

The origin of the Third Missouri Infantry begins with the Missouri State Guard under the command of General Sterling Price. Many soldiers in the Third received their first military training as members of the State Guard. They were veterans of the battles in Missouri in 1861. The battles of Carthage, Wilson's Creek, Dry Wood Creek and Lexington launched a reputation for these Missouri troops as dependable and hard fighting soldiers. Once their term of service ended with the State Guard in late 1861, many of these soldiers tendered their services to the fledgling Confederacy. The men of company B, Third Missouri Infantry were largely from Ray County in the northwestern part of the state. Some men in the company also hailed from Gentry, Harrison and Worth Counties. The Third Missouri Infantry actually began their Confederate service as the Second Missouri Infantry. This change in their numerical designation will be explained later in this short unit history.

The Second Missouri Infantry was formed in December of 1861 under the command of Colonel (formerly Doctor) Benjamin Allen Rives. The Second was brigaded with the First Missouri Infantry, the First Missouri Cavalry and the First and Second Missouri Artillery. This First Missouri brigade was placed under the capable hands of a West Point graduate and now Confederate Colonel Lewis Henry Little. Colonel Little would play a key role in transforming the Missouri Brigade into a highly effective fighting force. Through the end of December and most of January, 1862, the brigade trained and drilled in the Osceola area of Missouri. The First Missouri Brigade, which had been organized to help win Missouri for the Confederacy, remained in the state only for a few weeks before heading south. They would never return to their beloved state, the 12th star on the Confederate flag, during the course of the war. February of 1862 found the brigade in winter quarters at Springfield, Missouri.

While in winter quarters, General Price was surprised by a Federal thrust from Rolla. The Federal troops were under the overall command of Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis. After a lively skirmish, Price was forced to begin a hazardous 10-day withdrawal into the Boston Mountains of northwestern Arkansas. The Missouri Brigade was called upon several times to form as the rear guard of the army and enhanced their reputation as dependable troops. On February 15th, Federal cavalry smashed into the rear of the First Missouri Cavalry while the latter was protecting the army's rear. The Second Missouri Artillery was caught up in the rush by the Federals and were unable to unlimber their guns. The gunners faced being completely overrun and captured. Before the artillerymen were wiped out, Colonel Rives about faced his Second Missouri Infantry and charged. The men were able to drive off the Federal horsemen and save the battery. The army finally reached Cove Creek in the Boston Mountains and was able to unite with General Ben McCulloch and his Arkansas troops. The vigorous Yankee pursuit ended when these southern troops united. At Cove Creek the Missouri soldiers were issued their first "real" uniforms since joining Confederate service. The men of the brigade were given jean fabric uniforms made with undyed wool, white in color, and still smelling of sheep. While these uniforms were unflattering and brought laughter from other rebels who bleated like sheep when the Missourians marched by, this unusual uniform actually enhanced morale as it gave Little's men a distinctive look.

President Jefferson Davis sent Major General Earl Van Dorn west to take command of the Arkansas and Missouri soldiers. They would now be called the Army of the West and they immediately prepared for an offensive. Federal General Curtis had aggressively pursued Price and McCulloch into Arkansas and Van Dorn believed he had an opportunity to strike at vulnerable Federal line. On March 4th, the Army of the West swung north with the Missouri brigade leading the way. On March 6th, The First Missouri Cavalry smashed into the Federals at Bentonville. Curtis quickly recalled his scattered units and concentrated on high ground. The Federals were on the north bank of Little Sugar Creek, a couple miles south of Elkhorn Tavern. Now more than 10,000 Federal soldiers were in fine defensive positions astride the Telegraph Road, the main route leading from northwestern Arkansas to southwestern Missouri. Frontal assaults on such a position would be suicidal. General Van Dorn decided on an audacious flank march around the right of Curtis' line and then east around Pea Ridge to enter the Telegraph Road north of Curtis and in the Federal rear. Again, the Missouri brigade was called upon to take the lead and began an eight mile all night march at 8pm on March 6th. Van Dorn planned to be in the Yankee rear by

dawn on March 7th but his plan called for pinpoint timing which was not realistic given the conditions. Delays on the march began at midnight and continued throughout the early morning. By 8am on March 7th, Colonel Little's brigade had reached the Telegraph Road. Scattered picket fire began almost immediately and the stage was set for one of the hardest and bloodiest battles in the west.

