

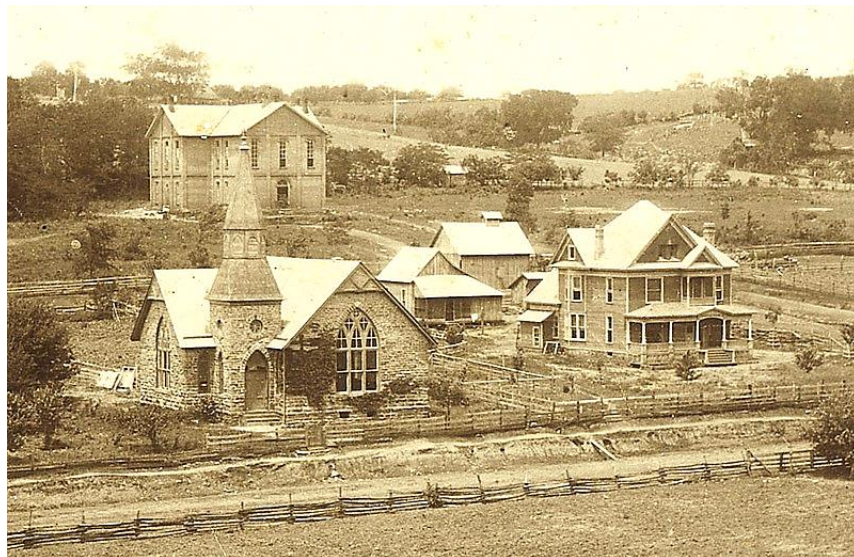
My Ancestor – Pvt. Samuel King Reed

Samuel King Reed was born in 1838, the youngest of 13 children of William Buchanan Reed and Margaret “Peggy” Robertson, both originally from Livingston County, Kentucky.

William and Peggy had moved to Cane Hill, in the Northwest corner of Arkansas in 1825, after the birth of their 8th child, James Crittenden Reed, and the death of William’s father, John Lovett Reed. The Reeds had already become a prominent family in Benton County near the Missouri border, and William was one of the first settlers in Washington county.

William and Peggy settled 3 miles southwest of Cane Hill, halfway between Fayetteville and Evansville, Arkansas, at the foot of the Ozark mountains. This was a region somewhat isolated from the rest of Arkansas, more accessible from Cassville, Missouri, than Little Rock. They built a two-room log cabin with a two-sided fireplace – and later added a loft when the family needed more sleeping room to accommodate Samuel and his older siblings.

Wife Peggy, a devout woman, and had a particular spot in the orchard where she went for private devotions. *“No weather, regardless of temperature, prevented her from going for her devotions.”*



Cane Hill, Arkansas, before the Civil War

After twenty-three years of peace and prosperity, Samuel Reed’s life, and those of the citizens of Washington county, were thrown into upheaval by the Civil War. In May 1861, the Arkansas Senate in Little Rock sided with the confederacy - with only one dissenting vote.

Still, in Washington county and Northwest Arkansas, “there was a large latent element of neutrality or Federal sympathy. Indeed, the men of Washington County were in a peculiarly trying position. With a large element of educated men, who felt the conviction that Union was the only hope of the land, the strong fraternal feeling with the Southern States whose interests were similar, a stronger hope that their homes might not be laid waste by invasion, and that the secessionary rupture might still be healed, all this certainly was an explanation, if not an excuse, for a great mass of uncertain and changeable action.”

To quote from Col. A. W. Bishop, *“Though bordering on the Cherokee line, it has been the intellectual center of the State, with Fayetteville as the point from which its intelligence radiated. Settled principally by Kentuckians and Tennesseans, whose early teachings under Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson gave to their*

politics life, and to their loyalty vigor, attachment to the Federal Union has, from its settlement, been the prevailing sentiment of this section; a result attributable, in no small degree, to the educational institutions of Fayetteville and vicinity."



