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"THIS OLD BOOK"

The Civil War Diary of
Mrs. Mary Sale Edmondson
Of Phillips County, Arkansas

Edited By

R. P. Baker, Archivist
Arkansas History Commission
1972

PART VIII

PREFACE

The vast majority of Civil War diaries which have come down to this present time are those of the soldier himself. They give a thrilling account of the battlefield, the campfire, and the march but usually little else. This diary is different. It is an account of a different kind of battlefield, the home front in the South. But it is no less a story of privation, destruction, and bravery.

This is the diary of a very literate southern gentlewoman. It reflects her interest in the welfare of her home, her husband and children, and her Negro slaves. In it is captured the essence of a way of life rapidly being destroyed forever by Yankee Soldiers. Gone were the gracious ways, the leisurely civilization and finally, life itself.

INTRODUCTION

MARY FRANCES SALE EDMONDSON was born November

16, 1816, in Amherst County, Virginia, the eldest of the eight children born to the Reverend Alexander F. and Sarah Crenshaw Sale. In 1812, the family emigrated with a large number of their fellow Virginians to Lawrence County, Alabama, and settled near the county seat of Moulton. Here they made their home for a number of years.

In 1848, Mary's brother, John B., a lawyer by profession and the fifth County Court Judge of Lawrence County, "was seized by a desire to try a new Country" and removed to Aberdeen, Mississippi. It was no doubt through her brother's new friends and acquaintances that Mary met a widower from Pontotoc County, Mississippi, Dr. Albert G. Edmondson. Dr. Edmondson's first wife was Caroline Pinson, and they were the parents of three children: William, Mary E. and Caroline L. The first Mrs. Edmondson died about 1848 or 1849.

Dr. Edmondson and Miss Sale were married in Mississippi on May 23, 1854. Their first child, Alexander, was born April 20, 1855, but died eight days later. Their second child, John Albert, was born on May 23, 1856.

In 1857, Dr. Edmondson, his father-in-law, Alexander Sale, and two of his brothers-in-law, William and Melville Sale, joined the great American move westward. Choosing Phillips County, Arkansas as their new home, they settled northeast of Walnut Corner. Here they bought over one thousand acres of land in the Blackfoot or Central neighborhood, along Spring Creek Road. William named his plantation Grammedi, and the home shared by Dr. Edmondson and the rest of the Sale family was called Holly Grove. Some of the other families which made up this neighborhood were those of: Judge John T. Jones, George R. Johnson, Richard Ford, Thomas and John Gist, Joseph Green, Arthur Robinson, Richard Anselm Blount, Amos Jarman, James Cook, Alexander Graves, Warren and Jack Smizer, Dr. T. R. Welch, F. H. Dade and David

Threlkeld.

On September 20, 1858, Mrs. Edmondson's third child, Sarah, Susannah, or Sallie, was born - only to die on June 24, 1860, ironically the same day as the birth of her fourth and last child, Louise Titus, or Lou. Mrs. Edmondson died on February 7, 1865, after several months of illness. Dr. Edmondson died in Phillips County in 1885.

*

DIARY

July 25, 1864, Monday. Carrie and Albert were to come after us at the proper time--which they all did. I think every member of the Church I know of was present, and quite a number of others. We had a good meeting and all seemed to feel that our covenant with God was renewed and rejoiced in once more having the privilege of kneeling round our Lord's table and partaking of the emblems of his broken body and shed blood. Lucy, Dick, and old Jake came in for their share of the privilege--the rare privilege for it was more than two years since that sacrament had been administered among us. Mrs. Robinson had her remaining child, Henry, dedicated to God in baptism. It was a solemn and impressive occasion but her good brother could not be there to witness it. Alas! she never saw him alive again. The people were dismissed and separated for home--on reaching the half way gate between us and Grammedi, (Will's plantation) we saw an ominous dust rising from beyond the Blounts as far as the eye could reach west, to the woods that girded our place on the east, but on reaching home found they were Confederates under Dobbins going to Helena.¹ We found brother Will at the house and quite a number of soldiers calling to get water--Mr. Scaife² called and spent an hour or two--Mr. (John W.) Keesee³ also, brother and sister Wynne had returned with us from church. I fixed

up Will a basket of vituals--ham, corn and potatoes--for him and Col. Dobbins--gave Mr. Keesee a lunch to put in his pocket and they all departed. Bro. Jones and Beckham drove over in the afternoon to sit with us an hour or two, and we should have had a quiet christian evening but for our anxiety and excitement as to what the soldiers were after. Several of Shelby's men called and talked a while--one of them interested me much when palliating his hatred of the enemy, he told us a tale of such persecution and oppression as his family had suffered in Missouri that it seemed almost to justify his resolve, long practiced, of never taking a prisoner alive. Albert came running in out of breath. "Papa the Secesh⁴ are taking all our cows--they have got my sister too!" The Missourian quietly observed to the Doctor that if he wished to select his cattle he had better get on his horse and go to Headquarters before they were killed--which he did. They only took two of our young beefs and a heifer. Will came to see us this evening. I had a nice snack fixed up for him --and gave him a box of Sardines I happened to have and he took leave of us. The next news we heard was the roar of cannon⁵ early next morning, (July 26) and the crash of small arms--a battle was in progress evidently at Big Creek. Toward ten a.m. the battle ground seemed to have shifted down toward John Nelson's⁶ --six or eight miles nearer town. We passed a morning of great anxiety when, just as dinner was coming in the firing having ceased--the soldiers began to call in again to get water--some ate with us. Presently Mr. (John H.) Hicks came in--and told us Lieut. (William J.) Wilburn⁷ was shot dead in an instant. Oh who shall tell his sister this? Doctor was called urgently to Mr. Cook's--so I sat stupefied not knowing what to do. Mr. Hicks said Lieut. (J. T.) Green would let Mrs. Robinson know, and would attend to the body of her brother--so I sat down--then walked about and felt restless enough.

