

*Privates John Benton “Johnny” Hart (right) and Hugh F. Hart, courtesy of the editor.*

---

# Under Moonlight in Missouri: Private John Benton Hart's Account of Price's Raid, October 1864

*edited by John Hart*

John Benton Hart served in the Eleventh Kansas Cavalry, Company I, from 1862 to 1865. In October 1864, his was one of the units sent out under General James G. Blunt to slow the march of General Sterling Price from Lexington, Missouri, toward the Kansas line. Hart took part in the battles of Lexington, the Little Blue, the Big Blue, and Westport, and in the subsequent pursuit of Price toward the Arkansas River.<sup>1</sup> Between 1918 and 1923, at his home in western Colorado, he dictated memories of that time and of his later adventures on the frontier to his son Harry. The manuscript that resulted came down through the family unpublished.

Hart was born on July 10, 1842, in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh. In August 1854 the family settled in Jefferson County, Kansas, soon coming into conflict with proslavery immigrants.<sup>2</sup> The memoir said nothing of the boy's early life.

On September 9, 1862, at Camp Lyon near Fort Leavenworth, "Johnny" Hart volunteered for the Eleventh Kansas Infantry, then in the process of organization. The roll described him as brown-haired, blue-eyed, fair, and just five feet, five inches tall. On December 7, he was wounded at the Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas.<sup>3</sup>

---

John Hart, the great-grandson of John Benton Hart, is an environmental historian and the author of fifteen books concerning such topics as western water controversies, agricultural land preservation, regional planning, and wilderness preservation. He lives near San Francisco, California.

The author is grateful to Daniel Smith and Mike Calvert, of the Civil War Round Tables of Kansas City and Western Missouri, respectively, for their help and guidance, especially in matching the Hart account as well as possible to the landscape and the calendar. Thanks also to authors Mark A. Lause and Darryl Levings, and to Hart family historian David Hart, for sharing their expertise.

1. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1861–1865* (Topeka: The Kansas State Printing Company, 1896), facsimile available online at <http://archive.org/details/reportofadjutant00kans>; "Roster and Descriptive Roll, Eleventh Regiment, Cavalry, Kansas Civil War Volunteers," microfilm AR116, State Archives Division, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka, available online at Kansas Memory Database, #227699, <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/227699>; a brief regimental history and "The Price Raid" also available in William G. Cutler and Alfred T. Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), 1:195–97, 204–8, available online at <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/sthist/milrec-p12.html>.

2. Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 1:520.

3. "Roster and Descriptive Roll," 79. Twin brother Hugh F. Hart had joined the same regiment and company on August 15, 1863; his absence from the Civil War portion of the memoir is a mystery. Young John Benton Hart was apparently always called "Johnny," and so he shall be here.



*Born on July 10, 1842, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, John Benton Hart settled with his family in Jefferson County, Kansas Territory, in August 1854, and served as a private in Company I, Eleventh Kansas Cavalry, from 1862 to 1865. Beginning almost fifty years later, at his home in western Colorado, Hart dictated memories of that time and of his later adventures on the frontier to his son Harry. The resulting manuscript, published in part for the first time here, came down through the family. Portrait courtesy of the author.*

**I**n April 1863, the unit was converted to cavalry, with Thomas Moonlight in command. This strikingly named military man was born in Scotland. In the United States by 1850, he settled in Leavenworth County, Kansas, in 1860. He earned much praise for his service against Price and much blame for some bad decisions made the following year in fighting Lakota and Cheyenne in Dakota Territory.<sup>4</sup> Johnny, for his part, idolized his commander.

4. See for instance Douglas C. McChristian and Paul L. Hedren, *Fort Laramie: Military Bastion of the High Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 236.

For the next two years the Eleventh divided its time between combatting Indians on the frontier and Confederates and guerillas in the Missouri borderlands. It was in the latter locale when word came of Price's approach.<sup>5</sup>

General Sterling Price invaded Missouri in September 1864 with more than ten thousand men, in a desperate attempt to divert Union forces from the east, to recruit men and capture matériel, and perhaps to influence the fall elections. After failing to destroy the garrison at Fort Davidson (Pilot Knob), Price aborted a planned assault on St. Louis and turned west toward Jefferson City, which he threatened but elected not to attack. He worked his way on toward Kansas, creating short-lived jubilation among Confederate sympathizers as he passed, but not provoking the full-scale pro-Southern uprising he seemed to have banked on. While Union General Samuel R. Curtis dug in to defend Westport and Kansas City, General Blunt went east with two thousand men, including the Eleventh Kansas, to locate Price and then to resist his advance. Meanwhile, Generals Alfred Pleasonton and Andrew J. Smith were pursuing the Confederates from the rear. Blunt urged Curtis to come eastward and face Price at the Little Blue River on October 21, but his superior had to decline, because the Kansas State Militia, an essential part of the force, would not go that far into Missouri. Blunt, and notably Moonlight, nonetheless made an effective stand at the Little Blue before retreating grudgingly through Independence to the main Union line along the Blue River.<sup>6</sup>

On October 22, General Price located an unguarded ford on the Blue, penetrated and flanked the defense, and drove the Union forces back on Westport. On the same day, a messenger made it through to General Pleasonton, who accelerated his advance. It would have shocked Johnny, who thought he was part of a coordinated campaign, to know that the two generals had not heretofore been in touch, because the telegraph lines were down.

On October 23, the battle surged back and forth across Brush Creek south of Westport. The Union side was already gaining when Pleasonton, having bloodily forced his own way across the Blue, appeared out of the streamside timber. Then the story focused on Price's retreat toward the Arkansas River, punctuated by several more pitched battles with pursuing Union forces.

5. Howard M. Monnett, *Action Before Westport, 1864*, rev. ed. (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1995), 36.

6. Monnett, *Action Before Westport*. See also Edgar Langsdorf, "Price's Raid and the Battle of Mine Creek," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 37 (Summer 2014): 78-99.

Despite such serious treatments as Howard Monnett's *Action Before Westport* (1964) and Mark Lause's *The Collapse of Price's Raid* (2014), the events surrounding the Battle of Westport have received less attention than they deserve.<sup>7</sup> The fate of Price's invasion, historians agree, did little to change the course, or even to delay the conclusion, of the larger war, but its scale and its regional importance were huge.

Hart's account of Price's Raid was preserved in two versions, both beginning at Lexington. An earlier manuscript, titled "Sweet Potatoes and Other Stories," was written in his son Harry's hand and chiefly covered events to the eve of the Battle of Westport; the second, a typescript titled "My Bunkies," repeated the same incidents, often more extensively, and continued the account to the end of the campaign. Compared to the plain diction of the earlier version, the second showed some ornamentation added by Harry, an aspiring if unschooled writer. The excerpts below have been drawn by preference from "Sweet Potatoes," switching to "My Bunkies" when the former telling gives out.<sup>8</sup>

Written down so many years after the events, Hart's account cannot be read as a literal guide to the last days of Price's raid. The chronological and spatial framework he provided is sometimes questionable. But he captured well the enlisted man's experience of a prolonged cavalry campaign, the round-the-clock movements, the snatched sleeps. When he spoke of a sixteen-day running battle leading up to the Battle of Westport, he was clearly confused; yet Company I's total journey from Hickman Mills, Missouri, where the march began on October 17, to Lexington and back and down the state line to Fayetteville, Arkansas, on November 4, encompassed every bit of sixteen days (and many nights), and a minimum of 350 miles.

Unlike such narrators as H. E. Palmer, Hart did not yearn for eastern battlefields, but took with utmost seriousness his role as a defender of Kansas.<sup>9</sup> His lack of

personal animosity toward individual Confederates and Southern sympathizers he encountered is striking. Also notable are the almost affectionate interactions he reported between officers and men. As Johnny wrote, "the officers in the Civil War would talk to their men, somewhat sociable at times. They could dine with their men in a pinch and not feel lowered by so doing."

#### FROM "SWEET POTATOES AND OTHER STORIES"

*Blunt's force reached Lexington, Missouri, after an all-night march from Holden on the morning of October 18 and saw its first action on the nineteenth. Johnny appeared to conflate the two days. He opened on a theme that runs through the whole memoir: the search for provisions.*

We marched through Lexington, and went into camp a little way outside of town. As there could not be enough corn provided for our horses from the merchants in town, something had to be done. Andy [Andrew G.] Todd and myself, and some others, were detailed to go under the command of a sergeant out among the farms and get what was needed. So, off we went for near a mile and a half to a big house, and on arriving there found plenty of corn of which we took one wagon load.

But just as the wagon load of corn was being driven off, Andy Todd and I sat down on the porch of the house where the people lived for a little rest. We were expected to bring up the rear in a few minutes.

While resting here the lady of the house came out on the porch where we were, and asked us if we would like some bread and milk. We replied that we would. She went back into the house, but she left an impression with us, for she seemed kind, had a neat appearance, a soft voice and wore earrings that looked like diamonds. In a little while a Negro woman came out with light bread and milk. She cut slice after slice for us, and we had a feast, nothing in our lives tasted so good as that light bread and milk. We thanked the lady of the house who was standing in the doorway, then made for our horses.

