alexandria, crossing the Ouachita River at Trenton Ferry, north of Monroe, and set up camp a mile west of Trenton until July 19. The division continued to Alexandria, taking boats down the Red River to a

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<sup>190</sup> *O.R.*, XXIV, pt. 2, 466; Walker, “The War of Secession,” 30-31.

<sup>191</sup> Walker, “The War of Secession,” 31-32.

camp near the town of Vernon on July 22. At this time, Brigadier General Henry McCulloch received orders reassigning him to command in Texas. Colonel Flournoy of the 16<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry took temporary command of the brigade. The division reached Campiti on July 27 and remained there until August 3 when the men ferried across the Red River to Grand Ecore. The next morning, ferry boats from Shreveport moved the troops to Alexandria. After spending some days at Alexandria, the division marched to Camp Green, twenty-five miles southwest of Alexandria on August 10 where they stayed until the end of the month.<sup>192</sup>

During the months of August and September, Walker's Texans suffered through the common camp characteristics of inactivity and boredom. Many of the troops harbored sour feelings about the loss of Vicksburg and how affairs in the department were being handled. Many others believed the war to be already lost. Lack of furloughs, low pay, inadequate food, and lack of campaigning further hurt Confederate morale. During these months, desertion once again plagued the division and only the threat of execution brought men to their senses. Most of Walker's men remained dedicated to the cause of defending hearth and home from Yankee depredations. During this time of war, Walker's troops, like many others in Confederate armies throughout the South turned to religion to help sustain them in difficult times. A member of Walker's command wrote home, "The meetings in the command still continue. You never saw such scenes in your life. The woods are filled day and night with men praying and singing. There has now

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<sup>192</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 2, 121; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 127-131.

been near 40 conversions and Martin has baptized 12. He also baptized 12 today in Hawes brigade. The Spirit of the Lord is in the army here.”<sup>193</sup>

The only excitement came in late August when Walker received a report that a Union force crossed the Mississippi from Natchez to capture Fort Beauregard, a small Confederate post near Harrisonburg, forty miles northeast of Alexandria. Misinformed about the enemy’s strength, Walker sent Randal’s 1,100 men to face almost 4,000 Federals. As Randal’s troops trudged their way through the swamps and woods, the commander at Fort Beauregard evacuated the fort on September 4. The same day, advanced troops in Randal’s brigade skirmished with Federal raiding parties, but quickly withdrew back toward Alexandria when they heard of the fort’s abandonment. Union troops destroyed the fort before retiring as well.<sup>194</sup>

Union armies in the Trans-Mississippi became active once again in the fall of 1863. In September, 15,000 Union troops under Major General Frederick Steele advanced from Helena, Arkansas toward Little Rock, pushing back General Sterling Price’s Confederates. Price abandoned Little Rock and retreated behind the Ouachita River with his 7,000 infantry and 2,500 cavalry. For the rest of the fall and winter the ground between the Arkansas and Ouachita Rivers became a no man’s land between armies and a scene of frequent cavalry clashes. At the same time, Banks’ Federals in Louisiana received orders to operate against Texas. Banks decided to attempt an amphibious landing of Union troops on the Texas coast at the Sabine River. The

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<sup>193</sup> Anderson, ed., *A Texas Surgeon in the CSA*, 77, 82; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 116-118.

<sup>194</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 1, 279-280; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 119.

Yankees could then move to capture Houston, and gain control of railroad communications inland. The expedition of twenty vessels set sail on September 5. Early on September 8, one transport and four gunboats entered the mouth of the Sabine River, and encountered a small Confederate redoubt of six cannons. The Union gunboats and the rebel post engaged in a heated fight in which two of the gunboats became disabled and a third grounded. The Union fleet decided to abandon the effort and returned to New Orleans.<sup>195</sup>

Despite the union failure at Sabine Pass, Banks did not give up on the idea of reaching Texas. Earlier, Union General Henry Halleck suggested advancing up the Red River, but at the time the low water did not permit the use of boats to maintain a long supply line. Banks instead planned to move up the Teche region of Louisiana and over the southern plains to Niblett's Bluff and into eastern Texas. Major General William B. Franklin led his divisions of the Nineteenth Corps and Thirteenth Corps, about 19,500 total troops, up the lower Teche on October 3, slowly moving toward Opelousas. In the face of the large Union force, Taylor's rebels fell back skirmishing along the way, instructed by Kirby Smith to "throw every obstacle in his way and contest every position; avoid a general engagement, but while of the defensive to assume the offensive on every favorable occasion." The Federals eventually muscled their way forward and took Opelousas and the surrounding territory. Simultaneously, Banks took the opportunity to

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<sup>195</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 2, 218, 220-221; Walker, "The War of Secession," 34-35; John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 294-296.

launch a second water borne expedition to the Texas coast in late October, landing at Brazos Santiago and occupying Brownsville and Point Isabel.<sup>196</sup>

In late September, Walker's division received orders to move south from Alexandria to reinforce Taylor. By mid-October, Walker's brigades camped only seven miles from Opelousas. Franklin sent a cavalry force out of Opelousas on October 24 headed towards Taylor's force near Moundville. Taylor placed Walker's division and the Louisiana brigade of Brigadier General Alfred Mouton in drainage ditches and behind plantation outbuildings looking down the road from Opelousas. The Union horsemen met Green's cavalry, however, and retired after a brief skirmish. Despite the proximity of the enemy, the only noteworthy event for Walker in October was the arrival of Brigadier General William R. Scurry from Texas, who took command of McCulloch's former brigade from Colonel Flournoy. Throughout October, the Union push through Louisiana stalled as Franklin wasted much time trying to determine his next move. When he reached the upper Teche, Franklin found the water in the bayous not suitable for navigation and difficult to maneuver around. By October 28, Franklin decided to abandon the overland expedition to Texas and began a slow withdrawal by fragments toward New Iberia. All the while, Taylor's men continued to skirmish with the Federals, now moving backwards.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> *O.R.*, XXII, pt. 1, 24-26; XXVI, pt. 2, 251-252, 294-295, 341-342, 410; Walker, "The War of Secession," 38; Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, 298.

<sup>197</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 1, 386-392; Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, 298; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 131-133.

Franklin began to withdraw his Federals south of Opelousas in early November to find forage for his army. Green's cavalry continued to scout and monitor Franklin's movements with regiments from Walker's and Brigadier General Camille de Polignac's brigades as infantry support. Green quickly learned that the Union rearguard, the Thirteenth Corps division of Brigadier General Stephen Burbridge, left itself in an isolated position, seven miles below Opelousas at bayou Bourbeau. Taylor ordered Green to harass the separated Union force. At that time, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Texas of Walker's division and the 15<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry from Polignac's command sat positioned north of the town of Washington on outpost duty while the rest of the infantry camped several miles to the northwest. Green with his two cavalry brigades and the three infantry regiments took up a line of march toward Opelousas on November 1.<sup>198</sup>

Green spent November 2 reconnoitering the Federal position at Bayou Bourbeau and decided to attack. The Union brigade of Colonel Richard Owen, 1,250 men strong, camped just below a skirt of woods near the bayou. Green placed the three infantry regiments, about 950 men led by senior colonel, Oran M. Roberts, of the 11<sup>th</sup> Texas, on the left flank of the Confederate line with orders to attack the Union right flank. The rebel cavalry of Colonel A.P. Bagby's brigade would occupy the center of the line while Colonel J.P. Major's horsemen held the Confederate right wing. Along with the cavalry, Green posted a section of Daniel's battery and a section of the Valverde battery.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 1, 393-394; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 134-135.

<sup>199</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 1, 394; Alwyn Barr, ed., "The Battle of Bayou Bourbeau, November 3, 1863: Colonel Oran M. Roberts' Report," *Louisiana History* 6 (Winter 1965), 85-86.

Early on November 3, Colonel Roberts organized his infantry two miles south of Opelousas and took up line of march for the enemy camped on the west side of Bayou Bourbeau on the old Grand Coteau Road. In the battle line, Roberts placed the 15<sup>th</sup> Texas on the right flank, the 18<sup>th</sup> Texas in the center, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Texas on the left flank. At 11:00 a.m. Roberts' troops moved down the road toward the Cavinque farm, held by Union pickets. Roberts pressed his Texans forward amid musketry from the enemy pickets. The rebels moved under fire over difficult terrain for almost a mile before encountering a stronger Union line at which the Texans charged with bayonets and chased the Federals from the farm. After a brief rest, the line reformed and marched up a ridge to the edge of the woods. By this time, Union officers had scrambled to form their troops in line of battle. Roberts' regiments met withering fire from the enemy attempting to defend their camp.<sup>200</sup>

Roberts' troops and the Federals blazed away until Union cavalry threatened the Confederate flank. To avoid the danger, Roberts advanced the Texans forward with the bayonet, sending the Federals running through their camps. General Green recalled the event: "Our infantry was most stubbornly resisted by the enemy, but they gallantly and steadily moved forward, without for a moment faltering, under a most terrific fire of artillery and musketry...the whole Federal force gave way as soon as the engagement became general and close." As the rebel infantry swarmed into the Union camp, Major's horsemen charged into the enemy's flank, while Bagby's mounted and dismounted troopers hit the center. Hundreds of unfortunate Union troops fell prisoner as they fled

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<sup>200</sup> Barr, ed., "The Battle of Bayou Bourbeau," 88-89; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 139-140.

through the camp and into the prairies and woods behind to avoid being overwhelmed by the Confederate tide. The pursuit came to an abrupt halt as a Union division from the Nineteenth Corps came up to support Burbridge's fleeing men. After the hard fight, Green had no desire to tangle with the large enemy force moving up from the rear and ordered the Confederates to retire west of the bayou then rejoin the wagon train camped a mile south of Opelousas.<sup>201</sup>

Roberts' three regiments lost 139 out of the 180 Confederate casualties at Bayou Bourbeau. Union losses amounted to 25 killed, 129 wounded, and 562 captured. After blunting Green's pursuit at Bayou Bourbeau, General Franklin continued his slow withdrawal on November 4, fighting small skirmishes with rebel cavalry until he reached the earthworks of New Iberia where he put his troops into winter camp on November 17.<sup>202</sup>

As the campaign season came to a close in 1863, General Kirby Smith in Shreveport still desired to protect his department from a possible Union thrust up the Red River Valley and into the heart of the Trans-Mississippi theatre. In response, Taylor ordered Walker's division to the area at the convergence of the Mississippi, Red, and Atchafalaya Rivers. The division dug in near Simmesport along the west side of the Mississippi, and placed artillery batteries to harass Union naval traffic attempting to navigate the river. On November 18, the Union gunboats *Signal* and the Texans former Milliken's Bend nemesis, *Choctaw*, steamed up the river and met with cannon and

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<sup>201</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 1, 394; Barr, ed., "The Battle of Bayou Bourbeau," 89; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 140-142; Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, 298-299.

<sup>202</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt. 1, 359, 395; Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, 299.

musket fire from Walker's troops in position behind a levee. Later that same day, Walker's men fired on the transport *Emerald*. Walker's men did relatively minor damage to these vessels, but scored a victory three days later on November 21. The transport *Black Hawk* attempted to run past their guns, but rebel fire severely damaged the boat, setting it on fire and forcing it to run aground. Despite successes, the Confederates were forced to retire west of the Atchafalaya by the rise of the water, which threatened to destroy the bridges and trap them in an exposed position.<sup>203</sup>

In late November, Taylor ordered Walker to lead his division downriver to capture a supposedly undermanned Union garrison at Plaquemine, on the bank of the Mississippi about sixty miles southeast of Simmesport. Walker marched his division south on December 1. The Texans marched for three days over difficult interior roads before reaching the town of Lavina. Here Walker received information that caused him to second guess the attempt on Plaquemine. Walker decided to abandon the attack and stated his reasons in his report:

At this point, however, I have received the most exact and entirely reliable information in regard to the strength of the garrison, and the nature of the defenses. In addition, I am well assured that a spy of the enemy yesterday afternoon carried him the information of our movement, which leaves no longer a hope that we will be able to effect a surprise... There is an absolute certainty that we will meet such resistance as will render the capture of Plaquemine, if not impracticable, only possible at an expense of life that we cannot afford. I am fortified in this opinion by the unanimous concurrence of Brigadier General Mouton, commanding division, and his brigade commanders, and the brigade commanders of my own division. The circumstances of my position and the great necessity to preserve from useless sacrifice the only force left us for the defense of Western

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<sup>203</sup> Walker, "The War of Secession," 40; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 151-152; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 151-153; Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, 299.

