

# THE UNION INFORMER

Monthly Newsletter of the Indian Nations Camp No. 3  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

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The Elkhorn Tavern as it stands on the Pea Ridge National Military Park in northwest Arkansas. The tavern, situated on the Old Wire Road from Springfield, MO, was a pivotal point in the battle.

## May Camp Meeting

Our speaker for this month's camp meeting will be Cdr. Mike Rusk. His topic will be "On Both Sides of the Line." This is a story about war in the Atlanta Campaign, and particularly about the Battle of Chickamauga as seen through the eyes of diarist Fannie (Oslin) Jackson, who lived nearby.

This lady's firsthand account of some of the action that took place in her vicinity provides a rare glimpse of these events.

This month, our camp meeting will be held in the Maple Room of the **Hardesty Regional Library**, 8316 E. 93<sup>rd</sup> Street, two blocks east of Memorial Dr. with parking all around. The meeting will begin this Thursday at the usual time of 6:30 p.m. **Correction:** Please note that last month's newsletter incorrectly stated the date of the camp meeting as May 22, rather than *May 23rd*.

## April Camp Meeting

At our April camp meeting, a light turnout of six camp members were present to discuss the Battle of Pea Ridge. They were: Brothers Joe Fears; Jesse Walker; Charlie Walker; Mike Rusk, and Carl Fallen.

The Battle of Pea Ridge (known to Confederates as The Battle of Elkhorn Tavern) was called the most pivotal Civil War battle west of the Mississippi River and is one of the most intact Civil War battlefields in the United States.

It was fought on March 6-8, 1862, just nine months before the Battle of Prairie Grove was fought just a few miles south of Fayetteville. Approximately 10,500 Union soldiers engaged 16,500 Confederates. Estimated casualties for the Union were 1,300 as opposed to 2,100 for the Confederates.

Under Major General Earl Van Dorn, the Confederate strategy was to advance northward through Missouri, defeat the Union forces and take St. Louis, which would give them control of the gateway to the west. St. Louis, lying at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, was a strategic link between the eastern and western portions of the Confederacy. It was decidedly pro-Union, and a major industrial and commercial center.

Even though suffering from the after effects of flu or pneumonia, Van Dorn began assembling his troops at Fayetteville. He was joined by Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, whose troops had been steadily losing ground in Missouri and had been driven to the Arkansas-Missouri border. Texas troops under Brig. Gen. Benjamin McCulloch also joined Van Dorn. A colorful contingent of 2,000 assorted Indians, mostly Cherokees, under the command of the renowned frontiersman Brig. Gen. Albert Pike made up the rest of Van Dorn's force.

Van Dorn's force was opposed by fellow West Point graduate Samuel R. Curtis of no prior military distinction. A heavy snow was falling, and the troops trudged through stinging winds and knee-deep snow drifts as they travelled northward toward Fayetteville.

Gen. Curtis was moving south to meet the threat. At Pea Ridge, Curtis consolidated his forces and entrenched along Sugar Creek two miles to the south side of the ridge, and roughly parallel to it. He centered his operations at Elkhorn Tavern at the eastern edge of the ridge.

Van Dorn had hoped to slip past Curtis' force and circle around behind him, cutting off his supply line, and attacking from his rear. However, arriving on the evening of March 6, he realized that he would not be able to slip past Curtis completely unnoticed. He would have to deal with Curtis first. He decided to take advantage of his superior numbers, the static position of the entrenched Federals, and the terrain itself. The same mountains that provided security to Curtis' right flank might also serve to mask Van Dorn's movements to the west.

Van Dorn determined to bring to bring his force to the rear of the Federal line, thereby negating its entrenchments and its advantageous position behind Little Sugar Creek.



Image from the Pea Ridge National Military Park.

On the night of March 6-7, he ordered his troops, already weary from three days and 50 miles of arduous marching, to make their way along a road called the Bentonville Detour. That movement would allow the Confederates to move past the Union right flank, shielded from view by the looming mountains. Troops from McCullough's and Price's divisions would fall upon the Federal flanks from the rear in a pincer movement, creating a surprise double envelopment from which the outnumbered Federals would have no escape.

However, Van Dorn's strategy had left his slow moving supply train behind in Arkansas, leaving him cut off from it as he had sought to cut off Curtis supply train and possible escape back to Missouri. He had kept his campfires burning all night long on the south side of Little Sugar Creek to deceive Curtis that his troops were still in position there.

On the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, Curtis realized that the Confederates were absent, and he had no idea where they had gone. Later in the morning his scouts reported that they were advancing toward him in strength from

the high ground in the rear. He ordered his troops to about-face in position.

The long march during the cold, dark night had caused the attack to start late. Outnumbered by artillery, the Federals fought the superior numbers of the attackers, but gradually lost ground until darkness caused a halt for the evening. After repeated barrages and assaults, the Confederates had used much of their artillery ammunition, and could not be resupplied. By this time, the Confederate forces were exhausted. They had had no sleep and little food for almost two days.

Van Dorn suffered setbacks when the Indian troops left the field, and the deaths of Gen. McCulloch and his successor, Col. James McIntosh, were killed. Col. Louis Hebert was captured. Only Albert Pike was left to gather the remnants of the command.

On the following day, Curtis sensed the Confederates were now in a defensive posture and not inclined to renew the offensive. His troops enjoyed a hot breakfast and confidence that they had held against superior numbers. He shifted his troops to take the offensive.

