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### Snapshot Within a Portrait: The Civil War in Clark County, Arkansas, 1861-1865

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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**Snapshot Within a Portrait:  
The Civil War in Clark County, Arkansas, 1861-1865.**

written by

**Stephanie Harper**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for completion of the  
Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

thesis director

second reader

third reader

honors program director

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Pointilism is described as “the application of paint in small dots and brush strokes so as to create an effect of blending.”<sup>1</sup> From a distance, the artistic style of pointilism appears to be a complete work of art but closer inspection reveals a series of miniscule dots that combine to form the entire image on the canvas. The American Civil War is a large portrait in American history. However, its description is not limited to battles and war heroes. A true portrait encompasses all aspects of the war effort from the citizens on the home front to the soldiers in the field. All these tiny points combine to complete the portrait rather than to leave the viewer with an incomplete image.

The war effort in Clark County, Arkansas, earned a position as one of the many dots that satisfy the portrait. Efforts in the county covered every aspect of life for the ordinary citizen. Although no major battles occurred in the area, Clark County became an important supply depot to the Trans-Mississippi Army. The city of Arkadelphia sits at the crossroads of the Ouachita River and the Southwest Trail, which along with the natural resources of the area and the existing factories, made it an ideal location for a supply depot. Factories produced salt, clothing, medical chemicals, and munitions for the Confederate Army. Many families sent their husbands and sons to fight in the war, often taking them to far away states. The citizens of Clark County labored day and night to supply the Confederate war effort. To understand the importance of the county to the war effort in Arkansas, the historian must examine every aspect of the war that affected the ordinary citizen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *American Heritage Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. “Pointilism.”

<sup>2</sup> Janna Ferguson, “Arkadelphia’s Contribution to the Civil War Effort,” *The Clark County Historical Journal* Vol. II, No. 1 (1975): 23.

Arkansas was not prepared to fight a war when it seceded from the Union in May of 1861. The frontier state had few developed industries and government officials discovered quickly that they could not support its troops or its people. Local citizens and communities had to fill this void by supplying the necessary equipment for enlisted soldiers and the overall war effort within the state. On January 10, 1862, Arkansas became part of the newly created Trans-Mississippi District under the command of Major General Earl Van Dorn. After losing the Battle of Pea Ridge in northwest Arkansas, Confederate General Van Dorn, by request from General P.G.T. Beauregard moved his entire force to Corinth, Mississippi in an effort to defeat Major General Sherman. Van Dorn took most of the weapons, troops, equipment, stores, and machinery with him as he left Arkansas. His unapproved actions left Arkansas in chaos, with no means of defense against Federal troops. Brigadier General John S. Roane related the situation to Beauregard: "No troops- no arms- no powder- no material of war- people everywhere eager to rise, complaints bitter."<sup>3</sup> Beauregard placed Arkansas native Major General Thomas C. Hindman in command of the Trans-Mississippi to bring order to the chaos. Hindman was responsible for raising and equipping an army. He established supply depots at Little Rock, Camden, Washington, and Arkadelphia in the early summer of 1862. Munitions, chemicals, and salt production began at Arkadelphia shortly after Hindman's actions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John S. Roane to Beauregard, 10 May 1862, John S. Roane Letters, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

<sup>4</sup> William L. Shea, "1862: 'A Continual Thunder'" in *Rugged and Sublime: The Civil War in Arkansas*, ed. Mark Christ (Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, 1994) 37-39.; Margaret Ross, "Need of Army Spurred Arkadelphia's Industry," *Arkansas Gazette*, 14 February, 1963.

The Confederacy owned many of the industries that began to produce material for the soldiers. The chemical laboratory in Arkadelphia produced needed medicines for Confederate soldiers. Castor oil, calomel, spirits of niter, and tinctures of iron were the top manufacturing priorities in this factory. In order to supply the factory with the necessary plants, weeds, and wild herbs needed for production, advertisements were placed in the newspaper offering to buy these items for citizens. An advertisement in the October 25, 1862 issue of the *Arkansas Gazette* reads:

Poppy, rice capsules	\$1.00 per lb.
Lettuce, dried juice	\$1.00 per lb.
Sassafras pith	\$5.00 per lb.
Flax seed	\$2.50 per bunch
Red pepper	\$1.00 per lb. <sup>5</sup>

Salt has always been a necessary commodity to support healthy life in humans and animals. When trade routes between the North and the South were severed, southerners began looking for ways to produce this commodity. Confederate Major General Theophilus H. Holmes placed salt production under the control of the Arkansas Confederate Government in October 1862. He hoped to begin producing an adequate salt supply to keep the men from acquiring scurvy. Arkadelphia possessed a natural salt creek which had produced salt in the past. Native Americans used the saline creek for salt production centuries earlier and had traded the commodity with tribes as far away as Iowa. John Hemphill, one of the first settlers in the region, was the first American to develop the creek. He operated a salt mill from 1811 until 1850 when it became cheaper

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<sup>5</sup> Calomel is a white, tasteless powder used as a laxative. Ferguson, 23, 28.

to import the salt from a mill in Louisiana. This mill had been called the first industry in Arkansas.<sup>6</sup>

Captain J. M. King came to Arkadelphia to analyze the salt content in the water. He found the water to contain fifty percent salt. The Confederate government sent Arkadelphia native M. S. Carpenter to oversee operations along the Saline Creek. The salt spring did not flow naturally from the ground as it had when settlers first arrived, so Carpenter sunk wells forty and fifty feet deep to provide a continuous flow of salt water. Two crews of slaves that had been impressed by the government maintained the flow day and night. Several two hundred pound iron kettles kept constantly boiling salt water.<sup>7</sup> The boilers from old steamboats were cut open, the flues removed, and the metal rolled out flat. Huge pans were made from this metal to dry out the salt. F. J. Carpenter, son of M. S. Carpenter described the simple process.

The big pans were filled with water which was kept boiling until all the water had evaporated. The layer of salt left in the bottom of the pans was shoveled out and the pans were again filled with water, the operation being repeated many times a day. The salt was ready for use when taken from the pans.<sup>8</sup>

Steamboats and wagons transported the salt to the Confederate commissaries. The wagons were canoe shaped so they could carry the salt to staging points. Some excess salt could be bought by ordinary citizens for the exorbitant price of \$2.50 a bushel.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ferguson, 25; Wendy Richter, ed., *Clark County: Past and Present* (Walsworth Publishing Co. 1992) 14-15.

<sup>7</sup>Saline Creek is located one mile east of Arkadelphia. One of the kettles still exists today and can be seen at the Clark County Court House.

<sup>8</sup>Grace Benton Nelson, "Arkadelphia: A Confederate Arsenal Center," *Clark County Historical Journal* Vol. II, No. 1 (1975): 10.

<sup>9</sup>Ella Lonn, *Salt As a Factor In The Confederacy* (Forge Valley: Murray Printing Company, 1965): 235; Nelson, 10.

