

Battle of Arkansas Post [Fort Hindman], 11 Jan 1863

General William Sherman had thought he was going to be in command when writing to brother John, but he was replaced by McClernand.

[The Sherman Letters Correspondence Between General Sherman and Senator Sherman from 1837 to 1891, by Rachel Sherman Thorndike, 1894.]

"Steamer Forest Queen, Jan. 6, 1863

....We are now en route for the Arkansas. Up that river about 50 miles the enemy is entrenched and has sent down to the Mississippi and captured two steamboats, conveying to the fleets supplies. Now it is unwise to leave such a force on our rear and flank, and inasmuch as General Grant is not prepared to march down to Vicksburg by land, we can attack this post of Arkansas and maybe reach, Little Rock. Success in this quarter will have a good effect on the main river. But in the end Vicksburg must be reduced, and it is going to be a hard nut to crack. It is the strongest place I ever saw, both by nature and art; and so far as we could observe it is defended by a competent force of artillery, infantry and cavalry. Besides its railroad connections with the interior give them great advantages..."

Army of the Mississippi: Major General **John A. McClernand**

XIII Corps

Second Division: Brigadier General **Peter J. Osterhaus**

1st Brigade: **Col. Lionel A. Sheldon**

118th IL: Col John G. Fonda

69th IN: Col. Thomas Warren Bennett

120th Ohio: Col. Daniel French

And Admiral David Dixon Porter was in command of the gunboats.

Private **Henry Myers**, Co I, was captured "in action" 9 Jan 1863; returned to the company 26 Nov 1863. Henry and Hiram were from Richland County OH.

From the Diary of John Summerfield Petty, at that time a Private in Company C:

Jan. 9th, Friday

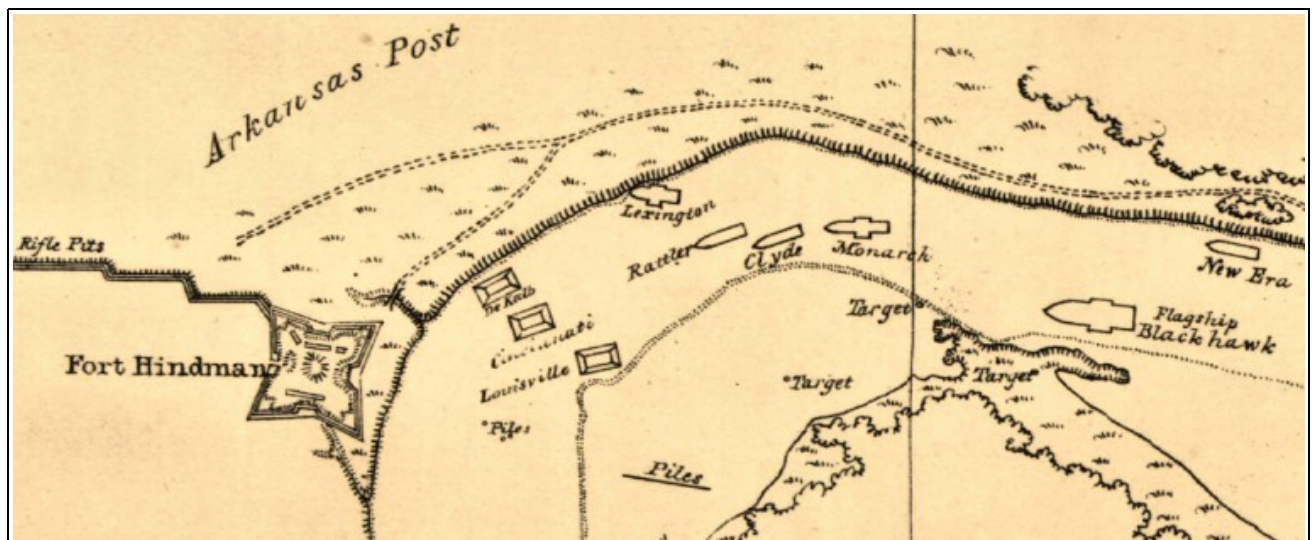
"We ran up the White River a few miles & then entered the Arkansas River & are now moored on its banks."

January 10th, Saturday

"I arose early and cooked some cakes & meat. We are ordered to take two days rations. we are preparing to land here. (later that night) We are now encamped in a field on the banks of the river."

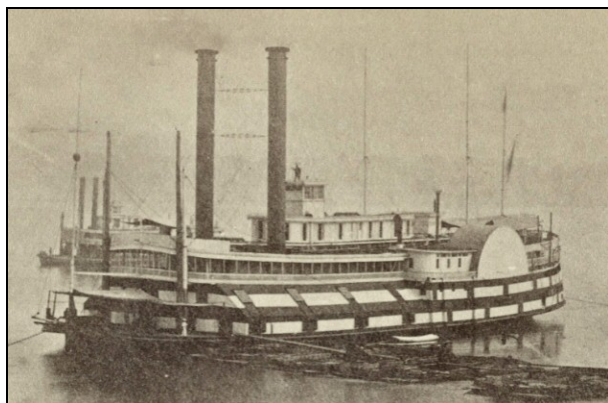
The following map is the Approaches to Fort Hindman, Arkansas Post, on the Arkansas River....January 11th, 1863 from the National Archives.