Presently I heard a horse in full gallop--and

immediately at the gate--I saw it was Mrs. Robinson! She had been told that her brother was desperately wounded--by a passer by--and that Dr. Edmondson would tell her where to find him. I told her she couldn't go--it was full six miles from here and two days before she had fainted from being driven not so far in a buggy from little Carrie's Burial! I begged her to stop. "Oh no," she said, "if I stop I can't get my breath; may Albert go with me, if he can get his horse quick for I can hardly stop a minute--I may get there in time to hear his last words." I called Dick, a trustworthy negro man, and in three minutes he was ready to go with her; I thought perhaps the violent bodily exercise would be good for her--and had not the heart to tell her he was certainly dead. So she rode the six miles as fast as her horse would go--and found her beloved and only brother cold on his bier on the gallery (of the James Cook house) by which she entered the house. The second day after, he was buried by his sister and little Carrie, his pet. Mrs. Robinson and Jennie (Graves) were sick afterward--and when she was able Doctor brought Mrs. Robinson here. She spent a week with us profitably I trust, to her mind and body. Our men fought well, badly managed by Col. Dobbins--well managed they might have captured the whole scout--chiefly of negroes--I was very anxious meanwhile about my brother Will--who was with them--but late in the evening he came home safe and sound--for which I felt and feel truly grateful to God.

August 1, 1864, Monday. A week after, Dobbins made another attempt to break up the deserted plantations, occupied by Yankees and run away negroes. Will was with them again, but took no part in it. He called and spent the night on his return. I was glad I did not know he was on the warpath until his return. Mrs. Robinson was here. Shortly after, I rode over the creek for the first time since the Yankees have been here, with Albert as an escort, to get her (doesn't say who) (Aunt Sue) to do some sewing for me.

She owed some \$30.00 to the Doctor, and we only asked in payment the making of six shirts; after long persuasion she undertook them--two of them I designed for brother Will as I learned through rumor that his regiment with others were going to Missouri with Price. She kept them a long time and when Will got back unexpectedly, I sent for them and found three untouched. Dr. bribed (her) by a joint of meat to make one in a day on her machine. I, with Carrie's help, made the other with handwork--in a day and night and repaired and put in order his other clothing, trying to make him comfortable for a winter campaign in Missouri, and he left me with that expectation. I felt again all the bitterness of being cut off from my kindred--and expected no more letter from La. and scarce hoped to hear from my brother (John) on the other side of the Confederacy. I went today to see Mrs. (Joseph T.) Green. She is quite sick and has an infant of one night old--two of her little daughters are quite sick also. I stayed a day and night with her and returned leaving the Dr. with her for that night. Very busy this week with my wool trying to prepare for clothmaking for the first time in my life--(I) have gone round and borrowed cards from my neighbors to break and card up my wool filling--and card my cotton warp for winter clothing for my children and the Dr.--gave \$1.50 a lb. for very dirty wool from Mr. Blount--I find breaking wool very fatiguing.

September 5, 1864, Monday. Sept. 5th. Started the children to school again to Miss Sue Johnson. It is beautiful weather--hope they will have a prosperous session.

September 13, 1864, Tuesday. Oh sad, sad news! The children came home from school and told me that Mr. (Arthur W.) Robinson was dead in his far off Yankee prison.⁸ Jennie (Graves) had sent for Sue Johnson, as her sister was in a spasm at the news.

My first impulse was to go and weep with them, but Dr. came home and I thought he might be of more use to them, so he went over. In one month to lose a child, brother, and husband under such cruel circumstances was terrible.

September 14, 1864, Wednesday. I went over to see Mrs. Robinson, Jennie is sick, and Sue Johnson also--I stayed until quite late--and talked and sympathized with the afflicted sisters--and left. Sent Mr. Johnson (Sue's father) word of Sue's illness that night.

September 16, 1864, Friday. Mrs. Robinson quite ill. She longs to come over here again. Dr. will bring her as soon as she can sit up--Poor lady! I will surely do all I can to alleviate her sufferings--but I must lay aside my clothmaking for I can't carry that on without taking a hand in it myself. Dr. says she will come tomorrow--so Carrie and I have put dear Mama's room in nice order for her, made her a sweet, comfortable bed where my dear father and mother used to lie, put a delicate vase of autumn flowers on the chimney piece, and now being right tired I will rest me till they come.

September 19, 1864, Monday. Lou is in ecstasies at the idea of having little Henry with her again, and Albert much gratified. The cotton picking has begun and Lou has been out at it both days--it was a cross to give up the novel amusement to stay in the house even with Henry. They came about twelve o'clock. Dick had to bring her in his arms from the buggy to the house--she has borne the removal better than I expected. She seemed improved by it until the third day.

September 23, 1864, Friday. Mrs. Robinson is improving after a week's stay. Mrs. (Richard) Ford and Mrs. Wynne came over to see her.

My dear brother Will was here this week and left today, he did not go to Missouri having been elected to the Legislature. ⁹ Last night he slept in one corner of the yard--in a secluded place with his horse near by. We sat up till late talking--feeling that we might not meet again for long, if ever.

September 25, 1864, Sunday. Another blessed Sabbath--I have cared for my afflicted guest--read some to her in Neander's Life of Christ. After reading several chapters from the Bible to my children I then, to quiet their restless spirits took a walk--much to the delight of all three, leaving Carrie with Mrs. Robinson. We had a pleasant Sabbath--and I (found) more comfort in my evening devotion, than of late. Oh God, help me, and leave me not to my own devices. Doctor is rarely at home more than an hour at a time so many are sick.

September 28, 1864, Wednesday. Mrs. Robinson is much improved--I went to my spinning today, and was surprised in the midst of it by a visit from the Yankees.

Our Heavenly Father preserved us from any _____ serving injury from them. (My Negro slave) Dick Bankhead, who was in the garden at work, hid in the butter bean vines, and we were too much on the alert to lose our silver money or jewelry by them-- although they searched for such valuables as they could secret under the pretense of "looking for arms." They picked up several knives from the table that was set for dinner--however, we could better have spared their worth (than) money or jewelry--but I was thankful to God we were rid of them so easily. I had been making molasses of watermelon and they highly enjoyed the pile, which they went to with the instinct of hounds after a hen's nest. Brother Jones (Methodist preacher) spent this night with us--the negroes, all but Dick, came to family prayers. We all felt it a privilege to be able to attend it once

more in our house.

September 29, 1864, Thursday. Mrs. Robinson has gone home to attend and prepare for her sale. She intends leaving for Ala. where her father-in-law lives--indeed he has sent for her, difficult and perilous as the journey is--he knows not of her bereavements. She was able to walk to the buggy on leaving.

September 30, 1864, Friday. This is the day for the sale.¹⁰ Dr. is absent at Dr. A. J. Hughes since yesterday evening--Mrs. Hughes not expected to live--he asked me to ride over if he did not return. I went in the rain and stayed all day. Lieut. Sipson, Mrs. Robinson's escort is quite ill. Notwithstanding the bad day almost every man in the country was there. I am sure I did not know so many were left in it. Dr. came over in the afternoon. I exchanged bacon for wool with Mrs. Green, and bid in a few articles of Mrs. Robinson's as credit on Dr.'s large account with the family since '61.

