

# **Battle of Westport**

## Biographical Sketches

### **Union**

- William Rosecrans (Department of Missouri)
- Samuel Curtis (Department of Kansas)
- James Blunt (KS Provisional Cavalry)
- Alfred Pleasonton (MO Provisional Cavalry)

### **Confederate**

- Edmund Kirby Smith (Trans-Mississippi Department)
- Sterling Price (Army of Missouri)
- Joseph Shelby (Div. Cdr)
- John Marmaduke (Div. Cdr)

\*\* These are baseline sketches from “Generals in Blue”, “Generals in Gray” and “Who Was Who in the Union/Confederacy”. Please do additional research to add to the background information, and analyze the “*Missouri, One Last Time*” article to understand each characters roles during the Campaign/Raid.

## ROSECRANS, William Starke (1819-1898)

The military successes of William S. Rosecrans were overshadowed by others and were insufficient to protect him from the wrath of his superiors—with whom he had difficulties in dealing—when he met with a major defeat at Chickamauga. Born in Ohio he had been graduated from West Point in 1842 and, ranking fifth in his class, was posted to the engineers. After a series of routine assignments and faced with the ever-slow peacetime promotions, he resigned as a first lieutenant in 1854.

Entering the business field, he was severely burned in 1859 in an accident at his kerosene plant in Cincinnati. With none of his business ventures being really profitable, he reentered the military service at the outbreak of the Civil War. His assignments included: volunteer aide-de-camp, Ohio Volunteers (April 23, 1861); colonel, Engineers, Ohio Volunteers (April 23, 1861); commanding brigade, Army of Occupation—West Virginia, Department of the Ohio (May-July 23, 1861); colonel, 23rd Ohio (June 12, 1861); brigadier general, USA (June 17, 1861, to rank from May 16); commanding Army of Occupation—West Virginia, Department of the Ohio (July 23-October 11, 1861); also commanding the department (July 23-September 21, 1861); commanding Department of Western Virginia (October 11, 1861-March 11, 1862); commanding Mountain Department (March 14-29, 1862); commanding Right Wing, Army of the Mississippi (May-June 1862); commanding the army (June 26-October 24, 1862); also commanding District of Corinth, Army of the Tennessee (July-September 24, 1862); also commanding 3rd Division, Army of the Tennessee (September 24-October 20, 1862); major general, USV (September 17, 1862; reappointed October 25, to rank from March 21, 1862); commanding 14th Corps, Army of the Cumberland (October 24, 1862-January 9, 1863); commanding Army and Department of the Cumberland (October 30, 1862-October 20, 1863); and commanding Department of the Missouri (January 30-December 9, 1864). Shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter Rosecrans was assigned to the staff of George B. McClellan and took part in the early campaigning in western Virginia. He scored a minor victory at Rich Mountain but the credit went instead to his superior, McClellan, who had failed to carry out his part of the operation. When McClellan went to Washington, Rosecrans took over command in the region and fought at Carinfax Ferry and Gauley River Bridge. After being superceded by John C. Frémont he was assigned to guide Louis Blenker's division on its new assignment in West Virginia. A brigadier general from the early stages of the war, he was sent to the West at his own request and served under John Pope in the advance on Corinth. He commanded the only Union forces to get into action at Iuka, under a plan that had been approved by his new superior, Grant. He also fought at Corinth and then was named to succeed Don C. Buell in charge of the Army of the Ohio, which was renamed the Army of the Cumberland. A heavy drinker and profuse swearer, he was extremely popular with his men who dubbed him "Old Rosey." After much prodding he advanced from Nashville to near Murfreesboro where he was set upon by Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee. Hard pressed at first, he managed to hold on and score a victory for the Union cause. Lincoln expressed his gratefulness for the battle and his faith in the general and Rosecrans received the Thanks of Congress. His next achievement is little remembered but of vital importance. In a campaign that produced no major battle he maneuvered the Confederates out of middle Tennessee and into northern Georgia. Known as the Tullahoma Campaign, it and its aftermath was one of the most important moves of the