<http://www.loc.gov/resource/g4004a.cw011500/>

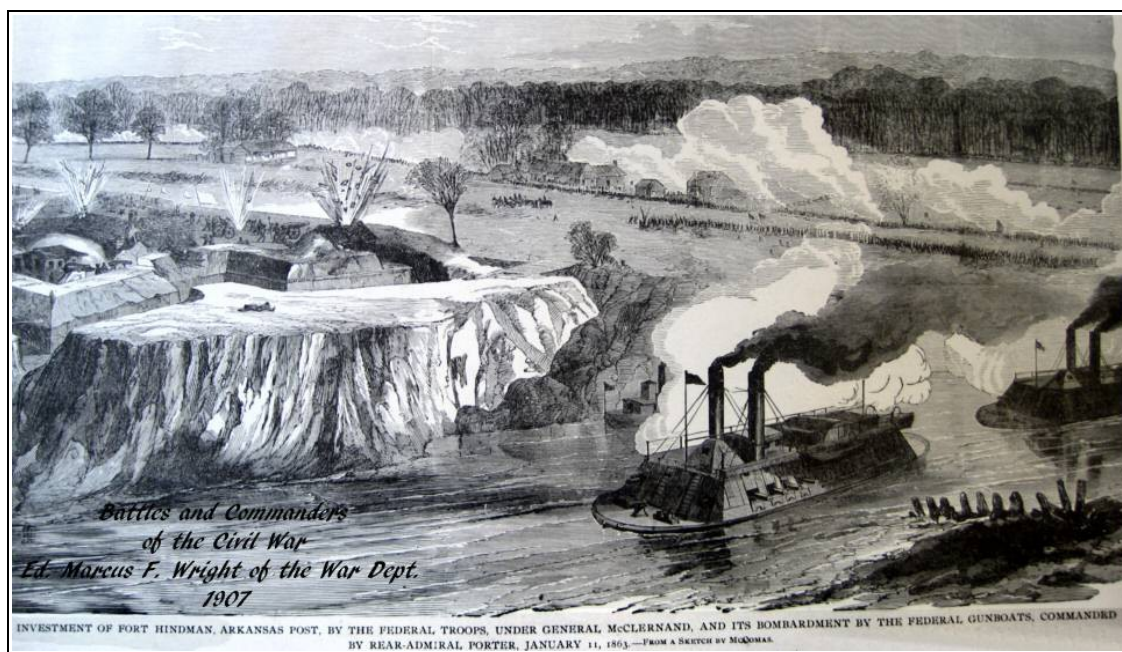
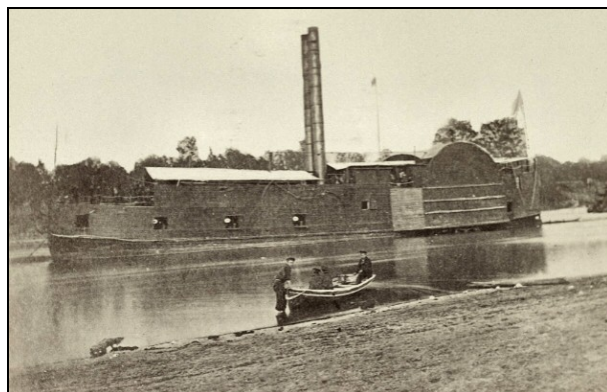
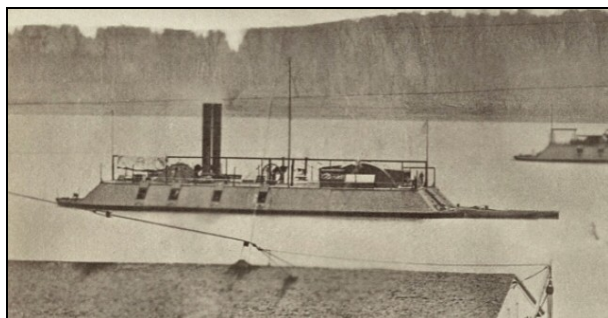


The river is the Arkansas. In the river are the gunboats that fought there along with the regiments. The gunboats were Baron De Kalb, Cincinnati, Louisville, Lexington, Monarch, Black Hawk, Rattler, Clyde and New Era. The Black Hawk was Porter's flag ship.

Below: The ram, Black Hawk, from the National Archives and the ironclad, Cincinnati, from the National Archives



Below: The ironclad, De Kalb, from the National Archives and the ram, Lexington, from the National Archives



Sketch from the book Battles and Commanders of the Civil War : a graphic and pictorial history

prepared directly from the government records in the Departments of War and Statistics, by Frank Leslie and Marcus J. Wright, 1902 and 1906

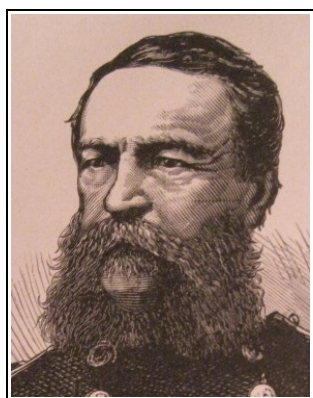
This letter in the Beacon may be from a soldier in the 3rd Brigade led by Col DeCourcy in the Second Division of Osterhaus. 42nd Ohio, led by Lieut Col. Don Albert Pardee. It is signed at the end with the initials A. P.