October 1, 1864, Saturday. Another return of brother Tom's birthday. Dr. called in to see Lieut. Sipson. How unfortunate he should be taken ill here where he cannot remain a single day in safety.

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FOOT NOTES

¹ For a complete description of the battle of Big Creek see Mrs. Kirkman's "The Leased Plantations," Phillips County Historical Quarterly, Vol. 4, No. 4 September, 1966. Page 13 ff.

² Not identified.

³ He was in Co. K of Dobbins' 1st Arkansas Cavalry. Muster Rolls, Dobbins' 1st Arkansas Cavalry.

⁴ A slang term for secessionist or Confederate.

⁵ The Federal troops had a battery of artillery with them.

	Age	Born
⁶ Malinda Nelson	56	Tennessee
John W. Nelson	20	Arkansas
James Hugh Nelson	14	Arkansas
Elizabeth Walker	66	Virginia

Household no. 425, 1860 U. S. Census, Planters Township, Phillips County, Arkansas.

⁷ See "Cook Diary" July 25 - 27, 1864, for details of battle and burial of Lieutenant Wilburn, Phillips County Historical Quarterly, Vol. 4, No. 3

⁸ He died at Ft. Delaware, New Jersey, August 21, 1864, of small pox.

⁹ The state legislature was meeting at Washington, Hempstead County, Arkansas. Evidently William was never able to attend the Legislature.

¹⁰ See "Cook Diary" September 30, 1864. Phillips County Historical Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 1, December, 1966.

THE 28th WISCONSIN INFANTRY REGIMENT AT HELENA

by

Dale P. Kirkman

In this issue of the Quarterly we will start a series of letters and excerpts from diaries written by Union soldiers stationed at Helena during the Civil War. The first three parts of the series were written by three soldiers of the 28th Wisconsin, two of whom were in the same company, and the two describe some of the same happenings during the big battle on July 4, 1863. It would be more interesting to print these two items in the same issue of the Quarterly, but they are too lengthy.

The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Vol. XXII, Pt. 1, Reports, which includes the Battle of Helena, mentions the 28th Wisconsin four times. One reference is to the fact that it was a part of the 1st Brigade, 13th Division, Brigadier General Frederick Salomon commanding, of the 13th Army Corps, U. S. A.

The second reference is that two companies of the 28th were ordered to the valley west of Fort Curtis by General Salomon as a reinforcement for Batteries C and D, shortly after 5 A. M. on the day of the battle.

The third reference is to the map by Lt. Fred. Sommer, which is the one nearly always used to show the locations of the Union batteries, forts, and troops at the Battle of Helena. The 28th is placed at Battery B. The enclosure in this issue of the Quarterly is a copy of a later and better topographical map, also drawn by Fred. Sommer, by then, Captain Sommer. This map shows a battery or fort named F or E, very near Battery B, and it may be the one

mentioned by Edward N. Walden in his diary notations. (It is interesting that a third map by Captain William Hoelcke, U. S. A., denotes the road that Map #1 calls the Old St. Francis Road as the New St. Francis Road, and shows the road that Map #1 names the Upper St. Francis Road as the Old St. Francis Road.) The fourth reference in the Official Records to the 28th Wisconsin is its division and brigade assignment in the Arkansas Expedition against Little Rock not long after the fight at Helena.

A copy of the Walden Diary is owned by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin at Madison.

DIARY IN PART OF EDWARD N. WALDEN, COMPANY G, 28th
WISCONSIN

1863

June 23rd, Wrote a letter to G. M. Barney.

June 24th, Received a letter from William Washburn and answered the same.

June 25th, Doctor Smith commenced to examine and prescribe for the sick. He tells me that I am in a bad way as I have a fever every afternoon. He gave me an almighty large dose of quinine and morphine.

June 26th, We have had an abundance of rain for the past three days.

June 30th, The last four days have passed and nothing of any great importance has transpired to my knowledge. Do not pretend to be very well posted at the best.

July 1st, The day has been very warm. It is very uncomfortable either in or out of tents the heat comes through the tent and makes it like an oven when there is no air.

July 2nd, Wrote a letter to sister E. A. W. My health is slowly improving. Have less fever and

bone ache. Doctor Smith told me this morning that he would send me up the River, the first opportunity if I did not get any better.

July 3rd, Warm as usual. Co. G. went out on advance guard. This afternoon it looked a good deal like a storm but blew over. Lucky for our boys as it is not very pleasant to be out in the rain all night.

July 4th, This morning at half-past 3 o'clock the Rebels made an attack commencing on Co. G., they being out as advance guard. Saw the enemy approaching, made an advance to a hedge-fence and there lay in wait for them until they were near enough to warrant them to fire with effect which they did, discharging the contents of their guns into the ranks with telling effect. Receiving a fire from a party of Rebels on the right at the same instant wounding 3 of our men--all flesh wounds in the legs--when they all turned and made the best possible time barely escaping being taken--leaving behind their rubber blankets, haversacks and canteens for the benefit of the Rebels. The picket, hearing the firing, did not wait to see the enemy but made quick time back to camp. Co. G. retreated to Battery E where they were ordered to assist in keeping back the Devils who came charging at them, yelling like so many fiends let loose from the bottomless pit.

Soon after sunrise our whole line was attacked at, or about the same time except the portion of works occupied by the 28th and Battery B which our Regt. was ordered to support. Also the left wing was not attacked, the enemy kept back from this portion of the line by the Gunboat Tyler. This portion of the line which was entrenched and supported by an In. Regt and the negro Regt which fought so desperately, without firing a gun. Bully boys are they! They get a good deal of praise for what they did not do. One section of Haden's Battery was stationed on

the right, next to the River. They were charged upon and lost their guns which were retaken by our men. The fight on this portion of the line was fearful. Battery or Fort A which is located on the first ridge from the River, and some 3/4 of a mile north of Fort Curtice was charged upon twice, the Rebels being driven back each time. Fort B comes next. This Fort as I said before was not attacked. The Rebels probably knew that it was supported by the 28th Wis. Regt and that it would be sheer destruction to them if they attempted a charge.