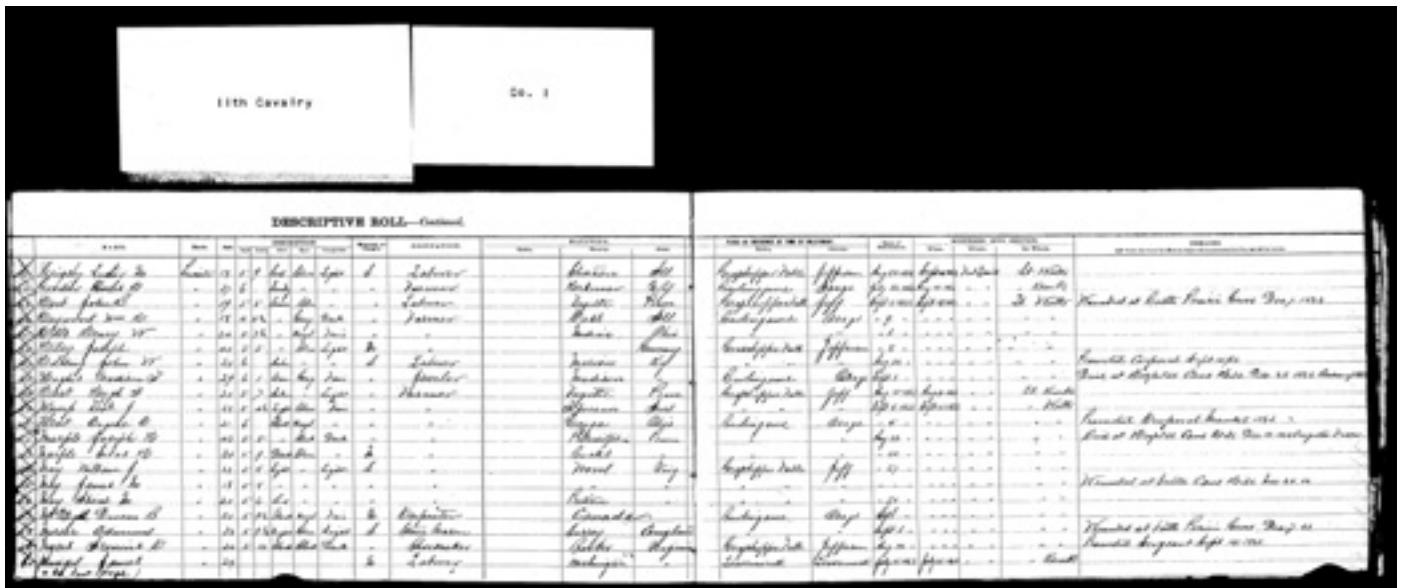
Just as we were mounted, the lady came running out to where we were. She threw her arms up and grabbed me by the trouser leg, and now the ear rings were gone, her ears were bleeding, her hair was down over her shoulders and face and the pretty dress she wore all torn to pieces. "Come!" she said, "they are killing my father, come in the house quick! Oh, please, come!" . . .

Back we went pell-mell into the house, through two rooms and started up a flight of stairs; here we pulled

7. Mark A. Lause, *The Collapse of Price's Raid: The Beginning of the End in Civil War Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2014), forthcoming. This is volume two of Lause's exhaustive treatment of the campaign.

8. The manuscripts are in the collection of John Hart, the narrator's great-grandson, in San Rafael, California. "Sweet Potatoes and Other Stories" comprises about 16,000 words, "My Bunkies" about 23,000. In addition, over 100,000 words describe John Benton Hart's later experiences in Dakota Territory (now Wyoming and Montana) and western Colorado.

9. H. E. Palmer, "The Black-Flag Character of War on the Border," *Kansas Historical Collections* 9 (1906): 455. Palmer was captain of Company A, Eleventh Kansas Cavalry, but his initial enlistment was with the First Kansas Battery, a part of the Fourth Kansas Infantry.



The Eleventh Regiment, Kansas Volunteer Cavalry organized during the summer of 1862, following President Abraham Lincoln's July 2 call for troops. John B. Hart enlisted on September 5 of that year, his twin brother Hugh F. Hart on August 15, a year later. They were listed on this "descriptive roll," along with many other recruits from Grasshopper (Valley) Falls and Burlingame, and mustered out together with the regiment on September 26, 1865.

out our guns. "That's right, boys. God bless you," she said, and all the time kept hurrying us up the stairs. As soon as we were on the landing [we] could hear arrogant demanding voices through a door. The lady opened a door and pushed us into the room.

There was a very old gentleman sitting in a high backed rickety-looking chair. His hair was white and his face nearly as white, and his hands looked lean and bony and thin. His head was pushed back against the back of the chair, his head was all bruised up and bleeding a little. There was two men from the Fifteenth Kansas, pushing the barrels of their revolvers against the old gentleman's forehead, hissing through their teeth, "Where's your money, old man? Where's your money?"<sup>10</sup> I poked my gun into one fellow's neck and at the same time jerked him off his feet while Andy Todd did the same with the other one. They did not make very much resistance. Down the stairs they went with not very much ceremony, but somehow they managed to take

a sack of silverware with them. We was going to make them leave that, but the lady said, "Let them have it! Let them take it! Get them out of here! That's all I want!" Out of the house they went, and we after them like a couple of bulldogs.

In the yard once more the lady thanked us, indeed, she had been doing so every minute it seemed to us. Then the mother soul in her bared itself free. She wanted to save, to pay a debt of gratitude to two boys in blue; while the blood of her race wore the gray. "Price," she said, "will be here in fifteen minutes and my husband is a colonel in his Southern Army, a man with influence and pull. You may be killed going now. You may get killed, you can't get away, it's too late. I will guarantee you boys protection, you will not be mistreated." And, as if to punctuate her plea for us like an orderly from Heaven, we could hear firing on the pickets. The lady said it was Price's men. No we said, we would have to go, and go we must. "Well," she said, "remember both of you if you are ever wounded

10. The Fifteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry was commanded by Colonel Charles R. Jennison, a notorious Jayhawker who was forced to give up command of the Seventh Kansas Volunteer Cavalry early in the war in part because they too often engaged in such activity. See

Stephen Z. Starr, *Jennison's Jayhawkers: A Civil War Cavalry Regiment and Its Commander* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973). In the Price's raid campaign, the Fifteenth Cavalry made up the core of the First Brigade, one of the two brigades Blunt took into Missouri. See Monnett, *Action Before Westport*, 43-44.

or in trouble of any kind, please let me know and I will pay the price no matter what it is. You boys saved my father—and goodbye.”

We rode away with all the haste we could after what she had told us, about Price being so near, who knows, maybe it was so. Just as we were riding out of view from the house, Andy Todd glanced back over his shoulder, saw the lady kneeling facing us as if praying for us. “That’s an angel of a woman, she’s good, Johnnie,” he said. We rode on for about a mile when we met the Negro coming back with the corn.<sup>11</sup> He was scared, we told him to take the corn back to the lady and tell her that we would not take anything from her.<sup>12</sup>

*The little detachment hurried through hostile Lexington with revolvers drawn and caught up with Company I. They got a bit of a scolding from Lieutenant William J. Drew: “You fellows are always fooling around somewhere when you’re needed. Fall in line and be good for a while, if it’s in you.”*

Our company lined up in the middle afternoon about one half mile south of the fairground and two miles south of Lexington. We were dismounted and lined up facing south (or was it northeast?) toward Price’s men across a sweet potato patch; some of the potatoes were dug and heaped up in hills; there was corn, some of it in shocks and some still uncut: an ideal place for a hungry horse and soldier. Was eyeing one of those sweet potato piles about twenty feet in front of me and longed for just one of them. And like a flash [I] left the ranks headlong for one of them. Just as I picked up one nice big fat fellow an officer ordered me back. And it seemed like every one of the boys in that line had something to say about that sweet potato. “What are you going to do with that potato?” “Give me a bite!” “Going to send it home to Ma?” And last a little bit of a dried-up fellow asked, “Let me carry it for you for a while, Johnnie?” I wanted to knock that dried-up lad a rap, but dared not.<sup>13</sup> That potato was crowded into my shirt bosom against a time when it could be baked.