Vicksburg Campaign, From Chickasaw Bayou to Victory at Arkansas Post [Sketch of Porter from the book Battles and Commanders of the Civil War : a graphic and pictorial history prepared directly from the government records in the Departments of War and Statistics, by Frank Leslie and Marcus J. Wright, 1902 and 1906]

[Wednesday, 15 May 1889 Summit County Beacon (Akron, OH), Vol 51, Issue 2650, Page 5, available at GenealogyBank.]

Written for The Beacon.

Upon the arrival of our fleet at the mouth of the Yazoo river we found the steamer "Tigress"



awaiting us. Gen. John A. McClernand had been sent by President Lincoln to relieve Gen. W. T. Sherman and was aboard of her. The fleet accompanied by the gunboats under **Admiral Porter [pictured]** moved about 10 miles up the Mississippi and rendezvoused at Milliken's Bend.

Gen. Sherman in an official order withdrawing from the command said: "A new commander is now here to lead you. He is chosen by the President of the United States, who has the undoubted right to select his own agent."

[*Note: Sherman did not like Abe Lincoln.*] Immediately on assuming command Gen. McClernand assigned Gen. George W. Morgan to the command of his old corps (the 13th). Gen. P. J. Osterhaus was assigned to the command of Gen. Morgan division. The 13th corps consisted of the divisions of Osterhaus and Gen. A. J. Smith. Gen. Sherman was given command of the 15th army corps, containing the divisions of Gen. Steele and Gen. Stuart in place of M. L. Smith, who was wounded in the hip by a

minie ball during the engagement at Chickasaw.

With the army thus organized, Gen. McClernand ascended the river on the 4th of January and on the 8th reached the mouth of the White river which empties into the Mississippi a few miles above the mouth of the Arkansas river. A deep bayou connects these streams some distance from the Mississippi, and to deceive the enemy as to our destination our fleet moved up the White river, through the cut-off, to the Arkansas and appeared below Arkansas Post. The fort was built upon the site of an old Government trading post with the Indians, and commanded the river for a long distance. The troops disembarked about three miles below the fort on the east bank, on the evening of the 10th. About a mile below the fort a line of rifle pits proved the first obstacle in our way.

Just before sunset our gunboat fleet steamed up and engaged the fort, this assisting the infantry to force the enemy to abandon this outer line. During the night the 15th corps passed in rear of the enemy's works and formed a line with left resting on the river above the fort. The 13th corps, connected with Gen. Sherman's right, completely investing to the river below. The gunboats learned that two small boats were in the river above the fort, and lest the rebels might escape across the river two sections of Foster's Battery and the Mercantile Battery of Chicago, with Gen. Lindsay's Brigade of our division, were landed on the opposite side of the river and before morning their guns were in place behind the levee a mile above the fort. DeCourcy's brigade had lost more than one-third of its numbers at Chickasaw bayou and Gen. Morgan chose to hold it in reserve. We bivouacked in a large cornfield near the rifle pits. The night was cold and frosty, but the boys managed to find rails enough to keep up fires and were comfortable.

When the sun arose on Sunday the 11th the fort was completely invested. Gen. McClernand felt so sure of his game that he did not care to force by fighting at a great sacrifice of life. He preferred to have the gunboats disable the casemated guns and dismount the artillery and give them a good waking up before making the assault. At 11 o'clock the gunboats advanced and engaged the fort at short range. The railroad iron with which the fort was encased was peeled off and bent in every shape. The inner lining of the front part consisted of 40 inches of hewn timber, but when the outer casing was knocked off the 200 pounder rifle cannon sent their shot through

the timber as readily as a minie ball would pierce an inch board. A nine inch barbette gun was struck in the muzzle and split nearly to the trunnions[?]. Two pieces of Foster's battery, 20 pounder Parrot rifle cannon, got in an advantageous position about 300 yards from the fort and with the precision of a sharp shooter target rifle, sent shell after shell into the embrasure of the casemate. By noon the gunboats had passed the fort, the water fronts being silenced. The artillery fire from a point of land on the opposite side of the river was at first thought to be Rebel re-enforcements from Little Rock, but the shells were seen to strike the rear of the Rebel works with terrible effect. It was Foster, who had gone during the night to intercept the two boats above, but had become tired of waiting and had come to have a hand in reducing the fort. About 1 o'clock the reserve was ordered up and deployed into line of battle, perhaps 50 yards from the fort, with right resting on the river. On our left was Col. L. A. Sheldon's brigade of A. J. Smith's division.

