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THE CIVIL WAR CAREER

OF

JOHN GIBSON PARKHURST

By

Jerry L. Bower

AN ABSTRACT

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History

1962

Frederick D. Williams

This study traces the Civil War career of John Gibson Parkhurst, a lawyer from Coldwater, Michigan, who led the Ninth Michigan Infantry during most of the war. It treats his activities as a combat commander, as Provost Marshal of the Fourteenth Army Corps under General George H. Thomas, and as Provost Marshal General of the Army of the Cumberland from January, 1864 to October, 1865. Through his eyes the record of the Ninth Michigan is traced and an attempt is made to place that regiment in proper historical perspective.

New information is disclosed concerning the contribution of the Ninth Michigan to the Union victory at Stone's River in January, 1863. A critical examination of the claims made by Parkhurst concerning this battle revealed that the Ninth played an important and much overlooked role in General Braxton Bragg's withdrawal from the battlefield.

For this study use was made of the John Gibson Parkhurst Papers in the Museum of Michigan State University and in the Michigan Historical Collections of the University of Michigan. Printed documents, notably The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, provided useful information. Another valuable source was the Records of the Michigan Military Establishment located in the Archives of the Michigan Historical Commission in Lansing.

For background material on Parkhurst liberal use was made of state and local histories. Other secondary works, notably studies of the war in the western theater, were relied upon to place the Ninth Michigan Infantry in its proper context.

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PREFACE

The amount of material that has already been written about the American Civil War is almost beyond imagination. However as the viewpoint of the historian is molded by an ever-changing society, the study of the Civil War goes through a constant process of re-evaluation. Despite the volumes already published there are many aspects of the war that deserve study and many personalities that merit recognition.

This thesis will trace the Civil War career of one of these men --John Gibson Parkhurst--a Colonel from Coldwater, Michigan. Only a brief sketch will be given of the pre-war and post-war periods. Whenever possible secondary sources were used to fill in the gaps but, unfortunately, some still remain.

The greatest reward that one receives from the study of a man's diary and letters is insight into his ideas and beliefs. Parkhurst's letters were particularly valuable in disclosing his political beliefs, his reasons for fighting in the war, his observations on the prosecution of the war, and his opinions of the generals whom he served.

Parkhurst's diary proved to be somewhat disappointing. He seldom recorded his inner thoughts about the events that he had witnessed; as a result the diary served mainly to trace Parkhurst's movements throughout the various campaigns that were a part of his Civil War career. It must be concluded that, from a historian's viewpoint, John Parkhurst was a poor diarist.

Parkhurst's account of the Battle of Stone's River revealed new and interesting insights into that great clash between Northern and Southern armies. In these papers Parkhurst stated that he felt his

regiment had played an important role in the Union victory--a role which had never been recognized by the histories of the period. This contention is investigated in this thesis and it is concluded that, within limits, Parkhurst's views were correct.

It is hoped that this study will add to the knowledge and understanding of the Civil War. While the study of John Parkhurst's Civil War career cannot be expected to provide an entirely new perspective on this period in history, it is hoped that this examination results in new insights and information of more than ordinary value.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1 A PRE-WAR PORTRAIT.	1
2 INTO KENTUCKY	7
3 OPERATIONS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE: THE ENGAGEMENT AT MURFREESBORO	17
4 THE BATTLE OF STONE'S RIVER	31
5 THE CHATTANOOGA CAMPAIGN AND THE BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA	45
6 THE ATLANTA CAMPAIGN.	57
7 THE BATTLE OF NASHVILLE--A CROWNING GLORY	66
8 THE POST-WAR YEARS.	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	81

MAPS

	Page
THE BATTLE OF STONE'S RIVER34
BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA51
ATLANTA CAMPAIGN.60
TENNESSEE67

Chapter I

A PRE-WAR PORTRAIT

A war which had the size and the violence of the American Civil War cannot cross the pages of history without having a profound influence upon the society in which it takes place, and upon many members of that society. Many men and women who served in the Civil War have long since been forgotten; yet they did their share in shaping the future of our nation. The roles that these individuals played must not be forgotten, even though they have not been proclaimed great heroes. This is the situation concerning the Civil War career of John Gibson Parkhurst, a lawyer from Coldwater, Michigan, who, though never recognized as a hero, served as a regimental commander during most of the war and made a record that is worthy of recognition.

Information on Parkhurst's early life is scanty. Born in Oneida Castle, New York, on April 17, 1824, he was one of the eight children of Stephen and Sally (Gibson) Parkhurst. When John was seven years of age his mother died, leaving the responsibility of rearing the family to Stephen and the older daughters. John obtained a thorough literary education at the Oneida Academy. At the age of nineteen he began to read law at the office of N. F. Graves and four years later, in 1847, he was admitted to the New York bar.¹

After two years of successful law practice in New York, Parkhurst came to Michigan in 1849 and settled in Coldwater. From 1849 to

¹ Rev. Henry P. Collin, A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Branch County Michigan (Chicago, 1906), p. 340.

1861 he practiced law, part of that time as the partner of George A. Coe, who later became lieutenant-governor of Michigan. Parkhurst also established other business interests, including an insurance agency that he held throughout his life. Over the years he invested money in farm lands in the Coldwater area.²

In politics, Parkhurst supported the Democratic Party. He continued to hold his original views despite the formation of the Republican Party at Jackson, not far from Coldwater, in the spring of 1854. In fact the lawyer was among those Democrats in Branch County who were defeated by the new party in the summer of 1854 when he lost the race for office of prosecuting attorney to John W. Turner.³

Parkhurst continued to follow his interest in politics, and in the Democratic State Convention held in Detroit, in February, 1860, he was chosen as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention to be held in Charleston, South Carolina, in April, 1860.⁴ Parkhurst received numerous congratulatory notes upon his election as a delegate to the Charleston Convention, many of which urged him to go to Charleston and work for the nomination of Douglas. One note said that if Douglas succeeded, Parkhurst should receive a good position, "for if there is a faithful working Democrat in Michigan who deserves to be rewarded it is yourself."⁵ Parkhurst was to play an active role in promoting Douglas' nomination in this convention.

² Ibid., pp. 340-342.

³ Ibid., p. 211.

⁴ Parkhurst Diary, Museum of Michigan State University, February 21-22, 1860. Hereafter cited as Diary, MSU.

⁵ Parkhurst Papers, Michigan Historical Collections of the University of Michigan, Phin to Parkhurst, April 4, 1860. Hereafter cited as Papers, MHC.

Parkhurst left Coldwater for Charleston on April 11, 1860.⁶ Enroute he stopped to visit the New York legislature and viewed, with disgust, the actions of the "Black Republicans" in that body. He commented that the New York Republicans were much worse than Michigan Republicans because they knew more ways to steal legally than did their counterparts in Michigan.⁷

Parkhurst commented in letters to Amelia, his wife, on the chances of nominating Douglas. While in New York he noted that the New York delegation generally favored Douglas, but that an effort was being made to promote the candidacy of either Daniel S. Dickinson or Horatio Seymour. Parkhurst felt that Douglas could be nominated, but that the Southern delegates would provide the greatest opposition.⁸

On the eve of the convention Parkhurst noted that the administration of President Buchanan was trying to defeat Douglas' nomination. In fact, he said that some of the administration's followers and the Southerners were more bitter toward Douglas than toward the Republicans. In view of this opposition some members were predicting that the convention would last eight or ten days, but Parkhurst felt that he would be on his way home in less than a week.⁹

On April 21, the day after he arrived in Charleston, Parkhurst was made a member of the Democratic National Committee in place of Jacob Olmot. Three days later, he was elected to the post of Recording

⁶ Diary, MSU., April 11, 1860.

⁷ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to his wife, Amelia, April 15, 1860.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., April 17 and 21, 1860.

Secretary of the convention, a post that gave him an excellent opportunity to view and to hear the proceedings.¹⁰

In a very interesting letter to his wife, dated April 29, 1860, Parkhurst described the convention in great detail and ventured a prediction as to its outcome. He noted that the convention had been unable to agree upon a platform and that the Platform Committee had returned two reports. The majority report rejected Douglas' popular sovereignty, and the minority report upheld it. Parkhurst believed that the minority report would finally be adopted and that Douglas would be nominated. He was equally confident that Douglas' nomination would cause the Southerners to withdraw from the convention, but that they would remain as long as there was any hope of defeating Douglas. He closed his letter with the prediction, "that We Shall break up in the Wildest Confusion and that one half or rather one portion of the Convention will be dissatisfied with the acts of the Convention and will attempt to Establish Another organization, but that they will fail success."¹¹

After the Southern delegations of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas withdrew from the convention on April 29, 1860, Parkhurst foresaw a black future for the Democratic Party and for the country. He felt that the rupture of the Democratic Party meant destruction of the Union. The split meant that three, and perhaps four, candidates would be seeking the presidency and that in such a contest Douglas would undoubtedly be defeated.¹²

¹⁰ Diary, MSU., April 21 and 24, 1860.

¹¹ Papers, MHC.

¹² Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to wife, May 1, 1860.

Parkhurst also performed the duties of Recording Secretary at the convention which opened on June 18, 1860, in Baltimore, where the Democratic Party made one last attempt to settle its differences. For Parkhurst there was but one course. It would be better for the entire country to go to the "d---l," he asserted, than for the Douglas Democrats to rely on "such a class of Men as Yancey or Rhet[t]" for support. Nothing could be gained by yielding to the Southern fire-eaters. ¹³

Parkhurst's predictions with respect to the Democracy were accurate. On June 22, 1860, the Southern delegations again bolted the convention and the Democratic Party was hopelessly split. On June 23 Douglas was nominated by the remaining delegates and Parkhurst returned home. Although he could see nothing but defeat for the Douglas Democrats, he clung to the opinion that it was better to lose the election than to yield their principles. ¹⁴

After his return from Baltimore, Parkhurst resumed his regular duties as a lawyer and businessman, but he also kept abreast of political developments and their consequences. There is no evidence to indicate that Parkhurst actively campaigned for Douglas in Michigan during the summer and fall of 1860. With Lincoln's election, in November, 1860, the Southern States began to secede and the firing on Fort Sumter, in April, 1861, precipitated the Civil War. Parkhurst actively supported the Union war effort through speeches given at Coldwater (April 17), Batavia (April 22), and Quincy (May 8). Neither Parkhurst's Diary nor the newspapers of the time presented the text

¹³ Ibid., June 20, 1860.

¹⁴ Ibid., July 14, 1860.

of these speeches; the only comment made by Parkhurst was that his address at Coldwater was "Enthusiastically cheered."¹⁵

Parkhurst decided to serve his country and promptly made efforts to secure a commission in one of the Michigan regiments that was being formed. He wrote directly to Governor Austin Blair requesting a commission, probably a colonelcy, and he also had some of his friends write to the Governor in his behalf. On May 28, 1861, he accepted a captaincy in the Coldwater Artillery but continued his efforts to secure a better position.¹⁶

While this great national crisis was developing a second daughter was born, on May 24, 1861, to Parkhurst and his wife, Amelia. However the happiness of this event was short-lived for Amelia became ill and died on July 26, 1861. During his wife's illness Parkhurst spent almost all of his time with her and the entries in his diary reveal the great heartaches of this month as Amelia alternately improved and failed until her death. Since Parkhurst was a devoted family man, Amelia's death brought a great crisis into his life; he had lost his beloved wife and he was left with two small daughters.¹⁷

¹⁵ Diary, MSU., April 17, 18, 22, 29 and May 4, 8, 1861.

¹⁶ Ibid., May 16, 28, 30 and June 1, 18, 1861.

¹⁷ Ibid., May 24-July 26, 1861.

Chapter II

INTO KENTUCKY

Parkhurst went to Detroit, early in August, to see Governor Blair about an appointment to an infantry regiment. Blair informed Parkhurst that while he could not give him command of a regiment, he could and would appoint him a Lieutenant Colonel in either the Eighth or Ninth Infantry. Colonel William M. Fenton agreed to Parkhurst as the Lt. Colonel of his regiment, the Eighth Infantry, but for some reason Governor Blair deferred the appointment and he returned to Coldwater without a commission.¹

Upon his return home, Parkhurst made arrangements to send his children to New York. The baby, Maggie, was sent to live with Parkhurst's sister, Helen Starr. An older daughter, Kittie, was to live with her Uncle William Parkhurst, who came to Coldwater and took the children to New York with him, leaving Parkhurst alone in his now "desolate home."²

Parkhurst's family urged him not to go to war. His sister, Helen, was especially adamant in her opposition to Parkhurst's decision to join the service. She argued that the war was the result of "black Republican" policies and that a good Democrat like Parkhurst should not offer his services. Furthermore she accused her brother of neglecting his duty to his children by even considering entering the army.³

¹ Diary, MSU., August 7, 1861.

² Ibid., August 8 and 12, 1861; Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to sister, Helen Starr, August 9, 1861.

³ Papers, MHC., Sister to Parkhurst, August 19, 1861.

Parkhurst replied with firmness. "Government or no government. Republicanism or Despotism. This is no partisan war," he declared, "it is a War for the life of the Nation. Now I am willing, yes anxious, to Serve My Country in their (sic) hour of peril to the Constitution." ⁴ Parkhurst reaffirmed his decision to volunteer, adding that he desired to make the country safe for his children by doing his share to insure the continuance of a unified nation.

After receiving word from Governor Blair, on September 3, 1861, that he would be appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the Ninth Infantry, Parkhurst made a short visit to New York to see his children. ⁵ On September 23, 1861, he returned to Detroit to take up his duties in preparation for the mustering of the regiment into the federal service.

The Ninth Michigan Infantry Regiment was raised during the late summer and early autumn of 1861, but when the men were called to muster at Detroit many of the companies were not yet filled to capacity. Thus the men who had been promised captaincies in the unit were asked to report how many soldiers they had enrolled and were urged to fill their quotas as soon as possible. ⁶ One of the companies was made up exclusively of men from Coldwater and Branch County, and since other captains also recruited men from the area, that county was well represented in the regiment. ⁷

⁴ Ibid., Parkhurst to Sister, September 2, 1861.

⁵ Ibid., Governor Blair to Parkhurst, September 1, 1861.

⁶ John Robertson, compiler, Michigan in the War, revised edition (Lansing, Michigan, 1882), p. 293.

⁷ Crisfield Johnson, History of Branch County, Michigan (Philadelphia, 1879), p. 63.

Parkhurst spent the rest of September and the first half of October in Detroit taking care of military and personal affairs. He spent much time at Fort Wayne, where the men rendezvoused, getting the regiment ready for service. He purchased the supplies that he would need as a soldier and arranged his personal affairs by making a will, by storing his books and other possessions, and by checking over his business affairs.⁸

The officers and men of the Ninth Michigan Infantry Regiment were mustered into the service on October 15, at Fort Wayne, in Detroit.⁹ At that time the Ninth was placed under marching orders and, as Parkhurst wrote, was ready to "go to Kentucky as soon as we can get arms."¹⁰ The regiment spent several days waiting for weapons and finally left Detroit without them. Parkhurst explained that they were leaving without arms because those they had were so poor that they expected to find better ones when they reached Kentucky.¹¹

The Ninth left Michigan on October 25 and reached Jeffersonville, Indiana, the following day.¹² After a one day stopover the organization was ordered to take up a post at the mouth of the Salt River, near West Point, Kentucky. Here the Ninth was assigned to guard supplies and roads in the area.¹³

⁸ Diary, MSU., September 23-27 and October 11-14, 1861.