*Price’s army moved in and the fighting retreat began. Johnny described a tactic by which Blunt divided his force into two equal units. While one group made a stand against Price,*

*the second would retire to improvise a new defensible line. As its position became untenable, the forward group would fall back through the rear group and take its turn preparing a line. Johnny described this “saving and protecting maneuver” correctly, but, according to Blunt and others, the tactic was employed only later, west of the Little Blue. The reality on the evening of October 19 was, if anything, more impressive: it was the Eleventh Kansas alone—about one quarter of the force—that covered the Union’s retreat.<sup>14</sup>*

*The last encounter of the day was a twilight skirmish at one of the crossings of Fire Prairie Creek, at a site not now identifiable.*

Our place this time was a rather hard one. We had to cut a new road through trees and brush as best we could and at that it was crooked, in the form of a big horseshoe. You see the Johnnies had burnt the bridge, just enough to let the end next to us fall down into the water, so that a part of the abutment had to be torn out and thrown into the creek, therefore the new road had to be built so as to get to [the] water.<sup>15</sup> All the troops had to go into the water then up the slanting floor of the bridge, it was the only way to cross in a short time. We expected a lively time there, if the Johnnies crowded us very hard. We were not disappointed.

Soon the men came crowding through there, but most of them had considerable of a time getting up the slanting floor of the bridge. It became wet in a little while causing horses’ feet to slide back down and some of them fell and rolled down causing more trouble. It couldn’t be helped, there was not enough time to do better. Most of our men managed to get through that crooked road in good time; but it was growing dark and still the road was yet crowded with the last remnant of our men.

Suddenly the Johnnies crowded into the lane . . . in the rear of our men. Immediately everything in that lane became a fighting bunch, all mixed up. It was evident they were being crowded pretty hard from the noise and the commotion they made. They passed the word forward, “They are cutting the rear all to hell.” Every soldier knows what that means. He does not have to be knocked [down] to understand.

Company I was ordered to line up just where our new road commenced on the left side of the road; and two

14. James G. Blunt, “General Blunt’s Account of His Civil War Experiences,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 1 (May 1932): 211–65, available online at [www.kanecoll.org/khq/1932/32\\_3\\_blunt.htm](http://www.kanecoll.org/khq/1932/32_3_blunt.htm); Monnett, *Action Before Westport*, 53, 66; Richard J. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas and the Campaign of the Army of the Border against General Sterling Price in October and November, 1864* (Chicago, Ill.: Church & Goodman, 1865), 88.

15. Confederate advance parties ranged far to the west, sabotaging crossings.

11. “The Negro” was not otherwise identified in Hart’s account.

12. The idealization of the lady seems extreme. But, unlike some other sentimentalized passages, this one was present in the plainer first version of the memoir as well as in the more self-conscious second version.

13. This soldier was not otherwise identified.



Born in Maine and trained as a physician in Ohio, James Gillpatrick Blunt moved his family and practice to Greeley, Anderson County, Kansas Territory, in 1856, and quickly became involved in Kansas politics. General Blunt, who was closely identified with James H. Lane, was a controversial leader in his own right during the Civil War. At war's end Dr. Blunt returned to the practice of medicine, this time in Leavenworth, but he removed to Washington, D.C., in 1869, where fortune eventually turned against him. In 1879 he was admitted to a government hospital for the insane and died there on July 25, 1881. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

companies were lined up on the right side of the road. It was dark and I do not know what two companies were lined up over there. . . . Colonel Moonlight rode up and down in front of our company, begging us to hold our fire, and with each word bringing his hand down good and hard, as if for emphasis, on his thigh. . . . "Hold your fire until I say when! I'll say when, boys. Don't make a fool of yourselves." You have to see a man in action like that to appreciate the value of the man, to see the real life being lived in a few minutes. Across the colonel went to the other two companies begging them like he had us to

hold our fire. We didn't want to hold our fire, but it is well that we did, many thanks to the colonel.<sup>16</sup>

After all our men in the lane had just about gained the welcome protection of our new road, which allowed the Johnnies to come up close to us, the order was given to fire. "Fire!" Colonel Moonlight yelled, at the top of his voice. It was almost as bright as day. Three companies emptied their rifles into that lane full of horses and men. Then the order came to empty our revolvers: "Shoot low in there, every man," which we did. The Johnnies stopped crowding, they were down, horses and men. Everything in a bunch. It looked pretty hard from what we could see by the flash of our guns, but it had to be done. Everybody had a chance after that to draw a long breath. Never again did they crowd us so fast and furious as that, especially after dark.

*In the small hours of October 20, the army camped somewhat east of the Little Blue River, shifting to the west bank the following day. Blunt and Monnett described a day of relative ease at this spot, but Johnny recalled a far briefer break in the action.*

*Unknown to him, the commanders were in the midst of a tactical debate. General Blunt saw the west bank of the Little Blue as the best place for a definitive stand against Price and unsuccessfully urged General Curtis to move forward; Curtis instead instructed Blunt to pull the bulk of his force back to Independence, leaving Colonel Moonlight and four hundred men at the river to face the Confederate assault early on the twenty-first. Their unexpectedly effective delaying action developed into the Battle of the Little Blue, with significant losses to the Confederate side.<sup>17</sup> Johnny, however, got side-tracked into a peripheral adventure.*

All our men had safely crossed a good sized creek on a splendid good bridge, which was immediately covered afterward with all kinds of inflammable material.<sup>18</sup> Artillery was stationed on both sides of the road on our side

16. Colonel Moonlight at this point was not the head of the Eleventh Kansas but of the larger, made-to-order unit called the Second Brigade. However, the Eleventh provided the bulk of this brigade, and Johnny never mentioned the nominal regimental commander of the moment, Colonel Preston B. Plumb. See Monnett, *Action Before Westport*, 44.

17. U.S. War Department, "Report of Colonel Thomas Moonlight, Eleventh Kansas Cavalry, Commanding Second Brigade," in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893), 591.

18. The "creek" was the Little Blue River.

of the creek, so as to rake the bridge. One regiment, and the Second Kansas and the Second Colorado, held the place and burnt the bridge, which forced the Johnnies to find a ford. This being anticipated, Company I under the command of Captain Greer was ordered to go down the valley and hold two fords, the first one a little more than four miles down the creek below the bridge, the second one a mile and a half still farther down.<sup>19</sup> Captain Greer held the first ford and detailed Lieutenant [William J.] Drew and twenty men to go and hold the second ford as long as possible.<sup>20</sup> Now this creek had rather steep banks which were muddy and dangerous, but out in the stream, the creek bottom was firm and good. This gave us some slight advantage. Everyone was ordered to not build any fires as that would be sure to give us away to our enemies.

After a while it began to be light and then we could build fires. And then, out from my saddle pocket I pulled my old sweet potato and placed it in a bed of hot coals to bake. All the fellows around there crowded around my fire, asking dozens of questions and giving advice about my potato. One little fellow wanted me to save him an eye, another one wanted to hold it for me on a board while I ate it, and still another said that sweet potatoes was dangerous to have inside of one, 'cause his old aunt got blowed up by eatin' one, one time. Had to watch them, to keep them from stealing my sweet potato.

Had just about got my sweet potato good and hot, when a picket fired a shot and right on the heels of that shot came the order to fall in. Quick as I could, and that wasn't long, [I] raked my potato out of the coals and shoved it into my saddle pocket and away we went. You see our boys had had a couple of hours of pretty good rest and it seemed a little uncanny somehow, everything for a time being so still and quiet there. Up on a little ridge we went, and there hailed some soldiers down in the timber. They said they were Yankees, soon however they proved to be Johnnies, for they came for us. Across a field we "hit it up" but were losing ground, so Lieutenant Drew ordered us to make for a house up on a hill where there could be seen a big gate and a girl standing outside by the house.

Lieutenant Drew hallooed to her "to please open the gate and let us go through." Quick, she ran like a deer and opened the gate for us, and held it open until we all got through, and held that gate, mind you, under fire, while dozens of bullets were whizzing by with their intended mission of death. Every one of us boys thanked that girl . . . as we went through the opened way on a dead run; some of them said "God bless you." Then when we were through, the girl shut the gate and ran into the house.

Away we went into a cornfield like a bunch of Indians, scared half to death, for behind was five to one against us, all eager to take us prisoners. The corn in the field was high and our horses tore a swathe through this forty feet wide. We got away all right, but it was a good run. Up on a little ridge a quarter of a mile away Lieutenant Drew looked back toward the house where the girl had opened the gate for us, and could see the Johnnies were going back below the house and some of them were firing into the house. Lieutenant Drew shook his fist at them, saying, "You fellows hurt a hair of that girl's head and I will come back here and blow your crowd into hell!"

For a long time our little bunch of men rode after that, until finally Lieutenant Drew said, "We must be about far enough back, the artillery firing sounds away back in the rear of us now." So all hands then rode to the top of a little ridge and looked over; much to our surprise, there below in the road was cavalry, marching four abreast as far as we could see up and down the road. Lieutenant Drew asked them who they were. They replied, "We are Marmaduke's men," and laughed, and then again "Jim Lane's Tads" rolled up to us from a dozen throats.<sup>21</sup> Their captain ordered "Fire!" without any preliminary maneuvers whatever, which they did and quick, too, and then a big bunch of their men came on a run for us; there was nothing to do but run for it, back over the way we came; but hold, whoa, stop, before we knew it, we were right in front of another column of cavalry marching four abreast coming toward us some three hundred yards away. This rattled all of our little band, because we had just crossed over down there a few minutes before, and surely there was not a single trooper anywhere sight. It was folly to turn back, death to go ahead, so the only way out was to run with them a race for our lives.