The assaulting column moved rapidly across the space and were met with a terrific fire from small arms. Suddenly a white flag was run up from an angle of the fort, but was soon pulled down. Our artillery, from every quarter, opened anew, when up went the flag again, as well as white hats, tufts of cotton, &c. We were almost up to the ditch when the order to "cease firing" was given.

Cheer after cheer rent the air and the regimental color-bearer made an effort to place their colors first on the works. It is generally conceded that the 120th Ohio, of Col. Sheldon's brigade, won the honor.

By the surrender, three brigades of the enemy under Gen. Churchill, about 6,000 men, were made prisoners, two field batteries and a number of heavy guns fell into our hands. Two regiments of Rebel infantry had made forced marches to reinforce the fort and came up soon after the surrender. Our cavalry scouts announced their approach. The troops fell back to allow them to enter. When the colonel of one of the regiments was told that he need not go any further, that they were "All Yankees in there," he replied, "That's a h__ l of a way to reinforce."

Next morning after surrender a wagon train of provisions drove into camp and wagon master and all were captured. The troops proved to be mostly Texan regiments, only one regiment being from Arkansas. That night the 42d was detailed to guard prisoners. The night was extremely cold, but the camp fires sent forth a gleam of comfort to the crowded mass of humanity within our guard line. Rations were issued the prisoners during the evening and the remarks complimentary to the "Yankees" as they called us, were amusing. Their only regret or complaint was that they had to give up their "side arms," as they termed them, an old horse pistol or huge bowie knife, which almost every man had in his belt when the surrender was made. We were relieved from guard by the 30th Iowa next day, and for the first time had an opportunity to view the surroundings. We have seen many battle fields covered with slain, but never have seen men so mutilated as they were here -- a part of a body lying at one place and the balance somewhere else; scarcely a whole body could be found. Several headless bodies were seen. The boys had gathered a number of arms and legs together in a pile, and were trying to find the body to which they belonged.

The cause of this fearful carnage was that the line of works lay at right angles to the river and our heavy artillery on board the gunboats, at short range, mowed down the men as they stood in line behind their fortifications. The prisoners were put aboard of three large boats and under guard sent to Cairo [IL]. A heavy detail of men was made and the work of leveling the fort began.

On the evening of the 16th the magazine in the [casemate fort](#) was blown up. A number of buildings were fired. We went aboard the boats and moved down the Arkansas river in splendid spirits, and in a snow storm went into camp at Napoleon.

A. P.

The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative incidents, Poetry, Etc...Vol 6, edited by Frank Moore, 1868: [See <http://books.google.com/> for the complete account.]

[pp. 360 and 361]Doc. 101, Battle of Arkansas Post, **Report of Major-General McClernand**, Headquarters Army of the Mississippi, Steamer Tigress, Miss. River, January 20, 1863, Lieut.-Colonel John A Rawlins, A. A. General, Department of the Tennessee:

I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the forces of which, in pursuance of the order of Major-General Grant, commanding the department of the Tennessee, I assumed command on the fourth inst. at Milliken's Bend LA., resulting in the reduction of Fort Hindman, more generally known as Post Arkansas.

These forces, styled by me for convenience and propriety of description, the "Army of the Mississippi," consisted of parts of two corps d'armee; namely the Thirteenth, my own, and **the Fifteenth, Major-Gen. Sherman's**. Desiring to give my undivided attention to matters affecting the [page 361] general command, I immediately assigned Brig.-General Geo. W. Morgan, a tried and meritorious officer, to the command of the Thirteenth corps d'armee, in which he was the senior division commander.

The Fifteenth corps, temporarily constituted by me the right wing, was composed of the following troops:

First Division. Brigadier-General F. Steele, commanding.

First brigade, Brig.-Gen. Frank P. Blair, commanding --Thirteenth Illinois, Twenty-ninth Missouri, Thirty-first Missouri, Thirty-second Missouri, Fifty-eighth Ohio, Thirtieth Missouri.

Second brigade, Brig.-Gen. C. E. Hovey, commanding -- Seventeenth Missouri, Twenty-fifth Iowa, Third Missouri, Seventy-sixth Ohio, Thirty-first Iowa, Twelfth, Missouri.

Third brigade, Brig-General John M. Thayer, commanding--Fourth Iowa, Thirty-fourth Iowa, Thirtieth Iowa, Twenty-sixth Iowa, Ninth Iowa, infantry.

Artillery --First Iowa, Capt. Griffiths; Fourth Ohio, Captain Hoffman, and first Missouri hours artillery. Cavalry --Third Illinois, and company --, Fifteenth Illinois.

Second Division Brigadier-General D. Stuart, commanding.

First brigade --Colonel G. A. Smith, commanding --Eighth Missouri, Sixth Missouri, One Hundred and Thirteenth Illinois, One Hundred and Sixteenth Illinois, Thirteenth United States.

Second brigade, Colonel T. Kirby Smith, commanding --Fifty-fifth Illinois, One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Illinois, Fifty-fourth Ohio, Eighty-third Indiana, Fifty-seventh Ohio, infantry.

Artillery --Companies A and B, First Illinois light artillery, and Eighth Ohio battery.

Cavalry --Two companies of Thielman's Illinois battalion, and company C, Tenth Missouri.

