

THE TWENTY-SIXTH LOUISIANA INFANTRY

IN THE CIVIL WAR

THESIS

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
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Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 LET NO MAN HANG BACK.....	4
3. VICKSBURG I.....	19
4. VICKSBURG II.....	54
5. PAROLE AND RED RIVER.....	68
SUMMARY.....	93
WORKS CITED.....	97

INTRODUCTION

Control of the Mississippi River was crucial to both the North and the South in the American Civil War. Winfield Scott, Commanding General of the United States Army at the outset of the war, recognized the mighty river's importance from the beginning. Scott urged President Abraham Lincoln to put down the rebellion in the Southern states by subjecting the Confederacy to a massive siege, using the Union Navy to blockade Southern ports, many of which were on the Mississippi, in order to slowly strangle the Confederate economy. According to Scott's plan, major land battles would be averted until Federal armies were strengthened. At this point, land warfare would also center around significant rivers like the Mississippi which would be used to penetrate and dismember the Confederacy. He urged a thoroughly Jominian strategy and was ultimately lampooned in the press as offering the "Anaconda Plan."¹

Scott's plan was derided in the North because the United States Government and its people did not have the patience to wage the type of protracted war that he advocated. However, the Federals eventually returned to Scott's strategy in regard to the Mississippi. U. S. Admiral David D. Porter commented on the fact that "the Federal Government neglected to approach the mouth of the Mississippi until a year after hostilities had commenced." That delay gave the Confederates time to fortify the approaches to New Orleans, at the river's mouth, as well as both banks of the Mississippi as far north as Memphis. In November of 1861, when Porter presented his plan to capture New Orleans to Northern senators "they expressed surprise that no action had been taken in the matter." Lincoln also admitted that the Federals should have made an earlier, concerted effort to take control of the river. He agreed with Porter that the Mississippi was the

¹Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1973), 93.

most vital of Confederate resources and that the rebellion could not survive without it.² Soon after, Union forces began to concentrate and move to take the river.

It was the Trans-Mississippi Department's job to prevent the Federals from seizing the Mississippi. Thus, the troops in this department participated in the decisive campaign to control the river and its valley. Louisiana's Twenty-sixth Infantry unit fought with the Trans-Mississippi from the spring of 1862 until the department's surrender in May of 1865, attempting to block Federal conquest of the Mississippi and its surrounding areas. The Twenty-sixth endeavored to stop Federal forces from capturing the South's queen city of New Orleans. It defeated General William Tecumseh Sherman at Chickasaw Bayou and spent forty-six days in the trenches around Vicksburg, the city that Jefferson Davis called "the nailhead that held the South's two halves together."³ After surrendering Vicksburg, the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi, to Ulysses S. Grant, the regiment was paroled and exchanged. It spent the last year of the war fighting around the Red River, a tributary of the Mississippi. The Twenty-sixth's role in protecting the key waterborne transportation route of the Confederate forces, while not decisive in-and-of itself, was important and warrants study.

Although the Twenty-sixth fought in one of the most important theaters of the war, few complete histories of the regiment exist. We have Winchester Hall's *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry in the Service of the Confederate States*, a somewhat slanted accounting of the regiment written by its disgruntled colonel who was replaced during the early days at Vicksburg. We have too the diary of Company B's lieutenant, *Diary in Gray: Civil War Journal of J. Y. Sanders*, an excellent first-hand description of the regiment's service. Unfortunately, the first volume of Sanders's journal was lost and

²David D. Porter, "The Opening of the Lower Mississippi," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, eds. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1887; New York: The Fairfax Press, 1979), 122-123.

³Shelby Foote, *The Civil War*, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1958), 2:346

his diary does not begin until mid-May of 1863, over a year after the formation of the Twenty-sixth. Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr.'s *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units, 1861-1865*, is a valuable reference tool but necessarily gives only a cursory description of Louisiana's troops. Research presented here attempts to address the gaps in the literature and offer a more comprehensive history of the Twenty-sixth. Thanks to the records left by the members of Louisiana's Twenty-sixth Infantry unit, their stories are discernible, and together they comprise one piece of the larger puzzle of the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederacy in the Civil War.

CHAPTER 2

LET NO MAN HANG BACK

The Mississippi River was vital to the Confederate effort in the Civil War. In fact, it was the South's greatest waterway and ran through four of the eleven states that seceded from the United States Government in 1861. Rebel forces in the East relied on the river and its tributaries to move the substantial quantities of soldiers, cotton, and other critical supplies that were produced in Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas to other parts of the Confederacy. In addition, the South's largest city and busiest port was located on the Mississippi, at New Orleans. There, the rebels manufactured heavy machinery and built guns and ships to be used against Federal forces. Thus, the Mississippi River was one of the South's most crucial resources and its free navigation was necessary for the survival of the rebellion.

The Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department was very important because it guarded the Mississippi River Valley. This department fought to keep the lower parts of the river in Southern hands and, consequently, participated in several pivotal phases of the war such as the fall of New Orleans, the defense of Chickasaw Bayou, General S. Ulysses Grant's siege at Vicksburg, and the Red River Campaign. Even so, there are few histories of the Trans-Mississippi Department. Affairs in this theater have been comparatively neglected by students of the war because the battles fought in the Trans-Mississippi were not as large or dramatic as those east of the mighty river. Historian T. Harry Williams noted that although some fairly decisive operations occurred in this department it has not been adequately surveyed because historians have focused on battles that seemed to decide the fate of the South--such as those fought at Gettysburg

and the heights of Chattanooga.¹ While events in the Trans-Mississippi did not decide the war for either side, they affected its outcome

The troops that composed the Trans-Mississippi were also significant and deserve study. Louisiana's Twenty-sixth Infantry Regiment, Confederate States Army, was one of those units. Organized in the southern part of the state in April 1862, in an attempt to repel the Federal invasion of the Mississippi Valley, this regiment rushed to protect New Orleans, helped defeat General William Tecumseh Sherman at Chickasaw Bayou, and battled in the trenches at Vicksburg for forty-six days before surrendering to Grant on July 4, 1863. It also guarded Forts Buhlow and Randolph along the Red River of North Louisiana after its exchange. Members of the regiment left records of their experience, and this paper will use mainly primary sources to tell the Twenty-sixth's story.

By the fall of 1861, Louisiana was deeply concerned about the appearance of the Federal Navy along its southeastern coastline. U. S. forces had captured Ship Island and the Head of Passes, near the mouth of the Mississippi and were preparing to enter the river and attack New Orleans. The Confederates desperately needed to retain possession of the Crescent City because it was the commercial and financial center for the Mississippi River Valley. It was also the most important slave market in the United States. One Confederate called New Orleans "the great throbbing commercial emporium of the State and the South," and all knew that its loss would be disastrous to the South.²

Even though New Orleans was the most important urban center in Louisiana and arguably in all of the Confederacy, the rebels were not prepared to defend it. In fact, when Major-General Mansfield Lovell took command of the Department of New Orleans from the aging Major-General David Twiggs in October, he swore that his predecessor

¹T. Harry Williams, introduction to *The Civil War in Louisiana*, by John D. Winters (Baton Rouge Louisiana State University Press, 1963), viii

²Will Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Louisiana Infantry* (Baton Rouge privately printed, 1866, Fayetteville The University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 5

informed him that “the department was almost entirely defenseless” and at many points “could not make an hour’s fight.”³

As the Federals moved inexorably toward New Orleans, Louisiana frantically prepared for the attack. Even though the State raised its quota for the Confederacy, many Louisianans had already gone off to fight on other fronts. In the first year of war alone, thousands were shipped to Florida, Virginia, and Arkansas, and many were assigned to seacoast and harbor divisions leaving the state an easy target for invasion. The citizens of New Orleans screamed that Louisiana had been stripped of its defenses; leaving them at the mercy of the Federals.

Union leaders intended to take advantage of Louisiana’s plight, and on November 12, 1861, Admiral David Porter formally presented his strategy to capture New Orleans and secure the Mississippi River to President Abraham Lincoln. Porter stressed that the river was the lifeblood of the Confederacy and added that the Federal Government’s first move in the war should have been to capture it. The admiral explained that if Federal forces had attacked both ends of the Mississippi simultaneously, before the Confederates were able to fortify its banks, the Union could have held the entire length of the river by then and hastened Southern defeat. Lincoln listened closely to Porter’s plan which called for a flotilla of mortar vessels to bombard New Orleans’s primary defenses at Forts Jackson and St. Philip so that a fleet of warships could pass the forts and attack the city. Transports would move General Benjamin Butler’s troops into the area to take possession of the city after it surrendered to Porter’s navy. Some Federals would remain to hold the place, while the rest proceeded upriver to their next target, Vicksburg, Mississippi. When Porter finished speaking, Lincoln, aggravated that the commander of Federal forces, General George McClellan, had not come up with any such plan, exclaimed, “The

³*The 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), Series I, Vol VI, 558-561, cited hereinafter as *Official Records*

Mississippi is the backbone of the Rebellion; it is the key to the whole situation. This should have been done sooner. While the Confederates hold it they can obtain supplies of all kinds, and it is a barrier against our forces. Come let us go and see General McClellan.”⁴

During that autumn and winter, Lincoln’s generals finalized their plans to secure the Mississippi river. Porter nominated Captain David Glasgow Farragut, who he had known since he was five years old, to command the expedition. The sixty-year-old Farragut was a fearless veteran of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, and Porter said that he “possessed such undoubted courage and energy that no possible objection could be made to him.” This was true, despite that fact that Farragut was born in Tennessee and married to a woman from Virginia. From the very outset, he had adamantly refused to consider joining the rebellion, even under duress, saying, “Mind what I tell you: You fellows will catch the devil before you get through with this business.”⁵

On January 20, 1862, Farragut took charge of the expedition that would give New Orleans the devil. It included fourteen gunboats, eight steam ships, and a sailing sloop accompanied by a powerful mortar-flotilla. Farragut went to work immediately on the preparations, for the attack and Louisiana’s worst fears became reality in late February when word reached them that the Yankee fleet had established a base near Ship Island in Mississippi Sound. The Federals stood poised to attack New Orleans, and Confederate prospects for its defense did not look good.

Lovell’s situation at New Orleans worsened in February when Union pressure in Tennessee forced Richmond to deprive his department of twenty-two heavy guns, an army division, and eight gunboats. He raged that he was “left without ships or men.” In fact, he had about three thousand ill-prepared, short-term militia. Only half of these

⁴Porter, “The Opening of the Lower Mississippi,” *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 123

⁵Ibid , 125

possessed muskets “and the remainder very indifferent shotguns.”⁶ The residue of Lovell’s skimpy defenses consisted of twelve gunboats, two mediocre ironclads, some river batteries, a chain that held a boom of hulks strung across the Mississippi River, and the two brick forts, Jackson and St. Philip, seventy-five miles below New Orleans.⁷

Grant telegraphed his superior, Henry W. Halleck, on February 6, 1862, to report the capture of another important western rebel fort. His communication to General Halleck read, “Fort Henry is ours. I shall take and destroy Fort Donelson on the 8th.”⁸ Although Grant’s plan was delayed, he did seize Donelson on the 16th. While both forts were located in Tennessee, they were dangerously close to the Mississippi River and Louisianans panicked at their capture. Their loss meant that the Federals could sever the railroad connection between Bowling Green and Memphis, and Union gunboats could move up the Tennessee River and attack the Memphis and Charleston Railroad near Eastport, Mississippi, threatening direct communication between Confederate East and West.⁹ Winchester Hall, a resident of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, described the reaction to the fall of the forts: “There was a wide spread and uneasy feeling that our great enemy had gained two highways into the heart of the Confederacy, which would give him terrible advantage, and require on our part every effort to circumvent.”¹⁰ With Henry and Donelson in the hands of the enemy, Albert Sidney Johnston had to evacuate Nashville, and Grant turned his attention toward New Orleans. The remnants of the Confederate Army also pulled out of Columbus, Kentucky and Louisiana anxiously awaited the invasion. Although the state was not prepared to withstand a major attack, its people

⁶*Official Records*, Vol VI, 558-561

⁷*Ibid*

⁸*Official Records*, Vol. VII, 125.

⁹Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, 119

¹⁰Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry in the Service of the Confederate States*, 1

were desperate to save New Orleans. The rebels mobilized all available units to the area and urged men who had not yet volunteered to do so immediately.

Across the state, recruiters pleaded for extra companies, and even men who had remained at home to take care of plantations, farms, and family businesses answered the summons.¹¹ One of Lafourche Parish's new recruits wrote his family from Mansfield, "There is a great deal of excitement here since the distressing news from Fort Donelson; old men and little boys 14 and 15 years old are enlisting."¹² Winchester Hall, another of Lafourche's latest volunteers, originally promised to oversee operations at his Thibodeaux law office while his partner joined the Confederate army; but, by February 1862, felt compelled to close their business after a recruiter convinced him that Louisiana was in a state of emergency and needed all available men. The recruiter declared that "it [the surrender of Forts Henry and Donelson] rendered necessary on our part, an extraordinary effort," and urged Hall, and others like him, to raise additional companies for the Confederacy.¹³ After signing up, a young soldier from St. Mary Parish proclaimed, "Let no man hang back who has strength enough to bear a gun though he may have some petty excuse, enough to aid him in avoiding the law. Society must not countenance such young men, if there be any so unmanly in our land."¹⁴

Hall distributed a list for volunteers in Lafourche parish, and roll call for the ninety-four members of the new company, dubbed Allen's Rifles after its local benefactor, R. H. Allen, came on February 22. One week later, fifty more men from the area rushed to join after an impassioned address by the state's leading secessionist

¹¹Ibid., 1

¹²L. M. Thomas to "My dearest Sister," March 7, 1862, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection, Allen J. Ellender Memorial Library Archives, Nicholls State University, Thibodeaux, Louisiana

¹³Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 2.

¹⁴Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 6.

Democrat, Pierre Soule, during a barbecue at Thibodeaux. Other parishes also held political rallies and scrambled to form new companies. By mid-March, eight companies with 805 men met at an old camp near Berwick Bay called Camp Lovell, to form the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry Regiment.¹⁵

A young lieutenant's first letter home from Camp Lovell demonstrates the particular patriotism felt by the newly formed regiment: "Tonight will find me resting for the first time upon a soldier's couch I hope however, to live and fight through all that threatens, or may threaten, my country's freedom" He felt the Southern rebellion against the United States Government was similar to "our fathers forced recognition from the haughty, invincible Britons." In the early days of his enlistment, Lieutenant Jared Y. Sanders, II, also compared the Civil War to the American Revolution and concluded that the Confederacy, like the original thirteen colonies, must free itself from "foreign" rule.¹⁶

A month after that letter, on April 3, 1862, the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry Regiment of the Trans-Mississippi Department, was formally organized and its field officers elected. Alexandre Etienne DeClouet of St. Tammany Parish, whose parent had led some of the Twenty-sixth's fathers against the British at New Orleans, in the War of 1812, was chosen as the regiment's colonel. Duncan S. Cage of Lafourche Parish made lieutenant-colonel, and Winchester Hall became the regiment's major.¹⁷ After the elections, the men called for speeches, and DeClouet responded with a rousing address in French since the majority of his soldiers were Louisianans of French descent. Only in Captain Mannah Bateman's, Company B (St. Mary Parish), and Octave Metoyer's,

¹⁵Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 2-3.

¹⁶Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 1, 79, 94

¹⁷Winchester Hall was promoted to colonel on December 30, 1862

Company G (Natchitoches), were half of the men of American-born parents. The Twenty-sixth also contained some Irishmen and a few Germans.¹⁸

At Camp Lovell, the new regiment studied W.J. Hardee's, *Rifle and Infantry Tactics*, and drilled with Enfield rifles.¹⁹ Some of the officers, like Major Hall, knew nothing of military tactics and so divided their time between reading Hardee and then drilling the men on what they learned. While encamped at Berwick Bay, the Twenty-sixth learned of the Confederate disaster at Shiloh in southwestern Tennessee where one man out of every four was killed, captured, or wounded. Sadly, General Albert Sidney Johnston was among the twenty thousand casualties as Grant forced Beauregard to retreat to Corinth, Mississippi. Two companies from Hall's native Lafourche Parish fought at Shiloh, the bloodiest battle thus far in the war, and Hall read the casualty list, filled with the names of neighbors and friends to his company with "a dimmed eye." Many of the regiment gathered with them and raised their hands and "solemnly swore to avenge the deaths of brothers, cousins, and friends who fell at Shiloh."²⁰

The Twenty-sixth did not have much time to mourn those who died at Shiloh, however, because in early April, Farragut's fleet appeared a few miles below New Orleans's primary defenses at Forts Jackson and St. Philip; and the regiment anxiously

¹⁸Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 27-28, Bergeron, *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units 1861-1865*, 134-135 The eight companies that composed the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry and their commanders were: **Company A**, Lafayette Prairie Boys (Lafayette), Eraste Mouton, **Company B**, Lovell's Rifles (St Mary), Mannah Wheaton Bateman, promoted major March 4, 1865, Jared Y Sanders II; **Company C**, Assumption Creoles (Assumption), W Whitmel Martin, promoted major December 30, 1862, Lovincy Himel, **Company D**, Bragg Cadets (Lafourche), Cleophas Lagarde, promoted major June 22, 1863, Lewis Guion, **Company E**, Grivot Fancy Guards (Lafayette), William C Crow, promoted major November 10, 1862, **Company F**, Grivot Guards Company C (Terrebonne), John J Shaffer, **Company G**, Prudhomme Guards (Natchitoches), Octave Metoyer; **Company H**, Grivot Guards Company B (Terrebonne), William A Bisland, **Company I**, Allen Rifles, (Lafourche), Winchester Hall, Caleb Tucker, killed December 28, 1862, Lovincy A. Webre; **Company K**, Pickett Guards (Terrebonne), C.O Delahoussaye, resigned October, 1862, Felix Winder, killed May 19, 1863, Richard C. West

¹⁹Curiously, the Twenty-sixth had not yet been supplied with arms by the Confederate States Army

²⁰Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 3-5

awaited orders to move out and attack the invaders. The two brick forts were New Orleans's best defenses and were located at a very swift part of the river. The Confederates were confident that they could sink any enemy warship that attempted to pass Jackson and St. Philip in the dangerous waters and moved just about everything they had there. All available units also concentrated in the vicinity.