19. Captain James E. Greer. Except for a disapproving comment from Moonlight, he left little trace in the record of Price's raid, but figured more prominently in accounts of Indian warfare in 1865.

20. Monnett wrote confusingly: "Captain Greer with Company I was sent south two miles down the [north-flowing] river" (*Action Before Westport*, 54). Moonlight confirmed that the movement was to the north. Johnny, however, exaggerated the distances. Greer was a mile downstream from the principal crossing, near East Blue Mills Road; Second Lieutenant William J. Drew was somewhat beyond that.

21. Major General John S. Marmaduke, one of three division commanders under Price; James Henry Lane, Jayhawker, Union general and U.S. Senator from Kansas. Here, of course, Marmaduke's men were joking.



Down to a house along a little creek we rode and jumped our horses over a fallen tree close by the side of the house, when there was a better way around the house; but [we] didn't know it, being pressed so hard we were a little rattled, or couldn't think fast enough, don't know which. Then the people in the house commenced firing at us, which made our position still worse; so out into a cornfield we went, couldn't find no hole to crawl into; had to do something. At the edge of this cornfield was a swamp, and that swamp didn't look a bit inviting to our men, especially when everything depended on a few precious moments.

"Into it!" Lieutenant Drew shouted. "We can't be taken prisoners here!" And into it we went, and by good fortune made the other side easier than expected, as slough grass held up our horses pretty good considering the weight of our steeds. As we gained the bank and solid footing once more, here in front of us was a steep hill that had to be made on double-quick, which tried our horses and worried us.

Here Jim Lane's Tads, who had by this time gained considerable distance on us, began to shower a perfect rain of bullets over our heads. Everyone after that went for himself up that hill, getting behind big trees, something in the fashion a wild turkey will do in the wild woods to evade the man with a gun. You see, our horses were all fresh mounts and were able to hold their own; while our enemy's horses were pretty good too, but they couldn't go into the wind quite so keen as ours, and that is the only reason our outfit got out of the jaws of two columns of steel and muscle and up on the hillside in the comparatively safe refuge of the timber.

But nearly halfway up this hill, my "bunkie," Tom Roderick (the second one to be killed) got shot in the back, and fell off his horse.<sup>22</sup> Lieutenant Drew examined him in a hurry, and Tom was begging us not to leave him, so I started back to him. "Go on!" Lieutenant Drew ordered. "You can't help him now, his back is broke." "Well," I said, "don't want to leave him here, that's pretty tough." "Yes it is, Johnny, but some more of us will get it, if we don't get out of here!"

Up on the top of the hill, just before we went scurrying away, one more look we must have, down through the trees to where our comrade lay, and something hard for

22. The identity of the fallen soldier was unclear. There was no Tom Roderick in Company I on the "Roster and Descriptive Roll," although there was a John F. Roderick. No Roderick was listed among the casualties in Cutler and Andreas, *History of Kansas*, 197.



This map of the Battle of Westport was created by "A. Konig," Second Colorado Cavalry, and published in 1865 as part of the "Battle Grounds in Missouri during Price's Raid." The Second Colorado made up the bulk of the Fourth Brigade, commanded by that regiment's Colonel James H. Ford, during the battle and subsequent pursuit of Price's Confederates. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.

our eyes there to stand we saw. The Johnnies were shooting Tom Roderick to death, finishing him then and there; but that, even, was some consolation as it put him out of his misery.

Away we went hunting our company. . . . We had to make a ride away out to one side to get around the Johnnies coming up the valley. It was evident the Johnnies must have crossed the ford where Captain Greer and the rest of our company was last seen on duty. What had become of them? That was the question. If they had to fall back, why was we not notified in time? . . .

When we did we did finally get in [we were] an angry bunch and there had to be an explanation. The truth of the thing was that Captain Greer fell back when the first



shot was fired across the creek and that he got scared at the ford ordering his men to fall back leaving us in ignorance of his move; therefore we were flanked and came very near being taken prisoners.<sup>23</sup>

23. Moonlight reported that Greer "retired without firing a shot, but claims that it was not possible to do otherwise, as the enemy were crossing at all points." "Report of Colonel Thomas Moonlight," *War of the Rebellion*, 592.

**A**fter this incident nearly everyone in Company I called Captain Greer a coward, and would not go willingly into tight places with him in command without a kick and a grumble. The morale of the soldiers under him was gone. Eventually Captain Greer left his command and went to Kansas City, turning the company over to Lieutenant Drew who then commanded as acting captain. Captain Greer was not a soldier and could not face bullets without great mental strain. At the same time he was a good intelligent man.

He did come back and wear his spurs with honor later in battles with the Indians.

*It was west of the Little Blue, according to Monnett, that Blunt divided his forces as earlier described, making stand after stand. The afternoon closed with a street fight in Independence, where Johnny was slightly wounded by a shot from a window. Around midnight Company I arrived at a site on the Blue River previously fortified by the Kansas Militia. This was probably Simmons Ford, in modern Blue River Park.*

#### FROM "MY BUNKIES"

*The following incident, reported only in the second and later manuscript, was dated Saturday, October 22, the eve of the Battle of Westport proper. That morning, Price had found an unguarded ford, Hinkle's, and poured his troops across. Johnny experienced another attempted crossing.*

We were about three or four miles southwest of Westport at a ford (on the Blue). We were having it hot and heavy. All were angry and nervous. The Johnnies had crossed the ford and were coming and forming too sure of themselves to suit our company. We were held in a line close up where we could see a Johnny officer riding a white horse and coaxing his men to hold the line. He rode back and forth on a run. All our men tried to shoot his horse from under him, but he seemed to be charmed. This was one thing that exasperated us.

Someone hallooed "Charge!" and away we went after that officer riding the white horse. Into the Johnnies we bolted. After that officer we ran around and around, and came near capturing him a dozen times in a dozen minutes. Finally the officer discovering we wanted him, he dived into the ford where his horse fell down and the fine officer tumbled into the water rolling under a wagon. We caused a jam at that ford and stopped the Johnnies from crossing over to our side and whipped them plumb out capturing a bunch of prisoners on the side for our pains. But this charge without authorized orders from an officer was a bad move even if it was successful and did a lot of good.

Colonel Moonlight raged and swore and rested for breath, and then started in on us again. "Boys," he said, "we are fighting this campaign for a principle, for what we think is right. Don't ever charge again without orders from an officer, be honorable, be dependable. Your charge was successful, because unexpected on all sides; but if it hadn't have been, we would be in a fine position now. You have stood firm against shot and shell before. Why



Major General Alfred Pleasonton (standing, center), pictured here with his staff in October 1863, was an 1844 graduate of West Point with an impressive record of service before and during the first years of the Civil War prior to his transfer to the Western Theater. Moving out of Jefferson City, Pleasonton's command caught up with Price on the Blue River. "We could see at the bottom of the hill, where Johnnies were lining up and counting off, about three regiments of cavalry," Hart recalled. "About the time they were lined up and ready for action, here through the timber of the Blue came Pleasonton's cavalry, about three regiments of cavalry. They came out below us and formed as they came. We knew there was going to be something doing pretty soon. Three thousand cavalry of Pleasonton going to match their strength with an equal number of Johnnies. We shouted at the top of our voices, we stood up in our stirrups as if to make our noise carry farther." Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

weaken now? I bow my head in shame before boys I trusted and considered equal to anything under the sun."

Then Colonel Moonlight rode on down the line saying something about "how foolish some people are even after they have been trained."

*On the afternoon of Saturday, October 22, General Blunt heard artillery to the south and understood that Price had crossed the river on the Union right. He ordered Colonel Moonlight to Hinkle's Ford. Arriving too late to hinder the crossing, Moonlight retreated toward Shawnee Mission before joining in a vigorous counterattack that averted collapse.<sup>24</sup> Company I was engaged again Sunday morning in the Battle of Westport proper, first pushing forward and then retreating as Price recovered ground. Johnny described these events only in summary and may have conflated two days' actions.*

24. Blunt, "General Blunt's Account of His Civil War Experiences," 256; Monnett, *Action Before Westport*, 80–81, 84.

Our next battle was about six miles from what was then the baby Kansas City. It was called the Battle of Westport and the end of the Price advance. Westport was the big town then. Price forced us by Westport in a mighty hard drive, flanked us and drove us off the field about used up. This was on Sunday morning and this time we lost sixteen men out of the company.<sup>25</sup> We had been fighting five to one.

Price moved up south of Westport and commenced to throwing shells into Westport. We were whipped this day good and plenty and we all were feeling mighty blue. Sixteen out of our company when we counted off did not make for very pleasant thoughts just then. Down, down in the blues we had sunk and blacker and blacker the awful thing crowded over our eyes. Lieutenant Drew was all covered over dust and mud and his uniform half torn from his precious body. And Lieutenant Clancy was in the same condition. It hurts soldiers to see their officers used up, especially when they were men who were always in the lead and no cowards.

