

2ND ARKANSAS INFANTRY – HARDEE PATTERN BATTLEFLAG CAPTURED AT LIBERTY GAP, TENNESSEE, JUNE 25, 1863

This Hardee pattern battle flag of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry, which recently turned up in an Oklahoma estate is a very historic battle flag. Captured in the Battle of Liberty Gap, Tennessee during the Tullahoma Campaign and never sent to the U.S. War Department, its recent discovery solves a key flag mystery in terms of “where did this flag go after capture?” It has been missing for years!

This report will delve into the 2nd Arkansas Infantry, its battle flags and color bearers plus details about the capture at Liberty Gap. Additionally, this report will explain why this is such an important relic of the Civil War.

The 2nd Arkansas Infantry and its Leadership

What would become the 2nd Arkansas Infantry regiment formed in the spring of 1861 at Helena, Arkansas on the Mississippi River. Its component companies were mustered into Confederate service between late May and mid-June. Helena was the county seat of Phillips County and nine of its fourteen component companies came from there. Civil War regiments typically had only ten companies but this number includes some of the original companies plus replacement companies after the regiment reorganized. The balance came from Bradley County (two companies), Saline County (one company) as well as a transfer from the old 11th Arkansas Infantry that was not captured at Island Number Ten in April 1862 plus Jefferson County’s Southern Guards which became Company H. This company had formed in December 1860 as part of the 24th Regiment of the Arkansas State Militia.

The 2nd Arkansas’ first 3 colonels would become prominent commanding generals; Thomas Hindman, Daniel Govan, & Saint John Liddell.

The first colonel was Thomas C. Hindman, a Knoxville, Tennessee native (born January 28, 1828). Son of an Indian Agent in Alabama, Hindman grew up in Alabama and Mississippi. In 1846 he enlisted as a lieutenant in the 2nd Mississippi Infantry for service in the Mexican War. After the war ended, Hindman returned home and became a lawyer. Known as a fiery speaker, Hindman was elected to the state legislature in 1854. After this term he moved to Helena, Arkansas where he married and carried on his law practice. In November 1858 he ran for the U.S. Congress where he would serve two terms (the second cut short by the state’s secession in May 1861). Hindman advocated for secession as far back as December 1860.

Elected colonel of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry, he and the regiment mustered into Confederate service on June 12, 1861. Hindman’s stature soon grew and he was promoted to brigadier general with date of rank September 28, 1861. He then moved into brigade command and on April 14, 1862, Hindman was promoted to major general.

Daniel Govan, Hindman's replacement as colonel of the 2nd Arkansas, was born in North Carolina on July 4, 1829. A year later his family moved to west Tennessee and in 1832 the family moved to Mississippi. After his local education Govan attended the University of South Carolina but left in 1848 before graduating. A year later he traveled to California to take part in the Gold Rush with future Confederate general and relative Benjamin McCulloch. Two years later Govan returned to Mississippi, married and then settled in Arkansas as a planter.

With the coming of Arkansas's secession in May 1861, Govan raised and became captain of Company F which would join the 2nd Arkansas Infantry. Govan replaced Hindman as colonel of the 2nd Arkansas after being promoted to colonel on January 28, 1862 with the rank back-dated to January 6th. Govan first saw action at Shiloh in April 1862 in R.G. Shaver's Brigade. Shaver was replaced by St. John Liddell under whom Govan would serve in the Tullahoma Campaign of June-July 1863. Liddell's Brigade was part of Major General Patrick Cleburne's crack division.

After a fine career in command of the 2nd Arkansas, and then as brigade commander, Liddell was promoted to major general and division command. Govan was promoted to brigadier general on February 5, 1864 with the rank back-dated to December 29, 1863. The brigade remained an all-Arkansas command under Govan's tenure including after the unit was overrun at the battle of Jonesboro, Georgia on September 1, 1864. Govan was captured along with about 600 of his men and later exchanged for Union cavalry commander Major General George Stoneman who had been captured along with most of his division in an ill-fated raid during the Atlanta Campaign. Govan continued in command until his wounding in action during the Battle of Nashville, Tennessee, December 16, 1864. Govan returned to action in April 1865 after the Army of Tennessee had moved to North Carolina and he was surrendered with that formation on April 26, 1865.

The 2nd Arkansas Infantry campaigns

The 2nd Arkansas Infantry would fight in the major actions of the Army of the Mississippi/Army of Tennessee from Rowlett's Station in Kentucky in December 1861 and then Shiloh in April 1862. A month later, thanks to the passage of the Confederate Conscription Act of April, all Confederate units that had originally enlisted for one year had to re-muster for two years or the duration of the war. Within this came new elections for commanding officers down to company level. Those that would not stand for re-election could resign their commissions. The regiment's next action would come in the Kentucky Campaign in particular at the Battle of Perryville. Upon the return to Middle Tennessee, the regiment next saw action at the Battle of Stones River (also called Murfreesboro) in late December 1862/early January 1863. After a break of several months, their next engagement would come in the Tullahoma Campaign in particular in the Battle of Liberty Gap.

After Tullahoma and just before Chickamauga, the regiment was consolidated with the 15th Arkansas Infantry. As part of the Confederate rearguard following the debacle at

Missionary Ridge in late November, Patrick Cleburne's Division, holding the high ground at Ringgold Gap, Georgia, stopped a full Union corps while covering the retreat of the Army of Tennessee. In December 1863, the 24th Arkansas Infantry was added to form the 2nd/15th/24th Arkansas Infantry.

After Confederate General Joseph Johnston took over the army, the regiment was again reorganized and became the 2nd/24th Arkansas Infantry and under this designation would fight in the Atlanta Campaign. As mentioned previously, on September 1, 1864, Govan's Brigade got crushed by a large Union attack taking hundreds of officers and men as prisoners but were exchanged not long afterward. Following the Atlanta Campaign the Arkansas regiments were again consolidated and would fight for the rest of the war as the 1st/15th, 5th/13th and 2nd/24th Arkansas Regiments. They would use the colors of the 5th/13th Arkansas as their battle flag until it was captured at Franklin on November 30, 1864.

One more consolidation took place in 1865 when the 3rd Confederate Infantry, a mostly Arkansas unit, along with the remnants of the 6th, 7th, 8th and 19th Arkansas were added to the rest to become the 1st Arkansas Consolidated Infantry Regiment. The regiment surrendered at Bennett Place in North Carolina on April 26, 1865.

The Tullahoma Campaign

In order to fully understand the capture of the 2nd Arkansas flag one must understand the campaign and battle in which it was captured.

Major General William S. Rosecrans took command of the Army of the Ohio from Major General Don Carlos Buell in late October 1862 in the aftermath of the Confederate invasion of Kentucky. Upon assuming command, he renamed the army the 14th Corps, Left, Center and Right Wings. Under this name Rosecrans would fight the pivotal Battle of Stones River (or Murfreesboro) in Middle Tennessee in late December 1862/early January 1863. This battle was crucial for the Lincoln Administration in providing the public with a big military victory in the aftermath of the debacle at Fredericksburg earlier in December. After Stones River, Rosecrans renamed the army after its new department name; the Department and Army of the Cumberland.