Louisiana, compelled me to abandon the attempt on Plaquemine, a position of no strategic importance, and to content myself for the present with opposing such obstacles as may be in my power to the navigation of the Mississippi River.<sup>204</sup>

Walker's troops re-crossed the Atchafalaya at Morgan's Ferry on December 11 and passed through Simmesport, camping at Bayou De Glaize on December 13. Two days later, Walker ordered Randal's and Hawes' brigades to Marksville to construct winter quarters. Scurry's brigade stayed behind to guard the Atchafalaya country. The next day Scurry's brigade moved to the Norwood plantation a mile north and made winter quarters in some abandoned slave cabins. Various companies from the division picketed at Simmesport throughout the winter. The holiday season and the winter of 1863-1864 passed without incident. Only a few eventful moments occurred at this time. In January, the 12<sup>th</sup> Texas of Hawes' brigade and the 11<sup>th</sup> Texas of Randal's brigade competed in a drill competition, in which the 12<sup>th</sup> regiment won and received a banner, presented by Walker. In February, Hawes received orders to proceed to a new command at Galveston, Texas. Brigadier General Thomas N. Waul soon arrived to take over his brigade. Joseph Blessington wrote that the troops were in fine health and happy as Walker instituted, "a liberal system of furloughing which gave general satisfaction to the troops."<sup>205</sup>

Elijah Petty of Walker's division once wrote home, "I do reckon that Walker's Division has traveled more and fought less than any other troops in the Confederacy." Petty's statement is very true. Walker and his troops spent most of 1863 marching

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<sup>204</sup> Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 155-156.

<sup>205</sup> *O.R.*, XXVI, pt .2, 249-250; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 158, 164-165.

hundreds of miles up and down the Trans-Mississippi to face suspected enemy threats. The Federal troops even gave the Texans the nickname “Greyhounds,” because according to one of Walker’s men, “They said they could hear of us one day perhaps a hundred and fifty miles off and the next day we would be fighting them.” Throughout the year, both the district commander, Taylor, and the department commander Smith, felt Walker’s division necessary to the success of their immediate focus in the war. The division often found itself bouncing back and forth to the whims of these two generals. Walker and his troops probably could have been used more efficiently in 1863, especially along the Mississippi. In the spring, when Grant’s supply line to Vicksburg sat on the west bank, Smith sent Walker west in the other direction toward Alexandria. By the time Smith sent Walker back to hit the enemy line of communications, Grant had removed it across the river. Also, as Taylor clamored to attack New Orleans, Smith held Walker in the swamps opposite Vicksburg. When Smith allowed Walker to join Taylor in southern Louisiana, Port Hudson had fallen and the Federals forced Taylor to move north and give up his move on New Orleans. Considering the firepower of Union gunboats on the waterways and the mobility the boats provided Union infantry, it is doubtful Walker’s division could have effected any change on the inevitable outcome of Vicksburg and Port Hudson.<sup>206</sup>

Despite the losses suffered by the Confederacy in the summer of 1863, Walker and his men helped stunt the Union army’s first attempt to move troops into their home state of Texas. Along the way, many of Walker’s men received their baptism of fire at

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<sup>206</sup> Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., “Bully for Flournoy’s Regiment, We Are Some Punkins, You’ll Bet: The Civil War Letters of Virgil Sullivan Rabb, Captain, Company I, Sixteenth Texas Infantry, CSA,” *Military History of the Southwest*, Part One, 19, no. 2, (Fall 1989), 183; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 112-113; Prushankin, “A Crisis in Command,” 6.

such places as Milliken's Bend and Bayou Bourbeau. Walker performed well in these battles despite the continuous infighting among his two ranking commanders. Walker developed a strong bond and concern for the well being of his Texans that is reflected in his careful handling of the division. At Milliken's Bend, Walker called off the attack when it would have only cost lives and likewise defended Hawes' decision to not assault Young's Point. In the Vicksburg debate, Walker expressed no desire to see his men chewed up trying to run the gauntlet to a siege that was doomed to fail. Again at Plaquemine, Walker determined the objective of the mission not to be commiserate with the potential loss of life. In a war filled with senseless fights ordered by senseless commanders, Walker seemed to show common sense.

Although small compared to many battles, the campaigns of 1863 forged warriors out of simple Texas farmers and developed a strong relationship between Walker and his Texans. Wilburn Hill King wrote after the war about Walker, "whose soldierly abilities and service in battle and on the march, and whose modesty, manliness, and consideration for his men at all times so endeared him to them as to cause this splendid command to proudly take the name and be known to the end of the war as Walker's Division." Together in 1864, Walker and his men would face the largest Union effort to knock the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy out of the war and plant the Stars and Stripes on Texas soil.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> David L. Norris, ed., *With the 18<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry: The Autobiography of Wilburn Hill King*, (Hillsboro, TX: Hill College Press, 1996), 73-74.

## CHAPTER V

### RED RIVER CAMPAIGN TO THE WAR'S END, 1864-1865

While Walker and his Texans spent the winter of 1863-1864 sharpening their military skills, the Union army still planned for the capture of Texas and the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy. After two failed attempts with the defeat of the Union fleet at Sabine Pass and Franklin's retreat during the Overland Expedition, the Union goals for the department had gone unfulfilled, but had not changed. In New England, northern textile mills began to feel the shortage of cotton and lobbyists from the industry pressured the Federal government for decisive action. Rumors abounded about thousands of cotton bales in the Red River Valley of Louisiana and Eastern Texas that sat ripe for the picking. Another lobbying group in the form of exiled Texas Unionists continuously clamored for a military movement in favor of Texas occupation and liberation from the Confederacy. The U.S. government in Washington also favored a military expedition to demonstrate American strength in the region in the face of the French controlled puppet government in Mexico. Washington hoped to deter the French from aiding the Confederates and to stymie foreign trade across the Rio Grande with the Trans-Mississippi.<sup>208</sup>

With the previous failures to effectively occupy Texas in 1863, the Union command finally accepted General Halleck's earlier proposal for a combined army and naval advance up the Red River Valley of Louisiana toward Shreveport and the heart of the Trans-Mississippi Confederacy. Banks showed support for the idea when he learned

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<sup>208</sup> Ludwell H. Johnson, *Red River Campaign: Politics and Cotton in the Civil War*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1958), 9, 13-14, 34-35.

he would receive reinforcements from Sherman's army across the Mississippi and that the Union army under Major General Frederick Steele in Little Rock, Arkansas would also move south against Shreveport in a double pincer movement coordinating with Banks' force. After capturing the Confederate headquarters, the combined armies would march into Texas.<sup>209</sup>

During the first months of 1864, spies and scouts in southern Louisiana provided information to the Confederate command about the buildup of Union forces in the region. The scouts reported that the Red River Valley seemed the likely Federal line of advance. Kirby Smith learned in March that the Union fleet under Rear Admiral David Porter and infantry of the Union Sixteenth Corps moved down from Vicksburg to reinforce Banks. At the same time, Smith learned of Steele's apparent preparations to advance from the north. Smith correctly determined the objective of their march to be Shreveport and the destruction of the military depots and shops in the vicinity. In response to the Union threat of a move up the Red River, the Confederate command put Walker's division to work during the winter building defensive fortifications near Marksville where the Red, Atchafalaya, and Mississippi Rivers converged.<sup>210</sup>

Walker's troops set about reconstructing Fort DeRussy, a small defensive work located three miles north of Marksville and about forty miles down river from Alexandria on the north bank of the Red River. Along with Fort DeRussy, Walker's men constructed

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>210</sup> Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1879), 154; Edmund Kirby Smith, "The Defense of the Red River," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. IV, eds., Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1956), 369; Richard Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division, CSA: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 164-165.

trenches and breastworks near Simmesport along Bayou De Glaize and on the west bank of Yellow Bayou. About six miles below DeRussy, the Texans built a water barrier of iron plates and bolts clogged with logs and felled trees to stop enemy ships. From the beginning, Walker expressed skepticism as to the effectiveness of the defenses. He had gained much experience with river based defense while serving in the East. From his service at Evansport and Aquia Creek on the Potomac and Drewry's Bluff on the James River in Virginia, Walker wrote that artillery fire directed at moving naval vessels was usually inaccurate at distances of two hundred to three hundred yards. Walker felt the location of the DeRussy guns meant that "not one shot in ten" would be aimed accurately. Walker also noticed that the artillery gunners would be unable to see enemy ships until the river had risen another twelve to fifteen feet above its present level and the river only had to rise a couple of feet before the enemy ships could pass. Walker also felt the most effective artillery pieces should be moved from the fort to the water battery. He recommended the 9-inch and 32 pound rifle guns should be moved from the fort to the water battery and the two 24 pound guns be placed at DeRussy to defend against a land assault.<sup>211</sup>

Walker's dislike of Fort DeRussy also included its physical location, which he believed unfavorable. He wrote after the war that the fort was commanded by a large range of hills in the rear that stood eight to ten feet higher in elevation than the fort. He also commented that an adequate defense would require ten thousand men to be

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<sup>211</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 128 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), XXXIV, pt. 2, 894; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 166.

positioned on those hills. Walker recommended the construction of breastworks and the placement of artillery atop the hills as their occupation by the enemy would make DeRussy indefensible. Walker also had qualms about the location of the raft-like water defense. He thought the defense too far downstream from the fort for the artillery to provide support. Walker commented that the enemy could come upriver and remove the obstructions from the water at his own leisure without facing artillery fire from the guns of DeRussy.<sup>212</sup>

Despite his concerns, about three hundred of Walker's troops and three companies of heavy artillery under Lieutenant Colonel William Byrd held Fort DeRussy. The rest of Walker's division held the line of the Atchafalaya about twenty-five miles from the Mississippi River. Scurry's brigade occupied Simmesport on the Atchafalaya while Randal's and Waul's brigades camped twenty miles to the west at Marksville. In late February, General Thomas Green's cavalry division moved west into Texas to reinforce General Magruder's district, leaving Walker with only three companies of Louisiana cavalry on the east side of the Atchafalaya. Harrison's Louisiana cavalry camped to the north near Monroe. Taylor's other infantry brigades under Generals Mouton and Polignac camped at Alexandria and Trinity on the Ouachita, respectively.<sup>213</sup>

In mid-March, when the waters of the Red River rose high enough for ships, Banks' set his army in motion for what history remembers as the Red River Campaign. Banks' army consisted of two divisions of the Thirteenth Corps and two divisions of the

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<sup>212</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 2, 894; John G. Walker, "The War of Secession West of the Mississippi River During the Years 1863, 64, & 65," Myron G. Gwinner Collection, U.S. Army History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 42-43.

<sup>213</sup> Walker, "The War of Secession," 43; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 154.

