

## CAMP BEAUREGARD GRAVES COUNTY, KENTUCKY

By PHILLIP M. SHELTON

IN THE LATE summer of 1861, Confederate hopes were high concerning the conversion of Kentucky to the Southern cause. General Albert S. Johnston, a native Kentuckian, believed his presence in the state would prove benevolent toward this aim.<sup>1</sup> The South first violated Kentucky's neutrality declaration when General Leonidas Polk's Confederate troops streamed into the state to form part of the Confederacy's western defense line.<sup>2</sup> General Polk occupied Hickman and Columbus on September 3, 1861, and the defense line reached from there to Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, back north to Bowling Green and then east across Kentucky to Mills Spring.

General Johnston, whose headquarters were in Bowling Green, evidently realized shortly afterward that the line from Columbus to Fort Henry was considerably overextended, thus leading to the forwarding of the following dispatch.

Headquarters, Western Department  
Columbus, Kentucky  
September 30, 1861

Lieutenant Joseph Dixon:<sup>3</sup>

Sir: You are directed by General Johnston to proceed to examine the country on a line east from this place to Mayfield, and included within said line, and the railroads leading from this place and from Paducah to Union City.

<sup>1</sup>Thomas D. Clark, *A History of Kentucky* (New York, 1937), p. 449.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Speed, *The Union Cause in Kentucky* (New York and London, 1907), p. 136. The neutrality declaration was issued on May 20, 1861. However, neutrality at this time was purely a popular stand.

<sup>3</sup>Lieutenant Dixon was the only engineer in Polk's command. General Johnston ordered him to Fort Donelson on October 8, 1861, to mount the guns there for defense of the river. This job he completed on November 21, 1861. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. 130 Vols. (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, IV, 440; Series I, VII, 698. Hereafter cited as O. R.

Your attention will be specially directed—

First: To the selection of a suitable place in an advanced position for an intrenched camp, covering the Paducah and the Mobile Railroads, and forming also a part of the line from Columbus to Fort Henry, on the Tennessee.

Looking at the map, Milburn or Mayfield would seem to fill the conditions of the problem; but it is understood that a want of water at both these places forbids the establishment of a camp at either, and that therefore the point must fall south of this line.

Second: To the thorough reconnaissance of the roads leading from the front to the camp and the communications of the camp with the Mississippi and Tennessee Rivers.

Third: The practicability of the country for cavalry and artillery.

Your particular attention is called to the supply of water. It is understood that this section of the country is badly watered, and in summer, almost destitute, and though you may find water in abundance after the recent rains, you must inquire carefully as to the state of the streams and springs during the dry season, as the necessity for the camp may be as great during the coming summer as for the present winter.

The camp must, if possible, be convenient to wood for fuel and for bivouac, and for economy of transportation as near the Paducah Railroad as practicable. Be particular to obtain from the people of the country the names of the roads, and let these appear on your map. You are authorized to employ guides and to give them a certificate of pay due for services, to be paid by the quartermaster at this post.

The object of your expedition will not be communicated to others.

I am, sir, very respectfully,<sup>4</sup>

4O. R., I, IV, 432-33.

Wm. W. Mackall  
Assistant Adj. General

The site selected by Lieutenant Dixon could hardly have been more appropriate for a Confederate encampment. It provided for the water mentioned, as several creeks were nearby, was near the Paducah-Union City Railroad, and as an added advantage, was in Graves County, a county of very strong southern sympathies.

In 1860, nine out of ten Graves County citizens were natives of Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia or Virginia. There were 2845 slaves and 518 slaveholders in the county. A strong secessionist newspaper, *The Southern Yeoman*, was printed in Mayfield, the county seat.<sup>5</sup> It was no surprise that these people supported the rebellion and cast not a single vote for Abe Lincoln in 1860.

<sup>5</sup>Lon Carter Barton, *History of Graves County*. Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Kentucky, 1957.