The Thirteenth corps, forming the left wing, was composed of the following forces:

First Division Brigadier-General A. J. Smith, commanding.

First brigade, Brig.-Gen. S. G. Burbridge, commanding --Sixtieth Indiana, Sixteenth Indiana, Twenty-third Wisconsin, Eighty-third Ohio, Sixty-seventh Indiana, Ninety-sixth Ohio.

Second brigade, Colonel W. J. Landrum, commanding --Nineteenth Kentucky, Seventy-seventh Illinois, One Hundred and Eighth Illinois, One Hundred and Thirty-first Illinois, Eighty-ninth Indiana, infantry.

Artillery --Seventeenth Ohio battery, Captain Blount, and Illinois Mercantile battery, Captain Cooley.

Cavalry --One company Fourth Indiana.

Second Division Brigadier-General P. I. Osterhouse, commanding.

First brigade, Col. L. A. Sheldon, commanding --Sixtieth Indiana, One Hundred and Eighteenth Illinois, **One Hundred and Twentieth Ohio**.

Second brigade, Col. D. W. Lindsay, commanding --Third Kentucky, Forty-ninth Indiana, One Hundred and Fourteenth Ohio.

Third brigade, Colonel J. DeCourcy, commanding --Sixteenth Ohio, Twenty-second Kentucky, Forty-second Ohio, Fifty-fourth Indiana, infantry.

Artillery --First Wisconsin, Capt. Foster, Seventh Michigan, Captain Lamphere.

Having, as already mentioned, assumed command of these forces on the fourth instant, after they had retired from the neighborhood of Vicksburgh, I sailed with them, the same day, in execution of a purpose, the importance of which I had suggested to Gen. Gorman, at Helena, on the thirtieth December ultimo, on my way down the river. That purpose was the reduction of **Fort Hindman, which had been laboriously and skilfully [sic] enlarged and strengthened, since the commencement of the rebellion; which formed the key to Little Rock, the capital of the State of Arkansas, and the extensive and valuable country drained by the Arkansas River, and from which hostile detachments were constantly sent forth to obstruct the navigation of the Mississippi River and thereby our communications.**

[Page 365:]Meanwhile Col. Sheldon, under Gen. Osterhaus's opportune direction, had ordered up Cooley's battery within two hundred yards of the enemy's defences, and deployed the One

Hundred and Eighteenth Illinois on its right, and massed **the One Hundred and Twentieth Ohio on its left, holding the Sixty-ninth Indiana in reserve. Both infantry and artillery replied to the galling fire of the enemy until the rifle-pits of the latter, in front, were nearly cleared. Seizing the opportunity, the One Hundred and Twentieth Ohio dashed forward to carry the east face of the Fort, and only failed because, superadded to the fosse, there was an impassible ravine in the way.**

Col. DeCoucy's brigade, which with General Blair's had born the brunt of the repulse near Vicksburgh, was left near the transports to protect them, and to guard the approach across the swamp by which General Steele had counter marched, and remained there until about three o'clock, when it was ordered up.

Having reinforced General Sherman, at his request, at a quarter-past three o'clock, by sending the Twenty-third Wisconsin, Nineteenth Kentucky, and Ninety-seventh Illinois, from General Smith's division, to take position further to the right' and the engagement, notwithstanding the guns of the Fort had been silenced by the combined fire of my artillery and the gunboats, being sharp and general on both sides, I ordered an assault.

Burbridge's brigade with the two regiments of Landrum's which had been sent to its right, and **the one Hundred and Twentieth Ohio of Colonel Sheldon's brigade bearing the brunt, dashed forward under a deadly fire quite to the enemy's entrenchments, the Sixteenth Indiana, Lieut.-Col. John M. Orr, with the Eighty-third Ohio, Lieut.-Colonel Baldwin, of Burbridge's brigade, and the one Hundred and Twentieth Ohio, Colonel D. French, of Colonel Sheldon's brigade, being the first to enter the Fort.** Presenting himself at the entrance of the Fort, Gen. Burbridge was halted by the guard, who denied that they had surrendered until he called their attention to the white flag, and ordered them to ground their arms. Immediately after, meeting General Churchill, commandant of the post, he referred him to me, from whom I received the formal surrender of the post, its armament, garrison, and all its stores.

The War of the Rebellion: Formal reports, both Union and Confederate, of the first seizures of United States property in the Southern States (53 v. in 11) pp 750 Chapter XXIX No. 22 At [Google books](#).

Report of Col. Lionel A. Sheldon, Forty-second Ohio Infantry, commanding First Brigade Hdqrs. First Brig., Second Div., 13th Army Corps January 13, 1863

Sir: The part taken by my brigade in the reduction of Post Arkansas is as follows:

On the 10th instant the brigade debarked and moved up the river to the open field about 2 miles from the fort and there remained for the night. At sunrise it moved forward and took up position in support of the batteries attached to the division, the left of the brigade resting on the river bank and the right forming on the left of the First Division.

At 10 a.m. two companies of the Sixty-ninth Indiana Volunteers, Colonel Bennett, were advanced as skirmishers and participated in the fighting during the day.