The demand for salt exceeded production capabilities. Individual families tried to produce salt on makeshift furnaces. Due to the demand for this precious commodity when the government found out about these operations, the citizens were forced to sell their salt to the government. Salt production continued until 1864 when Union Major General Frederick Steele closed the salt works during his occupation of Arkadelphia. Attempts at reopening the salt works proved unsuccessful. Remnants of production during the Civil War are still visible at the site today.<sup>10</sup>

The Confederate government also operated several other factories in the city. A cotton carding factory operated five machines. Four of the machines were used for the Confederate government while one operated for civilian use. A steam engine and bottling works were added later. A clothing factory also manufactured clothes for the exclusive use of the army. However, the Confederate government did not operate all the factories. A tanning yard in the city tried to meet the demands of the war. Tanners pulled hides from storage vats before they were ready in order to produce knapsacks, saddles, bridles, and shoes for the soldiers. The business proved profitable for a number of years.<sup>11</sup>

The Ordnance Works was perhaps the most notable industry in Arkadelphia during the war. Similar operations ran in Little Rock, Washington, and Camden. Captain G. S. Polleys directed the Works. Most of the equipment was homemade due to the loss of machinery when General Van Dorn left Arkansas in 1862. Captain Polleys and Arkadelphia native Henry Carter developed a machine to make percussion caps. They manufactured small cannons, guns, percussion caps, cartridge boxes, bullets, and powder.

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<sup>10</sup> Ferguson, 26.

<sup>11</sup> Richter, 15-16.

The factory used lead from the mountains of western Arkansas and Joplin, Missouri. Charcoal was obtained by burning wood and saltpeter came from the mountains in Pike, Polk, and Montgomery counties. The Arkansas General Assembly passed a joint resolution asking planters and churches to donate their bells to be used in making light artillery. The churches would be offered a fair price or the bell would be replaced at the end of the war. Those who did not donate their bells were suspected of disloyalty to the Confederate Government. One of the cannons sits on the present day library lawn. It was left behind when Confederate troops fled the city as Union troops approached in 1864.<sup>12</sup>

The Confederate Government desperately needed people to work in the factory. Civilians received a small paycheck for working; however, the money did not meet the needs of the people but it was one of the few places where civilians could find a job. Men and women of all ages and races worked together to produce the essential items. The *Arkansas Gazette* ran an advertisement on August 14, 1862 from Colonel John H. Dunnigan, chief of ordnance, which requested children willing to work making cartridge boxes move to Arkadelphia. Records indicate that several children between the ages of 10 and 13 came to work in the factory. Two “Negro” boys ages 6 and 8 are recorded on the books as cartridge makers. The majority of the ages of the men working in the factory began at age forty-five and continued through age fifty-nine. Positions listed in

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<sup>12</sup> Nelson, 10-11. Ferguson, 23. W.H. Halliburton, “Civil War Cannon At Library Made Here,” *Siftings Herald*, 17 September, 1970.



the account book include teamsters, fatigue hands, cartridge makers, blacksmith, master mechanic, gun smith, carpenter, saddler, and bullet molder.<sup>13</sup>

Several well-known gunsmiths already living in the area worked at the factory. These gunsmiths were one reason the Ordnance Works was located in Arkadelphia. A.R. Mendenhall and Barney Paynter were listed as working in the department. Mendenhall received \$3.00 per day for his services, probably based on his skilled artisanship. Only one other man, A. O. Johnson, received the same amount of money. Paynter was listed as a master mechanic and received \$8.00 per day. However, he also provided his boy Henry and his tools, which were probably homemade.<sup>14</sup>

Gunsmiths became a necessary and vital citizen in every community. Arkadelphia and Clark County were home to many individuals skilled in the gunsmithing arts before and during the Civil War. These men perfected the art of gun-making and brought recognition to the town due to their talent.<sup>15</sup> Frontier Arkansas proved to be a land of many dangers. “The Bear State” was an accurate nickname for this young state due to the abundance of wild life. Settlers continuously feared an Indian attack or being robbed by one of the many outlaw groups roaming the state. As a result, guns became a precious and vital commodity for each family. Pioneers took great pride in their guns and the art of gunsmithing quickly rose to prominence.

To protect his home from wild beasts and marauders, and as a way to provide meat for his family, the early settler always had a gun, or pistol, or

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<sup>13</sup> Ordnance Department Account Book. Arkansas History Commission. 1863.; Advertisement, *Arkansas Gazette*, 14 August, 1862.

<sup>14</sup> Ordnance Department Account Book. Arkansas History Commission. 1863.

<sup>15</sup> Swanee Bennett and William B. Worthen, *Arkansas Made: A Survey of the Decorative, Mechanical, and Fine Arts Produced in Arkansas, 1819-1870* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1990) Vol. 1, 167.

both. And in the days before machines turned out weapons in abundance, the gunsmith was a very necessary person.<sup>16</sup>

Production of guns in Clark County began as early as 1818. Clark County quickly became a renowned place for firearm production. Clark County records report twenty-five gunsmiths operated in Arkadelphia, second only to Pulaski County, which employed fifty-two gunsmiths. However, twenty-one of Arkadelphia's gunsmiths produced in the area due to the Civil War. Eleven of these gunsmiths were native Arkansans but the majority immigrated to Arkansas. Tennessee sent twenty-nine men to Arkansas with states such as Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia also contributing a significant number. Historians can locate the place of birth of many gunsmiths but not the location in which they learned their occupation. They can only assume that these men learned their trade in their home state.<sup>17</sup>

Some of the weapons made in Clark County include flintlock rifles, the caplock pistol, and the caplock rifle with half-stock. The half-stock proved to be more portable and light than the longer Pennsylvania or Kentucky rifle. Arkansans found the half-stock to better meet their needs due to these qualities. The gunsmiths would order some of the parts to their gun pre-made. This was a common practice in the nineteenth century due to advances in the art. Advertisements would list the different materials shipped in from other parts of the country. The sale of one gunsmith's shop in Arkansas in 1834 offers insight into the tools required to practice this art. The following were sold:

11 Boring Rods	2 pair Composes	30 Files
8 firmer Chisels	3 pair Nippers	7 Gouges
4 bench Hammers	2 hand Vices	3 drawing knives
1 bench Vice	2 screw plates	1 breach-pin Wrench

<sup>16</sup> Farrar Newberry, "Arkadelphia Gunsmiths of Former Times," *The Southern Standard*, 14 April 1966.

<sup>17</sup> Bennett and Worthen, 173-174.

