



The battle of Kirksville, August 6, 1862. Painting by an unknown artist (Wilson's Creek National Battlefield)

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In order to understand the significance of the battle of Kirksville it is necessary to give in brief outline the general situation in the state from the outbreak of the war to the day of the engagement.

In the election of 1860, Missouri cast her electoral votes for Douglas for President, but elected Jackson, a southern rights man as Governor, and Reynolds, another southern rights man as Lieutenant Governor. The Legislature elected at this time met in January, 1861, and through a combination made between the Douglas men and the southern rights men, a Speaker was elected who agreed with the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor in politics. During January and February of that year six southern states followed South Carolina in seceding from the Union. Under the influence of these acts of secession the Legislature ordered that the people should elect representatives to a State Convention which should decide whether the State should stay in the Union or not. To the great disgust and disappointment of the southern sympathizers in the Legislature and elsewhere, the election returns showed that not a single member of the secession party had been elected, though a few believers in States rights had been elected. The Convention after discussing matters for some time, finally voted in March not to secede. This was followed by futile attempts by Governor Jackson to take the State out of the Union anyhow. How Camp Jackson was taken by General Lyon, how the effort to effect peace between the different parties failed, how Governor Jackson abandoned Jefferson City, how he defeated Sigel at Carthage, how he went to Memphis, Tennessee, to secure assistance from the Confederate Government, how the State Convention in its second session deposed him and appointed Hamilton R. Gamble in his stead, how the Confederates won the battle of Wilson's Creek in August and the battle of Lexington in September, how the subsequent victories of the Federals in the next few months culminated in the battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, in March, 1862, thereby determining the course of the State with reference to the great question of secession - all these things need not be

detailed here. But as we approach nearer to the battle of Kirksville in August, 1862, it is necessary to note somewhat more carefully the events that took place.

In June, 1862, all of Missouri except the three southwest counties was erected into a military district called the District of Missouri, and was placed under the command of General Schofield. This district was divided into five divisions. The Northeastern Division was placed under Col. McNeil of St. Louis, his effective force being at that time 1,250 men.¹

At about this time the Federals began to realize what the plans of the Confederates were after the battle of Pea Ridge, and how those plans were working out. As has already been intimated this battle put an end forever to the Confederates' plan of taking the State out of the Union, but they did not give up hope as yet. Many Missouri men were sent back home after Pea Ridge to recruit soldiers for the Confederate army, and the forces that were to be thus raised were to be used in gaining the State for the southern cause. Places of rendezvous were appointed and men began to assemble in large numbers at these places in May and June.² The order for a general enrollment which was issued by Governor Gamble in July³, served to send many men into these recruiting camps in order that they might escape the State militia service.⁴

Among those who were recruiting in Northeast Missouri were Joseph C. Porter, Poindexter, Franklin, and McCullough.⁵ Porter had been elected Lieutenant Colonel of a regiment raised in Lewis County in July, 1861, and had taken an active part in the campaigns in Missouri in that year and had been at the battle of Pea Ridge. He was sent back to his home in Lewis County by General Price after that battle to recruit troops⁶, and some time in April or May he established a camp on the North Fabius River near Monticello.⁷ To this camp a goodly number of recruits came.

When it became apparent to the Federals what was going on under Porter and others, every step was taken to prevent their plans from succeeding. Gen. Schofield caused all boats and other means of crossing the Missouri River which were not under guard of his troops, to be destroyed. This was to prevent any considerable number of Confederate troops from crossing the Missouri and proceeding south to join the main army. Meanwhile Federal troops were directed against the masses of Confederate recruits that were being collected so as to crush them before they became too large.⁸ As Col. McNeil was in command of the Northeast Division of the District of Missouri, the attack upon these Confederate bands under Porter and the other leaders already mentioned was largely directed by him.

To escape attack and to increase the number of his enlistments, Porter moved from his camp on the North Fabius near Monticello to Memphis, which he took on July 13.⁹ For nearly a month from this time on Porter was on the move almost constantly with the Federal forces generally in close pursuit. As this month of marching and fighting culminated in the battle of Kirksville, it is well to note it in detail.