⁹ Ibid., October 15, 1861.

¹⁰ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, October 15, 1861.

¹¹ Parkhurst Papers, Museum of Michigan State University, Parkhurst to Sister, October 22, 1861. Hereafter cited as Papers, MSU.

¹² Diary, MSU., October 25-27, 1861.

¹³ The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I (Washington D. C., 1880), VII, 466. Hereafter cited as OR. and from Series I unless otherwise indicated.

While the first duties of the Michigan men were anything but spectacular, they had been called for service in an important theater of the war. Kentucky was considered a key area by both the North and South because it was a border state strategically located along the Ohio River. On May 24, 1861, the Kentucky legislature, at the urging of Governor Beriah Magoffin, proclaimed neutrality for the state in the civil struggle that was developing. However Kentucky was too important to be allowed to live in peace and both Unionists and Secessionists worked actively to secure the state for their cause. Very early it was seen that the State Guards under Simon B. Buckner were decidedly pro-South. To counteract this a Home Guard was organized in Louisville by the supporters of Lincoln.¹⁴

Kentucky did contain a strong body of Union supporters but Lincoln was unwilling to force the issue until he was sure such action could be decisive. The importance that Lincoln placed in maintaining Kentucky for the North was pointed out by one author who reported, ". . . Lincoln was said to have remarked, he hoped to have God on his side, but he must have Kentucky."¹⁵ Thus while the state was "officially" neutral both the Union and the Confederacy were openly recruiting in Kentucky and establishing forces which they hoped would carry the state into their camp.

The Department of Kentucky of the Federal Army was created on May 28, 1861 and General Robert Anderson (of Fort Sumter fame) was

¹⁴ Accounts of Kentucky's early position with regard to the war can be found in William H. Townsend, Lincoln and the Bluegrass; Slavery and Civil War in Kentucky (Lexington, Kentucky, 1955), pp. 278-285; Thomas D. Clark, A History of Kentucky (New York, 1937), pp. 446-450.

¹⁵ E. Merton Coulter, The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865 (Baton Rouge, 1950), p. 46.

placed in command. In early June the Union forces established Camp Dick Robinson under General George H. Thomas, while Buckner led the State Guards south to join other Rebel troops on the Kentucky-Tennessee border.¹⁶

In September the secessionists made their move into Kentucky with three separate forces. General Leonidas Polk moved into northwest Kentucky and took Columbus; Buckner moved on Louisville but was stopped at Bowling Green by Federal troops. A third force, under General Felix B. Zollicoffer, moved through the Cumberland Gap to Barbourville. Since the Federal forces were still small, they were more than happy just to hold the invaders in check until they had a sufficient number of men to begin an offensive. This, then, was the military situation when the Ninth appeared on the Kentucky scene in late October, 1861. Several days after their arrival General Don Carlos Buell was placed in command of the Department of the Ohio which included the states of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Tennessee and that part of Kentucky which was east of the Cumberland River.

While the Ninth Michigan was located on the Salt River, Parkhurst kept up a steady correspondence with his sisters and brother in New York. In these letters he expressed his views concerning the regiment's duties and his own progress in the service. Parkhurst wrote, no doubt in a burst of enthusiasm, that the Michigan men had been given a "post of honor" although their activities were limited to guard duty and occasional foraging missions. He believed that their unit compared favorably with other volunteer regiments and even excelled many of them.

¹⁶ For background information on the movements of the Army of the Cumberland see: Henry M. Cist, The Army of the Cumberland (New York, 1882).

He had nothing but praise for Col. Duffield, whom he regarded as "an accomplished officer."¹⁷ In commenting upon his own progress in the service, Parkhurst said that he felt he had given satisfaction to the men and other officers and that he liked military life, at least as much of it as he had experienced to that time.¹⁸

Colonel Duffield commented about the Ninth and Lt. Colonel Parkhurst in correspondence with John Robertson, Adjutant General of Michigan. His main concern was the condition of the muskets carried by his men. Our arms are so poor, he wrote, that "it is unsafe to send men into the field with such Miserable Weapons as those We have." Duffield expressed the hope that the governor would be able to obtain better arms for the regiment and charge the expense to the federal government.¹⁹ He also mentioned that Parkhurst was proving to be a valuable officer who would soon be as good as any officer in the Michigan units.²⁰

In November the Ninth was organized along with the 13th and 15th Kentucky and 3rd Minnesota into the Sixteenth Brigade of the Army of the Ohio. A brigade commander was not appointed at the time; but the units were under General Thomas, whose entire command was designated by General Buell as the First Division of the Army of the Ohio.²¹

¹⁷ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, October 28, 1861.

¹⁸ Ibid., October 28 and 30, 1861.

¹⁹ "Ninth Michigan Infantry," Records of the Michigan Military Establishment, record group 59-14, Michigan Historical Commission Archives, Lansing, Duffield to Robertson, November 7, 1861. Hereafter cited as RG 59-14, MHCA.

²⁰ Ibid., December 4, 1861.

²¹ OR., VII, 461.

During November and December the Ninth was hard hit by illness and at one time 332 of the approximately 950 men were on the sick list. In early December, when it appeared that a battle would soon be fought, the sick men were ordered to a hospital in Louisville. ²²

The moving of those men who were unfit for duty to a safer position was indicative of conditions that were developing at Bowling Green and at Mill Springs. When Buell first assumed command he had been content merely to check the rebel forces while he consolidated his units and obtained supplies. However, in late November the enemy began to make movements and concentrations of troops that could no longer be ignored.

Buell received information that General Albert Sidney Johnston had concentrated 45,000 men at Bowling Green in preparation for advances against Lexington, Louisville and Cincinnati. Early in December Zollicoffer crossed the Cumberland River near Mill Springs with about 9,500 troops. The Second, Third and Sixth Divisions, commanded respectively by Generals Alexander McCook, Ormsby M. Mitchel and Thomas J. Wood, were alerted to stop any move by Johnston while General Thomas' First Division was ordered to watch Zollicoffer, but not to take any offensive action.

At length plans were changed, and on December 29, 1861, Thomas was ordered to attack Zollicoffer and drive him back across the Cumberland River and out of Kentucky. On January 19, 1862, the two forces met in the Battle of Mill Springs or Logan's Crossroads in which the Confederates were defeated. They escaped during the night by crossing

²² Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, December 5, 1861; Diary, MSU., November 13, 1861.

the river and destroying their boats, thereby preventing any Federal pursuit.

While most of the units under General Thomas were seeing action at Mill Springs, the Michigan men had to be content with nothing more glorious than a change in their location. Early in January, 1862, the Ninth moved to Elizabethtown where they were to guard roads and bridges in the vicinity.²³ Because of their light duties the officers held frequent drills and dress parades to keep the men from becoming bored.²⁴

Parkhurst was placed in command of the Ninth during the latter part of January when Duffield was given a special assignment in Bardstown, Kentucky. During Duffield's absence Parkhurst commanded his first battalion drill and, after it was over, said he was well-pleased with the results.²⁵ Parkhurst anticipated that his responsibilities as commander of the Ninth would continue since he expected Duffield would soon be promoted to a higher position in the brigade.²⁶

Since the Ninth had few duties at Elizabethtown, the men had an opportunity to enjoy some recreational activities. In particular, they made good use of the stream running through their camp for swimming. This was certainly a new experience for Michigan boys--swimming in January--and it seemed to work wonders for the health of the men. According to Parkhurst, "This little stream is worth more to our Reg't

²³ Ibid., January 11, 1862; Diary, MSU., January 3-7, 1862.

²⁴ Diary, MSU., February, 1862, passim.

²⁵ Ibid., January 17 and 23, 1862.

²⁶ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, January 24, 1862.

than all the calomel in Ky." ²⁷ Parkhurst himself found time for social activity, making frequent visits to acquaintances in the area for dinners and parties. ²⁸

The Ninth remained at Elizabethtown through the month of February, and Parkhurst became anxious for the regiment to go into action. He wrote his sister that he was certain that he would live to the end of the war since there was no immediate prospect of the Ninth moving forward. Parkhurst was provoked by the sight of other units, with less time in the service, going into action while he and his men remained at Elizabethtown. ²⁹

Parkhurst's indignation at the relative inactivity of the Ninth no doubt arose over the movement of most of the Army of the Ohio into Tennessee. Thomas and his men marched to Louisville in late February and embarked for Nashville, arriving early in March. The Fourth and Fifth Divisions had departed earlier to aid General Ulysses S. Grant at Fort Donelson, but they arrived after the Fort had fallen and were subsequently ordered to Nashville.

General Johnston had been forced to evacuate Bowling Green when Fort Henry fell to General Grant. This enabled the Federal units facing that city to advance unopposed to Nashville along the railroad from Bowling Green. Thus while the bulk of the Army of the Ohio was concentrating in Nashville, the Ninth remained in Elizabethtown.

On March 10, 1862, the Michigan men moved to Bloomington, Kentucky and joined the rest of the Sixteenth Brigade, which was awaiting

²⁷ RG. 59-14, Parkhurst to Robertson, January 27, 1862.

²⁸ Diary, MSU., January, 1862, passim.

²⁹ Papers, MSU., February 13, 1862.

transportation to Nashville. Colonel Duffield, in the meantime, was assigned to the command of the brigade while Parkhurst was given charge of the Ninth. Once in Tennessee Parkhurst expected to see some action. He was ready, confident that his men formed "the best Reg't in Ky. or Tennessee." ³⁰

³⁰ Diary, MSU., March 10-19, 1862; Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, March 14, 1862.

Chapter III

OPERATIONS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE: THE ENGAGEMENT AT MURFREESBORO

The Ninth Michigan and the other units of the Sixteenth Brigade boarded a steamer on March 19, 1862, and headed for a rendezvous with the rest of the Army of the Ohio. They travelled via the Ohio and Cumberland Rivers to Nashville and thence to Murfreesboro, where they established a camp south of the town.¹ The designation of these regiments was now changed to the Twenty-third Independent Brigade of the Army of the Ohio with Colonel Duffield in command.²

The assignment of the Ninth was part of a large operation. General Buell had gathered an army of over 73,000 men at Nashville by early March and had deployed almost one-half of these troops to guard important roads, railroads, river crossings and mountain gaps in Kentucky and Tennessee. With the other units, totalling about 37,000, Buell was moving to Savannah, Tennessee, to join General Henry W. Halleck's command for operations against General Johnston, who, after suffering reverses at Forts Henry and Donelson, had concentrated his army at Corinth, Mississippi.

The advance of the Army of the Ohio was stalled for several days by high waters in the Duck River near Columbia, Tennessee. In the meantime Halleck sent General Grant and his men to Pittsburg Landing on the west bank of the Tennessee River. On April 6 the rebels

¹ Diary, MSU., March 19-April 1, 1862.

² Frederick H. Dyer, A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion, 3 vols. (New York, 1956), III, 1285.

surprised Grant with a smashing attack and made great gains against the Union troops, threatening to isolate and destroy them. Since Buell had not been informed of Grant's move across the river, he proceeded to Savannah. When Buell learned of the battle at Pittsburg Landing, he found that there was no transportation for a quick move to the scene of the battle. However General William Nelson's division did arrive in the late afternoon and helped Grant hold the Union position. During the night the bulk of Buell's army arrived and was in line for battle on the following morning. With these reinforcements the tide of the battle turned against the Confederates, who withdrew late in the day and made good their escape during the night.

During the remainder of April and through all of May, Halleck supervised an advance on Corinth, where General P. T. G. Beauregard and his army were located. Beauregard became the commander of the Confederate army in the West when Johnston was killed during the first day of action at Shiloh. Halleck's movement toward the rebels was very slow, and considering that his army greatly outnumbered its opponent, his extreme caution suggests want of generalship.

While their comrades had been engaged at Shiloh and in subsequent operations against Corinth, the Michigan volunteers remained at Murfreesboro, and they were to reinforce any of the other garrisons in the vicinity when the need arose.³

Lt. Colonel Parkhurst was ordered to take the post of Provost Marshal of Murfreesboro by General Ormsby Mitchel, who was in charge of several garrisons around Nashville. Parkhurst gladly accepted this position and thereafter spent a part of each day in his office carrying

³ Diary, MSU., April 11, 1862.

out this new responsibility. These tasks, not very heavy, consisted mostly of handling prisoners and of exercising legal powers for the military over the civilians in the area. ⁴

The men of the Ninth did see limited action, being involved almost daily in skirmishes with the rebels. However these clashes were, "nothing which [would] warrant the command of a Col. or Lt.-Col.," as Parkhurst noted in his diary. ⁵

In his correspondence with his sister Parkhurst described the countryside around Murfreesboro and commented upon the sentiment of the citizens in the vicinity. The scenery was beautiful and delightful, but the people were "all rebels. There is Scarcely a Union man in the whole Country," he declared. "I suppose this is the worst portion of the State in respect to politics and will probably be the most difficult to Establish a Union Feeling in." The people around Murfreesboro expected that the Federals would soon be driven out, but Parkhurst said that the men in blue were determined to hold their position. ⁶

Late in April the hopes of the Ninth were raised at the prospect of joining Halleck's forces near Pittsburg Landing to aid in the advance upon Corinth. ⁷ On April 23 General Ebenezer Dumont was ordered to take the Twenty-third Brigade to Pittsburg Landing, however these orders were countermanded on the very next day. ⁸ In place of

⁴ Ibid., April 3-30, 1862, passim.

⁵ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, April 12, 1862; Diary, MSU., April 11, 1862.

⁶ Ibid., April 1, 1862.

⁷ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, April 20, 1862.

⁸ Diary, MSU., April 23-24, 1862.

the intended move the brigade was directed to proceed to Huntsville, Alabama to reinforce Mitchel. From this point Parkhurst expected a move upon Chattanooga or Corinth, and he even conjectured that his men might be part of an operation against Atlanta or Dalton, Georgia.⁹

But the Twenty-third Brigade was unable to carry out its orders to join Mitchel, for the military situation in Tennessee took a new course which demanded its attention. Parkhurst had commented several times about the presence of "marauders" in the area and that their attacks had increased enough to demand some decisive action.¹⁰ The group that commanded the attention of the Ninth was a rebel cavalry unit led by Colonel John H. Morgan. The Michigan Infantry marched to Shelbyville in pursuit of Morgan on May 3 along with other units under General Dumont and Colonel Duffield. The next day they learned that Morgan had moved to Lebanon and, since pursuit by infantry was too slow, the Ninth was ordered back to Murfreesboro. At the request of the commanding officers, Parkhurst accompanied the Union cavalry to Lebanon.¹¹

The next day the Federals surprised Morgan's cavalry at Lebanon and defeated them after a house to house battle. Parkhurst directed the attack against a group of rebels holed up in the Odd Fellow's Hall and forced them to surrender after threatening to fire the building. In all 200 prisoners were taken along with 250 horses. The casualties listed 50 killed for Morgan and nine for the attackers. Parkhurst,

⁹ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, April 26, 1862.