Colonel Rives lead his regiment to a hill on the east side (left) of the road. An artillery duel ensued with members of the First and Second Missouri Artillery and their Federal counterparts. The battle of Pea Ridge/Elkhorn Tavern had begun. As the gunners dueled, Colonel Little ordered his brigade forward straight at some Federal troops on a high level plateau north of Elkhorn Tavern. A see-saw fight ensued with attack and counterattack. There were even some clubbed muskets and bayonets employed when the fighting got close with the Federal Ninth Iowa Regiment. The Second Missouri did not yield any ground during this point blank fight of about 1 1/2 hours. The Missouri Brigade was now only 300 yards from the tavern. Federal shells tore into their ranks as they charged yet again. Now the howling Missouri soldiers poured over Elkhorn tavern and its surrounding area. This key to the Federal position fell to the Missourians. The Second Missouri Infantry had become separated and had to be halted and reformed. Then they raised a cheer and charged further south. The fading light put an end to any further attacks. As darkness fell upon the battlefield, the Federal soldiers rallied and set up new defensive positions further south on the Telegraph Road. They had also received some reinforcements as the battle closed. Unfortunately for the Army of the West, Van Dorn's other wing and major part of his plan had been badly defeated. General McCulloch had been killed and his Arkansas troops had lost heavily. Pea Ridge had divided Van Dorn's two wings and he had fought at a severe disadvantage on March 7th. Federal General Curtis now shifted thousands of troops from his left flank to his right. He could concentrate his entire force on Price after McCulloch's defeat. General Price's troops would have to struggle alone against the full might of the Federal army.

On the cold morning of March 8th, Curtis concentrated for a massive counterattack. Colonel Little consolidated his position and redeployed his Missouri brigade along a better defensive position in the center of Price's battle line. An artillery duel started the fight. With nearly 60 pieces of cannon, Van Dorn employed the largest concentration of southern artillery in any battle west of the Mississippi River and outnumbered the Federal guns that day. Unfortunately, the southern gunners lacked enough ammunition to continue the contest and their rate of fire slowed after two hours. The Federals charged with full artillery support and cut into the Missouri Brigade. Little knew his men could not hold out for long as they were exposed to the Federal artillery fire. Colonel Rives was ordered by Van Dorn to hold his ground at all costs. Rives knew that there was only one way to slow the Federal advance. He had to attack the blue coats. The attack had to be launched to cover the brigade's, and with it the army's, retreat. The attack of the Second Missouri threw the Federals off balance and allowed precious time for Colonel Little to disengage the rest of the brigade and pull out. The Second was in a bad fix and they were running out of ammunition. After their attack, Rives ordered his men to retire slowly through some woods. To encourage his men Colonel Rives rode down his hard pressed line as bullets seemed to be coming from all sides. A ball staggered Rives in the saddle as it tore through his abdomen; this mortal wound was the exact fate that Rives most dreaded. He knew he had been fatally wounded but asked his aide to help him keep his seat until he rode down the line one more time to encourage his troops. He worried that if his men saw him fall they would break. Colonel Rives' death ride raised a chorus of cheering. The Missourians retired in good order and thanks to them, the Army of the West lived to fight another day. Lieutenant Colonel James Avery Pritchard now took command of the Second Missouri Infantry after the death of Colonel Rives.

Not long after this terrible battle, the regiments in the First Missouri Brigade were given new numerical designations. The re-designations were made because Colonel John Stevens Bowen had recruited a Missouri infantry regiment in the summer of 1861. Since this was the first Confederate infantry regiment organized from Missouri, Bowen's unit was designated the First Missouri Infantry. Consequently, the First Missouri Infantry regiment of Little's Missouri Brigade now became the Second Infantry and the Second Missouri Infantry of Little's brigade became the

Third Infantry. A 200-mile trek across east and central Arkansas began at the end of March. By April 1st the Army of the West was ordered to cross over to the east side of the Mississippi River to join a large concentration of Confederate forces at Corinth, Mississippi.