Van Dorn resumed hostilities with a massive artillery barrage, but the firing was without focus. The Confederates had expended most of their artillery ammunition the previous day, and were cut off from their supply wagons. Curtis ordered Sigel's artillerymen to respond. As the Rebel ammunition dwindled, the Union gunners began knocking the Confederate cannons out, one by one. Meanwhile, the Union infantry surged forward on the left and pushed the Rebels back from the ridge.

The fighting enveloped the Elkhorn Tavern. Both of Van Dorn's wings began to dissolve. The Confederates beat a hasty retreat in three directions to the north.

According to the Pea Ridge website: "Inside the Visitor Center you will find a theater, a bookstore, and a small museum. Outside you will find a 7-mile, 10-stop tour road, a 9-mile horse trail and a 7-mile hiking trail.

"The tour road as well as the hiking and horse trails are open from 6:00 am to sunset, 7 days a week. The park is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

"For those that enjoy nature, there are plenty of opportunities to see wildlife and beautiful forest, and a chance to get away from the pressures of the modern world."

## **Camp Business Conducted In March**

Cdr. Rusk announced that the camp's Form 990-N had been filed with the IRS to retain our 501 (c) 3 status.

Dept. Cdr. Jesse Walker stated that the Dept. Cdr. badge had been located. In another matter, the Dept. website has not been updated for two years, and the password to access it is unknown, making it likely that it will have to be abandoned. A question was raised as to whether a Facebook page could be a less expensive substitute.

Cdr. Walker said that two Department positions had been filled: William Andrews as Chaplain; and Mike Rusk as Patriotic Instructor.

Cdr. Rusk will try to secure the Schusterman-Benson Library as the site for camp meetings for the rest of the summer.

Since the year 2021 will be our 20<sup>th</sup> year Department Encampment, Cdr. Rusk would like to see a committee formed to make it a special one, with all members encouraged to attend. In all likelihood, the national Commander-in-Chief will be a member of our Department. We should begin making plans now to make this a special occasion.

As part of our recruiting effort, we should make a determined effort to poll former camp members and try to persuade them to rejoin the camp.

## **Memorial Day Ceremony**

Again, be reminded of our Memorial Day ceremony on Monday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, at 10 o'clock. This year, it will be held at the GAR monument in Rose Hill Cemetery. This is one of the camp's key activities for the year, so please make every effort to be present with family members, if possible.

The Rachel Cormany Auxiliary would like our help in distributing grave flags to the Union soldiers buried there. Bring a sandwich and drink, if you would like to join them in a pleasant picnic on site, after the job is done. Each year, they dutifully assemble in the parking lot on the east side of the building at the entrance to the cemetery at 9:30 a.m. on the Saturday preceding Memorial Day, May 25<sup>th</sup>. Each person will be given a few flags, a cemetery map, a list of headstone names, and a gouge to punch a hole for the flag, if the ground is hard to penetrate.

The auxiliary will return after Memorial Day to reclaim their flags, which are labeled as their property.



Our Department Encampment badge and delegate ribbon for April 2019. (Badge design by Mike Rusk)

## Brother Bernie Cooper Recovering from Broken Ankle

During a fall on Easter morning, Brother Bernie Cooper broke his right ankle and was taken to the hospital to wait for the swelling to recede so that a boot or cast could be applied. He has been moved a couple times since then. Healing time was originally estimated at eight weeks. He is now recovering at:

Sand Plum Assisted Living  
 9999 East 121 Street South  
 Bixby, OK 74008  
 918-369-7100                   **Room 415**  
 No Phone in his Room

**Bernie's Cell Number: 918-724-7887**

Said to be doing well, but Bernie still is not allowed to put any weight on his ankle. Lori asks that we keep her father in our prayers.

## Commander's Dispatch – May 2019

A standing order from our National Command Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War is the observance of Memorial Day by all camps and departments. We will hold our ceremony at the Rose Hill Cemetery on Monday, May 27, 2019 at 10:00 with brother Joe Fears presiding. As Camp Commander and representing our Department Commander Jesse Walker and I will be traveling to Oklahoma City for Memorial Day to participate with the Jeremiah Smith Camp #1 at their Memorial Day service which will be dedicating the grave of Brother Jeff Kennedy's great grandfather who is a civil war veteran buried there. I know that our camp officers and brothers will carry out Memorial Day services here in Tulsa as in the past. The Rachel Cormany Auxiliary and the Sgt Jacob Overturf camp #4 have also been invited to join us. I understand that we will be dedicating a new Indian Nations Camp wreath this year. Thanks to SVC Carl Fallen for making this possible.

On Saturday, May 25, 2019, those of us who are able will meet at 9:30 at the Rosehill Cemetery as we do every year to plant a US flag on the 40 plus Union Veterans who are interred there. If you have not done this before I highly recommend that you join us as it is very meaningful as we remember the Civil War Union Veterans who lived to become Tulsans. If you do attend be sure to pack a sandwich as we usually have a picnic style lunch there at the cemetery after the last flag is placed.

Camp meeting in May will be held at the Hardesty Library, Maple Room. In June, July and August we will be meeting at the Helmerich Library on 91<sup>st</sup> street.



## Camp Calendar

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| May 23  | Camp Meeting – Hardesty Regional Library, Maple Room |
| May 25  | Place Grave Flags at Rose Hill Cem. 9:30 a.m.        |
| May 27  | Memorial Day Ceremony – Rose Hill                    |
| June 27 | Camp Meeting – Helmerich Library                     |
| June 27 | Camp Meeting – Helmerich Library                     |

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