Cane Hill College, est. 1852

The time had come, however, when Washington County was supposed to furnish every able-bodied man to fight for State protection against the Federal Government and for the Confederate cause. The most severe military measures were adopted to enforce this throughout the county.

To those not realizing the necessities of war, those means seemed hideous and barbarous. Those with neutral inclinations, or those in whom Union convictions were supreme, were compelled to flee the country, hide in caves, use any deception to cover their intentions until a favorable opportunity arose, go armed, or, in some cases, suffer death.

This state of affairs continued during 1861, and up to March 29, 1862. At this time the Union *Army of the Southwest* was lying at Cross Timbers, Missouri, when refugees from all parts of this section applied to the Federal officers for protection and enlistment. The battle at Pea Ridge, a Union victory, was the signal for the exodus of Union sympathizers to the Federal lines, and it gave them more boldness at home in Washington County.



Battle of Pea Ridge, a.k.a. Elkhorn Tavern, March 7-8, 1862.

The Union victory encouraged many Unionists in Northwest Arkansas to start marching north to join the federal lines in Missouri, as *"to remain longer at home was worse than to leave wives and children"*. In the spring of 1862, many refugees began appearing in Cassville.

Col. A. W. Bishop, author of *"Loyalty on The Frontier"*, wrote: *"Prior to that event (Pea Ridge) the loyal (Union) citizens of Arkansas were cowed and powerless. With difficulty they avoided enlistment in the rebel army, and now that the reins of persecution began to slacken, they availed themselves of every opportunity to strike for the Federal lines. The Army of the Southwest moved to Batesville, and Cassville became the outpost of the frontier, with Lieut.-Col. C. B. Holland, of 'Phelps' Missouri Volunteers,' as commander of the post, and M. La Rue Harrison, then of the Thirty-sixth Illinois Infantry Volunteers, as quartermaster and commissary of subsistence. Cassville was also at this time the seat of a general hospital, and in other respects a position important to hold."*

Samuel King Reed and his brother James were among those who joined Colonel Harrison's *1st Arkansas Cavalry Regiment*. Samuel joined in November 1862 in Fayetteville, Arkansas. It is unclear when and where the elder James joined the *1st Arkansas Cavalry*, as he had already moved to Benton County and started a family before the war broke out. So Samuel likely joined alone in November, fleeing the harassment and murder from marauding Confederate bands and seeking retribution for the pain and suffering they were inflicting.

Pvt. Samuel King Reed



A month before Samuel enlisted, the *1st Arkansas Cavalry* was ordered to set up a post at Elkhorn Tavern, at the very site of the Pea Ridge victory. Their assigned duty was difficult, if not impossible, given their lack of training and resources. Gen. James M. Schofield's orders to them read:

"One half of the command should be on distant scouts all the time; the other half should be constantly employed in your immediate neighborhood... You are expected to rid the country within your reach of all small bands, guerillas, provost guards, etc. etc. You are to relieve the Union people and punish the treasonous. Unfailing activity and the utmost vigilance are demanded at your hands."

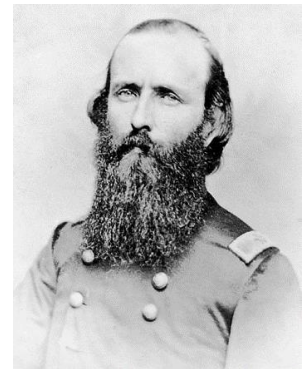
Col. Harrison and the regiment left Elkhorn Tavern on December 5, as part of the southward movement of the Union army - hoping to catch up with General James Blunt's forces at Cane Hill. The goal was to link up with Blunt before the confederates could strike.

But in the evening the next day, the *1st Arkansas Cavalry* arrived at Illinois Creek - 8 miles north of Cane Hill. Harrison decided to encamp his 500 men there for the night. They were *"so tired that Harrison did not think they could move farther until Monday, the 8th."*

Col. Marcus Larue Harrison, Cmdr. of the *1st Arkansas Cavalry Reg't.*

On the morning of the 7th, however, the Confederates struck. They caught Blunt's forces by surprise and sent them fleeing in total panic and disorder. The fleeing 7th and 8th *Missouri Cavalry* ran into the now approaching *1st Arkansas* at Prairie Grove. The *1st Arkansas* also panicked and rode away for their lives, leaving Blunt's main force and twenty regimental supply wagons behind.