It seems that Porter left Memphis a few hours after he entered it, going to Downings eight miles away where he camped that night. On the day following his

¹ War of the Rebellion; Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. XIII, p. 9.

² Ibid, p. 10.

³ Ibid, p. 12.

⁴ Mudd, *With Porter in North Missouri*, Wash., 1909, 241.

⁵ War of Rebellion, Series I, Vol. XIII, p. 12.

⁶ Mudd, 25-26.

⁷ Ibid, 36.

⁸ War of Rebellion, Series I, Vol. XIII, p. 12-13.

⁹ Mudd, 53 ff.

departure Col. McNeil with three or four of his officers arrived at this place.¹⁰ After leaving Memphis Porter became aware that the Federals were pursuing him, and so planned an ambush at a nearby place called Vassar's Hill. As a result he badly crippled Major Clopper's battalion of Merrill's Horse on July 18.¹¹ Porter's men knew this engagement as Oak Ridge, and Clopper's men as Pierce's Mill.¹²

After this engagement Porter continued his way south through Knox and Shelby Counties.¹³ At Florida, Monroe County, a skirmish took place on July 22, between Porter and Major Caldwell of the Third Iowa Cavalry. Caldwell was forced to fall back while Porter continued south.¹⁴ Caldwell resumed his pursuit a little later and came upon Porter at Santa Fe and was defeated in skirmishes on July 24. Here he was compelled to fall back again while Porter advanced farther south through Audrain County.¹⁵

Porter left his camp in Audrain County on July 25 and moved west to the boundary line between Callaway and Boone Counties. He then turned east and came to Boone's Spring, nine miles north of Fulton. Here he was reinforced by men from Capt. Frost's and Capt. Cobb's companies, so that he had in all 260 men.¹⁶ The expected attack from the Federals did not materialize, so Porter proceeded down the Auxvasse to Moore's Mill, about seven miles east of Fulton. Here he was opposed by Col. Guitar who had advanced into Callaway County from Jefferson City, having been advised by General Schofield as to the movements of Porter. Guitar's forces were much larger than Porter's and were therefore able to win a victory which turned Porter back from his movement south.¹⁷ Notwithstanding this serious check Porter, according to his recent biographer, accomplished a great deal in fifteen days, having marched five hundred miles, captured one town, paroled one hundred of the enemy, fought four battles, and captured a lot of arms.¹⁸

After Moore's Mill Porter turned north, sending detachments to Paris and Canton and thereby taking those places.¹⁹ From Paris he went to Newark, Knox County, where he captured Capt. Lear and his company.²⁰ Meanwhile Col. McNeill was following him in hot pursuit. Finding it advisable to keep on the move, Porter withdrew to the north from Newark, leaving that town just shortly before McNeill came up. Instead of pushing the pursuit any farther at that time, McNeill remained at Newark a few days awaiting reinforcements. Porter continued his march until he reached the western border of Lewis County where he was reinforced by the battalion of Col. Cyrus Franklin who had been sent to capture Canton. With this battalion was Col. Frisby H. McCullough of whom we shall hear more shortly.²¹ Porter then called a conference of his officers to decide on what should be done.

The ultimate object of all these movements of Porter was, as has been said, to gather a large army and move it to Arkansas where it could join the forces that were

¹⁰ Mudd, 64.

¹¹ War of Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. XIII. 163-4; Mudd, 82 ff.

¹² Mudd, 101.

¹³ Ibid, 113 ff.

¹⁴ War of Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. XIII. 172-3; Mudd, 119 ff.

¹⁵ War of Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. XIII. 3; Mudd, 148 ff.

¹⁶ Mudd, 159-60.

¹⁷ War of Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. XIII. 184-7; Mudd, 159 ff.

¹⁸ Mudd, 199-200.

¹⁹ War of the Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. XIII, 212; Mudd. 246.

²⁰ Mudd, 242-3, 246-7.