Rosecrans set about making his army the best in the Union with a revamped staff, a Pioneer Corps, improved Signal Corps and other innovations. He also set about rebuilding his cavalry arm which, like the counterpart in the Army of the Potomac, was getting beaten by Confederate cavalry on a regular basis. He brought in a new cavalry commander and gave him carte blanche to do what was needed to rebuild that arm. He also named, in March 1863, Brigadier General James A. Garfield, as his new Chief of Staff. He replaced Lt. Colonel Calvin C. Goddard in this post, the latter also serving as the army's Assistant Adjutant General. Goddard would remain on Rosecrans staff until after the Battle of Missionary Ridge in late November 1863. Goddard will have a direct connection with the flag of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry that will be discussed later in this report.

Rosecrans went to war with the War Department trying to build up his army for the next offensive. Finally able to build up his cavalry arm and get them better horses, weapons and leadership (in particular at brigade level), Rosecrans, consulting with David Stanley, his Chief of Cavalry, finally let them loose in the field. The mission was two-fold. First, get them needed experience under the new leadership. Secondly, to test the defenses of the Confederate defense line that ran from Franklin, Tennessee east to McMinnville on the Highland Rim; a line of over 60 miles. Braxton Bragg, commander of the Confederate Army of Tennessee, had lost infantry units to Mississippi but received a huge cavalry force to cover his flanks and screen his front. It was this force that Rosecrans blue troopers would clash with over the next two months.

Rosecrans, in moves with infantry sometimes added to his cavalry component, struck the Confederate right, held by famed raider John Hunt Morgan's division. Morgan took the bait several times and was defeated in four straight engagements. This set the stage for his famous Indiana-Ohio raid. On Bragg's left, however, Confederate troopers under Nathan Bedford Forrest and Earl Van Dorn (until that officer was killed by a jealous husband for having an affair with his wife) defeated or stymied Union cavalry objectives. While gaining needed experience, the attacks also told Rosecrans what he needed to know; Bragg's weak side and thus where to strike him. It was Bragg's right (Rosecrans' left) that would be the target.

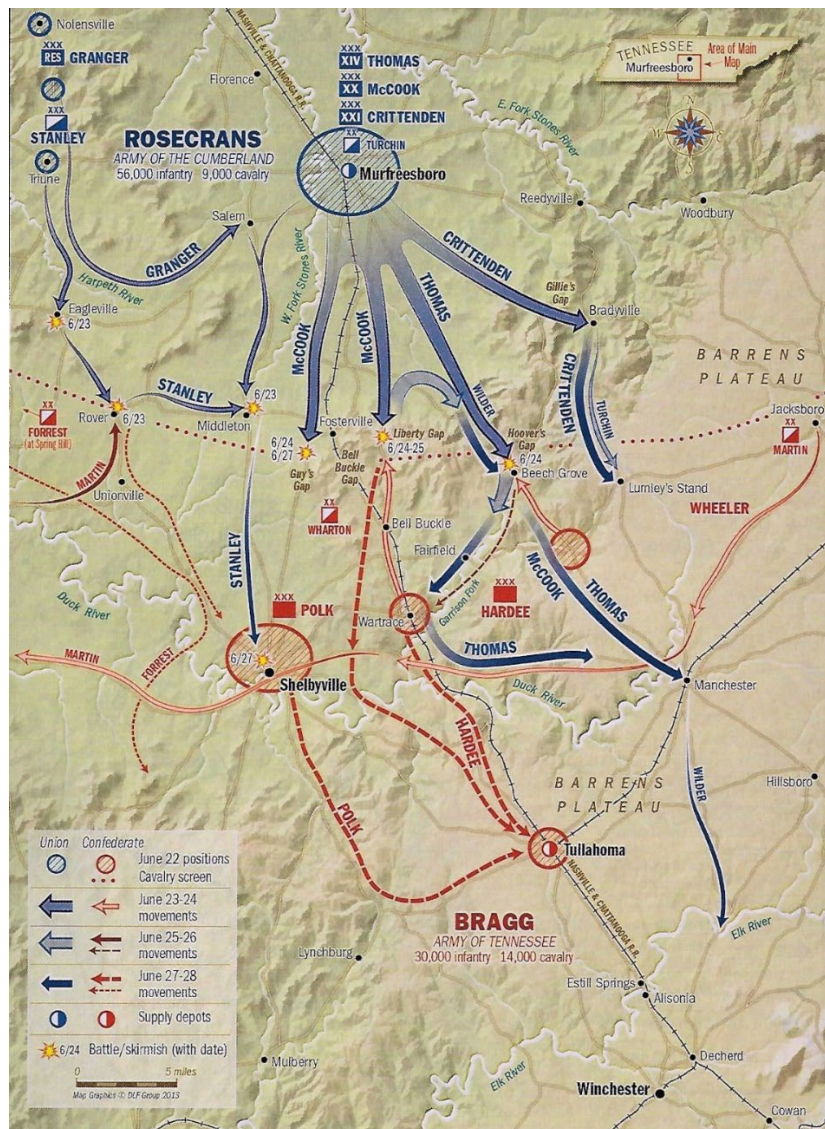
The terrain factored into Rosecrans' planning and Bragg's defenses. Nashville and Murfreesboro were in a large bowl surrounded by high ground called the Highland Rim. Heading south towards the goal of Chattanooga, the rim was bisected by "ramps" – gaps in the hills through which ran roads all of which Rosecrans planned to use. The Confederate defenses posted cavalry to the front that would serve as a delaying and early warning force upon which the Confederate infantry and artillery would then march to prepared positions along the gaps and high ground. Supply issues forced them to camp below the gaps on flatter terrain. If all went well, when Rosecrans moved finally, the Confederate troopers would skirmish and delay them as well as inform General Bragg at his headquarters in Tullahoma, which was also the site of a large Confederate fort and the railroad supply hub for the army.

Except, as with all things in war at times, things did not go right for the Confederate cavalry. First, Morgan, chafing at his defeats and yearning for positive headlines, took his whole division on a raid north towards Louisville, Kentucky to cut the railroad from there to Nashville. He was only supposed to take half of his troops. Morgan then crossed the Ohio River into Indiana and later crossed into Ohio where most of his command would be captured later in June 1863. This denuded Bragg's right flank save for a beat-up Kentucky cavalry regiment Morgan left behind (1st/3rd Kentucky Cavalry).

Bragg's center screen fell apart when Joe Wheeler, his chief of cavalry, moved his troopers west to launch a raid behind Rosecrans' lines (as he did before Stones River with great results) which forced a remaining division to spread much further out to cover

the front. It was then that Rosecrans pulled the trigger and began the Tullahoma Campaign.