Nineteenth Corps. On March 10, two divisions of the Sixteenth Corps and one division of the Seventeenth Corps from Sherman's army, led by Major General Andrew J. Smith, headed south from Vicksburg to join Banks. Banks' force also contained a cavalry division under Brigadier General Albert Lee and over ninety pieces of artillery, bringing the total to nearly 30,000 men. Operating closely with Banks, Admiral Porter's fleet consisted of around sixty gunboats and transports.<sup>214</sup>

On March 12, Walker received information that pickets had seen Federal gunboats and transports moving down the Mississippi River above Simmesport. Walker correctly guessed that these troops were from Vicksburg as they came down the river. The same day, Walker received a dispatch from Scurry on Yellow Bayou, four miles from Simmesport, that a large enemy force had disembarked at Simmesport with artillery and wagon trains. Based on Scurry's information, Walker estimated the Federal force as twenty-seven transports and fourteen gunboats. Union General A.J. Smith's 10,000 Vicksburg veterans had landed. Scurry intended to advance with his brigade toward the Atchafalaya and attack the Federals in an attempt to drive them back upon their boats. The strength of the enemy, the dry swamps around the flanks of the Yellow Bayou defenses, and the fear of being cut off from the other brigades at Marksville, however forced Scurry to withdraw to Moreauville, eleven miles west of Simmesport. Walker instructed Scurry to fall back, slowing the enemy advance when he could. If heavily pressed, Walker advised Scurry to retreat west of Bayou de Glaize, put his brigade into line behind the bridge at Bout de Bayou, and resist the Union advance until Walker

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<sup>214</sup> Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 89, 99-100.

arrived with the rest of the division. Walker spent the night of March 12 preparing his other brigades to march toward Scurry.<sup>215</sup>

Walker reached Bout de Bayou on March 13 and learned that Scurry had fallen back across the De Glaize and taken position behind the long bridge. Walker also realized that the movement of Union gunboats up the Atchafalaya had cut off his cavalry force at Pointe Coupee, leaving him no means to conduct a reconnaissance of the enemy strength and positions. The Federals kept their movements well screened by their cavalry. Early on March 14, the large Union force moved towards Walker's position. At around 8:30 a.m. the Federals entered Moreauville and turned left, marching along the De Glaize and driving back Walker's pickets. For the first time in the campaign, Walker could see the true strength of the enemy force. He later wrote that the Federal line extended two and a half miles along Bayou de Glaize and through Moreauville, then disappeared in the direction of the Atchafalaya. Walker estimated the Union force at 15,000 to 17,000 infantry, three hundred cavalry, thirty to forty pieces of artillery, and a wagon train.<sup>216</sup>

Walker placed his brigades into line and prepared to give battle at Bout de Bayou, hoping reinforcements would arrive to support his division, which he placed at 3,828 men and twelve artillery pieces. Walker soon reassessed his situation. He later reported that although his position could hold well against a smaller enemy force, the Federal strength forced him to reconsider. Walker also stated that the dryness of the ground above and

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<sup>215</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 598; William R. Scurry to John G. Walker, March 12, 1864, John G. Walker Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

<sup>216</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 598-599.

below Bout de Bayou bridge, usually covered with water, would allow the passage of enemy infantry and artillery. Walker realized the true danger of his position. His division sat on an island formed by the Red River, and Bayous De Glaize, Du Lac, and Choctaw. The only way out of the natural cul-de-sac was eight miles to the south at Bayou Du Lac Bridge. Walker feared the enemy could turn his flank and cut off any movements toward Du Lac, closing off any escape and destroying his entire command. Walker also believed a withdrawal towards Marksville and Fort DeRussy would have been equally dangerous. Walker determined to move towards Du Lac, unfortunately leaving the small garrison at Fort DeRussy on it own devices. Walker later vindicated the decision in his report:

By falling back, however, toward Bayou Du Lac and watching the movements of the enemy I was in hopes of finding an opportunity of attacking him should he march upon Fort DeRussy with less than his entire strength. The prairie country through which the enemy would pass would give me an excellent opportunity for observing his movements and estimating his strength. All these considerations induced me to adopt the only course not dictated by folly or madness; and however mortifying it might be to abandon our brave companions in arms at Fort DeRussy to their fate, it became my imperative duty to do so rather than attempt resistance, which at best could delay this danger but a few hours, and without a miracle from Heaven would insure the certain destruction of my entire command.<sup>217</sup>

At 10:00 a.m. on March 14, Walker began to march toward Bayou Du Lac. He moved his division along the Marksville and Simmesport road to another road that diverged from it at Mansura. Near Mansura, Walker formed his division into line and prepared to fight. When the Federals did not oblige him in battle, Walker continued to

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<sup>217</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 599.

move his troops toward Du Lac, reaching the bayou at 4 p.m. Here, a company of cavalry from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Louisiana and a portion of another joined Walker and informed him that the larger portion of the enemy had reached Marksville at around 3:00 p.m. and bivouacked while a force of about 4,000 moved toward DeRussy. Union General A.J. Smith had been advised by Admiral Porter that DeRussy had to be captured before the Union army could march to Alexandria. The Union officers decided to attack the fort with the navy on the river and the army in the rear of the fort. Just as Walker had feared, Union brigades from Smith's corps attacked from the hills and captured DeRussy along with 319 rebels and ten guns.<sup>218</sup>

After learning of DeRussy's capitulation at around sundown on March 14, Walker marched his division across Du Lac and burned the bridge behind them. Walker remained at Du Lac until March 16 when he made a night march to Lloyd's Bridge on Bayou Boeuf, twenty-five miles south of Alexandria. Walker understood that the enemy could embark troops and move them by river to Alexandria, cutting off his troops and forcing them to move west into the "desert" between the Calcasieu and the Sabine, and possibly forcing Walker to escape to Niblett's Bluff and into Texas. Walker arrived at Lloyd's Bridge on March 17 and linked with Alfred Mouton's Louisiana brigade the next day. There on the Boeuf, Major General Taylor arrived with Polignac's Texas brigade and formed a division out of Mouton's and Polignac's commands to be led by Mouton.

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 304-305, 599-600; Joseph P. Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, (New York: Lange, Little, and Co., Printers, 1875, reprint Austin TX: State House Press, 1994), 173.

Taylor then marched Walker's and Mouton's divisions to Carroll Jones' plantation, located about thirty-five miles from Alexandria on March 19.<sup>219</sup>

Taylor decided to remain at Carroll Jones' plantation and await reinforcements. While there, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Louisiana Cavalry joined Taylor's small army. At the same time, the Union Thirteenth and Nineteenth Corps under Banks had been advancing north up Bayou Teche, passing through Opelousas and Washington. Banks soon rendezvoused with A.J. Smith and the combined army continued its move north. Federal cavalry continued to scout in advance and search for the retreating Confederates. On March 20 and 21, troopers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Louisiana Cavalry skirmished with Union cavalry near Carroll Jones' plantation. Taylor sent Edgar's artillery battery to reinforce the cavalry. On the night of March 22, a large force of Union cavalry took a road unknown to the Confederates and moved into the rear of the Louisiana horsemen and Edgar's guns on Henderson Hill. The Federals launched a surprise attack that captured Edgar's four guns and about one hundred of the rebel cavalymen.<sup>220</sup>

On the morning of March 22, Taylor feared that the Union cavalry would advance on Carroll Jones' plantation and decided to move the wagon train to Beasley's, a forage depot twelve miles away near the roads to Fort Jesup and Natchitoches. After the loss of the cavalry at Henderson Hill the same night, Taylor put the infantry into motion toward Beasley's, where they remained until March 29. As the Confederates moved northwest,

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<sup>219</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 600-601; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 156; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 174-175.

<sup>220</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 561-562; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 177; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 99.

the Union army followed. A.J. Smith's Sixteenth Corps reached Alexandria on March 25. The Thirteenth and Nineteenth Corps under Franklin arrived at Grand Ecore on March 28. Taylor ordered the few remaining rebel cavalry to contest the enemy advance as he moved Walker and Mouton by way of the Fort Jesup road toward Pleasant Hill, forty miles away.<sup>221</sup>

During the long Confederate retreat from Banks' army, General Taylor and department commander Edmund Kirby Smith had been in continuous correspondence with each other. Smith, long aware of Banks' advance and that of Steele in Arkansas, believed Shreveport to be the goal of the Union campaign. Hence, Smith favored a retreat of Taylor's army toward Shreveport to protect its arsenals, depots, and shops, as well as to defend military industrial complexes at Marshall and Jefferson, Texas. Smith hoped to concentrate Confederate forces near Shreveport and operate using interior lines, defeating one Union column before turning to defeat the other. As part of the concentration, about 4,000 Arkansas and Missouri troops under General Thomas Churchill arrived in Shreveport on March 24. Taylor despised the idea of giving ground without contesting the enemy, especially because the ground was his beloved home state. Taylor later wrote in his memoir that Smith essentially gave him two options: Taylor could retreat into the defenses of Shreveport and hold out under siege from Banks until reinforcements arrived or he could abandon Louisiana all together and move his force into Texas. Taylor believed a siege would only result in another Vicksburg with the loss

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<sup>221</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 562; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 157; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 110-112.

of Shreveport and his whole army, as no other force could come to their rescue. Taylor also opposed the surrender of Louisiana and Arkansas to the Federals, believing such a maneuver would cause mass desertions among the troops from those states.<sup>222</sup>

Smith felt that Steele in Arkansas posed the greater threat to Shreveport and ordered Taylor to continue his withdrawal without risking a major engagement. Taylor only grudgingly obeyed. After the war, Walker wrote about Confederate strategy in the campaign and seems to support Taylor's desire to give battle to Banks' Federals: "If on one hand, Banks was defeated, Steele was not sufficiently strong to advance alone, if, on the other hand, Banks should defeat Taylor, Steele's defeat would not retrieve the disaster, or save the valley of the Red River and the whole of Western Louisiana and Eastern Texas from Federal invasion and conquest." Walker's Texans also voiced their desire to stop retreating and face Banks' army. Elijah Petty wrote, "I had rather advance than retreat if we are ready for the fight and so I believe is feelings of the most of us. We have run until our patience had oozed out. A fight I think will help us now." Theophilus Perry, full of eagerness, wrote home, "I shall fight like I was standing at the threshold of my door fighting against robbers and scourgers for the defense of my wife and family." Indeed, many of Walker's men enlisted solely to keep the enemy from setting foot in Texas.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 515-516, 521-522, 525-526, 563; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 158-159; Smith, "The Defense of the Red River," 370.

<sup>223</sup> Walker, "The War of Secession," 47; Norman D. Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Elijah P. Petty, Walker's Texas Division, CSA*, (San Antonio, TX: Institute of Texan Cultures, 1982), 387; M. Jane Johansson, *Widows by the Thousand: The Civil War Letters of Theophilus and Harriet Perry, 1862-1864*, (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 233.