On April 7th, the Missourians boarded steamboats and made their way to Memphis, Tennessee and then marched overland to northern Mississippi. The Sixteenth Arkansas Infantry regiment, which had fought with the Missouri brigade at Elkhorn, was officially attached to the brigade. Now at Corinth and under the overall command of General P.G.T. Beauregard, the Missouri troops have some time to rest and refit. In May the Missourians reenlisted in Confederate service for 3-years. By May 29th, Beauregard ordered his army to move to Tupelo and out of disease ridden Corinth. As The Rebels slipped out of Corinth and avoided facing a huge Federal army under Major General Henry W. Halleck, the Missouri Brigade was again called upon to serve as the rear guard. Once they reached Tupelo, the Missouri troops began drilling and improving discipline. The Army of Mississippi, of which the First Missouri Brigade was a part, was now placed under the overall command of General Braxton Bragg. In mid-June, Colonel Little had been promoted to divisional command and took charge of the First and Second Missouri brigades. Colonel Elijah P. Gates of the First Missouri Cavalry now took command of the First Missouri Brigade. Van Dorn had been sent to Vicksburg and Little's division was placed under General Sterling Price once again. The two divisions of the Army of the West were ordered to guard the Mobile & Ohio railroad.

In early September Bragg's plan to launch an offensive into Tennessee and Kentucky was moving forward. The Army of the West's role in the overall Confederate strategy was crucial. They had to keep Federal General Ulysses Grant's forces around Corinth tied down so he could not reinforce the Federals opposing Bragg's invasion. General Price found a good place to strike at the Federals to the northeast at luka Springs. Federal Major General William S. Rosecrans was in command of the left of Grant's line at luka and was vulnerable to attack. On September 14th, the Army of the West easily entered luka. The Federals were caught off guard and after only a light skirmish Rosecrans was forced to retire north towards Corinth. Grant immediately ordered a counter attack upon hearing the news that Price was in luka. He ordered simultaneous attacks on Price from the north and south on September 19th. The pincer movement did not go off as planned for Grant but Price and his army were almost cut off by an attack by Rosecrans from the south. General Little and his men counter attacked and saved the army by throwing the Federals back and keeping the Fulton Road open. This road was Price's only avenue of retreat. While discussing tactics with General Price, Little was hit in the forehead with a bullet and killed instantly. Despite this major loss of a promising officer, the Army of the West was able to slip south that night and continued until they reached Baldwin about 20 miles southwest of luka. In late September they marched northwest to link up with Major General Van Dorn at Ripley. They had been bloodied but not beaten at luka and now these Missourians were ready for what would be their greatest challenge in the war so far. Van Dorn was set on taking back Corinth from the Federals.

After retreating south from luka, Price's Army of the West swung northwest in late September for Ripley, Mississippi. The Van Dorn's forces waited to link up with Price for another strike at Grant. The First Missouri Brigade arrived with the army at Ripley on September 29th. The uniting of Price's and van Dorn's troops created the Army of West Tennessee composed of over 22,000 veterans. The rebels marched north and entered Tennessee on October 1st. Once there they turned southeast for Corinth for another chance at the vital railroad hub. Wrecked bridges across both the Hatchie and Tuscumbia Rivers slowed their advance. By October 3rd, thousands of rebels converged on the powerful fortifications outside of Corinth, Mississippi. The Missourians were now positioned in front of works on the northwest of the Federal line. Ironically, these were the same works occupied by the Missourians when facing Federal General Halleck and his army just six months before.

Price's corps of two divisions swung east and took up positions on the left and center of Van Dorn's line. General Louis Herbert, now leading Little's division, put the Missouri Brigade in front

of strong works. After a spirited artillery duel, Colonel Gates ordered the brigade forward. In only a few moments, the Missourians stormed the works in front of them with little loss. They captured many needed provisions and continued the advance. The Missourians got into to some close quarter fighting and aided in beating back a Federal counter attack. Darkness began to settle as both side reorganized for what they knew would be a hard morning.