His goals were simple and very much brilliant in conception. With his three corps, 21st (under Major General Thomas Crittenden), 14th (under major General George Thomas) and the 20th (under Major General Alexander McCook), backed by Major General Gordon Granger's Reserve Corps and Stanley's Cavalry Corps, Rosecrans would make feints along Bragg's left and center while delivering his main thrust somewhere else; Bragg's right. Selected for that main attack was the 21st Corps who would march out of Murfreesboro to Bradyville and then turn south heading through Gillie's Gap and aiming for the town of Manchester up on the Highland Rim. The advance was screened by one of the cavalry divisions. Once there, the corps would take aim at the bridges over the Elk River at Estill Springs. This would place a portion of the Union army behind Bragg's defenses. Rosecrans' goal was not only to outflank Bragg but also pick a position where he could defeat Bragg's anticipated response and destroy his army.



While Crittenden's men marched and climbed the Rim, Thomas with his corps would make a strong feint at Hoover's Gap a few miles to the west and in much better terrain. He would also be in a great position to support Crittenden if the latter ran into problems. West of him by a few more miles was Liberty Gap which was the target of the feint by Wood's 20th Corps. Further west was Guy's Gap and below that the town of Shelbyville which was the target of a division of Stanley's cavalry corps backed by Granger's Corps. Union cavalry on this flank would also threaten the area of food that supplied Bragg's army which was protected by Forrest's division.

The campaign kicked off on June 23rd with the Union cavalry's advance west of Bragg's main defenses which quickly collided with Wheeler's movement for his raid. Crittenden's advance faced only a squadron of rebel troopers who were quickly scattered and allowed the detachment of a cavalry brigade to reinforce Stanley. Thomas's movement, screened by the soon to be famous mounted infantry brigade of John Wilder with his Spencer rifle armed brigade, also began moving towards Hoover's Gap while Wood's feint on Liberty Gap also began. From here on the Liberty Gap engagement will be the focus of this letter.

All was going well until the skies darkened and the rain fell and fell and fell. For days it fell turning the clay-based soil into a quagmire that slowed Rosecrans' advance to a crawl, in particular that of the 21st Corps of Crittenden who already had the toughest terrain to negotiate. This incessant rain would stymie Rosecrans' planning to destroy Bragg in place.

The Battle of Liberty Gap

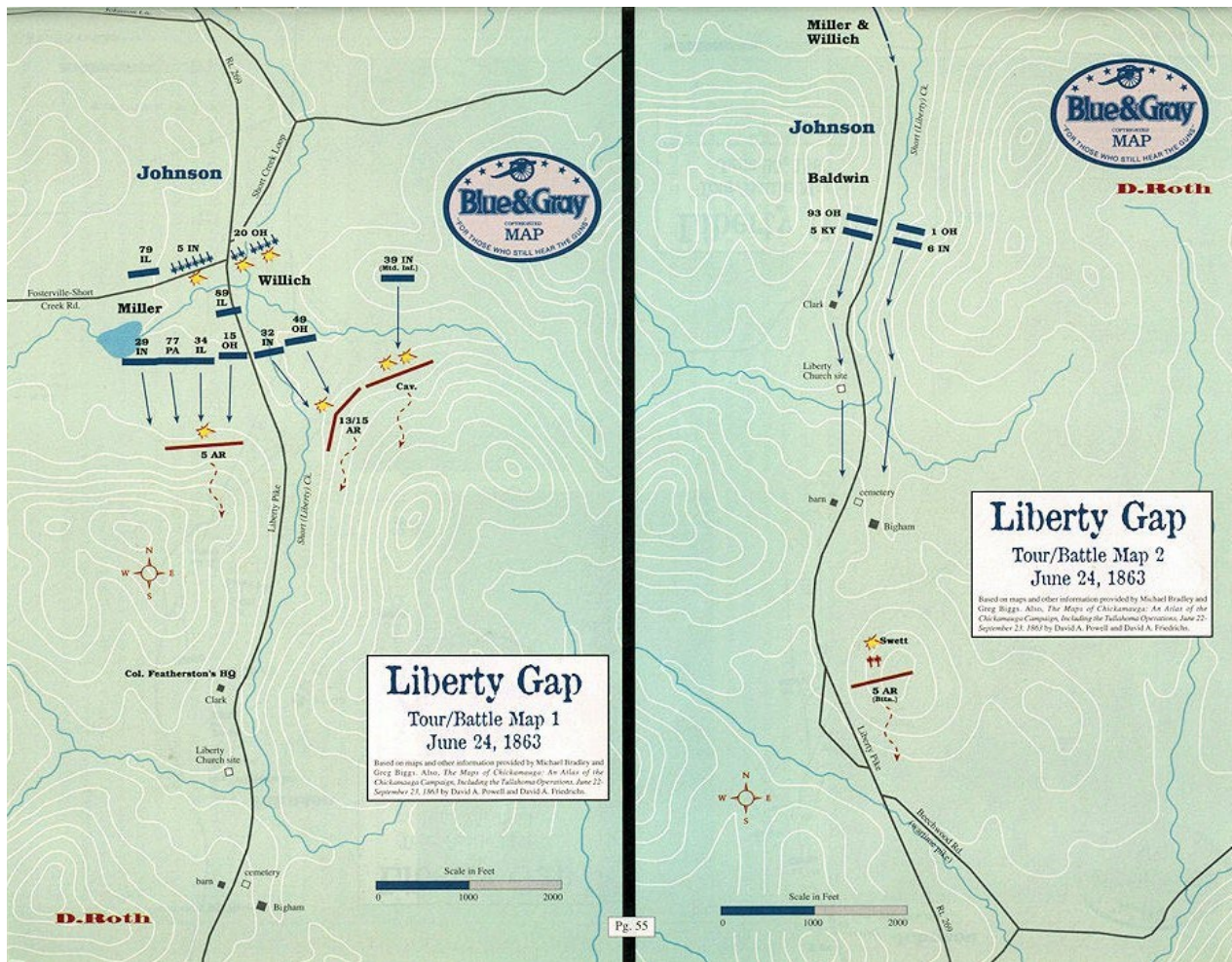
Alexander McCook's 20th Corps consisted of three infantry divisions; those of Jefferson C. Davis, Richard Johnson and Philip Sheridan. Screening his advance was the 39th Indiana Mounted Infantry who were also armed with Spencer repeating rifles.

Defending Liberty Gap was a portion of the 1st/3rd Kentucky Cavalry as the advance screen (the balance was at Hoover's Gap with the same mission). The Confederate infantry tasked with holding the gap was the crack division of Major General Patrick Cleburne which consisted of four brigades; Thomas Churchill's, St. John Liddell's, Lucius Polk's and S.A.M. Wood's (under Mark Lowrey). Posted below Liberty Gap in the towns of Bell Buckle and Wartrace, Cleburne rotated a brigade in and out of the gap after a few days on duty. As McCook's advance arrived on June 24th it was Liddell's Arkansas Brigade's turn in the gap. Liddell also had to protect the Railroad Gap a couple miles further west and sent one regiment to cover it.