Taylor's army arrived at the small town of Pleasant Hill on April 1. The same day, General Thomas Green's rebel cavalry division arrived from Texas and joined Taylor. The head of the Federal column reached Natchitoches and pushed forward, only to be met by newly arrived Confederate cavalry. On April 3, Taylor offered battle to the enemy at Pleasant Hill, but Banks' did not accept. Taylor decided to pull back Walker's and Mouton's divisions to Mansfield and left the cavalry at Pleasant Hill to face any Union advance. On April 4 and 5, the Confederate infantry entered Mansfield. Walker's division marched off the Mansfield Road onto the Kingston Road and camped in a swampy bottom about four miles from Mansfield, where the men remained for the next couple of days.<sup>224</sup>

As Banks prepared to move his army forward from Grand Ecore, he realized that the road to Shreveport veered west away from the Red River. This meant that Banks' forces would have to advance northwest away from the river and the supplies, communications, and gunboat support of Porter's fleet on the water. Suffering from poor reconnaissance, Banks failed to realize that another road followed the west bank of the Red River and wound its way toward Shreveport as well. This road would have allowed close cooperation with the Union fleet. Banks felt the Confederates would not offer battle before they reached Shreveport and chose to march inland toward Pleasant Hill. On April 6, the Union army began to advance out of Grand Ecore. Albert Lee's cavalry led the way followed by nearly three hundred wagons of the cavalry train. Behind them

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<sup>224</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 562-563; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 157-158; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 180; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 112.

cam the Thirteenth and Nineteenth Corps infantry divisions, and then seven hundred more wagons. At the rear of the column, A.J. Smith's Sixteenth Corps left the next day. Porter, with the Seventeenth Corps division on transports, steamed upriver on April 7.<sup>225</sup>

That same day, Lee's Federal cavalry approached Pleasant Hill and encountered several of Thomas Green's cavalry regiments at the Green Farm three miles beyond the town. After a brief skirmish, superior Union numbers compelled the Confederates to retire. Lee became concerned about advancing through an unknown country against unknown enemy strength, especially with his cavalry train vulnerable near the front of the column. Lee asked to have the wagons moved back with the infantry train, but Franklin, leading the infantry refused. Because of muddy roads and numerous wagons, the Union column stretched out for nearly twenty miles.<sup>226</sup>

With the Federals closing in, Taylor knew a decision had to be made when the army reached Mansfield. He knew that beyond the town, Banks could use the numerous roads to make better use of his numbers against Taylor's smaller force and possibly link with Porter's fleet. Taylor also realized that between Pleasant Hill and Mansfield, there existed only two streams. For twenty miles from Natchitoches to Pleasant Hill, little water could be found as the roads of the region followed the high ridge dividing the drainage of the Red River from that of the Sabine and water became scarce. Taylor selected a position to post his army and engage the Federals in battle. The place Taylor chose sat three miles in front of Mansfield in the edge of a wood that fronted a large open

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<sup>225</sup> Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 113-118.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-118, 124-125.

clearing, about eight hundred yards in width and twelve hundred yards in length. The Mansfield-Pleasant Hill Road ran through the middle of the clearing.<sup>227</sup>

Once Taylor decided to fight near Mansfield, he wrote a dispatch to Kirby Smith at Shreveport informing him of his decision to fight on April 8, unless Smith countermanded the plan. On the morning of April 8, Taylor ordered the Arkansas and Missouri troops under Churchill to march from their camps twenty miles away at Keachie to Mansfield. Walker's and Mouton's divisions marched down the road from Mansfield to the position selected by Taylor the previous day. Walker filed his regiments off the road to the right and into the woods at the clearing. The men completed their deployment and positioned themselves behind a fence that enclosed a plantation facing the open field and the direction of Pleasant Hill. Scurry's brigade formed on the right, Waul's in the middle, and Randal's brigade on the left with its flank next to the road. Daniel's and Hardeman's batteries formed with Walker's troops. Joseph Blessington commented about the feeling of Walker's men in the woods: "Many of the troops went to work with their knives, lopping off the branches of the trees and bushes which obstructed a good view of the road, in order to render their aim and fire more effective. The men waited and watched for the foe, with compressed lips and blanched faces, betokening the inward excitement, while every man kept his allotted place."<sup>228</sup>

Mouton's two brigades filed off to the left of the road and likewise positioned themselves in the edge of the woods. As Walker's men anxiously awaited the events of

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<sup>227</sup> Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 159-161.

<sup>228</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 563-564; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 161-162; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 183; T. Michael Parrish, *Richard Taylor: Soldier Prince of Dixie*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 339.

the day, they listened to the firing of Green's cavalry to the front. General Franklin's plan on April 8 involved advancing the Union troops of the Thirteenth and Nineteenth Corps to a place west of Pleasant Hill, allowing the column to close up and moving A.J. Smith's corps to Pleasant Hill. Early on April 8, Lee's Union horsemen and Colonel Frank Emerson's Thirteenth Corps brigade met resistance from Green's troopers, but pushed them back, gaining six miles a ground by midday. Soon the rebel cavalry came up the road and joined Taylor's infantry. Buchel's and Terrell's regiments under General Bee joined Walker on the right. Following close behind, the Federals soon emerged into the clearing opposite the Confederate line. At the same time Lee informed Banks that the rebels intended to make a stand in force to his front. Banks ordered forward another infantry brigade of the Thirteenth Corps.<sup>229</sup>

As the Federal troops arrived on the opposite end of the field, their lines similarly formed on the left and right of the road in the woods. Opposite Walker's division on the Union left sat Lee's cavalry on a slight rise called Honeycutt Hill. To the right of the cavalry stood two Union infantry regiments that had faced Walker's troops at Bayou Bourbeau the previous year. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Wisconsin formed on the left of the road and the 67<sup>th</sup> Indiana on the right, with Nims' 2<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts Battery in between. Six more Union infantry regiments, five cavalry regiments, and five artillery batteries completed the Union line. The Union force totaled about 4,800 men, facing Taylor's 8,800. Almost immediately, light skirmishing began. Taylor soon sensed the enemy massing against his left, so he shifted Terrell's cavalry regiment to the far left of the line and moved Randal's

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<sup>229</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 563-564; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 126-129.

brigade from the right to the left side of the road to support Mouton. Taylor also sent out Debray's cavalry on both sides of the road as skirmishers to cover the shifting of troops.<sup>230</sup>

The two lines stared across the field at each other in suspenseful anticipation. Taylor expected Banks to attack, but Lee had convinced Banks that such a movement would be very costly. Banks decided to hold his position and call for more troops. The position of the wagons in the column placed reinforcements too far back to reach the front in any reasonable amount of time. By 4:00 p.m., Taylor had become very impatient waiting for the Federals to open the engagement. The rebel commander decided it would be up to him to initiate the fight. Taylor rode over to Mouton and told the Louisianan to attack the Union troops in his front.<sup>231</sup>

With Major's cavalry brigade supporting their left, Mouton's brigades under Colonel Henry Gray and Brigadier General Camille de Polignac surged forward out of the woods and towards the Union line. The five Union regiments of Landram's division on the right of the line braced for the attack. Mouton's troops faltered under a heavy fire from the Federals and Mouton himself fell dead in the attack. His division lost almost a third of its men. Shortly after Mouton advanced, Randal's brigade of Walker's division marched forward in echelon from the right of Mouton. Randal found Mouton's troops stalled by enemy fire and pressed his Texans forward to hit the union right flank.

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<sup>230</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 564; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 133; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 190.

<sup>231</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 564; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 190.

Randal's troops along with Mouton's division and major's cavalry began to drive back the Union line.<sup>232</sup>

As soon as Mouton's attack began on the left, Taylor ordered Walker to send his two remaining brigades forward along with Bee's two regiments of cavalry under Buchel and Debray to turn the Union left flank and gain the enemy rear. Scurry's and Waul's brigades marched out of the woods, advancing in columns of companies and came under intense artillery and canister fire from Ormand Nims' Massachusetts Battery across the field. Nims commented about the charge of the Texans after the battle: "Upon the approach of the enemy, who came out of the woods in front and on the right flank, the battery opened fire, using shell and canister with good effect, repulsing three successive charges of the enemy..." Walker recounted the charge in his postwar writing: "Walker's division, impatient of delay, now moved rapidly to the front in echelon of brigades, with instructions to attack the enemy with the bayonet. This order was executed in the most gallant style. Moving across a field which lay in their front, and exposed to heavy fire of artillery and musketry, at support arms it attacked the enemy lining the woods beyond with such impetuosity that his line was instantly broken and he fled in the utmost disorder..." Walker's Texans charged up Honeycutt Hill outflanking the 3<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts Cavalry and the Wisconsin and Indiana infantry, prompting them to break for the rear. The Texans captured a few of Nims' artillery pieces that could not be removed from the field and turned them on the retreating enemy. The 83<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Infantry

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<sup>232</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 564; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 134-135; Jane H. Johansson and David H. Johansson, eds., "Two Lost Battle Reports: Horace Randal's and Joseph L. Brent's Reports of the Battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, 8 and 9 April, 1864," *Military History of the West* 23, no. 2, (Fall 1993), 173-174.

attempted to reinforce the flank, but found themselves unable to sustain the crumbling position.<sup>233</sup>

Amidst the retreating Federal soldiers, Union officers attempted to rally the bluecoats behind Honeycutt Hill in the edge of the woods around the Chicago Mercantile Battery and Cameron's newly arrived Thirteenth Corps division. After a brief rest atop the captured rise, Walker sent his troops at the new Union line with the bayonet. In the attack, Joseph Blessington remembered seeing Walker:

As we approached a narrow skirt of timber, and about six hundred yards from the enemy's position, we beheld General Walker, mounted on his iron-gray horse, with his field glass to his eye, taking close observations of the enemy's position. His actions and features were a study for the closest scrutinizer of physiognomy. Not a quiver on his face – not the movement of a muscle, to betray anxiety or emotion, notwithstanding the shower of balls whizzing around him<sup>234</sup>

Walker's troops slugged it out with the new Union line for almost an hour before the Texans overlapped the enemy flanks. Walker's brigades gained a fence and poured musketry into the backs of the retreating Federals. The Chicago battery and the rest of Nims' artillery fell into the hands of Walker's men. Farther to the left, Randal's Texans and mouton's troops drove the Union troops back miles from every position they tried to establish, capturing ambulance and ordnance trains, staff wagons, artillery, and hundreds of prisoners. The panicked Union troops of the Thirteenth Corps scattered in every direction. As foreseen by Albert Lee, the position of the wagon train at the front of the

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<sup>233</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 462, 564; Walker, "The War of Secession," 50-51; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 135-136; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 192-194.

<sup>234</sup> Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 187-188; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 193-194.

column had dire effects. The wagons and the dense forest flanking the road clogged the escape route of the Union forces. Hundreds fell prisoner to the pursuing enemy and most of the wagons became plunder to the victorious Confederates.<sup>235</sup>

Early in the fight, Banks ordered forward more infantry to bolster the line. Franklin sent forward Brigadier General William H. Emory's division of the Nineteenth Corps from Ten Mile Bayou. Emory moved his division forward to a position about two miles behind the battlefield at a place called Pleasant Grove. He deployed his brigades on a slight rise known as Chapman's Hill, fronting a ravine which contained a stream. As Walker's Texans and the other troops of Taylor's army chased the fleeing Federals through the woods, Taylor ordered Walker to attack Emory's line and gain possession of the needed water. In pursuing the Federals, Walker's men had become very disorganized and fatigued. Walker sent his men forward only to have them beaten back savagely by the fresh Union troops. Joseph Blessington recalled the fight: "Volley after volley, and shower after shower of bullets came whizzing down upon us. It was utterly impossible to advance, and to retreat beneath the range of their long guns seemed equally desperate. We lay down, arose again, and then involuntarily sought the shelter and protection as the ground afforded." Walker's men lay pressed to the ground until darkness ended the fight.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 188-189; Johansson and Johansson, eds., "Two Lost Battle Reports," 173-174; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 194-195; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 137.

<sup>236</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1 565; Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 164; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 190; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 138-139.