7 Burrs	11 Rifling Rods	18 Taps
8 Planes	1 Brace and 29 Bits	2 Ox Bands
36 Littering Tools	1 Frame and Emery Wheel	5 Saws
2 Hatchets	1 pair Shears	1 pair Flasks <sup>18</sup>

Many gunsmiths had more than one occupation. Jesse Overton served as county judge, carpenter, and tavern keeper. Other trades included knifemaking, horseshoeing, locksmithing, surveying, bell-making, steam engine work, blacksmithing, and farming.<sup>19</sup>

Some of these renowned Arkadelphia gunsmiths such as Barney Paynter, Jesse Overton, and A. R. Mendenhall worked for the Ordnance Department. However, the quality of the mass-produced rifles they created remains questionable. General Hindman praised the excellent condition of the rifles, but Brigadier General W. L. Cabell claimed the rifles were no better than a shotgun. He added that these guns had been a disadvantage at the Battle of Fayetteville.<sup>20</sup>

One of the most well-known gunsmiths, Barney Paynter, came to Clark County from Virginia in 1853. He established a gunsmith shop in his twenties between the courthouse and the jail at 323 Clay Street. Paynter stood over six feet tall and weighed two hundred pounds with red hair and blue-grey eyes. He had a keen understanding of business and soon added several town lots and some nearby farmland to his assets. While working for the Ordnance Department in Marshall, Texas, he met and married Georgiana Phillips, a member of the prominent Maddox family, on March 29, 1863. They had three children, but only one, Barney, Jr., survived childhood.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 171.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 190-198, 171.

<sup>20</sup> Richter, 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> Newberry, "Arkadelphia Gunsmith."

During the Civil War, Paynter worked for the Ordnance Works as the highest paid worker. He and “boy Henry”, probably his slave, received \$8 an hour due to his excellent skills and craftsmanship. His wage was more than double that of anyone else who worked in the factory. As Union troops moved toward Arkadelphia, Paynter relocated to Marshall, Texas, where he continued to produce guns. In 1866, he returned to Arkadelphia to reestablish his gunsmithing business. However, he contracted tuberculosis and died in 1869. The *Southern Standard* later stated, “He was a universally esteemed and useful citizen and a clever man. His death cast a gloom over the entire county.”<sup>22</sup>

Pieces of Paynter’s work still exist today. Three of his guns are on display at the Historic Arkansas Museum. Some of these pieces are inscribed with Paynter name on the barrel. John Wallis and his son found a silver medal in Nevara County, Texas, which reads “Manufactured and Presented to Dr. H.L. Nelson, by B. Paynter, Arkadelphia, Ark. 1860.”<sup>23</sup> Wallis sent a description and a drawing in hopes that someone could add to the historical value of this piece of art by the talented Barney Paynter.<sup>24</sup>

Jesse Overton preceded Paynter in coming to Arkadelphia. Overton traveled to Clark County from Somerville, Tennessee between 1842 and 1845. He served as county judge from 1848-1850 and acquired substantial real estate holdings. The 1850 census lists his occupation as a carpenter. Overton owned slaves, kept bees, and ran a tavern.

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<sup>22</sup> Newberry, “Arkadelphia Gunsmiths.”; Elias, Charles, “Barney Paynter.” Paynter File, Historic Arkansas Museum, 1960.

<sup>23</sup> *Southern Standard*, 10 December, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Newberry, “Arkadelphia Gunsmiths.”; Joe May, “Gunsmiths called Arkadelphia home,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 28 September 1993.; H. B. McKenzie, *Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association* John Hughes Reynolds, ed. ( Fayetteville, 1908) Vol.2, 209.; Special Collections, Historic Arkansas Museum.

The first records of Overton's occupation as a gunsmith are the 1870 census records. His shop is believed to have been on the second story of a frame house on the corner of Sixth and Clay streets. The McKnight brothers operated a mercantile store on the ground floor. However, he advertised having 18 to 20 years experience at the craft. An advertisement in the *Ouachita Conference Journal* from July 4, 1861 claimed Overton could make and repair guns.

#### A GOLDMINE

##### Just Discovered in Arkadelphia

The undersigned would respectfully inform the public that he had opened and will keep up, a GUNSMITH SHOP on Clay Street, some two hundred yards due West of the public square. He has just received from New York, and will always keep a supply of

Barrels	Locks
Triggers	Wipers
Bullet	Moulds
Tubes	Cylinders

and everything necessary to carry on the above business. Having had some eighteen or twenty years experience in making and repairing Guns, and by due attention to business, he hopes to share a portion of public patronage. All pains will be taken to give general satisfaction. Give him a call for he has now over *two thousand* at work in this Gold Mine; if you don't believe it, call and you can see them.

Take particular notice, for all repairs on Guns, Pistols, &c., he must have the *cash* when the work is delivered.<sup>25</sup>

Overton was not listed in the Ordnance Record Book but could have worked at the arsenal in Camden. Overton died at his home in Hollywood in June 1890 at the age of 76. The Historic Arkansas Museum also has three of his guns including a caplock rifle and a caplock pistol.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Ouachita Conference Journal*. 13 February 1861. Overton File. Historic Arkansas Museum.

<sup>26</sup> Newberry, "Arkadelphia Gunsmiths."; McKnight, Ray, "Jessie Overton-Gunsmith" *Muzzle Blasts* December, 1981, Overton File, Historic Arkansas Museum.; U.S. Census Records 1850, Clark County AR, Special Collections, Ouachita Baptist University.

Another prominent gunsmith, A. R. Mendenhall, came from Michigan to Arkansas in 1850. He first settled in Des Arc but eventually moved to Arkadelphia at the beginning of the Civil War to work in the Ordnance Factory. He made rifles, shotguns, and pistols but was most renowned for his derringers. Mendenhall worked for the Ordnance Department and moved to Tyler, Texas in 1863 when the Confederate arsenal was moved as the threat of a Union advance loomed over Arkadelphia.<sup>27</sup>

These men all had very diverse backgrounds that led them to the same occupation: gunsmithing. They embraced this vocation for a variety of reasons. Paynter and Mendenhall worked for the Confederate war effort, while Overton appeared to have worked several other jobs as well. Their skill and experience played a role in locating the Ordnance Works in Arkadelphia. The quality of their workmanship can still be seen today in the few remaining pieces that have been preserved at the Historic Arkansas Museum. These men made a contribution not only to Clark County but also to Arkansas.