¹⁰ Ibid., May 11, 1862.

¹¹ Ibid.; Diary, MSU., May 3-4, 1862.

as Provost Marshal of Murfreesboro, took charge of the prisoners and sent them north to Nashville.¹²

After his return to Murfreesboro Parkhurst was forceably impressed with the pro-South sentiment of the citizens when he was fired upon by a would-be assassin. As a result of this incident, Parkhurst, acting under orders of Governor Andrew Johnson, searched the city for arms and arrested twelve citizens who were sent at once to Nashville to be held as hostages.¹³

While the Ninth and other units in Tennessee were engaged in protecting Union communications, Halleck was conducting his snail-paced advance on Corinth. Halleck's movement with superior numbers finally forced General Beauregard to leave Corinth without a fight.

In conjunction with the Corinth campaign the Michigan men participated in an advance upon Chattanooga which was designed to draw rebel troops from other areas to defend that city. This enterprise was under the command of General John S. Negley, who assembled his men at Fayetteville. The Federal forces began to move forward on June 2, 1862. In addition to eight infantry regiments, the group included two cavalry regiments and two batteries of artillery--a total of about 10,000 men.¹⁴ In order to move rapidly the troops travelled without camp equipment. They arrived opposite Chattanooga on June 7 after a series of long, rapid marches through the rugged Cumberland Mountains.¹⁵

¹² Diary, MSU., May 4-7, 1862; OR., X, part I, 885-886; RG. 59-14, MHCA., Parkhurst to Robertson, May 10, 1862.

¹³ Charles W. Bennett, Historical Sketches of the Ninth Michigan Infantry (Coldwater, Michigan, 1913), pp. 9-10; Diary, MSU., May 10-13, 1862.

¹⁴ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, June 1, 1862.

¹⁵ Diary, MSU., June 2-7, 1862.

Unable to cross the Tennessee River the Union troops threw a few shells into Chattanooga and then withdrew back over the Cumberland Mountains. Neither Parkhurst nor his men could make much sense out of the whole operation. The retirement was made by long, rapid marches which brought the Ninth back to Murfreesboro on June 13.¹⁶

While Parkhurst was understandably disappointed over the retreat, the feint at Chattanooga had forced the rebels to make certain adjustments which proved advantageous to the Union. The threat posed by Negley's forces caused General E. Kirby Smith's command, as well as rebel troops in the Cumberland Gap, to hasten to Chattanooga. As a result Federal troops were able to occupy the all-important Cumberland Gap without a fight.¹⁷

After evacuating Corinth, part of the Confederate forces, now under General Braxton Bragg, headed for Chattanooga with Buell in pursuit. Buell and Halleck had a sharp difference of opinion over the best route of advance upon that city. Buell wanted to keep the Nashville-Chattanooga Railroad open for his supplies, but Halleck ordered him to advance along the Memphis-Charleston Railroad which laid parallel to the rebel lines. Thus Buell was forced to disperse his troops to protect his communications from being disrupted by Confederate Cavalry under Colonels Morgan and Nathan B. Forrest. The Confederate strikes were especially destructive during June and July, and the raid that hit Murfreesboro on July 13 stirred a great controversy.

In Murfreesboro was the Twenty-third Brigade, which was racked by internal discord, the friction being particularly high between the

¹⁶ Ibid., June 9-13, 1862.

¹⁷ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, July 9, 1862.

Ninth Michigan and the Third Minnesota. When Duffield was called to other duties in late May, Colonel H. C. Lester of the Minnesota regiment became the commander of the brigade. Parkhurst held a very low opinion of Lester's ability and did not believe he was qualified to command a brigade.¹⁸

On June 20 Col. Lester placed Parkhurst under arrest for refusing to obey an indirect order to move the lines of the Michigan Infantry. When threatened with being put in irons Parkhurst told Lester that "he was not man enough to do it." After an exchange of notes on the following day, Parkhurst was released from arrest with Lester expressing satisfaction that the matter was settled.¹⁹ This incident heightened the ill-will between the two men and during the next week the Minnesota men, along with their supporting battery, withdrew from Murfreesboro and established their camp north of the city.²⁰ In the last days of June the Michigan regiment holding the city was further reduced when four of its companies were ordered to reinforce the garrison at Tullahoma.²¹

Thus when Duffield, who had been promoted to the rank of General, and General Thomas T. Crittenden returned to Murfreesboro on July 11, they found the Twenty-third Brigade located in widely scattered camps. The following day Crittenden assumed over-all command of Murfreesboro while Duffield took charge of the Twenty-third. Both Generals felt that it was dangerous for the units to be so widely

¹⁸ RG 59-14, MHCA., Parkhurst to Robertson, May 10, 1862.

¹⁹ Diary, MSU., June 20-21, 1862.

²⁰ Ibid., June 26, 1862.

²¹ Ibid., June 29, 1862.

separated. Parkhurst concurred in their opinion, stating that "Col. Lester must take the responsibility so far." ²²

At dawn on July 13 Confederate cavalry under General N. B. Forrest smashed into the camp of the Ninth, catching many of the men still in bed. Approximately 1,200 raiders hit Parkhurst's command of about 250 men, consisting of six companies of the Ninth and 80 members of the Fourth Kentucky Cavalry. ²³ After this initial impact, in which Duffield was severely wounded, Parkhurst rallied the men and they poured a heavy fusillade of fire into the Confederates who were somewhat disorganized after galloping through the enemy camp. Taking advantage of this situation the Union men drove their attackers some two hundred yards and improvised a strong stockade in an enclosed garden. ²⁴

From their new position the handful of men under Parkhurst repelled several thrusts by the rebels. The attackers then gave up their attempts to carry the stockade by storm and deployed the dismounted cavalry in positions around the stronghold, keeping up a steady stream of fire while awaiting the return of Forrest, who had taken part of his men to attack the camp of the Third Minnesota. ²⁵

Soon after the fighting commenced Parkhurst sent two couriers to tell Colonel Lester that he was in serious trouble. Both of these men got through, as did one sent by Lester to check on conditions in Murfreesboro. ²⁶ However, despite his knowledge of the determined

²² Ibid., July 11-12, 1862.

²³ Ibid., July 13, 1862; OR., XVI, part I, 801-802.

²⁴ OR., XVI, part I, 803-807; John A. Wyeth, That Devil Forrest (New York, 1959), pp. 73-74.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ OR., XVI, part I, 803-807.

attack by the rebels upon the Ninth and their Kentucky comrades, Lester's only action was to form a line of battle and advance 600 yards. The Minnesota volunteers strongly desired to aid the beleaguered garrison, but their Colonel did not allow them to budge. According to Lt. Colonel Christopher C. Andrews, "While Colonel Lester sat upon his horse at his proper post in rear of the line, different officers approached and asked him, in tone of entreaty, if he would not march the regiment into town. Lester replied, 'We will see.'" ²⁷

In view of Lester's obvious reluctance to throw his regiment into action, Forrest concentrated almost all of his men against the Federals in the stockade. At this time, around 11:30 A. M., Forrest sent in a flag of truce and demanded the surrender of Parkhurst and his men. Duffield, whose wound had taken him out of action in the first assault, relinquished this decision to Parkhurst. Parkhurst met with the other officers and they decided to surrender their decimated force at noon. They reasoned that since Lester had made no attempt to relieve them, further resistance with 134 fit men against about 1,800 rebels would be fruitless and could only lead to the fulfillment of Forrest's threat to execute the entire command if they continued hostilities. ²⁸

The surrender of Parkhurst showed that he had about 130 unwounded men who were marched off by Forrest as prisoners of war. Some seventy wounded were paroled at Murfreesboro, and twelve men of his command

²⁷ C. C. Andrews, editor, Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865, 3 vols. (St. Paul, 1890), I, 153.

²⁸ OR., XVI, part I, 803-807; Diary, MSU., July 13, 1862; Wyeth, That Devil Forrest, p. 75; Ralph S. Henry, Forrest (New York, 1944), p. 87.

had been killed.²⁹ Shortly after the capitulation of the post in the city, Lester surrendered the Third Minnesota and its battery without a struggle. This left Forrest free to destroy Federal supplies whose value was estimated at \$1,000,000.³⁰ This raid, along with others by Colonel Morgan, caused Buell a great deal of trouble and often forced him to alter plans in order to protect his supply lines.

The engagement at Murfreesboro raised many questions as to who was responsible, causing the establishment of a board of inquiry to investigate the affair. The first reports of the destruction placed the onus upon the Ninth and upon T. T. Crittenden and Duffield. However, the investigation absolved Crittenden of any neglect on the ground that he had been assured by Lester that enemy troops were no closer than Chattanooga. The great surprise effected by Forrest resulted from Lester's regular practice of removing pickets at night from the roads leading to Murfreesboro. Because of his obvious neglect in taking proper security precautions and for not coming to the aid of the besieged men, Lester was dishonorably discharged from the service.³¹

The findings of the board of inquiry absolved the Ninth and Parkhurst of any responsibility for the great loss of property at Murfreesboro. In fact General Crittenden in his report highly commended the Michigan volunteers and the Lt. Colonel for the stiff resistance in the face of great odds.³² Parkhurst always felt, however, that his men were never totally cleared of the onus attached to their surrender, for as he wrote in 1866, "the Regiment has never received

²⁹ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, July 15, 1862.

³⁰ Cist, Army of the Cumberland, pp. 43-45.

³¹ OR., part I, 796-798.

³² Ibid., p. 795.

a proper degree of credit, having in a manner received the reproach which should have [been] attached solely to Col. Lester of the 3rd Minnesota, whose refusal to allow his regiment and Hewitt's battery to go into the fight was the sole cause of the Capture of Murfreesboro." ³³

Forrest paroled all of his prisoners, except the officers, and the next eight days were spent in marching, or in riding southern railroads, to a Confederate prison at Madison, Georgia. While on the march General Forrest took Parkhurst's horse and gave his "poor" mount in return. In addition to this "exchange" Parkhurst discovered that most of his horse-riding equipment and other valuables were stolen by the rebels. Although this was most annoying, his greatest indignation was aroused when a Negro, to whom he gave \$2.50 to fill his canteen, made off with both container and money. ³⁴

In the prison which was located in an old cotton mill surrounded by a board fence, boredom was the biggest problem for the men, and they whiled away the time reading, talking, and playing cards. At first the prisoners were often stirred with excitement as rumors of exchange were circulated; but hope of a short internment soon died, for this gossip proved false. Some of the Federals wrote an inscription upon the fence which greatly irritated the Confederate guards, and the officer in charge of the prison demanded the immediate removal of "Dixie the Land of Snakes, Scorpions and Traitors." Adding another insult the inmates hired a Negro to remove the offending sign. Early in October there came a reliable report that an exchange had been arranged, and the prisoners prepared themselves for the trip north. ³⁵

³³ RG 59-14, Parkhurst to Robertson, December 29, 1866.

³⁴ Diary, MSU., July 14-22, 1862.

³⁵ Ibid., July 23-October 3, 1862, passim.

On October 7, 1862 the prisoners left Madison by rail for Virginia and parole. After a short stay in Libby Prison at Richmond the men were transferred to a steamer and taken to Washington, D. C. While in the capital Parkhurst called on President Lincoln and recorded this event in his diary with the exasperatingly cryptic notation that the Chief Executive "is quite ugly and inferior looking." ³⁶

During Parkhurst's imprisonment the Army of the Ohio under Buell was encountering difficulties. The raids by Morgan and Forrest in June and July had raised havoc with its communications. Bragg's move to Chattanooga put him in position to invade the North by several routes: he could advance into middle or eastern Tennessee, or he could move through the mountains into Kentucky.

In early September, Buell, faced with uncertainty, decided to concentrate his forces at Murfreesboro and await Bragg's next move. The Federals had recently been forced to abandon the Cumberland Gap when the Confederates cut the Union supply lines. Still more trouble was provided by General Kirby Smith, who raised havoc in Kentucky among the green recruits of General William Nelson. These developments enabled Bragg to move his forces through Tennessee and into Kentucky, with high hopes of driving north all the way to the Ohio River. Bragg's invasion precipitated a race for Louisville between the opposing commanders, with the Union army arriving first, on September 29, 1862.

In Louisville the Union commander reorganized his men and absorbed new recruits into his Army of the Ohio. He then led his men against the invaders, and succeeded in defeating them in the bloody battle of Perryville, on October 8. This clash was not decisive, and

³⁶ Ibid., October 7-16, 1862.

Bragg made good his escape despite an active Union pursuit which shifted the scene of action to Murfreesboro, where the enemy began to concentrate his troops.

This period is often viewed as the height of Confederate military success. General George B. McClellan had been forced to abandon the Virginia peninsula; and Federal troops under General John Pope had been whipped at Second Bull Run, after which the Army of Northern Virginia prepared for its first invasion of the North. In the West, as already noted, Bragg had driven from Chattanooga northward into Kentucky. But both invading forces were defeated and turned back--Lee at Antietam, and Bragg at Perryville.

The success of the Confederates gave rise to such widespread criticism of McClellan and Buell that Lincoln, convinced of their incompetence, decided to relieve them of their commands. On October 30, 1862, Buell was dismissed, and a few days later McClellan was removed as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Buell's successor was General William S. Rosecrans, whose command was designated as the Army of the Cumberland. Rosecrans' first action was to relieve the garrison at Nashville under Negley, who had been under a semi-siege directed by General John C. Breckinridge operating from Murfreesboro. General Alexander McCook arrived in Nashville with reinforcements and lifted the siege, while other units following him repaired the railroad from Louisville as they advanced.

On November 7 Rosecrans reorganized the Army of the Cumberland into three wings under the commands of Generals Thomas, McCook and T. L. Crittenden. Rosecrans also removed all officers whom he believed unfit for their positions. The rest of that month and most of December

were spent in drilling troops and gathering supplies at Nashville in preparation for an offensive against Bragg at Murfreesboro.

Chapter IV
THE BATTLE OF STONE'S RIVER

Lt. Colonel Parkhurst and the other Union officers who had been sent north by the secessionists were merely on parole. Under the rules adopted for the exchanging of prisoners, these men could not return to active duty until the Union authorities had released an equal number of Confederate officers of corresponding ranks. If a soldier was recaptured before he had been officially exchanged, he faced death before a firing squad. When Parkhurst learned that he was not free to return to the front, he said, "[this is] Not very flattering news to us. Our Govt should have had us exchanged." ¹

During his parole Parkhurst visited relatives in New York, old friends in Coldwater, Michigan, and enjoyed a happy reunion with his two children, Kittie and Maggie, whom he had not seen in over a year. The trip to Coldwater included a sad visit to the grave of his beloved Amelia, whom he often remembered fondly in entries in his diary. ² This was a time for reflection, and the lawyer-turned-soldier contemplated what the future might hold in store for himself and his broken family.