The Twenty-sixth received orders to proceed to the outskirts of New Orleans, to Camp Benjamin, near the Ponchartrain Railroad, where it was to unite with two more companies, complete its outfit and help repel the Yankees from the Crescent City. The regiment moved to its new camp, named for Louisiana's Judah P Benjamin, who served on the Confederate Cabinet, and awaited further instructions.²¹ There, it was joined by Captain Octave Metoyer's Company from Natchitoches and Captain Delahoussaye's Pickett Guards from Terrebonne to complete the regiment.²²

At Camp Benjamin, the Twenty-sixth received word that the Federal fleet was bombarding the forts. Farragut's mortar schooners had opened fire on Forts Jackson and St. Philip on April 18, and though they blasted the forts continuously for six days and nights, there was no sign of surrender. Farragut, determined to take New Orleans, and impatient with the delay, decided to run past Forts Jackson and St. Philip. He knew that once he made it by the forts, he could easily reduce the city with his powerful fleet. On the cool, windy night of April 20th, two Union gunboats got past the forts and broke a hole large enough for the passage of the fleet in the chain the rebels had placed across the Mississippi. In the wee hours of the morning of April 24, Farragut's boats began to steam through the opening, one by one. Porter, who watched from a distance, called the

²¹Lewis Guion, Record Book, April 20, 1862, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

²²The Twenty-sixth Louisiana Regiment contained more local volunteers than any other regiment in the Confederate Army

movement “beautiful.” He said that Farragut’s steamers weighed anchor and began to move “slowly through the water like phantom ships.”²³

This tranquil scene was rudely interrupted when the Confederate forts and gunboats began to bombard the head of the line as it came within range. Porter said that as soon as the rebel guns could reach the enemy, “one incessant roar of heavy cannon commenced.” Farragut’s forces responded quickly with twice the guns and mortar shells. Their thunder shook the ground. Rebel tugboats pushed rafts of burning tar and pitch toward the Yankee fleet, lighting up the sky and according to Porter, “it seemed as if a battle were taking place in the heavens as well as on the earth.” The contest was virtually over an hour and ten minutes after the Federals weighed anchor and began to move upriver. Although Farragut’s fleet took a beating, all but four of its ships made it past the forts and were headed for New Orleans. The unthinkable had occurred.²⁴ General P.G.T. Beauregard remarked that once the Federal fleet got by Forts Jackson and St. Philip “an army of 50,000 men or more could not then have saved the city from destruction.”²⁵

That same morning, DeClouet received orders to proceed immediately from his position at Camp Benjamin to Camp Moore, seventy-five miles north of New Orleans in St. Helena Parish. Most in the regiment had expected an order to move toward the city, and it suddenly seemed as if the Twenty-sixth was not to meet the enemy after all but to take off in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, the colonel ordered two days rations cooked and the wagons loaded, but before his troops moved out, he received another command sending him to Camp Chalmette, six miles south of New Orleans. The Confederates anticipated the enemy just below the city, and the Twenty-sixth was apparently expected there to combat them. As night fell, and the lines and wagons

²³Porter, “The Opening of the Lower Mississippi,” *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 138.

²⁴Ibid

²⁵*Official Records*, Vol VI, 601.

prepared to move out, Lieutenant-Colonel Cage spoke to the men. He was glad to say that they were ordered to face the enemy instead of retreating and “trusted that the plains of Chalmette, made memorable by Andrew Jackson’s victory, should afford another bright page to our country’s history.”²⁶

The Twenty-sixth marched thirteen miles to Camp Chalmette, arriving about 11:00 P.M. DeClouet discovered some troops already stationed along an extensive line of breastworks that extended from the river to the swamp. Most were asleep on the ground. To his surprise, the colonel found no ranking officer presided, and he was without further orders. He moved his regiment behind the breastwork near the swamp where it slept on the ground on its arms about three miles from the enemy’s gunboats.

The next morning, the Twenty-sixth awoke to music and drums and frenzied activity. Lookouts had spotted Farragut just below the city. The admiral meant to silence the river batteries there and push on to New Orleans. Confederate Brigadier General Martin Luther Smith was on the west side of the river commanding the defenses at the McGehee battery, while Brigadier General Benjamin Buisson, commander of the state troops, led the forces on the east side, at the Chalmette battery. Both had given up most of their ammunition to the Confederate Navy. Buisson rode up to warn DeClouet that he expected the Chalmette Battery to be shelled at any moment, yet the Twenty-sixth still had no orders and was without ammunition. As bad as that was, an additional two companies did not even have serviceable weapons. Major Hall told DeClouet that the officers “owed it to the command not to expose it unnecessarily,” and the colonel moved his troops away from the river toward the cover of the woods on the Mexican Gulf Railroad, where they were out of range of the enemy’s shells and could determine their orders. After a couple of hours, when the colonel still could not locate anyone in charge,

²⁶Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 6

he took the regiment back toward the river, behind the barracks, and rode to headquarters in New Orleans to find out where Lovell wanted the Twenty-sixth.

Before DeClouet returned, enemy gunboats appeared and began firing at Chalmette's fortifications. The rebels, forced to conserve what little ammunition they possessed, did not return the fire. Orders came for the Confederates on the Chalmette line to move north to New Orleans and catch the Jackson Railroad for Camp Moore. In DeClouet's absence, Cage consulted with Hall, and they decided to return to their former companies and then each captain should get his own men out of the city as best he could.²⁷ Leaving its camp equipage and baggage, the members of the Twenty-sixth "marched along after the rest of the army, bringing up the rear though we had not one round of cartridges in the regiment--for none had been given to us."²⁸ Companies separated from one another, but each company marched together in good order as the gray lines moved rapidly toward the city.

New Orleans presented a grim spectacle. The whole place appeared to be on fire because the rebels were burning cotton and other important supplies that they did not want to fall into enemy hands. Across the river, they had also torched the shipyards in Algiers. Hall said the place "was in the wildest confusion. Anxious men and women thronged the streets--objectless--fearing the worst."²⁹ When the troops reached Esplanade Street, the head of the column received orders to proceed immediately to the Jackson Railway and take the train to Camp Moore. Sanders said he "never saw men hate to leave a place as ours did; our whole regiment would have rather fought three to one than to retreat as we were ordered to do."³⁰

²⁷Ibid., 11

²⁸Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 3

²⁹Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 8

³⁰Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 19, Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 2-3

When DeClouet finally met with Lovell in New Orleans to determine his orders, the general was surprised to see him there. Lovell was sure he had ordered DeClouet's command to Camp Moore. DeClouet explained the situation and showed his superior the order he received the previous morning, signed by Lovell's own aide, sending him to Chalmette, just outside of New Orleans. Lovell insisted the order was a mistake and ordered the Twenty-sixth to join the two thousand Confederates he was evacuating to Camp Moore.³¹ Except for DeClouet's regiment and a battalion of Louisiana Zouaves, these were chiefly new militia and state troops recently raised for local defense, and their discipline left much to be desired. To add to the confusion, some of Lovell's officers, like DeClouet, were unsure of their orders.

Lovell was preoccupied with removing and destroying military supplies from New Orleans. He said he determined to evacuate the city when the enemy made it past Forts Jackson and St. Philip because he had concentrated nearly everything available for the defense there, and he "knew there was no material obstacle to prevent the fleet from proceeding at once to the city, and that all the guns, forts, and men on the other ten or twelve water approaches would go for naught." Furthermore, he thought he could prevent the destruction of the city and protect its citizens by removing his troops at once so that it could not be considered a military position. He claimed this would prevent the "useless sacrifice of life and property."³² The citizens of New Orleans, however, felt as though Lovell abandoned them and one protested, "Lovell left the women and children to be shelled and took the army to a safe place. I do not understand. Why not send the women and children to a safe place and let the army stay where the fighting was to be?"³³

³¹Camp Moore, located seventy-eight miles north of New Orleans, in piney Tangipahoa parish, above Lake Pontchartrain, near the Louisiana-Mississippi border, was established in May of 1861

³²*Official Records*, Vol. VI, 565-566.

³³Mary Boykin Chestnut, *Mary Chestnut's Civil War*, ed C Vann Woodward (New Haven Yale University Press, 1981), 333

According to General M. L. Smith, who directed the interior lines of the city's unsuccessful defense, Lovell remained cool throughout the ordeal and "gave no evidence of embarrassment." When criticized for his decisions, he even offered to go back to New Orleans if the proper Confederate authorities desired it.³⁴

Of course there was no such recall and the Twenty-sixth, exhausted from marching till near midnight the day before, trudged the thirteen miles back to Jackson Station where it waited for the train that would deliver it to Camp Moore. Some of its members "became very much worried, & had to lose their blankets for their napsacks, clothing, blankets, guns, etc., were too much for such a long march."³⁵ Once on the train, the Twenty-sixth rode on the tops of boxcars in a driving rain since the interiors were filled with the government stores and weapons that Lovell was determined to remove from the city. Its officers became indignant when they discovered that the Confederate Guards, a militia regiment of prominent New Orleans citizens pampered by General Lovell, occupied the plush passenger coaches on a nearby track and were "comfortable and jolly as a pic-nic party." Winchester Hall quipped that even though the Guards had encamped for a while in Lafayette Square, they had never really entered Confederate service. Hall went so far as to accuse Lovell of being on the train to watch out for his pet regiment while he failed to notice the Twenty-sixth, "the only regiment of the Confederate service in the city, at the time." When Hall could stand it no longer, he approached Lovell and loudly informed him that his men "were as good soldiers as the Confederate Guards, and he saw no reason why they should occupy passenger coaches, and we the tops of box-cars."³⁶

³⁴*Official Records*, Vol. VI, 624.

³⁵Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 3.

³⁶Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 8-9

Hall was not the only member of the Twenty-sixth who was unhappy with the way that Lovell and his staff handled affairs in New Orleans. Many wondered why the regiment was sent there at all. Since the battle for the city was actually fought at the forts commanding the Mississippi River, and not in New Orleans itself, many in the regiment felt they should never have been ordered there. Lieutenant Sanders remarked, “the folly of that move was supreme, for the city had fallen virtually before we got there--& it only remained for the enemy to pass our two little batteries on each side of the river at Chalmette next morning, which was no trouble to boats that had passed our big forts.” In truth, the contest was already lost when the Twenty-sixth arrived on the scene, and the regiment could have provided little resistance anyhow, considering it was never supplied with ammunition.³⁷

Though Lovell evacuated his troops shortly after Farragut got by Jackson and St. Philip on the 25th, he refused to surrender the city, leaving that responsibility for Mayor John Monroe. The mayor also declined saying New Orleans was under martial law. Farragut could do little about the situation as Butler’s troops had not yet arrived to reinforce him on land. Finally, on April 29, after days of unsuccessful negotiations which facilitated Lovell’s withdrawal, New Orleans officially capitulated. On May 1, General Butler’s troops took possession and raised the Union flag over the Custom House. Butler stationed his soldiers throughout the city, leaving Farragut’s navy free to continue up the Mississippi River. The capture of New Orleans was a glorious victory for the North and a horrible loss for the South. The Confederacy forfeited its largest city and most important port and lost control of the lower Mississippi. One rebel recorded the catastrophe in her diary: “New Orleans gone--and with it the Confederacy. Are we not cut in two?”³⁸

³⁷Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 2

³⁸Chestnut, *Mary Chestnut’s Civil War*, 326, 327, 330, 333, 339

CHAPTER 3

VICKSBURG I

The Yankees had struck a terrible blow, and the Twenty-sixth was forced to watch it happen without ever being given a bullet to fire in its defense. Upon the regiment's return to Camp Moore, however, it obtained its requisition of arms and ammunition. Most companies were armed with the Enfield rifle and though two companies started out with Belgians, those were eventually replaced by the Enfield.¹ Morale improved even more when the regiment learned that Louisiana's most famous general, P. G. T. Beauregard, had paid the Twenty-sixth a high compliment when he requested it join him at Corinth, Mississippi. Lovell informed Governor Moore that he refused to send the regiment because he "did not wish it to quit the soil of Louisiana." Certainly the shortage of troops in Louisiana contributed to Lovell's decision, but the men, undisciplined and untested as they were, still had "the pleasure of feeling they were already worthy the favorable notice of a famed soldier."²

Despite Lovell's desire to keep the Twenty-sixth in Louisiana, it left Camp Moore on May 6, 1862, bound for Mississippi.³ The Federals' next target on the Mississippi River was the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg, and the Twenty-sixth moved there to protect it. Lincoln was determined to have the city he called, "the key to all that country watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries."⁴ If the president's controversial but able general, U. S. Grant, could take Vicksburg, the North would control the entire length of

¹Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 31-32

²*Official Records*, Vol XV, 733-734; Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 11.

³Guion, Record Book, May 18, 1862

⁴Johnson and Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 123.

the great river, isolate Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas and access to the richest portion of the Confederacy. Vicksburg's capture also would be terribly demoralizing to the rebels since it "was looked upon for a considerable period as the point around which clustered the hopes and fortunes of the Confederate cause."⁵

The Twenty-sixth intended to keep Vicksburg in southern hands. Its first stop in Mississippi was a place about four miles from Jackson on the Brandon Road that became known as Camp DeClouet. There, the men pitched their tents in a forest "interspersed with vines and shrubs and decked with floral beauty" and good springs with plenty of fresh water. They only remained at this pleasant camp a week before they were ordered to march to Camp Cage, near Edward's Depot, on the Vicksburg and Jackson railway. Enroute, the men stumbled across a great deal of sugar cane stored by speculators. The temptation was too much for the men of the Twenty-sixth, mostly raised in the land of sugar, and they helped themselves to some samples. They were not at Camp Cage long when the owners of the sugar appeared demanding retribution. Colonel DeClouet listened patiently to the speculators' demands that the soldiers be punished, while Hall, unable to restrain himself, berated them "for their contemptible mission" and demanded they leave the camp.⁶

The Twenty-sixth was needed for more important fighting. That May, Federal gunboats pounded Vicksburg in early attempts to take the place, and on the nineteenth the regiment moved inside the city. When the Twenty-sixth pulled into Vicksburg, the scene that greeted it was reminiscent of what it encountered upon its arrival to New Orleans, just a month earlier. Like New Orleans, Vicksburg "looked as if the simoon of war already had swept over it." Most businesses were closed and those that remained

⁵Ulysses S Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Memoirs and Selected Letters*, (New York Literary Classics of the United States, Inc , 1990), 283, R S Bevier, *History of the First and Second Missouri Confederate Brigades 1861-1865*, (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand, and Company, 1879), 196

⁶Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 12

open had no stock. The lowlands were flooded and the city nearly empty of civilians. Five days after its arrival, the Twenty-sixth reported to General M. L. Smith and joined his brigade with the Twenty-seventh, and Twenty-eighth Louisiana, and the Third Mississippi. The Confederates braced for the attack. Hall said “beautiful homes, set in emerald lawns, embowered with magnolia, rose, myrtle and wild peach, and smiling with beautiful flowers, awaited the coming of the spoiler.”⁷

The Twenty-sixth did not have to wait long for the enemy’s arrival. On May 26, the regiment faced its first real fire as the Federals began shelling Vicksburg’s lower batteries. They did not do much damage the first day, but on the second, they opened up with a much heavier fire, damaging the water battery near the hospital and many other buildings in the city. Members of the regiment picketed near the railroad station, which was also receiving some attention from the Yankees, and when Hall rode there he observed that some of the Twenty-sixth were “a little frightened” under the bombardment. Hall was also afraid and admitted, “If I had dismounted, I was too weak in the knees to mount again; but as I was not struck, I survived it.” Union troops failed to gain a foothold into Vicksburg this time, but the Twenty-sixth remained there performing picket duty and waiting to be used as an infantry unit.⁸

The Federals were closing in on Vicksburg and patrolled the Mississippi River cutting off the men of the Twenty-sixth from their homes and families. General M. L. Smith discontinued all furloughs. One homesick sixteen-year-old wrote “Ma I want to see you and Sister the worst in the world but Old Smith wont let any body come home under no circumstances whatever.”⁹ The Twenty-sixth knew the enemy had already

⁷Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 12-13; Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, III, 477

⁸Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 13

⁹Granville L. Alsbaugh, June 14, 1862, Civil War Letters of Private Granville L. Alsbaugh, Company A, 27th Louisiana Infantry, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

raided many of the home parishes of its members and was moving across the state, but it rarely received word from home. Lieutenant Sanders said, "I am sure if our 'home folks' could see how eagerly the boys gather around one just from our parts to catch every word he speaks, they would spare no trouble in order to send us news."¹⁰

Once in a while some daring spirit would endeavor to run the gauntlet of the river, but it was a dangerous trip since many places in Louisiana were enemy territory; and one had to elude Yankees across streams and swamps in small boats and on horseback. An enterprising Louisianan, Auguste Roger, from the Attakapas District, frequently acted as an "express rider" between the home parishes and camp.¹¹ Roger brought letters, accounts of home, and desperately needed clothing that the Quartermaster's Department did not supply. Most shoes, hats, or shirts were "received from our friends or obtained by our own efforts from private sources, by gift or purchase." The men eagerly anticipated the arrival of the riders who traveled nearly every fortnight, returning with news and presents from home that often helped settle the spirits of the exiled soldiers.¹²

While Roger furnished many comforting items to the Twenty-sixth, it was another matter to transport perishables. Thus, after the retreat from New Orleans, the troops never had a ration of coffee or tea. Though the Confederate army still fed its officers fairly well, enlisted men resorted to procuring their own food to supplement their poor allowance. A young private grumbled, "the government don't half feed us the hogs got hold of our beef the other night and actually they would not eat it but we have to eat what the hogs would not eat." He explained to his mother why he had written her asking for money, "the reasons I sent home for more money was because I had to buy nearly all that

¹⁰Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 15.

¹¹Usually refers to south central Louisiana. In 1765, St. Martin Parish was referred to as "Le Poste des Attakapas" In 1811, St. Mary Parish was formed from St. Martin Parish

¹²Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 19-20

I eat.”¹³ It also became difficult for the rebels to procure alcohol, even for medicinal purposes, and only officers “with superior facilities, now and then secured a bottle.”¹⁴

Conditions grew considerably worse for the regiment at Vicksburg. The Twenty-sixth faced its first enemy fire from gunboat shelling along the Mississippi, where it did picket duty, but it also faced another killer, the measles. Quartered in vacant buildings throughout the city, the men lacked hospital accommodations, nurses, cots, and medicine and the disease “reigned terror.” Local nuns, called the Sisters of Mercy, turned their beautiful home into a hospital and tended to the large numbers of sick and dying. Even private citizens took the afflicted into their homes. Despite these ministrations, many Confederates succumbed. When originally organized, the regiment numbered close to 900 but, by June 13, only 197 were available for duty, some of these undoubtedly caring for the infected.¹⁵

Difficulties mounted as food, blankets, clothing, shoes, and serviceable military equipment became harder to obtain for the Confederates at Vicksburg. The Twenty-sixth was no exception. Though officers usually fared better than the common soldier, life in camp was still a transition especially for those accustomed to comfort. To ease his condition, Colonel DeClouet brought his slave, “Old Jesse,” who cooked chicken gumbo and other delicious dishes for the officers, while Captain William Bisland’s “Harrison” served as waiter. Captain Bateman’s slave also accompanied his master to war, while Sanders soon tired of fending for himself, and wrote his father lamenting, “I wish very much I had a boy to carry my things--wash and help me.”¹⁶

¹³Alspaugh, *Civil War Letters*, June 14, 1862

¹⁴Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 32.

¹⁵Johnson and Buel, eds, *Battles and Leaders*, III, 14

¹⁶Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 16-17; Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 11, 3.

Though Sanders's father sent him a slave named Oliver, the lieutenant's worries soon multiplied. Personal tragedy struck Sanders and Bateman, following their arrival in Vicksburg. After the fall of New Orleans, Union troops moved as far west as Berwick Bay where their neighboring plantations were located. According to Bateman's "cousin Jim," who remained in the area during the occupation, the Yankees destroyed the Sanders' property, killed the livestock, entered the house, cursed and insulted his father, and threatened the family. The elderly Jared Sanders, I was "arrested three times upon negro accusations and carried to the bay for trial." Apparently, "this treatment and his mental sufferings induced disease which proved fatal."¹⁷ The Batemans fared no better. Federals shelled the captain's neighboring residence, and a company of them occupied the place. Union troops trampled fences, bayoneted windows, mirrors, and safes and helped themselves to the garden, store-room, closet, and dairy. They "made the servants cook for them" and destroyed or carried off everything portable, including photographs and the children's toys. It was the same at the homes of many others in the regiment, especially the officers.¹⁸

The Twenty-sixth hated the fact that it was in Mississippi while the Yankees raided its home parishes. So much so, in fact, that Hall wrote departmental commander, General Earl Van Dorn, that summer expressing the regiment's unanimous desire to return to Louisiana in order to "defend the homes of its members." In his application, he assured Van Dorn that the Twenty-sixth would "not allow a few hundred of the enemy, as had been done, to overrun the fairest portion of the state." Van Dorn angrily denied the request, saying it did not conform to military propriety and added that "good soldiers go where they are ordered." Hall, grateful his application was denied with "so gentle an

¹⁷Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 8

¹⁸*Official Report Relative to the Conduct of Federal Troops in Western Louisiana: Compiled From Sworn Testimony* (Shreveport News Printing Establishment, 1865), 15

admonition,” vowed to “keep within the limits of military propriety” in the future. Thus, he and the Twenty-sixth remained in Mississippi.