At 1 p. m. the One hundred and twentieth Ohio was ordered forward in support of a battery, and very soon thereafter advanced to the left of the battery, its left resting upon the river bank.

At 3 P. M. the regiment was ordered forward to the enemy's works. Accordingly it was formed in column, doubled on the center, and moved forward at a double-quick in very fine order, under the lead of the intrepid Colonel French, until they encountered the ditch outside of the enemy's works and at the same time encountered a heavy fire from the rifle-pits. Although being considerably in advance of any other troops the regiment deployed as far as it could in the space allowed and very gallantly maintained its ground without disorder or flinching until the firing ceased, and was the first to plant its colors on the enemy's works. The one hundred and eighteenth Illinois, Colonel Fonda, was advanced on the right of the battery and participated to some extent in the infantry fighting.

The officers and troops under my command, as far as I was able to discover, behaved with becoming skill and courage.

A nominal list of the killed and wounded I herewith transmit, with designation of company, &c. **[On page 717, 120th Ohio 2 enlisted men killed; 9 enlisted men wounded; 11 enlisted men captured or missing.]**

Very Truly, L. A. Sheldon, Colonel, Commanding First Brigade. Capt. W. A. Gordon, Assistant Adjutant General.



Sketch from the book Battles and Commanders of the Civil War : a graphic and pictorial history prepared directly from the government records in the Departments of War and Statistics, by Frank Leslie and Marcus J. Wright, 1902 and 1906, page 186.

From the Diary of John Summerfield Petty, at that time a Private in Company C, 120th OVI [Contributed by descendant Dave Robinson]

Sunday, **11 Jan 1863**: "We are now resting near the enemy's fortifications. Both sides seem to be holding back. Heavy firing commenced near noon and was kept up almost constantly from the fort & our gun boats & batteries. I never heard anything to equal it before. We were ordered to advance and support Foster's battery. When no fears were entertained for that, a body of skirmishers from our regiment were sent out, and shortly afterward we were ordered 'forward double quick,' March. We advanced with in 60 yards of the fort & lay there exposed to the enemy's fire until 4 o'clock when the white flag was hoisted & we advanced into the fort. Our flag was the first upon the battlements. From our regiment we lost 5 killed. The gallant Davis [Stephen] from our company. The victory was an important one as we took a good many prisoners & horses & commissary & ordinance stores."

Hardesty's Wayne County version: (Henry Hartman, Co. D, biography page 506)"Owing to the efficient service of the Foster battery, which disabled the rifled cannon which commanded the field, and also that of the gunboat Benton, disabling the cannon commanding the river, this entrance was effected with but small loss of life. When the fort was in the hands of the Union soldiers, having no other ammunition, they cut the railroad iron which guarded the outside of the fort and shot into the ranks of the foe and it proved a more destructive weapon than the shell."

Letter written to Mrs. Henry Jennings, sister of Corporal **James Patrick, Co D**, 120th OVI. The letter was written by Capt. G. P. Emrich. Published in the Wooster Republican newspaper, Thursday, 5 Feb 1863, pg 3, available at GenealogyBank.]

[Note: Ohio, County Marriages: Soldier's sister, Margaret J. PATRICK, married Henry JENNINGS at Wooster, Wayne County OH on 14 Oct 1858.]

"Arkansas Post, on the Arkansas River, 50 miles above its mouth, on board the steamer Jess. K. Bell, **Jan. 12, 1863.**

Dear Madam - It is under a deep sense of feeling that the present circumstances are such as compel me to record upon this sheet which was enclosed with yours dated the 27th ult., and this day received; also containing a postage stamp and envelope to carry back and be the winding sheet of the intelligence of the lamented death of your dear brother, James Patrick. He died this day at half-past 6 o'clock P. M., about two hours after the receipt of your letter. His disease was pronounced by his physician Typhoid fever and measles. I had him furnished with the best medical treatment that circumstances would admit, and also well attended by nurses. I had furnished him with a good bed in a state room, in the cabin of the boat. He having become insensible before the receipt of your letter, consequently it could not be recognized by him. I therefore took upon myself to open and read your kind favor. And I feel sorry to record in answer the sad intelligence of the death of a dear brother. but his is the course of nature, and the Lord's will be done. I sympathize with you in this affliction, hoping you may bear it with a Christian spirit, and that your prayers may ascend to heaven in behalf of the balance of the company and officers, of which your brother was a worthy member, two of which have already gone before him.

"We expect to proceed to-morrow and place his remains beneath the sod, on the right bank of the Arkansas River, called the Arkansas Post, along side of three of the brave boys of the 120th regiment, already buried there, having fallen in the battle here yesterday, of which you have no account yet. We had a very successful battle with the enemy at this place yesterday. We took their fortifications, and a large amount of commissary stores, several hundred head of horses and mules, and between 5000 and 6000 prisoners, with all their arms, ammunition, &c. If it were possible, I would be glad to send the remains of your brother to your parents, but it cannot be done now, but we will mark his grave in a conspicuous manner, so that it may be found hereafter.