At 10:00 p.m. Banks decided to pull his army back to Pleasant Hill and join A.J. Smith's Sixteenth Corps. His troops marched through the night, reaching Pleasant Hill at 8:30 a.m. the next morning. Banks' army suffered greatly at the hands of Taylor's small army. Out of 12,000 troops engaged, the Federals lost 113 killed, 581 wounded, and 1,541 missing, totaling 2,235 casualties. The Union force also lost twenty pieces of artillery, 156 wagons of various sorts, and over a thousand animals. Taylor lost about 1,000 of his roughly 8,800 man force. Randal's brigade lost 9 killed, 52 wounded, and 6 missing. Scurry's and Waul's losses are uncertain, but Walker is thought to have lost around two hundred men as casualties.<sup>237</sup>

Walker's division played a large role in driving the Federal forces from the field at Mansfield. His Texans spearheaded the charge against the Union left flank atop Honeycutt Hill, broke through the position, and drove the Federals back to a second defensive line. The Union line at the edge of the woods collapsed after Walker's troops flanked the enemy, sending them streaming back into the forest. Walker's Texans rounded up hundreds of prisoners and captured supplies before running into Emory's strong line behind the main battlefield. Although checked by the new Union troops, Walker's men were able to retrieve water from the stream after the Union troops retreated. Walker later wrote about the victory, reflecting upon the tremendous hardships faced by the Confederates: "When the enormous disparity of the two armies is considered, and the further fact that the Confederates who had gained this signal victory were the very same that for three weeks had been retreating before the overwhelming

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<sup>237</sup> Johansson and Johansson, eds., "Two Lost Battle Reports," 174; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 200-201; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 140-141.

force of the federal command, it must be considered one of the most extraordinary incidents of the four years of war in America.”<sup>238</sup>

The previous evening, Taylor had ordered forward the Arkansas and Missouri divisions of Brigadier Generals Thomas Churchill and Mosby Parsons from their camps at Keachie. The reinforcements marched out at 2:00 a.m. and joined Taylor in time to advance toward Pleasant Hill at daylight on April 9. Taylor sent Green and all the cavalry forward to search out Banks’ Federals while the infantry followed with Churchill’s Arkansans in front, followed by Parsons’ Missourians, Walker’s division, and the rear brought up by Mouton’s division, led by Polignac. Green’s cavalry caught up to the Union army in strong positions around Pleasant Hill. At about 1:00 p.m., Churchill’s troops arrived about two miles from Pleasant Hill, followed by Walker and the other units. Taylor halted the troops for a few hours rest while the cavalry scouted the Union force ahead.<sup>239</sup>

Taylor knew he had to push the Federals away from Pleasant Hill. He learned through correspondence with St. John Liddell’s cavalry that Porter and a fleet of about thirty gunboats and transports had ascended the red River above Grand Ecore. In a letter written early on April 9, Taylor told Walker about his concerns. Taylor feared Banks would use the road from Pleasant Hill to Blair’s Landing, sixteen miles away on the Red River and forty-five miles above Grand Ecore, to link up with Porter’s boats. Banks could gain reinforcements and supplies to replace his losses from the previous day and

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<sup>238</sup> Walker, “The War of Secession,” 53; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 200-201.

<sup>239</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 565-566.

rejuvenate his campaign. Taylor wanted to push Banks back toward Natchitoches and away from the Blair's Landing road to the Red River.<sup>240</sup>

The town of Pleasant Hill sat on a flat plateau with open fields surrounding the town. The Union Sixteenth Corps brigade of Colonel William T. Shaw formed in some woods west of the town and perpendicular to the Mansfield-Pleasant Hill Road. A half mile to the left sat the Nineteenth Corps brigade of Colonel Lewis Benedict in a dry ditch in an open field below the town. Slightly to the rear of Shaw's troops stood two other brigades from the Nineteenth Corps under William Dwight and James McMillan. About a mile to the left and rear of these troops sat the rest of the Sixteenth Corps near Pleasant Hill. Shaw's and Benedict's brigades held rather exposed positions that were open on their flanks.<sup>241</sup>

At around 3:00 p.m. after the troops had rested, Taylor formed an attack plan. Churchill's and parsons' divisions would advance on the Confederate right and outflank the enemy, reach the Jesup Road, and attack from the west to the east while maintaining contact with cavalry on the far right and Walker's division on the left. The cavalry received orders to attack down the Jesup Road and gain the enemy rear and line of retreat. The divisions of Churchill and Parsons filed off the road and moved into the woods on the right. Walker filed his division off the road and formed them into line of battle between the Pleasant Hill and Jesup Roads to link with Churchill's left flank. Walker received orders to advance with his brigades in echelon from his right upon

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 528-529, 566; Richard Taylor to John G. Walker, April 9, 1864, Walker Papers.

<sup>241</sup> Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 147-150.

hearing Parsons' and Churchill's guns on the right. Bee's cavalry regiments on the Pleasant Hill Road were to attack up the road while Major's and Bagby's cavalry brigades received instructions to move on foot, outflank the Union right, and gain possession of the road to Blair's Landing. Polignac's troops, after heavy losses at Mansfield, constituted the reserve.<sup>242</sup>

At 4:30 p.m., Taylor ordered Green on the left to open artillery fire to divert attention from the attack on the right. A half hour later, the Arkansas and Missouri troops emerged from the woods with Parsons on the right and Churchill on the left. The rebels engaged Benedict's line and in a heated fight drove his men back out of the ditch and across the fields towards Pleasant Hill. To the left, Bee's cavalry raced up the Pleasant Hill-Mansfield Road only to be repulsed with fire from Shaw's Federals. Green's cavalry under Major advanced to clear the enemy from the woods on the right. Walker ordered his division forward out of the woods and across the fields west of town. Scurry's brigade moved first on the right, Waul's brigade in the center, and Randal's brigade on the left. Walker directed his troops at Shaw's Union brigade posted in a skirt of woods behind light breastworks. The two lines met and exchanged deadly volleys. Unfortunately for Shaw, Benedict's withdrawal left his flank even more exposed. Scurry's Texans began to pour around and engulf the 32<sup>nd</sup> Iowa regiment. The stubborn defense by Shaw's Federals prompted Taylor to order Polignac's command forward from

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<sup>242</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 566-567.

the reserve. The combined pressure of Walker, Polignac, and Green's cavalry on the left slowly forced back the Union troops.<sup>243</sup>

After a few hours of fierce combat, the Confederates began to gain the initiative. As Churchill and Parsons drove back the Federals on the right, their own flank became exposed as they chased the Union troops to the edges of the town. Churchill, in overall command of the two divisions, did not extend his line far enough to the right when he deployed the divisions into line of battle. As they advanced toward Pleasant Hill, they opened their flank up to the entire Sixteenth Corps, concealed in some woods. A few Union regiments came forward to confront Parsons' line, then A.J. Smith sent forward his whole force, knocking Parsons' brigades backwards. As the Missourians fell back, Churchill's division also became exposed and likewise fell back fighting. Scurry's brigade, on the right of Walker's line, became disorganized when Churchill's left brigade stumbled into it during the retreat. In the confusion, nearly 250 of Scurry's men fell prisoner to the pursuing Federals.<sup>244</sup>

As the Federal counterattack rolled up the right of the Confederate line, Walker realized Scurry needed help and ordered Waul and Randal to counterattack the Federals in his front. Joseph Blessington recalled seeing Walker in the thick of the action:

General Walker seeing this unexpected movement of his troops, galloped towards his men, to cheer them on; a nobly appearing chief, and full a vigor and life, as he dashed along the line inspiring his brave men with enthusiasm...He knew well that if his line faltered the least, and was not successful in driving the enemy from their position, Scurry's brigade

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<sup>243</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 567, 603-604; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 156-158; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 206-207.

<sup>244</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 568, 603-605; Walker, "The War of Secession," 55; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 160-162; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 207.

would be sacrificed. While in the act of waving his hat, in cheering his men onward, he was pierced by a minie ball, but paying no attention to his wound, he issued orders to his brigade commanders amid a continual shower of shot and minie balls.

Taylor learned of Walker's wounding and rode over to see him. Taylor recounted the event in his report: "Gallop[ing] to the spot I found that he had received a severe contusion in the groin, and ordered him to quit the field, which he did most reluctantly. The continuity of our line was lost, as I could not for some time find either of his brigade commanders, all of whom were hotly engaged within the pine thicket in the front."<sup>245</sup>

Churchill's and Parsons' troops continued a fighting retreat until they reached the woods where the attack had stepped off. With temporary command confusion after Walker's wounding, the Texas division along with Polignac's division and the cavalry also grudgingly gave ground. According to Blessington: "All the effort on the part of our troops to check or turn this human avalanche, proved unavailing, and for the first time our brave and determined men staggered and gave ground, and commenced to fall back." Walker's Texans too fell back into the woods where the attack began. Fortunately for Taylor's army, the coming of darkness and difficult terrain prevented the Federals from pursuing the rebels any farther across the fields. In the woods, Taylor reorganized the units and ordered them six miles to the rear to get water, leaving a small cavalry force to watch the enemy. Banks and his generals decided to continue their withdrawal and sometime after midnight, Banks set his army marching for Grand Ecore.

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<sup>245</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 568; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 197.

Taylor brought most of his cavalry back to the front and found himself in possession of Pleasant Hill the next morning.<sup>246</sup>

The Union army had 12,193 troops engaged at Pleasant Hill of which 1,369 became casualties. With Churchill's and Parsons' divisions, Taylor put about 12,000 men on the field of battle and lost 1,626 men. In Walker's division, Waul's brigade lost 25 killed, 179 wounded, and 21 missing. Randal's brigade lost 22 killed, 100 wounded, and 6 missing. Scurry's brigade suffered about 350 casualties, most as prisoners since his brigade accounted for sixty percent of those rebels captured at Pleasant Hill. A close estimate of Walker's casualties in the two days of battle at Mansfield and Pleasant Hill is about 1,000 of his 3,800 man command, the most significant casualty being Walker himself.<sup>247</sup>

Taylor moved his army back to the Mansfield vicinity on April 10 and 11. Bee with part of the cavalry pursued banks toward Natchitoches. Green and the rest of the horsemen moved from Pleasant Hill toward Blair's Landing on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The next day, Green's cavalry engaged the Union fleet at Blair's Landing. Unfortunately Green was killed in the fight. All the cavalry soon consolidated near Natchitoches to confront Banks, who entrenched at Grand Ecore with Porter's fleet nearby. Early on April 13, Kirby Smith rode to Mansfield to meet with Taylor and decide the army's next move. Taylor believed that Steele's Union army in Arkansas would retreat back to Little Rock when he learned of Banks' own retreat. He wanted to pursue and drive Banks back into

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<sup>246</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 568-569; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 195; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 162-165.

<sup>247</sup> Johansson and Johansson, eds., "Two Lost Battle Reports," 175; Johnson, *Red River Campaign*, 169; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 207, 211-212.

southern Louisiana before he could regroup. Smith felt Banks to no longer be a threat to Shreveport and that Taylor's army was in no shape to follow the Federals anyway. Smith believed Steele could still press forward and threaten Shreveport and the heart of the department and therefore, Smith did not want to allow Taylor to pursue Banks south and leave Shreveport undefended with Steele so nearby. Smith believed the Confederacy in the Trans-Mississippi stood to gain more from the defeat of Steele, namely possession of Arkansas and potentially Missouri.<sup>248</sup>

Taylor reluctantly agreed to move his troops and join the rebels under Major General Sterling Price, operating in Arkansas, with the belief that if Steele retreated or was defeated, Taylor could move south and finish off Banks. Smith soon left Taylor to watch over Shreveport while he personally took command of the infantry moving toward Arkansas. Taylor instead took Green's cavalry, led by Major General John A. Wharton, and Polignac's battered division and pursued Banks. At daylight on April 14, Walker's Churchill's and Parsons' divisions marched toward Shreveport. After the war, Walker voiced his support of Taylor's desire to chase down Banks' Federals and credited Smith's bad judgment to his escape:

Doubtless it was to have been expected that the whole Confederate force would have thrown itself upon the track of his flying army, but unfortunately for the Confederates, Gen. E.K. Smith was not the leader to comprehend the true line of action, and hesitating several days as if to see if Banks would not again assume the offensive, against the opinion and advice of all his principle subordinates, he unwisely determined to leave the pursuit of Banks to Gen. Taylor, with Polignac's small division of infantry and Green's cavalry, and to dispatch Walker's division and the Missouri division of Parsons, and the Arkansas division of Churchill

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<sup>248</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 480, 530-532, 571-572; Smith, "The Defense of the Red River," 372.

against the Federal army still at Camden under Steele. To this fatal blunder Banks was indebted for his safety, for it is morally certain that if the whole force of the Confederates had been thrown upon his shattered and demoralized army its escape, as an organized force, would have been almost impossible.<sup>249</sup>

As Banks' Union army moved up the Red River Valley, Steele's Federal force of about 12,000 men, twenty-five pieces of artillery, and 400 wagons marched out of Little Rock on March 23 as the northern pincer of the campaign. The expedition quickly became a logistical nightmare for the Federals as the army had no adequate supply line and very little rations and forage for the troops and animals. Steele moved his army toward Camden, Arkansas in hopes of finding subsistence. Smith alerted Price to keep Steele away from Camden if possible and try to disrupt communications and supply routes where he could while Smith brought up Walker's division and the other infantry to reinforce him. Steele occupied Camden on April 15 and Price set up cavalry patrols to guard the roads leading in and out of Camden.<sup>250</sup>

Walker, recuperating from his Pleasant Hill wound, left camp with his division near Mansfield on April 14 and reached Shreveport two days later. There Scurry's brigade received needed reinforcements in the form of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Texas Infantry. Walker received orders to march his command east via the lower road to Minden, Louisiana while Churchill and Parsons continued into Arkansas. After two days of marching, Walker passed through Minden on April 18 and camped his men twelve miles beyond on Black Bayou. Smith believed that with Steele at Camden, he could still threaten the

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<sup>249</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 572; Smith, "The Defense of the Red River," 373; Walker, "The War of Secession," 56-57.