As the 39th Indiana Mounted Infantry collided with the rebel troopers, a courier was sent to the closest infantry commander, Col. Lucius Featherston of the 5th Arkansas Infantry. Thus warned, Featherston deployed his men as well as those of the 13th/15th Arkansas Infantry on the hills on either side of the road at the north end of the gap. Seeing rebel infantry to his front, division commander Richard Johnson sent forward the brigades of Col. John Miller and August Willich, the Marxist Prussian immigrant and veteran of the

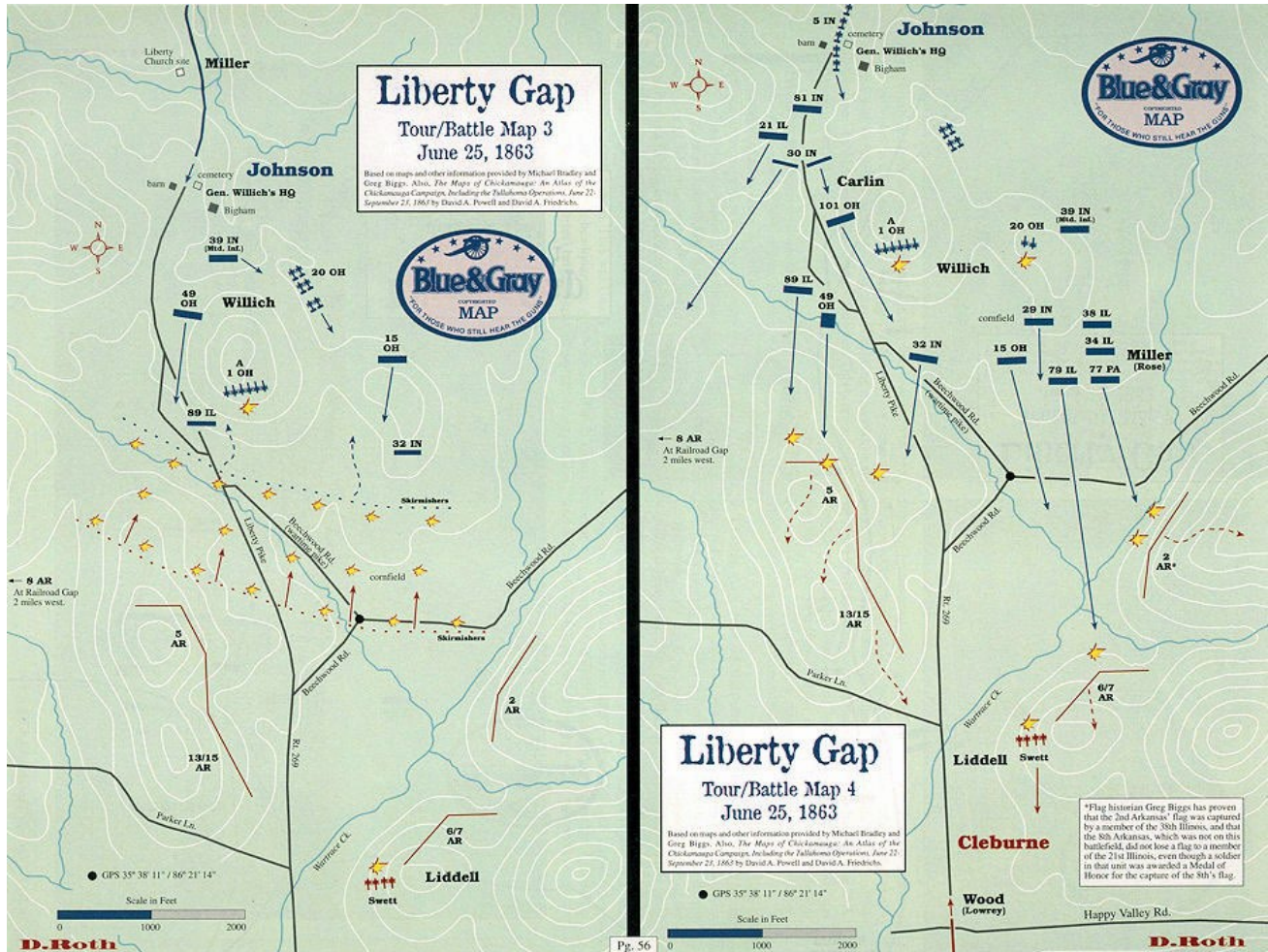
1848 revolts against Prussia. Union colonel Philemon Baldwin described the rebel defenses, *“The enemy’s position was on a chain of hills 400 yards from where we deployed. The road, on reaching the base of the hills, turned square to the left, and followed their base for 500 yards, to where the hills extended across the road. Their main force was posted where the road entered the hills.”*

Rather than make a full assault against the Confederates, Willich began to probe for ways to turn their flanks, which could be done via two farm lanes on either side of the rebel line. Featherston saw what was coming and spread out his line even more and was able to stop the initial Union attack for a time. The 49th Ohio made a dash for one of the hills before being pushed back but ultimately succeeded. The weight of the Union assault was too much for the two Arkansas regiments and the supporting Mississippi artillery battery and after leaving their camps behind they fell back to a new line around Liberty church when darkness fell. With that, they retired to the southern end of the gap where even more hills could be used for defenses. The badly outnumbered Razorbacks had held up the Union advance for six to seven hours.



The initial Union advance and the Confederate fallback.

Thus, warned of events, General Cleburne sent forward Wood's Brigade under Lowrey to support Liddell. The new Confederate position was strong and had clear fields of fire for both rifles and cannons. On June 25th the Federals advanced again as Willich's Brigade relieved Baldwin's and moved forward deploying into lines of battle. The Confederate hills ringed a cornfield and created a bowl into which the Union troops advanced through the mud. Skirmishers from both sides fired on each other in this field and soon Willich began running low on ammunition and his fire slackened. Liddell took this as an opportunity to attack which he did but he was pushed back onto the hills.



Liddell's attack and final defense line at the base of Liberty Gap

Willich was reinforced by John Miller's Brigade (commanding the brigade of Joseph Dodge) who helped drive back Liddell. As Miller led his brigade forward across the field, he was badly wounded by a Confederate sharpshooter firing an imported British Whitworth rifle; the first combat use of the weapon in the Western Theater. Union accounts tell of the effective fire of these weapons in Liberty Gap. Brigadier General William Carlin's Brigade of Jefferson C. Davis' Division was added to the advancing Union line adding pressure on the Razorbacks in the bowl of the cornfield.

As Liddell's units fell back to the hills, the 2nd Arkansas under Colonel Daniel Govan, was under fire the entire time from four Union regiments (Govan's official report states he saw "five flags," meaning five regiments) and running low on ammunition. Informed that some was waiting for them on the hilltop, the regiment fell back under fire. They crossed over the rail fence that ran along the creek at the foot of the hill and as they climbed back up their color bearer, waving his flag from a ledge and seeking to rally his command, was shot and killed. The flag fell towards the Union lines and was captured.