²¹ Mudd, 247.

gathering there. The problem was how to get across the Missouri river, and it has already been noted how the Federals had anticipated this problem and made the crossing of that river very difficult by destroying the means of transportation and by patrolling the river. Nevertheless the Confederates did not despair of crossing the river, and in order that they might conceal their plans and draw the Federals away from the Missouri, a feint in force was to be made in the northern part of the state by Porter's forces, which feint would perhaps involve a bloody battle.²² It seems that Memphis had been thought of as the proper place at which to concentrate the Confederate forces and there bring on a battle, but while Porter and his men were deliberating on what they should do, a courier came from Captain Tice Cain to the effect that he and his Schulyer County company had entered Kirksville and taken it.²³ Kirksville had been held for some days previous to Cain's arrival by a company of newly enrolled militia (Company 8, 56th Regiment) under Capt. James A. Smith, but this company had been ordered by Col. Gilstrap, who was in command at Macon to come to that place and avoid the danger which it was thought was threatening it at Kirksville.²⁴ Hardly had this company left before Capt. Cain came in and sent a courier to Porter telling him what he had done. This news caused Porter and his men to decide in favor of moving to the west and joining Cain at Kirksville near which place they might bring on an engagement.

The combined force under Porter numbered about two thousand. Of this number only about five hundred were well armed, while five hundred more were only fairly armed, and the rest, fully one-half of the entire number, were completely unarmed.²⁵ The presence of so many unarmed men was doubtless due to the fact that Porter was gathering up recruits many of whom had no arms of their own and would not get any until they reached the main Confederate army in Arkansas.

This conference of Porter and his men seems to have been held in the northeastern part of Knox County near the North Fabius River. The Federal forces were crowding in upon Porter very rapidly. On Sunday, August 3, they caught up with him, but after reconnoitering for a while decided not to give battle and so withdrew into camp.²⁶ Later that same day Porter and his force started towards Kirksville which place they reached Wednesday forenoon, August 6, and made their entrance from the northeast.²⁷ Seeing how hard pressed he was, Porter decided to give battle at Kirksville.²⁸ It has been said by some that he made a mistake in not going on a little farther west and making his stand in the Chariton River bottom; it has been claimed that his chances would have been a great deal better there than in the town. Parties who were witnesses of the battle and who are still living in Kirksville say that Porter was altogether too much pushed to get beyond the town, and could not have chosen to go farther if he had wished. Warning the people to get out of town, Porter ordered some of his troops to barricade themselves in the houses²⁹, and drew up his main line of defense behind a rail fence that ran along where the Wabash Railroad now is, just west of the central part of the town.

²² Ibid. 248.

²³ Ibid. 248.

²⁴ *History of Adair, Sullivan, Putnam and Schuyler Counties*, Chicago, 1888, 304.

²⁵ Mudd, 247.

²⁶ Ibid, 252.

²⁷ Ibid, 252.

²⁸ Ibid, 252.

²⁹ War of the Rebellion, Ser. I. Vol. XIII, 213.

Kirksville was then a very small village, extending from High street on the east to the line of the present Wabash Railroad on the west, and a few blocks from the square to the north and the south. The population was about seven hundred. The census of 1860 gave it only 658.³⁰

As has already been intimated, Porter had been pursued for some time by McNeil. McNeil had started the pursuit on July 29, the day after the battle of Moore's Mill.³¹ According to his report he had started out from Palmyra on July 29, and after passing through Clinton, Monroe County, he came to Paris, which place he found Porter had just vacated.³² The pursuit from there to Kirksville via Newark has already been detailed. It should be added that McNeil remarks in his report that the pursuit from Newark to Kirksville was delayed somewhat by the worn out condition of his men and horses, by the character of the country, and by the burning of the bridges and the destruction of the fords by Porter who was in retreat before him.³³