<sup>250</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 779-781; Edwin Bearss, *Steele's Retreat from Camden and the Battle of Jenkins' Ferry*, (Little Rock: Arkansas Civil War Centennial Commission, 1967), 1, 9.

shops and depots at Shreveport or link with Banks at Grand Ecore. He thought Minden to be a sound strategic point from where Walker could march quickly to Camden, Campiti, or Shreveport if needed. Walker remained at Minden for the next several days.<sup>251</sup>

At Camden, Steele sent out a large wagon train to gather forage at White Oak Creek, fifteen miles west of Camden. The train set out on April 17 and loaded up over 140 wagons with supplies. The next day, as the train headed back to Camden, Confederate cavalry under Brigadier General Samuel Maxey attacked the train at a crossroads called Poison Spring, capturing the wagons and sending the Federals fleeing back to Camden. Steele's army not only suffered from lack of supplies, the Union general also heard rumors of Banks' retreat. Steele worried about the prospect of facing Price with heavy infantry reinforcements from Louisiana. On April 19, Smith joined Price at Woodlawn with Churchill's and Parsons' divisions. Smith organized a large cavalry force under Brigadier General James Fagan and sent it across the Ouachita River to cut lines of supply and communication between Camden and Little Rock. On April 23, Smith realized Banks would not advance again, and sent for Walker to march from Minden to Arkansas. Walker's division crossed the Arkansas state line the next day and passed through Calhoun on April 25. One day later, Walker's Texans camped just twelve miles from Camden.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 481, pt. 3, 778; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 214-215.

<sup>252</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 481, 781, 841-844, pt. 3, 786; Bearss, *Steele's Retreat*, 6, 15-37, 42-46; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 215.

As Walker moved to join Smith, Steele received another severe blow as a second Union wagon train fell victim to the rebel cavalry. On April 25, Fagan's cavalry captured a wagon train moving from Camden to Pine Bluff in a fight at Marks' Mills. After the loss of the trains at Poison Springs and Marks' Mills, along with the subsistence, artillery, and prisoners, Steele decided to evacuate Camden on the night of April 26. By daylight of the next day, the Union rearguard had crossed over the Ouachita River and headed toward Little Rock. Early on April 27, Confederates entered Camden and engineers set about building a bridge to get across the river. Smith wanted to defeat Steele before he could reach the safety of Little Rock. After the completion of the bridge, Churchill's and Parsons' divisions crossed the river, followed by Walker's division. The army covered sixteen miles before bivouacking. On April 29, the Confederates resumed the pursuit, marching through Princeton and Tulip, covering almost thirty miles. In the distance, Walker could hear the sound of Brigadier General John S. Marmaduke's rebel cavalry, sparring with the Union rear guard. The march resumed at midnight, April 30 in an incessant rain. At daylight, the Confederate force came to the Saline River bottom where Steele had attempted to get his train over the swollen Saline River at Jenkins' Ferry the day before. On April 30, Steele knew he would have to defend his train from the rebels.<sup>253</sup>

Early on April 30, Marmaduke's Confederate cavalry approached the ridge overlooking the Saline bottom to probe the Union positions. The Military Road to

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<sup>253</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 481-482, 781-782, 788-790; Bearss, *Steele's Retreat*, 61-77, 87-89, 102-107, 114; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 217-219.

Jenkins' Ferry moved down from the hills toward the Saline River, about two miles away. Beginning on the 29<sup>th</sup> the weather became rainy, saturating the lowlands of the Saline bottom into a wet and muddy quagmire. About one hundred yards from the high ground, and to the right of the Military Road the dense woods and undergrowth opened up into a field about a quarter of a mile square called Jiles' Field. On the other end of the field sat a large skirt of timber about three hundred yards wide, opening into another open field known as Cooper's Field. At the far end of Cooper's Field, in another patch of woods, Steele placed the troops of Brigadier General Frederick Salomon's division. The Federals formed their line behind a brush covered fence and large felled logs at the edge of the timber. On the Union right flank, and running parallel to the Military Road, stood a deep and swollen stream known as Cox's Creek. On the left flank sat a heavily wooded swamp. The Federals waited in a strong position, with an open field of fire, and natural obstacles protecting both flanks.<sup>254</sup>

At 8:00 a.m. on April 30, Churchill's lead division reached the high ground overlooking the Saline bottom. Tappan's brigade of Churchill's division advanced into Jiles' Field to reinforce Marmaduke's cavalry who had been skirmishing with the Union pickets since daybreak. The rebels drove the Federals back across Cooper's Field and into the main Union line. A second of Churchill's brigades advanced into the fight only to find itself overlapped by the Federals. Kirby Smith sent an Arkansas regiment over Cox's Creek to find the Union right flank, only to have the regiment forced back by

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<sup>254</sup> Bearss, *Steele's Retreat*, 117-119; Ira Don Richards, "The Battle of Jenkins' Ferry," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1961), 7-9.

Union troops waiting to enfilade any Confederate attacks across Cooper's Field. At 10:00 a.m., Parsons' division arrived on the field and formed line of battle in the woods between the fields along with Churchill's reserve brigade. At the same time, Salomon's line received reinforcements from the Union division of Brigadier General John M. Thayer. Parsons advanced into the fight, and together with Churchill's command, sent forward a series of unsuccessful attacks for the next hour and a half, before being forced to retire into the woods.<sup>255</sup>

A lull settled over Cooper's Field as both sides reorganized to continue the battle. Walker, having camped twenty-one miles from Jenkins' Ferry, had his division on the march at 2:00 a.m. on April 30 and arrived with his division at around 11:30 a.m. As the Texans moved down the Military Road, Smith learned of another small road that branched off to the right of the main road about three miles behind the battlefield. Smith ordered Walker to send one of his brigades down the Military Road to reinforce the other divisions and march the other two brigades down the side road, hoping to find the Union left flank and rear. Walker decided to send Waul's brigade down the road to join Churchill and Parsons while he marched Scurry and Randal along the alternate route. As the Texans deployed for battle, Joseph Blessington recalled seeing Walker at the fork:

At this place we beheld our favorite leader, General Walker, mounted on his iron-gray war horse, awaiting to address a few remarks of encouragement to each regiment as they passed him by. His presence above on this occasion was enough to inspire his troops with the highest patriotism and love for their old chieftan; cheer after cheer was freely given him, as they passed by him. They had implicit confidence in his

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<sup>255</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 799-802, 806-816; Bearss, *Steele's Retreat*, 122-129; Richards, "The Battle of Jenkins' Ferry," 10-11.

judgment, and that he would not tolerate any useless sacrifice of life in the forthcoming battle.<sup>256</sup>

Waul moved down the road and formed his brigade in the woods behind the other Confederates. He observed the field and found the Union line to be very formidable against assault. Not only did the Federals have concealment with the fence and logs to their front, their flanks had protection as well. The only approach to the Union line was directly across an open field. Waul also realized the Federals had troops across the creek and that their other flank extended beyond the field and angled slightly forward, forming their line into an obtuse angle. The Confederates could receive fire from front and flanks simultaneously. Waul sent forward skirmishers, but decided not to advance until Walker arrived with the rest of the division. Unfortunately for Walker, the side road taken to find the enemy flank only led into Cooper's Field near the woods where the other attacks had been previously launched. Walker moved Scurry's and Randal's brigades into the woods and rejoined Waul. After realigning the division, Walker marched them forward.<sup>257</sup>

The Texans advanced with Waul's troops on the left, Randal in the center, and Scurry's brigade on the right. As predicted, the division withered under fire from front and flanks. Waul's brigade, hit by musketry in front and from the Federals across the creek, stopped in a depression to return fire. Waul received a bullet that broke his arm. Randal's and Scurry's troops charged across the field into musketry from an almost invisible foe. Joseph Blessington recalled the confused fight: "An incessant roar of

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<sup>256</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 816-817; Walker, "The War of Secession," 64; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 249-250; Bearss, *Steele's Retreat*, 148-149; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 221.

<sup>257</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 816-817; Bearss, *Steele's Retreat*, 149-150; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 223-224.

musketry prevailed for about six hours. During this time the tide of battle ebbed and flowed – now advancing, then receding; but at no time did the ground fought over vary more than two hundred and fifty yards. Owing to the dense fog and the dense clouds of smoke which hung in the thick woods, many times, opposing lines could only be discovered by the flash of their muskets.” Randal fell, shot through the body leading his brigade. Scurry tried to turn the Union left, but also fell mortally wounded by a bullet through the body. Command confusion prevailed as all three brigade commanders went down and Walker’s attack bogged down in the mud. Like the troops before them, Walker’s Texans began to fall back to the cover of the trees.<sup>258</sup>

As Walker pulled his troops back, Salomon also withdrew his troops to a new position closer to the river crossing. Soon thereafter, the remainder of Steele’s wagon train crossed the Saline. Salomon left a small force in Cooper’s Field to cover the retreat and marched his command over the Saline. The rearguard soon followed and crossed the river at about 2:00 p.m., deflating the rubber pontoon boats of the bridge as they crossed. After the war, Walker reflected upon the poor state of his command:

The exhaustion of the Confederates was so complete that after the retreat of the enemy the men threw themselves down for a repose in the mud and water where they stood. With no other subsistence than that contained in their haversacks, and no commissariat wagons in attendance, they had marched three days and nights almost continuously, broken by only a few hours for daily repose. The hope of capturing or destroying Steele’s whole army, however, buoyed up these devoted men, but now that the excitement was ended they sank down in utter fatigue.

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<sup>258</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 817-818; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker’s Texas Division*, 250; Bearss, *Steele’s Retreat*, 151-153; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 225-226.

Steele committed about 4,000 troops in the fight at Jenkins' Ferry of which about 700 became casualties. Kirby Smith sent forward about 6,000 troops in the attacks and lost 1,000 men. At Jenkins' Ferry, Walker's division numbered about 2,000 men, of which he suffered 84 killed, 360 wounded, and 3 missing or about twenty-two percent of his force. The two most significant losses were Randal and Scurry, both dying soon after the battle. Of the engagement at Jenkins' Ferry, Walker later wrote, "Here the same fatal blunder was committed as at Pleasant Hill, and the enemy was attacked before any information was gained as to his position or the nature of the ground."<sup>259</sup>

On May 3, the entire Confederate force marched back to Camden. Smith soon decided to send Walker's division and the other infantry back to Taylor in Louisiana to pursue Banks. The Union fleet had become stuck as they could not pass over the falls above Alexandria until the construction of wing dams raised the water level. Walker received orders to march for Campti, Louisiana on the Red River. On May 8, Walker's division crossed the Ouachita River at Lone Pine Ferry and camped about a mile from Camden. That night, Walker received new orders to march for Alexandria. The division marched out on May 9 and crossed the state line into Louisiana two days later. On May 12, Colonel Richard Waterhouse of the 19<sup>th</sup> Texas took command of Scurry's brigade and Major Robert Maclay, Walker's Chief of Staff, took command of Randal's brigade. A few weeks after Jenkins' Ferry, Waul resigned and his brigade was taken over by Colonel

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<sup>259</sup> Walker, "The War of Secession," 64, 68; Bearss, *Steele's Retreat*, 156-157; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 228.