Looking north from the position of the 6th/7th Arkansas Infantry towards the Union lines on the distant hills. The 2nd Arkansas would have been to the right of this view. This was a corn field at the time of the battle.



The hill defended by the 2nd Arkansas Infantry at the base of Liberty Gap and where their flag was lost. The road towards Bell Buckle is to the right of the hill.

The capture of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry's battle flag was the cause of Union celebration and Confederate sorrow. There was also some controversy as to what Union regiment took the flag with a post-war Medal of Honor being involved despite the Union accounts stating, correctly, what regiment took the colors. Even the accounts of how the flag was found from both wartime writers and post-war historians sometimes differ.

Lastly, the flag was never turned into the U.S. War Department per issued orders for captured Confederate flags and simply disappeared for years – many years – save for an appearance at a wartime sanitary fair. And then it vanished until recently.

The Union taking of Liberty Gap, which had been intended from the start to be a feint designed to pin Cleburne's Division in place, while successful, the area was abandoned by McCook's Corps thanks to the success of George Thomas' Corps at Hoover's Gap, a few miles to the east. With the incessant rains bogging down the whole offensive, Thomas Crittenden's Corps was buried in mud trying to get through Gillie's Gap. Thomas' success allowed Rosecrans to carry forward his stated objectives and McCook's Corps was pulled to Hoover's Gap to follow Thomas on the drive to Manchester, Tennessee. Liddell's troops came back into the gap when the Federals left.

The 2nd Arkansas Infantry Flag Captured at Liberty Gap – The Primary Sources

The loss of a flag in battle was a terrible event for any unit. Often, it was not mentioned in any official reports save those of the captors. The admission in an official document of such a loss could bring shame on a unit. Col. Daniel Govan's report makes no mention of this loss but his brigade commander's does. However, St. John Liddell did and reported, ***“Two color bearers of the Second were killed, and the third, standing on the declivity of the hill, was fatally struck, and falling forward headlong, cast his colors toward the base, in close proximity to the line of the enemy. The colors were not missed until the regiment had retired over the hill, and having now no ammunition, it was useless to renew the attack for their recovery. This is a source of great mortification to the regiment as well as the brigade.”*** Curiously, Liddell makes no mention of this loss in his post-war memoir, *Liddell's Record*.

The third color bearer was probably Edward D. Wood. His Compiled Service Record states, *“Killed 25 June 1863 at Liberty Gap, TN attempting to pick up the colors.”*

Union accounts made quick mention of the flag's capture but so did a soldier of the 38th Illinois Infantry, William E. Patterson. In his post-war published book *Jasper County Yankee*, Patterson reported, ***“We quickly crossed the cornfield and road, waded the creek, and closed up to the fence, and not a live reb was then to be seen. A line of skirmishers was sent to the top of the hill and there found 30 killed and 1 or 2 wounded and took them prisoner. The battle flag of the 2nd Arkansas was found,***

the color sergeant laying across it on his face, dead; his hands grasping the staff of the 'Bonny Blue Flag,' the color guard all killed."

Colonel D.H. Gilmer, commanding the 38th Illinois reported, *"The firing having ceased on both sides, as soon as the men were rested, I ordered Company F, under command of First Lieutenant Westcott, to be deployed as skirmishers, and to ascend the hill to ascertain the whereabouts of the rebels, and they soon sent me the flag of the rebel regiment, with the word that here was no enemy in sight, and there were 14 dead and 2 wounded rebels on the hill in our front."*

Gilmer's superiors weighed in with their official reports. Division commander Jefferson C. Davis wrote, *"At this time General Willich reported a part of his brigade as running short of ammunition, and I immediately ordered the Thirty-eighth Illinois to their support. **This gallant regiment, under the command of its well-trying and veteran commanders, Colonel Gilmer, moved handsomely to the front, and soon engaged the enemy and drove him back, capturing one of his regimental colors. This trophy was gallantly won, and the regiment may well be proud of it.**"* Brigade commander William Carlin stated in two reports, *"Though I had not the gratification of placing this regiment in action, all accounts represent the conduct of the officers and men as admirable. **It advanced over an open field, deep in mud and under a heavy fire. The Thirty-Eighth Illinois captured the colors of the Second Arkansas Infantry and deserve the credit of breaking the line of the enemy and forcing him to retreat.**"* Carlin later stated to Chief of Staff James Garfield, *"A prisoner just reports two brigades at Wartrace, General Cleburne in command. General Liddell commanded the forces fighting us this afternoon. **The Thirty-eighth Illinois captured the battle-flag of the Second Arkansas.**"* Incredibly, Carlin, in his post-war memoirs, made no mention of the flag capture. This is especially amazing considering Carlin was the first colonel of the 38th Illinois Infantry!

Post-war Union and Confederate unit histories also weighed in on the capture. 6th Arkansas Infantry veteran Stan Harley wrote a series of post-war accounts for the *Arkansas Democrat* newspaper in Little Rock. Harley's regiment was to the left of the 2nd Arkansas and reported in June 1903, *"They (the Federals) advanced in admirable style, and with the assistance of the regiment which made the flank attack drove the Second back, and in retreating over the high fence lost their flag, to their own chagrin and that of every other regiment of the brigade."*

The 2nd Arkansas Infantry Flag Captured at Liberty Gap – The Post-War Sources

Historian Floyd Barnhill, in his unit history of the 5th Arkansas Infantry reported on the fight at Liberty Gap, *"Liddell ordered the 6th and 7th (Arkansas) to join the fray in front of the 2nd. The ammunition wagons were also ordered up, but this time the mire was so deep the teamsters abandoned the wagons at the creek forks and brought cartridge boxes forward by hand. It was a devilish slow process. In the forward line, two color-bearers of the 2nd were killed and a third was defiantly waving the banner from a ledge in plain view. In a matter of minutes, he was shot dead, pitching forward over the edge*

and throwing the colors among the Federals of Baldwin's Brigade packed at the base of the ridge. The regimental flag was lost and not recovered."

This account errs in the identity of the Federal brigade in front of the 2nd Arkansas which was a mixture of Miller's (Dodge's) and Carlin's Brigades of Johnson's and Davis' Divisions respectively.

Writer John Lee Fults grew up in the Liberty Gap area and, steeped in its history, and wrote about numerous aspects of the gap's history. In his book *Liberty Gap*, Fults recorded this account, ***"As the 2nd Arkansas was falling back, two color bearers were killed, and the third standing on the declivity of the hill was fatally struck, and fell forward headlong, casting his colors toward the base of the hill, in close proximity of the Bluecoats."*** But Fults did not stop there, ***"I would like to tell you that Captain Dick Tinius an outstanding tour guide – he is noted for his precise details. During my last visit, I went to the hill where the color guard of Colonel Govan's Regiment were shot and looked over the cliff. Sure enough, at the bottom of the cliff, where it was reported the color guard had fallen, laid a staff. Of course, the flag had decayed, but the staff was still good."*** Fults was obviously not aware that the flag had been captured.