The particulars of our battle yesterday, I cannot give at this time, as I am very busy, and surrounded with confusion. We had three killed in the 120th. Serene Wells, of Wooster, is among the killed. But one, of our company was wounded, slightly in the ankle. Our loss in killed, is small, perhaps will not exceed 25, while that of the enemy is over one hundred. You will hear the particulars more fully hereafter. Accompanied herewith, I send a package to you, containing the scrap-book, likenesses, pocket-book purse with one dime of money in it, a number of letters, pen knife, &c, belonging to James, hoping all will reach you in safety. I hope to hear from you as soon as you receive this. Direct to Memphis, Tenn., to follow regiment. - You will please immediately hand this note to the parents of James Patrick.

Your humble servant, G. P. Emrich, Captain, 120th Regiment O.V.I."

[Note: The men of the 120th who were buried at Arkansas Post were to be moved to Little Rock National Cemetery. But only Cyreneus Wells of Co. A is listed there and has a grave stone. Perhaps the others were buried at Little Rock as unknowns.]

From the Diary of John Summerfield Petty, at that time a Private in Company C

[Contributed by descendant Dave Robinson]:

Monday, 12 Jan 1863: "I was over the battle field this morning & the sights I saw were enough to make any heart feel. In some places six horses lay in a pile just as they fell. The enemy's loss was much greater than ours as the gun boats were so very destructive. I shall never forget the horrid sights the rifle pits presented. Some poor fellows had their legs blown entirely off. A few were hit near the middle by a shell & were completely mangled. A great many were hit in the head or had their heads taken off.Stephen Davis was buried with four or five of our regiment near the river."

Who really planted the flag at Arkansas Post??? Various versions:

Hardesty's Richland: (George Stake, Company H, biography page 486)" ...and the 120th regiment was the first to enter the rebel stronghold. Lieutenant Wallace, of this regiment, planted the colors

on the ramparts." [Robert P. Wallace, company E]

Hardesty's Richland: (George Flaharty, Company H, biography page 483)"Captain Phelan, of Company H, was the first man to enter the rebel stronghold, and his company the first to plant the Stars and stripes on the fort."

Hardesty's Richland: (Erastus B. Wilson biography) "At the charge on the fort at Arkansas Post, their regiment was the first to enter the fort, and Mr. Wilson [Company B] assisted the color-bearer to plant the flag on the ramparts."

"The National Tribune [Washington DC], 2 Oct 1884, page 3:

"More about the Capture of Arkansas Post.

To the Editor: In your issue of the 11th of September I noticed an article over the signature of Jas. S. Schermerhorn, late Color-Sergeant of the 127th Ill., in which he takes exception to the description of Arkansas Post as written by J. W. Fry, of the 42d Ohio, published in The Tribune of Aug. 28, in which he (Fry) gives Lieut. R. P. Wallace, of the 120th Ohio, the credit of placing the colors of his regiment first upon the fort, claiming that distinguished honor for himself. The author of the article, J. W. Fry, is certainly correct, as hundreds who were present can testify. The same day that I received The Tribune of the 11th ult. I visited Lieut. R. P. Wallace at his home near Loudonville, O., and showed him the article and held quite a lengthy conversation with him on the subject. I also conversed with several others on the subject who were eye-witnesses, and they all tell the same story. The facts are substantially as follows: The 120th Ohio held a position on the left of the line, near the river, about 20 rods from the fort, with orders to advance and charge the fort when the signal was given. But before the bugle sounded, which was to be the signal for a general charge all along the line, the white flag was displayed in the fort, and, although the command was given to halt, the 120th rushed pell-mell into the fort closely followed by other regiments. Lieut. R. P. Wallace, who was Color-Sergeant of the regiment was in the lead and scaled the ditch and ascended into the fort by jumping on the back of another soldier and planted his flag on the fort and commenced to cheer. Now, these are the facts in the case, as hundreds of the members of the 120th and 42d Ohio and Gen. Osterhaus, who commanded the division, if living, can testify. Lieut. Wallace says he had a good view of the fort and could not see another Union flag on the fort until soon after he planted the 120th's colors. I do not wish to detract one iota from any comrade's bravery or pluck a single star from his crown, but I desire to see justice done to all. Serg't Schermerhorn says he went into the fort with his flag before they quit firing and got the flag-staff shot in two in his hand, etc. Now this may all be true, but it is an unusual proceeding in military tactics to rush up and plant a flag on a fort while the firing is still going on, and before the surrender, and receive the fire of both friend and foe. I do not know the position the 127th Ill. occupied; but if they were on the right of the line, it might be possible that comrade Schermerhorn is right and placed his colors first on the fort, the same not seen from our position, but our impression always was that the 120th's flag was first on the fort; and cannot believe differently until fully convinced that such was not the case.

Lieut. R. P. Wallace was taken prisoner at Raymond, Miss., and served 18 months in Libby Prison, when he succeeded in effecting his escape and reached the Union lines. He was as brave a soldier as ever drew a sword or pulled a trigger. Lieut. Wallace lives on a splendid farm which he owns, near the town of Loudonville, Ashland county, O., and is engaged extensively in farming.