Lieutenant Drew said, "Boys, there isn't so many of us now. I want those boys back."

*Later on Sunday, Company I remained near Shawnee Mission, positioned to block any move by Price into Kansas. From this spot, Johnny witnessed the juncture—or a juncture—of Pleasonton's forces with those of Curtis and Blunt. Johnny gave the time as "after four o'clock," though Pleasonton's breakthrough occurred between noon and one.<sup>26</sup>*

Our company and several others were on a hill where we could see away down on the Blue. The air was clear and we could see a long way. We were lined up on this hill and counting off. Something was going to happen pretty soon. We had been everywhere this Sunday and saw things changing before our eyes as in a dream. Whipped by the Johnnies in the morning and in turn they were whipped by us to a showdown and were on the retreat.

We could see at the bottom of the hill, where Johnnies were lining up and counting off, about three regiments of cavalry. About the time they were lined up and ready for action, here through the timber of the Blue came



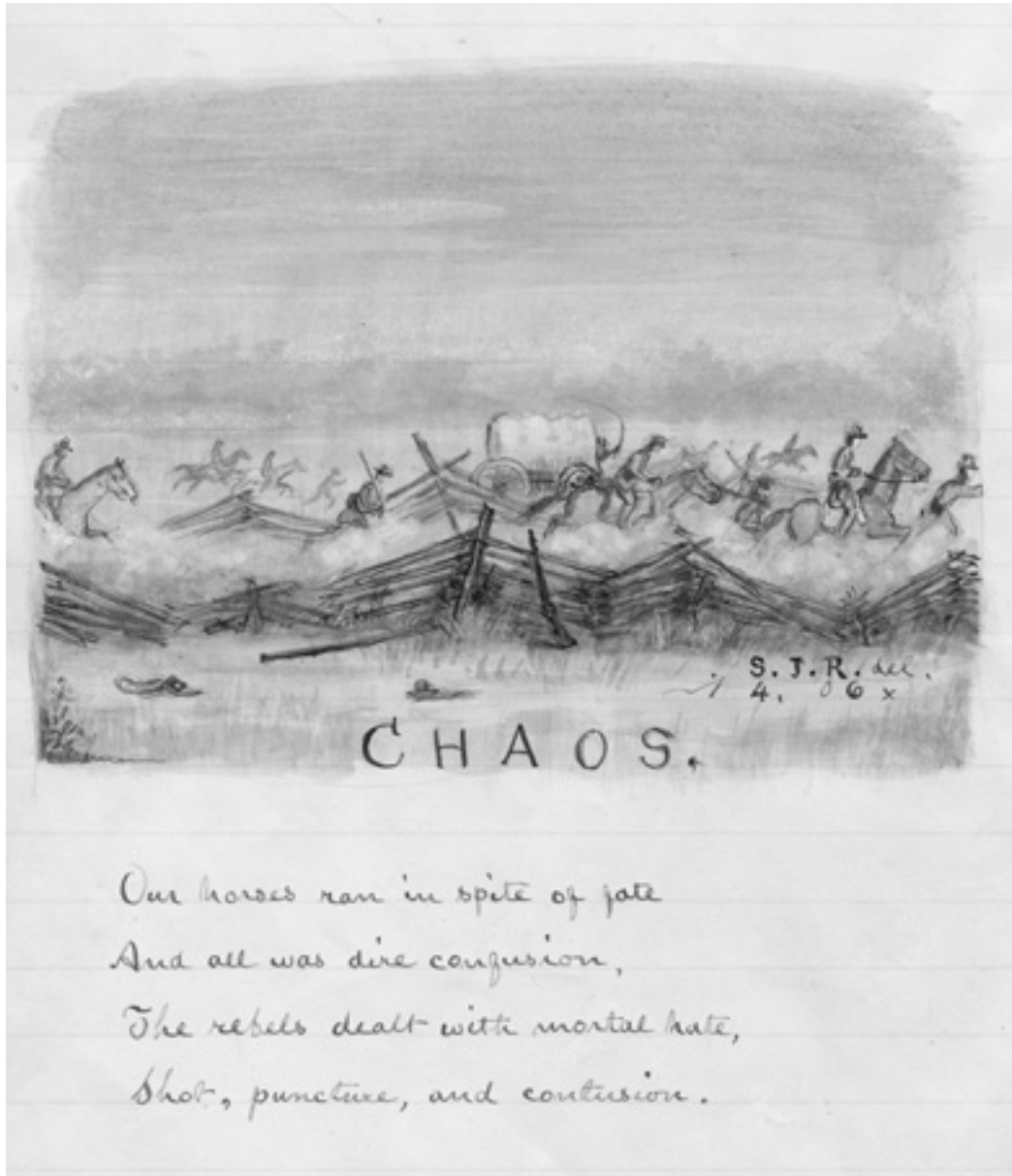
*Born in Arbroath, Scotland, in 1833, Thomas Moonlight set sail for America at age thirteen and enlisted in the regular army in May 1853. He was discharged at Fort Leavenworth in 1858 and settled on a farm in Leavenworth County. With the outbreak of war in 1861, Moonlight raised a light battery and was commissioned captain of artillery, but on September 20, 1862, he mustered as lieutenant colonel of the Eleventh Kansas Cavalry and took command of the regiment when Colonel Thomas Ewing, Jr., was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers in the spring of 1863. A year later Moonlight was assigned to command the Second Brigade, District of Southern Kansas, and in this capacity engaged General Price at Westport and beyond in October 1864. "We loved Colonel Moonlight," remembered Hart, "we worshipped him, it was heavenly to have him lecture us in his plain honest way. He had . . . a wonderful amount of good common sense right over his eyes balancing the front side of his head straight on ahead through calms and through storms." Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.*

Pleasonton's cavalry, about three regiments of cavalry. They came out below us and formed as they came.

We knew there was going to be something doing pretty soon. Three thousand cavalry of Pleasonton[s] going to match their strength with an equal number of Johnnies. We shouted at the top of our voices, we stood up in our stirrups as if to make our noise carry farther. Colonel Moonlight ordered all the line officers and sergeants in

25. Official records do not support such a high loss. See *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1861–1865*, xxxix, and Cutler and Andreas, *History of Kansas*, 195.

26. Hinton, *Rebel Invasion of Missouri and Kansas*, 173; "Reports of Major-General Alfred Pleasonton, U.S. Army, Commanding Provisional Cavalry Division," in *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 41, pt. 1, 337.



Samuel J. Reader, Second Kansas State Militia, captured here the confusion and “chaos” of the battle on the Blue River, October 22, 1864.

front to keep us from charging. He wanted to make sure we obeyed orders. “I’ll give you the charge in time, if Pleasonton’s men cannot handle their end of the line. You wild-eyed, daredevil bunch, hold still! I’ll say When!” Colonel Moonlight shouted.

We loved Colonel Moonlight, we worshipped him, it was heavenly to have him lecture us in his plain honest way. He had very little self-esteem, but a wonderful amount of good common sense right over his eyes balanc-

ing the front side of his head straight on ahead through calms and through storms.<sup>27</sup>

We knew they drew their sabers because of the sun’s reflection on their steel. We could hear the bugle sound the

27. By most accounts, Moonlight had plenty of “self-esteem.” Johnny, however, experienced him as friendly and not at all arrogant, as several episodes omitted here attest.

charge. We could see that line of cavalry advance forward, then in a little while the bugle sounded the double quick and then the whole line of men lunged forward. They intended to do something that evening, and that line of Price[s] cavalry would have to fight. We cheered, we were excited, we wanted to be in on that charge, and all the time that line of Johnnies stood there, they never showed the white feather, they were as good as our boys, and why not? Weren't they born under America's stars? And weren't they our brothers?

Closer and closer Pleasonton's cavalry advanced, now they were within about one hundred yards of the Johnnies, all on the double quick in earnest. And then we could see a soldier here and there along the line speed up and leave his comrades, daredevils they were, going to meet their death ahead of their time. Now our line was up close to the Johnnies and the Johnnies still stood there, don't believe they batted an eye. It was steel against steel, muscle against muscle, sand against sand, fate against fate, all in the twinkling of an eye.

We stood up in our stirrups and well-nigh forgot to breathe, so intensely interested did we become watching this game of real life. Then that whole line of Johnnies fired, three thousand bullets good for three thousand Union horses, or three thousand Union providing they all hit the mark; but it is hard to fire true in the face of an onrush of men and horses, it is hard to keep down the quiver and tension of muscles. The eye is apt to overrate the distance and fool you on the bead and a rapid heart beating under excitement does not make for accurate shooting at the mark. And that is the answer why our boys were not stayed in the advance of their charge.

The line did reel and sway, and horses and men went down. We could see men leave their wounded horses and continue the charge on foot, unswayed, undaunted, and unwhipped. Why shouldn't we cheer? Why shouldn't we feel the wonderful thrill of a lifetime?