2nd Arkansas Infantry Capture Controversy

While the 38th Illinois, based on reports and the markings on the flag itself, were credited with taking this flag at Liberty Gap, as sometimes happened, other units tried to make the claim.

On August 21, 1899, the *Indianapolis News* ran an article that stated the Assistant Adjutant-General Smock, of the Indiana department of the Grand Army of the Republic from the secretary of the 22nd Indiana Regimental Association, asking if, ***"the captured flag of the Second Arkansas Confederate Regiment was in the State Museum. The letter said that the Twenty-Second Indiana captured the flag of the Second Arkansas at Liberty Gap, Tenn., June 25, 1863 and that the Second Arkansas captured the flag of the Twenty-Second Indiana at Perryville, KY. The secretary was anxious to exchange the flags. Adjutant Smock could not find the flag referred to."***

The *Arkansas Democrat* in Little Rock on October 5, 1999, reported, ***"Adj.-Gen. Arthur Neill today received the following communication from W.R. England of Seymour, Indiana and being unable to throw any light upon the matter he refers to in the readers of the "Democrat:" On the 8th day of October, 1862, our regiment (22nd Ind.) met the 2nd Ark. C.S.A. at Perryville, KY. and had a bloody battle. They killed our colonel, wounded and captured our lieutenant-colonel, killed about half the regiment and captured our colors. Now what I want to know is the said flag yet in existence? We fought the 2nd Ark. C.S.A. at Perryville, Stone River, Liberty Gap, Tenn. And at Bentonville, N.C. We captured their flag at Liberty Gap, Tenn. And if I can find it I will return it."***

Lastly, H.A. Atkinson, a veteran of the 2nd Arkansas, sent an inquiry to Confederate Veteran magazine that was published in September 1898. Atkinson stated, *“Our regiment was doing picket duty at the time Rosecrans made his advance on Tullahoma, and we fought the hardest battle of the war for the length of time it lasted, confronted by about three thousand Federals, sustaining a loss of about seventy killed in three hours. We were stationed on the side of steep, rocky hill, and when our color bearer was killed he fell down the hill into the Federal lines, and they got our flag. I think he fell into the lines of the Twenty-Second Indiana. We fought this regiment three or four times, as well as I remember, and captured two or three flags from it.”*

Joseph McGuire of Company E, 38th Illinois Infantry, wrote to the Union Army veteran’s newspaper *National Tribune* which was published on July 1, 1886. McGuire was upset that General William Carlin’s memoirs did not go into enough details about Liberty Gap. He stated, *“Then we charged down through that cornfield and captured both the 2nd and 3rd Ark.’s flags and a lot of prisoners...Do you remember how we skirmished all day after and halloed to the rebs to come and get their flags. Gen. Carlina seems to think it did not amount to much. But, comrades, let’s keep still, or maybe the 101st Ohio or 15th Wis. Or 21st Ill. Will come in and claim capturing these flags like they did in regard to the guns at Knob Gap.”* McGuire gets the identity of one of the regiments incorrect; he meant the 15th Ohio Infantry, which attacked to the right of the 38th Illinois but against the hill held by the 6th/7th Arkansas Infantry. The 101st Ohio attacked along the road through the gap also to the right of the 38th Illinois and to the right of the 15th Ohio. Additionally, the 3rd Arkansas Infantry fought in Virginia during the war. Only one Confederate flag was reported as being captured at Liberty Gap.

The 1903 unit history of the 34th Illinois Infantry reported this about the 2nd Arkansas’ flag, *“At a point in front of Company A was an open space on the hillside, in which suddenly appeared a Confederate flag. George Phipps and Thos. C. Chamberlain, of that company, fired at the color-bearer, and the flag went down. The attention of other comrades was directed to the spot, and several persistent efforts to recover the flag were frustrated and the enemy withdrew. After firing ceased, several men jumped the fence and started to bring in the fallen colors, but they were called back by Capt. Patrick. The Thirty-Eighth Illinois and One Hundred and First Ohio, of Gen. Davis’ Division, coming up in the rear of our lines as reinforcements, a skirmish line was thrown forward by the Thirty-Eighth Illinois and the colors of the Second Arkansas, rightfully belonging to the Thirty-Fourth, were simply picked up by the Thirty-Eighth skirmishers and held by that regiment although demanded by ours. We at least had the satisfaction of getting even with the Second Arkansas for capturing our colors at Stones River.”* The 34th Illinois advanced ahead of the 38th Illinois but this account seems to clash with that of division commander Jefferson C. Davis already posted here.

A look at the maps in this letter will show that the 22nd Indiana was not involved at Liberty Gap and that their request is pure hyperbole. However, another controversy arose, and this involved the awarding of a Medal of Honor.

In 1890, a Medal of Honor was awarded to First Lieutenant Nineveh S. McKeen of Company H, 21st Illinois Infantry. According to the citation, the medal was awarded for: *“Conspicuous in the charge at Stone River, Tenn., where he was three times wounded. At Liberty Gap, Tenn. Captured colors of the 8th Arkansas Infantry.”* This flag capture is erroneous as the 8th Arkansas was about two miles west of Liberty Gap protecting the Railroad Gap through which the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad passed on the way to Tullahoma and Chattanooga. They were not involved in the fighting at Liberty Gap and when Liddell’s Brigade fell back during the night of June 25th, the 8th Arkansas also withdrew from the Railroad Gap. Thus, with only one Confederate flag being taken at Liberty Gap that was ever reported was that of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry. The 21st Illinois was on the west side of the gap, west of the road, and nowhere near the position of the 2nd Arkansas. Additionally, there is no record of the 8th Arkansas Infantry losing their flag at any time in 1863. After being combined with the 19th Arkansas they would lose a flag at Jonesboro, Georgia in early September 1864.

The Spring 1863 Issued Hardee Pattern Battle Flag of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry and Hardee Pattern Battle Flags History



This flag was issued in the Army of Tennessee winter camps around Tullahoma after battle of Stones River, probably March or April 1863. Headquarters and supply depot at Tullahoma on the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad made supply easy from the Dalton and Atlanta Depots.

In the aftermath of Civil War battles armies would then seek to replace lost and expended items like ammunition, shoes, knapsacks and lost or damaged battle flags. Thus, a requisition for a replacement flag for the 2nd Arkansas Infantry would have been issued for this new flag which was to replace the banner they lost at Stones River.

The flag like other Hardee patterns is made from cotton which is atypical for CS flags (usually silk, early war, or imported wool bunting, late 1861 onwards but with some cotton components). The flag measures 46 ½ inches (fly) by 40 ¼ inches (hoist). The hoist edge sleeve is 2 ½ inches wide and the “moon” is 16 by 14 inches.