war since it forced Bragg back to his base at Chattanooga and set the stage for the capture of that city, which was accomplished in September 1863. Rosecrans then spread his forces out in pursuit of the "fleeing" enemy who turned, reinforced, and attacked him along Chickamauga Creek. The first day's battle gave the advantage to neither side but on the next day Rosecrans mistakenly believed that there was a gap in the defensive line and ordered Thomas J. Wood's division to fill it. This created a real gap which the Confederates under James Longstreet promptly exploited. The result was that Rosecrans and almost two-thirds of his army found themselves fleeing from the field toward Chattanooga. However, a stand was made by mixed forces under George H. Thomas, who would succeed Rosecrans in army command. Relieved by Grant the next month, Rosecrans was shunted off to the troublesome Department of the Missouri where his limited forces had difficulty in dealing with Sterling Price's invasion of the state. He was suddenly relieved in December 1864 and spent the balance of his career on leave or awaiting orders which never came. Mustered out of the volunteers on January 15, 1866, he was brevetted major general in the regular service for his victory at Murfreesboro but resigned in disgust at his treatment, on March 28, 1867. Settling in California, he became the chairman of the Military Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives; but this was not until after he had repeatedly turned down nominations for congress. He was so noted for this that he became known as the "Great Decliner." For the second time he was removed from a position by Grant, when he was ambassador to Mexico. He got even with his old chief while in Congress by opposing Grant's attempts to collect back pay. Rosecrans won a

certain degree of recognition in 1889 when he was placed on the retired list as a brigadier general. (Lamers, William M., *The Edge of Glory: A Biography of General William S. Rosecrans*)



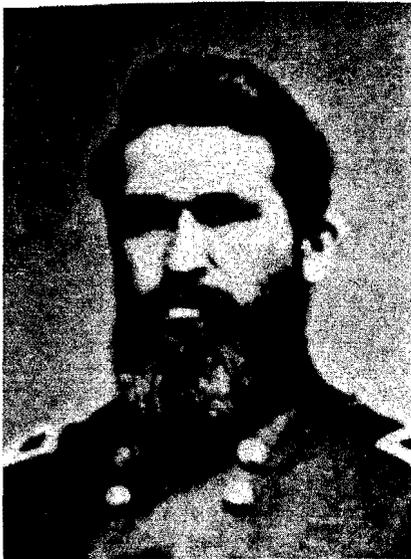
Samuel Ryan Curtis was born February 3, 1805, in Clinton County, New York. His father, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, and his mother were both originally from Connecticut. Soon after Cur-



tis' birth, the family moved to Licking County, Ohio, from which state he was appointed to West Point. After graduation in 1831, he served a year in garrison at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, resigning on June 30, 1832. For the next seven years Curtis was a civil

engineer in Ohio; in his free time he studied law and interested himself in the activities of the state militia. Upon the outbreak of the Mexican War he was appointed adjutant general of Ohio but soon accepted the colonelcy of the 2nd Ohio Volunteers, which he led with distinction in General Zachary Taylor's army. He moved to Keokuk, Iowa, and later lived in St. Louis. While in Keokuk he engaged in engineering and in the practice of law, was elected mayor in 1856, and the same year was elected to Congress, where he served three successive terms. Mustered into the Union army as colonel of the 2nd Iowa, he was appointed brigadier general of volunteers to rank from May 17, 1861, and resigned his Congressional seat on August 6 in order to accept the commission. The following spring he was in command of the Federal army which defeated the Confederates at the celebrated battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas. For this achievement he was appointed major general on March 21, 1862. That autumn he was given command of the Department of the Missouri; however, his falling out with Governor William Gamble resulted in the removal of Curtis in May, 1863, by President Abraham Lincoln, who remarked that he had no authority to remove Gamble. General Curtis then commanded the Department of Kansas and later that of the Northwest until the close of the war. In August, 1865, he was commissioned to negotiate treaties with the Sioux, Cheyenne, and other Plains tribes and in November of that year was appointed to a commission to examine and report upon the construction of the fledgling Union Pacific Railroad, then building west from Omaha. While on this work, he died at Council Bluffs, Iowa, December 26, 1866, and was buried in Oakland Cemetery, Keokuk.