In early July, the portions of the regiment that were healthy enough to move, proceeded to Camp Hall, three miles from Edward’s Station and about eighteen from Vicksburg. The camp was near four springs with good drinking water and also close enough to the Big Black River that the men were able to bathe, wash clothes, and fish. It was located in an oak grove on a level stretch of ground, enabling the men to lay it out in real military style. Field and staff tents were separated from those of line officers by a hundred-foot wide street where officers set up mess tables and gathered to chat and read and write. The men camped behind the officers and were separated from them by an even broader street. There was also a parade ground where the troops practiced military maneuvers.¹⁹

Officers maintained their study of Hardee’s *Tactics* and attended a daily school, while the troops continued to drill. Hall remarked, “We had, up to this time, company and regimental and brigade drills steadily--to the very confines of disgust.” Hall knew the soldiers were bored with the exercises and commented on their patience. He said, “how weary the men were of any movement laid down by Hardee.” According to Hall, most of the regiment still knew almost nothing about tactics. Captain W. Whitmel Martin (Co. C) and Lieutenant John Shaffer (Co. F), who had already served in Virginia, advised the other officers and proved invaluable in the training of the Twenty-sixth. One day, during battalion drill, Hall confused the men so much that Martin had to step in and restore order to the “unseemly mob” he had created.²⁰ Despite his lack of experience, Hall

¹⁹Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 16-17

²⁰Ibid , 39, 20-21

became Lieutenant-Colonel on November 10 when DeClouet resigned due to his advanced age and Duncan Cage assumed the Twenty-sixth's colonelcy.²¹

Davis was desperate for good leadership to save Vicksburg and his home state. By now, the Federals had pushed down the Mississippi to take Memphis and also come up from the Gulf of Mexico to capture New Orleans leaving the river open to Union gunboats all the way to Vicksburg. They were now able to take troops from Memphis and Helena, Arkansas, move down the Mississippi, and with the cooperation of gunboat fleets, attempt to reduce Vicksburg and gain control of the whole length of the river.²² Sherman requisitioned the quartermaster at St. Louis for enough transports to carry his 33,000 men from Memphis to Vicksburg, and one week later the resourceful Federal Government sent him seventy large transport steamers. Admiral Porter's navy would be reinforcing him with nineteen ironclads, wooden gunboats and rams, two ordnance vessels, a smithery vessel and two mortar boats. The expedition against Vicksburg was one of the most massive combined army and navy forces yet used in the war.²³

Sherman and Grant had big plans for Vicksburg, and the Confederate government did not have the resources to compete with the Federals. Davis needed a strong artillery officer to take charge of the defense of the South's last strategic stronghold on the Mississippi River and turn the tide for the rebels. He chose Brigadier-General Stephen Dill Lee of South Carolina, a West Point graduate who had already proven himself in Virginia. In November of 1862, Davis transferred S. D. Lee from the Army of Northern Virginia to Vicksburg, and he took charge of a reorganized brigade that included the

²¹Ibid , 39

²²William Tecumseh Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman, by Himself* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 283-285

²³Stephen D Lee, "The Campaigns of Generals Grant and Sherman Against Vicksburg in December, 1862, and January 1st and 2nd, 1863, Known as 'The Chickasaw Bayou Campaign,' " *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol IV (1901) 22.

17th, 26th, 27th, 28th, and 31st Louisiana, the 4th and 46th Mississippi, and two batteries of light artillery. The President explained S. D. Lee's appointment, "I selected a General who, in my views, was capable of defending my State and discharging the duties of this important service." Davis credited Lee with turning the tide of battle at Second Manassas and defended him to all saying, "Though yet young he has fought more battles than many officers who have lived to an advanced age and died in their beds."²⁴

Davis intended S. D. Lee to be principally responsible for Vicksburg, but Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton, commander of the Department of Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana, also sent his assistant engineer officer M. L. Smith to Vicksburg to work on the city's interior defenses. Smith, who supervised the unsuccessful defense of New Orleans, oversaw engineering emplacements and strengthened Vicksburg's interior defenses. He also ranked S. D. Lee but Smith's role was supervisory, and he left Lee free to operate in the field and concentrate on the extensive fortifications the Confederates constructed on the banks of the Yazoo, particularly the ten mile stretch from Vicksburg to Snyder's Mills.

Sherman planned to use the Yazoo River to get into Vicksburg from the north while Grant attacked Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton, commander of the Department of Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana, near Grenada. As Sherman's transports entered the green, slime-covered Yazoo, his men swore they saw the "death malaria arising from it in the hot sun."²⁵ Even worse, the Federals would have to cross the extensive swamp that bounded the Yazoo to the rear in order to reach the road leading to Vicksburg. They could only cross this marshy area on foot in five places, and Chickasaw Bayou was the

²⁴Edward A. Pollard, *The Early Life, Campaigns, and Public Services of Robert E. Lee with a Record of the Campaigns and Heroic Deeds of His Companions in Arms* (New York: E. P. Treat and Co., 1871), 679

²⁵Captain Lyman Jackman, *History of the Sixth New Hampshire Regiment in the War for the Union* (Concord, New Hampshire: Republican Press Association, 1891), 166-167

best of those because of a good high road that ran along the swamp. For days, the Federals had been moving troops to the vicinity, and S. D. Lee was convinced Sherman's main attack would come there, at Chickasaw Bayou.²⁶

President Davis and his new commander in Tennessee and Mississippi, General Joseph E. Johnston met in Vicksburg to consider how to combat the impending assault. One of Johnston's colonels inspected the Twenty-sixth on the grounds at Camp Crow, near the Vicksburg Cemetery, on December 21, 1862. Three days later, an exhausted, muddy Confederate telegraph operator interrupted a Christmas Eve ball in Vicksburg to inform General M. L. Smith, that eighty-one gunboats and transports had passed Lake Providence, Louisiana and were moving toward Vicksburg. The blood drained from Smith's face and he shouted, "This ball is at an end; the enemy are coming down the river, all non-combatants must leave the city." The Federals were closing in on Vicksburg.²⁷

General Smith ordered S. D. Lee to take all available artillery and infantry and meet Sherman six miles north of Vicksburg, near the mouth of the Yazoo, at Chickasaw Bayou. Louisiana's Twenty-sixth Infantry Regiment was on the field for review when it received orders to join S. D. Lee. His command was to be responsible for the Confederate line of battle from Vicksburg to Snyder's Bluff, the high ground northeast of Vicksburg that dominated the Yazoo River. S. D. Lee's troops started at noon and marched for three hours before reaching their destination. The men set up camp and waited for orders. Immediately, they were to annoy Union gunboats, make any landing on the Yazoo impossible, and forbid inland advance.

²⁶Johnson and Buel, eds, *Battles and Leaders*, III, 471, Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 37-38.

²⁷Stephen D Lee, "Details of Important Work by Two Confederate Telegraph Operators, Christmas Eve, 1862, Which Prevented the Almost Complete Surprise of the Confederate Army at Vicksburg," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol VIII (1904): 54

When the Twenty-sixth got into place it found three companies of the Forty-sixth Mississippi already in position, and together the men dug rifle pits with swords and bayonets because there were no shovels. Sharpshooters were needed to go to the Yazoo River and harass enemy gunboats. Captain Bateman's Company B, along with several other companies, was detailed for the job. The men concealed themselves behind some hills and lay flat on the ground to avoid fire from the gunboats. Orders were to fire on every boat that passed whenever anyone appeared on deck. As soon as the Yankees heard their shots they began a constant shelling of the woods. Every few minutes a cannon ball landed nearby, showering the rebels with dirt, but they remained on the banks of the Yazoo at this work until dark when Captain Winder relieved Bateman who bivouacked in the rear. Most of the regiment slept on its arms that night.²⁸

The next day was Christmas and Bateman's company, although heavily shelled, continued to annoy the Federals until about noon when it was relieved by another command. The Twenty-sixth remained near the banks of the Yazoo until a lieutenant reported that a regiment of Union infantry and some cavalry landed and occupied rifle pits only five-hundred yards in front of the Confederate line. Meanwhile, about sixty Yankees drove Captain John Shaffer's pickets in at the head of Chickasaw Bayou. While the Seventeenth Louisiana moved to the front to skirmish with the enemy, Captain Bateman and Captain Shaffer's troops deployed in some woods to the Confederate right, positioned to assault the left flank of the Federal movement. Colonel Jones Withers, then ranking officer, countermanded the original order and directed Bateman to proceed at the double quick to flank the enemy. Company B, confronted by shot, shell, and musket volleys from artillery and three regiments of Union infantry, retired but not before killing six and wounding two of the enemy. Christmas of 1862 was quite unlike any the

²⁸Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 11, Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 38

Twenty-sixth had experienced and though its feast that day only consisted of a few potatoes, Lieutenant Sanders reported that he “was proud to know the cause of this deprivation of the delicacies that one usually has on that day.”²⁹

At dawn on the twenty-sixth, the regiment heard more Yankees landing near Chickasaw Bayou. Captain Whit Martin and ten others ventured down to the waterfront, to within three-hundred yards of the enemy’s boats. Union vessels hovered near the banks waiting to deposit Sherman’s troops. About 4:00 P.M., Martin ordered a detail of sharpshooters to drive away a transport that was trying to land. Before the detachment could accomplish its mission, however, it spotted two regiments of infantry, a battery, and a company of Union cavalry headed in the Twenty-sixth’s direction. The detail aborted its mission and rejoined the regiment, and the pickets rushed in. Captain William Crow’s company moved up and relieved Martin. Skirmishers went out to meet the enemy, but the Yankees drove them in. The Federals succeeded in pushing Crow’s command back nearly a half mile to where the rest of the Twenty-sixth was deployed in a field near the Lake plantation. The Yankees continued to shell the regiment there until night fell when the Twenty-sixth was replaced and bivouacked near Fort Morgan.

To combat the attack at Chickasaw Bayou, rebel reinforcements had been arriving on nearly every train. Still, the Confederates only had 25,000 troops to the North’s 33,000. Outnumbered, and still for the most part untested, the Twenty-sixth remained in its trenches under intense shelling, waiting for the main Federal assault. Rebel batteries opened on the Yankees on the night of December 26, and many an anxious soldier got no rest in anticipation of what he would have to do the next day.³⁰

²⁹Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 39-42; Lewis Guion, Record Book, December 25, 1862, Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 9

³⁰Guion, *Diary*, December 27, 1862, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

At 9:00 A.M. the following morning, a lieutenant from the Twenty-sixth's Company D, picketing on the banks of the Yazoo, reported that a regiment of infantry and several companies of cavalry had landed. His captain, Lewis Guion, immediately notified S. D. Lee and sent scouts out to gather more information. Before long, they returned to report that the enemy was definitely advancing on their position. By 2:30 P.M., Guion, still not reinforced, realized he was about to be flanked by Union cavalry and fell back a mile to the rear, to higher ground that he hoped would be less accessible to soldiers on horseback. Mounted Federal troops soon overtook his command, however, and began firing on it. At first, the company broke and ran, but Guion rallied his men and "placed them behind the lines & they behaved very well." Returning fire, they retreated to the shelter of the Twenty-sixth's artillery. The batteries opened up on the Yankees, driving them back for the evening. Even so, Guion knew the Federals were not far off. He sent out pickets and kept half of his company awake all night.³¹

While the Twenty-sixth tried to rest and prepare itself for the next day, Sherman finished disembarking the remainder of his army two miles above the mouth of the Yazoo, opposite the Lake plantation. As his troops landed they combined with the forces that arrived the day before at Johnson's plantation, twelve miles further up the Yazoo river. Sherman's troops united and pushed eastward towards the bluffs and the city of Vicksburg in four distinct columns under the division commanders, A. J. Smith, Morgan L. Smith, George Morgan, and Frederick Steele.³²

In the morning, Union cavalry, infantry, and four artillery pieces renewed the attack against Guion's position. After skirmishing with the enemy, he was relieved by a company of the 46th Mississippi and rejoined his own regiment in front of the main lines.

³¹Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 42, Lewis Guion, Diary, December 27, 1862.

³²Lee, "The Campaign of Generals Grant and Sherman Against Vicksburg in December, 1862, and January 1st and 2nd, 1863, Known as the 'Chickasaw Bayou Campaign,' " *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol IV (1901) 29

The Twenty-sixth had moved about five-hundred yards in advance of the rest of the troops and settled into rifle pits that were actually three-foot ditches with dirt thrown out on the side facing the Yankees. Its position was a strong one, however, located high on the edge of a bluff. Captain Cleophas Legarde took charge of the Twenty-sixth's left wing, while Hall led the forces on the right. S. D. Lee, his staff, several spectators, and the remainder of his troops were on the bluffs behind them.

Colonel Allen Thomas's Twenty-eighth Louisiana moved out about two hundred yards in front of the Twenty-sixth to skirmish in some woods. Though the Twenty-eighth fought hard and lasted several hours, its ammunition began to run low. Two of the Twenty-sixth's captains, Whitmel Martin (Co. C) and Octave Metoyer (Co. G), came to Thomas's rescue by moving their companies out to support Allen's right and prevent his being flanked. When the Twenty-eighth completely exhausted its ammunition, it fell back under heavy fire, leaving the Twenty-sixth nearly surrounded by Yankees. Hall said, "There was now nothing between the enemy and the 26th and on they came." The Federals immediately opened up a tremendous fire and minie balls whistled through the air. The Twenty-sixth could not see its attackers, concealed in the woods a couple of hundred feet away, so it rarely returned fire. The bluecoats continued at this work for hours, and at one point, some of them ran up a battery on the wagon road that led through the Twenty-sixth's pits until they were only four hundred yards away from Cage's regiment. This time, the Federals were in plain view and the Twenty-sixth peppered them with shots until they retreated, without returning fire. The Yankees kept up an incessant fire throughout the day.³³

Though their attempt to reach the Twenty-sixth failed, the Federals continued to bombard the regiment. For the most part, the rebels squatted close to the ground,

³³Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 43, 45

occasionally raising their heads above the trenches to look out and shoot. No one seemed to have noticed until that moment that the Twenty-sixths' rifle pits were situated so that they were exposed to the swarm of Yankee sharpshooters hiding in the woods to the right. One of the Twenty-sixth's officers said the regiment was "entirely at their [the Federals'] mercy." Captain Caleb Tucker (Co. I), who sat daringly on a box with his head above the embankment, was shot through the head and carried to the bluff where he died that night. Another soldier, Emile Bergeron, detailed to attend the wounded, was hit in the forehead and died instantly. The open sloping ground to the rear of the Twenty-sixth's pits was just as perilous. Retreat in that direction, would have left the men fully exposed for about five-hundred yards as they crossed the large field that led to the bluff. In fact, when Lieutenant Henry Lee, S. D. Lee's cousin and aide, galloped down that route to give an order to Colonel Cage, a bullet blew off part of his finger. Though the Twenty-sixth had succeeded in fighting off the Federals that day, it was in a dangerous position.³⁴

The regiment had refused to give up any ground, and Hall complemented the men on their performance that day. He praised Legarde for his work on the Twenty-sixth's left side, saying that the captain "might have been assaulted, overpowered, every man killed about him; but he would have been found there, still holding the trenches." Cage's regiment still held the trenches, but in the process it had lost six privates and Captain Tucker and seven or eight more were wounded. Injured and captured Federals told the Twenty-sixth that it had held back several Yankee regiments that day and that Union officers did not order its works charged because they assumed it was a larger force.

Although the Federals did not attack again, they continued shelling the rebels until dark. Hall said, "it seemed night would never come. I wished for it as heartily as

³⁴Ibid., 44-45.

Wellington wished for night or Blucher at Waterloo.” When the red sun finally set, the firing stopped and though the men of the Twenty-sixth breathed easier because they still held their position; most knew their situation was precarious.³⁵ Pickets were posted several feet apart on the embankment and Hall called the captains together for a meeting to discuss their next move. The captains agreed that their works had been completely enfiladed, and they told Hall there was no way they could hold their position against the superior force opposing them. When Cage brought this information to S. D. Lee, the general ordered the place abandoned before daylight.³⁶

At 3:00 in the morning, the men of the Twenty-sixth stole out of their trenches, one by one, “with a tread noiseless as the step of time.”³⁷ They moved out by the left flank and re-formed on the road, leaving Crow’s company as picket.³⁸ The regiment marched up about two miles to a place where the Confederates suspected a Federal column had landed the night before. The officers found there were no rifle pits, and since the regiment was without tools, the men used their bayonets to dig an embankment. Just as the Twenty-sixth finished throwing up its breastworks on the levee, it received orders to retake the very same trenches it evacuated the night before. Exhausted and filled with dread, the men returned to the pits. One of them remarked, “We all expected to be killed in the undertaking.”³⁹

³⁵Ibid , 44

³⁶Robert Martin, Jr to Maggie Martin, January 3, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection; Whit Martin to Maggie Martin, January 3, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection, Whit Martin to General Robert C Martin (father), January 7, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

³⁷Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 45

³⁸Guion, Diary, December 29, 1862

³⁹Robert Martin, Jr to Maggie Martin, January 3, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection; Whit Martin to Maggie Martin, January 3, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection, Whit Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father), January 7, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

Despite their misgivings, the soldiers of the Twenty-sixth reoccupied the rifle pits they had evacuated at dawn with little trouble. Early morning remained quiet, but the Confederates waited anxiously for the attack. Their line of battle was at the base of a range of hills where they had rifle pits and a battery and was almost a straight line running in front of the open ground that the Yankees had to cross to get to the road that led to Vicksburg. About 9:00 A.M., the Federals began to stir in preparation of a general assault. An hour later their line was formed, and they showered S. D. Lee's troops with cannon fire. Hall shouted, "That's the music!" and the Twenty-sixth spotted the Federals pouring over the fallen timber towards its works.⁴⁰ "They came over in daring style, with banners flying. Many an old U.S. was floating to the breeze, and far stretched their heavy columns." The Yankees pressed forward at a double-quick, their shouting mixed with replies from the Confederate batteries and rifle shot.⁴¹

S. D. Lee, undoubtedly hoping to inspire his men, rode to the Twenty-sixth and shouted that it held the post of honor and that "he knew that Louisianans would ever do their duty." According to Hall, "a terrific storm of shot and shell now burst upon us, and in its fury it seemed as if no living thing about us could escape."⁴² The Federals advanced under heavy artillery cover and nearly carried the Twenty-sixth's weaker lines, where the men in the trenches were single file with no reserves. Both sides were hotly engaged and Sanders saw "men falling by crowds--officers tumbling from their horses & horses dashing over the field."⁴³ Peals from the batteries mixed with the rattle of rifles and the screams of the men. Bullets flew so rapidly over the trenches that it was nearly

⁴⁰Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 46

⁴¹Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 13.