The gunsmiths and other workers in the factory lived with danger each day they ventured to work. Working in the munitions factory proved to be quite hazardous on many levels. J. N. Clem relates his experiences as a boy working in the factory. His boss seemed to be a “Yankee” and no one knew anything about him. One day, the “Fillers” found a number of matches in the powder. The boss left town the next day. However, when General Steele’s army passed through Arkadelphia, one soldier picked out Clem and identified him as one of the workers in the factory. The accusing Union soldier was the boss who had mysteriously disappeared. He and the other Union soldiers were preparing a noose to hang the young boy when a cavalry officer stopped them and ordered them to return to camp. Clem said, “While I felt that my life had been spared,

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<sup>27</sup> Bennett and Worthen, *Arkansas Made*, 174, 192-194.

looking back now, I feel that I did not understand the full gravity of the situation. The dangers through which we boys passed were not realized."<sup>28</sup>

Newspapers tried to help reduce the amount of danger and did not print stories of the factories in hopes of keeping them a secret from the Union army. However, these efforts would not be successful. As early as January 13, 1863, William H. Pierre, chief of scouts for the Union Army of the Frontier, reported that Arkadelphia was "the great depot for the Trans-Mississippi Confederate States Army." The city was defended by 500 men but could easily be attacked by landing at Gaines' Landing, 87 miles away. Not only would this stop the manufacture of needed goods but it would also cut communication between Lieutenant General Holmes and Richmond. Union troops could block the Confederate retreat route to Texas, leaving no other options for retreat. Pierre reported this information to Major General Curtis who immediately approached Major General McClelland about the possibilities of an attack. General Grant replaced General McClelland at Vicksburg and waited to move against Arkadelphia. He concentrated his troops on the Mississippi River, leaving the ordnance works to manufacture goods for another ten months before being forced to retreat to Texas.<sup>29</sup>

The Ordnance Department moved from Arkadelphia to Marshall in late October 1863. A letter from Thomas Ewing to his wife Liza tells of a Union raid that occurred in Arkadelphia in early November.

About 300 men came into town about 12 o'clock at night. It was raining very hard. They went to every house and got something to eat. Took all the jewelry and watches they could find. Treated the citizens very well with one or two exceptions...Mrs. Paynter also suffered, they stole all of her clothing and bed clothes. Part of the

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<sup>28</sup> *Southern Standard*, 10 November 1892.

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Ross, "Scout of Federals Urges Attack on Arkadelphia," *Chronicles of Arkansas, Arkansas Gazette*, 13 February 1963.

latter she got back...Mr. Paynter was not home when the frolic was going on.- When I left Arkadelphia the Feds were all reported at Benton and leaving that place for Little Rock. But when I got to Antoine I heard they were marching this way – 9000 strong- and were to have been in Arkadelphia Friday night. But I don't believe this report.<sup>30</sup>

Ewing was in Washington, Arkansas, when he wrote the letter. His wife apparently moved to Marshall. A letter from Madosa Cook, an Arkadelphia resident, to Liza told her of all the town news and expressed her wish to see Liza. However, Mrs. Cook said Arkadelphia was a dangerous place with the Union troops nearby. She wished she were in Texas with Liza.<sup>31</sup>

Union troops began to threaten the area in late 1863 but the most significant military action occurred as Union troops under the command of Major General Frederick Steele came through Clark County on the way to Camden. This action became known as the Red River Expedition. For the first four days in April 1864, Confederate troops attacked Federal troops in hopes of keeping them from advancing. On April 3, General Joseph Shelby met General Samuel Rice's Union troops. As they prepared to fight, a large thunderstorm began to drop hail on the two armies. The hail and high winds knocked down several beehives, agitating the bees. The bees swarmed on the Confederate troops and then moved to the Union forces. Both armies fled from the field without engaging in battle. It seems the bees proved too strong an adversary. The largest skirmish occurred the next day. Shelby met Generals Marmaduke and Cabell at Elkin's Ferry to try and stop the Union troops from crossing the Little Missouri River. The

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Ewing to wife Liza, 8 November 1863, Thomas Ewing Papers, Special Collections, Ouachita Baptist University.

<sup>31</sup> Madosa Cook to Liza Ewing, 17 May 1864, Thomas Ewing Papers, Special Collections, Ouachita Baptist University,



fighting was intense for several hours, but Union troops emerged victorious and continued their march toward Camden.<sup>32</sup>

Clark County contributed more to the Civil War than supplying goods and munitions. Many men accepted the challenges placed before them to fight for the cause or to serve the Confederate States of America in another way. Harris Flanagin, a prominent Arkadelphia resident, represented a man who accepted both challenges. His leadership moved Arkansas through some of its most difficult years. It was, however, a leadership role that Flanagin did not seek for himself. "Zeal, energy, and cool fixedness of purpose...characterized all the acts of his life... To his clear judgement, prudent foresight and watchful care was owing in a very large degree, the perfection of this conservative convention."<sup>33</sup> The comments of the Constitutional Convention of 1874 offer enormous insight into the life of Harris Flanagin. He molded himself into a public servant who paid great attention to detail. His enemies even held him in high esteem. Upon his death in 1874, former Governor Henry Rector, whom Flanagin replaced in office, said, "He was the noblest work of God-a man of unblemished character...He has fallen a martyr to the people he served."<sup>34</sup>

On November 3, 1817, James and Mary Harris Flanagin announced the birth of their son, Harris Flanagin, in Roadstown, New Jersey. His grandfather, James, came to America from Scotland in 1765 and his father, James the Second, had been born in Gloucester County in 1768. James the Second operated a furniture and undertaking business in Roadstown. He married Mary Harris, who passed her maiden name down to

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<sup>32</sup> Richter, 16.

<sup>33</sup> *Southern Standard*, 31 October, 1876.

<sup>34</sup> Farrar Newberry, "Harris Flanagin," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1958): 19.

her infant son. The name Harris continues to be used in the present generation of Flanagins.<sup>35</sup>

Flanagin worked with his father in the family furniture and undertaking business while getting his education. He showed an extraordinary ability for remembering detail and quickly rose among his fellow students. His teachers regarded him as a model student. Several years later, the family moved to Greenwich in order for James to return to cabinet-making. Harris attended a school run by Quakers and continued to excel. He so impressed his teachers; they promoted him to assistant teacher while pursuing his own scholastic work.<sup>36</sup>

Flanagin's record of excellence helped him secure a position as professor of Mathematics and English at Clermont Seminary in Frankfort, Pennsylvania at the young age of eighteen. Within one year of accepting this position, Flanagin opened his own school in Paoli, Illinois. He began to pursue a career in law and passed his bar examination within two years of beginning his study.<sup>37</sup> This feat is even more commendable when seen in the context of Flanagin's other actions. While still a minor, he taught and sent home extra money to his father. Flanagin portrayed a work ethic which would aid him for the remainder of his life.