James Gillpatrick Blunt was born in Trenton, a village of Hancock County, Maine, on July 21, 1826. At fifteen he went to sea for five years. He later was graduated from a medical college in Columbus, Ohio, commenced practice in New Madison, Ohio, and in 1856 settled in Greeley, Kansas. Opposed to slavery, he soon allied himself with John Brown. Blunt was a member of the Wyandotte constitutional convention in 1859 and served as chairman of the committee on militia. Contrary to some accounts, Blunt's entrance into the Civil War was actually an extension of



his Jayhawker career, like that of his superior, Senator James H. Lane. Lane recruited the "Kansas Brigade," a force that was not at first admitted into Federal service. Blunt, acting as a regimental commander under Lane, participated in some minor affairs in Kansas and the Indian Territory. However, on April 8, 1862, he was duly appointed a brigadier general of volunteers and distinguished himself in a number of skirmishes and battles. He chastised Confederate General Douglas H. Cooper and his Cherokees and Choctaws at Old Fort Wayne that autumn and in November became commander of the Army of the Frontier, with which he defeated General J. S. Marmaduke at Cane Hill. Acting in concert with General F. J. Herron he repulsed T. C. Hindman at Prairie Grove; captured Van Buren, Arkansas; again defeated Cooper at Honey Springs, Indian Territory, in July 1863; and in 1864 successfully opposed the "Missouri

Raid" of General Sterling Price. Meantime he was promoted to major general of volunteers on March 16, 1863 (to rank from November 29, 1862). For four years after the war Blunt practiced medicine in Leavenworth, Kansas, after which he moved to Washington, where he was for many years a claims agent. Blunt spent his last years in a government hospital for the insane in Washington, D. C. He died there on July 27, 1881, and was buried in Leavenworth.

## PLEASONTON, Alfred (1824-1897)

Thought by many to be a *beau sabreur*—the very ideal of a cavalryman—Alfred Pleasonton nonetheless proved ineffective at intelligence gathering and was eventually exiled to the Department of the Missouri for the balance of the war. A West Pointer (1844) from the nation's capital, he had been posted to the dragoons and had served in Mexico and against the Seminoles in Florida. In the former conflict he earned a brevet. His Civil War-era assignments included: captain, 2nd Dragoons (since March 3, 1855); captain, 2nd Cavalry (change of designation August 3, 1861); major, 2nd Cavalry (February 15, 1862); brigadier general, USV (July 16, 1862); commanding 2nd Brigade, Cavalry Division, Army of the Potomac (July 16-September 1862); commanding cavalry division, Army of the Potomac (September-November 1862 and January-February 12, 1863); commanding Cavalry Division, Right Grand Division, Army of the Potomac (November 1862-January 1863); commanding 1st Division, Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac (February 12-May 22, 1863); commanding the corps (May 22, 1863-January 22, 1864 and February 12-March 25, 1864); major general, USV (June 22, 1863); commanding District of Central Missouri, Department of the Missouri (July 24-September 3, 1864); commanding District of St. Louis, Department of the Missouri (November 21-December 9, 1864); and commanding District of Wisconsin, Department of the Northwest (1865). After initial recruiting duty in Delaware, he commanded his regiment in Utah where he feared he would be left out of the war. His regiment was, however, transferred to Washington in the fall of 1861 and he attracted McClellan's notice the next year while commanding the regiment at army headquarters on the Peninsula. Following his service during the Seven Days he was made a brigadier and given a brigade in the newly organized cavalry division. By the battle of Antietam he commanded the army's cavalry and had