The final showdown for Corinth began at 4:30 in the morning of October 4th, 1862 with Confederate artillery fire. After over two hours of an artillery duel and heavy skirmishing, the Missouri Brigade was ordered forward into some woods. Once through the wood lot, they came upon a vast expanse of cleared terrain before the huge network of Federal fortifications. The Missourians were awed by what they saw. Across almost 400 yards of open slopes, with no cover whatsoever, the ground lead up a ridge top crowned with earthworks, artillery and infantry. Colonel Gates galloped down his lines making sure his alignments were complete before the assault everyone knew was coming. The Third Missouri stood in line on the brigade's right flank. About 9:30 am the brigade was ordered forward. After crossing some distance and losing men with every step, the attack pressed on up the slope. The attack soon became a slaughter as the Missourians made their way toward Battery Powell which was the strongest artillery and most formidable earthwork anchoring Rosecrans' right center and dominating one of the highest points on the ridge. Up the slope the Missourians were taking terrible losses and were finally able to reach the crest after the Federals to the right and left of Battery Powell began to give way. A savage hand to hand fight ensued as the Missourians breached the battery. Among the foremost of the attackers, Lieutenant William Russell Duvall and his three brothers of the Third Missouri all charged over the top together. When several color bearers of the Third were cut down, Lieutenant Duval picked up the unit's colors and planted them on the Federal earthworks. There he was shot down and killed. Not far from Duvall was Colonel Pritchard who had dismounted and was leading his men on foot. While standing on the parapet, Pritchard was hit by a bullet and mortally wounded. As he was carried to the rear, Pritchard shouted to his boys to do their duty and had to be convinced by Major Hubbell to leave the field. Major Finley Lewis Hubbell now took command of the Third Missouri Infantry. More Confederate troops poured into Battery Powell and Colonel Gates and his men had captured more guns then they had ever seen together. Including the cannon in and around Powell, at least forty pieces of Federal artillery were captured by the Missouri Brigade.

No time to waste with the spoils of war, the charge continued. Supporting brigades slammed into the Federal line in this sector. Colonel Gates and his men headed south towards Corinth. But these were the only Confederate troops to pierce the federal lines this day. The Missourians rushed into the valley of Corinth which soon became a death trap. Hit by a murderous crossfire, many of the southern troops began falling back. Some Missourian tenaciously held on and fought but Federal reinforcements from other parts of Rosecrans' line were on hand to drive the Missourians back. Many Missourians now held on at the ridge they fought so hard to take and waited for reinforcements that were never to come. They held on for another hour but were soon forced to give way. Without support, the Missourians had to fall back down the ridge and back to their positions at the day's outset.

The nightmare of Corinth had ended and the brigade had lost 53 killed, 332 wounded and 92 missing. Despite the heavy losses and another defeat, the fighting spirit among the men of the Missouri Brigade remained high. The Rebel withdrawal began around noon as the survivors of the Army of West Tennessee moved away from Corinth the way they had come. Rosecrans pursued and some very close calls occurred for the Rebel army as they pushed southwest toward Tupelo. Six miles below Holly Springs, the Missourians rested and called their new home "Camp Pritchard" in the name of their fallen commander. That fall the brigade recuperated and benefitted from some good fortune. Their ragged and soiled uniforms were replaced by donations of clothing from the Dixie Daughter's Society on October 20th. Despite looking more like civilians than soldiers, the man of the Third Missouri published their "thanks to the ladies of Panola County" in a major southern newspaper.

On that same day, a general reorganization occurred within the army. The First Missouri Brigade became an all Missouri unit once again with the departure of the Sixteenth Arkansas Infantry which had provided splendid service for eight months. General Green replaced Colonel Gates as the brigade commander. The First Missouri Brigade of General Bowen's division now consisted of the First, Second Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Missouri Infantry and the First Missouri Dismounted Cavalry. In addition, the Third Missouri Cavalry Battalion was assigned to the brigade. Before the end of October, Van Dorn was replaced by General John C. Pemberton as overall commander. Pemberton ordered a withdrawal south. After a 50-mile march, the Rebels halted behind better defensive positions behind the Yalobusha River, north of Grenada, Mississippi. There Pemberton set up winter quarters. In January of 1863, Major Hubbell relinquished command of the Third Missouri to Colonel William R. Gause. Born in Ohio, Gause had the distinction of being the only regimental commander in the Missouri brigade to have northern born. Also during that January in Mississippi, the Missourians received their first genuine Confederate uniforms. They were described by one veteran as "Gray pants, gray jackets and gray caps. The collar and cuffs on the jackets are trimmed with light blue."