Approximately one mile south of Camp Beauregard, named for General P. G. T. Beauregard, was the post village of Feliciana. It provided numerous services for the troops, for at this time it was of considerable size. There were four stores, two hotels, a masonic lodge, a school, a druggist, four physicians, an attorney, a magistrate, two blacksmiths, a boot and shoe maker, a tanner, a painter and two tailors at Feliciana.<sup>6</sup> The troops from Camp Beauregard always found good Bourbon whiskey there and usually found themselves resting in the Guard House for a few days after they returned to camp.<sup>7</sup>

The troops that occupied Camp Beauregard composed the Fourth Division under General Polk at Columbus.<sup>8</sup> The first abstract report from the camp shows that there were 193 officers and 2668 men there in late September, 1861.<sup>9</sup> This number was virtually unchanged in October, and the following is the complete abstract of troops stationed there in November, 1861.<sup>10</sup>

First Brigade	Officers	Men	Aggregate Present	
			Aggregate Present	and Absent
Ninth Arkansas <sup>11</sup>	35	483	611	822
Kentucky Battalion	12	267	324	351
Twenty Second Mississippi	38	597	795	873
Watson Battery <sup>12</sup>	5	94	111	124
Williams Battery	2	43	49	57
TOTAL	92	1484	1890	2227
Second Brigade				
Tenth Arkansas <sup>11</sup>	35	348	649	695
First Mississippi Valley <sup>13</sup>	32	568	742	787
First Missouri <sup>14</sup>	27	531	663	739
Hudson's Battery	5	75	105	109
Cavalry Battalion <sup>15</sup>	9	160	211	237
TOTAL	108	1677	2370	2567

<sup>6</sup>*The Kentucky Gazetteer and Businessman's Directory* (The G. W. Hawes Company, Louisville, 1859.)

<sup>7</sup>Joseph Boyce, St. Louis, Mo., to Mrs. Lizzie Fuller, Mayfield, Kentucky, March 18, 1916. Typescript copy in Mrs. Fuller's *U. D. C. Scrapbook*, Mayfield Public Library. Hereafter cited as *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

<sup>8</sup>*O. R.*, I, III, 730.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 712.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, VII, 728.

Shortly after the troops arrived at Camp Beauregard, a sharp rivalry developed between Colonel D.W.C. Bonham,<sup>16</sup> of the Twenty-Second Mississippi, and Colonel John S. Bowen of the First Missouri. Both were West Point men, but Bowen had graduated while Bonham was sent home for some escapade. General Polk favored Bowen and appointed him Brigadier General in command of Camp Beauregard. The men who served under Bowen found him to be gallant, accomplished, thorough, and a kind hearted officer.<sup>17</sup> Colonel Bonham was given command of the Second Brigade and Colonel John D. Martin, of the first Mississippi Valley, commanded the First Brigade.

These troops were all fresh from civilian life and were untrained in military activities. There were farmers' sons, many planters' sons, some clerks and two companies of Irish soldiers from Mississippi.<sup>18</sup>

The following is an incident that illustrates how unfamiliar the troops were with military life.<sup>19</sup>

A patrol was being formed to scout for Yankees. The Colonel told the Lieutenant to go out in front to reconnoiter. The Lieutenant said "Colonel, how far is it to Reconnoiter" and the Colonel said "You damn fool, go ask your Captain."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>11</sup>The First through Eighth Arkansas and four companies of the Ninth were at Cave City, Kentucky, under Lieutenant P. G. White. *Ibid.*, IV, 472.

<sup>12</sup>Watson's Battery (Beltzhoover's) under Captain Daniel Beltzhoover had fought at Belmont and their battery was captured and recaptured. *Ibid.*, III, 304.

<sup>13</sup>The First Mississippi Valley was later called the Twenty-Fifth Mississippi Infantry and later was called the Second Confederate Infantry. Major General Virgil Y. Cook, Commanding Third Division, Forest Cavalry Corps, to Mrs. Lizzie Fuller, Typescript copy, *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

<sup>14</sup>The First Missouri had also seen action at the battle of Belmont. *O. R.*, I, III, 305.

<sup>15</sup>This cavalry battalion was commanded by Colonel Clay King and was known as *King's Hell Hounds*. It was composed of Boyd's, Pell's, and Swan's Companies from McCracken, Graves and Calloway counties respectively. Colonel King was a native of Paducah, Kentucky. *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

<sup>16</sup>G. C. Phillips, M. D., Ex. Surgeon, 22nd Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Infantry, Lexington, Mississippi, September 15, 1915, to Mrs. Lizzie Fuller. *U. D. C. Scrapbook*. Hereafter cited as Dr. Phillips.

<sup>17</sup>Colonel Bowen had previously been stationed at Fulton, Kentucky, to prevent any Federal movement from Paducah. *O. R.*, I, IV, 425.