Upon acceptance to the bar, Flanagin decided to pursue a career in a different part of the country. He chose Arkansas because lawyers were said to be "few and far between" and hard work and the will to win indicated success.<sup>38</sup> In 1839, at the age of 22, he moved to Greenville, Clark County, with only a letter of recommendation to show

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

his previous successes. However, this letter from W. A. Boles, a prominent friend in Paoli, summed up the true character of Harris Flanagin. “I beg leave to introduce to you Mr. Harris Flanagin, Esq., as a gentleman well educated and possessing a good moral character, and during my acquaintance with him to be one in whom full confidence may be placed in his understanding.”<sup>39</sup> Flanagin was the first lawyer to permanently settle in this area and became very successful. He arrived with very little money but by 1853 he owned three thousand acres of farmland, thirteen town lots, and six slaves.<sup>40</sup> His name regularly appeared in courthouse records as an estate administrator, land manager, and attorney for executor of wills. He also served as deputy sheriff.<sup>41</sup>

In 1842, three years after Flanagin’s arrival to Greenville, the county seat moved to Arkadelphia. The crescent city (originally known as Blakelytown) contained a shipping port on the Ouachita River that made the transportation of goods to and from New Orleans possible. The city also had a larger population and a more centrally located position in the county. However, the decision to move the county seat had been a subject of hot debate. Flanagin’s contribution to this debate is not known, but he immediately moved his office to Arkadelphia that same year. He began to practice on the southwest corner of the Courthouse Square and continued to prosper. The year found Flanagin elected to one term in the Arkansas House of Representatives on the Whig ticket. He displayed his ability to work hard and devote attention to detail. Moreover, Flanagin had little time for recreation because he focused on fulfilling his duties to the best of his

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>40</sup> Anne McMath, *First Ladies of Arkansas* (Little Rock: August House, Inc., 1989), 61.

<sup>41</sup> Newberry, 5.

aptitudes. The experience gained and the friendships made benefited him for the remainder of his life.<sup>42</sup>

The young lawyer entered the political arena once again in 1848 as the Whig candidate for State Senator against the Democratic candidate Hawes H. Coleman. The race, which resulted in a Flanagin victory, ended as the closest political contest of his life. This election, perhaps better than any other incident, revealed the true character of Harris Flanagin. Though the race remained close, the men conducted themselves with dignity and did not engage in slander. In fact, the two men began a friendship that transcended their political views. The words spoken by Hawes H. Coleman at Flanagin's funeral in 1874 show the true nature of the friendship.

Our contest (for the State Senate in 1848) was wholly political. Neither candidate shot a poisoned arrow... This political opposition cemented a friendship that withstood the trying ordeal of personal rivalry... It culminated in a fraternal attachment which for 26 years induced each to watch for opportunities to promote the welfare and happiness of the other.<sup>43</sup>

During the period, Flanagin also gained valuable military service. His name appears in a list of volunteers for the Mexican War, though the company never organized. However, he founded a group of militia in Clark County in 1847 near Greenville (now Hollywood), a small community south of Arkadelphia. Thomas S. Drew, the Governor of Arkansas, gave Flanagin his commission; his peers unanimously elected him Captain. No records have been found showing the service of this militia, but through the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.; Timothy P. Donovan, Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., and Jeannie M. Whyne, eds., *The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography* (Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, 1981). 36.

<sup>43</sup> Newberry, 20.

experience Flanagin developed leadership qualities which later assisted him during the Civil War.<sup>44</sup>

Harris Flanagin, at thirty-four, had devoted himself to his work. He did not have any romantic interests because he did not have time for frivolity. In 1851, a friend calmly reminded him of his comfortable position and stated he was being selfish in not sharing himself with a worthy lady. The friend suggested a young woman in Washington, Arkansas, who possessed many of the characteristics attractive to Flanagin. After a short period of consideration, Flanagin appeared at the home of Mr. Phineas Nash. He stated his intention of courtship and marriage to Nash's daughter, was invited to supper, and presented himself to Martha Nash. Despite the fact that the couple had never seen each other before she accepted his proposal of marriage and the couple married three weeks later on July 3, 1851.<sup>45</sup>

Martha Elizabeth Nash was born in Prince Edward County, Virginia, on April 3, 1830, to Phineas Nash and Phoebe Haskins Ligon Nash. Martha had seven brothers and sisters. After living in Virginia for four years, Martha's family moved to Tennessee and later to Harmon, Arkansas. As a young lady, she attended an academy in Washington, Arkansas. Martha had many prominent relatives throughout Arkansas, which provided contacts that helped her husband. The future first lady exhibited characteristics which enabled her to aid her husband in fulfilling the duties of his office such as a cordial nature and the love of entertaining guests.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Donovan, Gatewood, Jr., Whayne, 36.; Richter, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Newberry, 7.

<sup>46</sup> McMath, 61.

Flanagin brought his new wife to the colonial home he had built the year before in Arkadelphia. He provided elaborate furnishings for the house. Hand-carved walnut furniture, ordered from Philadelphia, arrived by steamboat, as well as a silver tea service inscribed with the initials “HMF” – H for Harris, M for Martha, and F for Flanagin. Martha, a devout Presbyterian, helped to organize the first Presbyterian Church in her new home. She remained an active member until her death in 1904. The couple had three children: Duncan, named after a family friend, Nash, from his mother’s maiden name, and Laura.<sup>47</sup>

During the next few years Flanagin subtly built his law practice while staying involved in local politics. He assisted in the education of his children to ensure their environment was disciplined yet gentle. He once wrote his son, “Pay attention to one thing at a time. When you study, think of your lessons and nothing else, when you play, enjoy yourself as much as you can.” He wanted his children to experience all aspects of life in order to mature into accomplished adults. Their activities included swimming and dancing in addition to their studies.<sup>48</sup>

The Whig party in Arkansas collapsed during the 1850s and Flanagin soon became a conservative Democrat. He served as an alderman for Arkadelphia, but did not pursue politics at the state level. As tensions began to escalate between the North and the South, Arkansas split into two camps: Unionist and Secessionist. Flanagin held to his beliefs of state’s rights and joined the secessionist camp. The prospect of fighting against his fellow countrymen saddened him, but he could see no other course of action.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>48</sup> Newberry, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Michael B. Dougan, *Confederate Arkansas: The People and Policies of a Frontier State in Wartime* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1976), 47.

After the election of Abraham Lincoln to the office of President of the United States, a Constitutional Convention quickly formed in Arkansas. Flanagin offered himself as a delegate. Claiming this to be the most important occasion “that has existed in the lifetime of the present people,” Flanagin distributed a circular stating his beliefs for the people of Clark County. “There is no question that a people have the right to alter, change, or abolish a government, whenever it shall fail to answer the purpose for which it was created.”<sup>50</sup> However, he did not view secession as a solution for the South. He only supported the idea because he thought it was inevitable.

Will we have war? If the South is united, no! The north does not desire war, for the sake of war, and if convinced that we cannot be coerced, they will not attempt it. If, however, we are divided among ourselves, and they believe we can be coerced back, they will make the effort. It will be with them a matter of interest, and their interest is peace. When they see we cannot be compelled to submit, they will be anxious to negotiate a reconstruction of the government, or a favorable negotiation for their commerce.<sup>51</sup>

The convention voted not to secede in March of 1861 by a very narrow margin. However, the secessionists relied on national developments to further their cause. The shots fired on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on April 12, 1861, shortened their wait. Soon after, on April 29, a summons issued by Governor Rector called for reestablishing the convention. Arkansas voted on May 6 to secede from the Union, with only one dissenting vote by Isaac Murphy of Madison County. Murphy left the state as an exile, but returned as the new governor during the final years of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The session also called for new elections, including the position of governor, in 1862.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Harris Flanagin, “To the People of Clark County,” 1860, Flanagin Papers, Special Collections, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Dougan, 62-65.