The left of the 28th was just half-way between fort B and C fort. C was charged upon and taken by the enemy. From where we was we could see every move that the Rebels made. In making the charge upon fort C it was a very exciting scene to look upon. The Rebel horde as they marched up the hill screaming and yelling at the top of their voices. We might, at the time, have avoided them considerable if we had been allowed to have fired at them but the officers having command thought that it was too far off and would be of no use so we looked on and saw the Rebel army march up to the fort and without scarce making a halt marched inside of the works, our men leaving as fast as their legs would carry them. They retreated to the foot of the hill where they made a stand being supported by a portion of the 43rd Ill. Regt.

The Rebels came charging down the hill supposing from their actions that they expected to go on in to town without any further trouble but, before they got down the hill they received a volley from the Infantry at the foot of the hill; also, shell and grape from Fort Curtice which made it too warm for them and they commenced to retreat. They tried to stop in the fort but they soon found it a dangerous place and so skedaddled back into the ravines and hollows, where many of them remained and continued to fire at our men. After

they had made the charge and taken fort C. then sharpshooters got into the rifle pits and behind stumps and logs and commenced to fire at us. They made good shots but did not do much damage--wounding 3 of our men one mortally. He belonged to Co. E. This receiving shots from an enemy caused us to return the compliment whether our officers were willing or not. We threw lead quite smart for a while which caused the rascals to withdraw from their hiding places and cease their firing. Co. G remained on the left, at or near fort E. doing good execution.

We have had the misfortune to lose one of our number, Jerome B. McKenstry who was shot in action and died a few hours after receiving his wound. He expressed himself as being willing to die in so glorious a cause; he told his comrades who were standing by and who assisted in bearing him from the field to the Post Hospital to tell his folks that he was shot with his face to the enemy. This will be sad news to his folks, particularly to his mother.

I had not done anything for two months but on hearing the reports of the guns knew that there was trouble and wishing to have a hand, put on my traps and loaded my gun and went in to the entrenchments where I remained til about 11 o'clock. After the firing had ceased, went to the sutler's and got breakfast and dinner and, then in company with Walton went down past Ft. Curtice to get a good look at the prisoners that were being brought in by the hundred. They are a dirty, rough looking set of fellows but who would not look both rough and dirty after a long march, and a hard fight whipped and prisoners. They are to be excused for the mean appearance.

We then went up to Fort C. and surveyed the grounds thereabouts which was covered with dead, dying and wounded men. The battlefield is no pleasant place to visit, covered with men wounded in all ways--some with brains exposed,

others shot through the body with a grape shot, or a larger ball still sufficient to nearly cut the body in twain. But if there is anything that calls on the sympathy of a man it is to look upon a wounded man, with deathlike and pale face, groaning and wreathing with the greatest possible pain.

The first wounded man I saw was wounded in the knee. His leg was entirely useless. I talked with him and gave him water to drink. He thought that if he had a little assistance he could get to some shady place. I volunteered to help him, got him up, and he fainted in my arms. I thought that I would take him to a shady place so I partly carried, and partly dragged him about a rod. My strength was not sufficient for the task so I lay him down placing his coat under his head. When he came to, I assured him that he would be cared for as soon as possible by our men but that I was not strong enough to move him away.

Our force of men engaged in the battle did not exceed 3,800. The Rebel forces are variously estimated from 14 to 20 thousand. Our loss in killed, wounded or missing is estimated at 150. The Rebels estimate of their loss is 2500 from the best information and will probably exceed 3,000 in killed, wounded and prisoners.

July 5th, Sunday morning came without any further trouble, altho it was expected that the Rebels might make an attack in the night and our forces slept behind the earth-works with their tools by their side ready to receive them and gave them the same warm greeting that they did the morning previous. Our men returned to camp this morning. Wrote a letter to S. Barney.

At 3 o'clock p. m. the signal gun was fired from Fort Curtice--the same being an order for every man to strap on his accoutrements, and with gun get into the entrenchments as soon as possible. Co. G was the first in but there was

no Rebels in sight. It proved to be a false alarm.

About 4 o'clock the Heavens opened her artillery and the sky being overcast with a mantle of black which gave us warning of an approaching storm. Some of the men were sent after our Rebels which we found useful in sheltering us from the storm which came down thick and fast and lasted some two hours when we sick were released and returned to our tents for the night, providing there was no attack. The well remaining out all night.

A good many of our men, assisted by the Rebels, have been engaged in burying the dead and the sad and unpleasant task is not near accomplished.

July 6th, The men were permitted to come into camp this morning after sunrise. After an unpleasant night-watch last night makes the third night that they have been on the watch and the boys are pretty much tired out.

We have been reinforced by troops from Memphis. Finished writing a letter to William Washburn. We received the news of the surrender of Vicksburg this morning with joy.

July 7th, This morning about sunrise the signal gun was fired as we supposed, and as each Battery was, also, firing their large guns all supposed that our whole line was again attacked and we made all possible haste to our line of works but saw no Rebels. We soon learned that we had been sold as Genl. Ross had ordered a salute to be fired to start at Fort Curtice, then Battery A and B, and so the rounds of firing in all 33 guns of this last order we knew nothing about but obeyed our previous order.

At 10 o'clock according to order the Helena forces assembled in most of the east side of Fort Curtice where we listened to speeches made by Genl. Prentice and others. Wrote a letter to

G. M. Barney.

July 8th, Went to bed last night with a severe headache and got up this morning with the same and from this date to the 22nd was very near sick with the fever and ague. It is not very pleasant to have a burning fever and be obliged to lay in those small tents through which, and into which, the sun shines with a suffocating heat. Managed to write a letter to G. M. Barney.

July 22nd, Went to the doctor's; from there to the commissary department and weighed myself. Weighed 120 lbs.

July 23rd, Remained in tent all day, as usual, without doing anything. A hard way to kill time but it's the best I can do at present. Had some chicken broth with some of the meat for supper. It was very good but there is not anything that tastes natural.

July 24th, There is a good deal of talk to-day of another attack. The report is that Price has a force of 30,000 men and is bound to take Helena. Our force is less to-day than on the fourth.