The notification of Parkhurst's official exchange was communicated to the military authorities in Detroit on November 10. This news was relayed to Parkhurst, who was at Syracuse, New York; however, he did not receive orders to rejoin the Ninth until the nineteenth of

¹ Diary, MSU., October 2, 1862.

² Ibid., October 16 - November 1, 1862.

December.³ When he arrived in Nashville, Parkhurst found the bulk of the Army of the Cumberland concentrated in that city.⁴

The reunion with his regiment was a joyous occasion for the commander of the Ninth. He made a short speech which the men heartily cheered while throwing their hats into the air.⁵ During his absence the Michigan volunteers had received a post of honor, being assigned to the headquarters of General Thomas as Provost Guard.⁶ Parkhurst described the station as "one of which any Regiment in the Service would feel a pride and that's the position of Select Guard for the Army Corps of Maj.-Genl Thomas--Similar to the Body-guard of a European officer."⁷

General Rosecrans had been under pressure from the Washington authorities for a considerable length of time to advance upon the enemy at Murfreesboro. Rosecrans delayed his attack for almost two months while he reorganized his army and gathered an adequate amount of supplies for a major battle. Then came his move. The Army of the Cumberland was to advance in three columns--McCook's right wing against General William Hardee at Triune; Thomas with the center against Hardee's right and then to Nolinsville; and T. L. Crittenden's left wing was to move on a direct route via the Nashville Pike against Generals Leonidas Polk and Kirby Smith.⁸

³ OR., Series II, V, 46; Diary, MSU., November 13, 1862.

⁴ Diary, MSU., December 19-23, 1862.

⁵ Ibid., December 24-25, 1862.

⁶ Dyer, Compendium, III, 1285.

⁷ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, December 26, 1862.

⁸ Papers, MSU., "Recollections of Stone's River." This is a

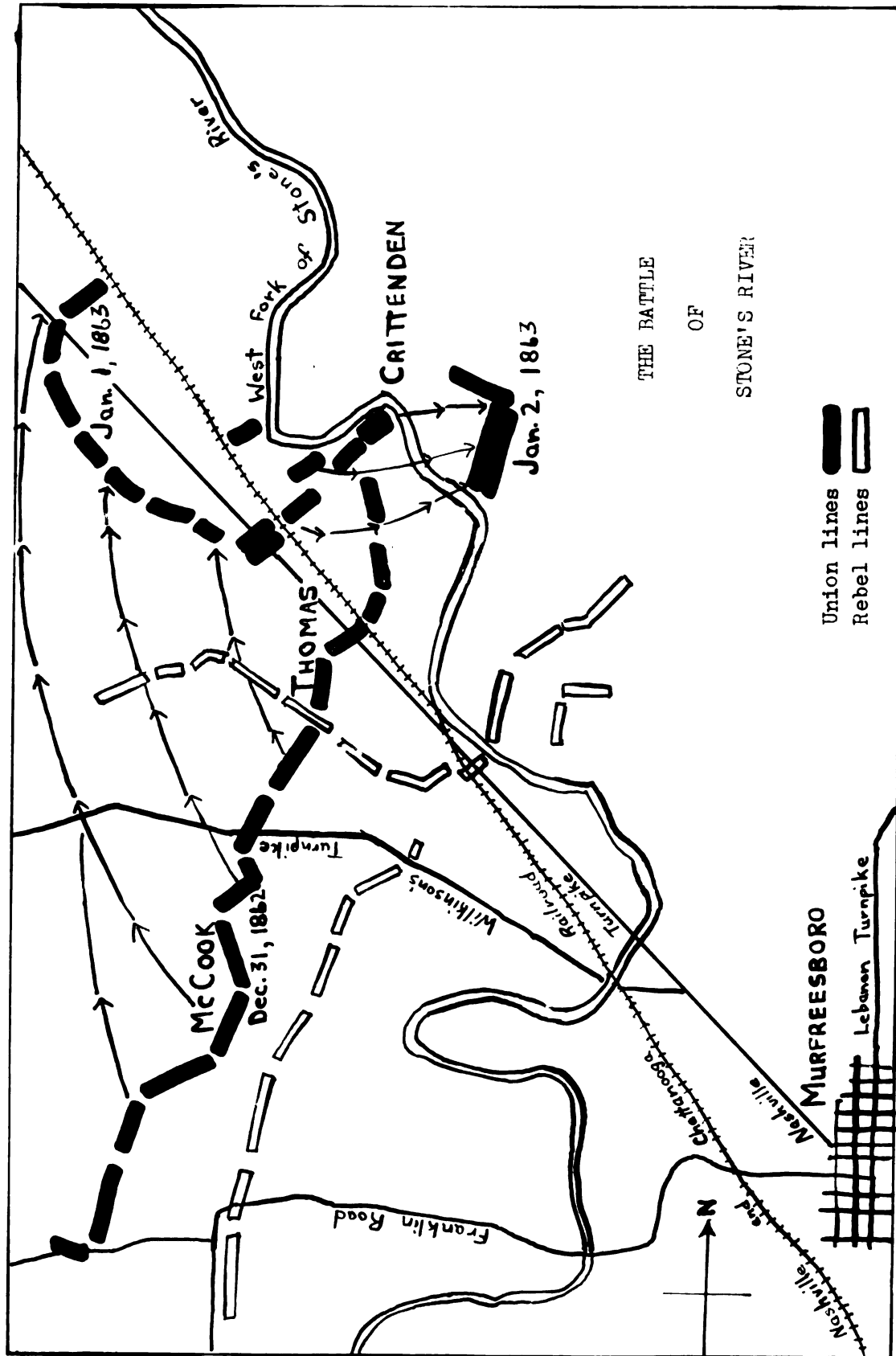
The Federals made contact with enemy pickets within two miles of Nashville and McCook ran into stiff resistance within six miles of the city. It took four days of constant fighting for the Union army to reach the rebel lines which were solidly established about two miles from Murfreesboro on the west bank of Stone's River.

On December 30 Rosecrans established his battle line. It was anchored on the left on Stone's River and extended south and west across the Nashville Pike towards Overalls Creek. Rosecrans' plan of battle was to attack with Crittenden and Thomas on the left and center, while performing a holding action with McCook on the right. Unfortunately McCook's line was not only poorly placed, but was vulnerable because of several gaps between the various brigades of his command. These defects were noted by Rosecrans in his inspection of the Federal position, but the final emplacement was left with McCook, who was familiar with the terrain. The failure of Rosecrans personally to establish a proper line on the right placed upon his shoulders much of the responsibility for the near-disaster which occurred on the next day.⁹

Bragg, on the other hand, conceived a plan that was identical to that of Rosecrans--attacking with his left and center and holding on his right. To effect these tactics Bragg transferred some troops from his right to the opposite wing, which then overlapped the Union

report of the battle written by Parkhurst for his comrades of the Ninth after the war. Detailed descriptions of the battle may also be found in W. D. Bickham, Rosecrans' Campaign with the Fourteenth Army Corps or the Army of the Cumberland (Cincinnati, 1863); Van Horne, History of the Army of the Cumberland; and Cist, The Army of the Cumberland.

⁹ Cist, History of the Army of the Cumberland, pp. 129-135.



Adapted from John Fitch, Annals of the Army of the Cumberland (Philadelphia, 1864), p. 381.

line. Once the hostile armies had assumed their position, the advantage would rest with the army which seized the initiative.

Rosecrans had ordered his assault to begin at 7 A. M. on the last day of December, 1862; but Bragg's attack began at dawn, and the forces on the Union right were caught by surprise. The smashing Confederate offensive quickly outflanked McCook's defective line, and as his units fell back under the weight of the attack, the rebels were able to turn on the flank of other Union brigades. Within two hours Rosecrans' right was in dire danger of total collapse.

When the battle began the Ninth Michigan was located at the rear of the lines near Thomas' headquarters. Shortly after the action commenced, Parkhurst noticed a large number of men rushing to the rear. He described the scene in his "Recollections of Stone's River."

And in advance of the running mules was one particular Negro, who, though very black, had an absolute pallor upon his countenance, and about four inches of tongue protruding from his mouth, his eyes bulging nearly out of his head.

It being a part of the writer's duty to prevent straggling and to keep men with their respective commands, he sent out details to pick up these terrified troops; but, the picking up soon became a pretty lively business and he found it necessary to place the 9th Michigan in line of battle across the Nashville Pike extending its flanks to the utmost limit, and he was none too soon in this movement. Cavalry--Artillery--Infantry Quitters and camp followers came rushing with the force of a cyclone, and the 9th Michigan was ordered to fix bayonets and charge upon this panic stricken mass of men.

The Charge was Made and the result was gratifying--the Stampede was Checked and the fleeing Mass of troops were halted, put in line facing the enemy, until a force of some thousands of Infantry [about 2,000]--Seven pieces of Artillery and several hundred Cavalry were placed in a favorable position, from which this recently terrorized force several times repulsed the Charges of the pursuing Enemy and finally after General Wilkes with his brigade including the 4th Michigan Artillery came foreward from Stewarts Creek, We were Enabled to drive the Enemy back to his lines and relieve the right of Rosecrans' Army. ¹⁰

After the opening rush had carried away the extreme right of Rosecrans' line, the entire rebel force began to pivot slowly on Stone's River bringing it into action against the Union right and center. The second phase of the day's fighting centered upon the Union divisions of Jeff C. Davis, Bushrod R. Johnson and Philip H. Sheridan, whose flanks were exposed to assaults by the enemy. These units resisted bravely but eventually were forced to retreat, fighting their way through enemy troops in their rear to a new position which paralleled the Nashville Pike.

The new alignment of the Army of the Cumberland revealed that the right wing had been driven to a position perpendicular to the center. Confederate General Leonidas Polk now concentrated his attack on this angle in the Union line, for a break-through would split the Federal army and put the secessionists across the Nashville Pike, cutting off the best route for a Union retreat. Failing to carry this point after numerous charges, heavy fighting developed on the left of

¹⁰ Papers, MSU., "Recollections of Stone's River."

Rosecrans' line near Stone's River. Bragg ordered fresh troops under Breckinridge, who had been posted across the river all morning, to make one final attempt to break through the Union lines. Once again the Northerners arose to the task and repelled the rebels with great losses. Darkness put an end to a day of hard, costly fighting.

During the night both armies were busy consolidating their positions. Bragg believed that enemy losses were so heavy that the Federals would retreat. Rosecrans, however, held a council of war with his chief officers and all decided that the Union position could be held. Thus when daylight broke on New Year's Day the Army of the Cumberland was still on the battlefield ready to receive an attack. It never came, for Bragg had not formed any definite plans. The Federals, unprepared to launch an offensive, were content to hold their position, repulsing the few probes that were made by the Confederates. The greatest activity occurred in the rear, where rebel cavalry harassed Union communications. It was in that quarter that Parkhurst's regiment saw action.

Well before dawn the Ninth received orders from Thomas to escort to Nashville a train of wagons which carried unneeded equipment and wounded men. Nine miles from their destination the column was hit by cavalry which had been harassing the rear of the Union lines. The attack threw the teamsters into a general stampede, which Parkhurst's regiment managed to check. The men were then lined up ready to repulse any subsequent onslaught by the enemy, but the Confederates made no further efforts to stop the train and it proceeded unmolested to Nashville. ¹¹

¹¹ Diary, MSU., January 1, 1863; OR., XX, part I, 652-654.

On the third day of the battle the heaviest fighting occurred on the east side of Stone's River, away from the main body of both armies. Some of Crittenden's units, situated on heights across the river, were in a position to throw enfilading artillery fire into Polk's lines on the opposite shore. Seeing this danger, Bragg ordered Breckinridge to carry the heights and drive the Federals back over the stream. The attackers reached the crest of the hill, but the concentrated fire of fifty-eight Union batteries forced them to retreat, with Crittenden's men in hot pursuit. After this clash the strategic position on the heights was strongly reinforced, posing an even greater threat to Polk.

Early in the morning of January 3, the Ninth, under orders from Thomas, left Nashville to return to the battlefield with supply wagons and the troops who had fled the front. They reached Lavergne about noon and found Colonel William P. Innes and his First Michigan Engineers awaiting an attack from Confederate cavalry. The Michigan volunteers and their column joined the Engineers and after an uneventful two-hour wait, decided to proceed. The train reached the battlefield in the late afternoon after a hard march of twenty-seven miles.¹²

Dawn of the following day found the Army of the Cumberland alone on the battlefield before Murfreesboro. Bragg had withdrawn his men during the night, leaving behind his dead and wounded. The decision to retreat was based upon a report by General Joseph C. Wheeler of the rebel cavalry that Rosecrans was receiving reinforcements. The Union troops spent the day in burying the dead and resting.

¹² OR., XX, part I, 652-654; Diary, MSU., January 3, 1863.

The occupation of Murfreesboro was a happy event for the men of the Ninth Infantry as they were allowed to enter the city at the head of the army. Thus the Michigan Volunteers returned to the scene of their earlier defeat at the hands of Forrest.¹³

The conclusion of the great clash at Stone's River brought a time of reflection for the troops. Parkhurst, in looking back over the activities of his men, said that they had fulfilled their duties well. Reflecting on the two stampedes halted by his Ninth Michigan, he asserted: "I think I have saved our army from two sad disasters and disgraces if I never do anything More for My Country."¹⁴ For their timely action the Michigan volunteers were commended by Thomas in his official report of the battle for rendering "most valuable service" to the army.¹⁵

Parkhurst said, in commenting upon the rebel retreat, that his regiment had played a key role in causing that movement. In writing a report of Stone's River after the war he began one portion with the statement, "I trust it will not be regarded immodest in the Writer, at this remote period, to furnish the Companions of this Commandery-- but the information must go no further (underline added)-- [knowledge of] the occasion which influenced General Bragg to abandon a claimed victory, and to withdraw his army from the front of what he proclaimed a defeated foe." There follows a brief description of the Ninth's return to Stone's River on January 3 with the ammunition train and

¹³ Diary, MSU., January 5, 1863; Bennett, Historical Sketches of the Ninth, p. 30.

¹⁴ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, January 2, 1863.

¹⁵ OR., XX, part I, 374.

the stragglers collected in Nashville. The appearance of this column relieving the besieged Innes and his Engineers at Lavergne had caused the rebel cavalry to hasten to Bragg with the report that Rosecrans was receiving fresh men. Parkhurst continued, "No other troops came to Rosecrans on the 3rd and the inference is fair that he [Wheeler] referred to the 9th Michigan.

"Thus you can see comes the conclusion that not only was Innes saved by the opportune arrival of the 9th Michigan at Lavergne, but Wheeler was so impressed with its Extended Columns as to induce him to hasten a report to Bragg of its March to reinforce Rosecrans." ¹⁶

If Parkhurst's information is correct, he and his regiment were instrumental in securing an important victory for the Union--a matter which deserves deeper investigation. Bragg reported that he withdrew because Wheeler had informed him by noon on January 3 that Rosecrans was being reinforced. ¹⁷ Van Horne said that Bragg's information was incorrect or else the Confederate leader had interpreted the arrival of General James G. Spears' brigade as giving a great preponderance to the Union army. ¹⁸ A study of the official reports disclosed that Spears arrived at 5 P. M. on January 2 while Wheeler and his men were operating in the rebel lines at Stone's River. ¹⁹ Thus Spears' unit did not prompt the retreat. It appears from this evidence that Parkhurst's assumption was correct and that it was the approach of his column that was reported to Bragg. This is further

¹⁶ Papers, MSU., "Recollections of Stone's River."