J. P. Van Nest, Lieut., 120th Ohio, Wooster, O."

[Robert P. Wallace, Company E, 120th OVI]

From The Wooster Republican, 22 Jan 1863, p. 2, available at GenealogyBank.

The Victory at Arkansas Post

The Place Taken by Storm

From 7,000 to 10,000 Prisoners, Stores, &c. Captured

Memphis, Jan. 11

Major-Gen. Halleck, General-in-Chief

The following dispatch is just received:

Headq'rts Army of Mississippi

Post of Arkansas, Jan. 11

Major-General Grant, Commanding Department of Tennessee:

I have the honor to report that the forces under my command attacked the Post of Arkansas today. Having stormed the enemy's works, we took a large number of prisoners, variously estimated at from 7,000 to 10,000, together with all his stores, and munitions of war. Rear Admiral David D. Porter, commanding the Mississippi squadron, effectively and brilliantly co-operated in accomplishing this complete success.

John A. McClernand,

Major General Commanding

In The Wooster Republican, 14 June 1899 available at GenealogyBank, was an account of the 31st annual reunion of the 120th Regiment O.V.I. which was held at Perrysville, Ohio on 6 June. At the reunion a letter from John McClernand was read:

Springfield, Ill, June 2, 1899

"Lieutenant J.P. Van Nest, Secretary,

Dear Comrade

I greet with thanks your letter requesting a message of remembrance to my surviving comrades of the 120th O.V. Infantry, to be read on the occasion of their Reunion, on the 6th instant. As the weight of years and infirmity will deny me the pleasure of personally joining them on that occasion, I have great pleasure in complying with your request.

The conspicuous and important part borne by the 120th Ohio Regiment in the assault upon and **the capture of Arkansas Post** in the entirety of its Garrison, defenses and stores, is still fresh in my memory. **The feat was a coup de main, eliciting the applause of President Lincoln, who wrote me that the "Success was both brilliant and valuable. In fact its value was enhanced by the consideration, that the coup came upon the heel of disaster sustained by the National arms both upon the Mississippi and Potomac. The feat was potent in restoring our military prestige.**

Please convey to my surviving comrades of the 120th Regiment, the assurance of my grateful remembrance of their valor and patriotic devotion in the time that tried men's souls.

Your Old Commander and Comrade,

John A. McClernand"

[From Jackie Riblett Horvath, the great great great granddaughter of John H STRAHER and Sarah HOAG.

John Straher, Corporal, Co D 120th OVI, died 4 Feb 1863.]

Headquarter Army of Mississippi,]

Feb. 14, 1863 }

Mrs. Sarah Straher – Dear Madame: It is under a deep sense of feeling I am thus compelled to convey to you the sad and painful intelligence of the death of your husband, John Straher. I this day received official notice from St. Louis, Mo., that he died on the 4th inst. of musket shot wound in the ankle. His wound was not considered dangerous when he was taken off the field. But thus it is – man is like the grass that is cut down and wilted in an hour. I can deeply sympathize with you in your deep and sore bereavement, hoping that you may bear up under it with a Christian spirit, yielding submissively to Him that holds us as it were in the palms of his hand and doeth all things well. He was a faithful, honest and true soldier, and laid down his life honorably in the defense of his country. Thus we have lost another true patriot and good and faithful citizen and neighbor, and our company of which he was a member deeply laments his loss.

He was wounded at the battle of Arkansas Post, on the 11th of January 1863. The next day he was put on board a steamboat along with many others that were wounded in the same battle, and started up the river. I never was informed where they [had] taken him nor heard from him until I received official notice from the St. Louis Hospital of his death, which took me very much by surprise. I mentioned it in two of my letters I wrote after it happened. Whether they were received or not I do not know. I must close, hoping this may reach and find you well. Yours truly,

G. P. Emrick

[George Emrick, Capt. Co D 120th OVI]

The 120th at Arkansas Post, 11 Jan 1863:

Pvt. William Brown, Co F, killed

Corporal John Straher, Co D, wounded, died of wound 4 Feb

Pvt. Stephen Davis Co C, killed

Pvt. William Wilson, Co I, wounded, died on 12 Jan [Pension: "William Wilson was shot....while charging the army on double quick, and that while running he was shot and fell."]

Pvt. Franklin Getz, Co I, slightly wounded thumb

Pvt. Davidson Long, Co H, wounded

Pvt. Cyreneaus Wells, Co A, killed...the only one killed who has a stone at Little Rock National Cemetery

Corporal William Johnson, Co G, wounded

Sgt. James L. McClure, Co K, wounded

Pvt. Judson Wells, Co A, slightly wounded ??Jan 1863

There were a couple of men who died on that date at Arkansas Post but they died of disease.



Albert Gouter

Albert Gouter, Private, Co G, was discharged 20 March 1863 after spending two months in the hospital because of a wound in his right side. Was he wounded at Arkansas Post? I don't have any evidence that Albert reenlisted later.[Photo contributed by descendant Robert Robinson]

Research by Susie Holderfield, 2001-2018

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