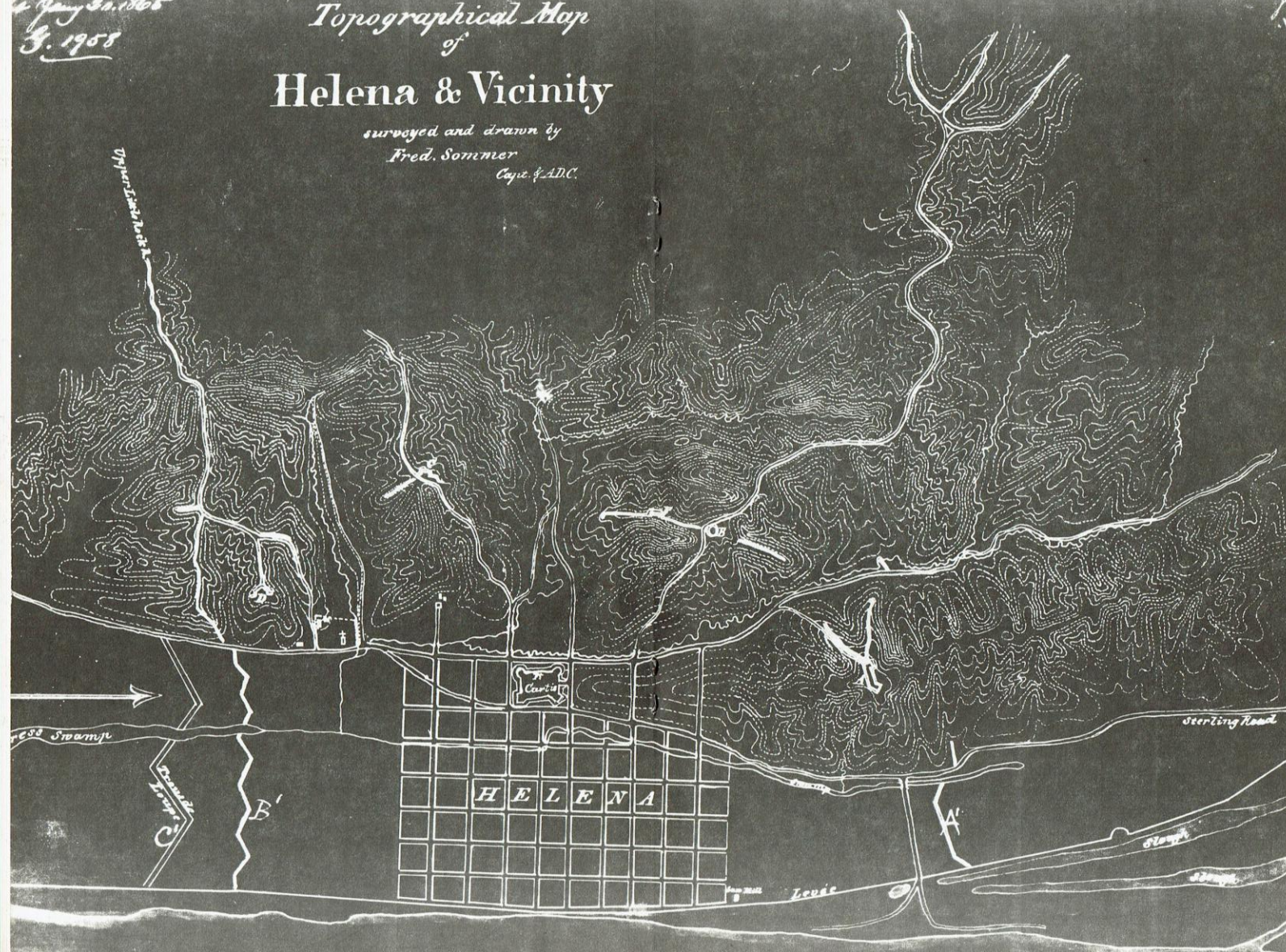
July 25th, The men were called out this morning at 3 o'clock, the roll being called. They then stacked arms and then allowed to go back to bed with their accoutrements on ready to fall in at a moment's notice or warning but were not called upon. Received two months pay to-day.

Co. G was ordered out to sleep in the entrenchments tonight. This looks as though there was some danger of an attack.

July 22, 1865
3. 1958

Topographical Map
of
Helena & Vicinity

surveyed and drawn by
Fred. Sommer
Capt. & ADC.



he was again in Latour, later moving to Marvell where he was employed by S. Krow & Son until the death of his wife February 24 and his death on February 26, 1908. They are buried at the Marvell Cemetery. On or before 1876 Mr. Belsha became a partner with Mr. A. G. Jarman under the firm name of C. S. Belsha & Company as shown on a printed bill-head of the company, dated in 1878 at Barton, now along with other papers and the Family Bible in possession of his grandson, James V. Belsha. Some contents of those papers will be discussed later in this article.

James L. Belsha, brother of C. S. Belsha, married Mary Elizabeth (Betty) Lane October 18, 1866 in Phillips County, Arkansas. She was a daughter of Drury H. Lane of Lauderdale County, Alabama. To that marriage were born Bailey Barton Belsha, August 21, 1868 and Drew Anna Belsha, November 7, 1869, both dying young; Sarah Pearse Belsha, March 5, 1872 (called Minnie), Catharine Bell Belsha (called Kate), July 23, 1875; and Edward Lane Belsha, born May 22, 1877, who died young. Mary Elizabeth (Lane) Belsha died September 25, 1884, and in 1885 James L. Belsha married Sarah Chappell Slate, a widow, who died September 18, 1898. There were no children by that marriage. The Chappell family lived on a farm near Rehoboth Church in the Vineyard area. In 1968 we visited Mr. Oscar McGrew, a long time resident of the Vineyard area, and he told us of the sudden death of Sarah (Slate) Belsha one Sunday morning at Rehoboth Church, and that she was buried at the Chappell family cemetery nearby, called Chappell Hill, which we understand has now fallen to the plow of the farmer cultivating that farm.

On the 1968 trip, we visited the home of Mrs. Ella Campbell at Vineyard and talked with her son-in-law, Mr. Neal, who told us he was a nephew of Della Slate, daughter of Sarah Slate and that he

remembers James L. Belsha and called him "Uncle Jim", as we do; also that Uncle Jim operated a brick yard not far from the Church where he made and sold bricks. We also found a history of the Church which showed Uncle Jim on the Membership Roster from 1882 to 1897, and a deacon for part of that time, most or all of which he was a resident of Barton. His grandson, Edward Moss Spaine of Marianna, tells us that Uncle Jim would take him and his brother James N. Spaine with him on alternate Sundays to meetings at Rehoboth.

Sarah Pearse (Minnie) Belsha married Charles B. Spain, and they had three children, the two boys mentioned above, and Elizabeth (Betty) Spain, who died young; James N. Spaine died in January, 1973, at North Little Rock, Arkansas, and Edward Moss Spaine still lives at Marianna. He tells us that for "business and personal reasons," they use the name Spaine.