⁴²Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 46

⁴³Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 13

impossible to look out from them. Several of the men became ill and begged to go to the rear and Sanders called it “the warmest work I have ever experienced.”⁴⁴

It was also some of the bloodiest and Sanders was shocked by the carnage. He said, “it was so sad to hear the groans of the dying around us. The brave boy who was killed in our company had his brains blown partly out and he lay there picking out the remainder with his fingers, and uttering the most piteous moans.”⁴⁵ The Yankees made it to within fifty yards of the rifle pits, but somehow Cage’s regiment held. Union officers cheered their troops on but when they came close to the Twenty-sixth, the regiment poured forth such a ferocious fire that their men turned and ran.⁴⁶ S. D. Lee said that the Federals “were literally mowed down by the fire of the infantry in their front and on both flanks.”⁴⁷ The Twenty-sixth made a “handsome movement” on the Federal flank and “threw the enemy into inextricable confusion.” Eventually, the Yankee lines broke and retreated. They soon rallied, however, and sent part of their forces to the right, only to be beaten back again by the Twenty-eighth Louisiana and the Forty-second Georgia. The repulse was a very bloody one, and the Yankees did not try again.⁴⁸

Shouts of “victory is ours” rose from the rebel lines, and by 1:00 P.M., the Federal assault was virtually over.⁴⁹ Fairly certain that Yankees would not attack his line again that day, S. D. Lee directed Hall to report to him with a detail to secure prisoners. Hall

⁴⁴Ibid , 12

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 46.

⁴⁷Stephen D Lee, “The Campaign of Generals Grant and Sherman Against Vicksburg in December, 1862, and January 1st and 2nd, 1863, Known as the ‘Chickasaw Bayou Campaign,’ ” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol IV (1901) 33

⁴⁸Johnson and Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders*, III, 470; *Official Records*, Vol. XXIX, 667

⁴⁹Johnson and Buel, eds , *Battles and Leaders*, III, 470, Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 46, *Official Records*, XVII, Part I, 608; Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 13.

took the companies of Bateman, Mouton, Bisland, and Lieutenant Webre (commanding Company I). Enroute to meet Lee, the command came to halt at a point where it had an unobstructed view of Federal troops only a hundred yards away. The men stopped without orders and “savagely peppered the bluecoats” until Hall gave orders to cease fire and march to the open ground and secure prisoners. The command was eager, however, and when a Yankee appeared again, a young sergeant of Company A, unable to restrain himself, fired after him. Hall, furious that his orders had been disobeyed, rode up from the rear and hit the sergeant on the back with the flat side of his sword. The sergeant “turned round to look where the blow came from, and when he saw [Hall], seemed as much astonished as if a shell had stung him.” Hall ordered the column into line and then rode to the front, cocked his weapon, and threatened to kill the first man to fire. To punish the men, he put them through the manual of arms in full view of the enemy. Displeased with what he considered a needless exposure of the troops, S. D. Lee rode up and commanded the men to take cover in a shallow wagon rut about a hundred feet to the rear. Finally, the firing decreased and the command rounded up its prisoners and rejoined the regiment.⁵⁰

The Twenty-sixth captured four stands of regimental colors, 21 commissioned officers, 311 non-commissioned officers, and 500 stands of arms.⁵¹ The fighting had been fierce as evidenced by the forty-two bullet holes in Company C’s flag. Whit Martin, Company C’s captain, promoted major after the battle, boasted that the Twenty-sixth had done its share that day of the good work of sending Yankees to their

⁵⁰Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 46

⁵¹Stephen D Lee, “The Campaign of Generals Grant and Sherman Against Vicksburg in December, 1862, and January 1st and 2nd, 1863, Known as the ‘Chickasaw Bayou Campaign,’” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol IV, 34

final resting place.⁵² S. D. Lee praised his men, saying they behaved with “the greatest coolness and courage in the face of the large numbers of the enemy”⁵³

Finally night fell, and though most of the firing ceased the Twenty-sixth remained on alert. Its officers chose a picket to protect those who cared for the dead and wounded. The rest of the men tried to sleep in a pouring rain in rifle pits on the edge of the field. Lieutenant Sanders made his sick bed on a pile of rails but was kept awake by the piteous groans of the wounded and dying still on the field. “You cannot imagine how pitiful their cries did sound. They would cry out ‘Oh boys! come and help me, O God, I am dying,’ and all such exclamations that would make one’s blood run cold.”⁵⁴ The moans of the wounded continued all night because many Federals remained on the battlefield where they had fallen. One of the Twenty-sixth commented, “Poor fellows who were wounded must have had a hard time as it rained all night after the fight. We took off all that were near us and attended to them.”⁵⁵

Sharpshooters began to harass the Twenty-sixth as soon as it brought its injured and captured to the rear and continued to annoy it until dawn, making the job of the pickets particularly “unpleasant.” At daylight, the regiment was in line ready for action; however, it soon became obvious that the Yankees were not preparing for an assault. Though the rebels observed some movement in their camps, the Federals remained relatively quiet throughout the day. When night fell, Hall took a detachment out to destroy a bridge S. D. Lee expected the enemy would try to use to cross artillery the next

⁵²Whit Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father), January 7, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection, Nicholls State University Archives, Whit Martin to Maggie Martin, January 3, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁵³Stephen D. Lee, “The Campaign of Generals Grant and Sherman Against Vicksburg in December, 1862, and January 1st and 2nd, 1863, Known as the ‘Chickasaw Bayou Campaign ’ ” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol. IV, 34

⁵⁴Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 13-14

⁵⁵Robert Martin, Jr to Maggie Martin, January 1, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

day. Hall's force worked quickly and quietly, aware that the slightest noise could mean their capture. They accomplished their goal and returned to their bivouac to wait for their next assignment.

Shortly thereafter, another order came for a detachment of fifty men to plant torpedoes in the Yazoo, an extremely dangerous job given that the Federals had control of the river. S. D. Lee preferred volunteers so the Twenty-sixth fell in line and Hall explained the mission and requested that all interested parties step forward two paces. Captain Bateman's Company B, dubbed "the dear old dirty shirts," by the rest of the regiment, came forward immediately, volunteered to a man, and requested permission to handle the assignment alone. Though the mission was canceled, Hall was impressed with Bateman's company.⁵⁶

Finally, on December 31, the Federals made a move, but it was only to bring over a flag of truce and ask for a cessation of hostilities for four hours to bury their dead and take care of the wounded.⁵⁷ S. D. Lee granted the request and two-hundred dead bodies were carried into Union lines. One member of the Twenty-sixth remarked on the fact that the Federals let their men stay on the battlefield for two days, "I cannot imagine why they did not remove them immediately."⁵⁸

On January 1, 1863, General Lee summoned Hall to his tent to share cake and wine. Headquarters had sent word that Colonel Cage's resignation had been accepted, and S. D. Lee informed Winchester Hall that he was to assume the colonelcy of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry Regiment. Hall was promoted despite the fact that he was "exceedingly unpopular with all from the highest to the lowest." Another officer even

⁵⁶Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 50-51; Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 10

⁵⁷Johnson and Buel, eds, *Battles and Leaders*, III, 463, Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 47-48, Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 13-14

⁵⁸Robert Martin, Jr to Maggie Martin, January 1, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

accused him of frequently put the men through unnecessary drills against the general's orders to "gratify some useless whim" Regardless, Hall was to lead the regiment with Major Crow as lieutenant-colonel and Captain Martin as major.⁵⁹

Other than the cease fire, the Confederates heard little from the Yankees but occasionally observed some movement in their lines. General Lee still expected an attack at Snyder's Bluff and took four regiments to the vicinity to reinforce the area, but when it became apparent that the reports of an assault there were false, he returned to Chickasaw Bayou. In fact, Sherman had arranged for Admiral Porter to transport ten thousand of his troops to Snyder's Bluff and then join in an attack against the rebel works with his gunboats, but dense fog on the Yazoo foiled their plan. Sherman decided to abandon the expedition and return down the Yazoo to the Mississippi river instead. All of his troops were ordered aboard their transports by dawn of January 2⁶⁰

The Federal plan also called for Sherman to cooperate with Grant who was to hold Pemberton in the front while Sherman moved into Vicksburg from the rear. Things had not gone well for Grant either, and his overland advance on Vicksburg also ended in defeat. General Nathan Bedford Forrest destroyed most of Grant's main rail line, and General Earl Van Dorn's cavalry smashed his supply base at Holly Springs so Grant, unable to communicate with the North and deprived of supplies retreated to Memphis and gave up the idea of reaching Vicksburg by an overland route. Grant was furious and called the capture of Holly Springs "a disgraceful one to the officer commanding." He continued, "I determined, therefore, to abandon my campaign into the interior." Without Grant, Sherman was easily repulsed at Chickasaw Bayou.⁶¹

⁵⁹Robert Martin, Jr. to General Robert C. Martin (father), January 22, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection, Robert Martin, Jr to Maggie Martin, March 12, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁶⁰Stephen D. Lee, "The Campaign of Generals Grant and Sherman Against Vicksburg in December, 1862, and January 1st and 2nd, 1863, Known as the 'Chickasaw Bayou Campaign,' " *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol. IV, 35-36.

⁶¹Ulysses S Grant, *Personal Memories of U. S. Grant* (New York Charles L Webster & Co , 1885),

Demoralized by his army's failure to pass enemy lines and frustrated by Grant's inability to reach Vicksburg, Sherman evacuated the front and returned to the cover of his gunboats on the Yazoo River. The Twenty-sixth was relieved at his departure because this meant it would return to camp for a much needed rest. The men had been on constant duty for more than a week and were exhausted and filthy. One soldier wrote his wife, "I have had on the same clothes for near two weeks, a week ago last Sunday I put them on and until last night had pulled none of them off for near a week. Even sleeping with my shoes on most of the time."⁶² As the Confederate lines formed to return to camp about ten miles distant, S. D. Lee thanked them for their "distinguished gallantry" and "endurance in the trenches." He expressed his confidence in them, saying that he now knew that the Twenty-sixth would remain where placed until ordered to leave. Three cheers went up among the men for General Lee, "the hero of Chickasaw Bayou."⁶³

The Louisianans trudged through deep mud in a driving rain but arrived back at their camp, near Vicksburg Cemetery, with precious souvenirs from the battlefield at Chickasaw Bayou, including letters, "foreign curiosities," and "many large overcoats and other Yankee equipments." A lucky few had found more than \$100 in "greenbacks," and according to Sanders, "for \$10 in Yankee greenbacks one can get \$15 in Confederate notes in Vicksburg." Despite the hardships the Twenty-sixth endured in its first real contest, it was elated over its victory at Chickasaw Bayou.⁶⁴

Although the rebels defeated Sherman at Chickasaw Bayou, they knew he would try to attack Vicksburg again by water, so the Twenty-sixth returned to its camp for the next

431-433, Stephen D. Lee, "Details of Important Work by Two Confederate Telegraph Operators, Christmas Eve, 1862, Which Prevented the Almost Complete Surprise of the Confederate Army at Vicksburg," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol VIII, (1904) 52

⁶²Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, January 1, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁶³Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 51

⁶⁴Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 14.

few months to picket along the Yazoo every other night and support the water batteries. While encamped, the men built shacks out of sugar cane and caught immense quantities of crawfish with pieces of meat tied to string. “The Mississippians looked with great amazement and much disgust at the keen relish with which ‘them ere Cre-owl Louisianians’ devoured this species of food.” For their part, Louisiana’s soldiers remained unconcerned with their comrades disdain for their diet and considered crawfish an excellent supplement to their diminishing rations.⁶⁵

Prior to the siege, the Commissary Department provided cornmeal, fresh beef, bacon, salt, and soap, but, by the end of 1862, the Confederates could hardly afford to feed their cattle; and many head died daily from hunger or produced meat that was blue and inedible. Winchester Hall complained of the deplorable conditions, but Brigade Headquarters informed him that it had no other meat to send him. One malnourished Southerner lamented, “the hogs got hold of our beef the other night and actually they would not eat it but we have to eat what the hogs would not eat.”⁶⁶ Blue quarters of meat were laid out each day on a bench in front of the commissary tent, and though few partook, “some of the more hungry ventured to appease a gnawing stomach with the best portions.” Cornmeal was frequently made into bread for three days’ rations when the men were in the field. By the third day, not even it was palatable to starving men, but at least it stifled hunger. While the men often went without food for a day or two, officers ate beef, bread, and molasses.⁶⁷

There was a marked difference in the officer’s diet, and they were also paid on a fairly regular basis while the soldiers sometimes went months with no compensation. When the men of the Twenty-sixth finally received their pay in camp in January of 1863,

⁶⁵Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 197

⁶⁶Alsbaugh, June 14, 1862, Civil War Letters

⁶⁷Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 32-33

an officer remarked, “The soldiers have just been paid off for two months. They will soon be paid again. It is shameful the way they are treated. This is the first pay they have had for six months.”⁶⁸

Men who were drafted fared even worse. Near the first of March, the Twenty-sixth moved with its brigade into vacant warehouses and other dwellings within the city to guard against a suspected frontal attack, and here it was joined by some of the Confederacy’s first conscripts. These conscripted soldiers wore a coarse, white, woolen uniform dubbed, “*nolens volens*,”⁶⁹ which distinguished them from volunteers and became a symbol of contempt and reproach. Not long after the conscripts joined the rebels at Vicksburg, the Quartermaster’s Department finally supplied desperately needed uniforms to the regiment but unfortunately they were the same white woolen outfits given to the men who had been impressed into service. The Twenty-sixth’s colonel recalled how “a howl of indignation rose from his regiment, at the bare suggestion of wearing the badge of a conscript.” The Twenty-sixth was especially offended as no conscripts were yet placed in that regiment, and it remained filled only with volunteers; however, after repeated appeals by its officers one company after another yielded and donned the hated white suit. Only Company B refused to give in, and Bateman, as its captain, reluctantly reported to Colonel Hall that two of his men were still vehemently opposed. Though he privately referred to them as “*staunch old hearts*,” Hall informed Bateman that those who continued to resist would be tied up by their thumbs until they relented.⁷⁰

Also in March, in anticipation of a Federal attack, the Twenty-sixth traveled to northeast Mississippi. The Yankees, impatient with the protracted operations around

⁶⁸Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, January 8, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁶⁹Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 191

⁷⁰Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 59-60.

Vicksburg, attempted innumerable expeditions into adjacent bodies of water such as the small bayou that entered the Yazoo above Snyder's Bluff, called Deer Creek. To meet the Federal advance, the Twenty-sixth walked fourteen miles north of the city to Haynes's Bluff, on the Yazoo, and took a steamer to Deer Creek where it intended to attack the enemy within a few days. Unfortunately, the Federals got wind of the impending assault and withdrew. Before the Twenty-sixth moved out, however, Mississippi was hit by a brutal storm and Lieutenant Sanders said trees fell "so fast that it sounded like a bombardment" During the night, five frightened members of Company A fled, leaving their bedding on the ground. In the morning, a large tree lay upon their abandoned blankets. Nearly fourteen men were killed by falling timber around Vicksburg and Sanders grimly remarked, "I shall long remember that night."⁷¹

The Twenty-sixth returned to Vicksburg and since the rebels were certain the Yankees would try another attack by water, the regiment picketed along the Yazoo every other night, sleeping on its weapons in the trenches or sometimes in town, "ready to move at a moment's warning."⁷² On April 30, the Federals did try to reach Vicksburg again but this time they moved their army on the ground along the west bank of the Mississippi and crossed the river at a town called Bruinsburg about thirty miles south of the city. This time the Yankees succeeded in crossing the river. Some of the forces inside Vicksburg marched out to meet the bluecoats, and during the battle Confederate commander Brigadier-General Edward Tracy was killed. Richmond decided to replace him with General S. D. Lee, and Francis A. Shoup took over as the Twenty-sixth's brigadier.

Even though he headed another command, S. D. Lee asked that the Twenty-sixth be permitted to accompany him on his next assignment to Champion's Hill, about eight

⁷¹Bergeron, *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units 1861-1865*, 135

⁷²Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 55.

miles east of Vicksburg. His request was denied because the regiment was needed to support the water batteries around Vicksburg, but during the Battle of Champion's Hill, two weeks later, S. D. Lee ordered a regiment to advance under heavy fire; and when it hesitated he reportedly shouted, "Oh! if only I had the Twenty-sixth Louisiana here."⁷³

Meanwhile, three rebel army divisions formed the line of defense around Vicksburg and hoped to keep Grant out. M. L. Smith's command held the left line on the river just north of the city, which extended about one and a quarter miles, where it met Major-General John Forney's command. Smith's army was composed of three brigades under the following generals, F. A. Shoup, William Baldwin, and John Vaughn. Shoup's Twenty-sixth, Twenty-seventh, and Twenty-eighth Louisiana occupied the right. Baldwin was in the center with the Seventeenth, Thirty-first Louisiana and Fourth and Forty-sixth Mississippi, while Vaughn's Sixtieth, Sixty-first, and Sixty-second Tennessee took the left with Mississippi State troops and a detachment under Major-General William Loring. Smith's strong front was on a narrow ridge where he placed a line of rifle-trenches with points for field artillery.

The Confederates' defenses around Vicksburg were strong and at this point still outnumbered the Federals. General Joseph E. Johnston thought it a good time for Pemberton to make an offensive move and commanded him to march upon Clinton. Pemberton disapproved of Johnston's plan because it would pull him away from Vicksburg and called a meeting with his generals where he exhibited Johnston's communication, "making a long argument against obedience to the order expressed in it." The majority of the council supported Johnston's plan but several officers advocated moving the army to the road from Jackson and Raymond to Port Gibson to cut off the enemy's supplies from the Mississippi river. Although Pemberton did not particularly

⁷³Ibid., 61

care for either strategy, he chose to follow the plan of the minority of his officers “in violation of the orders of his commander” because it did not remove him from his base at Vicksburg.⁷⁴ On the morning of May 14, Pemberton sent Johnston a note protesting his superior’s order, “I deemed the movement very hazardous, preferring to remain in position behind the Big Black, and near to Vicksburg.”⁷⁵ Accordingly, Pemberton moved east of the Big Black River to occupy Champion’s Hill near Baker’s Creek.

Grant was closing in on Pemberton and the Federals periodically sent transports loaded with goods down the river so that he could supply his army after crossing the Mississippi. Simultaneously, Grant encircled the city in preparation for a siege. He daringly cut himself off from his base at Memphis and marched to a point east of Vicksburg where he attacked Pemberton, smashing the Confederates at Champion’s Hill on May 16. Pemberton retreated to the Big Black River, but the following day the Federals chased his army from its position there back to the entrenchments around Vicksburg. Pemberton held the weaker lines with inferior forces, and Grant drove him into Vicksburg. General Shoup, the Twenty-sixth’s new brigade commander, garrisoned in the city, reported that “through heat and dust the troops came tumbling back into Vicksburg in utter confusion.”⁷⁶ Next, Grant took the interior position and moved between Johnston at Jackson, and Pemberton at Vicksburg thus accomplishing his goal of dividing the two Confederate armies.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Joseph E Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations during the Late War between the States* (New York: Appleton, 1874, Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1959), 181, 186, Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, 2 vols (New York: D Appleton, 1881), 2:412

⁷⁵Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations during the Late War between the States*, 185 Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, 2:413.