Four battle honors were painted on the flag – Shiloh (April 1862 – battle honor authorized by General Orders No. 29, July 17, 1862), Tuscumbia Bridge (also called Tuscumbia Creek, near Corinth, MS, May 28, 1862, Perryville (October 1862 – battle honor authorized by General Orders No. 1, November 23, 1862), Murfreesboro (aka Stones River, late December 1862/early January 1863 – battle honor authorized by General Orders No. 10 dated January 23, 1863). Also of note is the crossed cannon battle honor above the painted unit designation which was authorized only in the Western Theater and was awarded for capturing Union cannon in battle. This was first authorized by General Orders No. 23 dated December 21, 1862 for the regiments of Brig. Gen S.A.M. Wood’s Brigade initially. General Orders No. 10 of January 23, 1863, also authorized this honor across the rest of the army. The honor was supposed to be with muzzles inverted however rather than muzzles up, which is the symbol for artillery units. The 2nd Arkansas was awarded this honor for taking a Union battery at Stones River.

Of special note for this flag is the capture details painted in the central device. It states, *“Captured by the 38th Regiment Illinois Volunteers, commanded by Col. Gilmer, at Liberty Gap, Tennessee. June 25th, 1863.”* Daniel H. Gilmer was the colonel of the regiment at this time. Pre-war, he was an attorney, involved in Illinois Republican party politics and a friend of Abraham Lincoln. **As this flag was never sent to the U.S. War Department the 38th Illinois had it marked to honor their deed in battle.**

Lt. Colonel Arthur Freemantle, of the famous Coldstream Guards, who are the oldest continually serving regiment in the British Army (formed in 1650), came to the Confederate States in 1863 entering through Texas. He would spend three months in the Confederacy before going back home and wrote a detailed memoir of his travels. Reaching the area south of Liberty Gap on May 31, 1863, where units of General Patrick Cleburne’s Division was bivouacked, Freemantle the next day observed a review of St. John Liddell’s Arkansas Brigade, which included the 2nd Arkansas Infantry. He stated, *“We all went to a review of General Liddell’s Brigade at Bellbuckle. There were three carriages of ladies...the weather and scenery were delightful. General Liddell’s Brigade was composed of Arkansas troops – five very weak regiments which had suffered severely in the different battles. Each regiment carried a ‘battle-flag,’ blue, with a white border, on which were inscribed the names of “Belmont,” “Shiloh,”*

“Perryville,” “Richmond, KY.,” and “Murfreesborough.” They drilled tolerably well, and an advance in line was remarkably good...” Freemantle undoubtedly saw this flag!

Of very special interest for this flag is that several large blood stains are apparent. This is no doubt from the last color bearer who bore it at Liberty Gap, Edward D. Wood who was found dead laying across the flag.

Hardee pattern battle flags date to January 1862 and were the creation of Confederate General Simon B. Buckner. In a post-war interview in a Nashville newspaper, Buckner, a former officer of the Kentucky State Guard, whose battle flags (based on a surviving example) were blue, with a lighter blue circle in the center bearing a variant of the U.S. Coat of Arms, came up with a battle flag for the Army of Central Kentucky based then at Bowling Green in the Bluegrass State. His motivation was to have a flag different from those of Union regiments. The first use of this flag in battle was at Fort Donelson in Tennessee when his division was transferred there. These flags, made by a ladies sewing circle in Bowling Green in January 1862, only had a white hoist edge. The unit designation, based on descriptions and some surviving examples, was placed in the white central device, a circle. Five more versions of this battle flag, now known as the Hardee pattern battle flag (Major General William J. Hardee was the overall commander of the Army of Central Kentucky) would be created during the war. From May 1862 onwards, the blue flags had white borders all around the outer edges. The central devices would change from circles to vertical oblong circles in the fall of 1863 and then to rectilinear shapes in 1864 when the flags were only used by Cleburne's Division. After the Atlanta Campaign the replacement flags went back to using circles with many of them being unmarked by unit designations of battle honors.

The flags from May 1862 onward were often made by men in the field who had been supplied the bulk cloth by the army; no evidence has been found that a depot ever made these flags. That was certainly the case for Pvt. Jacob Gall, who was General Hardee's tailor and who was supplied with cloth in the fall of 1863 to make new flags bearing unit designations for his corps. A Corinth, Mississippi dry goods store sold the blue and white cloth in bulk to the army to make new flags in May 1862. This explains why so many of these flags were not 100 per cent uniform in construction and even design. Gall's flags came the closest of those that survive today. The flag of the 2nd Arkansas is very well made and it was sewn by someone with excellent tailoring skills.

Other Known Flags of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry

The first known flag presented to the 2nd Arkansas Infantry was a First National that was presented to the regiment under Colonel Thomas Hindman upon their arrival in Memphis, Tennessee.

“Arkansas Volunteers – Col. Hindman's company of Arkansas volunteers, six hundred in number, with Col. Hindman in command, arrived in this city on the Morrison on Sunday (June 9th). They will remain here until the whole regiment is collected

together...The Arkansas volunteers have a splendid silk flag, presented by President Davis' Lady." – *Memphis Daily Appeal*, June 11, 1861

The *New Orleans Daily Delta* (June 14, 1861) offered more details:

"We find in the Avalanche the subjoined correspondence between the brother of Mrs. Jefferson Davis and Col. Hindman – New Orleans, June 1, 1861 - Sir, I have this day forwarded per steamer Mary E. Keene, to your address, a silk flag of the Confederacy, which you will please receive for your regiment with the compliments of Mrs. Jefferson Davis. – W.F. Howell"

Mr. Howell was the brother of Varina Davis, wife of the Confederate president. At the time of the letter Hindman's troops were at Helena, Arkansas. Col. Hindman responded on June 5, 1861 –

"Sir, I received today your letter of the 1st inst., accompanying the beautiful flag for my regiment sent with the compliments of Mrs. Jefferson Davis. The flag was unfurled at dress parade and your letter read to the command. The response was three cheers for the giver, three for the President, and three for the Confederacy...Be pleased to convey to Mrs. Davis the warmest expression of our thanks for the privilege of fighting under the colors given us by her, with our promise to prove ourselves not unworthy of so high an honor on the battlefield of Virginia, whither we are ordered. – T.C. Hindman"

The regiment as originally supposed to be sent to Virginia but that order was rescinded. The silk First National flag cannot be located today.

The second flag, which also does not exist today, should have been a Buckner/Hardee battle flag given to the regiment in January 1862 when Hindman's Brigade was posted to Bowling Green, Kentucky. This flag would have only had a white hoist edge and within the white circle in the center was probably their unit designation. The latter is based on known surviving flags of the pattern as well as descriptions.