Now that line all mixed up, two and two waging a battle, three and three, and bunches here and there. And all the time the line widening, scattering out. It was like, excuse the comparison, six thousand dog fights on a plain waging a battle of life and death, all equally matched, all trained under fire and all brothers under our beloved American stars. Good all of them, the Yankee and the Johnny.

The outcome of that charge was in doubt for some little time, no living being could predict correct, a minute rolled by in the time of an hour. Even Colonel Moonlight,

hard and seasoned as he was, forgot himself and ceased to breathe now and then, then he would catch himself and slap his leg in downright earnestness. He was a true soldier.

Round and round, up and at it, across and over and down, then all over again, continuous, everlasting and death. Then, [we] could see breaking, running, hurrying and scurrying, the Johnnies were going, they were whipped. The Yankees did not follow them, they were too near used up and had about all they wanted before the sun went down. It was worth living a lifetime to see this charge of the Blue and the Grey.

Afterward we could see hundreds of horses down and men administering to a wounded comrade. And then an orderly came on the dead run to Colonel Moonlight. Then the order came to march. We started out on the trot uphill and along the line of Price's retreat in between Price and the Kansas line. General Price wanted to get into Kansas, and we were determined he should not.<sup>28</sup>

*The next episode is titled "Shelling the Johnnies out of the Bloody Lane." Bloody Lane was the name applied to Wornall's Lane (now busy Wornall Road) after a guerilla force under George Todd, part of Quantrill's group, ambushed a party of Union soldiers there on June 17, 1863. The location was between 51st and 55th Streets.<sup>29</sup>*

Our company was lined up and counting off when a heavy brass battery of eight pieces from General Pleasonton drove in front of us.<sup>30</sup> It proved that we had at last united our forces and would wage war all together from now on, instead of two separate units as heretofore. We greeted them with all the cheers we could and went half wild, and kept it up. The officers finally restored order.

But such an outfit. Our boys looked bad and dilapidated, but these men of Pleasonton[s] clapped anything [we] had ever seen before. Their captain wore a cap which had nothing left to it but a rim and the cap part over the eyes. His hair was all fussed up and protruding out and

28. Despite his weakness, Price was expected to strike at Fort Scott, but he decided against it, reentered Missouri north of town, and headed south to Fayetteville, Arkansas. See Langsdorf, "Price's Raid and the Battle of Mine Creek," 78-99. See also Lause, *The Collapse of Price's Raid*, chap. 10.

29. Wiley Britton, *The Civil War on the Border* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 2:133; *The Union Army: A History of Military Affairs in the Loyal States, 1861-65*, vol. 6, *Cyclopedia Of Battles—Helena Road to Z* (Madison, Wisc.: Federal Publishing Company, 1908), 921.

30. The metal was more likely bronze, not brass.

above the cap rim like a garden that had gone to seed for ages. His remnant of a uniform resembled a rag wagon. On one trousers' leg a large piece of carpet had been wired and tied in lieu of the missing portion long since passed from service. Both of his arms were honored by common pieces of gunnysacks patched on here and there, and he hadn't shaved for so long, his beard looked like a bramble bush. But his eyes shone keen and bright and fairly snapped with fire.<sup>31</sup>

The artillery men looked worse than tramps. They were all patched up with pieces of carpet and gunnysacks like their captain, and like him all unshaved. But few of them had a cap or hat, and the ones bareheaded didn't seem to miss their headgear the least bit in the world. Real soldiers they were, hardened, nonchalant and ready for anything to come before them and test their might. Their horses were large, long and poor, so that their ribs could be plainly seen. These horses looked like Kentucky pure-breds, with now and then the exception of a fat horse picked up somewhere to take the place of a horse that had died or been killed.

My position in the line was at the end of the line and was close to the captain where he was talking to General Blunt and in speaking distance of some of the men.

"Aren't you the men that is going to guard us while we pepper the Johnnies out of yonder cornfield, or wherever it is we go?" one of them asked me.

Believe we are from the looks of things, I answered.

"Well, we left some pretty good men. If you men are as good as ours we will be all right."

We will hold, never mind about that. We have been fighting night and day and would rather fight than eat, I answered.

"You will, will you! We'll see about that! We have been fighting night and day too. And we're in just the right temper of mind to not care for anything. Now that we are in front of General Price we intend to make him sweat blood if he advances any further."

After we turned toward a large cornfield which looked as if it might be two hundred acres in extent, the land became more level. Here double-quick was sounded once more, the bugler sounding the call on the dead run. And the artillery horsemen each whipping the horse they rode and

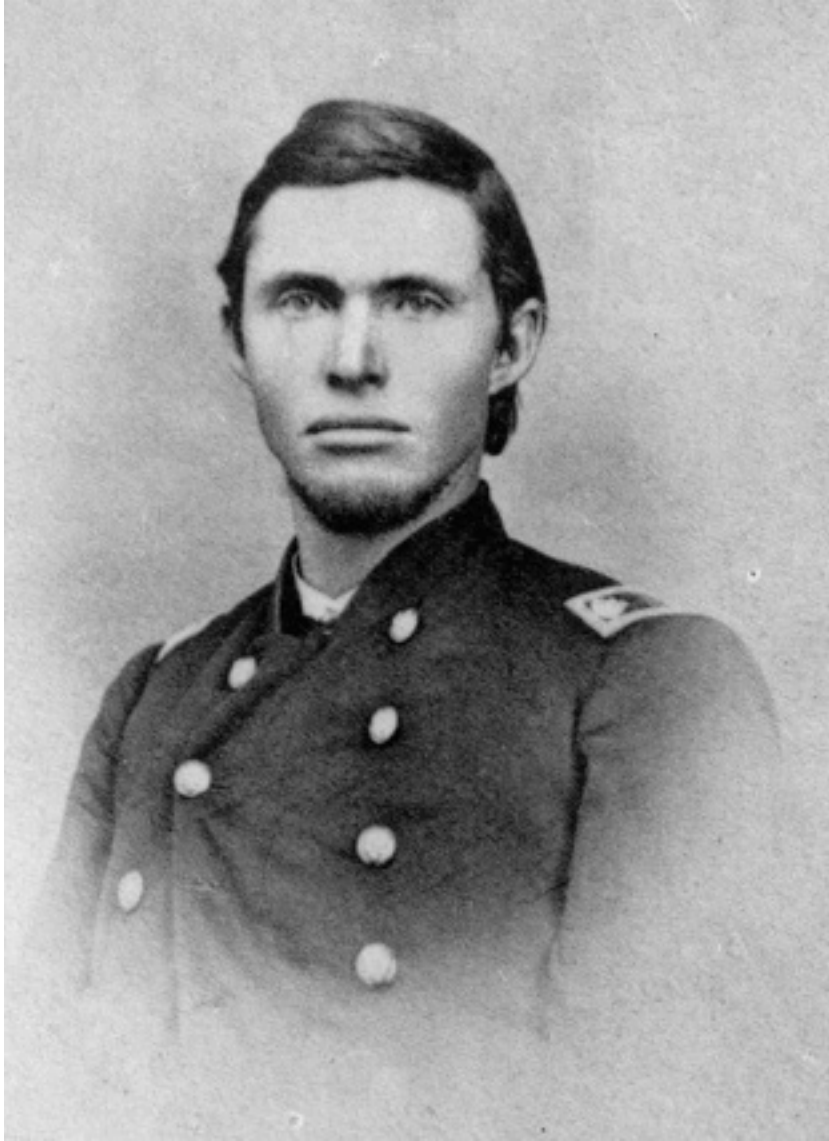
the one beside them, one quirt apiece. Most of the pieces had ten spans of horses pulling them and large horses at that. These pieces were larger and heavier than anything we had in the way of artillery under General Blunt. . . .

In front of us was a board fence. The captain and his bugler jammed their horses right into the board fence as if it was a piece of paper. The horses leaned their shoulders against the board fence and lunged, they knew what to do and the captain and his bugler braced their feet against the boards. Through they went in a couple of seconds and right behind them the artillery on the dead run. When the artillery struck the board fence it went into kindling wood in a jiffy and then they went for the rail fence. But a few seconds ahead the captain and his bugler had pushed the two top rails over, and right after them the artillery knocked that rail fence into no resemblance of a fence at all. It was a sight worth seeing, something to be proud of; true, our batteries did some wonderful work, but this battery must have been a brag battery of the East sent out to aid us, for all did splendid work and all with the bugle calls, both men and horses. . . .

After this big brass battery was clear of all fences they made an excellent run for position which had been planned by some of our generals in due regard for the danger it would be placed in and the method of a quick retreat. It was known that the cornfield was full of Johnnies and that they were protected by their artillery, so this position was not without danger, both from being charged by the Johnnies from the cornfield and their artillery fire. We could not march up the Bloody Lane to get at them, so the cornfield had to be cleared, also if we could once get into action we could everlastingly wallop everything in that field.