¹⁷ OR., XX, part I, 653.

¹⁸ Van Horne, History of the Army of the Cumberland, I, 251.

¹⁹ OR., XX, part I, 416, 959.

borne out by Wheeler's report which tells of being unable to attack a wagon train about noon on January 3 because it was heavily guarded by infantry and cavalry.²⁰ In short, the evidence in the official records reveals that the Ninth had, quite by accident, caused the rebels to leave the battlefield at Stone's River thus bringing a great victory to the Army of the Cumberland.

The actions of the Michigan volunteers become even more significant when the results of the battle are viewed. The Federals had finally forced Bragg to make a stand. In the battle the Union troops suffered a near-disaster on the first day, but recovered from the shock, regained the offensive on January 2 and forced the rebels to abandon their strategic position at Murfreesboro on the Nashville-Chattanooga railroad. Of great importance, too, was the psychological impact of the victory upon the men-in-arms and the people of the North, for this was the first major success for the Federals in several months. Conversely Bragg's retreat caused considerable consternation in the South. It may very well be true that the Ninth Michigan has never received proper credit for their part in securing Murfreesboro for the Union.

The Army of the Cumberland spent almost six months at Murfreesboro without engaging in any important action against the rebel army, which established itself behind the Duck River with a large supply depot at Tullahoma. As before, the Confederate cavalry under Morgan and Forrest posed a constant threat to the supply lines. To meet this harassment, Rosecrans spent considerable time in developing a larger cavalry force to neutralize this effective arm of the enemy's

²⁰ Ibid., 959.

fighting machine. In February, Rosecrans received 14,000 reinforcements under Generals Charles C. Gilbert and George Crook. These units had previously been known as the Army of Kentucky. The following month saw several reconnaissance missions depart from Murfreesboro towards Bragg's position, but they generally ended with small clashes and little or nothing in the way of important news about enemy plans. During May Lincoln and the War Department repeatedly urged Rosecrans to strike the rebels and prevent Bragg from reinforcing the besieged Confederate army at Vicksburg. Rosecrans refused. He insisted that he needed more cavalry, and he argued that if he attacked, the rebels would retreat behind the Cumberland Mountains, making it even easier for them to go to the aid of Vicksburg!

The Ninth, during the Union occupation of Murfreesboro, performed routine duties as Provost Guard for the headquarters of Thomas, while Parkhurst discharged his responsibilities as Provost Marshal for the Fourteenth Corps. The Michigan volunteers sometimes escorted foraging parties into the surrounding countryside, but beyond this their activities were very limited.²¹

During February, 1863, Lt. Colonel Parkhurst corresponded with the military authorities in Michigan concerning his pending promotion to the rank of colonel. He requested that the commission be dated January 17, 1862, the day on which he assumed command of the regiment.²² In support of his request the other officers of the Ninth wrote: "We believe that he has earned this by a faithful and satisfactory performance of his duties while in command of the Regiment" The

²¹ Diary, MSU., January 3 - June 23, 1863, passim.

²² RG 59-14, MHCA., Parkhurst to Robertson, February 9, 1863.

officers went on to say that Parkhurst's commission should be antedated so that he would not be out-ranked by some other colonel with less time in the service. On February 27 Parkhurst received confirmation of his promotion, which bore the date March 25, 1862.²³

Throughout this eventful period Parkhurst carried on a regular correspondence with his sisters in New York. His letters contain several interesting comments and observations about the prosecution of the war. Parkhurst believed that the activities of certain elements in the North made the prosecution of the war an unnecessarily difficult task.²⁴ On one occasion he declared that if "the whole North would turn out and give these rebels what they deserve and then go home and pitch into the abolitionists[,] we could soon put our country into its old position[;] but it is impossible to carry on both wars at the same time and succeed in either" ²⁵

The Colonel was disturbed that the Northern populace was not giving total support to the war and found it difficult to understand. "I don't know," he wrote, "why people suppose the rebellion is going to be put down when they don't furnish the Means to do it. It is My opinion that We Shall have a war on our hands for years to Come and that these rebels will resist the Government so long as there are any of them left to fight. They will never come into the Union willingly" ²⁶ In short, by the spring of 1863 Parkhurst realized that the South must be conquered; he suggested that the only way to

²³ Ibid., Officers of Ninth to Robertson, February, 1863; Diary, MSU., February 27, 1863.

²⁴ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, February 15, 1863.

²⁵ Ibid., February 25, 1863.

²⁶ Papers, MSU., Parkhurst to Sister, May 20, 1863.

do it was for, "the North to turn out En Masse and give the South a Whipping." ²⁷

Early in June some forty members of the Ninth Michigan became a mounted guard as a result of the efforts of Parkhurst. The Colonel felt that the presence of this group would add to the efficiency of the regiment in discharging its duties for General Thomas. ²⁸

In late June Rosecrans finally decided to advance. It appeared that Vicksburg was so close to surrender that it was too late for Bragg to offer any effective aid to that army. The Union offensive was directed against Shelbyville and Tullahoma, where Parkhurst was sure the enemy would form for "a big battle." ²⁹ Orders to move were issued on the twenty-third, and the advance began the next day. In a last-minute letter Parkhurst said: "We move foreward today--the whole army--We go in the direction of Chattanooga." ³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., March 23, 1863; May 29, 1863.

²⁸ Diary, MSU., June 9-11, 1863; Papers, MSU., Parkhurst to Sister, June 14, 1863.

²⁹ Papers, MSU., Parkhurst to Sister, June 14, 1863.

³⁰ Ibid., June 24, 1863.

Chapter V
THE CHATTANOOGA CAMPAIGN AND THE
BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA

The advance against Bragg was a flanking movement designed to force the enemy from their strong defensive position. A feint was to be made at the center of the rebel line at Shelbyville by General Gordon Granger while Thomas, McCook and Crittenden were to sweep around the right of the Confederate lines to concentrate at Manchester. This movement would make it necessary for Bragg either to retreat south of the Tennessee River or to offer battle at Tullahoma.

The Union columns reached Manchester on June 27 and the campaign entered its second phase. Granger had been successful in executing his feint at Shelbyville, causing Bragg to concentrate at that point. This allowed the rest of the Army of the Cumberland to turn the right flank and put the Confederates in a disadvantageous position. Skillful maneuvering by General David S. Stanley's cavalry forced Bragg to evacuate Shelbyville and fall back towards Tullahoma. Only the heavy rains which were falling prevented the corps of Thomas, McCook and Crittenden from beating the rebels to their objective.¹ Bragg did not offer battle to the Federals at Tullahoma and continued to retire southward, crossing the Tennessee River to Chattanooga. The Union pursuit was stalled at the Elk River by high waters and the destruction of the bridges by the rebels. Parkhurst, in viewing developments,

¹ Diary, MSU., June 28-30, 1863.

expected that the Confederates would probably make a stand at Bridgeport to contest the crossing of the Tennessee. ²

The Elk River proved to be a great obstacle to the Union advance. In addition to this problem the Federals were experiencing difficulty in supplying the men with food. Parkhurst said that the troops were forced to live on one-half ration for several days until the railroad to the front was repaired. ³ Finally in mid-July the river was bridged with pontoons and the army again moved forward, with Thomas' headquarters being established at Decherd.

The duties of the Provost Marshal of the Fourteenth Corps were constantly increasing. In addition to processing prisoners and returning stragglers, Parkhurst became responsible for all Negroes who were picked up along the way. Most of these refugees were sent north to keep them from hampering the activities of the army. His regiment was also ordered to make reports upon the condition of citizens in the Decherd area who had been stripped of supplies by the retreating rebels. ⁴ John C. Love of the Ninth said, in commenting about his commander, ". . . our Colonel is Provost martial General for the 14th Army Corps, it is a good position, but he has a good deal of business to doe. But he is a verry business man and it does not trouble him to doe what there is to be done." ⁵

² Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, July 3, 1863.

³ Ibid., July 12, 1863.

⁴ Diary, MSU., July 16-30, 1863, passim.

⁵ John C. Love Papers, Michigan Historical Collections of the University of Michigan, Love to Parents, July 13, 1863.

The month of July, 1863, saw the tide of events in the Civil War turn definitely in favor of the North. On July 3 the siege of Vicksburg had ended with the surrender of General John Pemberton's army to Grant. That same day also saw the last great action in the Battle of Gettysburg, which ended in defeat for Lee and forced him to abandon his invasion of the North. Rosecrans had initiated a movement which forced Bragg back to Chattanooga, leaving almost all of Tennessee in Union hands. With the Tullahoma campaign behind, the advance of the Army of the Cumberland came to a halt.

Early in August Colonel Parkhurst was granted a leave of absence from the army. After putting his affairs in order he proceeded to Murfreesboro to attend to a pleasurable personal matter.⁶ In April, 1862, Colonel Parkhurst had made the acquaintance of Miss Josephine Reeves and throughout the following months he called upon her whenever an opportunity presented itself.⁷ Their friendship grew into love and the couple became engaged in July, 1862. Now being momentarily free from military affairs, the Colonel married Josephine on August 10, 1863.^{8 & 9}

⁶ Diary, MSU., August 6, 1863.

⁷ Ibid., April 13, 1862-August 10, 1863, passim.

⁸ Ibid., August 10, 1863.

⁹ Marital difficulties soon arose for the Parkhursts. Mrs. Parkhurst's impulsive and indiscreet actions caused her husband much worry. Josephine visited a male acquaintance in Buffalo, New York, while Parkhurst was on duty in Tennessee. She constantly requested sums of money from her husband, and when it did not arrive, tried to obtain the money from Parkhurst's business manager in Coldwater. In November, 1864, Josephine lost a baby through miscarriage. John attributed the tragedy to imprudence on the part of his wife because she had travelled from Murfreesboro to Louisville, Kentucky, without his consent or knowledge. These personal problems diverted the Colonel's attention from his military concerns and prevented him from giving full attention to his duties.

The newlyweds travelled to Coldwater, Michigan, where Parkhurst presented his bride to friends and showed her his home. The couple then went to New York to join Parkhurst's children at Oneida Castle.¹⁰ Here they reaffirmed their vows in a church in accordance with the wishes of Mrs. Parkhurst since the marriage ceremony in Tennessee had been performed by an army chaplain.¹¹ On August 26 Parkhurst bade farewell to his wife and children and two days later returned to the Ninth, then encamped at Bolivar.¹²

Rosecrans had not ordered the army forward from the positions that they had assumed after Bragg's retreat despite pressures from General Halleck and the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. The commander was convinced that certain conditions were necessary before it would be advisable to advance. He believed that it was essential for General Ambrose Burnside to occupy Knoxville and the Cumberland Gap; that a good supply route was open from Louisville and Nashville; and that the corn in southern Tennessee was ripe to provide forage for the animals. When these prerequisites were met in mid-August, 1863, the Federals crossed the Cumberland Mountains and prepared to bridge the Tennessee River.

The men were carrying rations for several days and enough ammunition for two battles when the campaign was resumed. Rosecrans rejected the idea of a frontal assault on Chattanooga, preferring to make a feint at the city with some units while sending the rest of the

¹⁰ Diary, MSU., August 11-25, 1863.

¹¹ Papers, MSU., A Newspaper Clipping without name or date.

¹² Diary, MSU., August 26-28, 1863.

army southward to encircle the rebel position. The scheme worked very well and by September 4 the Army of the Cumberland was in Georgia.

Thomas had alerted his men that they were to move forward on the first day of September. The Ninth was ordered to collect and send all tents, excess supplies and baggage back to Nashville.¹³ Two days later they left Bolivar and crossed the Tennessee River on a pontoon bridge 412 yards long supported by fifty-eight boats. The Corps then marched up the south side of the river a distance of seventeen miles before establishing camp at Moores Spring.¹⁴ After stopping for a day the Fourteenth Corps then scaled the Raccoon Mountains and advanced its position to Trenton, Georgia, some twenty-two miles south of Chattanooga.¹⁵

Rosecrans, after crossing into Georgia, had directed his corps commanders to strive for separate objectives, for his information indicated that the rebels were making a fast, full retreat. Thus Thomas was ordered to march to Lafayette, McCook to Alpine and Crittenden to pass near Chattanooga and then on to Ringgold. Bragg evacuated Chattanooga on September 9, having finally perceived the threat that Rosecrans' army posed to the south. In viewing the proposed movements Parkhurst wrote, "The Move We are now making is a desperate one and Genl Rosecrans is risking a great deal in making it but if it proves to be Successful it will damage the rebels more than anything which has yet occurred."¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., September 1, 1863.

¹⁴ Ibid., September 3, 1863.

¹⁵ Ibid., September 4-8, 1863.

¹⁶ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, September 9, 1863.

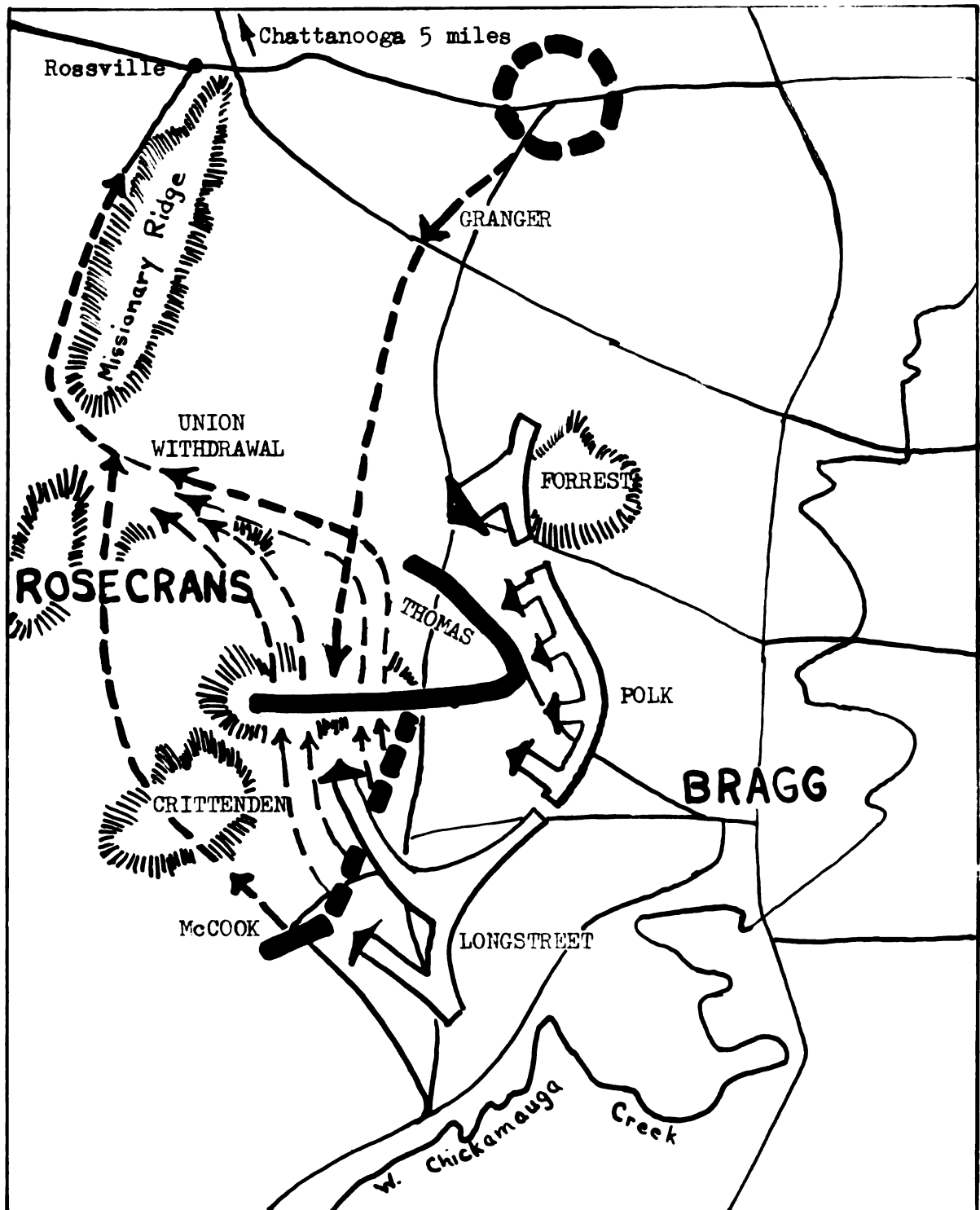
The Colonel of the Ninth anticipated a real danger in the plans of Rosecrans. Bragg had evacuated Chattanooga but he was not in a rapid retreat and was actually falling back towards Lafayette to protect his supply lines. The rebel commander saw what the Federals were doing and decided to whip them in detail. This loomed as a real possibility for each of the three corps was separated by rough mountains. This meant that the Confederates had an excellent opportunity to concentrate on one column as it emerged from the mountains and, after smashing it, they could turn their attention to another until they had destroyed the entire Army of the Cumberland.

