

The Union victory at Pea Ridge, Arkansas in March, 1862 prevented Confederate forces from reestablishing themselves in Missouri. There were only scattered rebel bands of irregular forces left behind in Missouri to keep up the struggle for that state and to harass Federal detachments as much as possible. Confederate recruiters were still able to operate in certain parts of Missouri and continued to work diligently to bring soldiers into the Confederate ranks. Confederate Major General Thomas C. Hindman encouraged all recruiting efforts in Missouri as he badly needed men for his army soon to be concentrating in northern Arkansas. In April 1862, General Hindman issued General Order No. 2 which authorized the formation of guerilla or partisan ranger companies. Once formed, these units were to "commence operations against the enemy without waiting for special instructions." These irregular forces were invaluable to Hindman in keeping the Union command off-balance throughout August, which in turn gave him time to raise a regular force in his district. Operating deep in enemy territory these guerillas had effectively shifted the war in the Trans-Mississippi area away from embattled Arkansas and had effectively controlled the tone of operations in July and August 1862. In all, Hindman's organizing First Corps, Trans-Mississippi Army had received from Missouri five regiments of infantry, seven regiments of cavalry and three batteries of artillery.

On July 22, 1862, Federal Major General John M. Schofield issued General Order No. 19, which required all able bodied men to report for Militia duty by July 28th. This order forced many neutral Missourians to decide between Federal or Confederate military service. Many Missourians chose to cast their lot with the Confederacy. Company D of Lt. Colonel Charles S. Mitchell's Missouri Battalion was officially formed on August 7, 1862 at Thomasville, Missouri. The men who made up company D were from Crawford, Phelps and Gasconade counties. By August 13th, the battalion had marched to Fulton County, Arkansas. On September 2nd the battalion was mustered into regular Confederate service by an officer from Little Rock, Arkansas. On October 19, 1862, the battalion was reorganized and company D came under the command of Captain Eathan Allen Pinnell and would remain so for the duration of the war. Mitchell's men were known as the Seventh Missouri Battalion at this time and they went into camp on October 18, 1862 near Pitman's Ferry in Randolph County, Arkansas.

By October 27th, 1862, Mitchell's men began their journey to join the Confederate army then concentrating at Fort Smith, Arkansas. By November 13th the battalion had marched for seventeen days, resting only two, and did over 250 miles in that period at an average of over sixteen miles per day. Captain Pinnell noted that many of the men in the battalion were without shoes. When the march began, company D had 97 men. When the company landed near Clarksville in Johnson County,

Arkansas, they had only 54 men left. Many of the men fell ill along the march and suffered due to lack of proper shod. On November 29, 1862, the battalion was increased by the addition of W.H.L Frazier's Missouri Battalion of three companies from southwestern Missouri. These men became companies G, H and I in Mitchell's Battalion bringing the total to nine companies. With November ending, final preparations were underway for the Confederate offensive in northwest Arkansas. Hospitals were prepared in Van Buren as the Pendergrast Hotel and other private buildings were converted for military use. Steamboats on the Arkansas River were stripped of their bedding and supplies were sent to divisional hospitals for use. And, finally, camp followers were banned and a final inspection was scheduled. In reviewing his corps in late November, Hindman could be justifiably proud of his accomplishment. In less than six months he had recruited, organized, clothed, armed and supplied an army of more than twelve thousand effective men. By December 1st Mitchell's battalion had marched through Van Buren, Arkansas and were preparing to head north with Hindman's army moving along the Telegraph Road. They were headed for the town of Morricks at the junction of the Fayetteville and Cane Hill roads and were looking for a fight.