<sup>18</sup>Dr. Phillips to Mrs. Fuller, September 15, 1915. *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

<sup>19</sup>The Missouri First, and Ninth and Tenth Arkansas were exceptions to this fact as they had seen action in Missouri. Dr. Phillips to Mrs. Fuller, August 17, 1914. Typescript copy, *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

<sup>20</sup>L. B. Wardlew, Utica, Mississippi, to Mrs. Fuller, March 25, 1916. Typescript copy in *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

The troops were ordered to prepare winter quarters and to watch and prevent raids from the 6000 Yankees at Paducah. The people of Mayfield helped stock the commissary for winter.<sup>21</sup>

As circumstances would demand, these troops would not stay at Camp Beauregard throughout the winter. General Albert Sidney Johnston at Bowling Green was hard pressed and demanded troops to reinforce his command. As a result, on the twenty-fourth of December, 1861,<sup>22</sup> General Polk ordered Colonel Bowen's command to Bowling Green.<sup>23</sup> The force was divided and half went by wagons to Paris, Tennessee, and the other half went via Union City to Humbolt.<sup>24</sup> Although the initial command did not include the cavalry and artillery units, Polk sent these to Bowling Green five days later. Polk had intended holding these forces and supplementing them with four regiments of sixty-day men from Mississippi. Because of the loss of the cavalry and artillery, Polk decided to send the Mississippi regiments<sup>25</sup> back to Union City and to break up Camp Beauregard.<sup>26</sup> Colonel J. L. Alcorn was in command of these sixty-day men.

Although Polk had already decided to abandon Camp Beauregard, a twist of fate kept Confederate troops there through January and most of February. On December 30, 1861, Colonel Alcorn had asked Colonel J. H. Miller, in command at Camp Desha near Moscow, Kentucky, for reinforcements to meet a suspected attack from Mayfield. Colonel Miller acted promptly and started at once to Camp Beauregard.<sup>27</sup> Upon arrival at Camp Beauregard, Colonel Miller found that Colonel Alcorn<sup>28</sup> had been

<sup>21</sup>Reverend R. R. Noel, Stanford, Kentucky, to Mrs. Lizzie Fuller, December 23, 1910. Typescript copy in *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

<sup>22</sup>Colonel Bonham died on this day and was replaced by Colonel Schaller, also of the Twenty-Second Mississippi Infantry. Rev. R. R. Noel, Stanford, Kentucky, to Mrs. Fuller. Typescript copy in *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

<sup>23</sup>*O. R.*, I, VII, 790.

<sup>24</sup>Joseph Boyce states that his unit went to Bowling Green via march to State Line Station (Fulton, Kentucky) and from there on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. Joseph Boyce, St. Louis, Missouri, to Mrs. Lizzie Fuller, March 15, 1916. Typescript copy in *U. D. C. Scrapbook*.

<sup>25</sup>The sixty-day troops were formed at Grenada and Corinth, Mississippi, and were under the command of Colonel J. L. Alcorn. The total force that left for Kentucky was 1850 infantry and 56 cavalry. They were armed mainly with double-barrel guns although any type of gun was accepted. *O. R.*, I, VII, 689, 771.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 808.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 808-09.

<sup>28</sup>Colonel Alcorn had previously commanded troops at Hopkinsville, Kentucky. *Ibid.*, I, IV, 466.

ordered to withdraw to Union City.<sup>29</sup> Apparently, General Polk then decided to transfer Colonel Miller<sup>30</sup> to Camp Beauregard and Miller's entire command was at Camp Beauregard by January 21, 1862.<sup>31</sup> These troops stayed only a very short time<sup>32</sup> and on February 21, 1862, the entire camp was put to the torch by a Confederate patrol.<sup>33</sup>

The soldiers' life at Camp Beauregard was one of picket duty, reconnaissance and drill. There was also the constant fear of being struck down by one of the various diseases that were common there.

"In preparing winter quarters the men built log pens, many of them using their tents over these as roofs and most of them building a chimney in one end. These dens were warm enough but ventilation was poor. I do not believe any fortifications were built."<sup>34</sup>

The camp was on relatively high elevation and was exposed to the harsh winter of 1861-62. By late November at least three inches of snow had already fallen.<sup>35</sup> The cold, wet weather combined with the constant fatigue duties left the men quite susceptible to sickness. The following is an account by a veteran of Camp Beauregard telling of the epidemic that raged throughout the camp.