In accordance with orders, Thomas continued to move slowly toward his objective. On September 12, the Ninth was ordered to establish headquarters for the Fourteenth Corps at Stevens Gap.¹⁷ This was executed on the following day and upon arrival at the designated point, Parkhurst found that the advance had been stalled by the presence of Bragg's entire army between Thomas' position and Lafayette.¹⁸ The troops under Thomas were forced to hold off the rebels, while the other columns under McCook and Crittenden marched to join them. Thus the stage was set for the Battle of Chickamauga.

The Confederates, in the meantime, had failed to execute Bragg's excellent plan. Each of the three Union commanders had experienced stiff resistance on September 10, while they were still widely separated. Here fate seemed to have taken sides because on the following day orders to attack Thomas were not carried out and on the 12th Polk failed to smash Crittenden. These blunders allowed Rosecrans to direct

¹⁷ OR., XXX, part III, 565.

¹⁸ Diary, MSU., September 14-17, 1863.



BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA

Adapted from Mark M. Boatner III, The Civil War Dictionary (New York, 1961), p. 151.

McCook and Crittenden to retrace their steps at once and join Thomas. When the battle opened on the 18th the Union army was not entirely reunited, but by the next morning all of the troops were in line.

The rebels, at Chickamauga, reversed the plan which had proved so effective at Stone's River, concentrating the attack on the left of the Federal army hoping to cut the roads between the battlefield and Chattanooga. Bragg's forces, recently reinforced from Virginia with a corps under General James Longstreet, numbered about 70,000 while Rosecrans had 55,000 men ready to fight. On the first day of action, September 18, the enemy failed to turn the left held by Thomas. The next day Bragg massed an even greater number of troops on the flank and attempted to carry his objective, but he was repulsed and the day's fighting ended with no decisive results.

The crisis of the battle occurred on September 20. The Confederate assaults began on the left and slowly moved toward the center, their weight becoming so heavy that Thomas was forced to call for reinforcements from McCook. In the shuffle of sending regiments to aid Thomas a gap was inadvertantly created in the Union right. The enemy quickly exploited this hole and soon put McCook's entire wing into rout, forcing Thomas to contract his lines to protect his right flank. Misfortune continued to plague the Federals as the rest of the units on the left gave way and those troops were put to flight leaving Thomas to face Bragg's entire army with approximately five divisions. The resistance, admirably directed despite great odds, earned for the commander the title "Rock of Chickamauga." Parkhurst, in describing the scene, wrote, "alone the brave and gallant Thomas stood resisting the repeated assaults of column after column like a lone rock on old

oceans stands buffeted by the Surging waves of Men, bullets and bayonets." ¹⁹ His stand had saved the Army of the Cumberland as it was able to concentrate at Rossville and execute a successful retreat to Chattanooga.

While the battle raged the Ninth performed the unglamorous task of escorting a hospital train to Chattanooga and on the morning of the 20th they retraced their steps to the front. They reached Rossville in the rear of the Union lines about noon and were on their way forward when Crittenden's and McCook's corps gave way in a wild stampede. The Michigan volunteers fixed their bayonets, as at Stone's River, and taking positions across the road they stopped the mad rush to the rear. ²⁰ Evidently Crittenden thought that the entire army was lost. Refusing to take command of the men gathered by the Ninth, he ordered Parkhurst to hold the position until the artillery and wagons had passed. ²¹ The Michigan men under their Colonel provided a rallying point for the dispirited men, who were reorganized into a semblance of fighting order along the road to Rossville. Presently General John S. Negley appeared and took command of the force collected by Parkhurst. ²² The timely actions of the Ninth were commended by both Generals Rosecrans and Thomas in their official reports of the battle. Thomas said, "Col. J. G. Parkhurst, . . . at the head of his regiment did most valuable service on the 20th, in arresting stragglers and reorganizing the troops which had been driven from the field." ²³

¹⁹ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, September 29, 1863.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ OR., XXX, part I, 263-265, 612.

²² Ibid., 331.

²³ Ibid., 85, 256.

Bragg followed the retreat to Chattanooga and decided that the Federals could be starved out of their position because the Army of the Cumberland had to transport its supplies from Bridgeport by wagon-- a trip of 60 miles that was vulnerable to disruption by rebel cavalry. The long overland supply route was forced upon the Union because the Confederates had occupied Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge which allowed them to prevent supplies from arriving via the Tennessee River. By mid-October the men were on low rations and the horses that had drawn the batteries were dying of starvation. Either the Federals had to break the siege or retire to a safer base of operation.

Faced with this great problem the authorities in Washington made several changes in the Western military structure. They created a Division of the Mississippi, to include the Army of the Tennessee, the Army of the Cumberland and the Army of the Ohio, and Grant was given the over-all command. In Chattanooga Rosecrans was replaced by Thomas as the head of the Army of the Cumberland. On the day that this change took place Parkhurst dropped in at the Headquarters of General Thomas. Thomas called Parkhurst into his room and said that he had been placed in command of the army. The General regretted that the change had been made for he felt that it was wrong to remove Rosecrans simply because he had lost a battle. Parkhurst was requested to continue, with his regiment, as the provost guard for Thomas' headquarters. The Colonel noted that Thomas felt the weight of his new responsibilities but was sure that the "Rock of Chickamauga" was equal to the task. ²⁴

²⁴ Diary, MSU., October 19, 1863.

By the first of November the siege had been partially relieved and some supplies were reaching Chattanooga. This was effected by seizing Brown's Ferry opposite the rebel stronghold on Lookout Mountain. With this point in their control the Federals sent supplies up the Tennessee River to the Ferry and then by Wagon to Chattanooga. These operations were supervised by Grant, who had come to Chattanooga to direct operations in and around the embattled city.

The Colonel of the Ninth was very busy during the month following the Battle of Chickamauga. Parkhurst spent many days processing prisoners and on November 6 Thomas gave him the additional duty of commanding the Post of Chattanooga.²⁵ In this capacity Parkhurst was responsible for governing the city and for directing police activities. Within a few days the Fifteenth Kentucky was placed under Parkhurst to aid in expediting his work.²⁶

Late in November the Union troops dislodged Bragg's entire army from its strong position on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, putting it in full retreat. The first break was made when several units under Thomas took Orchard Knob near Chattanooga. The following day "Fighting" Joe Hooker's men carried Lookout Mountain. On the 25th General William T. Sherman, with troops from Grant's army, attacked the rebels on the northern end of Missionary Ridge with some success but the decisive action occurred at the center of the rebel position when Thomas' men stormed the heights despite heavy rifle and artillery fire. This put Bragg in flight with the Federals pursuing as far as Ringgold, Georgia.

²⁵ OR., XXXI, part III, 66.

²⁶ Diary, MSU., November 7-9, 1863.

While the Ninth was not directly engaged in the fighting, it was close enough for Parkhurst to observe the battle. He considered the success a great victory and probably one of the "most important of the war." The extent of the rout was shown by the fact that after the battle Parkhurst sent over 4,000 prisoners north in one day.²⁷ Since winter was setting in the Colonel of the Michigan regiment did not expect much action until the following spring, but then a strong offensive against the enemy would be mounted to, "get him confined to so narrow a limit he will be Compelled to Submit."²⁸

During most of December Parkhurst was busy preparing his regiment for leave and re-enlisting 274 of his men who decided to return as veterans. Thomas informed Parkhurst, on December 24, that he would be promoted to Provost Marshal General of the Army of the Cumberland upon his return. Four days later the Michigan Volunteers boarded a train at Bridgeport and headed for Michigan and a much needed rest.²⁹

²⁷ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, November 28, 1863.

²⁸ Ibid., December 8, 1863.

²⁹ Diary, MSU., December 24-28, 1863.

Chapter VI

THE ATLANTA CAMPAIGN

Many regiments of the Union armies were granted furloughs during the winter, 1863-1864. This policy was followed because men in the two-year units had completed their term of service. Some of these men went home to stay; others re-enlisted as veterans to serve for the duration of the war. Because of these furloughs the number of troops available for duty was greatly reduced until the experienced soldiers and new recruits returned to the front.

For the morale of the army perhaps it was fortunate that many of the soldiers were absent during the long, dull period of inactivity which found the armies in winter quarters. In the West these months were spent in planning the spring campaigns for Grant's three armies--the Army of the Cumberland under Thomas; the Army of the Tennessee under Sherman and the Army of the Ohio led by General John M. Schofield. In accordance with these plans the army in the West moved against the rebels in February. Thomas occupied the troops under General Joseph E. Johnston, who had replaced Bragg, while Sherman struck against the railroads near Meridian, Mississippi. This operation was successful and greatly reduced the ability of the rebels to make movements westward against the important Mississippi River.

In March there came another important change in the command structure. Grant was called east to accept a promotion to lieutenant general and to the position of general-in-chief of the Union armies. At the same time Sherman was promoted to the post vacated by Grant in the West. Grant and Sherman met in Nashville and planned a coordinated

campaign for 1864. The armies in both theaters of the war were to work towards one goal--the destruction of the rebel forces and of the Confederacy's capacity to carry on the war. Grant would lead the Army of the Potomac against Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, while Sherman struck towards Atlanta against Johnston's Confederate Army. General Nathan P. Banks was to march from New Orleans upon Mobile to keep enemy troops in the deep South occupied and prevent them from reinforcing either Johnston or Lee.

Sherman concentrated his armies at Chattanooga during the winter and spring months. By May 5 Union troops in the Chattanooga-Ringgold area totaled 100,000. Thomas had 60,000; Schofield, 14,000; and General James B. McPherson, who had succeeded Sherman to the command of the Army of the Tennessee, had 25,000. Each of these armies was in excellent condition. The railroad to their rendezvous had been kept open throughout the winter, and equipment and supplies rolled in for the coming campaign.

During January Parkhurst and the Ninth Michigan Infantry were on furlough from the army. Parkhurst and his wife, who had recently come south, traveled to Coldwater, Michigan, where they spent several days visiting old friends and attending to business matters. The couple then went on to visit the children in New York where they had a very pleasant time with the girls and Parkhurst's sisters and brother.¹

Colonel Parkhurst returned with his wife to Murfreesboro on February 8 and on the following day reported to Thomas in Chattanooga. As expected, Thomas ordered Parkhurst to assume the post of Provost

¹ Diary, MSU., January, 1864, passim.

Marshal General for the entire Army of the Cumberland.² Parkhurst began his new duties on February 11, fully aware of the fact that he now had "a very important position" which would require "a vast amount of hard labor and constant attention."³ The responsibilities of the new office included processing all prisoners captured by Thomas' troops, commanding the military railroad police and granting passes to military personnel for travel on the railroads.⁴

The Michigan volunteers returned to Chattanooga in mid-February, much to the delight of their colonel, who had missed his men.⁵ A short time later the regiment was equipped with new Springfield rifles, which were superior in every respect to the weapons it had been using. The Springfields were more accurate, had a much greater range, and could be fired more rapidly.⁶

Sherman, with about 100,000 well equipped men, decided early in May that he was ready to march. The enemy army under Johnston, about 60,000 strong, held a formidable position at Dalton, on the Chattanooga-Atlanta railroad. The Confederate strategy was to give ground until an opening appeared that could be exploited with promising results. When Sherman saw the Confederate works, he decided against frontal assaults in favor of flanking movements aimed at forcing the rebels into the open where he could use his superior numbers with

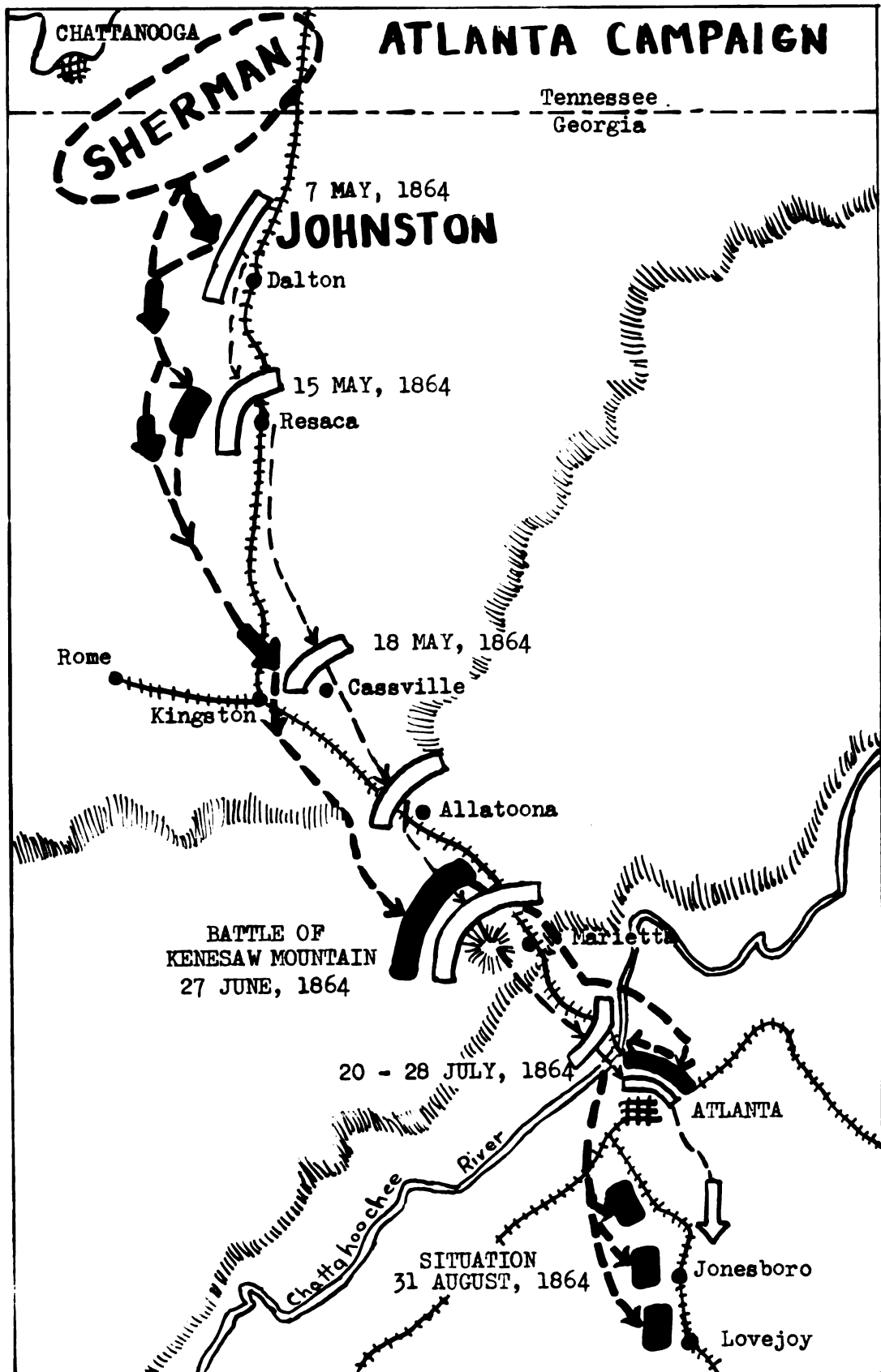
² Ibid., February 9, 1864; OR., XXXII, part II, 370.

³ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, February 11, 1864.

⁴ RG 59-14, MHCA., "History of Officers--Ninth Michigan Infantry," statement by Parkhurst, February 23, 1874.

⁵ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, February 11, 1864.

⁶ Diary, MSU., February 26, 1864.



Adapted from Mark Mayo Boatner III, The Civil War Dictionary (New York, 1961), p. 31.

telling effect. This was the basic Union strategy throughout the campaign from Dalton to the outskirts of Atlanta.⁷

The movement against Dalton began on May 7, 1864, and within four days the Federals had outflanked Johnston and forced him to retreat to Resaca. Throughout the rest of May Sherman used similar movements to force the enemy from strong fortifications at Resaca, Adairsville and the New Hope Church near Dallas.

During the first days of the campaign Parkhurst remained in Chattanooga as commander of the post while the Ninth Michigan moved forward as Provost Guard of Thomas' headquarters. On May 16 Parkhurst received orders to join his men. Thomas was glad to see him and requested that he remain at the front where he was needed.⁸ Thomas and Parkhurst evidently were quite friendly with one another as the General often revealed his thoughts to the Colonel. In one of these conversations Thomas said that he felt Sherman was not "operating as well as he might."⁹ Unfortunately Parkhurst did not say, if he knew, on what grounds Thomas criticized his commander.

During the month of June, as Sherman's army was attempting to dislodge the rebels from their lines around Marietta, Colonel Parkhurst and his regiment were executing their duties for Thomas. A steady stream of prisoners kept the Provost Marshal General very busy. However these efforts were not without reward for on June 25 Parkhurst

⁷ Jacob D. Cox, Atlanta (New York, 1882) presents this campaign in detail. For a brief but informative account see Walter Geer, Campaigns of the Civil War (New York, 1926), Chapter 18.

⁸ Diary, MSU., May 18, 1864.

⁹ Ibid., May 30, 1864.

was brevetted a Brigadier General, an honorary appointment which carried neither an increase in pay nor the authority accorded to a brigadier-general.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Parkhurst could be justly proud of this recognition. Late in June the Colonel, whose duties as Provost Marshal General were extremely demanding, was relieved of direct command of the Ninth Michigan.¹¹

In viewing the progress of the Union armies in the West, Colonel Parkhurst observed that their goal had not been obtained. It appears that Parkhurst misunderstood Sherman's true objective because he emphasized the fact that the enemy would make great efforts to keep the city of Atlanta.¹² The fact is that Sherman's primary goal was not Atlanta but the destruction or severe crippling of Johnston's army. The Colonel realized that they still faced the hardest fighting of the campaign but he believed "that a Divine Providence will give us the victory and sooner terminate this unhappy war."¹³

On July 7 the Union troops secured a bridgehead across the Chattahoochie River and the Confederate army retired within the defenses around Atlanta. In mid-July when the railroad to the front was completely repaired the Federals moved across the river and to the east of Atlanta. Sherman believed it would be easier to protect his communications from this position which also presented an opportunity to disrupt the rebel supply lines by destroying the Georgia railroad.

¹⁰ OR., XLIX, part II, 1034.

¹¹ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, June 28, 1864.

¹² Ibid., June 16, 1864.

¹³ Ibid., June 28, 1864.

The day after the Federals renewed their advance, General John B. Hood became the rebel commander. The Union officers welcomed this decision despite knowledge of Hood's aggressive nature since this might cause him to make errors that the more conservative Johnston had not committed. The Union troops braced themselves for the assaults that they knew would now be made by the rebels. Colonel Parkhurst agreed with the sentiments of his superiors on this change of the Confederate command, observing that Hood was not as good a soldier as Johnston; he was just a more desperate fighter.¹⁴

Hood soon attacked the Union flanks hoping to gain a position which would force the enemy to retreat. The assaults had little effect upon the Federals, while the heavy cost in casualties severely hurt rebel morale. Throughout July and August Sherman's troops reversed their earlier movements and maneuvered around Atlanta in a westerly direction toward the important railroad junction at East Point. By this movement the Federals destroyed the West Point and Macon-Atlanta Railroads, vital lines of Confederate supply. Hood now had to evacuate Atlanta, and the city surrendered on September 2, 1864. Thomas, with the Army of the Cumberland, occupied Atlanta and the victorious soldiers settled down to enjoy some well-earned rest.

Hood retreated eastward from Atlanta and the rebels remained inactive until the last days of the month. They finally made an attempt to cut the railroad between Chattanooga and Atlanta, hoping that this would force Sherman to make a long retrograde movement to protect his supply lines. However Sherman let the movement develop before committing himself, then he quickly cut in behind the

¹⁴ Ibid., July 29, 1864.

Confederates and forced Hood westward into Alabama. Sherman, who was now awaiting permission from Washington to begin the famed "march to the sea," was satisfied merely to observe the rebel army. This was the military situation in the west as October came to a close.

As Parkhurst reflected upon the campaign to Atlanta he noted that their efforts had been crowned with success, but at the cost of thousands of lives on both sides. Here Parkhurst corrected his earlier error concerning the goal of Sherman's army as he pointed out that "the rebel army is still Strong and the war is yet to continue and possibly the same ground over which we have fought for four months may again be a theater of contest. An army of 50,000 men is a great machine, a Monster that cannot be destroyed in a day, a month nor in years and never will it be destroyed nor the rebellion crushed till the people of the North unite as one man and push with their whole Strength upon the Enemy." ¹⁵

In answer to the requests of his sisters that he resign the service Parkhurst said, "I feel that My Service is of value to the Government now that I am familiar with My duties and I cannot make up my mind to withdraw from a field of duty so important and so necessary." ¹⁶ Parkhurst continued saying that he would never quit until the end of the rebellion was in sight and until he had done everything within his power to insure the honor and stability of the nation. ¹⁷

On the last day of October Parkhurst moved from Atlanta to Chattanooga in accordance with orders from Thomas, who had gone to

¹⁵ Ibid., October 2, 1864.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Nashville several weeks earlier.¹⁸ The war was now in its last phase and the Army of the Cumberland was destined to fight the great Battle of Nashville as Hood's army made its last great effort to save the rebellion for the Confederacy.

¹⁸ Diary, MSU., October 31, 1864.

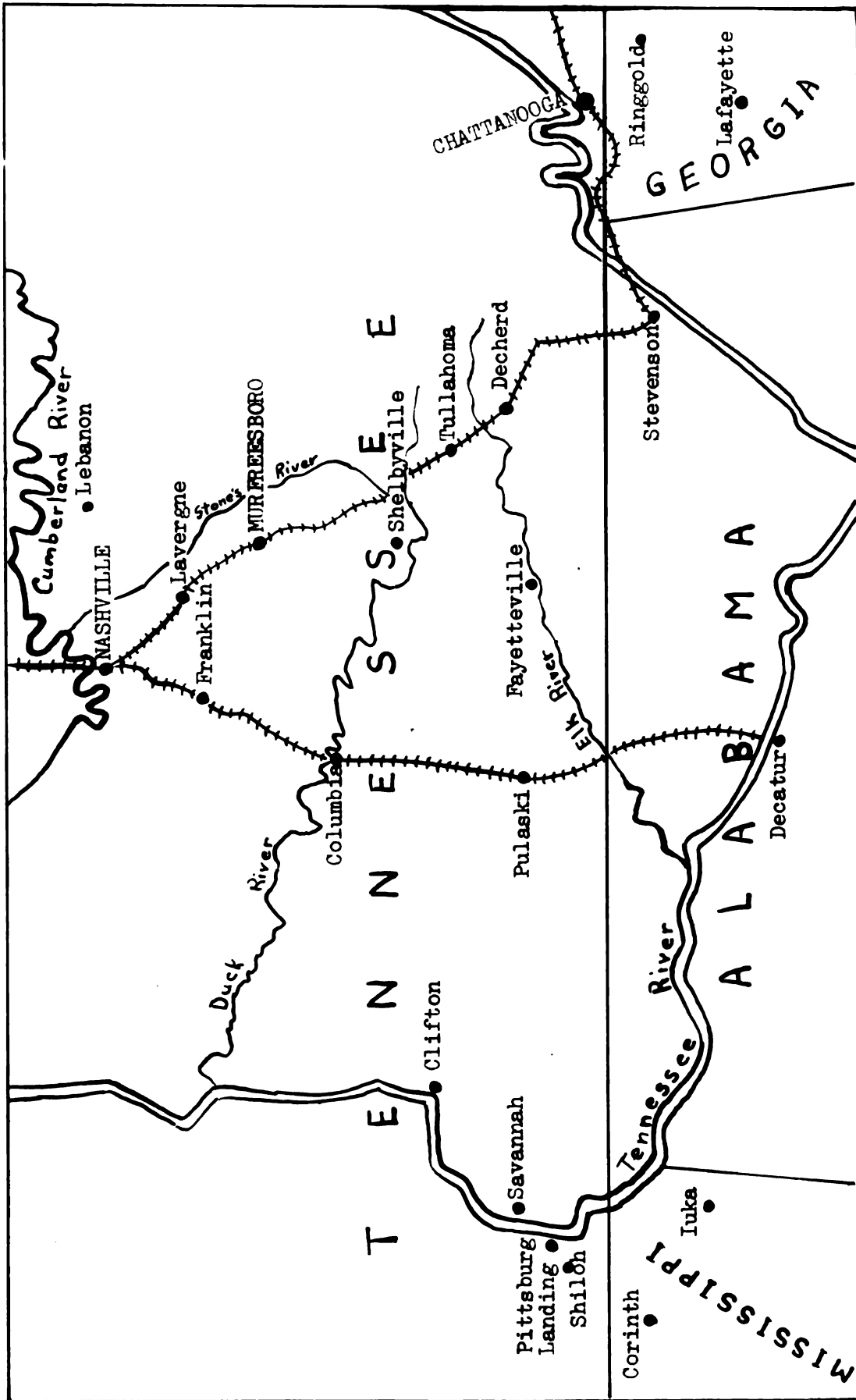
Chapter VII
THE BATTLE OF NASHVILLE--
A CROWNING GLORY

One of the most important battles of the Civil War took place in the West in late 1864. After Sherman had forced Hood's army into Alabama near the Tennessee River, he began his "march to the sea," leaving Thomas, with headquarters at Nashville, to oppose Hood. For this purpose the corps of Schofield and General David S. Stanley were sent into Tennessee with the understanding that Thomas would be sent new recruits to bring his army to full strength. The new troops and reinforcements arrived so slowly that throughout November the Army of the Cumberland was outnumbered by 10,000. ¹

The rebels crossed the Tennessee River early in November and concentrated at Florence, Alabama, to await the arrival of Forrest's cavalry before beginning a campaign directed at Nashville. ² This delay probably saved the Union cause in the West as it allowed Thomas to strengthen his army. Schofield, located 80 miles south of Nashville, had orders to contest the enemy advance. Hood moved forward on November 21, quickly outflanked the Federals, and forced them back to Columbia. At Columbia the Confederates again employed Sherman's tactics and crossed the Duck River, hoping to reach Franklin ahead of Schofield and force his surrender. The failure of Hood to execute this plan

¹ For general background see: Jacob D. Cox, The March to the Sea: Franklin and Nashville (New York, 1882), Chapters 1, 4-7; Geer, Campaigns of the Civil War, Chapter 19.

² General J. B. Hood, "The Invasion of Tennessee," in Robert Underwood Johnson, editor, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, 4 vols. (New York, 1888), IV, 426-428.



Adapted from Jacob D. Cox, The March to the Sea: Franklin and Nashville (New York, 1882), p. 62.

successfully is considered one of the gravest errors of the war. Two of his corps did get behind the Federals and were in a position to cut the road to Franklin, but neither General Alexander P. Stewart nor General Benjamin F. Cheatham carried out their orders and the Union troops marched unmolested within one-half mile of the rebels on their way to Franklin. ³

The first major action of the campaign took place at Franklin, Tennessee on November 30. Schofield placed his men in defensive positions while bridges across the Harpeth River were being repaired. He planned to retire to Nashville. Late in the afternoon Hood's men struck the Union lines and tore a large hole in the center, which was repaired only after severe hand-to-hand combat. The Confederates lost close to 7,000 men in their desperate attacks, while the Federals suffered 2,300 casualties. The setback was a great blow to the secessionist's plans. Despite this reversal Hood decided to continue his advance towards Nashville, where Thomas was gathering a numerically superior army behind strong defenses. Historians have since questioned the wisdom of this decision. ⁴

Hood followed the Federals to Nashville and took up a position outside the city. Meanwhile Thomas had received new recruits and reinforcements from the Army of the Tennessee. This gave the Union troops a decided advantage since Thomas' troops now numbered about 55,000 while Hood's forces had been cut to 23,000 by casualties and by detaching Forrest for an attack on Murfreesboro. Thomas spent the first eight days of December developing his plans despite the urgings

³ Geer, Campaigns of the Civil War, pp. 389-390.