Flanagin enlisted as the captain of Company E in the Second Arkansas Mounted Rifles under Col. James McIntosh. The majority of this company consisted of Clark County men. They first saw action at Oak Hills, or Wilson's Creek, where Flanagin engaged in some of the heaviest fighting of the battle. In a report to Brigadier General Benjamin McCulloch of the fighting, Colonel McIntosh spoke of his officers' bravery and coolness. He claimed they, "all deserve credit great credit for the manner in which they led their companies."<sup>53</sup>

The next engagement occurred in the spring of 1862, bringing major changes for Company E. At the battle of Pea Ridge, or Elk Horn Tavern, Colonel McIntosh received fatal injuries that forced the regiment to reorganize. Flanagin assumed the position of Colonel with a vote of 20 to 9. He wrote his wife, "My election was very flattering, as I never did anything to get a vote and always I was no candidate...and yet I got 20 votes while the other got only 9."<sup>54</sup> The regiment transferred to the Army of Tennessee for the summer and fall of 1862.<sup>55</sup>

During Flanagin's absence, the election year of 1862 in Arkansas progressed. A Constitutional Convention that same year called for the election of a new governor because the current chief executive, Henry Rector, did not have the support to continue his four-year term. His inability to protect the state from Union invasion made him very unpopular. As the Union invasion of Little Rock seemed inevitable, Rector began making plans to leave. The Confederate army stepped in to divert the dangerous situation

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<sup>53</sup> Col. James McIntosh to Brig. Gen. Ben. McCulloch, August 12, 1861, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Unions and Confederate Armies*, Ser. 1, vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), 110-111.

<sup>54</sup> Newberry, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Donovan, Gatewood, Jr., Whayne, 37.



in the state capital. Due to court motions which had been quickly filed, the election for governor would occur in October. Rector announced his bid for reelection; however, the Democrats decided to nominate Flanagin due to his unimpeachable background and military service. His letter of nomination includes the signatures of T. C. Hindman, Elias N. Conway, William E. Woodruff, and C. C. Danley. Flanagin allegedly did not know of his nomination due to his absence from the state and did not campaign.<sup>56</sup>

The press contributed most to the campaign. The majority of major newspapers supported Flanagin, though the *Camden Eagle* supported James S. H. Rainey, a third party candidate, and the *Ouachita Herald* tried to label Flanagin as a Yankee because of his Irish family background and his origin in New Jersey. However, due to Democratic support, he easily won the election. Union troops hindered voting in Phillips, Monroe, Greene, and Mississippi Counties but the remainder of the state reported a heavy turnout. Flanagin received 18,187 votes to Rector's 7, 419 and Rainey's 708. While still in Tennessee, the Colonel is believed to have received word of his nomination the day before the election. Flanagin did not return from Tennessee to campaign. Flanagin did not seek the office of governor, but had it placed in his hands. His notification of victory came by a telegram to Knoxville which simply stated, "Col. Flanagin was elected gov. of Ark. by large majority."<sup>57</sup> He immediately made preparations to return to the state. Thomas Fletcher, president of the senate, held the office from November 4 until Flanagin was inaugurated on the 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Dougan, 95.

<sup>57</sup> Telegram to Harris Flanagin, Photocopy, 25 October 1862, Arkansas History Commission.

<sup>58</sup> *Camden Eagle*, 17 September 1862.; *Little Rock Arkansas True Democrat*, 5 November 1862.; *Little Rock Patriot*, 6 November 1862.

Flanagin faced a monumental task upon his inauguration. Union and Confederate troops fought for control of the state and roaming guerilla bands caused chaos in many areas. His first act as governor gave \$200,000 to the families with soldiers fighting in the field. These starving families had no men at home to provide for them. He also faced rising prices and food shortages. Perhaps his largest struggle involved repelling Union troops from the eastern border.<sup>59</sup>

Military matters consumed Gov. Flanagin's tenure in office. A proclamation issued early in his term revealed the danger of the situation.

#### Proclamation by the Governor

To the People of Arkansas -

The enemy have secured a position upon the Arkansas river, and the State calls on her sons to rise en masse and drive them from her borders.

Choose ye. On the one hand the country is to be occupied by a foe who knows no pity, who claims your property as a right and who proclaims your despoliation a duty; on the other hand, you write your names in your country's history as its defenders, and retain the possession of your homes and firesides.

A people determined to be free cannot be enslaved, and with a determination on your part to resist, your State cannot be occupied by the enemy.

I will take command of the troops assembled under this call and under the control of the Confederate authorities will remain with them during their service.

Supplies will be furnished and payment made by Confederate authorities; a few hundred arms only can be furnished.

**THEREFORE**, I, Harris Flanagin, Governor of the State of Arkansas, hereby call upon the citizens of this State to appear **FORTHWITH** at **LITTLE ROCK**, with such arms and accoutrements as they may possess, to engage in military service for **SIXTY DAYS**, in order to repulse the enemy.

Every man must bring his own Blankets. It is urged upon every one to bring **ARMS** and accoutrements if he had them.

Given under my hand at Little Rock, this 14<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1863.

**H. FLANAGIN**<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Donovan, Gatewood, Jr. and Whyne, 39.

<sup>60</sup> Harris Flanagin, "Proclamation by the Governor," 14 January 1863, Flanagin Papers, Special Collections, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

Flanagin desperately tried to organize men to withstand a Union attack. However, his efforts failed when Union troops began to move in August 1863. Flanagin's troops did not have the skill or experience to withstand the invasion and the Confederate government fled. When Gov. Flanagin left the city, he took the state archives; state officials soon followed him.<sup>61</sup>

Flanagin and his wife, Martha, returned to their home in Arkadelphia for a month. He quickly moved to reestablish some form of government for the southwest part of the state which remained in Confederate control. Washington, Arkansas, became the new Confederate state capital. It resembled a military camp with all Confederate state and war business conducted in the homes of the townspeople. The relocation of the state archives and the arrival of the legislature added the only hint of legitimacy to the newly established government. The men faced a very desperate situation. Law and order ceased to exist, homes were empty, fields went unplanted, and slaves had fled. Arkansas did not have the money to provide the necessary services to its people. The legislature voted to use non-existent money in efforts to resolve the situation.<sup>62</sup>

While Flanagin fought to preserve the remaining shreds of the Confederate government, Union supporters in Little Rock seized the town and reinstated the Arkansas Constitution of 1836. They elected Isaac Murphy, the only dissenting member of the Constitutional Convention of 1861, as governor of Arkansas. Two men now claimed the office: Harris Flanagin and Isaac Murphy. The dueling governments were in constant conflict. Murphy and the Union troops called for the return of the state archives.