McNeil's forces arrived at the edge of Kirksville about ten o'clock on the morning of August 6. The main column and artillery had been preceded by the advance guard composed of detachments of the Second and Eleventh Missouri State Militia under Major Benjamin. This advance guard occupied the northeast approach of the town, halting at the Parceller place, afterwards known as the Kellogg place, and now the Kinloch farm. When McNeil learned that Porter had halted in the town, he ordered all his troops to hurry up into line and deployed them on the northern and eastern sides of the town. Lieut. Col. Shaffer was put in command of the right wing which was composed of the Merrill Horse under Major Clopper, detachments of the Second and Eleventh Cavalry of the Missouri State Militia under Major Benjamin, and a section of the Third Indiana Battery under Lieut. Armington. Major Caldwell was put in command of the left wing which was composed of his own command and a detachment of the First Cavalry, Missouri Volunteers under Major Cox. A section of the steel battery of two pounder howitzers in charge of Sergeant West and ten men of Company C, Second Missouri State Militia, acted as did the Indiana Artillery under Capt. Barr of the Merrill Horse.³⁴

In order to ascertain the exact position of the enemy in the town, McNeil called for an officer and a squad who should charge into the town and draw the enemy's fire. Lieut. Cowdrey of the Merrill Horse and a squad of eight men were detailed to execute this order. Cowdrey approached the public square, and according to McNeil's report, entered the square and passed around it, coming out at the other corner.³⁵ According to eyewitnesses still living in Kirksville, this squad came close to the northwest corner of the square but never entered it because of the heavy fire that was being poured into it. The charge revealed what had been sought for, but it was accomplished at some loss. According to McNeil's report two of the squad were mortally wounded, three slightly wounded, and five horses killed.³⁶ Other reports make the loss still greater while some make it less.

The enemy having been discovered the attack commenced. The artillery of five guns, planted near what was then called the Cumberland Academy, threw shot and

³⁰ Eight Census, 1860, Population, p. 288.

³¹ War of the Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. VIII, 212.

³² Ibid, 213.

³³ Ibid, 213.

³⁴ Ibid, 213.

³⁵ Ibid. 213-4; Mudd, 255-6.

³⁶ Ibid, 213-4, 217.

shell into cornfields, gardens, and houses where Porter's men were. The dismounted men were thrown forward and they seized the outer line of sheds and houses on the north and east sides of the town. Meanwhile a large body of Porter's men who had been in a cornfield in the southeast part of town was driven out. As the Federal forces moved towards the public square the two wings met and succeeded in taking the court house. As Porter yielded ground, he concentrated his forces along the main line of defense which had been stationed on the western edge of the town. From a position where the Wabash depot now stands he poured a galling fire into McNeil's men; but McNeil's right wing moved against this line and drove it away to the west, while the left wing took full possession of the southern part of the town. The battle lasted about three hours, from about ten in the morning to one in the afternoon.³⁷

The pursuit was continued through the woods that lay to the west of the town and many horses and large quantities of arms, clothing and camp equipage were thus found. Major Clopper was ordered to pursue the fleeing Confederates with a body of Merrill's Horse, and he is reported by McNeil as having done so until he felt the enemy had crossed the Chariton.³⁸ It is the opinion however of certain citizens of Kirksville who were witnesses of the battle that the pursuit was not kept up very long, for if it had been the whole of Porter's force, they claim, would have been captured. At any rate McNeil explains his failure to pursue any farther than was done, to the hunger and fatigue of his troops, to the large numbers of the enemy, and to the fear that the enemy might suddenly fall upon his rear.³⁹