Catharine Bell (Kate) Belsha married Edward Ernest McMurry, a cousin, and they had one child who died very young. Sarah Pearse (Belsha) Spain died August 26, 1900, and Uncle Jim, cousins Kate and Ernest took the Spain children in their home at Marvell where Betty died; they then moved to Marianna, where they lived until the death of Mr. Belsha October 9, 1919. Thereafter, the McMurrys moved to Little Rock, where they died and are buried. Mr. McMurry was station agent at Marvell for some years, and Mr. Belsha operated a store there for a time.

Among the records now in possession of James V. Belsha of Phoenix, Arizona, grandson of Columbus Shakelford Belsha is the billhead naming C. S. Belsha and A. G. Jarman as partners in the company; also a number of promissory notes payable to C. S. Belsha & Company securing small loans and some Sight Drafts, indicating the company also acted in

a limited way as a private bank. Names on these notes, deeds of trust and drafts and company accounts include many of the citizens of the locality from 1875 to 1877, including *Daniel Herron, R. P. Hughes, *Samuel Foster, C. C. Barrett, *Edward Richey, C. B. Thomson, Allen Thoe?, Whit Robinson, B. P. Graves, Moses W. Lane, T. Y. McDowell, *Frederick Arthur, *Ralph or Raford Peterson, John Humphreys, J. M. Brinkley, *Seale or Seab? Jones, *Charles Hughes, J. A. Stokes, Martin McIntire, William Cates, Derrel Brooks, *Henry Warren, *Randel Irvin, C. R. Coolidge, and A. S. Hawkins. Those names preceded by asterisks are shown by the census records to have been black people. Also, Peter Wright, Whitley Jarman, and R. P. Hughes appear as justices of the peace, certifying that the notes were secured by deeds of trust.

OTHER PAPERS IN THE COLLECTION ARE:

A memorandum - not dated - in the handwriting of A. G. Jarman:

Amounts to pay to C. S. Belsha & Company	
On account of George Johnson	\$102.06
On account of Archey Johnson	57.74
On account of Coleman Johnson	39.37
On account of Kissee Johnson	42.59
	<u>\$241.76</u>

(These debtors are shown in Census records as black men. JVB)

And on the reverse side:

Andersons check on Hornor & Son	134.75
Charge A. G. Jarman with	107.00
	<u>241.75</u>

Certificate of Appointment of Columbus S. Belsha as Postmaster at Barton, Phillips County, Arkansas, dated October 11, 1876.

A Share Cropping Agreement between A. S.

C. S. BELSHA
A. G. JARMAN

Robertson Johnson

Barton, Ark., January 18th 1878

Bought of C. S. BELSHA & CO.,

DEBTS IN

Groceries, Provisions and Family Supplies

Jan 18th To amt of account up to date
" " Subtotal 60% on the above

Cash paid to Johnson

113.63	
6.81	
<u>120.44</u>	
39.37	
<u>81.07</u>	

Bibb (owner) and W. T. Bishop, dated April 15, 1877, witnessed by C. S. Belsha and providing that the landowner's part of the crops be delivered to C. S. Belsha & Company when harvested, which indicates that company advanced credit for the crop year. (The contents of this agreement could be of interest to many people who do not understand the relationship between landowner and share-cropper. JVB)

Assessment List of the personal property, stock-in-trade, accounts, etc., of C. S. Belsha & Company, School District 8, dated July 23, 1877, M. G. Turner, Assessor.

Sight draft on C. S. Belsha, Barton, made by Whitley Jarman, payable to order of Henry Fink, dated February 24, 1877.

Post Card from H. M. Crouch, Paris, Texas, to C. S. Belsha, Barton, dated April 2, 1883, regarding money owed by "Scott" to Crouch.

A Statement of fees due Dr. W. M. Richardson for medical account of Mr. Lum Belsha, dated Latour, Arkansas, December 16, 1884, for sicknesses of Ben (his son) in months of August and October.

A "Memorandum and Medicine Book" published by Mansfield Medicine Company, Memphis, Tennessee, containing entries in 1885-1886, including the following:

Belsha pays 15 cents on the hundred for 5192# cotton--\$7.68, etc.
Took oaths of D. F. Wilson, November 25, 1885; C. W. Follis, January 1, 1886; and Simon Flanders January 5, 1886, as Notary Public on various land matters.
Lists members of Bible Class as: C. S. Belsha, J. W. Neighbors, J. W. Day, Dr. L. Hall, J. T. Smith, T. W. Fissackerly, J. N. Hayes, A. J. Barner, B. F. Belsha,

(F stands for "Fate," short for Lafay-ette), Dora Belsha, C. W. Barner, Sallie Belsha, Sarah Wilson, G. L. Barner, J. W. Smith Supt., C. S. Belsha Teacher, Ben Belsha Secretary. Meet at 3 O'clock. This was at Salem Baptist Church at Cypert.

(Barner above was how they spelled the name. Advertisements of medicines sold by the company and cures claimed for them would not likely be allowed today, such as cure by cough medicine of "pulmonary consumption" (tuberculosis), and by other nostrums, loss of memory, weak nerves, horror of disease, dimness of vision, hot hands, paralysis, and a number of other diseases that are best not mentioned here. JVB)

A post card from J. T. Graves at Barton to C. S. Belsha, Esq., Turner Postoffice, dated August 24, 1885. Re: Masonic dues, etc.

Certificate of Appointment of C. S. Belsha as a Notary Public for Phillips County, Arkansas, by James P. Eagle, Governor, dated February 13, 1889, with oath before J. T. Ward, justice of the peace, Phillips County.

A letter dated at Turner, Arkansas, May 14, 1889, from daughter Dora, to C. S. Belsha, who appears to have been off on a short trip at the time.

A letter from Joseph White, Poplar Grove, dated March 28, 1891, to C. S. Belsha, receipting payment of Masonic dues.

Letter from C. S. Belsha, Marvell, Arkansas, to Rev. W. H. Pasley, Forrest City, dated November 10, 1897--calling him to be pastor of Marvell Baptist Church--and acceptance by Rev. Pasley.

Letter from Bidwell & Stennis, Attorneys at Law, Weatherford, Texas, to Honorable C. S. Belsha, Howell, Arkansas, dated February 20, 1899--to serve papers in a court action to attach property, on W. B. Rosser and Malissa Rosser, his wife.