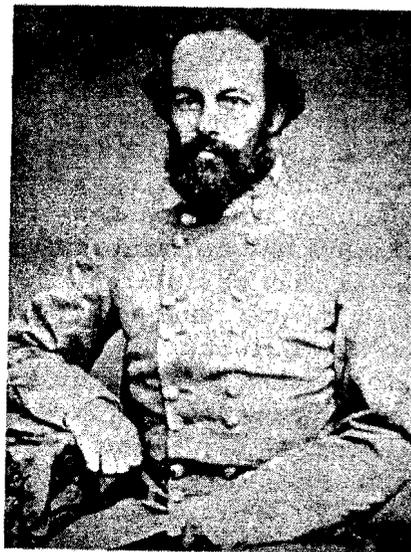


earned a brevet for the unimpressive role of guarding the artillery and a little skirmishing along the center. His role in the aftermath of the campaign was even less auspicious. His reports of enemy activity were so unreliable—due to his failure to break Jeb Stuart's screen—that he earned the nickname, "Knight of Romance," for the deluge of paper he sent to army headquarters. He also failed to catch Jeb Stuart's cavalry in its second ride around McClellan's army. At Fredericksburg he commanded the cavalry division attached to the Right Grand Division. At Chancellorsville, the corps commander George Stoneman, in an effort to slight Pleasonton, left him with only one brigade to accompany the main army while he himself would get the glory in a major raid. The raid failed while Pleasonton earned laurels for his ordering the suicidal charge of the 8th Pennsylvania cavalry to buy time for the cavalryman to gather up a number of guns to hold a vital position, Hazel Grove, in front of Jackson's assault. While his role was overrated, he was nonetheless named to replace Stoneman. His command did fairly well against Stuart at Brandy Station, Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville, with the Union cavalry beginning to hold its own against the Rebels. At Gettysburg he for some reason served more as a chief of cavalry at headquarters than as a corps leader. He failed to replace Buford's division on the left, which almost led to disaster on July 2. In the campaign as a whole he again failed as an intelligence gatherer. Early the following year he opposed the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid—rightly—but earned the enmity of its administration backers. In the March 1864 reorganization under Grant he was replaced by Philip H. Sheridan and later sent to Missouri where he performed creditably against Price's invasion, but he received little more credit than a brevet. His role was critical at both Westport and Marais des Cygnes. Mustered out of the volunteers on January 15, 1866, he was a major general by brevet in the regular army but only a major in line rank. Disgusted by his future potential in the army, he resigned on January 1, 1868, and held numerous minor governmental appointments and entered railroading.

## SMITH, Edmund Kirby (1824-1893)

Following the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson and the closing of the Mississippi, Confederate General E. Kirby Smith was confronted with the command of a virtually independent area of the Confederacy and with all of its inherent administrative problems. The Floridian West Pointer (1845)—nicknamed "Seminole" at the academy—had been posted to the infantry upon his graduation and won two brevets in the Mexican War. In 1855 he transferred to the cavalry and served until his resignation as major in the 2nd Cavalry on April 6, 1861. In the meantime he had taught mathematics at his alma mater and been wounded in 1859 fighting Indians in the Nescutunga Valley of Texas. When Texas seceded, Smith refused to surrender his command to the state forces under Ben McCulloch. Joining the Confederacy, his assignments included: lieutenant colonel, Cavalry (spring 1861); chief of staff, Army of the Shenandoah (spring-summer 1861); brigadier general, CSA (June 17, 1861); commanding 4th Brigade, Army of the Shenandoah (ca. June-July 20, 1861); commanding 4th Brigade, 2nd Corps, Army of the Potomac (July 20-21, 1861); major general, CSA (October 11, 1861); commanding 4th Division, Potomac District, Department of Northern Virginia (October 22, 1861-February 21, 1862); commanding Department of East Tennessee (March 8-August 25, ca. October 31-December 1862, and December 23, 1862-January 1863); commanding Army of Kentucky, Department #2 (August 25-November 20, 1862); lieutenant general, CSA (October 9, 1862); also commanding corps, Army of Tennessee (November 20-December 1862); commanding Southwestern Army (January 14-March 7, 1863); commanding Trans-Mississippi Department (March 7, 1863-April 19, 1865 and April 22-May 26, 1865); and general, PACS (February 19, 1864). After serving as Joseph E. Johnston's staff head in the Shenandoah Valley he was promoted to brigadier general and given command of a brigade which he led at 1st Bull Run. Wounded severely in that action, he returned to duty as a major general and division commander in northern Virginia. Early in 1862 he was dispatched to command in East Tennessee. Cooperating with Braxton Bragg in the invasion of Kentucky, he scored a victory at Richmond and was soon named to the newly created grade of lieutenant general. Early in 1863 he was transferred to the Trans-Mississippi West where he remained for the balance of the war. With the fall of the Mississippi River to the Union forces he was virtually cut off from Richmond. He was forced to deal himself with such matters as impressment of supplies, destruction of cotton to prevent capture, and blockade-running through Mexico, in addition to his normal military duties. He also, in an irregular fashion, promoted officers to general's rank, sometimes making his actions subject to the president's