The measles had gone through the regiment before it was made up of the companies then composing it, in many cases leaving some bronchial or intestinal trouble, rendering the men easy marks for Pneumonia and Typhoid fever. The weather became cold and rainy, then sleet and snow. The drilling and picket duty to most of the men was very hard, and the diet was not what they were accustomed to. It was mostly fresh beef and flour, no vegetables, with plenty of coffee, tea, tobacco and whiskey. Soon Typhoid fever and Pneumonia broke out among the men. There were 75 cases of Typhoid fever and Typhoid Pneu-

<sup>29</sup>Colonel Alcorn left for Union City on January 2, 1862. *O. R.*, I, VII, 816-17.

<sup>30</sup>Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Miller was with the First Mississippi Cavalry Battalion. *Ibid.*, I, III, 267.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, VII, 809.

<sup>32</sup>On February 10, 1862, Colonel Miller was six miles east of Paris, Tennessee, destroying the Tennessee River Bridge. *Ibid.*, 853.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 897.

<sup>34</sup>Dr. Phillips to Mrs. Fuller, September 15, 1915. *U. D. C. Scrapbook.*

<sup>35</sup>New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, December 6, 1861. Concern was expressed for the Louisiana boys there. (These Louisiana troops were in Co. A of the First Missouri.)

monia in my hospital tent during one month. I speak only of our own regiment. It was as bad or worse in other regiments. Then, the most terrible disease, cerebra-spinal Meningitis broke out, killing nearly every case attacked and frequently in a few hours. In one instance the men in a certain company had just come in from drilling and whilst waiting for their dinner to cook, one of them commenced to talk queer; then jerk his head back and fall over in convulsions. One ran to the Surgeons quarters and burst in his tent saying, "Come Doctor, quick one of the men has that thing." When we reached the tent, another of the men had been taken in the same way and in three hours, both were dead. The Doctors were all at sea. None of us had ever seen a case of this disease. We knew brain and spinal cord were affected, but why so many similar cases? This was an epidemic and more fatal than Yellow fever. We knew that a disease very similar in symptoms to this attacked the new recruits in the French Army during Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, but this did not help us, as no remedy was known for it.

Colonel Bonham sent for me and asked if nothing could be done to stop this high rate of death among his men. It was worse than a battle. The men became depressed and gloomy, each one feared that he would be the next one taken, and if so it meant death. Men in apparent perfect health, on going to bed, would be taken in the night and by the next night would be dead.

I advised the Colonel to move his camp, if only half a mile and to have his commissary issue corn meal, bacon, dry salt meat, turnips, potatoes, onions and cow peas as rations to the men, that this was an experiment, but I could advise nothing else. This was done and for two weeks afterward that we remained there, (being then ordered to Bowling Green, Ky.) we had no more of this terrible disease and Typhoid fever and Pneumonia fell very markedly. The troops remaining continued to suffer.<sup>36</sup>

Crude hospitals were set up to care for the sick. They were made up of large tents with cots, mattresses and extra blankets provided. The ground was the floor and it was covered with wheat straw which was changed every day or two. A stove was installed to keep the sick warm.<sup>37</sup>

Very little could be done to help these sick soldiers. Bleeding was practiced quite extensively but proved to be of no benefit. "It must be borne in mind that this was long before the days the germ theory of disease, asepsis, the clinical thermometer and hypodermic syringe had become known or had come into use. Many of these cases died without a dose of medicine being given them."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Dr. Phillips to Mrs. Fuller, September 15, 1915. *U. D. C. Scrapbook.*

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

These terrible conditions were, of course, very hard on the morale of the soldiers. "The men became depressed and gloomy; they had come to fight the enemies of their country in human shape, but not in the shape of fever and pestilence."<sup>39</sup>

There are no records on file pertaining to deaths at Camp Beauregard.<sup>40</sup> "The men were buried in two places, one south of and joining the old Mobley Grave Yard<sup>41</sup> contains 250 or 300 graves and the other place was some  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile East on the Mayfield road South of E. T. Latta's residence which contains about 100 graves."<sup>42</sup> Many of the boys were sent home for burial.<sup>43</sup>

Although there were no battles fought at Camp Beauregard, it was the object of some rather interesting military developments. Yankee patrols were constantly probing at Camp Beauregard and the Confederate Command could never seem to figure out what was going on.<sup>44</sup>