Wilburn H. King of the 18<sup>th</sup> Texas. On May 15, Churchill and Parsons received orders to head back to Camden.<sup>260</sup>

For the next two weeks, Walker's division continued to move south to rejoin Taylor and hopefully defeat Banks' army. On May 22, Walker reached Pineville near Alexandria. The same day, Porter's fleet reached the Atchafalaya and the Union army had for all purposes escaped. Walker's Texans camped near Alexandria from May to July, recuperating from the long and arduous, but victorious campaign. The only encounter with the enemy occurred when Walker sent a cavalry squadron attached to the division across the Black River to break up Federal leased plantations. The horseman burned several depots of food, mills, and gins, and captured several horses and mules before skipping back over the river. Walker later wrote about the tremendous feat his command had performed, saying from March 13 till April 30, he and his division marched 628 miles, fought three battles, and after only five days rest, marched 190 miles back to the Red River Valley, all in 48 days. During the red River Campaign, Walker lost about 1,450 of his nearly 4,000 men or about thirty-six percent of his command. For their sacrifice, the Confederates repulsed the Union attempts to march into the center of the Trans-Mississippi Department and eventually invade Texas. Walker's troops crushed the enemy flank at Mansfield and fought a hard battle at Pleasant Hill that forced banks to

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<sup>260</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 537; Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 261-262; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 230.

continue his withdrawal. Despite the losses suffered at Jenkins' Ferry, Walker's division still saw the backs of Steele's troops as they raced for the safety of Little Rock.<sup>261</sup>

Taylor, who had always clashed with Kirby Smith, erupted after the escape of Banks' army and Porter's fleet. He blamed Smith for the failure to destroy Banks and cited the loss of his infantry, especially Walker's division, for the debacle. In a dispatch, Taylor wrote, "My unfortunate trip to Shreveport and the loss of Walker's division have assuredly saved Banks' army from utter destruction." In scathing letters, Taylor expressed his extreme displeasure at being stripped of his troops and therefore stripped of the opportunity to capitalize on the victory at Mansfield and the Union retreat after Pleasant Hill. Taylor, having lost all faith in Smith's abilities and competence, asked to be relieved of command. Smith dismissed Taylor and sent him across the Mississippi River where the Confederate government assigned him to command the Department of East Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.<sup>262</sup>

On June 17, Walker received orders from Smith to take command of the District of West Louisiana. Joseph Blessington wrote about the sentimental goodbye between the Texans and their beloved commander:

On the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> we learned, much to our surprise, that our favorite leader, Gen. Walker, was assigned to the command of the District of Western Louisiana, thereby relieving Gen. Taylor. About noontime, on the 18<sup>th</sup>, General Walker bade farewell to his "old Division." Although he did take each officer and soldier by the hand, his countenance, and the countenances of his men, sufficed to express the feeling he entertained for them and they for him.

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<sup>261</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 4, 688; Walker, "The War of Secession," 68; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 231-234.

<sup>262</sup> *O.R.*, XXXIV, pt. 1, 540-543, 548, 581.

Walker would prove to be the favored commander by the Texas division.

Wilburn Hill King of the 18<sup>th</sup> Texas succeeded him as commander of the division for a short while until replaced by Major General John H. Forney, a martinet despised by the Texans for his overtly strict discipline and undesirable personal qualities. Unlike Forney, Walker demanded discipline, but could also exercise self discipline. Douglas F. Forrest, a member of Walker's staff, commented "The Genl. Is the most popular General in the Trans-Mississippi & has acquired his popularity by gallant service in the field & an equal & regular, but very rigid discipline...He is a small spare man, very quiet, courteous in his deportment to all, of great force of character & great capacity." Walker maintained a successful relationship with his command because he experienced the hardships of the field as a young soldier in Mexico. He understood and shared the sufferings of his troops rather than the privileges of an officer. He led the Texans through the long marches, the poor food, low pay, homesickness, bad weather, and the only combat they faced during the war. He earned their respect for his concern and also gained respect as a leader.<sup>263</sup>

Walker inherited a quiet District of West Louisiana as the attention of the Department focused on Major General Sterling Price's plans for a raid into Missouri to drive the Federals out and recapture Jefferson City. The raid soon took a backseat as in July and continuing throughout the month, Confederates on the eastern side of the Mississippi River clamored for reinforcements in the face of a supposed Union thrust against Mobile, Alabama. A hesitant Kirby Smith, believing his forces too small and the

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<sup>263</sup> Douglas French Forrest, *Odyssey in Gray: A Diary of Confederate Service, 1863-1865*, ed., William N. Still, (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1979); Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division*, 270; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 234-235.

crossing of the Federal controlled Mississippi River too dangerous, finally consented on July 28 to a transfer troops. Smith reinstated Taylor to command the infantry to be crossed over the river. Taylor, like Walker and many others in the department, disliked the idea of crossing troops. The infantry, already displeased over lack of pay, food, and furloughs, showed mutinous behavior and desertions accelerated. Most hated the idea of moving away from their undefended home state. Eventually, the transfer of troops, never actually authorized by Jefferson Davis, was abandoned in late August. Only Taylor crossed the Mississippi, taking command in the Cis-Mississippi Department.<sup>264</sup>

In September, 1864, Price's proposed Missouri raid began and the huge cavalry force slowly meandered its way through Arkansas into Missouri, routing small enemy units, and capturing arms, supplies, and new recruits. The Confederates suffered a crushing defeat at Westport, Missouri on October 23, however, and after skirmishes on October 25 and 28, retreated south. A successful raid by rebels under the Indian leader Stand Watie captured a large Union wagon train, but hardly compensated for the losses of Price's expedition. These forays into Union held territory marked the end of campaigning in the northern Trans-Mississippi theatre for the war.<sup>265</sup>

As Price left Arkansas for the expedition, Major General John Magruder received command of the District of Arkansas on August 4, 1864. Walker then received orders to move to command the District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Walker established his headquarters in Houston. Shortly after taking command Walker's attention focused

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<sup>264</sup> Robert L. Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy: The Trans-Mississippi South, 1863-1865*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 323-330.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 337-361.

on the Rio Grande border with Mexico. From April to July, 1864, Confederate cavalry under Colonel John S. Ford skirmished with Union forces on the Rio Grande, occupying Brownsville and sending Union forces back to Brazos Santiago. Soon, a French expeditionary force landed and began to occupy the Mexican side of the Rio Grande delta. Ford and the French established good relations about the sanctity of trade over the Rio Grande, but in the process evoked the ill will of a Mexican Juarista commander, General Juan Cortina. In late August, Confederates exchanged shots with Mexicans from across the Rio Grande and by early September, Cortina had interdicted the trade between the state of Tamaulipas and Texas and positioned artillery opposite Brownsville.<sup>266</sup>

On September 6, Juarista infantry and artillery fired at Confederate cavalry at Palmito Ranch, near Brownsville. Brigadier General Thomas Drayton sent a letter to Walker on September 15, informing him of the situation. Cortina and the Federals had fired on Confederates at numerous points along the Rio Grande, but were chased back to Brazos Santiago. The Mexicans across from Brownsville at Matamoros still had guns facing the town and Cortina had fired at a French flag of truce when a small French fleet traveled upriver. Walker expressed little concern for Cortina, saying his “acts are those of a successful robber, who finds himself accidentally in possession of a city...” Walker preferred to wait and allow the French forces to deal with Cortina, advising a defensive policy and limiting operations to the Texas side of the river, lest they disturb the French goodwill toward the Confederates and their cause. As Walker hoped, the French chased Cortina out of Tamaulipas and occupied Matamoros. By late September, only a small

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 367-370.

force of Union soldiers remained at Brazos Santiago, and could do little to interpose on trade over the Rio Grande.<sup>267</sup>

Walker's biggest concern while in Texas centered on the prospect of a Union attack on the coast. In October and December, spies reported the possibility of Union assaults on the coast. Walker wrote in a dispatch, "During the period of active operations in Louisiana, Arkansas, and the Cis-Mississippi country, I have felt no apprehension of an attack on the coast of Texas, but now that the season of impractical roads and low water condemns the enemy's forces to a state of inactivity, it is almost certain that a large force will be sent to operate in Texas during this winter." Walker believed the Federals would launch such a campaign in order to stop the blockade running, break up foreign trade along the Rio Grande, conscript large numbers of blacks into service, and destroy the system of agriculture in Texas. Like Walker, Kirby Smith also thought any Union coastal operations would center on Galveston. Smith advised Walker that according to an army engineer, Galveston could not be defended from any army and naval attack by the enemy. Although Galveston should not be evacuated, Walker should make plans for the removal of heavy guns, ordnance, and supplies if necessary. Smith also instructed Walker to reposition artillery around Fort Sulakowski, Bolivar Point, and Pelican Island to cover channels, the eastern pass, and approaches to the bridge to the mainland.<sup>268</sup>

Walker made preparations for the defense Galveston, but he too agreed that the city could not be held with the force at hand. Walker wrote to Smith in December, 1864:

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<sup>267</sup> *O.R.*, XLI, pt. 3, 371, 931-932, 972-973; Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, 370-371.

<sup>268</sup> *O.R.*, XLI, pt. 4, 1028, 1031, 1060-1061, 1092, 1095.

The topographical peculiarities of the island and harbor are such that it is almost certain that the enemy would make his land attack upon the left of our long line of entrenchments while his navy would attempt to force a passage into the harbor. To prevent the latter the greater portion of General Hawes' command would be necessarily at the extreme left of our position, viz, Fort Point, Pelican Spit, and Bolivar Point, leaving but a handful of men, not exceeding 800 or 1,000 to defend a line of entrenchments of two or three miles in length. It is reasonable to presume that in case of attack the enemy would have as its disposal a force quite competent to overcome the feeble resistance that we could make with this small force, and to capture the railroad bridge, our only connection with the mainland, in which case the loss of the whole garrison would be certain.