This was the first battle action for the *1st Arkansas Cavalry*, and it was an unmitigated fiasco. Nonetheless, the Union forces regrouped and fought Gen. Hindman's Confederates to a stalemate, forcing them to retreat.





Union troops hold their ground at the battle of Prairie Grove - 7 Dec 1862
“The Bayonet or Retreat” by Andy Thomas

Despite this ignominious start, Samuel’s regiment acquitted itself well for the rest of the war while on duty in Fayetteville. But their ultimate vindication came on April 18, 1863 during the battle of Fayetteville.

On March 12, 1863, Confederate Gen. William Steele wrote to Gen. Cabell:

“I hope that you will move on Fayetteville. My information is that there are only about 1,000 men there and no cannon”.

In fact, Union Col. Phillips reported in March that,

“...at the post in Fayetteville was the First Arkansas Cavalry, in poor condition; First Arkansas Infantry, 400 present, absent, sick, etc.; and a battery (men without guns), the latter two forces being of no consequence at present”.

Two weeks before the battle, Col. Harrison had noted that the 850 effective men in the 1st Arkansas Cavalry only had 154 serviceable horses, had received no clothing for three months, and were in “destitute condition”. Of the 850 men in the *First Arkansas infantry*, he wrote:

“700 were effective, but were totally without transportation, clothing or tents or equipment of any kind, except the arms picked up on the Prairie grove battle-ground, which were of all patterns and caliber.”

The April 17 Morning Report of Samuel’s Company F noted: “all company horses turned out as unserviceable.” Fortunately, the Cavalrymen were better armed than the Union Infantry, as they were equipped with breechloading Sharps carbines.

All told, on the day of the battle, some 990 Confederates were attacking 1,100 half-dressed Federals who had no artillery, few horses, and a hodge-podge of small arms of various calibers. The Confederate force, led by Gen. Cabell, left Ozark, Arkansas at three in the morning on the 16th with three days rations and a full supply of ammunition.

During the night of the 17th, the Rebels closed in on Fayetteville, undetected by the Federals. Leading them was Union deserter Mathew Sumner, who two days earlier was a Sergeant in Co. A of the *First Union Infantry*.

The Rebels attacked a Union picket post at dawn. But the shots ruined Cabell's element of surprise. Col. Harrison quickly organized his federals for a defense. Samuel's Cavalry Regiment, on foot, was ordered into position to receive the attack which began around 6:00 a.m. with a Cavalry charge.

Within 30 minutes of the initial attack, two pieces of Confederate artillery were in place and firing canister and shells into the Union lines - nearly causing panic.

Samuel's position was in the center of the Union line around the Baxter House and the Union Headquarters house. That was where the fiercest fighting took place. The Headquarters house still remains today as it was then, just north of Dickson Street and east of College Avenue.



The Tebbetts House on Dickson St. - Union Headquarters during the battle.

The Confederates captured the Baxter house, where the Washington county courthouse now stands, but the Federals held on to the Headquarters House. Most of the casualties were inflicted in this relatively small area.

At 9:00 a.m., Rebel Col. Monroe led a last cavalry charge up the Old Missouri Road (Dickson Street), only to be repulsed by heavy Federal fire from the carbines of Samuel's Co. F, led by Col. Harrison himself, who ordered them to *"fire low, take good aim, and be sure to kill a man every time."*

The Rebel assault was such described:

"The brow of the hill was only forty yards from the line. In a minute, the long line of Cavalry appeared, the Major (Ezra Fitch) rushed in front, gave the command to fire, and a sheet of flames from 500 carbines greeted them; dozens of men and horses went down; I could see the line waiver, and the men frantically reigning their horses, and swerving to the left and right. They were armed with sabers and, if they had pistols, they did not use them. All our men had carbines and revolvers, and in a minute, not a rebel was in sight, save the killed and wounded....The Major sped the fleeting guests, with fresh volleys of oaths, and then he, and his men began giving assistance to the wounded. Not a man on our side had received a scratch. It was a most thrilling sight, and for a moment, I thought our men would be ridden down, which might have happened, they did not charge in a single line."