Our records do not show how long the partnership between C. S. Belsha and A. G. Jarman lasted, or whether or not Mr. Jarman continued as a partner with James L. Belsha. We do know the term of C. S. Belsha as postmaster at Barton ended in 1883 or early 1884, when James L. Belsha took over as postmaster and continued as such in his "Jottum-Down Store" (per Mr. Win Cook) until succeeded by Richard C. Burke in 1901, when the Republican Administration of President McKinley took over, Mr. Burke no doubt having been a Republican. This also gives an indication of approximately when James L. Belsha left Barton and moved to Marvell, where he was still operating a store in 1904.

TO BE CONCLUDED

PHILLIPS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We note with regret the deaths of several of our members and contributors: L. R. Parmelee, E. G. Green, Walter Roe, Mrs. A. V. McCarty, Sr., Mrs. Bruce Gardner, Louis H. Hornor.

*

Dues for the membership year of 1974-1975 are payable as of May 1, 1974. By vote of the Society at the September, 1973 meeting, it was decided that our dues for the coming year will be \$5.00 for a regular membership and \$10.00 for a sustaining membership. Please mail checks to the Acting Treasurer, Mrs. C. M. T. Kirkman, 806 McDonough St., Helena, Arkansas 72342.

**

For the third year, our January meeting was highlighted by a house tour. We were pleased to be able to visit the home of Mr. and Mrs. Francis L. Thompson, 718 Perry St., Helena. This house is considered to be a fine example of Victorian architecture, and was built about 1897 by Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Pillow, grandparents of Mrs. Thompson. The house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places last year, along with three other houses in Helena. The tour was quite enjoyable to all who went, and many things of interest were seen.

A SHIRT - AND THE MAN WHO WORE IT

by

Carolyn Cunningham

One of the many fascinating items in the Phillips County Museum is a shirt. It is no ordinary shirt to those of us who are concerned with local history, although at first glance it appears to be a fairly new and common garment. Its color, while not vivid, certainly shows little evidence that it was worn 111 years ago by a soldier who was killed in the Battle of Helena. It was a new shirt that day, never having been washed. It has still never been washed and bears the blood stains from the wounds received by its wearer. The torn fragment of the yellow and gray print material marks the holes of the bullets which killed W. P. Ramey, whose granddaughters gave the shirt to the Museum.

William Pope Ramey married Jane Slaughter in the 1840's near Monticello, Georgia. They had six children born to them in Georgia. In the late 1850's or about 1860, they left Georgia for Arkansas. Probably traveling with them was Jane's brother, George Slaughter. It is not known which members of their families they left behind, but Jane did leave one sister, always spoken of as "Aunt Pus," who married a Talmadge. They came to Arkansas several times to visit. This was the same Talmadge family as Eugene who became governor of Georgia and his son, Senator Talmadge of Georgia.

The Rameys and their six children settled in what was then Phillips County, becoming Lee County in 1873. They made their home on what is now known as Ditch Bank Road near Big Creek, just east of

Ramey's Corner which is located on Highway 121 between Rondo and Aubrey.

That part of the country was then canebrake and wilderness. The family went about clearing a spot for a home, and then clearing and cultivating for food and crops. The father and sons worked hard, but the father was not to live long after he arrived in Arkansas, for in 1861 the dreadful war Between The States broke out and July 4, 1863, found him in Helena, in Company B, 2nd Arkansas Cavalry. He received a fatal wound that day.

He had at home a wife and seven children, one a baby girl named for him, Mary Pope, whom he never saw. She was the only one to be born in Arkansas. Years later she was affectionately called "Aunt Popey" by her nieces and nephews. She married William Few and was the mother of Edna Earl Few Rogers, who along with a cousin, Lula Thompson Harris of Aubrey, was instrumental in placing their grandfather's shirt in the Museum here.

Mary Pope was the only one of the Ramey's seven children not buried beside their parents in the little country cemetery at Spring Creek, only a mile from the family home on Ditch Bank Road. She and her husband moved to Beebe and are buried there.

By the middle of 1863, many Confederate soldiers were poorly clad. William Pope Ramey set out for Helena and death in ordinary clothing. He had no uniform; however, he did have a new printed shirt handmade for him by his beloved wife, Jane. It had never been laundered, and fate decreed it was not to be for on the morning of July 4th its wearer was struck down on the hillside where other members of Company B were also killed.

How, and what time of day, the soldier father of seven was wounded and removed to a hospital is

not known. He was taken to the old Sacred Heart Academy, recently demolished. It has not been definitely established to date that the convent was a permanent hospital; perhaps it was only set up for the extreme emergency of the battle.

Mrs. Ramey was somehow notified of her husband's having been wounded, and she left at once for Helena. The 30 odd miles were no doubt treacherous as she hastened along the hot, mosquito infested country on a route which was little more than a trail to reach her husband, but reach him she did before he died.

Here family legends differ slightly. One is simply that she did reach him and he lived for one or two days. Another one goes beyond that, she slipped him out of the prison hospital, put him in the buggy, and got as far as Marianna with him before he died.

The last is the remembrance of a granddaughter who died a few years ago. He was still wearing the blood-stained shirt. He was carried to his home and then laid to rest in the lovely little cemetery among friends and neighbors. Some years later his brother-in-law, George Slaughter, a veteran, helped the family attain an iron Civil War marker for his grave. References to his death state, "Killed at the Battle of Helena, July 4, 1863," and actual knowledge of anything different is not known among members of the family still living.

His widow, a gentle lady from Georgia, now left with seven children ranging in age from the baby to middle teens, settled in to raise her family. There remained much clearing to be done in order to change the wilderness to tillable soil, in order to "make a living." As young children they worked together, as one granddaughter was to write many years later, "to keep the wolf from the door which they did with

the help of our Dear Savior."

Three of the children died before reaching adulthood, Nany, William, and Charlie. Nathaniel Dishman married Addie Howard, and they lived at Rondo. It is their daughter, Lottie, who left much of the written family data. Sallie married B. F. Thompson, and they lived at Aubrey. It was their daughter, Lula, who made the trip down here to bring the shirt. John married Mary Elizabeth (Molly) Bonner.

The shirt remained exactly as it was, put away with her husband's blood still on it, kept by the widow at the family home for the 33 remaining years of her life. On July 19, 1895, she died and was laid to rest beside her husband and three children. The shirt passed then into the hands of their daughter, Sallie Thompson. At her death it went to her daughter, Mrs. Harris of Aubrey. Her son, Bob Austin, was a long time resident of Phillips County.