Smith only managed to exacerbate Walker's apprehensions by desiring a reorganization of forces in his district into a corps. Walker disliked the idea as it would require a shuffling around of his entire command. Most importantly, Walker realized such a move would place a force in Galveston smaller than Hawes' brigade and wholly inadequate for any defense while leaving other points completely undefended. With the small force at his disposal, Walker could never hope to completely defend hundreds of miles of coast, but he wrote to the Chief of Staff that he preferred to leave troops at the principle points they were presently at and, in the event of an attack, move troops to other points by railroad and concentrate them at threatened locations. Fortunately for Walker, the expected coastal expedition never came, as throughout the summer and fall of 1864 and into 1865 the Union army focused largely on campaigns in the East.<sup>269</sup>

On April 4, 1865, Magruder returned to command the District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Two days later, Major General John A. Wharton, commanding the cavalry corps in the district, was killed by another officer in Houston. Walker took over

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 1014-1015, 1095.

command of the cavalry. During the previous month, Walker's former division marched from Shreveport to Huntsville, Texas in response to rumors that 40,000 Federals planned to sail for the Texas coast. The Texans crossed the state line on March 15-17, and continued to move south until they reached Hempstead in mid April, the area where the regiments received their military indoctrination three years before. By this time, major events had begun to transpire in the East, as Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Virginia on April 9, followed by Joseph Johnston and the remnants of the Army of Tennessee in North Carolina on April 26. On May 4, Richard Taylor surrendered his Department of East Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, leaving the Trans-Mississippi as the last bastion of the Confederacy.<sup>270</sup>

Trans-Mississippi Confederates deserted by the thousands in the final days of the war. Without any other rebel armies in the field, they realized all Union resources could shift to the region and crush what remained of the Confederacy. Many men simply saw the futility in further resistance and after four years of war, desired the comforts of home and family. The despondent feelings did not spare many men, including Walker's division of Texans. On May 12, Walker again took command of his beloved Texans, but even his presence at their head could not stop the inevitable. Throughout the month of May, Walker's men disappeared in small groups until the division completely disbanded

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<sup>270</sup> Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, 415-416; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 249-252.

on May 20, 1865. Six days later, the last remains of the Trans-Mississippi army formally surrendered to Union forces.<sup>271</sup>

Walker, joined by his wife earlier in the month, and a group of about forty officers and men, determined they would escape into Mexico rather than wait for parole. The band left the Hempstead area soon after the disbanding of the command. With little money, few possessions, and scanty transportation, the party traveled southwest through the hot summer, trying to protect themselves from desperadoes and roaming ex-soldiers, looking to pillage and rob any passerby. Many of the party gave up on the idea and left for home. The travel soon took its toll on Mrs. Walker. Douglas French Forrest, traveling with the group, wrote “Poor Mrs. Walker seems to be laboring under great anxiety super induced by the defection of men who had volunteered undying devotion to the General & had enrolled in his Mexican band. It seems as if no confidence can be placed in anyone at this time.” On June 1, Walker sent his wife back to Houston to travel under a flag of truce to New Orleans where she would go by ship to Mexico, via Havana, Cuba.<sup>272</sup>

According to Forrest, Walker and many others seemed undecided as to what to do in early June. Soon, Walker and the small group learned about the surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Department. On June 5, Kirby Smith arrived and informed them that the Federals required a parole from all who surrendered. Forrest wrote that under such parole, persons were permitted to be at large for six months, at the end of which time

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<sup>271</sup> Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, 424; Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 254; Norman D. Brown, “John George Walker,” in *The Confederate General*, William C. Davis, ed., Vol. 6, (National Historical Society, 1991), 89.

<sup>272</sup> Forrest, *Odyssey in Gray*, 301-317.

“they are to give themselves up to be dealt with as our masters shall deem expedient.”

Walker decided to continue the plan and move into Mexico. The small band, having dwindled down to about six people, headed out on June 6 and reached San Antonio on June 11. There Walker joined with other officers and civilians not wishing to live under Yankee rule, raising the size of the group to around forty again. Forrest, having fallen ill with fever, remained at San Antonio and did not accompany Walker on the last leg of the journey. Walker’s party left San Antonio after a brief rest and in a few days crossed into Mexico.<sup>273</sup>

As 1864 began, Walker and the Texans under his command faced the largest Union effort to quell the rebellion west of the Mississippi River. Like the previous year, Walker found himself often involved in the disagreements between Edmund Kirby Smith and Richard Taylor. As before, Walker tended to favor Taylor and share his tactical and strategic ambitions. Walker and his troops fought in the three largest battles in the Trans-Mississippi theater during the war. The Texans crushed the enemy flank at Mansfield then fought hard at Pleasant Hill, and although forced to withdraw, compelled Banks to retreat. In Arkansas, Walker and his division pursued Steele’s Federals to the Saline River and fought again at Jenkins’ Ferry. Although the Confederates bloodied themselves in Arkansas, the removal of the Federals to Little Rock and Banks’ subsequent retreat ended the Union threat to the heart of the Trans-Mississippi department and deprived the Federals of their objectives. Walker performed well during the campaign and led his troops in the thickest of the fighting. During and after the war,

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 317-325.

his men commented about his bravery and leadership during the battles and the affection and confidence they shared in each other.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Born in Jefferson City, in Cole County, Missouri on July 22, 1822, John George Walker attended Jesuit College before receiving a commission as a lieutenant in the U.S. Mounted Rifles. Serving in Winfield Scott's campaign to capture Mexico City, Walker learned the duties of an officer and the life of a soldier in the army. Walker saw action at the battles of Contreras, Churubusco, and Molino del Rey, where he suffered a wound. During his service, Walker received a brevet to the rank of captain. After the end of the war in Mexico, Walker and the Mounted Rifles made the long and often dangerous journey across the western half of the United States on the Oregon Trail. Serving in Oregon, California, Texas, and New Mexico, Walker further developed his military skills, scouting and fighting against hostile Indians. These early army experiences in Mexico and the western frontier gave Walker knowledge of military service at lower levels of command. When the American Civil War began in 1861, Walker resigned his commission to join the Confederate army.

Walker enjoyed a successful period as an officer in the Army of Northern Virginia, leading a brigade during the Seven Days battles and a division during the Maryland Campaign of 1862. Walker distinguished himself in the campaign, participating in the Confederate capture of Harper's Ferry, Virginia and leading his division in a smashing counterattack that helped repel a Union advance and stabilize the crumbling rebel flank at the battle of Antietam. Because of his experience and successful

handling of a large body of troops, Walker received a promotion to Major General and a transfer to the Trans-Mississippi Department to take command of the Texas division in Arkansas. Taking charge of the Texans in early 1863, Walker saw much marching and little action, but nurtured a favorable attitude and respect from the men under his command, evidenced by their memoirs, diaries, and letters.

Walker moved his division into Louisiana in April, 1863 to join Major General Richard Taylor, commanding the District of West Louisiana. While in Louisiana, Walker often found himself caught in the disagreements between Taylor and the commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith. Smith and Taylor had different political affiliations as well as contradictory ideas about waging war. Smith felt an obligation to defend Arkansas as its politicians had been largely responsible for his appointment to department command. Smith also developed strong relationships with influential Missourians such as Governor Thomas C. Reynolds and General Sterling Price. Taylor, a native of Louisiana, had political and familial allegiance to his home state. Smith had served east of the Mississippi River under Generals Joseph E. Johnston and Braxton Bragg. Taylor's only previous military experience saw him serve under General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson during the 1862 Valley Campaign in Virginia. Taylor often emulated his former commander's offensive tactics and aggressive strategies.<sup>274</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1863, as Union forces laid siege to Confederates at Vicksburg and Port Hudson, Smith and Taylor disagreed over strategy. Smith, under

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<sup>274</sup> Jeffrey S. Prushankin, "A Crisis in Command: Edmund Kirby Smith and Richard Taylor in the Trans-Mississippi West," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Arkansas, 2000, 6-7, 120-122.

pressure from authorities east of the Mississippi for decisive action to assist Vicksburg, opposed Taylor's plan to move toward New Orleans and directed Taylor to use Walker and strike at the Union supply line near the Mississippi River. A combination of bad intelligence information, haphazard reconnaissance, and weak execution doomed any success. The resulting fight at Milliken's Bend and the botched assignment at Young's Point accomplished little and had no effect on the outcome of Vicksburg. The loss of Vicksburg, Port Hudson, control of the Mississippi River, and Union retention of New Orleans drove a rift between Smith and Taylor.

Walker's division gained its first combat experience from Milliken's Bend and little else. Although the problem began with Smith wrongly believing the Union supply line sat on the west bank of the Mississippi, Taylor and Walker should have done a better job of scouting the union positions at Milliken's Bend and Young's Point. With Union forces fighting defensively near the water with superior firepower gunboats, any attacks by Walker's division probably had little chance of success. Walker pulled his troops back from Milliken's Bend only after a savage and bloody encounter with heavy losses. Poor information actually delayed one of Walker's brigades from a potentially devastating engagement at Young's Point, where brigadier General James Hawes found himself facing a larger number of the enemy than expected with plenty of gunboat support.

After the small affairs along the Mississippi, Walker expressed doubts to Smith about any hope of relieving Vicksburg. He cited the Union use of gunboats, the superior mobility of the enemy infantry with transports, and the attack of the Federals upon his

troops near Richmond as examples of the destruction that awaited his command if they attempted to lift the siege on Vicksburg. Walker expressed more concern for his sickly troops, suffering in the disease ridden bottomlands west of the Mississippi.

In the spring of 1864, the union army attempted a double advance against the heart of the Trans-Mississippi department by moving up the Red River Valley from New Orleans and south from Arkansas. Walker expertly handled his division by removing it from a potentially ruinous position of being hemmed in a corner by superior numbers of Federal soldiers. Walker and his men suffered through a difficult retreat up the Red River Valley into northwestern Louisiana as Taylor and Smith once again argued over strategy. Fearing for the safety of the war manufacturing facilities in Shreveport and East Texas, Smith ordered a strategic withdrawal of Taylor's army, including Walker's division. Taylor, anguished by surrendering Louisiana soil without a fight, finally had enough and turned to face Banks' Federals at Mansfield, Louisiana. Walker's troops hammered the Union flank at Mansfield and helped rout them from the field. Taylor pushed forward and hit the Federals again the next day at Pleasant Hill. Poor deployment before the assault and overwhelming Union reinforcements drove back the Confederate advance.

Smith arrived soon after the battles and took over command of Walker and a majority of Taylor's infantry for a move north to face Steele's Federals in Arkansas. The Confederates chased the Union army from Camden, Arkansas and caught up to it at Jenkins' Ferry, where Smith unsuccessfully threw Walker's division and the other units at a strong enemy position. Both Union armies escaped to fight another day. Taylor

became enraged over the missed opportunity to defeat the Federals retreating from Pleasant Hill and what he saw as a senseless pursuit of the Union army in Arkansas. Walker shared Taylor's negative opinion of the decisions made by Smith. His division marched hundreds of miles to a fight poorly devised battle in which Walker lost all three of his brigade commanders and dozens of irreplaceable veterans.

Despite Walker's ridicule of Smith and preference for chasing Banks' army, any success the Confederates hoped to gain would probably have resulted in a battle similar to Jenkins' Ferry. Banks' forces, though demoralized, still outnumbered the rebels and fortified themselves at Grand Ecore. Soon, Union gunboats moved into position around the Union army as support. Fortunately for Walker, the Federals retreated south before the possibility of his battered division being obliterated in assaults at Grand Ecore. Any Confederate success in destroying banks would have had to occur immediately after Pleasant Hill.

Walker replaced Taylor as commander of the District of West Louisiana in June, 1864. He also temporarily commanded the District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, the cavalry corps of the department, and his Texas division once again at the end of the war. Walker had a successful military career throughout most of his life. In Mexico, the American West, the Eastern theater of the Civil War, and in the Trans-Mississippi, Walker exercised competent leadership skills and encouraged his troops in combat, earning great respect and praise from superiors and those under his command. Walker obeyed orders from superiors but knew when to exercise personal initiative and avoid

senseless slaughter. At the end of the war, Walker and a small band of former Confederates slipped across the border into Mexico.

After entering Mexico, Walker went to Cuba in the summer of 1865 and proceeded to England with his family. In 1866, Walker worked as an agent for the Venezuela Company, promoting the settlement of former Confederates in Venezuela. While overseas, Walker also worked in the Liverpool and London offices of the firm of Hoffman and Walker, supplying railroad equipment to the Southern United States and selling American goods in England. In early 1868 Walker returned to the United States where he held a number of job positions. He worked in Texas as an agent for Mutual Life Insurance of St. Louis, as a newspaper editor for the *Austin Democratic Statesman*, as a member and vice president of the Dallas Herald Printing Company, and as an agent of the Houston and Texas Central Railway. Walker and his family lived in Texas and afterwards New Orleans before moving to Winchester, Virginia in 1876. Walker also served as the United States consul in Bogota, Columbia and as an envoy to ask Latin-American countries to the 1889 Pan American Conference during the presidential administration of Grover Cleveland. On July 20, 1893 Walker died of a stroke in Washington, D.C. and was buried in Winchester, Virginia.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Thomas Cutrer, "John George Walker," in *The Handbook of Texas Online*.

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