In early November of 1861, demonstrations were sent from Paducah and Cairo toward Camp Beauregard and Columbus.<sup>45</sup> The purpose of these demonstrations was to keep pressure on the Confederate forces and prevent their sending troops into Northwest Arkansas.<sup>46</sup> Generals Polk and Pillow<sup>47</sup> were convinced that these moves were aimed at the encirclement of Columbus and an eventual attack.<sup>48</sup> The Federals may have turned the Confederate intelligence reports into an asset, toward convincing Polk and Pillow of this plan of attack, by instructing their officers at Paducah and Cairo to publicly express this calculation.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>H. T. McCain, Adj. General, Frankfort, Kentucky, to Mrs. Fuller, January 11, 1916. *U. D. C. Scrapbook.*

<sup>41</sup>The site of Camp Beauregard was known as Mobley's Old Camp Ground. W. G. Pirtle, Water Valley, Kentucky, September 27, 1910, to Mrs. Fuller. *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>Dr. Phillips to Mrs. Fuller, September 15, 1915. *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup>Yankee intelligence reports were very prompt and accurate. General C. F. Smith knew of the formation of Camp Beauregard by October 1, 1861. When Bowen's Command was sent to Bowling Green on December 24, Smith reported this information on December 27. *O. R.*, I, III, 510; VII, 517.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 299-300.

<sup>46</sup>*O. R.*, I, III, 300.

<sup>47</sup>General Pillow was in temporary command at Columbus from November 11 to December 1. *Ibid.*, VII.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 305; IV, 557. Colonel Bowen is instructed to aid Columbus if it should become encircled. *Ibid.*, IV, 557.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, VII, 708.



The Confederate commanders were misled once more in late December, 1861. Brigadier General Lew Wallace led a Yankee patrol from Paducah toward Camp Beauregard to reconnoiter the camp and to ascertain whether or not re-enforcements had left there for Bowling Green.<sup>50</sup> Again the Confederate commander at Camp Beauregard, J. L. Alcorn, was certain of an attack on his camp and urgently asked for re-enforcements.<sup>51</sup> A force of 250 cavalry was sent forward to meet the Yankees but no contact was made as Wallace turned back while still six miles from Camp Beauregard.

The last and perhaps the most important maneuvers dealing with Camp Beauregard began on January 10, 1862. On this day General Grant, in command at Cairo, announced to the newspapers that the invasion of Kentucky was about to begin. This set the stage for a somewhat involved feinting action, the final purpose being the exploration of a possible attack on Fort Henry.<sup>52</sup> Brigadier General John A. McClernard left Cairo with a sizeable force to probe the rebel forces at Columbus, Camp Beauregard, and Mayfield. Upon scouting these positions, he sent a message to General C. F. Smith, proceeding to Mayfield from Paducah, stating that there was no danger from the enemy in the vicinity.<sup>53</sup> Smith then proceeded to Fort Henry.<sup>54</sup> General Polk was thoroughly taken by these movements. He was convinced that a three-pronged attack was under way. These were to be on New Madrid, Union City via Camp Beauregard, and Columbus itself.<sup>55</sup> Need-4, 1862.<sup>57</sup> The following are excerpts from the last message sent from Camp Beauregard, Lieutenant Colonel T. H. Logwood reporting on February 21, 1862:

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 66-68. Wallace also had permission, if opportunity afforded, to attack Clay King's cavalry which he considered as marauders.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 803, 808-09, 813. This was the request that brought Colonel J. H. Miller and his command to Camp Beauregard.

<sup>52</sup>Paducah *Sun Democrat*, Sunday, April 3, 1861. 2C.

<sup>53</sup>O. R., I, VII, 68-70.

<sup>54</sup>There is no evidence proving that Smith took this action.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 828.

less to say, no attack on any of these positions developed at this time. Troops remained at Camp Beauregard for only a short time after this.<sup>56</sup> The evacuation of Columbus was completed on March

<sup>56</sup>See footnote 29.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 683.

Heavy Rain. Railroad destroyed from five miles south of Mayfield to Fulton Station. Bridges destroyed as far north as Viola. Clay King<sup>58</sup> taking care of that. Moved many provisions from Camp Beauregard to Fulton and set fire to the camp.<sup>59</sup>

Today there is very little evidence at the site of Camp Beauregard to suggest that thousands of men once camped there. There are only a dozen or so marked graves and the "U. D. C. Monument" to preserve their memory. The phrase, "little known nor long remembered," is very true of the men who lived and died at Camp Beauregard.

<sup>58</sup>Apparently King was not sent to Bowling Green with Bowen's Command.

<sup>59</sup>O. R., I, VII, 897. Colonel D. Stuart at Paducah reported that private houses were also burned. *Ibid.*, 665.