It is impossible to state with absolute accuracy the number of men engaged in this battle or the number of killed, wounded and captured. Col. McNeil in his report dated September 17, 1862, enumerated the forces under his command, but though they amounted to more than one thousand he says that only about five hundred of his men took part in the battle. The others were engaged in guarding the army train and in taking care of the horses of the men who were in the firing line.⁴⁰ He reported the Federal casualties as five killed and thirty-two wounded.⁴¹ According to an account of the battle given in the *History of Shelby County* there were six men killed and their names were as follows: Capt. Mayne of the Third Iowa; A. H. Waggoner, Mathias Olstein and Sylvester Witham, privates of Company C, Merrill's Horse; Sergeant William Bush of Company B, Ninth Missouri State Militia; H. H. Moore, of Company E, First Missouri State Militia.⁴² These names have never been verified by the writer from official records. Col. Wells Blodgett in his address delivered at the unveiling of the McNeil monument in Belle Fontaine Cemetery in St. Louis in 1894, said that the Federal loss was twenty-eight killed and sixty wounded. What his source of information was is not known.⁴³ Col. McNeil was slightly wounded in the head during the engagement. While it is impossible to ascertain the exact figures for the Federal side, the above estimates are undoubtedly more nearly correct than any that may be given for the Confederate side. Porter's men numbered about two thousand, but not over five hundred, if that many, took part in the battle.⁴⁴

³⁷ *Ibid*, 214.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 214.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 214.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 212.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 215.

⁴² *History of Shelby County*, quoted in Mudd's "With Porter", 256.

⁴³ Address of Col. Wells H. Blodgett, St. Louis, 1894, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Mudd, 247.

Those that were unarmed or poorly armed hurried on to the woods west of the town before the battle began. The Confederates killed are estimated all the way from thirty-five to one hundred and fifty, the wounded from seventy-five to four hundred, and the captured from fifty to two hundred and fifty. McNeil in his report said that about one hundred and fifty were killed, three hundred to four hundred wounded, and forty-seven taken prisoner.⁴⁵

He had an excellent opportunity of knowing the situation as he stayed in the town several days after the battle, but we can not take his estimates as being as correct as an official count would have been.

On the day after the battle, the people of the town were ordered by Col. McNeil to bury the Confederate dead. According to the testimony of several citizens of the town who responded to the order and who are still living there, the bodies of twenty-six men who were killed in the battle were gathered up and put in one long grave in the cemetery lying west of the square. But according to Mr. S. M. Johnston who was in the battle under McNeil and who has long resided in Kirksville since the war, there were three graves dug and thirty-seven Confederates were put in the one dug in a ravine west of the present Wabash depot, twenty-six in the one in the cemetery, and over twenty in the one to the northwest of the cemetery. This did not include the prisoners who were executed after the battle. As yet the writer of this article has found no confirmation of the statement of Mr. Johnston about there being three graves. It is agreed however by all that many of those who were buried in the cemetery were removed by their friends to other places as convenience permitted.

Among the Confederate killed was Lycurgus Bozarth of Adair County who is said to have joined Porter the morning of the battle. He was of the well known family of Bozarth's who were among the first settlers of the county and whose relatives were generally ardent unionists. He did not die for several days after the battle and was buried in a separate grave in the cemetery.⁴⁶ (46)

The condition of the Confederate wounded after the battle was something frightful. Porter came into town with practically nothing in the way of surgical instruments or medical supplies. Dr. A. P. Willard who then owned a drug store in Kirksville and is yet a resident of the place, says that Porter came to him on arriving in town and forced him to give up his surgical instruments. Dr. Willard says that he was promised the safe return of the instruments, but that he never saw them again. He is under the impression that Porter wanted to arrange for a hospital at the Isom Dodson place which stood southwest of the town to take care of the wounded after the battle. Even if that were the case the rout that ensued after the battle made whatever arrangements Porter might have made quite useless. The Confederate wounded were therefore in a deplorable condition. The townspeople were naturally afraid to render assistance as they felt that they might be dealt with as rendering help to the enemy of the victors. Moreover the local doctors were helpless to do anything as the only surgical instruments in the town had been taken away and nobody knew anything about where they were. Whatever of assistance was finally rendered is due to Mr. John L. Porter who was then Deputy Circuit Clerk and Recorder of Adair County and who is yet a citizen of Kirksville. He was a southern sympathizer but was acquainted with McNeil. On coming back to town late in the afternoon after the battle was over he saw the

⁴⁵ War of Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. XIII, p. 315.