⁷⁶Francis A Shoup, “Vicksburg Some New History in the Experience of General Francis A Shoup,” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol VII (1894). 172

⁷⁷J G Randall, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York D C Heath & Co , 1937), 529-531

Johnston recognized Grant's trap and ordered Pemberton to evacuate Vicksburg and march to the northeast. His dispatch read, "If Haynes's Bluff is untenable, Vicksburg is of no value and cannot be held. Under such circumstances, instead of losing both troops and place, we must, if possible, save the troops."⁷⁸ Pemberton responded, "I have decided to hold Vicksburg as long as is possible, with the firm hope that the Government may yet be able to assist me in keeping this obstruction to the enemy's free navigation of the Mississippi River. I still consider it to be the most important point in the Confederacy."⁷⁹ Johnston was furious and said in retrospect, "I should have joined Lieutenant-General Pemberton's 'movable army,' and taken command of it"⁸⁰

Johnston was unable to take command of Pemberton's army and on the morning of May 18, news reached Pemberton's headquarters at Vicksburg of a large Union force descending upon the city from the north. To stop the advance, the Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh Louisiana marched out to rifle pits on the lines of fortification below the city. About 10:00 A.M., both regiments were ordered back to town where they remained an hour-and-a-half, before receiving marching orders again. This time they moved north of the city to the line of works running to Snyder's Bluff. The Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh took position on the outer fortifications behind a ridge and waited for the approach of the foe. They heard the enemy's guns in their front before they were all in place. Federal sharpshooters and artillery opened fire, and their infantry appeared before the right side of Smith's works. Under heavy fire, the front of the line, manned by the Twenty-seventh, Seventeenth, Thirty-first Louisiana and the Forty-sixth Mississippi held them in check. Although the Twenty-sixth was annoyed until dark by sharpshooters

⁷⁸Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations during the Late War between the States*, 187

⁷⁹*Official Records*, Vol XXIV, Part 1, 271, Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations during the Late War between the States*, 188; Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, 2:413.

⁸⁰Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations during the Late War between the States*, 187

concealed in the forest in its front, the regiment escaped the brunt of the attack and bivouacked near the outer works.⁸¹

Pemberton said Smith had misunderstood his instructions when he occupied the outer line of defense on the range of hills north of the Fort Hill Road, so he ordered Smith to abandon the advanced line on the left as soon as the enemy fell back there. At 3:00 on the morning of the nineteenth, after only a few hours sleep on the ridge, Smith's troops were ordered to fall back to the interior trenches. Under cover of darkness, the men and artillery were "silently and safely withdrawn" to the inner line.⁸² The Twenty-sixth moved to several different spots before it finally found its designated place on the crest of a another gently sloping hill where Colonel Leon Marks's Twenty-seventh Louisiana closed the right and Hall's regiment took its left. Unfortunately, the Twenty-sixth's position was fully exposed to fire from the front and there were only enough pits to accommodate two companies. At this point the enemy was but three-hundred yards away, in the edge of the woods, firing. Officers marked off the trenches and the troops frantically dug them. A young private from the Twenty-sixth's Company A was killed while he worked and Colonel Hall immediately ordered the work to cease and his men into the newly dug pits. Lieutenant Richard West stood up defiantly, exposing himself to enemy fire, and screamed for the Yankees to come on.⁸³

The Federals needed no encouragement and before long, their assault began in earnest. Union artillery opened heavily about 1:00 P M. and created cover for its troops which made a direct attack on the right, at the center of Shoup's brigade. It seemed that "the whole Federal army transformed into a monster serpent, which began to writhe and

⁸¹*Official Records*, XXIV, Part 2, 397, Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 67

⁸²*Official Records*, XXIV, Part 1, 273

⁸³*Official Records*, XXXVI, Part 2, 406, Private Dorneville Fabre, Company A, Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry was killed May 19, 1863, Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 67-68

twist and turn and undulate.”⁸⁴ The Twenty-seventh Louisiana took the brunt of the attack while the Twenty-sixth, which held its left, fired on the enemy’s flank and together they held the line.⁸⁵ The Yankees were confident that there would be “another ‘walkover’ such as that which took place two days before at Big Black Bridge. But this time they struck a rock in General Shoup’s brigade.”⁸⁶

An hour-and-a-half later, Union troops reformed in a concealed elevated position, and attempted a second advance by six or seven regiments against the Confederate extreme right, but “the Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh Louisiana, supported by the First Missouri, in reserve, received the charge with a withering fire, and after the second volley the enemy fled in confusion, leaving five colors on the field, and the ground strewn with the dead and wounded.” About 6:00 P.M., the Yankees made another charge, directly in front of the Twenty-sixth, but the regiment repulsed them yet again. The rebels, held a heavily fortified defensive position at Fort Hill, and the great assault was a defeat all along the line. All attempts to rally the Federal troops failed though the artillery and sharpshooters kept up a continuous fire until nightfall.⁸⁷ The Twenty-sixth lost Captain Felix Winder and Lieutenant Pierre Ternier, while Colonel Hall was wounded in the leg. That night, a soldier of the Twenty-seventh called the Twenty-sixth “a good regiment . . . they don’t care if they fight always.”⁸⁸

The Twenty-sixth was soon under fire again when enemy sharpshooters opened on it at 4:30 in the morning on the twentieth. Though the Federals shelled the Twenty-sixth

⁸⁴Alonzo L. Brown, *History of the Fourth Regiment of Minnesota Infantry Volunteers During the Great Rebellion 1861-1865* (St. Paul: The Pioneer Press Company, 1892), 211

⁸⁵Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 68-69

⁸⁶Brown, *History of the Fourth Regiment of Minnesota Infantry Volunteers During the Great Rebellion 1861-1865*, 211.

⁸⁷*Official Records*, XXXVI, Part 2, 397-398, 406

⁸⁸Alsbaugh, March 25, 1863, Civil War Letters

and fired muskets till late in the evening, they did not charge near the regiment. Hall's men suffered a great deal from the sun and dust in the pits but miraculously sustained no casualties. The following day was spent in the same fashion, except that three men in the Twenty-sixth were wounded.

On Friday the twenty-second, the Federals began at daylight with artillery and musketry, and by 11:00 A.M. the cannonading was terrific as they charged the Confederate works to the right of the Twenty-sixth. An hour later they massed in front of the Twenty-sixth and the Ninth Iowa led the charge on its front "& about the same time a large number of the enemy passed by one at a time to the bottom of the hill. We in the meantime keeping up a brisk fire on them."⁸⁹ The Yankees came within thirty feet of the parapet, but the regiment "behaved finely . . . mounting on top the parapet to receive the enemy" and repulsing them with heavy loss. About 5:30 P.M., the Federals that had been collecting all day at the foot of the hill in front of the gunnery, to the left of the Twenty-sixth's Company K, charged the batteries. Captain William Bisland's company reinforced the point attacked and pushed the Yankees back. Twenty minutes later the enemy charged the Twenty-sixth's left again only to be repulsed. Firing continued on the regiment's right until late in the evening, and finally night terminated the attack. Federal losses were catastrophic. In fact, the Ninth Iowa lost 40 percent of its men that day.⁹⁰

Six members of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana were killed and three wounded, but the praise of General M. L. Smith took away some of the pain: "You have been the first to meet the shock of the enemy's assault upon Vicksburg and he has again recoiled before your admirable steadiness & courage--What cause for pride to have such troops! And what admiration from myself & others you have won!"⁹¹

⁸⁹Guion, Diary, May 22, 1863

⁹⁰Guion, Record Book, May 22, 1863, Guion, Diary, May 22, 1863

⁹¹Lewis Guion, Record Book, May 23, 1863

The Yankees had spent May 20-22, erecting new batteries about eight hundred yards from the Confederate line and reconnoitering for the best approaches for infantry. At 3:00 A.M. on the twenty-second, the Federals attacked with every thing they had. Both Union and Confederate soldiers agreed it was the worst bombardment of the siege. "Vicksburg was encircled by a girdle of fire; on river and shore a line of mighty cannon poured destruction from their fiery throats, while the mortars played incessantly and made the heavens themselves seem to drop down malignant meteors on the rebellious stronghold."⁹² Union sharpshooters and artillery fired from daylight till dark, and it was not safe to walk along the lines or between the cooking camps.⁹³ Enemy lines were in close proximity, and Federal troops riddled nearby Confederate flags with bullets and "seem[ed] to be fond of flaunting their miserable old flag close to our works. An adventurous Yankee has planted one within 100 yards of our line and has dug him a trench from which to shoot."⁹⁴

Heavy musket fire and artillery continued through most of the twenty-second, and at 2:00 P.M., a column of blue was discovered moving toward the right side of Shoup's brigade. The Federals charged the Twenty-sixth on their front and right simultaneously but were repulsed. Three hours later, the Yankees ran up the hill to the left of the Twenty-sixth, exposing their position. Lieutenant Sanders said, "They would run up until they were tired and then fall down, jumping up they would strive to reach our works but the fire was too severe for them and in twenty minutes they were repulsed."⁹⁵ One participant remarked that no Confederate soldier inside the fortifications at Vicksburg

⁹²Brown, *History of the Fourth Regiment of Minnesota Infantry Volunteers During the Great Rebellion 1861-1865*, 211

⁹³Johnson and Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders*, III, 489.

⁹⁴Brown, *History of the Fourth Regiment of Minnesota Infantry Volunteers During the Great Rebellion 1861-1865*, 211-213, Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 20.

⁹⁵Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 20

that day would ever forget the experience. Federal losses were high “while the rebels, ensconced behind their lofty parapets, had suffered but little in comparison.”

The Twenty-sixth expected another attack on their left that evening and although it took every precaution, none came. The morning of the twenty-third, it heard firing in Vicksburg’s direction and at 9:30 A.M. the Yankees opened with heavy artillery on its right. This did not last long however, and ultimately it proved to be the most quiet day the Twenty-sixth had experienced in quite a while. The men were able to leave their pits and venture around the battlefield where they found guns and various other trophies of the fight. Captain Guion took advantage of the lull in the fighting to walk around the works and survey the damages of the last few days. He saw several dead Yankees that had fallen within thirty feet of his regiment’s entrenchments.⁹⁶

In fact, the dead and dying were everywhere. Disgusted with what he felt was a disregard for the honor of fallen soldiers, General Pemberton penned a harsh note to Grant: “Sir, two days have elapsed since your dead and wounded have been lying in our front, and as yet no disposition on your part of a desire to remove them being exhibited, in the name of humanity I have the honor to propose a cessation of hostilities for two hours and a half, that you may be enabled to remove your dead and dying men. If you cannot do this I will endeavor to have the dead buried and the wounded cared for.”⁹⁷

Pemberton’s men did not have to care for the enemy’s fallen, however, because Grant agreed to the informal truce. The Twenty-sixth, relieved to be able to rest and breathe freely for a few hours, became enraged when an enemy sharpshooter fired at Lieutenant Sanders as he stood in full view on the parapet during the cease fire. Although the ball

⁹⁶Guion, Diary, May 23, 1863

⁹⁷*Official Records*, Vol XXIV, Part I, 271.

missed its mark, one of Sanders's men yelled to the perpetrator, "If ye do that again we will fire a volley into ye & it will take all day tomorrow to bury ye're carcasses!"⁹⁸

The Federals were also enraged. They had been beaten back at every point and even Admiral Porter's tremendous bombardment failed to silence a single battery. Those that survived were appalled at the numbers of their comrades in blue who were killed or wounded. Pemberton's repulses of May 19 and 22 convinced Grant that he must abandon the idea of attack and win Vicksburg through siege and underground approach.⁹⁹ He "now determined upon a regular siege--to 'out-camp the enemy,' as it were, and to incur no more losses."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 21.

⁹⁹James Bradley, *The Confederate Mail Carrier* (Mexico, Mo. privately printed, 1894), 108; Brown, *History of the Fourth Regiment of Minnesota Volunteers During the Great Rebellion 1861-1865*, 214, Johnson and Buel, eds, *Battles and Leaders*, III, 489, *Official Records*, XXIV, 398.

¹⁰⁰Ulysses S Grant, *Ulysses S. Grant: Memoirs and Selected Letters* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1990), 357

CHAPTER 4

VICKSBURG II

Grant had his work cut out for him. The Confederates were entrenched along the Mississippi River from a couple of miles above the town, to a mile below. Their lines formed a semi-circle around Vicksburg and measured approximately six miles long by two-and-a-half wide. Snyder's Bluff, Jackson, Baldwin's ferry, and the Warrenton roads were the four major thoroughfares that ran out of town; and each of these was heavily defended with forts, redans, redoubts, and batteries. The rebels guarded the half-way point between Snyder's Bluff and the Jackson roads with the formidable thirty-two pound rifle called "Crazy Jane" by the soldiers because of the insane noise it made when discharged. The rebels also planted twenty-four big guns along the riverfront, including a heavy Brooks gun dubbed "Whistling Dick." All of the forts, redans, redoubts, and batteries were situated on a high semi-circular ridge and the entire line was connected by a long zigzagging rifle pit.

The Federals dug their approaches in the hills parallel to this main ridge. Unable to take Vicksburg by storm, Grant's miners bored beneath the surface to reach the Confederate works. The enemy got close enough to the works to dig under them because Pemberton prohibited his men from firing on the Yankees as they toiled. Captain Lewis Guion explained, "The men lie low all day in the trenches & rarely return the fire, as we have orders to save ammunition, our artillery never opens fire except in the charges."¹ Major-General M. L. Smith confirmed that "the fire of the enemy was only occasionally replied to" because of "the limited amount of ammunition on hand." He added that

¹Guion, Record Book, May 23, 1863

“caution in this respect was pushed rather to an extreme, and that a little more firing would have proved beneficial.”² Pemberton’s goal was to limit the expenditure of ammunition, but he forced his troops to stand by helplessly as the enemy moved within thirty yards of them. Each day “they wondered whether the tunnel was yet complete, whether the barrels of powder had been placed beneath them, whether it was to be their fate or the fate of the next regiment to be whirled upward with tons of earth and torn limb from limb.”³ The Federals closed on them above ground as well and sharpshooters “who kept up an unceasing fusilade with the deadly Sharpe’s and Enfield rifles” filled each new trench. Union and Confederate reserves waited for the contest in deep ravines behind their armies.⁴

After May 23, Vicksburg was subject to a constant barrage of shells, fire from sharpshooters, and furious cannonading. It became the daily routine, and the Confederates cried, “Oh, for Johnston or night!” and prayed for the firing to cease. Lieutenant Sanders remarked on how much the soldiers suffered from being confined to their pits during the day. In order to get water, they had to run over a hill to a hollow under the fire of Federal sharpshooters. He said, “If enemy were to increase occasional shots at night we would be much worried by it, for we lay low in daytime, and scamper about at night.” The Twenty-sixth dubbed the regular evening fire its “dress parade.” Occasionally, the Federals broke the monotony with a charge. Sanders said, “The Yanks now & then amuse us with a charge when they get a good drubbing--much to our delight.”⁵

²*Official Records*, XXIV, 398

³General John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), 185

⁴Bevier, *The Missouri First and Second Missouri Confederate Brigades*, 197-199.

⁵Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 22-23

On May 27, the Confederate defenders awoke to hear firing in the direction of the Big Black. They raised their flags only to have the enemy shoot them full of holes. In fact, by this time, the Twenty-sixth's flag was shot to pieces. The Federals waved their own flag near the Confederate works to draw the rebels' fire and began to bombard the Twenty-sixth's position just before 9 A.M. Simultaneously, the *Cincinnati*, a Union ironclad, attempted to pass the upper batteries but was sunk. A few members of the Twenty-sixth got pieces of the ship's flag as souvenirs. There were even rumors that the hated Admiral David Porter went down with the ship.

Rumors of that sort abounded at Vicksburg. Each day there were reports that Robert E. Lee was whipping the Yankees in the North and that E. Kirby Smith was retaking Lafourche, Louisiana. The desperate and cornered Confederates discussed how Joe Johnston was organizing his forces and would soon rescue Vicksburg. On June 1, Captain Lewis Guion recorded, "the usual amount of rumour today, one that Price⁶ has captured Helena & that Johnston's advanced guard had a fight at Big Black."⁷

As the siege dragged on, the Confederates at Vicksburg had a good deal of time to ponder their fate. Each day seemed to grow more monotonous than the one before. In early June, one soldier wrote, "firing as usual & we bored as usual."⁸ With each passing day, Vicksburg's defenders grew more restless and exposed themselves at the cost of their lives. A private from Company F was torn apart by an eight inch shell, and it took a fatigue party to gather up all of his remains.⁹ On June 21, at 6:45 P.M., a Yankee shot the Twenty-sixth's major, Whitmel Martin, through the head. Lieutenant John Shaffer

⁶General Sterling Price commanded Missouri troops and was enormously popular in the Trans-Mississippi Department.

⁷Guion, *Diary*, May 27-29, June 1, 1863, Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 21-22

⁸Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 23.

⁹*Ibid.*, 25

wrote Martin's family, "We brought his body to town, dressed him, and buried him as nicely as circumstances would permit."¹⁰ Colonel Hall described the twenty-two-year old as "endowed with a fearless spirit, a cool head, a judgment rare, no better soldier ever stood behind the battlements of Vicksburg."¹¹ Lieutenant Sanders called Martin's death "the greatest loss our regiment could have met with in one man."¹²

Women and children were even more vulnerable than the troops, and many lay in the streets where they fell. According to a contemporary Chicago newspaper, 109 of them had been killed by mid-June. In truth, many of the deaths went unrecorded.¹³ At various times, the stench of decaying flesh became so unbearable that both sides called informal truces to bury the dead. Bodies burst as they were moved and Sanders lamented, "What an awful thing is war--how callous and heartless it makes us. We begin to see the dead and dying with almost no emotion, and we soon forget them--Oh! may God soon give us victory & peace!"¹⁴

Grant intended to give the rebels defeat. He planned to wear Vicksburg down, and as the siege wore on, his army began to bomb the city all night so that "there was not an hour in the twenty-four that the besieged felt safe in resting, and anything like sleep was out of the question."¹⁵ The Confederates lived in their trenches "exposed to burning suns, drenching rains, damp fogs, and heavy dews, and during all this period they never had, by day or by night, the slightest relief." In fact, they were "confined to the narrow

¹⁰Lieutenant John J Shaffer to Mrs R. C. Martin, June 22, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

¹¹Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 87-88

¹²Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 26.

¹³Guion, *Diary*, June 15, 1863

¹⁴Bevier, *The Missouri First and Second Confederate Brigades*, 206; Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 21; Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 83-85

¹⁵Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 27.

limits of trench, with their limbs cramped and swollen, without exercise, constantly exposed to a murderous storm of shot and shell,¹⁶ and although it was announced at the commencement of the siege that the army had stored away enough provision to last six months, as time passed food and supplies were nearly impossible to obtain. A barrel of flour cost four hundred dollars, so the cooks made bread from cow peas which were small beans traditionally used as animal feed. They were ground by a large mill in the city and supplemented the diet with a trailing weed known as purslane greens.¹⁷ As a rule, officers ate better than the men, and Captain Guion remarked, “the ration is small here but the men stand it like heroes.”¹⁸

As the siege wore on, even officers began to suffer from the lack of decent food. Guion sampled a piece of “tassoed”¹⁹ horse and swore he “would be willing to eat nothing but it a long time before giving up to the Yankees.”²⁰ Unable to consume the repulsive camp fare, Colonel Hall, who insisted that the privates of the regiment “successfully undertook a decrease in the rodent population,” sent a man to shoot a rat for him “imagining [he] could eat it broiled with relish.” According to Hall, at intervals during the siege the ration was reduced until it was insufficient to sustain life, and the men were forced to gather and cook weeds and grasses, cane roots, and tree buds.²¹

By late June, rations were so reduced that Pemberton’s soldiers angrily penned him a note which read, “Our rations have been cut down to one biscuit and a small bit of bacon

¹⁶Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, 2:415.