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<sup>61</sup> Donovan, Gatewood, Jr., Whayne, 39.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.; Charlean Moss Williams, *The Old Town Speaks*, (Houston, Anson Jones Press, 1951), 111.

“This is about the coolest piece of impudence we have received,” wrote John Eakin, in the *Washington Telegraph*. “Gen. Steele kindly urges our State officials to send the archives back, as they can no longer be of use to us. Messieurs Cunningham and Flanagin – pay attention!” However, the Confederate government ignored the request and continued to conduct state business.<sup>63</sup>

Throughout 1864, Arkansas, still under Confederate control, pressured Flanagin to find ways of acquiring much needed supplies. He refused to act without legislative authority. Citizens could not understand why the governor stood by his views of law and authority during such a lawless time. Union governor Murphy offered peace for the weary government.

We have all done wrong. No one can say that his hands are altogether clean, or his heart pure. Then, as we wish to be forgiven, let us forgive those who have sinned against us and ours...Let our last conquest be to conquer the hearts of our enemies by kindness. Then peace will be lasting.<sup>64</sup>

Realizing the war was over, Flanagin made plans to restore central government. In March 1865, he proposed to summon the legislature and repeal all hostile acts, resign as governor, and return the state archives to Little Rock personally. He also asked for Union authorities to uphold elected county officials in the southern part of the state. Only his proposal to return the state archives satisfied the Union authorities. Flanagin promptly returned the archives and retired to his home in Arkadelphia. He foresaw the upcoming problems with Reconstruction and urged the people on May 23, “In the present

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<sup>63</sup> Mary Medearis, *Washington, Arkansas: History on the Southwest Trail* (Hope, Arkansas: Etter Printing Company, 1976), 49.; *The Washington Telegraph*, February, 1864.

<sup>64</sup> Newberry, 15.

state of disorder, it is necessary that the citizens should take such steps as shall protect private rights and private property from violations.”<sup>65</sup>

Flanagin turned his attention to personal matters after the war. He received a full pardon from Andrew Johnson in December of 1865. However, he could not vote or hold office until 1873. He began to work harder than before to recover what had been lost in the war. His law practice resumed, but the workload placed a strain on his health. The desire to once more provide for his family seemed his primary motivation. He wrote to Duncan, who at twenty one years of age studied law at the University of Virginia law school, “It has been my ambition to give my children a fair chance, and my losses have been such that I am compelled my work harder than I ought to.” He knew the impact of his hard work to his health, yet he pressed on to be successful once again.<sup>66</sup>

The former governor remained in high esteem with many prominent men during Reconstruction. B. F. Askew, in a letter to Flanagin in March 1872, told him, “I have wished 10,000 times we could have a governor with a thousandth part of the honesty and statesmanship we had then (under the Flanagin administration).”<sup>67</sup> Flanagin, along with Jesse A. Ross, represented Clark County in the Constitutional Convention of 1874. He served as chairman of the judiciary committee. His conservative views won the respect of all at the convention. However, the constant activity, along with the summer heat, continued to put a physical strain on Flanagin. Exhausted and sick with dysentery,

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<sup>65</sup> Governors Henry Allen and Harris Flanagin to General Kirby Smith, May 13, 1865, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Ser. I, vol. 48 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), 190-191.; Newberry, 15-16.

<sup>66</sup> Newberry, 16.

<sup>67</sup>B. F. Askew, Magnolia, to Harris Flanagin, LS, 25 March 1872, transcript in hand of B. F. Askew, Flanagin Papers, Special Collections, Arkansas Historical Commission, Little Rock.

Flanagin returned to Arkadelphia in October. Due to his serious illness, he signed the new constitution before the convention concluded work on the document. On October 23, Flanagin died in his home. However, his influence can still be seen in Arkadelphia. A 12-foot marble obelisk stands on his gravesite in Rose Hill Cemetery. His law office remains across from the Clark County Courthouse.<sup>68</sup>

Judge Joe House, in a speech addressing the Arkansas Bar Association, claimed forty years later Flanagin proved to be the ablest man at the convention by his logical and unbiased input. Flanagin stood by his beliefs and values throughout his life never wavering in the most difficult moments or changing his views to fit politics. He promoted honor and integrity throughout his life by being a living example for others to follow. At his funeral, Hawes H. Coleman stated, "In painting the character of most men when they die the canvas is colored by the brush of flattery, but in the history of Governor Flanagin the simple language of truth is the best and perfect eulogy."<sup>69</sup>

While Harris Flanagin received much attention, he was only one of many who gave their lives to support the Confederate cause. The letters of Tom and Alex Spence offer a glimpse into the life of a Confederate soldier. Their surviving letters tell of the range of emotions a soldier experienced. The Spence family were prominent citizens of Clark County on the eve of the Civil War. Solomon and Frances Caruthers Spence had moved to Arkadelphia from Alabama with their ten children in 1849. The family owned a well-known hotel as well as farmland and slaves. Tom was sheriff of Clark County at

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<sup>68</sup> Newberry, 18-19.; *Southern Standard*, 31 October 1876.

<sup>69</sup> Newberry, 20.

the age of twenty-five and his younger brother, Alexander, age twenty-two, worked as a clerk.<sup>70</sup>

Alex was one of the first men from Clark County to enlist as a soldier. He joined Captain Charles Stark's "Clark County Volunteers" in April 1861. The men traveled to Little Rock and became Company B of the 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas Infantry Regiment. Tom enlisted a few months later in Company E of the Second Arkansas Mounted Rifles. Harris Flanagan was a Captain in this company under Colonel James McIntosh. The two companies first fought in different parts of the country. Alex traveled to Virginia and was present at the First Battle of Manassas although they did not participate in the fighting. The regiment had not seen many battles in the first year and Alex considered leaving when his year of service was over. His letters home on January 11 and February 6 of 1862 both state that he had not reenlisted and was not sure of his course of action. However, the regiment was transferred to Mississippi in 1862 and by February 20, Alex had agreed to reenlist for two more years of service.<sup>71</sup>

Although Tom enlisted after Alex, he was the first of the two brothers to fight in a battle. The Second Arkansas Mounted Rifles traveled to northern Arkansas to help Sterling Price attack Union Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon. They met Lyon's troops on August 10, 1861 at Wilson's Creek. After the battle, Confederate troops pulled back into Arkansas. Major General Van Dorn took command of the troops in early 1862 and suffered a devastating loss at the Battle of Pea Ridge in March causing him to move all his forces east of the Mississippi River in April.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Brothers in Arms: The Spence Family and the Civil War*, Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-13.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas Infantry participated in the Battle of Shiloh on April 6, 1862. Alex was severely wounded in the thigh on the fourth charge on the “Hornet’s Nest.” The Confederate army retreated into Mississippi and the two brothers were reunited for the first time since they enlisted. Alex’s wounds were extensive and Tom was granted leave to bring Alex back to Arkadelphia to recover. In a letter home, Tom tells his father