⁴⁶ *History of Adair County*, 308

dreadful condition of affairs, and went to McNeil and begged for help. McNeil detailed Surgeon Lyons to do the work. Lyons called in Dr. Willard to assist him, and for two days these two men amputated limbs and performed other surgical operations upon the wounded who had been brought to what was known as the Ivie building, which stood on the northeast corner of the square where Griffith now has his grocery store. The amputated limbs were thrown out the window of the building into the alley, and it is said that a cart load accumulated there before they could be taken off and buried. The Ivie building was not sufficient to accommodate the wounded so a great many were taken care of at other places in the town.

The Federal wounded were cared for at the Cumberland Academy and at the Parcells place east of town until they could be brought in.

Before the battle began, the citizens acting on the warning of Porter, had very generally fled. Many of them fled to the north and several on reaching a place of reasonable safety from danger climbed up on the roof of a barn and witnessed the battle. Had there not been a general desertion of the town many of the citizens would have been killed. As it was one woman, Mrs. Elizabeth Coots was mortally wounded. She and her husband lived in a house just northwest of the square. When the battle began they took refuge in their cellar. Accounts differ as to how she was killed. According to one she was killed after she left the cellar and gone back into the house, the battle being at that time only about one-half over. According to another, some Confederates tried to take refuge in the Coots cellar while she was still in it and she was shot as she started to come out. She lived only a few days after she was shot.⁴⁷

The day after the battle fifteen of the Confederates who had been captured in the fight were executed on the spot where the original Wabash depot afterwards first stood, that is about two hundred yards south of the present depot. They were executed on the charge of having violated their paroles.⁴⁸ They were William Bates, R. M. Galbreath, Lewis Rollins, William Wilson, Columbus Harris, Reuben Thomas or Thompson, Thomas Webb, and Reuben Green of Monroe County; James Christian, David Wood, and Bennett Hayden of Shelby County; William Sallee, and Hamilton Brannon of Marion County, and John Kent of Adair County.⁴⁹

On the second day after the battle, Col. Frisby McCullough was likewise executed. His case seems to be somewhat different from that of the other fifteen. He had been a very successful recruiting officer in North Missouri, and was at the time of his execution an officer in the Missouri State Guards, a military force that had been organized under Governor Jackson for the purpose of taking the State out of the Union.⁵⁰ McCullough had been operating with Porter only a very short time before the battle of Kirksville, having joined him after he had left Newark on his way to Kirksville. Almost immediately after the battle he had become so ill he could not keep up with the command. Declining the escort which Porter offered him, he started to go to his home in Marion County. Near Edina he was captured by the State Militia and taken to that place. Knowing that some drastic punishment would be likely meted out to him, he asked to be sent to Palmyra; but instead he was brought to Kirksville by Capt. James S. Best whose command was escorting McNeil's supply train, which had come into Edina on its way to Kirksville just after McCullough had been captured.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *History of Adair County*, 307.

⁴⁸ *War of Rebellion*, Ser. I, Vol. XIII, p. 863.

⁴⁹ *History of Shelby County*, p. 757, quoted in Mudd, 342.

⁵⁰ Mudd, 274-6.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 269.

According to one of McCullough's friends who wrote after the event, he was paraded up and down the streets of Kirksville amid the jeers and shouts of joy of the Federals.⁵² The writer of this article has had this statement confirmed by at least one of the spot where the fifteen had been shot the day before and standing up before his executioners and looking them steadily in the face he gave them the signal to fire. His remarkable bravery excited the admiration of friend and foe alike.⁵³

There is some dispute as to the procedure which led up to the execution of McCullough. Col. McNeil in a letter to a friend some time after the event said: "*McCullough was tried by a commission of which Lieut. Col. Shaffer was President, under Order No. 2 of General Halleck, and Nos. 8 and 18 of General Schofield. He had no commission except a printed paper authorizing the bearer to recruit for the Confederate army. He was found guilty of bushwhacking and of being a guerilla. He was a brave fellow and a splendid specimen of manhood. I would gladly have spared him had duty permitted. As it was he suffered the same fate that would have fallen to you or me if we had been found recruiting within the Confederate lines. He met a soldier's death as became a soldier.*"⁵⁴