By early February, the Missouri brigade was being transported by rail closer to Vicksburg to reinforce the city if needed. They travelled to Jackson and then encamped in the mud and swamps along the Big Black River. On March 9th, the brigade was ordered to Grand Gulf and the men were all glad to march out of the swamps. Upon arrival at Grand Gulf, they were put right to work rebuilding fortifications as the place had been torched by the Federals in June, 1862. The men hated the work but soon built new fortifications and stout breastworks and gun emplacements. General Grand intended to take Vicksburg and sent Major General John McClernand with his Thirteenth Corps to head the Federal advance south into Louisiana along the west bank of the Mississippi River. It was part of Grant's strategic turning movement to outflank Vicksburg from the south.

Major Isaac Harrison's Fifteenth Louisiana Cavalry Battalion was the only Confederate unit that stood in the path of McClernand's advance. Calls for help went out to all nearby Confederate troops including Bowen's command at Grand Gulf. General Bowen immediately realized that Grant's intentions had to be ascertained and ordered Colonel Cockrell of the Second Missouri to take some troops over the river. Bowen ordered the First, Second, Third and Fifth Missouri regiments under the overall command of Cockrell to cross the Mississippi River and march into Louisiana in early April. The First and Second Missouri troops boarded steamboats and crossed the river to Hard Times Landing, Louisiana on April 4th. After a 25-mile march, the Missourians reached the position of the Louisiana Cavalrymen about six miles below New Carthage. The Third and Fifth Missouri regiments were sent over the river on April 6th to bolster Cockrell's command. Skirmishing broke out on the 6th and 7th with advancing Federal soldiers. On April 8th, the Missourians were ordered into line of battle. After about a three hour contest of most artillery firing, the Missourians were ordered forward and took the Federal position. For a few moments the high ground in the area of James' Plantation belonged to Colonel Cockrell. But the Federals counterattacked and were able to retake the vital high ground. The Federals soon reinforced and fortified the James Plantation high ground which dominated the surrounding area. Colonel Cockrell wisely decided against a frontal attack to retake the position. After communicating with General Bowen, they decided that the best plan would be to recapture New Carthage from the Federals. By April 11th, the Missourians moved out to capture Dunbar Plantation on the right of the Federal line. With a swift attack, the Federal sentries were routed and badly needed supplies and provisions were captured. Most of the Federal soldiers, however, had vacated the position during the night of April 11th. The Federals regrouped and counterattacked on the 13th and were able to force Cockrell's men back. Now the Missourians had to run for safety along the western banks of the Mississippi River. What made things worse for Cockrell, Federal gunboats had run past Vicksburg on the night of the 16th and were heading for New Carthage. There was little time for rest as the march was made at almost a trot. It was a close call for the Missourians but they were able to reach Hard Times Landing once again. The 13-day service of Cockrell's command had ended. The Missourian's tenacity had succeeded in slowing the Federal advance on Vicksburg and allowed Pemberton valuable time. Bowen was

able to correctly understand that Grant intended to cross below Vicksburg and Grand Gulf to land in Claiborne County, Mississippi. Grant then planned to march overland and take Vicksburg from the rear.

The Missouri brigade enjoyed some relative quiet in the Grand Gulf area once again until April 29th when Grant began his bombardment and investment of the city's defenses. But Bowen and his men fought tenaciously and Grand Gulf was saved from Federal invasion that day. Grant realized that to take Grand Gulf by storm would cost many lives so he pushed his landing further south to Bruinsburg. On April 30th, Grant's army began crossing and unloading on the east side of the Mississippi River as soldier's of the Missouri Brigade still at Grand Gulf watched nervously. The Missourians were now ordered to the forests west of Port Gibson on May 1st to stop Grant's advance and to await reinforcements.