I arrived at this place day before yesterday pretty sick. Am able to sit up in my bed now. ... You need not be surprised to hear of the Big Battle at any time. Our men are confident of success. The forces are ordered out every day. Heavy skirmishing every day. I have been up to our camps once. Capt. Flanagan and the men that were able are now on pickett. I have seen none of them as yet. During my absence, the company reorganized.<sup>73</sup> They elected me Captain for which position I am thankful.<sup>74</sup>

Alex quickly grew tired of life in Arkadelphia and yearned to rejoin his regiment. “As soon as I get able to go a little better, I shall start for Camp, for I am getting heartily tired of this place. I am afraid I will be lame for a long while.”<sup>75</sup>

Both brothers fought in the Kentucky Campaign although their respective regiments were under the command of different generals. After several unsuccessful attempts to defeat Union Major General Buell, Major General Bragg ordered Confederate troops to return to Tennessee. They encamped around Murfreesboro as Christmas drew near. Tom’s letter reveal his earnest wish to be home in Arkadelphia.

This is a loansome time with me. ...I would like pretty well to spend this Christmas with you all, but times will not admit it. I guess you all have a fine time. Most of the members of this Regiment all are drunk to night, Col., Staff, and all. To tell the truth, we have no commanders. I

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<sup>73</sup> The Company reorganized due to the death of Colonel James McIntosh at the Battle of Pea Ridge.

<sup>74</sup> Tom Spence to Solomon Spence, 19 May, 1862. Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>75</sup> Alex Spence to Tom Spence, 28 May, 1862. Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas.



would give anything in the world to have Col. Flanagan or another like him.<sup>76</sup>

However, Tom would not see his home again. Tom was killed at the Battle of Murfreesboro on December 31. The two brothers had spent the night within shouting distance of one another. Alex also suffered the loss of his friend, Babe Cook, also of Arkadelphia, at the battle. Cook was cut in half by a Federal shell.<sup>77</sup>

Despite his personal losses, Alex continued to fight and was promoted to Captain on January 20, 1863. His wound from Shiloh continued to cause him pain, and he began to ask his family for one of their slaves to come tend to him. The 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas participated in the Battle of Chickamauga which Alex described as “the hardest fighting I have ever been in yet & our Regt suffered more than in any previous battle. ... We gained a great victory at Chickamauga, but it cost many a gallant spirit.”<sup>78</sup>

At the Battle of Ringgold Gap on November 27, the 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas captured the flag of the 76<sup>th</sup> Ohio Regiment. This was a great achievement for the Arkansas troops and offered encouragement after a long year of fighting. Many man deserted the army during the winter. “I am sorry to say there has been a great many desertions. Yet, strange to say, not as many from the Arkansas troops as from the troops of other states. Arkansas troops have gained a reputation in this Army of which our state may justly feel proud of.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Tom Spence to Spence Family, 24 December, 1862, Readyville, Tennessee. Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas. Col. Flanagan had been elected governor of Arkansas and had returned to the state.

<sup>77</sup> *Brothers in Arms*, 26.

<sup>78</sup> Alex Spence to Spence Family, 14 October, 1863, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>79</sup> Alex Spence to Spence Family, 1 February, 1864, Tunnel Hill, Georgia. Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas.

As the Confederate soldiers left to fight in the spring of 1864, they were under to command of General Joseph E. Johnston. Due to the loss of many soldiers throughout the years, the 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas consolidated with the 15<sup>th</sup> Arkansas Infantry to try and protect Atlanta from Union General Sherman. General Johnston continued to retreat closer to the city until he was replaced by General John Hood on July 18. Spence had full confidence in the Confederate soldiers ability to hold Atlanta from Union troops; however, after a summer of hard fighting, Hood was forced to abandon the city on September 1. Spence's letter portrays the Arkansas troops involvement.

“Our Division of Texians and Arkansians have fully done their part in these fights so far. Trans Miss troops are particularly relied on in this Army. We always occupy the “post of honor,” the front. Our Regt has suffered some in killed & wounded.”<sup>80</sup>

Hood devised an elaborate plan to defeat the Union Army in Tennessee and join General Robert E. Lee in Virginia. His forces met Union troops at Franklin, Tennessee on November 30 and engaged in a bloody battle in which Alex Spence was killed. Thirty five percent of the 20,000 Confederates who fought in the battle died. Alex died five months before the 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas surrendered on April 27, 1865. Both brothers were interred at Rose Hill Cemetery in Arkadelphia next to each other.<sup>81</sup>

One of the saddest chapters in the story is the fiancé Alex Spence left behind. He became engaged to Miss Amanda Willson of Madison, Georgia, shortly after Confederate troops lost the Battle of Atlanta. Alex related his eagerness to marry in a letter to Miss Willson on November 7.

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<sup>80</sup> *Brothers in Arms*, 35-40. Alex Spence to Spence Family, 7 June, 1864, Marietta, Georgia. Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>81</sup> *Brothers in Arms*, 43.

It does seem I can hardly realize that I am the person whom you have one day promised to make happy. Now I shall have something to live for & hope that soon the day many come when I can call you "all my own." When shall that day be it is now for you to say. I hope you will not decide like a great many to wait until "the war ends." Shall it be whenever it is possible for me to get a leave of absence to visit M[adison] for that purpose.<sup>82</sup>

However, the marriage never took place. Two years after Alex's death, Amanda Willson wrote to his sister, Sallie Hearn, and expressed how her heart was still broken.

Two years ago today it has been since that dark dark shadow crossed my pathway and I was left with a blighted heart to mourn the loss of one whom I had learned to idolize. It is wrong in me to indulge in painful memories, but it is a feeling I cannot if I would dispell. As long as life shall last, my mind will revert to the past.<sup>83</sup>

The love between Alexander Spence and Amanda Willson was not fleeting but a true devotion that continued on even after death.

The impact of the Civil War upon Clark County was significant. The loss of men such as the Spence brothers and Babe Cook continued to be felt for several generations. Widespread devastation and harsh Reconstruction policies created considerable hardships for many citizens for years. However, the community came together and worked to rebuild that which had been lost.

The importance of Clark County in the Civil War can be seen in the lives of the ordinary citizens. They are the people that supported the Confederate war effort through good times and bad. They sacrificed their goods and natural resources in order to fulfill their patriotic duty. Numerous actions through this tumultuous time depended on the

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<sup>82</sup> Alex Spence to Amanda Willson, 3 November 1864. Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>83</sup> Amanda Willson to Sallie Hearn, 30 November, 1866, Madison, Georgia. Publication of the Old State House Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas.

county for support and leadership. As pointilism requires each dot to complete the image, so the true portrait of the Civil War ought to include all aspects of the war effort. Although Clark County is not the biggest or most colorful point in the portrait of the Civil War, it is an essential element that blends with those around it to enrich the larger portrait.

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