The captain and his artillery went like the wind. The men riding the caisson held on for dear life. A bugle call pierced the air and the first brass piece arrived at the place where it was to unlimber, the riders whipping their horses as they swerved around to a standstill and it seemed the old heavy gun rolled around on two wheels. Quickly that bunch of men ran seemingly in a picked direction, but each one was doing one thing. I remember one fellow that carried the shells, he had a carpet on one half of his seat and a wad of gunnysacks on the other and I couldn't decide which side of him deserved the most curiosity. He ran with all his might to the caisson for solid shot; he jammed his foot up against the caisson to stop himself while the soldier there handed him the solid shot, then he tore back to the brass piece hard as he could hit it up a-running in a kind of a jump and a gallop, his legs ran and his body and arms as well, but he got there and quick, too.

31. Johnny's description of the soldiers' condition seems to belie the common assessment that Pleasonton's pursuit of Price was lackadaisical. See, for instance, Mark A. Lause, *Price's Lost Campaign: The 1864 Invasion of Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 183.



*The Eleventh Kansas Cavalry included several notable Kansans, including two who were to serve in the U.S. Senate: Edmund G. Ross, captain of Company E, who was promoted to major in May 1864; and Preston B. Plumb, who mustered in as captain of Company C, but was soon promoted to major and then in May 1864 to lieutenant colonel. When Colonel Moonlight was placed in charge of the Second Brigade, the twenty-seven-year-old Plumb took command of the regiment.*

And the powder man, him I nearly forgot. He ran smooth and fast, like a Kentucky thoroughbred. He didn't have any patches on his seat at all, he needed them to be sure, for there was two places where his pink skin showed. You see it is very hard for artillerymen to keep the seat of their trousers from wearing out.

They were firing before any of the others were and men would jump against the wheels with side and shoul-

der as they spun around and kicked back from their position. It was astonishing how quick these men could load their cannon after firing. How in deadly earnest they worked and so accurate and unerring. It was splendid, and well worthwhile to see. The solid shot from these guns fairly made my ears pop, as we were stationed right up close, but after a while [I] could only hear a keen sing ringing in my ears, and never afterwards could hear quite normal.

Away went the solid shot through that cornfield and [we] could see cornstalks shoot straight up in the air when the shot hit them. The solid shot would hit the ground as intended, roll and bounce through the cornfield. There was a commotion in that cornfield as we could see rows of Johnnies mounting their horses. Our solid shot was making it so hot for them they hurriedly moved out of there. At the edge of the cornfield we could see dozens of riders leaving their horses as they had legs broken. All of them at first tried to go out of there by way of the Bloody Lane. Then the captain seeing the Johnnies going out the Bloody Lane ordered the cannon turned on the rock fence beside the Bloody Lane. And when a solid shot would hit that rock fence on an angle the rocks would fly in all directions ahead like a hundred different shots all at once flying through the air. This made it really bad business for the Johnnies in that lane that day.

Did not know the number of this company of artillery then and never have found out, but they were of the first water, the best of the land.<sup>32</sup>

*In the aftermath of the battle, Johnny told of intervening to help a wounded Confederate officer.*

After this cornfield and Bloody Lane battle we were ordered to go up on a hill past a Johnny gun that had blown up where the Johnnies had established a temporary hospital. There were plenty of wounded soldiers

32. The identity of the unit has yet to be determined.



belonging to Price's army there. One Southern soldier who was shot in the leg just above the knee and was an officer in spite of his years wore a splendid pair of new boots. And as I thought of aiding him another man came along and noticing his boots seized hold of his foot which was swelled inside of the boot and the wounded leg. He pulled as hard as he could to get that boot off the officer's foot, and the officer yelled in pain. I pulled a revolver on the fellow and made him go clear off the hill. He said, "You ought to be on the Southern side, that's where you belong."

I came back with my knife and cut the boots off both the wounded officer's feet. He said, "I thank you, sir. You are a gentleman. May God bless you even if you are of the North."

Oh that's all right, I always aid boys of both sides when they are in distress. It's my duty, because after all we are our brothers' keepers.

Then I stepped around and ordered that the officer be attended to right away. The fellow looked at me for a moment. Get at it! I ordered. Tie a bandage, stop blood away and stayed there and saw that it was done, no one objected to my giving orders, and that surprised me. But a Southern lad is entitled to as much consideration when wounded as any other man, and this one was decent clear through and worthy.

It always made a world of difference with me in the manner another one spoke to me and how he conducted himself for his own good. There is a soft spot of comradeship running through all men, arouse that and you are accommodated.

*On the morning of Monday the twenty-fifth, the pursuit of Price southward along the state line began. The first days were intense, with several night marches for the Eleventh Cavalry, taxing men and horses no less than the earlier phase of the campaign. Some incidents Johnny assigned to the retreat from Lexington almost certainly belonged to the pursuit period, like this bivouac in the rain: such a drenching was recorded for the night of October 24–25, not earlier.*<sup>33</sup>

The skies became cloudy and the clouds changed to a dull dark hue, which foretold rain. It was lucky for us that night that the commissary wagons finally reached us for our rations had long since played out and we were living

33. The two incidents that follow are from "Sweet Potatoes and Other Stories."

off the country. Just a little while we stopped and then on and on in a tiresome grind as if forever. The rain poured down all night and everybody became wet and covered more or less with mud, horses and men. Our command stopped by a cornfield near midnight for I think one hour and a half to let the horses have time to eat. Some of the boys hunched up under trees, others worn tired stopped where they were and slept as best they could out in the pouring rain. For myself [I] rustled some poles and slabs of the fence near there and laid them side by side with one end a little higher than the other, then laid some corn fodder on that for a bed. Laid down on this sumptuous bed, curling up in a knot and pulling my long cavalry cape and coat combined over me, and then went to sleep like the rest out in the rain, but such a sleep, it was a good one and I got it in spite of the elements and the war. It refreshed me like nothing else could, not even hardtack.

Then "Fall in! Fall in!" was sounded. It sounded away off down through an earhorn and across a big canyon a mile deep, and the voice calling seemed hoarse with a weary shading mingled in with its tone. All were obedient though slow and sluggish in motion, for the machinery of our bodies was fast running down, and we couldn't get enough to eat and sufficient sleep to ever wind up a heart that was losing beats.

*Keeping west of Price to block any deeper movement into Kansas, Moonlight's men missed the Battle of Mine Creek on October 25, which cost the Confederates much of their remaining strength. The long marches and skirmishes continued for several more days, but at one stop, not identifiable by location, Johnny finally found time to cook and eat his sweet potato.*<sup>34</sup>

Then once more [I] dug out my sweet potato, now worn and dusty and flavored with a very nice powder smell.<sup>35</sup> Then [I] split it into two halves and chucked them both in the hot ashes and coals. But that was not all, an extra precaution and vigilance had to be kept up, even while I slept. So a slightly heavy stick was laid over the coals where my potato was roasting and on that stick my

34. For the pursuit of Price and the Battle of Mine Creek, see Langsdorf, "Price's Raid and the Battle of Mine Creek," 78–99; Albert Castel, "War and Politics: The Price Raid of 1864," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 24 (Summer 1958): 129–43; Albert Castel, *Civil War Kansas: Reaping the Whirlwind*, rev. ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 184–202; Lumir F. Buresh, *October 25th and the Battle of Mine Creek* (Kansas City, Mo.: Lowell Press, 1977); Kip Lindberg, "Chaos Itself: The Battle of Mine Creek," *North & South* 1 (no. 6, 1998): 74–85.

35. In an omitted incident, Johnny hurriedly stuffed the hot potato into a saddle pocket containing grains of powder, which ignited, causing

feet were placed to stand guard while my head slept a refreshing slumber it needed so very bad. Some part of me had to stand guard or some other man would eat my sweet potato and not I . . .

In less than half an hour I awoke and found my sweet potato roasted fine on one side, that was good enough that near baked. So, I stuck a slice of bacon on a stick, then held it over the hot coals and soon had the grease dropping over my one-half slice of sweet potato. Then went to eating and bragging how fine my sweet potato was and smacking my lips to make the other fellows wish they had some too. I knew that bunch would make me divide if my sweet potato looked too large, but leaving one half of it in the coals saved me from trouble, but this half looked so small no one expected me to divide.

But when I brought out the other and larger half and another slice of bacon, the boys began to be a little nervous and take notice, suppose they thought my potato was swelling and toasting faster than I could eat it. One fellow said, "If someone would dare me I will take that sweet potato away from Johnny. He must have a wagon load of them under the coals."

Lieutenant Clancy could stand it no longer, so he found a stick and a slice of bacon which he warmed over the coals, then sat down beside me and commenced dropping grease on the other end of my sweet potato, thus really appropriating that end.<sup>36</sup> We together finished it in short order. Lieutenant Clancy thought it was very fine, [I] think it was all he could do to eat it with all that powder flavor that was on the outside of it.