¹⁷Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 27, Bevier, *The Missouri First and Second Confederate Brigades*, 208-209

¹⁸Guion, *Diary*, June 12, 1863

¹⁹Tassoed pork is a highly seasoned and smoked meat common in Louisiana

²⁰Guion, *Diary*, July 4, 1863

²¹Bradley, *The Confederate Mail Carrier*, 135; Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 89-90.

per day, not enough scarcely to keep soul and body together, much less to stand the hardships we are called upon to stand.” They demanded he relieve their suffering saying, “If you can’t feed us, you had better surrender us, horrible as the idea is, than suffer this noble army to disgrace themselves by desertion, I tell you plainly, men are not going to lie here and perish, if they do love their country dearly You had better heed a warning voice, though it is the voice of a private soldier. The army is now ripe for a mutiny unless it can be fed.” The letter was signed “Many soldiers.”²²

Union troops sensed that they were wearing the Confederates down and because the opposing lines were so near one another, the enemy often taunted the starving rebels. The Federals yelled, “played out--played out” and “old Rebs are ye all dead yet?”²³ Lieutenant Sanders reported one evening a Yankee “hallowed over to us that we had a worthy general over us now. Our boys asked who it was and he replied, ‘General Starvation’.”²⁴ Even so, Lieutenant Sanders said of the Yankees, “they do not revile us as much as when they first appeared before us confident of driving us from our works at the first charge.”²⁵

Contact between the two armies was not always unpleasant and men passed notes, swapped knives and canteens, and held conversations. The parallels were often only a few feet apart and the soldiers exchanged news from the parapets and warned the opposition when they were ordered to fire with “Lie down, Rebs, we’re going to shoot, or, Squat, Yanks, we must commence firing again.”²⁶ One evening, a Missourian found some acquaintances across from his line and was invited to dinner with the enemy. After

²²*Official Records*, Vol. XXIV, Part 3, 982-983

²³Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 24

²⁴*Ibid.*, 29.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁶Bevier, *The Missouri First and Second Confederate Brigades*, 211

a feast with all “the delicacies and substantial,” conversation, and drinks he recrossed the lines and returned to his camp impressed with the northern hospitality he received.²⁷

Still, U. S. soldiers jeered that they would celebrate Independence Day in Vicksburg and when the Twenty-sixth heard the Federals singing hymns in their camp one of them protested bitterly, “What incongruity, an invading horde burning & devastating the land with unrelenting vigor at the same time having the sacred name of God upon their lips.”²⁸ On July 2, the Federals again taunted their starving enemy by spearing two loaves of bread on a pole in front of the Twenty-sixth’s line thus causing a loss of morale. Colonel Hall said of the siege, “Hell is empty and all the devils are here.”²⁹

There seemed to be no prospect of a relief force for the Confederates. Johnston was at Jackson, Mississippi, and although Richmond unrealistically expected him to rescue Vicksburg, he knew his forces were not strong enough to attack Grant’s great army. In fact, Johnston refused to undertake the expedition toward the city advocated by the Davis government saying, “This expedition was not undertaken in the wild spirit that dictated the dispatches from the War Department. I did not indulge in ‘the sentiment’ that it was better for me to waste the lives and blood of brave soldiers, ‘than, through prudence even,’ to spare them.”³⁰ He knew there was no hope of saving the place by lifting the siege and wrote Pemberton, “I am too weak to save Vicksburg.”³¹ Pemberton’s troops were shut up in the impregnable fortifications of Vicksburg and Grant also held a strong position with the Big Black River and its hills behind him. To rescue Pemberton by an

²⁷Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Louisiana Infantry*, 208

²⁸Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 26

²⁹Bradley, *The Confederate Mail Carrier*, 136; Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 24, 80-85, 87.

³⁰Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations during the Late War between the States*, 202-203.

³¹*Ibid*, 193

attack on Grant, Johnston would have to cross the river in the face of a vastly superior force and cut his way through the strongly fortified hills. One Confederate said that Pemberton's "little army of twenty-three thousand men was fully conscious of the great odds against them." It was backed up to the Mississippi River which was lined above and below the city with Union gunboats, preventing retreat, and an army five times its size waiting in front.³²

Although both sides expected something to occur on July 4, Grant declared that if Pemberton had not surrendered by the sixth, he intended to storm Vicksburg. About 10:00 on the morning of the third, white flags appeared on Union Major-General James B. McPherson's front, and the firing on that part of the line stopped. Three Confederates, led by General John Bowen, rode toward the Federal line, and U. S. General A. J. Smith moved out to meet them. Bowen bore a letter from Pemberton requesting terms for armistice to "save the further effusion of blood" and was adamant about speaking with Grant personally. Grant had been his neighbor in Missouri but still refused to see him and sent word that there would be no terms. His reply to Pemberton was terse: "the useless effusion of blood you propose stopping by this course can be ended at any time you may choose by an unconditional surrender of the city and garrison." While he did agree to meet Pemberton later that afternoon between the lines on McPherson's front, he sent word to Admiral Porter, whose gunboats patrolled the Mississippi, that if the rebels did not surrender he intended to "fire a national salute into the city at daylight."³³

Grant set the meeting for 3:00 P.M. and rode out of his lines with several other officers at the appointed time. His party dismounted under a large oak and waited for the

³²Bradley, *The Confederate Mail Carrier*, 106, 136.

³³Charles A. Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War: With the Leaders at Washington and in the Field in the Sixties* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1913), 95; Grant, *Memoirs and Selected Letters*, 374; John Y. Simon, ed. *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 458.

Confederates. Pemberton was twenty minutes late. Although he and Grant knew each other as young officers in the Mexican War, they did not shake hands until Pemberton's aide made the introduction. Their meeting was an awkward one in which the southern commander refused to play the defeated role. Pemberton was agitated and impatient, insisting that his army be paroled and allowed to march out of Federal lines, in formation, with its officers and their private property, including slaves. Grant refused to agree to any concessions. Pemberton was furious and asked why the Union general wanted to meet at all if he did not intend to compromise. He informed Grant that if he had no terms to propose other than were contained in his letter, the conference could terminate and hostilities be resumed immediately." Since their conversation was not going anywhere, Grant suggested that Bowen and Captain Montgomery, who accompanied Pemberton, should meet with his officers, Major-Generals McPherson and Smith to see if they could accomplish anything. While he and Pemberton continued their arduous discussion, the junior officers were to "retire for consultation, and suggest such terms as they might think proper for our consideration."³⁴ Pemberton and Grant conversed and Bowen and McPherson attempted to work out the details of the surrender. At the end of the difficult hour-and-a-half meeting, they all parted company. Grant assured Pemberton that he would send an ultimatum before 10:00 P.M. and Pemberton promised a timely response. Hostilities to cease in the meantime.

After consulting his staff, which prevailed upon him to moderate his position, Grant finally agreed to Pemberton's requests with some stipulations. He insisted that each man must sign his own parole, after which he would be marched out of Vicksburg to return home as a prisoner of war. Officers would be allowed side-arms and clothing, and mounted officers, one horse each. The men could take all of their clothing, but no other

³⁴*Official Records*, Vol XXIV, Part 1, 284.

property. These terms were far more palatable to the Confederates than the initial unconditional surrender, and besides none of them relished the idea of being transported to a northern prison. In truth, Grant was not so generous as he was concerned that his army would be weakened if it attempted to guard and transport so many prisoners. Paroling them was cheaper and meant that Union steamboats were free to move their own troops³⁵

The uneasy truce lasted all night, and during this time soldiers climbed on top of the works and some visited with each other. The Confederates, suspicious of the cease fire, whispered that Pemberton might be surrendering them. Captain Guion of the Twenty-sixth swore he would rather suffer the effects of the siege than give in to the Yankees. Though he remained adamant, he knew his superiors were working on some sort of compromise. He said, "I had somewhat the same feeling I had when in New Orleans. I knew it would be taken."³⁶ It was a strangely quiet night, and even though both sides were ordered not to fire without further orders, some resumed combat that night "with renewed vigor." Confederates, especially along the river front, poured firepower on the enemy's batteries until the whole bottom was smoking. An observer remarked that "you could see brass flying in the air for half an hour after the firing was over."³⁷

Many of the Twenty-sixth awoke with dread in their hearts on the clear and warm morning of the fourth. They could see Yankees on the parapets "basking in the Sunshine & the thought of taking the place they most desired." The Federals fired a salute between 6:00 and 7:00 A.M.³⁸ Lieutenant Sanders prayed, "God grant that we be not surrendered

³⁵Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 469; Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War*, 97-100.

³⁶Guion, *Diary*, July 3, 1863.

³⁷Bradley, *The Confederate Mail Carrier*, 137

³⁸Guion, *Diary*, July 4, 1863

on this day.”³⁹ About two-and-a-half hours later, General Smith sent out an order advising his troops of the surrender. The men were to march out of the entrenchments and stack arms and colors and then join their officers in the barracks to await paroling.

On the symbolic day of July 4, 1863, Pemberton surrendered one of the largest rebel forces in the field, and Southerners screamed that they had been sold to the Yankees by the Northern-born general. Pemberton said he did not agree to make terms because his men were starving or because he could not hold out a little longer. In fact, he insisted he conceded because his men were outnumbered and fatigued, and each day their defenses crumbled under their feet. He swore the date was selected because he knew the Federals “would attach vast importance to the entrance on July 4 into the stronghold of the great river, and that to gratify their national vanity they would yield then what could not be extorted from them at any other time.”⁴⁰ Sanders exclaimed that the traitorous Pemberton should be stricken from the army’s rolls. He remarked bitterly, “such is a soldier’s life--his friends & comrades fall & bleed in defense of some spot which in time is lost by some incompetency among their commanders.”⁴¹

The Twenty-sixth’s immediate commander, General S. D. Lee, notified Pemberton he would not surrender, but the regiment still evacuated its trenches at 10:30 A.M. with the rest of the defenders and stacked arms outside of the works. The Yankees cheered a little, and a few defiant Confederates broke their Enfields rather than present them to the enemy. Union parties removed their opponent’s flags from the ramparts and replaced them with the stars and stripes. An hour later, the Twenty-sixth marched to its barracks in town where Lieutenant Sanders charged that Federal soldiers entered his room and

³⁹Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 29-30.

⁴⁰*Official Records*, Vol. XXIV, Part 1, 285; Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, 2:416.

⁴¹Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 30.

“stole” his pistol and another soldier’s hat. The rebels watched helplessly as Union gunboats moved in front of the city, and “brigades of the enemy marched in under the flags and to foreign music.” Sanders moaned, “Oh, my heart sickens at the sight.”⁴² The entire regiment was taken prisoner, and its colonel “wept like a sick girl to think that the Twenty-sixth with its calm and constant courage, and its heroic endurance was compelled to succumb.” A major from Missouri burst into tears as he followed his men back to their lines after surrendering the regiment’s colors and weapons. Lincoln’s Assistant Secretary of War, Charles Dana, who rode into Vicksburg at Grant’s side, remarked that most of the enlisted men appeared happy to surrender while their officers looked as if they had been crying all night.⁴³

To make matters worse for Southern officers at Vicksburg, the enemy put many of their slaves to work for the U.S. Army. Originally, slaves were to appear without their masters before the Union provost marshal who would inform them of their freedom and ascertain whether they wished to remain with their owners. Those who did, would be issued passes and allowed to follow their paroled masters out of the city. That system proved ineffective, and it was not long before General McPherson accused Whites of coercing Blacks to accompany them out of Vicksburg and withdrew this privilege. He changed the order so that only families and sick and disabled officers could retain their slaves. Many Southerners, like the Twenty-sixth’s Captain Guion, insisted that McPherson’s concern for the captured slaves at Vicksburg was purely selfish. He said that despite McPherson’s “flimsy excuses,” the general was primarily concerned with recruiting for the Union’s black regiments. Guion said that once their masters departed Vicksburg the former slaves would be without “anything to eat and they will be forced to

⁴²Ibid., 29-30

⁴³Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 91, Shoup, *Confederate Veteran*, VII, 174, Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War*, 100.

join the negro Regts. in self defense."⁴⁴ He even accused the Federals of going into private homes to "take from there negroes."⁴⁵ Lieutenant Sanders complained that the Yankees were only in town a few hours before they began "stealing private property" and forming "negro companies." By 4:00 P.M., Sanders and his cousin, Captain Bateman, "saw negroes standing up in two ranks and Yankees taking down their names" and both agreed that the Blacks and their white commanders were "all equally mean looking." Sanders's slave, Oliver, departed that same day on a Union steamer while Captain Bateman's servant remained. Eventually, the Federals pulled all slaves out of Confederate ranks, and one Louisianan remarked that "the parting between them at the lines often exhibited very affecting scenes"⁴⁶ while another said he met his slave on the streets and "he did not evence [sic] a willingness to return to me."⁴⁷

The day after the surrender, Union medics entered the city to help care for sick and wounded rebels, and Grant issued the starving Confederates five days' rations from the Federal Commissary. Sanders recorded in his diary, "Had chicken, oysters & sardines tonight--quite a rarity." For the first time in many months, the Twenty-sixth enjoyed bacon, hominy, coffee, sugar, bread, salt, candles, and soap. Its spirit rose somewhat on account of this relief, and many of its men conversed with the Yankees who mingled with them, eager to see for themselves the effects of Grant's siege. They told the Twenty-sixth's Captain Guion that arrangements had been made for a general attack on the fourth had the rebels not succumbed. Guion said, "the Yankees seemed very much surprised that we had so few guns (26) on the river front."⁴⁸ They discussed the war,

⁴⁴Guion, Diary, July 8, 1863

⁴⁵Ibid, July 5, 1863.

⁴⁶Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 29-30; Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 243

⁴⁷Guion, Diary, July 7, 1863.

⁴⁸Guion, Diary, July 5, 1863

events of the siege, and the possibility of parole. The conquerors “were unusually kind” and “were horrified at the fact of the men eating mules and rats, and openly expressed their admiration for the unfaltering bravery of the Confederates.” Even Sanders conceded that the Federals treated them well but added that they would not sell them anything.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 30; Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 244

CHAPTER 5

PAROLE AND RED RIVER

Grant completed Vicksburg's occupation by July 7, and his officers began the arduous task of paroling the rebels. The requisite documents were signed in duplicate (both armies got a copy) and each soldier received his own signed copy. Pemberton surrendered 29,491 men, but 709 of them refused to sign paroles. Ten or twelve of the men who declined were from Captain Bateman's company and those who remained steadfast were taken prisoner and sent North. Those who did sign, were paroled after they stood up with their company and, with right hands raised, swore to the terms and articles stated. The Federals completed the paperwork four days later and moved those Confederates healthy enough to walk out to the road leading to Jackson without retaining their military order. There they searched the prisoners for weapons and released them to their officers.

The rebels called roll but only a very few remained to march out of Vicksburg with their commands. Thousands got their paroles and, contrary to the terms of surrender, convinced Yankees to ferry them across the Mississippi to begin the journey home. Eventually Pemberton heard of the "free ferry business running night and day across the river" and complained to General Grant that it was a violation of the terms of surrender. In fact, it was Grant's policy to disorganize and scatter all enemy forces in order to reduce the chances of their reunion. By the time the surrender and parole was complete at Vicksburg, the Confederate army was so diminished that one Union soldier said that "it was laughable to be on the picket posts on the Jackson and Baldwin's ferry roads when they [Pemberton's army] marched out."¹

¹Brown, *History of the Fourth Regiment of Minnesota Volunteers*, 248

Many curious Yankees crowded the stretch out of town to watch the departure of Vicksburg's stubborn defenders. Although they were anxious to take a last glance at the ragged prisoners who fought them so desperately, they did not cheer. As the rebels passed out of the works, they encountered a detachment of Federals filling up the approaches they had dug toward the Confederate entrenchments. The humiliation was too much for a private from Louisiana and he shouted, "Oh, yes, shovel dirt, d - - n you. It is all you are good for. You can do that better than fighting." The Yankee reply stung to the quick: "Dry up, you rebels have grown wonderful sassy on Uncle Sam's grub."²

The Twenty-sixth got outside of the city and its works at six o'clock that evening and advanced three miles in the scorching heat before bivouacking for the night. It was up and moving through war-torn Mississippi by 4:00 the next morning. Although weak from the deplorable conditions at Vicksburg, the men still managed to march fifteen miles that day. Lieutenant Sanders grumbled, "We are marching too far in one day as our men are feeble from effects of the siege." One afternoon, as the remnants of the regiment halted to rest near a familiar home, now in ruins, Sanders stretched out near its crumbling walls. It seemed strangely quiet there after the constant explosions and screaming shells of Vicksburg, and the young lieutenant recalled his last visit to the house. He mused, "I met a crowd of happy girls at a wedding party. General Green of _____ was there, who now lies at Vicksburg--killed during the awful siege."³

The paroled Twenty-sixth was ordered to march from Vicksburg to Enterprise, Mississippi to be furloughed there. Only thirty-seven of the regiment that numbered nearly eight hundred in the fall intended to move to Enterprise, however. Most of the soldiers, demoralized and weary from the siege, dropped out of the main body and

²Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 246.

³Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 30-31.

formed small squads that left for Louisiana without going to parole camp. Captain Guion noted the demoralized state of the men *and* their officers many of whom, “say they will not go into camp but will go home, that they have been badly treated by the Confederacy & that the CS states is lost.”⁴ Even so, Pemberton rode in advance of his troops and tried to prevent them from leaving the ranks. His efforts were useless as “they were determined to see their homes and relatives. Expostulations, threats and commands were words wasted, and a child might as well have endeavored to move a mountain with its puny arm, as for any officer to change their fixed purpose.”⁵

Those that remained in the lines were not organized by company, regiment, or brigade as they stumbled with blistered feet toward their destination. After so many days of inactivity in the trenches, they were unaccustomed to marching. One young Confederate hiked till noon and died four hours later. It was “common to see the dead & sick laying in the woods and on the road side.” Along the way, they received word of the surrender of Port Hudson, and as the unarmed wanderers neared Brandon, Mississippi, they met General Johnston’s wagon trains and heard the roar of artillery as his routed forces attempted to ward off Grant’s Federals at Jackson. Soon after, Johnston evacuated Jackson and turned Pemberton’s troops off the Brandon road as he could not have Vicksburg’s defenders blocking his evacuation route.⁶ All about them reeked of defeat as the disorganized, demoralized Twenty-sixth limped back to rebel lines; and many dropped out of the ranks each day.

On July 22, the weary rebels who remained with the army finally reached Enterprise where they were immediately given thirty-day furloughs. At that time, they were told that when their leave was up, all members of companies raised east of the Mississippi

⁴Guion, *Diary*, Sunday, July 5, 1863.

⁵Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 246

⁶Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 29, 31.

River were expected to report to Demopolis, Alabama while those in companies formed on the west bank should rendezvous at Alexandria, Louisiana and then march to Demopolis or any other point designated by the Secretary of War. Most of the Twenty-sixth intended to spend their time off in Louisiana and departed for home two days later. "The men who had fought so long and bravely, and who had suffered so severely, felt, after their capture and paroling, as if they were not only exempt from all military duty, but privileged to go where they pleased, and do as they pleased, until exchanged." Thus, the remains of Vicksburg's defending army melted away.⁷

Many of the Twenty-sixth returned home to occupied Louisiana after the agonizing surrender to find their parishes much changed by war. Although delighted to be home, Sanders noted, "the beautiful country along the Bayou Teche, dwellings, negro cabins, sugar houses, present a spectacle of ruin and desolation that makes one's heart sick to behold." The Federal army burned many of the homes and sugar mills of the planters especially those in Confederate service, and their charred skeletons lined the roads. Some Louisiana planters fled to East Texas with their slaves, and federal agents worked their abandoned places. On these plantations, Lincoln's government gave bonds for the protection of the property, paid Blacks for their work, and collected one-fifth of the cotton and one-tenth of the sugar raised. Sanders's family paid black men ten dollars, and black women half of that, for a month's labor. Former slaves now clothed themselves and paid for rations when they missed work.⁸ Sanders complained bitterly of a young girl hired on his plantation who announced black callers as "ladies and gentlemen" and Whites as a "man or woman." He grumbled about the new habits of black children who "call their mother 'Ma' & say to a white child 'Your Mammy and Dady [sic].'" Sanders was irritated to find that "negroes go and come at their pleasure

⁷Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 248-249.