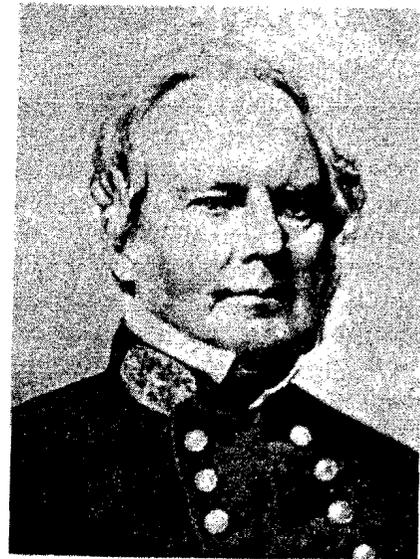
approval and sometimes not. Davis approved some and never acted on others. Smith could be forgiven for exceeding his authority in such matters due to the situation of his command as an almost separate country. In the spring of 1864 he soundly defeated Nathaniel P. Banks' Red River Campaign and then dispatched reinforcements northward to defeat Steele's cooperating column in Arkansas. With the pressure relieved, Smith attempted to send reinforcements east of the Mississippi but, as in the case of his earlier attempts to relieve Vicksburg, it proved impracticable due to Union naval control of the river. Instead he dispatched Sterling Price, with all available cavalry, on an unsuccessful invasion of Missouri. Thereafter the war west of the river was principally one of small raids and guerrilla activity. By now a full general, he surrendered his department—the only significant Confederate army left—on May 26, 1865. After the war he was active in the telegraph business and education. At the time of his death he was the last of the full Confederate ex-generals. (Parkes, Joseph H., *General Kirby Smith C.S.A.*)



## PRICE, Sterling (1809-1867)

As the leader of the Missouri State Guard, Virginia-born Sterling Price became one of the principal forces in Confederate Missouri at the beginning of the Civil War. A lawyer and farmer in his adopted state, he had gradually entered politics as a state legislator and U.S. congressman. During the Mexican War he was colonel of the 2nd Missouri and a brigadier general of volunteers. In the interwar years he served as governor and, as the secession crisis approached, he opposed separation but gradually altered his views. Accepting command of the Missouri State Guard, his assignments included: major general, Missouri State Guard (May 1861); commanding Missouri State Guard (May 1861-March 17, 1862); major general, CSA (March 6, 1862); commanding 1st Division, Trans-Mississippi District, Department #2 (March 17-April 1862); commanding division, Army of the West, Department #2 (April-May 1862); commanding the army (July 3-September 26, 1862); also commanding District of the Tennessee, Department #2 (July 1862); commanding corps (Army of the West), Army of West Tennessee, Department #2 (October-December 1862); commanding corps, Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana (ca. December 1862-February 27, 1863); commanding division, District of Arkansas, Trans-Mississippi Department (March 30-July 24, 1863 and September 25, 1863-March 16, 1864); commanding the district (July 24-September 25, 1863 and March 16-early August 1864); commanding Army of Missouri, Trans-Mississippi Department (September 18-December 1864); and also commanding Cavalry Corps, Trans-Mississippi Department (September 1864-early 1865). Meeting in June 1861 with Francis P. Blair and Nathaniel Lyon at the Planter's Hotel in St. Louis, he felt himself pushed into the Confederate camp. Leading the Missouri State Guard under Ben McCulloch, he fought at Wilson's Creek and then captured the Union garrison at Lexington. Unable to cooperate with McCulloch, he agreed to the idea of both of them serving under Earl Van Dorn and in such a setup fought in the Southern defeat at Pea Ridge. Appointed to a major generalcy in the regular Confederate forces from the date of the opening of the battle, he worked to transfer his men to that service. Transferred to the east of the Mississippi River, his forces arrived too late for the battle of Shiloh but took part in the defense of Corinth, Mississippi. He lost the fight at Iuka and again under Van Dorn took part in the unsuccessful attacks on Corinth. He maneuvered against Grant during that officer's drive into central Mississippi and then transferred back west of the Mississippi where he led the unsuccessful attack on Helena in an effort to relieve the pressure on Vicksburg which, ironically, fell the same day. Commanding the District of Arkansas, he failed to hold Little Rock but the next year campaigned successfully against Steele's drive on Camden, taking part in the victory at Jenkins' Ferry. Placed in charge of a large force of cavalry, he was dispatched on a raid into Missouri in the late summer and fall of