Dr. Joseph A. Mudd who was with Porter up to and including the battle of Moore's Mill, has recently written a book entitled *With Porter in North Missouri*, which has been extensively used in the preparation of this article. In his book the author has condemned in no uncertain terms the execution of McCullough. He doubts the statement of McNeil that a trial was held at all, and supports his view by the fact that the Government records contain no account of it whatsoever. He moreover points out that in McNeil's report made on September 17, 1862, mention is made of the execution of the fifteen prisoners taken at the battle of Kirksville who were charged with having broken their paroles, but no mention is made of the execution neither of McCullough nor of any trial. He even goes farther and doubts whether any of these fifteen were guilty of having violated their paroles as they were charged.⁵⁵ It might be further said that General Sterling Price said that he thought he had given McCullough a commission to recruit troops at Springfield the preceding winter but he did not know whether he ever acted under it or not.⁵⁶ It is not known whether General Price ever verified his statement made from memory or not.

Some other things took place which makes the story sadder still. A Dr. Davis who had come into town with Porter was attempting to give some assistance to the Confederate wounded who were in the southwest part of town when Federal soldiers came up and ordered him to go with them to McNeil's headquarters. It is told that after he started to go with them he was made to run and was then shot down for running.⁵⁷ How true this part of the story is cannot be said.

To the list of fifteen who were executed on the charge of having violated their paroles there came very near being added the name of Jackson C. Oldham of Kirksville. It seems that here were two Oldhams by the same name, father and son. The father had been paroled but the son had never been. Notwithstanding this the son had been arrested and tried at Macon and executed on the charge of having violated his parole. All this had occurred before the battle of Kirksville. McNeil was about to

⁵² Ibid, 270.

⁵³ Palmyra Courier, Aug. 15, 1862, reprinted in War of Rebellion Records Ser. II, Vol. IV, p. 885-7.

⁵⁴ History of Lewis County, quoted in Mudd, 272.

⁵⁵ Mudd, 280.

⁵⁶ War of Rebellion, Ser. II, Vol. V, 804.

⁵⁷ History of Adair County, 308.

arrest the father and execute him when Mr. John L. Porter of Kirksville intervened and assured McNeil that the elder Oldham had never violated his parole. Porter also protested that the younger Oldham had been unjustly executed. Later the older Oldham erected a monument to the memory of his son in the Kirksville cemetery on which was inscribed an account of the awful mistake that was made.

As has been already said Col. McNeil made no attempt to pursue Porter and his men on the day of the battle except for a little way west of town. He assigned as the reason for not doing so the exhausted condition of his men and horses. He went therefore into camp in Kirksville and took measures for collecting forage and supplies and for putting the men and horses in condition for pursuit a little later.

On August 7th, Lieut. Col. Morsey with four hundred and twenty men of the Tenth Cavalry, Missouri State Militia, and Major Rogers with the Second Battalion of the Eleventh Regiment Cavalry, Missouri State Militia, came into camp at Kirksville from the north. As McNeil was moving towards Kirksville from Newark the day before he had ordered these troops under Morsey and Rogers to move along a line north of him so as to prevent Porter from escaping into Scotland or Schuyler Counties. McNeil thinks that Porter's knowledge of this particular arrangement had obliged him to make his stand at Kirksville. The arrival of this force on the seventh swelled McNeil's command to about seventeen hundred and added to the difficulties in getting sufficient supplies.⁵⁸ However on the eighth Lieut. Hiller arrived from Palmyra by way of Edina with eight thousand rations and a good supply of horseshoes. The escort under Capt. Best that accompanied this supply train was the one that brought McCullough a prisoner to Kirksville from Edina, as has been related.⁵⁹