⁴ For example, see Ibid., p. 400.

of Stanton and Grant to smash the rebels. A further delay resulted from an icy rain which made troop movements impossible on the hills around Nashville. On December 14 a warm rain melted the ice and orders were issued for the assault to begin the next day.

The Federal attack was directed at Hood's right. Under the cover of fog the Federals surprised the rebels, broke their lines, and outflanked several units. The whole Confederate army was now in danger. Its left was crushed in the early afternoon and by sunset Hood had been driven back two miles. The following day the rebel lines were again pierced and the enemy was routed, with Union cavalry in pursuit. Heavy rains hampered the pursuing Union cavalry and Hood escaped without further disaster. But his army was badly whipped, and on December 27 what was left of it recrossed the Tennessee River into Alabama.⁵

The significance of this battle cannot be overestimated as it removed any serious rebel threat in the West. Parkhurst considered this victory as the most decisive of the war, agreeing with the opinions already cited. He said the rebels were "Whipt badly."⁶ The Colonel had nothing but praise for General Thomas, whom he described as, ". . . our beloved Hero--the Noble Thomas. No purer--braver--or better Man Ever drew a Sabre and thank God that on this occasion no one can take from him his laurels so proudly won."⁷

During the Battle of Nashville Parkhurst's command was small. Most of the Ninth Michigan was on duty in Chattanooga.⁸ The Colonel's

⁵ For a detailed description see Stanley F. Horn, The Decisive Battle of Nashville, (Baton Rouge, 1956).

⁶ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, December 18, 1864; December 21, 1864.

⁷ Ibid., December 21, 1864.

⁸ Diary, MSU., December 18, 1864; OR., XLV, part II, 251-252.

official report showed that in December he had handled 8,430 prisoners, a good indication of the extent of the Union success at Nashville.⁹

With the defeat of Hood's army, fighting in the West subsided. During January, 1865, Parkhurst completed the processing of Confederate prisoners taken in Tennessee before he returned to his command at Chattanooga.¹⁰ Early in February he was ordered to contact all "prominent and influential" citizens in the area under his control. Suspected rebel sympathizers were requested to show reason why they should not be sent through the Union lines and into Confederate territory. Parkhurst was directed to discover "where their sympathies are fixed and where their friends are to be found."¹¹ This step was taken to remove those people who might stir up trouble for the Federals.

On February 17, Parkhurst received orders from Thomas to meet General Forrest in Mississippi to arrange an exchange of prisoners.¹² He proceeded under a flag of truce to Rienzi, where rebel pickets telegraphed Forrest that Parkhurst had arrived. The conferees met and Forrest accepted the Union proposals for the exchange, but final approval of the plan had to be given by General Richard Taylor. The Confederate's decision, delayed several days because a storm damaged the telegraph wires, was to execute the exchange at Iuka, Mississippi, in early March.¹³

⁹ OR., XLV, part II, 405.

¹⁰ Diary, MSU., January 1-31, 1865, passim.

¹¹ OR., XLIX, part I, 628-629.

¹² Ibid., 735-736; Diary, MSU., February 17, 1865.

¹³ Diary, MSU., February 19-27, 1865.

Parkhurst returned at once to East Port, reported to Thomas, and recommended that a guard accompany the rebels to Iuka and then proceed to St. Louis with the exchanged Federals to prevent them from deserting.¹⁴ In accordance with Parkhurst's request, the Forty-Fourth Wisconsin was assigned to carry out this duty.¹⁵ The Colonel spent the first half of March travelling between Nashville and East Port trying to make final arrangements for the exchange. On March 15, Forrest informed Parkhurst that the exchange would have to take place at Nashville since floods prevented the rebels from reaching Iuka.¹⁶

The Provost Marshal General reported this development to Thomas, who approved the plan and released the Colonel from this assignment, ordering him to bring the Ninth from Chattanooga to Nashville.¹⁷

Parkhurst's sisters had been concerned about his safety during the negotiations. He dispelled their concern by saying, "I came out with dispatches from Genl Thomas to Genl Forrest and came under a Flag of Truce so you need not apprehend any danger as I have a Sufficient Escort to defend Myself against Guerillas and the Enemy are to (sic) high toned to fire on a flag of truce."¹⁸ The Colonel described the many flooded areas which he passed through, saying that the Tennessee River had never reached a higher level. The floods destroyed much property in northern Mississippi which increased the hardships created

¹⁴ OR., Serial II, VIII, 326-327.

¹⁵ Ibid., 367.

¹⁶ Diary, MSU., March 1-9, 1865; OR., Serial II, VIII, 354, 405.

¹⁷ Ibid., March 22, 1865.

¹⁸ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, February 26, 1865.

when Hood's retreating army stripped the countryside of all supplies.¹⁹
 To alleviate the suffering of the citizens, Parkhurst arranged for
 Forrest to transport supplies from southern Mississippi.²⁰

Momentous events occurred during the month of April, 1865.
 Richmond fell into Union hands on the 3rd after Grant cracked the rebel lines at Petersburg. Lee attempted to escape the pursuing Federals but was forced surrender at Appomattox Court House on the 9th. General Johnston turned his forces over to Sherman late that month and the Western Departments of the Confederacy formally surrendered during May.

The news of the great victory in Virginia caused spontaneous celebrations in Nashville. Colonel Parkhurst sent Thomas a bottle of "good whiskey" after learning of the fall of Richmond.²¹ Lee's surrender brought another jubilee to the happy troops and a formal celebration was planned for April 15. But the news of Lincoln's assassination turned Nashville from a happy city into one which was draped with black.²² On the 19th Parkhurst "attended the funeral obsequies of President Abraham Lincoln, as true a man as the Country had in its history."²³ In summing up Parkhurst said, "this Month has been frequented with the Most important Events of the Whole War and under ordinary times the occasions of this month would have turned

¹⁹ Ibid., March 7 and 18, 1865.

²⁰ Ibid., March 2, 1865.

²¹ Diary, MSU., April 3, 1865.

²² Ibid., April 15, 1865.

²³ Ibid., April 19, 1865.

the nation crazy but we have become accustomed to all sorts of life and familiar with death so that we become Shocked at nothing." ²⁴

The closing of the war caused Parkhurst to begin thinking about the future. Since Parkhurst expected that his duties as Provost Marshal General would hold him in Nashville until winter, he decided to send for his wife and children. ²⁵ Despite the cessation of hostilities, the Colonel was still occupied with preparing the rebel prisoners for parole. The entries in his Diary for several months merely show the notation "very busy in office all day." ²⁶

In May Colonel Parkhurst's earlier promotion to Brevet Brigadier-General by Thomas was made official. The commission stated that the promotion was granted for "gallant and meritorious service." ²⁷

In mid-September the Ninth Michigan Infantry was mustered out of the service, but Parkhurst remained in Nashville as Provost Marshal General. Thomas requested President Andrew Johnson for permission to retain the Colonel on his staff throughout the winter. Parkhurst believed that ". . . as the policy now is to Muster out of Service all Officers and all white troops Except the regulars I think it is very doubtful whether they will allow him to keep me." ²⁸ On October 4 he

²⁴ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, April 28, 1865.

²⁵ Ibid., May 8 and June 18, 1865.

²⁶ Diary, MSU., June-August, 1865, passim.

²⁷ General George H. Brown, Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, 1861-65, 46 vols. (Kalamazoo, Michigan, n. d.), IX, 110; Papers, MSU., "Military Record of John G. Parkhurst."

²⁸ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, September 19, 1865.

received orders relieving him of his duties and his official release came on October 10, 1865.²⁹

²⁹ Diary, MSU., October 4, 1865; Papers, MSU., "Military Record of John G. Parkhurst."

Chapter VIII
THE POST-WAR YEARS

Parkhurst, a civilian again, decided to practice law in Nashville, and early in November, 1865, he opened an office in that city.¹ Land speculation also interested him. Early in 1866, he, along with General Thomas and others, proposed to purchase 160,000 acres in Tennessee. The possibility that oil might be found on this land evidently increased the interest of the group. Parkhurst, however, strangely dropped the subject after mid-February, 1866, and made no further mention of it in his diary.²

Many northerners who remained in the South after the war found themselves buffeted by political and social pressures due to the unsettled conditions of that section. Parkhurst felt some of these pressures and when a friend decided to return North, he commented "I regret his leaving but think it will be very difficult for any Northern Professional Man to live here a great while on his business."³ In late July, 1866, Parkhurst himself decided to return to Coldwater, Michigan, and resume his law practice in that community.⁴ One source explained that the move had resulted from his refusal to identify himself with "either the radicals, the Republicans or the southerners."⁵

¹ Papers, MHC., Parkhurst to Sister, October 1, 1865; November 1, 1865.

² Diary, MSU., January 3-February 12, 1866, passim.

³ Ibid., April 4, 1865.

⁴ Ibid., August 1, 1865.

⁵ Collin, Biographical Record of Branch County, p. 341.

His own letters and diary were silent as to the reasons for his return to Michigan.

Shortly after returning to Michigan, Parkhurst was elected delegate to a national convention of war veterans to be held in Philadelphia.⁶ His attendance at this meeting was to have an influence on later events. He went to Washington, D. C. from Philadelphia and asked for an appointment to the post of Marshal for the Eastern District of Michigan. After several days of seemingly fruitless meetings with the Attorney-General, he returned home.⁷ Although his name was later placed in nomination, the Senate refused to confirm the appointment because Parkhurst had been a delegate at the Philadelphia Convention which warmly received a speech by President Johnson.⁸ It appeared that the radical Republicans were convinced that anyone who would applaud the President was unfit for a national office of any type.

Parkhurst ran unsuccessfully for several political offices on the Democratic ticket during the ten years immediately following the Civil War. In November, 1866, the ex-Colonel was soundly defeated for the post of Lieutenant-Governor. The Republicans, in that year, swept elections across the entire country, prompting Parkhurst to say: "Election all radically radical Except in Maryland and New York City. This Shows that the people are not yet Satisfied with revenge and blood and augers war I fear."⁹

⁶ Ibid., August 10-16, 1866.

⁷ Ibid., August 17-24, 1866.

⁸ Collin, Biographical Sketches of Branch County, pp. 341-342.

⁹ Diary, MSU., November 6-7, 1866.

In 1872 the Democrats backed a Liberal ticket and Parkhurst accepted the nomination as candidate for representative from the Third Congressional District.¹⁰ He campaigned actively during September and October, speaking in many cities and towns.¹¹ Again he was rejected by the voters, but he was not very disappointed for he had not expected to win.¹² Two years later he unsuccessfully sought the office of state treasurer. Commenting on Parkhurst's political activities, the Reverend Henry P. Collin said: "In politics General Parkhurst was an uncompromising Democrat, and were it not for the fact that his party [was] in the minority in Michigan he would have at various times been honored by election in high political station."¹³

Josephine Parkhurst's health had caused her husband great concern for several years. She was often unable to accompany him on business trips or on his political campaigns. In June, 1870, she was confined to bed by a severe cold but rallied quickly and appeared to be well on the way to recovery when suddenly she took a turn for the worse and passed away. Josephine's death was a great shock to her devoted husband, who revealed his deep feeling by sadly writing, "Poor little wife. Thou art an Angel now and relieved of all thy pains."¹⁴

For many years Parkhurst corresponded with Mrs. Frances Josephine Fiske of Syracuse, New York, who was a close friend of Parkhurst's sisters and brother in New York. On April 23, 1874, four

¹⁰ Ibid., August 29, 1872.

¹¹ Ibid., September 23-October 30, 1872, passim.

¹² Ibid., November 5, 1872.

¹³ Collin, Biographical Sketches of Branch County, p. 342.

¹⁴ Diary, MSU., June 3-14, 1870.

years after the death of Josephine, John Gibson Parkhurst took Mrs. Fiske as his third wife, bringing new happiness into his life. ¹⁵

Parkhurst attended the Democratic National Convention held in St. Louis during June, 1888. One source stated that the lawyer was seriously spoken of by local and state newspapers as a possible vice-presidential candidate. ¹⁶ Parkhurst did not mention this in his diary, merely noting that President Grover Cleveland was nominated by acclamation and Allen Thurman received the second position on the ticket on the first ballot. ¹⁷

Parkhurst was called to an interview in New York City in September, 1888, by John Dickinson, Cleveland's Post-Master General. Dickinson offered him the embassy at St. Petersburg, Russia, but Parkhurst was obliged to refuse the post because it would require \$35,000 annually to maintain while the salary would provide only one-half that sum. He was then tendered an appointment as minister to Belgium which he accepted after consulting with his friends in Coldwater. ¹⁸ He served in Belgium until May 31, 1889, when he was recalled by President Benjamin Harrison. ¹⁹

The last public office that Parkhurst held was Postmaster of Coldwater. He was appointed to this position in 1893, during President

¹⁵ Ibid., April 23, 1874.

¹⁶ [Chapman Brothers], Portrait and Biographical Album of Branch County, Michigan (Chapman Brothers, 1888), p. 503.

¹⁷ Diary, MSU., June 5-7, 1888.

¹⁸ Ibid., September 10-13, 1888.

¹⁹ Ibid., May 31, 1889.

Cleveland's second term. His resignation in 1897 marked his retirement from active participation in politics.²⁰

On April 17, 1906, John Parkhurst happily celebrated his eighty-second birthday with his daughter, Kittie, his brother, William, and several friends. While Parkhurst described the festivities in his diary, he struck an ominous note by writing that he was weaker on that day than at any of his past birthdays.²¹ Almost every entry thereafter contained some comment upon his health and it appears that Parkhurst was aware that his life was drawing to a close; he wrote, "If I keep getting weak I will soon have to travel on the River and leave this beautiful world."²² Six days later, he wrote "I think I grow weaker Every day and get short of breath." Here the writing stops for the life of John Gibson Parkhurst came to an end as he sat at his desk, pencil in hand, writing in his diary.²³

Upon Parkhurst's death The Detroit News stated that he should be recognized as "a soldier, a lawyer, a diplomat, a politician and always an honored citizen."²⁴ Parkhurst's career as a soldier was the major concern of this study, although his service in other capacities was recognized. It cannot be said that he proved to be an outstanding soldier. But he did serve effectively as Colonel of the Ninth Michigan Infantry, especially while it acted as Provost Guard for General Thomas. His promotion to Provost Marshal General of the Army

²⁰ Collin, Biographical Sketches of Branch County, p. 342.

²¹ Diary, MSU., April 17, 1906.

²² Ibid., April 30, 1906.

²³ Ibid., May 6, 1906; The Detroit News, May 7, 1906, p. 9.

²⁴ The Detroit News, May 7, 1906, p. 9.

of the Cumberland indicates that he was regarded as an efficient and trusted administrator. Throughout the war he showed his concern for a successful prosecution of the war by the North, for he felt that a Northern victory was essential to the continuance of the United States as a strong, unified nation. It must be concluded that Parkhurst executed his service during the Civil War very well. As the Detroit Free Press said, "His death marks also the passing of another of that group of Michigan men who rose to distinction and high rank in the Civil War." ²⁵

²⁵ Detroit Free Press, May 8, 1906, p. 11.

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