⁸Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 46.

and are very trifling.”⁹ Even worse, black soldiers were posted in his hometown of Brashear City.¹⁰ He remarked, “how humiliating to Southerners for their wives, sisters, mothers to have to pass their own slaves on guard and to show their passes to slaves.”¹¹ Despite his rage, Sanders knew that “one must be careful how they treat free negroes inside of enemy lines.”¹²

The hated bluecoats were everywhere, and to Sanders’s dismay, Federal soldiers constantly intruded upon his plantation “through impudent curiosity to see who lives here.”¹³ Paroled rebel soldiers were forbidden to move about the area without permits and ordered to report weekly to the provost-marshal. Jared Sanders described Provost Marshall Albert Stearns of the 131 New York Volunteers as an ex-detective “and as insolent scoundrel as was ever sent South to tyrannize over Southern people.”¹⁴ Federal guards were posted at the homes of disloyal citizens and ordered not to let paroled Confederate officers like Sanders and Bateman “out of their sight for two hours.”¹⁵

Near the end of August, the majority of the Twenty-sixth’s furloughs expired but few of the men reported to parole camp at Demopolis in obedience to published orders. Some officers, anxious to keep their commands after the reorganization, did report, however.¹⁶ A parole camp adjutant explained: “The men and officers with few

⁹Ibid., 47.

¹⁰Now known as Morgan City, Brashear was a small town located at the confluence of the Atchafalaya River, Bayou Boeuf, and Berwick Bay, directly across from Captain Bateman’s home on Bateman Island

¹¹Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 54

¹²Ibid., 49

¹³Ibid

¹⁴Ibid , 46

¹⁵Ibid., 55

¹⁶James Martin (at Alexandria Parole Camp) to General Robert C Martin (father), November 3, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection, James Martin (at Alexandria Parole Camp) to General Robert Martin (father), November 12, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

exceptions have acted very badly since being captured at Vicksburg, and it is probably owing to the influence of the examples of company officers that the men have or did go off without leave."¹⁷ In truth, there was not much being done at parole camp or towards the process of exchange and many of the Twenty-sixth had been away from home for over a year and felt the need to see to families suffering the ravages of war in occupied Louisiana.¹⁸

According to Winchester Hall, many of the men only needed a few weeks recuperation and were willing to return to parole camp afterwards; however, local military authorities forbid their crossing enemy lines for any reason. On August 27, Colonel Hall and Captain Shaffer (Co. F) journeyed to New Orleans to meet with General Nathaniel Banks and obtain a permit for the regiment to pass Federal pickets into Confederate lines. Banks denied the request and though Hall and Shaffer returned home they remained determined to get back to Dixie. They met with several other of the Twenty-sixth's officers and decided to leave secretly in small squads.

The first group left under cover of night from Captain Lovincey Webre's (Company I) home in Lafourche parish on horses stolen from a local planter known to be a Union sympathizer. Colonel Hall, guided their arrangements and departure and afterwards remained at Captain Webre's place for the night. At midnight, four armed Federal officers beat on the door and demanded admittance. Mrs. Webre reluctantly allowed them to enter whereupon they informed her that they knew a rebel meeting was taking place at the residence. Despite her protestations, they searched the premises and though

¹⁷James Martin (at Alexandria Parole Camp) to General Robert C. Martin (father), November 18, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

¹⁸James Martin (at Alexandria Parole Camp) to General Robert C. Martin (father), November 12, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

they discovered nothing, they arrested Hall, still on crutches from the wound he received at Vicksburg.

Four officers and twenty cavalry escorted the lame colonel to the headquarters of the commandant of the district. The ranking officer interrogated Hall but released him for lack of evidence. The successful escape of the first squad of paroled Confederates, set the precedent for others who determined to also leave enemy lines covertly and rejoin their units. After all, they knew the swamps through which they must escape like the backs of their hands and also knew which neighbors to avoid and which would aid in their escape.¹⁹

The Confederacy desperately needed every man though few of its soldiers were reporting as ordered to Enterprise. Apparently, the commanders of the paroled troops, General John Forney and General W. J. Hardee, disagreed over what was to be done with the parolees. Forney blocked their immediate return to Louisiana, and those who dealt with him expected to “be detained here for some time yet--‘dancing attendance’ upon their generalships.”²⁰ General Hardee, on the other hand, advised Jared Sanders to make written application to Confederate headquarters so that he could go to Louisiana and collect his men. Permission was eventually granted by Hardee and Sanders, and other officers left for Louisiana to report to their colonels and round up as many men as possible and get them to camp. Nearly six weeks later, Sanders, still at his cousin’s home near Alexandria, met Colonel Crow, promoted after Hall was wounded, who ordered him to St. Mary at once to collect the rest of the regiment.²¹

Sanders traveled back roads, prairies, and bayous to get home. Not far from his native parish, he was mistaken for a Yankee because of the blue pants he wore and held

¹⁹Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 102-105

²⁰Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 37-38.

²¹*Ibid.*, 37-39, 44

prisoner by a couple of rebels till he proved his identity. When Sanders finally reached home, he found that few of the Twenty-sixth were ready to report for duty. Some of the men had taken the oath of allegiance, others were reluctant to go into camp when exchange seemed improbable. Besides, the occupying Federal troops knew and watched the homes of those who served the Confederate States of America. All were forbidden to go outside Federal lines without written permission, and those who disobeyed were dealt with very severely.²²

In October of 1863, Colonel Crow was authorized to establish a parole camp near Alexandria, at Pineville, and he chose a deserted plantation two-and-a-half miles above town for the purpose.²³ There the Twenty-sixth was to rendezvous with the Twenty-eighth Louisiana, but only a small number from both regiments showed up. Most of those given furloughs after the surrender did not report when their leave expired. They saw no point in remaining in camp when even the enlisted men knew that “not the first preliminary for our exchange has been made.”²⁴ Others who had taken the oath stayed at home in their occupied parishes to care for their families and farms. Even those who did go to parole camp were disgruntled by the fact that they were not permitted any leave and threatened to depart anyway. A young lieutenant who would have been home himself but for protecting his commission, grumbled, “there is little being done here as but comparatively few of the paroled troops have reported.”²⁵ His brother, also in the Twenty-sixth, wrote, “I suppose that we will have to remain here some time as at present

²²Ibid., 47-48.

²³Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 275.

²⁴James Martin to General Robert C Martin (father), November 12, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

²⁵James Martin (at Alexandria Parole Camp) to General Robert C Martin (father), November 8, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection, James Martin to General Robert C Martin (father), November 3, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

no permits to leave are given. Perhaps when it is seen that our men will not come out that we will be permitted to remain at home until exchanged & until we are put on duty somewhere.” In the meantime, the Twenty-sixth’s officers were ordered to remain in camp and occupy themselves with combing the neighboring parishes for those who had not yet reported.²⁶

A month later, only a few more paroled troops reported to Alexandria. Although an adjutant at parole headquarters blamed the lack of numbers at Alexandria on the poor examples set by company officers who he accused of frequently going off without leave, it was difficult for the men to leave the occupied parishes of Louisiana in order to report for duty.²⁷ Those that managed to get through the Federal lines to the Twenty-sixth’s camp explained that anyone caught leaving the lines without authorization was imprisoned. Major Cleophas Lagarde said, “others can not report as the Yankees have caught those who attempted to come out & imprisoned them.” Even Colonel Hall spent a night in jail for helping some of his men to leave the lines.²⁸

Despite the efforts of local Union officials to keep paroled Confederates within their lines, Captain Mannah Bateman fled occupied Brashear near the end of January, 1864. His cousin, Jared Sanders, reported that “the Yankees [were] much exercised about Captain Bateman’s leaving and sent gunboats and a transport with a regiment after him.” Several days later, the infuriated Federals posted a notice on Sanders’s front gate which read, “If any person’s boat is used to convey rebels outside of the lines, such person shall be held responsible.”²⁹

²⁶Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, February 7, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

²⁷James B. Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father) from Headquarters Camp of Reorganization at Alexandria, November 18, 1863, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

²⁸Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, January 9, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

²⁹Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 52-53

In defiance of the occupying army's orders, Sanders and Sergeant Farley O'Brien made hasty preparations to leave enemy lines two weeks after Bateman's escape. They knew they were also under close observation and must "be very secret about this running out." Sanders bought a small boat in a neighbor's name for eight dollars, and his sisters carried his baggage to O'Brien's plantation, behind Lake Palourde, the starting point of their escape. Getting their skiff through the swamp to the lake proved difficult, but when they finally paddled out of Palourde and into Grand Lake, they laughed to think "how glad would the minions of old Abe have been if they had only known our occupation that evening in a swamp about two miles from their camps."³⁰

Finally, near the end of April, the Confederacy made positive steps toward reorganizing the Twenty-sixth. One member of the regiment wrote his father, "General Thomas is ordered to assemble his brigade immediately for active field service before the 3d of May. The 26, 27, & 28, will most probably be merged into one command."³¹ Shortly after, the Twenty-sixth was ordered to gather at Natchitoches and report to its new brigade commander, General Allen Thomas, as soon as it was safe. Three of its officers, Major Cleophas Lagarde, Lieutenant Louis Alexandre Bossier, Captain Octave Metoyer, and Lieutenant Alexis Lemee established a parole camp called Salubrity, just outside of Natchitoches at Grand Ecore, Louisiana.³² Upon their arrival to Camp Salubrity, Lieutenant Robert Martin complained that no preparations had been made for them, "As usual we are ordered here with our men & no provision has been made to receive us. No men at all have been reported as yet and I think that none will report."³³

³⁰Ibid , 52-55

³¹James Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father), April 25, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

³²Grand Ecore is just north of Natchitoches, Louisiana.

³³Robert Martin, Jr to General Robert C Martin (father), from Natchitoches, May 6, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

Though Bossier and Metoyer foraged for cooking utensils and other necessities in abandoned slave quarters near the Cane River (about ten miles from camp), rations were scarce.³⁴ Men and officers alike drew three-eighths of a pound of bacon and one-and-a-half pounds of corn meal a day.

Even though all of the Twenty-sixth was ordered to Natchitoches, numbers in camp remained extremely low. It was easier to persuade the regiment's officers, interested in maintaining their commissions, to report and remain in camp until the reorganization. One of the Twenty-sixth's officers wrote his father, "as in event of our not getting our Company out, we would not be permitted to remain in service as officers, without an available command."³⁵ Officers knew that as soon as the regiment was consolidated they would be examined to determine rank and so their presence in camp was mandatory. On the other hand, Louisiana's non-commissioned parolees saw no immediate possibility of exchange, and many refused to report when they were desperately needed at home. A discouraged lieutenant described the situation: "Our regiment is assembling very slowly & I doubt if it ever comes together again as a regiment."³⁶ Even though officers left on routine trips to their home parishes to round up their men, it was difficult to get them to stay in camp. One of them said, "I do not think our paroled men will ever be made to go into camp until they are exchanged & I do not blame them in the least for not doing so. I wish that I was as certain to have nothing done to me as they are. If I was I should certainly remain with my family until I was exchanged."³⁷

³⁴Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 123-124

³⁵James Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father) from Alexandria, June 12, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

³⁶Robert Martin, Jr. to General Robert C. Martin (father), February 8, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

³⁷Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, May 6, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection; Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, May 14, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

Nevertheless, every member of the Twenty-sixth was expected to be in camp. In June, the regiment was ordered to move its camp to Pineville, across the Red River from Alexandria, Louisiana. Confederate officials concentrated available troops there in hopes that they might be able to prevent the Federal invasion of Texas by way of the Red River Valley. An adjutant wrote from Grand Ecore, "I reached here on Sunday evening & am returning to Alexandria by the first boat. The whole brigade is ordered to concentrate at Alex'r by Genl. Taylor."³⁸

Following General Richard Taylor's orders, a few more men showed up to the Pineville camp, but the numbers remained quite low; and many of those who reported came and left as they saw fit. A year after the regiment's capture at Vicksburg, one of its officers informed his family that he still did not have enough soldiers to form a company because so many of his men took the oath of allegiance. From Pineville he wrote, "most of the regiment has left--only 61 left in camp. Many believe they will never get exchanged."³⁹ Besides, the Yankees were evacuating their home parishes, and all knew they "intend[ed] destroying as they go." Families and businesses needed help to save what was left of their property, so many Louisianans took the oath and remained where they were.⁴⁰

Finally, in June of 1864, the Twenty-sixth's officers began to be exchanged. One wrote his wife, "Even if we are exchanged we will have to remain idle until our commands are exchanged."⁴¹ Despite strict orders published by General John Walker in the New Orleans *Democrat* with regard to Louisiana's parolees, officers still could not

³⁸James Martin to Lt. Robert Martin, from Grand Ecore, June 2, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

³⁹Robert Martin, Jr to Thomas Martin, July 25, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection, Robert Martin, Jr to Maggie Martin, July 2, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

⁴⁰Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, July 18, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁴¹Robert Martin, Jr to Maggie Martin, June 30, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

30, the Twenty-sixth had twenty-three officers and sixty-one enlisted men at Alexandria. A couple of days later, Lieutenant Robert Martin grumbled, "Our men have nearly all gone. Seventy-odd left in two days."⁴² When Lieutenant Martin called rolled for his company and another at the end of July, he counted two sergeants and three privates. He knew the reason: "Most of the men of my company have taken the oath of allegiance. Only about twelve who did not do so."⁴³

Those who did report found camp life extremely dull. A parolee from the Twenty-sixth said, "nothing is being done & it is very unpleasant in camp I assure you."⁴⁴ There were incessant rumors of great Confederate victories and even of Lincoln's and Grant's deaths. Lieutenant Martin wondered, "What we would do in camp without something of the kind to keep our spirits from flagging I do not know."⁴⁵

Finally, in late August, the regiment was completely exchanged. Special Orders No. 56 issued by General Edmund Kirby Smith, commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, stated that all officers and men captured at Vicksburg who reported at camp any time prior to April 1, 1864, were exchanged and should report immediately to their commands in the field. After Smith's announcement, more men joined the Twenty-sixth in camp and were "generally pretty well armed, but very poor [sic] supplied & clothed."⁴⁶ They were expected to dress out, drill, and guard prisoners even though the Confederacy did not have the money to pay them on a regular basis. Many deserted. One officer wrote his father, ". . . two men from our Batt., one after two from my comp'y were shot

⁴²Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, July 2, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁴³Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, July 23, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁴⁴Robert Martin, Jr. to Thomas Martin, July 25, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁴⁵Robert Martin, Jr. to Maggie Martin, July 10, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

⁴⁶James Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father) from camp near Alexandria, November 6, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

for desertion. Several men are to be shot shortly. Without the severest penalties for desertions are enforced [sic] will be but few men left in our command."⁴⁷

Nevertheless, in November, General Thomas's brigade numbered 2,727. The Twenty-sixth and Twenty-eighth Louisiana, under Thomas, were ordered thirty miles south of Alexandria to meet a reported Federal advance at Evergreen. Upon their arrival they found no sign of the enemy and General De Bray, commander of the picket forces, told the men that the Yankees must have heard of the Twenty-sixth's record at Chickasaw Bayou and were afraid to fight the regiment that "had whipped and routed Sherman." He continued, "I wanted to say something to you about your record at the siege of Vicksburg, but am afraid you will cheer so loud the Yankees might come to see what's the matter." The Federals did not go to Evergreen as expected and the regiment returned to Alexandria to construct winter quarters just outside of town.⁴⁸

Finally, the Twenty-sixth was exchanged and in the process of reorganization, but unfortunately the character of the Trans-Mississippi Department had changed since the surrender at Vicksburg. One Louisiana soldier said, "I have been told that the army in the Trans-Miss Dept is nothing more than an armed mob, & consequently act as they please, go home and return at their leisure & conduct depredations through the country which equal in many instances the atrocities practiced by the Yankees."⁴⁹ Some of the Twenty-sixth's men were unhappy with the reorganization, and at least two officers applied for transfer. Lieutenant Martin, who requested an assignment to the Ordinance Department, commented, "Our regiment is far from being as pleasant as it formerly

⁴⁷James Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father) from camp near Alexandria, November 6, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

⁴⁸Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 123-124

⁴⁹J. B. Littlejohn to Maggie Littlejohn Martin, April 3, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

was.”⁵⁰ Captain Guion also applied several times to be relieved from General Thomas’ staff.⁵¹

To make matters worse, the Twenty-sixth still had not received any pay since the exchange. Even an adjutant in Thomas’s brigade could get no compensation and lamented, “I do not know what I shall do if we are not soon paid as I am much in need of clothing & have not the money to buy it from the Government.”⁵² Another soldier tried to make light of the situation, “If I do not get something in a short time to make me some pants I will have to either stay at home or travel under flag of truce wherever I go.”⁵³

In January of 1865, the regiment was formally reorganized, and the Twenty-sixth joined the Louisiana Brigade of the Trans-Mississippi Department under Brigadier General Thomas, at Pineville. The men quickly constructed pine cabins with chimneys in order to brave the severe winter. Lieutenant Sanders wrote his sweetheart from camp, “I am returning to the 26th Infantry--and find myself this evening sitting in a neat little log cabin which is among a thousand built like a little city, for our winter quarters. They all look so neat, with their white faces turned up toward Heaven as if imploring God’s mercy upon their inmates.”⁵⁴

The weather had no mercy on the Twenty-sixth, and unusually cold weather froze the ground for the first ten days of the year. Through it all, the Confederates suffered but continued to drill, march in dress parades, and work on nearby Forts Buhlow and

⁵⁰Robert Martin, Jr. to General Robert C. Martin (father), November 9, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

⁵¹James Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father), November 6, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection

⁵²James Martin to General Robert C. Martin (father), November 24, 1864, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁵³William G. Thomas Littlejohn to “My dear Joe”, No date, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁵⁴Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 83

Randolph.⁵⁵ Morale in the Trans-Mississippi, however, remained low, and most verifiable information was unhappy news for the rebels. A private from north Louisiana stationed near Alexandria wrote his wife of the demoralization of the department. Companies held nightly prayer meetings. He explained, “the boys is praying . . . in camps and wee see them nelt don all about the woods praying for pease.”⁵⁶ February brought endless rumors of peace. Sanders said, “Everyone seems crazy about the late peace movements.” The men, bored with camp life and impatient to get home, could speak of nothing but an end to the war. Lieutenant Sanders added that “Madam Rumor is becoming more respectable than she is wont to be.”

On the eighth, though its winter quarters were not yet complete, the Twenty-sixth was ordered to make camp at Bayou Cotile, twenty miles north of Alexandria. Even though the men complained of the monotony in the camp, they hated to leave their relatively comfortable surroundings at Pineville. Sanders consoled himself with the thought that such was a soldier’s life and was up and moving out with the rest by 7:00 the following morning. The Twenty-sixth caught a steamboat at Pineville and bivouacked for several days on the banks of the Red River, about two miles from Henderson’s Hills, where Nathaniel Banks’s Army of the Gulf captured the 2nd Louisiana Cavalry nearly a year before. Finally the regiment reached Bayou Cotile and began to set up camp.

The weather was bitterly cold and wet, and the men felled some of the north Louisiana pine that surrounded them and constructed cabins about a mile from the river. Although he had not wanted to leave Pineville, Sanders later admitted that he preferred Camp Cotile. For one thing, the troops received better food and clothing there. He confided in his journal, “The move up here which we considered an outrage, is best for

⁵⁵Official Records, XLIX, Part 1, 605; Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 125.