Porter's return towards the Chariton resulted in more or less disbandment. However a part at least of his forces tried to keep together, and moved in a southeasterly direction towards Macon. Near Stockton this body was attacked by a Federal force and was compelled to retreat. This was on August 8th.⁶⁰ On the next day this same body killed from ambush a hundred or more Federals under Col. McFerran while they were crossing Walnut Creek in their pursuit of the Confederates. After shelling the woods around Walnut Creek for some time, McFerran moved towards the Chariton River and at Sear's Ford (or See's Ford) skirmishing ensued. But being unable to get his artillery across the river, he was compelled to allow Porter to escape.⁶¹ However Porter had been foiled in his attempt to cross the North Missouri Railroad (the present Wabash R. R.) so as to rally his scattered forces, and finding the way of escape to the south in a body cut off, he decided to disband his organization completely and leave each company to take care of itself. This was done on August 11th.⁶²

In the month that followed, Porter managed to get a force together and on September 12th he effected the capture of Palmyra. The Confederate prisoners confined in the jail there were liberated, and the bonds that had been forced from southern sympathizers to observe their oaths of allegiance, were taken away from the Provost Marshal's office and burned. During the night of the twelfth Andrew Allsman who had been the object of much hatred on the part of the Confederates was taken from his home and murdered. Just when and how and by whom he was murdered is

⁵⁸ War of Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. III, 214.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 214-5.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 551

⁶¹ Ibid, 208; Mudd, 288-9.

⁶² Mudd, 286.

not definitely known.⁶³ In retaliation for this act ten Confederate prisoners were shot at Palmyra by order of McNeil on October 18, 1862.⁶⁴ This event has gone down in history as the Massacre of Palmyra, and served to intensify the hatred on both sides.

After the capture of Palmyra Porter marched northward into Lewis County. He was followed by McNeil and an engagement took place at Whaley's Mill on September 14, in which Porter's forces were scattered.⁶⁵ This was Porter's last engagement in North Missouri. For the next six weeks he gave himself up to the task of getting twelve hundred men through to the Confederate lines south of the Missouri. He is credited with having sent in all five thousand men from North Missouri during the year 1862.⁶⁶ He was wounded at the battle of Hartsville in Wright County, Missouri, on January 11, 1863, and died from the effects of the wound in camp near Batesville, Ark., on February 18, 1863, aged forty-four years.

Col. McNeil served through the war and was given the title of Brigadier General shortly after the battle of Kirksville. He took an active part in the politics of the State for some time after the war. One act of his long after the war has a local bearing. At the time when the Board of Regents of the First District Normal School was considering the location of the school which the act of the General Assembly, approved in March, 1870, provided for, friends of Kirksville appealed to Gen. McNeil to use his influence in behalf of this place. Mr. W. H. Parsells of Kirksville who was a long time acquaintance of McNeil, went to him and urged that since the town had been the scene of conflict during the war it should be the place where the State should have one of its institutions. Just what actual influence McNeil exerted in the matter cannot be said; but he did write a letter to certain members of the Board who were just retiring from their positions as State officers and hence also from the Board. He died June 7, 1891, aged seventy-eight years.

The battle of Kirksville was considered at the time as an engagement of considerable significance, especially by the Federal army officers. For some time, as we have seen, the Federals had been in hot pursuit of Porter and it was thought that this battle had completely ended his recruiting expedition. The reports of the Federal officers are congratulatory over their marked success in doing away with so dangerous an enemy. Lieut. Col. Shaffer said it was the most successful battle ever fought in Missouri and the victory most complete. To a very large extent their views that the battle was an important one is correct. Porter was never able to recover fully from the defeat he met at Kirksville.

In the history of the desperate effort of the Confederates to force the State of Missouri out of the Union, the battle of Kirksville has an important part, and it is only as it is considered in that connection that it is given its due place in the annals of Missouri.



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⁶³ Ibid, 292 ff.

⁶⁴ Mudd, 299 ff; War of Rebellion. Ser. I, Vol. XIII, 719.

⁶⁵ War of Rebellion, Ser. I, Vol. XIII, 269-70; Mudd, 310-11.

⁶⁶ Mudd, 311-17.