1864. Deterred from an attack on St. Louis by Union reinforcements, he moved to the West and was finally defeated at Westport. After fighting a rear-guard action at Marais des Cygnes, Kansas, he continued his retreat back into Arkansas by a roundabout route. While the campaign had thrown a fright into the Union high command, which felt this to be a dormant sector, it had not achieved any significant lasting result and had decimated Price's command. In the final months of the war there was a Confederate inquiry into the causes of the failure. At the war's close he moved into Mexico where he remained until the fall of Maximilian. The final year of his life was spent in St. Louis. To the end he had been popular with his Missourians who dubbed him "Old Pap." (Castel, Albert, *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West* and Stalhope, Robert E., *Sterling Price, Portrait of a Southerner*)



## **SHELBY, Joseph Orville (1830-1897)**

One of the Confederacy's most effective cavalry leaders, Joseph O. Shelby served entirely in the Trans-Mississippi West. A planter and rope manufacturer, he had had investments in both his native Kentucky and Missouri. During the Bleeding Kansas episode he led a company of Kentuckians on the slavery side. Early in the Civil War he entered the Missouri State Guard and his assignments included: captain, Shelby's Ranger Company, Missouri State Guard (spring 1861); colonel, 5th Missouri Cavalry (1862); commanding brigade, Marmaduke's Cavalry Division, 1st Corps, Trans-Mississippi Department (summer-December 1862); commanding brigade, Marmaduke's Cavalry Division, District of Arkansas, Trans-Mississippi Department (January-July 4, 1863 and late 1863-September 1864); brigadier general, CSA (December 15, 1863); commanding division, Army of Missouri, Trans-Mississippi Department (September 18-September 1864); and commanding 1st (Missouri) Cavalry Brigade, 1st (Missouri) Cavalry Division, Cavalry Corps, Trans-Mississippi Department (September 1864-May 26, 1865). As a company commander he fought at Carthage, Wilson's Creek, and Pea Ridge before being sent back to Missouri to raise a regiment. As a colonel in charge of a brigade in John S. Marmaduke's mounted division, he fought at Prairie Grove and was wounded at Helena. Upon his recovery he was promoted to brigadier general and led a brigade at Jenkins' Ferry. During Price's invasion of Missouri in the late summer and fall of 1864 he led a cavalry division. When the Confederacy's collapse came he refused to surrender and led part of his force to Mexico where they unsuccessfully offered their services to either side. He then returned to his business interests in Missouri. (O'Flaherty, Daniel, *General Jo Shelby, Undefeated Rebel*)



**John Sappington Marmaduke** was born near Arrow Rock, Missouri, March 14, 1833. He studied both at Yale and at Harvard before being graduated from West Point in 1857. Re-

signing his United States commission in 1861, he was first a colonel in the Missouri militia, then lieutenant colonel of the 1st Arkansas Battalion, and colonel of the 3rd Confederate Infantry. Highly commended for his conduct at Shiloh and Prairie Grove, he was promoted brigadier general to rank from November 15, 1862. Marmaduke twice raided into Missouri in 1863, and took part in the attack on Helena, Arkansas, in July of that year. During General Sterling Price's defense of Little Rock in September, Marmaduke was in command of the cavalry of Price's command. He here fought a duel with General L. M. Walker which resulted in the latter's death. Active in the Red River campaign of 1864, he later in the year accompanied Price into Missouri; and on the retreat, while in command of the rear guard, was captured at Mine Creek, a tributary of the Marais des Cygnes in Kansas, on October 25, 1864. While yet in prison he was the last major general appointed in the armies of the Confederacy—on March 18, 1865 to rank from March 17. (317) Upon his release from Fort Warren in July he returned to Missouri and engaged in the insurance business in St. Louis. He was later editor of an agricultural journal, and was defeated for the governorship of the state in 1880, but served



four years as a member of the Missouri Railway Commission. In 1884 General Marmaduke was elected governor with little opposition, but died at Jefferson City before the expiration of his term, December 28, 1887. He is buried there.