⁵⁶John A. Cawton, ed., “Letters of a North Louisiana Private to His Wife, 1862-1865,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXX (March, 1944). 544-545.

us, as we have no duties now but those of drill & of camp.” Noncommissioned soldiers also guarded prisoners.⁵⁷

April followed an uneventful February and March, and Hall, wounded at Vicksburg, returned to assume command of the Twenty-sixth. Unpopular among his men, Hall’s restoration to the regiment meant that all those promoted in his absence were returned to their former rank. Hall, who had gone all the way to Richmond to meet with Davis and request reinstatement, arrived in Alexandria to see General Thomas on April 4. When he handed Thomas the order from the War Department, reassigning him to duty as colonel of the Twenty-sixth, the brigade commander informed him he could not comply as the proper promotions had been made in Hall’s absence. An infuriated Hall stormed off to Kirby Smith’s Trans-Mississippi headquarters in Shreveport to protest the fact that Thomas refused to reassign him to duty. He insisted that the regimental promotions had not been confirmed by the Secretary of War and persuaded officers there to assist him in getting his position back. Hall’s application was forwarded to General Simon B. Buckner, Commander of the Department of West Louisiana, at his headquarters in Natchitoches where it was approved and he was reinstated. Sanders said of his efforts, “Heard Col. Winchester Hall has painted his face red & is again on the war path.”⁵⁸

At this point, the South was damaged beyond repair. On April 9, 1865, Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses Grant at Appomattox Court House. The Twenty-sixth heard the awful news ten days later. Staff officers read a general order from Kirby Smith to the troops wherein he related the South’s recent reversals and appealed to the men of the Trans-Mississippi to “sustain the holy cause which has been so gloriously battled for by your brethren east of the Mississippi.” He assured his soldiers that they possessed the means for continued resistance and urged them to stand by their

⁵⁷Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 85-89

⁵⁸Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 125-126; Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 86, 89

colors and maintain discipline as the fate of the Confederacy depended on them.⁵⁹ The men were stunned and “curses deep and bitter fell from lips not accustomed to use such language, while numbers, both officers and men, swore fearful oaths never to surrender.”⁶⁰ Another observer noted that, despite Smith’s words of encouragement, “the Army of the Trans-Mississippi was in spirit crushed.”⁶¹

In addition to the emotional crisis, Lee’s surrender left the Trans-Mississippi’s commanding officers in an awkward position militarily. Since the Federals had cut the department’s lines of communication to the rest of the Confederacy, the only information it received was brought by couriers. Though these messengers conveyed information as best they could, officers were frequently unsure of their orders. Some in the regiment wanted to disband immediately. Hall said, “rank and file, hardly less intelligent than the officers, perceived they could not further serve the cause, and were anxious to return to their families and homes.” Desertions became common, and those who left often took regimental supplies with them. According to Hall, who officially returned to the regiment as colonel on April 20, certain “turbulent spirits” thought that military supplies and stores “belonged to the first who could seize them.” Each squad of deserters left the brigade with “less means to keep together, or to make a lengthy march.”⁶² One officer commended the men “for one generous trait. Not a private horse was taken, nor a trunk or anything that was not government property was disturbed.”⁶³ Even so, chaos reigned,

⁵⁹*Official Records*, XLVIII, Part 2, 1284.

⁶⁰Tunnard, *The History of the Thrd Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 300.

⁶¹*Official Records*, XLVIII, Part 2, 400.

⁶²Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 133-135.

⁶³Silas T. Grisamore, *The Civil War Reminiscences of Major Silas T. Grisamore, C. S. A.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 182.

and it became dangerous for even General Smith or his staff to walk the streets after dark.⁶⁴

The South seemed to be falling apart, and fear and suspicion were rampant throughout the Trans-Mississippi. An officer expressed his distrust of the soldiers at Forts Randolph and Buhlow: "I think the temper of the greater part of the troops of the garrisons is such as to forbid the belief that they can be relied on."⁶⁵ One of Hall's first communications from brigade headquarters since his reinstatement questioned the disposition and continued loyalty of the Twenty-sixth. The message was to the effect that officers in the regiment "have proved recreant to all principles of manliness and soldierly obedience, and shown by their subordinate and mutinous language that they are no longer fit to fill positions of responsibility." Headquarters also directed Hall to keep a close watch on his men and whenever they used "language calculated to weaken faith in our cause, or tending to destroy discipline," he was to arrest them and send a report to General Thomas. Headquarters also expected a report on the spirit of the regiment. Though Hall was outraged that his men should be treated so badly after all of the sacrifices they had made, he did follow orders and made the requisite inquiries. When he came up empty-handed Hall demanded headquarters supply the names of the informants as well as the officers accused, adding that his administrators "always performed their duties cheerfully and faithfully, and have ever been mindful of military subordination and propriety." He reported the regiment's spirit equal to that of any other in the Confederacy and said discipline and subordination were all he desired.

Thomas's staff responded to Hall's report saying that its original communication was not addressed specifically to the officers of the Twenty-sixth but was sent to all commands. Apparently, General Thomas was convinced that after the reception of the

⁶⁴Tunnard, *The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry*, 300.

⁶⁵*Official Records*, XLVIII, Part 2, 1294-1295

bad news of Lee's surrender, several officers, including some in the Twenty-sixth, had "expressed sentiments doing little credit to their patriotism or habits of military discipline." Though the angry colonel again requested the names of the accused, Thomas only answered that he wanted to bring the matter to Hall's attention and was glad to be assured of the good morale of the troops.⁶⁶

At 7:40 A.M. on April 29, the Twenty-sixth's division, under Major General Harry T. Hays, began the fifty-mile hike from Camp Cotile, near Alexandria, to Camp Salubrity at Natchitoches. Sanders described the journey, "We had a long and trying march; the weather dry, & the sun pouring its heated rays upon the roads over which we were laboring through the sand." Seven exhausted men fell to the rear. Finally, after thirteen miles, the regiment bivouacked for the night near Monnette's Ferry. It was up and in line the following morning before 5:00 A.M. and covered another thirteen miles in the oppressive heat, before it stopped three miles from Natchitoches, near the Cane River. The next morning, the Twenty-sixth led the procession. The brigade's destination was only a few miles away, and the men, anxious to reach it, marched so quickly that General Thomas rode to the front of the line to tell them to slow down.⁶⁷

The Confederates were relieved to finally make it back to Camp Salubrity. Though it was a pleasant camp with good water and lots of shade, the Twenty-sixth found it hard to enjoy. While encamped there, word reached the regiment that Federal terms of surrender included the disenfranchisement of all Confederates, confiscation of rebel property, and the exile of commissioned officers. Sanders's response to this awful rumor was, "Oh, horrors! Can any man with warm southern blood coursing through his veins think for one moment of submission to such ignomy!"⁶⁸

⁶⁶Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 128-130

⁶⁷Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 93-94, Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 133-134, 127

⁶⁸Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 94

Morale worsened when the regiment learned that Richard Taylor handed over Confederate forces east of the Mississippi and that its Commander-in-Chief had fled Richmond. On May 8, Colonel John Sprague, representing Grant and General John Pope, journeyed to the Trans-Mississippi headquarters at Shreveport to see its commander, Kirby Smith, and deliver the Federal proposition for surrender of that department. In Pope's communication, he offered Smith the same terms Grant gave Lee. He mentioned that negotiations were underway between Sherman and Johnston for the surrender of rebel forces in North Carolina and added that Mobile was also on the verge of capitulation. He pointed out that a large part of the great armies of the United States would then be available to attack the Trans-Mississippi Department and force it to yield under "very different" terms than those he was granting at present. Pope also alluded to Lincoln's recent assassination and the deep feeling it created in the North, "which feeling will undoubtedly be heavily visited upon those who continue to resist the authority of the United States, to whom the mass of people in the North attribute, however remotely, the atrocious deed."⁶⁹

Smith, offended by Pope's terms and tone, replied that his sense of duty and honor would not permit him to accept the propositions put to him. The commander of the Trans-Mississippi claimed his army was "well appointed and supplied, not immediately threatened, and with its communications open cannot afford to surrender as prisoners of war."⁷⁰ He admonished Pope in a pointed message which read: "I regret that your communication should have been accompanied with a threat; or that you should have supposed that personal considerations would have influenced me in the discharge of my duties." After his meeting with Sprague, Smith wrote the governors of Louisiana, Texas,

⁶⁹*Official Records*, XLVIII, Part 2, 186-188

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 193.

Arkansas, and Missouri to say that his armies were “strong, fresh, and well equipped” and though they were outnumbered by the enemy this “may be counterbalanced by valor and skill.” He recommended that the remaining troops and their headquarters be moved to Houston and subsequently departed for Texas, leaving General Simon Bolivar Buckner in charge in Louisiana.⁷¹

The Confederates fully expected the Yankees to concentrate their forces to subdue the armies of the Trans-Mississippi. The soldiers in that department were dejected and overwhelmed by a sense of impending doom. Sanders did not write home for days because nearly all news was bad. When finally he penned a letter to his sweetheart, his despair was apparent for the first time. He wrote: “Thus, with our organized resistance over the Mississippi at an end, our armies captured, our people demoralized, our President fleeing for his life and the victorious legions of the enemy marching for our subjugation . . . can we expect deliverance except from the hands of Divine Providence!”⁷²

Though most of the men knew the end was near, they still felt the need to be brave for friends and family. In early May, Sanders wrote his people in St. Mary with half-hearted assurances of continued resistance. He declared that even though the Confederate forces might be “forced to scatter for safety,” they could still carry on partisan warfare, thereby depriving the Federals of “the fruits of their conquest.” Like many rebels, Sanders feared the U. S. Government meant to seize his lands, levy huge taxes upon him, and possibly exile him along with other commissioned officers. In order to prevent this, Sanders said that Southerners must “continue in a state of war” until the Federals tired of financing the large occupying armies necessary to keep some sort of order in the South. The lieutenant composed a letter from Camp Salubrity expressing his

⁷¹Ibid., 189-190

⁷²Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 93

thoughts: “When their armies come over to this side of the Mississippi, our brave men over the river will organize again, & vice versa.” Even though he hated the idea of continued war, he considered it preferable “to the unknown horrors of subjugation.” He added, “if the people are not willing to make every sacrifice, our fate is inevitable, and you will hear of submission before this reaches you.”⁷³

On May 10, while the regiment was near Natchitoches, Hall assumed command of the brigade. Headquarters had sent word that General Thomas was ill and Hall should take charge until his return. Just three days later, the Twenty-sixth’s division, led by Colonel Robert Richardson, in the absence of General Hays, moved west under orders towards Mansfield. Hall remarked that the order was not “based on an apparent motive” but added that it was not his to question. He seemed to think its purpose was to distract the attention of the men so that the commanding general could regain control of the panicked troops.⁷⁴

Unfortunately, the order did not have the desired effect. Although officers kept a close eye on the men, picketed roads, and doubled the camp guards, soldiers left the ranks in droves. The brigade numbered 1,200 when it left Natchitoches, but 450 deserted on the three-day march to Mansfield. Upon its arrival, the Twenty-sixth found the stores there had already been plundered. Circumstances looked grim. Sanders wrote to his sweetheart, expressing his disillusionment. He lamented, “The truth is, our armies are made up of men not deeply convinced that our cause is an individual matter with every southerner and hence they are not equal to the occasion.” He finally admitted that “our people are not prepared at heart to fight out this matter, organized or disorganized . . . for

⁷³Ibid , 93-94

⁷⁴Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 133-134.

when all our men forsake their colors, can Gen. Smith do other than disband the army, or make a formal surrender?"⁷⁵

Lieutenant Martin knew there really were no other alternatives for Smith's department. In a letter to his father he stated his certainty that the troops in the Trans-Mississippi would not fight any longer, and thus the war must necessarily end. "Many are deserting. At Jefferson men refused to work longer as they received no pay. There seems to be a general disposition among both soldiers & citizens to yield."⁷⁶

Colonel Richardson also sensed it was time to give up. On the nineteenth, he sent for Hall to discuss their dismal situation. The brigade had not received any orders since it departed Natchitoches, and the majority of the command had gone home. Commissary stores and the Quartermaster's Departments were nearly depleted and with no sign that they might be resupplied. The troops had taken all government animals and most of the wagons by force. Both officers agreed that their only option was to disband until they received further orders. Richardson notified headquarters that the military organization of Hays' Division was "paralyzed . . . rendering the maintaining of discipline and the subsistence of the troops any longer impossible." Thus, he gave brigade commanders permission to disband and permit the men to proceed to their homes.⁷⁷

Early on the morning of the twentieth, the last day in camp, a few who remained in the brigade began to plunder what was left of the rebel ordnance stores. Hall, unwilling to give an "absolute order" called for volunteers from the Twenty-sixth to guard the supplies and restore order. None in the regiment responded, and the colonel was hurt that his "faithful boys" deserted him in his hour of need. Finally, an officer remarked

⁷⁵Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 94

⁷⁶Robert Martin, Jr. to General Robert C. Martin (father), May 18, 1865, Martin-Pugh Manuscript Collection.

⁷⁷Hall, *The Story of the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry*, 135.

that Hall would do better to order a special detail. When he had done this, the Twenty-sixth obeyed immediately. His men drew regimental lines around the camp and sent pickets out to protect it. Later, that afternoon, the Twenty-sixth gathered silently around its flag while the regimental band played a dirge. The colors were then taken down and torn to shreds. Each member of the regiment received a piece, and then Hall broke the staff and burned it. The Twenty-sixth formed its lines for the last time and began its four-hundred mile march homeward with forage and bread to last only two days. Nevertheless, it remained in formation until, one by one, the men arrived at their individual homes, where they shook hands and bade their comrades in arms farewell. Hall's parting words to his men were in French. He told each of them that he was confident that they had performed their duty.⁷⁸

⁷⁸Ibid, 136-137

SUMMARY

Eventually, Kirby Smith was also forced to give up the fight. Though he had intended to move the Trans-Mississippi's base of operations to Texas and continue the resistance from there, he arrived in Houston to find that he was without troops or resources. The remnants of his forces had dissolved, seized all remaining military stores and property, and scattered to their homes. Smith wrote U. S. Colonel Sprague, "Abandoned and mortified, left without either men or material, I feel powerless to do good for my country and humiliated by the acts of a people I was striving to benefit." He advised Sprague of his intentions to leave the country until Washington officially announced its policy in regard to rebel officers and notified him that the Trans-Mississippi Department was open to Federal occupation.¹

When he departed for Texas, Smith had left Buckner in charge, and it was he who signed the surrender terms for the Trans-Mississippi Department in New Orleans on May 26th, 1865. However, Buckner insisted that Smith must also agree to the terms and so a copy was rushed to him in Galveston which he signed aboard the U. S. steamer *Fort Jackson* on June 2. The main conditions were: (1) "All acts of hostility on the part of both armies are to cease from this date." (2) Officers and men were to be paroled until duly exchanged. (3) Artillery, small-arms, ammunition and all other Confederate property was to be turned over to Federal officers. (4) Paroled officers and men were to be allowed to return home. (5) The surrender of property would not include side arms or private horses and baggage.²

¹*Official Records*, XLVIII, Part 2, 193-194

²*Ibid.*, 604-605.

The war was finally over for the Twenty-sixth Louisiana Infantry Regiment of the Trans-Mississippi Department. After more than three years of fighting for the department and the loss of 107 of their comrades-in-arms, the men of the Twenty-sixth left the service of the Confederate States Army.³ They had participated in the Battle of New Orleans, which, according to Admiral Porter was, “the most important event of the War of the Rebellion, except the fall of Richmond.”⁴ They were besieged by U. S. Grant at Vicksburg and thus took part in one of the most memorable campaigns of the war; the campaign that ensured Federal control of the Mississippi River and that British military strategist, J. F. C. Fuller, claimed was more significant than Gettysburg.⁵ The regiment also was involved in the Union’s failed attempt to capture the Red River Valley and was one of the last to surrender in 1865. Although the Twenty-sixth was not able to prevent the Federals from seizing the Mississippi River and its main branches, it played an important role in one of the most decisive theaters of the conflict.

The Civil War was devastating to the Twenty-sixth and to Louisiana. The state contributed about 65,000 men to the Confederacy and nearly one-fifth of these were slain. In addition, many Blacks who ran away to fight for the Union were killed or died of disease and countless black men, women, and children perished of starvation and illness in contraband camps. The loss of human life, black and white, adversely effected Louisiana’s future for many years.⁶

War also ravaged the homes of the Twenty-sixth. Entire towns were burned to the ground. Both armies raided plantations, farms, and private residences and the destruction

³In all, the Twenty-sixth lost 107 soldiers, thirty-eight were killed or mortally wounded and sixty-nine died of disease

⁴Porter, “The Opening of the Lower Mississippi,” *Battles and Leaders*, II, 121.

⁵J. F. C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant* (London: John Murray, 1929), 157

⁶Bennett W. Wall, ed. *Louisiana: A History* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: The Forum Press, Inc., 1984), 198-199.

of property was commonplace. Confederate troops often demanded local citizens supply the army and commandeered what was not offered to them, but the Federal army committed the worst depredations. After raiding a Louisiana parish, one Union colonel reported that his victims could not “this season or during the next year subsist anything more than a scouting party.”⁷ Battles were also fought in and around the regiment’s home parishes, leaving their mark on the countryside. Sugar cane fields were abandoned and overgrown with weeds and chimney stacks arose “out of the charred ruins of costly edifices. These still stand, marking the places where once stood the elegant and hospitable mansions of the Rhodes’, the Bateman’s, the Stirling’s . . . and others.”⁸ Destruction was not confined to the wealthy; while the yeoman farmer was away fighting in the war or dodging conscription, his farm often went to ruin and his family was left in need.

Though damage to homes and lands was debilitating, Louisiana’s worst economic losses were in capital. Slaves represented one-third of the state’s wealth and emancipation meant a loss of nearly \$500 million. Some estimates show that half of the state’s mules, horses, sheep, cattle, and pigs were gone at the close of the war, and two-thirds of all farm machinery was not fit for use. Sugar houses, barns, fences, and homes were beyond repair. Land value had shrunk and mortgage foreclosures were common. In 1861, there were 1200 sugar plantations in Louisiana but, by 1865, that number had dwindled to 180. Most of the remaining plantation owners struggled to survive and found it difficult to pay employees and buy new equipment. Roads had been neglected and were in disrepair, while railroads were so damaged that it would take great cost and many years to repair them. Levees had not been kept up and were no longer

⁷*Official Records*, XLVIII, Part 1, 68-72

⁸*Official Report Relative to the Conduct of Federal Troops in Western Louisiana: Compiled From Sworn Testimony*, 39

effective against Louisiana's frequent floods. Most would not be functional until the twentieth century. The once-unshakable banks in New Orleans were ruined after contributing all of their gold to the Confederacy. Financial institutions and individuals were left with worthless Confederate paper money and credits. Formerly established businesses were bankrupted, and only carpetbaggers, speculators, and Union sympathizers had any money, and they only loaned it at ridiculous rates of interest.⁹

Louisiana's Confederate governor, Henry Watkins Allen fled to Mexico to "avoid persecution" and in his farewell address said, "I would advise that you form yourselves into companies and squads for the purpose of protecting your families from outrage and insult, and your property from spoilation."¹⁰ After Allen's departure, Radical Republicans took over state government and civil strife erupted as conservatives fought to regain control. Many former members of the Twenty-sixth, like Lieutenant Sanders, joined another army, the Knights of the White Camellia, to combat this "corrupt Republican rule" and free Blacks. They meant to deprive the North of the fruit of its conquest by continued resistance. Although protracted war was a distasteful prospect for veterans of the Twenty-sixth, they considered it preferable to "the unknown horrors of subjugation."¹¹

⁹Wall, *Louisiana: A History*, 198-199; Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, 428-429.

¹⁰Sarah A. Dorsey, *Recollections of Henry Watkins Allen* (New York, 1866), 298-300.

¹¹Wall, *Louisiana: A History*, 199; Sanders, *Diary in Gray*, 93, 98.

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