Shortly thereafter, the rebel artillery ran out of ammunition and withdrew. By noon, the Rebel army was gone, retreating towards Ozark. Despite his victory, Col. Harrison understood that without horses and artillery, his position in Fayetteville was untenable.

Five days after the battle, he wrote to General Curtis: *"We have no stores here; we have nothing to eat, cannot get trains, with good luck, until the 28th. Must we starve, then have all the conscripts surrender to an overwhelming force, that will shoot them as deserters?" ... "The enemy are splendidly mounted. The [Union] men are brave, and have achieved a splendid victory, but we must have help or fall back."*

Gen. Curtis granted Harrison's request to abandon Fayetteville, which was completed on April 25th. But the 1st Arkansas Cavalry had redeemed the honor it had lost at Prairie Grove.



It wasn't until after the fall of Vicksburg in the summer of 1863 that the tide turned again. On September 22, 1863, the 1st Union Arkansas Cavalry reoccupied Fayetteville - this time for the duration of the war.

The year of 1864 began just as 1863 had ended, with long hard scouts involving brief and random deadly skirmishes. The Federal campaign against the Rebel guerillas was pursued to the limit of endurance of both men and horses.

Robert Mecklin of Fayetteville noted in his diary on February 4, 1864: *"The business of killing men still goes bravely on. Scarcely a day passes during which we do not hear of one or more bushwhackers getting killed or that some federals have been killed by them."*

Union Cavalry Soldier firing a Sharps Carbine - *Painting by Don Troiani*

On October 20, 1864, while escorting a wagon train at a place called Nubbin Ridge, 170 cavalrymen under the command of Col. Harrison ran into a heavy skirmish with Buck Brown's guerillas. A two-hour firefight resulted in casualties on both sides.

On the Union side, three were killed, one was wounded, and three were captured by the rebels, including Samuel's older brother Joseph Green Reed of Co. A. Uncharacteristically, Joseph wasn't executed, as was common practice when Union soldiers from Arkansas fell into Rebel hands.

The killing continued in 1865, with no end in sight. On the first day of the year, three captured Union soldiers were executed by the Rebels. Less than a month before Gen. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Major Worthington was killed by a rifle bullet while leading a charge against a column of bushwhackers.

Two days later, Rebel Maj. William "Buck" Brown was killed in a skirmish along with three of his men. This violence continued until June 2, when Confederate Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith surrendered the Confederate *Department of the Trans-Mississippi*. Samuel and his brothers were mustered out on August 23, 1865 - finally free to resume their lives.

Of the 1,765 men who served in the Regiment during the war, about 40% had been killed or wounded. The Regiment had been asked to perform a very difficult task - to suppress a rebellion in its home District. Probably no other Southern Regiment in the Union Army had the assignment of fighting its own neighbors - while occupying its home ground under relentless guerilla and large-scale attacks for three years.

The area this single Regiment preserved for the Union was as large as the entire battleground in Virginia between Washington and Richmond.

After being interrupted by three years of death, fear, and destruction, Samuel and his brothers went back to their respective homes to resume their lives. Samuel's wife, Martha, had died in Missouri in July 1865 while he was still serving.

A year later, he married Elizabeth Ellen Holt in Washington County. They had 12 children together. Samuel King Reed died in Cane Hill, Arkansas - where he had been born 74 years earlier. He is buried in Cox Cemetery in Morrow, a couple miles south of the log cabin where he took his first breath.



... submitted by 3rd great-grandson Charles Forrester Reed