I met with three of William Pope Ramey's great-granddaughters who live within two miles of the pre-Civil War homesite, as well as near the cemetery. They told me their great-grandmother's sister, Mrs. Talmadge, and her husband continued to come from Georgia for visits even after the death of her sister.

Every spring beautiful yellow jonquils bloom in abundance around the grave of the Civil War veteran and his family. The last of his grandchildren are dead now, but he has quite a number of great-grandchildren who are now grandparents too. The three great-granddaughters who live near by lovingly keep the graves cleaned and cared for.

Mr. Ramey has a great-great-great-grandson living in West Helena who is in the 9th grade now, but he recalls when he was in the 3rd grade he went with his class to visit the Museum and he was quite a celebrity among the other children because it was

his kinsman who had worn the bloody, bullet-torn shirt. The land Mr. Ramey left when he went into the army is still in the family, although all signs of the old house are gone.

After the shirt was placed in the Museum, Mrs. Rogers of Conway, a granddaughter, then 81 years of age, came to Helena in April, 1967, and after her return home she wrote, "We toured the whole Helena Battlefield and what a sacred moment when I stood maybe on the spot where my dear grandfather fell, if not, then very close to it. It was an humble feeling, and I am so grateful to him and to God for this heritage."

The blood stained shirt has a permanent home now, and we hold it in more reverence than the enemy held it that turbulent morning so long ago.

THE DELTA QUEEN

The Delta Queen has come and gone, but its visit to Helena on March 23rd will long be remembered. An invitation to stop here was extended to the members of the National Trust for Historic Preservation who made up the passenger list this time, from the Phillips County Historical Society by Tom Tappan. It was apparent that the visit was a huge success.

Four busloads of visitors, one of them made up of children, shuttled in different directions across town to use up the three or four hours of available time. Things went well and according to plan, and the tour guides were largely responsible for this, narrating and relating the sights as they went--- Mrs. Pat Bell, Mrs. John King, Jr., Mrs. Tom Faust, and Mrs. Alfred Jensen.

The buses came by stages to the Phillips County Museum, where members of the Historical Society and the Helena Library Board greeted them, served refreshments, and showed them the elegant new addition to the Museum. Mrs. Floyd Curtis was in charge of this stop on the tour route, and the service and hospitality could not have been improved. Others who helped entertain the visitors at the Museum were: Mrs. Tom Tappan, Mrs. Clancy King, Mrs. Herbert Hill, Mrs. Fred Faust, Sr., Mrs. James H. Pillow, Mrs. O. C. Brewer, Mrs. W. G. Dinning, Jr., Mrs. Otis Howe, Sr., Mrs. C. M. T. Kirkman, Mrs. Frank O. Griffin, Sr., Mrs. Dick Cunningham, Mrs. G. E. Cromwell, Mrs. F. R. McKnight, Miss Lily Peter, Mrs. Thurston Gist. The visitors, one of whom is a curator at the White House, were interested in everything, it seemed, and this man was especially interested in the Indian relics which he pointed out and explained to the children of the tour.

A display of steamboat paintings in the new

Museum by Mrs. W. S. Bradford of Harrisburg, Arkansas, added a lot of interest to the Museum party. Through Miss Lily's generosity, numbers were drawn by the visitors to win copies of her history of the Marquette and Joliet expedition down the river.

Another stop was Battery D, the remains of the fort behind the Walker home on Military Road, where Tom Tappan and John Connaway instructed the group on the strategy of the forces at the Battle of Helena. The visitors all said that they liked this stop, the flowers on the hillside were lovely, and they did not get as cold as they had expected.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Francis L. Thompson was opened to the Delta Queen passengers, and Mrs. Thompson was assisted in welcoming the guests by Mrs. Ray Burch. As each person entered the house, his or her name and address were given. It was thought that the children might find this part of the tour boring, or at least Mrs. Thompson thought so at first. This was not the case, however, as she, or the house, received the highest commendation on their departure. "This is really a neat (cool) house!"

A mention should be made of the treat that Mrs. Tom Faust gave the busload of children, and it should be noted that she survived the treat. The bus stopped at the entrance to Maple Hill Cemetery on Holly Street, as it was known to be too hard for it to wind around the small roads all the way to the top, and the group with Mrs. Faust ascended Hindman Drive and the hills to the Confederate Cemetery on foot. This used to be done in the past on Memorial Days, but it hasn't been done in a long time.

In the early afternoon, the music of the Delta Queen could be heard as it pulled away from the casting field, where it had landed because of high water. It sounded like a "thank-you" for the warm welcome received by its passengers that morning.

March 22, 1974

Phillips County Historical Society:

For the past several years the Arkansas History Commission has been attempting to collect material relating to Arkansas Political Campaigns. We have been able to collect a large amount of material consisting of posters, broadsides, campaign hats, fans, matchbook covers, etc., but they mostly relate to the Little Rock and Pulaski County areas.

Political campaigns have historically been the avocation of most Arkansans. From the local J. P.'s. race to the County Judge and beyond, candidates and their supporters turn out tons of campaign material. Unfortunately no one has undertaken a systematic drive to collect samples of this fascinating Arkansasiana.

I hope that I might persuade your historical society to undertake the collection of samples of this campaign material, for us, as a project for this coming summer and fall. When I receive any material that you and the members of your society might collect it will be placed in a file denoting county of origin and campaign.

I hope that this project will capture your imagination as it has mine, and that we will be able to work together for the preservation of this fascinating material. I remain

Sincerely yours,

R. P. Baker Archivist
Arkansas History Commission
300 West Markham Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

(The Edmondson Diary, which has been appearing in installments in the Quarterly, was located, researched, and edited by Mr. Baker, and then offered to us by him if we wished to print it.)

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The Phillips County Historical Society supplies the QUARTERLY to its members. Membership is open to anyone interested in Phillips County History. Annual membership dues are \$3.50 for a regular membership and \$5.00 for a sustaining membership. Single copies of the QUARTERLY are \$1.00. QUARTERLIES are mailed to members.

Neither the Editors nor the Phillips County Historical Society assumes any responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Dues are payable to Miss Bessie McRee, Membership Chairman, Box 629, Helena Arkansas 72342. Meetings are held in September, January, and May, on the fourth Sunday in the month, at 3:00 P. M. at the Phillips County Museum.