"Now, Johnny," the Lieutenant said, "that is the last of the sweet potato that has caused you some trouble and the rest of us as well. You ought to be in the guard house for not having a better supply."

*Several passages evoked the continuing decay of the Confederate army. Even in retrospect Johnny was not aware of the disputes and miscommunications that cost the Union commanders their chance to demolish that army completely.*

Every morning we would find the graves where the Johnnies had buried their dead during the night. Usually there would be stakes or slabs marking the graves and the names of the ones that had passed on. And we would

find about every two days a bunch of wounded and sick Johnnies under the care of a doctor and helpers. We always greeted them as if nothing of any consequence was between us. It was surprising how quick they would warm up to us, talk about our continuous battle that lasted day and night, and the funny things that happened along with the grind. We would laugh together, pass the tobacco around and make some fellow feel easier, and don't you ever forget that the men of the South have a way of thanking you that carries a season of hospitality that charms.

One afternoon we rode into a farm that smacked of being well kept up and from the looks of things around about the proprietor must be well to do. We were out to one side of the line of Price[']s retreat in search of food for our company and fodder for our horses.

We rode up to a fine brick house before going away because Lieutenant Drew wished to learn the names of the people so as to keep a record of what things we had taken belong to the right party. Lieutenant Drew made his quest known to a lady that was standing on the porch of the house who happened to be the wife of the man who owned the place, but her husband at the time was with General Price, so she said.

"Yes!" she answered. "You Yanks are welcome to our things because there is no force here that can prevent you. I suppose you men would take the house if it could be toted away handy."

"No, Madam," Lieutenant Drew answered, "we only want what is necessary to keep body and soul alive for a little while. We are up against a hard proposition."

"You men would be up against a harder proposition, if General Price had more soldiers to fight you!" The lady snapped back hard as flint.

"I realize that fact. General Price is an able general, lady. Now please do not be afraid of our outfit. We are not willingly robbing the country, we are forced to do these things because we are hungry. General Price is doing the same thing and destroying what he cannot consume to keep us from having anything. It's war and war is not kind to anybody."

"I don't care. I hate! the Yanks! I despise the pesky animals—I do!"

Then five more ladies came out on the porch. They wanted to take a good look at a Yank. They were inquisitive which is natural for the sex.

The lady of the house continued, "Why don't you have your men dressed in better clothing. I would be ashamed to go through a country looking like tramps. Do any of you know what a razor is for?"

his horse to bolt. "Johnny," Lieutenant Drew scolded, "you are a hoodoo for the whole company!"

36. Second Lieutenant James J. Clancy.

"Dear lady, we used to have some idea what a razor is for, but that has been so long ago it seems like it has been a hundred years ago, and good clothes, we wouldn't know how to conduct ourselves in good clothes.

"Before we go away, would you ladies sing us a nice song. We are tired of this war and are all homesick. We need a little cheer even if we are 'Yanks,'" Lieutenant Drew begged. He held his hand at salute and because our lieutenant showed that much respect, we all did the same.

"We will sing you a song if you will allow us to choose our song, and will not be angry with us after we have sung the song. If you agree to that, then we will sing."

"We agree, lady. Go ahead please."

Then the lady sang a [song] . . . which the Southern lads sang occasionally to appease their appetites. Don't remember the words except the last lines, they were, "Come on ravens and crows and have a feast, for Yankee flesh shall be your meat." And when they came to flesh in their song every lady in that bunch would stomp the floor of that porch as hard as they could.

"Now what do you think of that, you men?" the lady asked.

"It is splendid, your singing shows to have had some training and your motive is well emphasized and marked. Have never heard such fine singing in all my life before. Your professor must have a singing master of renown."

Then the Lieutenant thanked the lady and we rode away.

*On November 4, the troops were in northern Arkansas, where the company surprised a group of exhausted Confederate soldiers.*

At or near Fayetteville, Arkansas our army ceased to keep on the western side of Price as it was not necessary to continue further on that plan, we were away from the Kansas border. Here we were issued six hardtack and a handful of sugar, one ration, and it could not go very far, but that is all could be had at the time. We had to live off the country. The Johnnies would kill a beef and skin one side, cut half of the meat out, and go on if we were pushing too hard behind and then we would come along, turn the beef over, and skin the other side and cut out the other half of the meat. Here we found an ocean of abandoned wagons and mules and horses staggering around half dead. Their shoulders were worn to the bone, a hard looking bunch of stock.

In the afternoon we rode up on about twenty Johnnies sleeping beside a little creek. They were all dead for sleep which was why they did not waken when we

approached. We surrounded them, covering all with revolvers, then hallowed to them to wake up. Some of them hurried to their feet, others rubbed their eyes and then discovered they were trapped. At first showed they intended to scrap, but Lieutenant Drew told them to keep quiet if they wished to live a while longer.

They were quite angry and couldn't figure out what happened. Then one of their number said in an angry mood,

"We are caught like rats in a trap. I feel disgraced."

"That is about all there is to it. You men are caught, so be good about it, if it's in you," Lieutenant Drew answered.

"If I had known you were coming, no Yank would have taken me alive. It is bad to give up your life in battle, but that is honorable compared to be caught asleep. Our Lieutenant is the cause of this. He should have wakened us as agreed, and he alone is guilty. A fine man he is, worthy of nothing."

We made them come with us where they were made prisoners of war in the rear in a bull-pen.

*Toward the end of the manuscript, Johnny reported a suspiciously inspirational conversation. Did it really occur about as written, or might it reflect not only the softening effect of time but also deference to his wife, Corinna Siceloff, North Carolina-born? Son Harry remarked in a note: "If I sing 'Marching Through Georgia' [I] must follow it up with 'Dixie.'" The anecdote might also reflect the determination during the post-Reconstruction years to downplay the issue of slavery. Certainly Johnny barely mentioned that fatal matter but returned again and again to the need to preserve the strength of an undivided nation.*

Our forces did not follow General Price across the Arkansas River, as by that time the Johnnies were about used up, and their coming again into Missouri was very doubtful. Then too the Arkansas rising made it extremely dangerous to cross the river, General Price just barely crossing with his troops in the nick of time. Our forces then turned back to Kansas City vicinity.

Now we could march at our leisure in the daytime and sleep all the night minus the eternal rush and go and battling. They had given us a hard tussle and while they were in a bad way, we were not in a position to do much of the braggado [*sic*]. They were our honorable enemy, and a part of our blood and race; and that is the reason why they were so confounded hard to whip out of Missouri.

Our little dried-up fellow was still alive and healthy as an old-fashioned pine-knot, and more sassy and important



*Johnny Hart was a private in Company I of the Eleventh Kansas, which was composed of recruits mainly from Grasshopper Falls, Jefferson County, and Burlingame, Osage County. Pictured here are four of Johnny Hart's Eleventh Kansas comrades, members of Company G: Private Fox Winne and Chief Bugler N.D. Horton, seated; regimental saddler Sergeant Henry Barnes and First Sergeant Henry Boothe, standing. All listed their residence as Manhattan, as did the majority of the company's initial recruits.*

than usual.<sup>37</sup> I asked him what he thought about the war in Missouri.

"Why," he answered, "it's all right. We were fighting to keep our brothers of the South with us. We need 'em, we must have 'em. We cannot afford to divide our Stars and Stripes for any kind of a trumped-up charge. We can't both be victorious over each other, but we can be a helluva nation all together.

<sup>37</sup> The same unidentified Union soldier who kidded Johnny about his sweet potato at Lexington.

"Ain't one of my brothers fighting in the Southern army this minute, and ain't I fighting in the North? My mother is in the South, stickin' up for the South, livin' for the South, ready to die for the South—and one of my sisters married a Northern man.

"That makes our family mixed in the land. And we're a mixed country of people. We got to take 'er all mixed, with one universal language.

"Ain't it so?"

**A**fter the Price campaign, the Eleventh Kansas was again ordered to the frontier, where Johnny took part in the Battle of Platte Bridge, July 26, 1865, near modern Casper, Wyoming. One of the volunteers who rode out under Caspar Collins to confront a Lakota/Cheyenne war party, Hart saw Collins carried off to his doom on the back of his bolting horse (events also recounted in the memoir). Company I was mustered out at Fort Leavenworth on September 26, 1865.

Two years later Johnny went west again with his brother Hugh, alighting at Fort C. F. Smith on the Bozeman Trail in the middle of Red Cloud's War. He took lucrative but risky jobs including hay harvest (he was at the engagement known as the Hayfield Fight), poisoning wolves under government contract, and, he reports, carrying mail between Fort Smith

and Fort Phil Kearny. Returning to Kansas, he married Corinna Sicheloff in Leavenworth in 1871 and helped to found the Elk County town of Canola (fused into modern Grenola in 1879). In 1881 he moved the family west for good, homesteading a valley, still called Hart's Basin, in Delta County, Colorado. He served a term in the Colorado House of Representatives and died in Eckert, Colorado, in 1928. FT