

The Woodruff Gun

Annotations to the Margreiter Article

Curtis Seeks Woodruff Guns to Guard Missouri Bridges

Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume 8, pp. 471-472.

Correspondence, Orders, and Returns Relating to Operations in Missouri, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory, from November 19, 1861, to April 10, 1862.

Union Correspondence, Etc.

Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis was given command of the Army of the Southwest on December 25, 1861 by Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, commanding the Department of Missouri. In one of his first letters back to St. Louis after assuming command, Curtis discussed his plans to protect the Pacific Railroad running from St. Louis to Rolla by establishing blockhouses at key points along the line. He proposed that ...small cannon, ...such as they make in Quincy, Ill.,...would be an economical addition to these block-houses...”:

GENERAL ORDERS, } HDQRS. DIST. OF CENTRAL MISSOURI,
No. 29. } Otterville, December 28, 1861.

Brig. Gen. J. M. Palmer is assigned to the command of the cantonment at La Mine Crossing and of all the troops in the vicinity.

By order of General Pope :

SPEED BUTLER,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

HEADQUARTERS,
Jefferson City, Mo., December 29, 1861.

Col. LEWIS MERRILL,
Commanding Merrill's Horse:

SIR : In addition to the orders given you on the 26th instant to hold yourself in readiness to proceed to Columbia, the general directs me to instruct you to march to that point as soon as it is practicable to get your command over the river. Your duties, as heretofore made known to you, will be to operate against the rebels generally ; to disperse or capture all organized bands ; seize all arms, &c., intended for use against the United States. There will be other United States forces at Fulton, Danville, and probably at Mexico, with whom you can co-operate or communicate whenever you may deem it proper to do so.

By command of General McKean, commanding this post :

WM. T. CLARK,
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

ROLLA, MO., *December 29, 1861.*

Capt. J. C. KELTON,
Assistant Adjutant-General :

Twenty-four cavalry companies, Colonel Carr commanding in my absence, are moving towards Springfield, on a road a little south of the common traveled way. Scouting party drove out rebels from Lebanon Thursday and left there Friday morning. The report there was that Springfield was occupied with 2,200 rebels. Will report by letter.

SAML. R. CURTIS,
Brigadier-General.

HEADQUARTERS SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT,
Rolla, December 29, 1861.

Capt. J. C. KELTON,
Assistant Adjutant-General, Saint Louis, Mo. :

CAPTAIN : I arrived here 8 p. m. Thursday night and immediately rode to the camp of Brigadier-General Sigel, about 3 miles from town. I communicated to him the wishes of the major-general in regard to moving the cavalry forthwith, and requested him to order immediate preparation for the movements.

The general not having received the order placing me in command of the district and I not having assumed command (wishing to treat the general with all possible courtesy by conferring with him beforehand), it was with some expressions of doubt as to my rank and au-

thority that he finally issued the order to the cavalry to report when they could move.

Yesterday morning your telegraphic copy of Order 92 was received by General Sigel, and at his request I gave him the date of my commission and showed him our relative position in the Army Registers.

I then assumed command (see Orders, No. 1), and immediately issued Special Orders, No. 1, to move the cavalry at 8 this morning, which was, according to my judgment, the earliest moment they could be got ready to start.

Those best acquainted with the road say the route to Springfield has been stripped of everything near the road, and the country being very rough, and side roads, it became necessary to carry some supplies, which were accordingly provided and ready at the proper hour this morning. As a further precaution against scarcity of supplies, the command will go on a road south of the road so often traversed, passing by Cassage's, crossing Big Piney at McCourtney's, and the Gasconade at Wisdom's Ford, aiming to strike the old military road 7 miles this side of Springfield. I send copy of instructions given to Colonel Carr.

The movement of the troops displayed the usual lack of discipline. I had urged exact time and was early in the saddle myself, but it was after 9 before the bright warm sun was reflected from the long line of sabers which were displayed in passing off in form of review.

I left the command 4 miles out, about 1,500 strong, in good spirits, and well equipped for the service.

I will take another occasion to report further details in regard to this command. General Asboth has been very cordial, and so I can say of the officers generally, especially the Iowa and Illinois troops. General Sigel complains of ill health, but seems able for duty. Moving the troops would do them good. They have made very little defense against the cold, and some of them on bleak hills will be ordered into timber valleys for the purpose of better providing against cold. They are generally in tents, most of them very good.

I expressed my desire to occupy Lebanon with forces of infantry and artillery. Some point farther south, where our regular trains could easily transport supplies from the end of the railroad, would not increase the expense of the command, but give us a better stand-point to operate against the enemy. Scattering bands in the counties of Howard and Douglas deserve attention; but the general impression here is Price will make a stand at or near Neosho or retreat beyond the Ozark Mountains. In either event our cavalry movement cannot do much more than embarrass the enemy in his foraging excursions and increase desertions from his ranks, which are now very great.

I am organizing the defense of the railroad between this point and Pacific City. I design to locate a U. S. rifle cavalry regiment on the line, and have log block-houses, such as I had made on the Iron Mountain Road, erected on this by the troops themselves. Small cannon, like mountain howitzers, such as they make in Quincy, Ill., and costing about \$130 each, would, in my judgment, be an economical addition to these block-houses, and diminish the numbers now required to prevent the mounted bands from burning bridges.

Hoping the general will approve my exertions to organize this district and aid him in expelling the enemy from Missouri, I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

SAML. R. CURTIS,
Brigadier-General, Commanding.

The War of the Rebellion : a compilation of the official records of the Union and Confederate armies. / Pub. under the direction of the ... Secretary of War.

United States.

Washington : Government Printing Office, 1880-1901.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924079893719>

HathiTrust



www.hathitrust.org

Public Domain

http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd

We have determined this work to be in the public domain, meaning that it is not subject to copyright. Users are free to copy, use, and redistribute the work in part or in whole. It is possible that current copyright holders, heirs or the estate of the authors of individual portions of the work, such as illustrations or photographs, assert copyrights over these portions. Depending on the nature of subsequent use that is made, additional rights may need to be obtained independently of anything we can address.