Later on in 1862, probably at some point after May, the regiment should have received a wool/cotton Hardee pattern battle flag. This flag, which is also missing today, would have had white borders all around as exterior borders. This flag served the regiment through the Kentucky Campaign through year's end and the Battle of Stones River (or Murfreesboro). Col. Daniel Govan, commanding the 2nd Arkansas in the latter battle admitted in his report the loss of his colors in his report in the Official Records. Govan stated, *"A very closely contested fight here took place, the enemy holding their position until the Second Arkansas Regiment approached within 25 steps of their line, when it gave way in confusion and fled across the field, exposed to a murderous fire from my regiment, which was told with effect, as their dead were thick on the ground. It was at this point that the color-bearer was shot down by one of my men, and the colors were lost in the confusion of the fight."*

Lt. Colonel Oliver Shepherd, commanding the U.S. Fourth (Regular) Brigade reported, *"The casualties of the battery were not so great, on account of its position and of its fire dispersing every line of the enemy approaching sufficiently near, at one time completely routing the Second Arkansas (Rebel) Regiment, causing it to abandon its colors which were picked up by skirmishers of the Second Ohio Volunteers before the officer sent for it reached the ground where the regiment was broken..."*

The 2nd Arkansas would have received a new flag to replace the one lost at Liberty Gap in late June 1863 that would have served them through the rest of that year. To the battle honors on the flag than honor for *"Liberty Gap"* was probably added. Sadly, this flag is also missing today. After the Tullahoma campaign, the regiment was merged with the 15th Arkansas Infantry forming the 2nd/15th Arkansas Infantry. By this time St. John Liddell had been transferred and brigade command had fallen on Daniel Govan. In his report of the Battle of Chickamauga, he stated, *"To Captain Fletcher, Company A, Thirteenth Arkansas Regiment, I am indebted for saving one piece of Swett's Battery, which had several horses disabled, and but for this timely efforts would have fallen into enemy hands. He seized the colors of the Second and Fifteenth Arkansas Regiments and rallied enough men to drive back the enemy, whose skirmishers were within a short distance of the gun."*

After the debacle of Chattanooga in November 1863, the Army of Tennessee fell back into north Georgia massing around Dalton. Once again, the requisitions for replacement items were issued and the army resupplied including new flags. The 2nd Arkansas Infantry, now back with the 24th Arkansas as the 2nd/24th Arkansas Infantry, requested a new battle flag on January 31st, 1864. Colonel Elisha Warfield asked for *"One Battle Flag and Staff"* which was received at Tunnel Hill, Georgia, north of Dalton probably in March. These new Hardee pattern battle flags were only issued to Patrick Cleburne's Division and would have added *"Chickamauga"* and a battle honor for the fighting around Chattanooga (*"Tunnel Hill,"* the north end of Missionary Ridge) to the new flag. The last honor would have been *"Ringgold Gap,"* which was the stand of Cleburne's Division at Ringgold, Georgia against Major General Joseph Hooker's pursuing Union corps. According to the report of Lt. Colonel John Pearce of the 98th Ohio Infantry, the flag was taken at the Battle of Jonesboro. As these new flags were marked with the unit designation the identity would not be in question.

This flag is also missing today and would have resembled the colors of the 8th/19th Arkansas Infantry, also captured in this battle minus the *"Elk Horn"* and *"Arkansas Post"* honors.



Known Hardee Pattern Battle Flags in Private Hands

The majority of the flags of this pattern reside in various museums including the Old State House Museum in Little Rock, Arkansas; the Florida Museum of History; the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville and the American Civil War Museum (formerly the Museum of the Confederacy) in Richmond, Virginia.

The 8th Arkansas Infantry (former Texas Civil War Museum – this flag resembles the 2nd Arkansas Infantry flag and may have been made by the same maker and the honors painted by the same person as well);



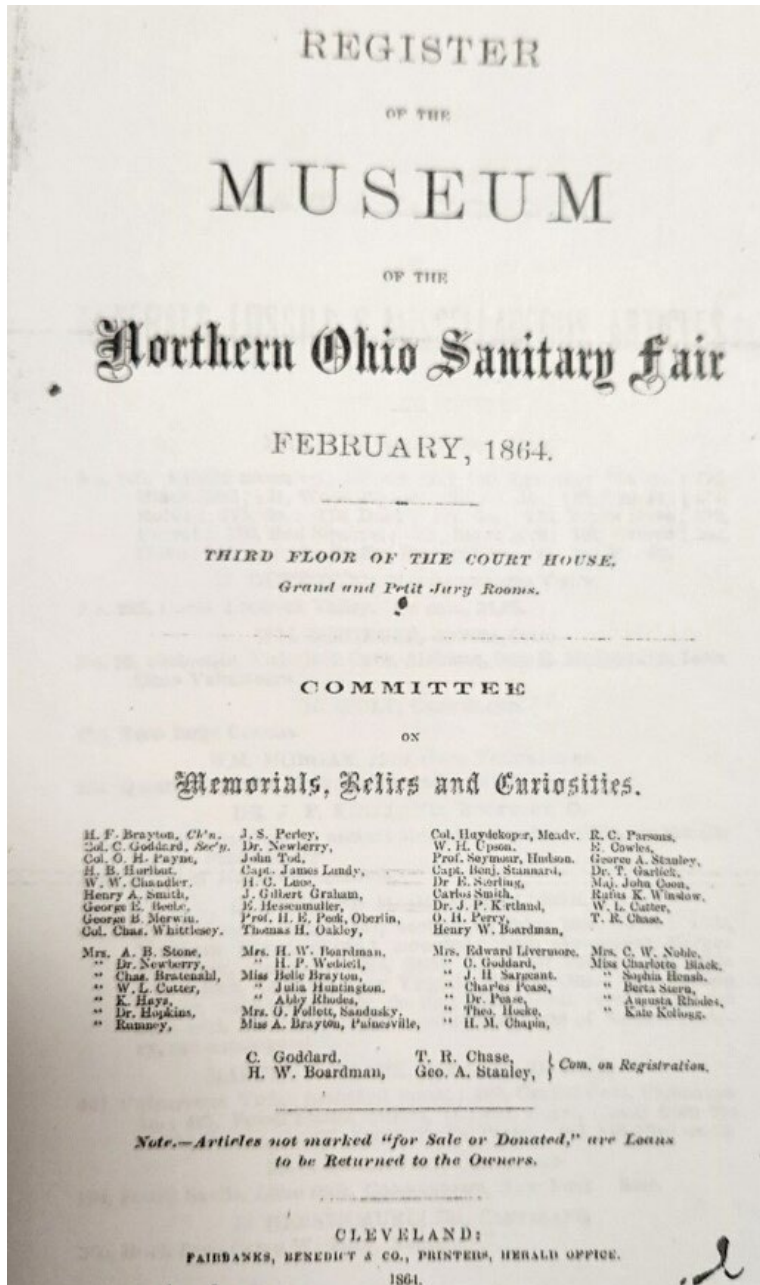
5th/13th Arkansas Infantry (Hardee/Cleburne issue, spring 1864);
33rd Alabama (Issued before the Tennessee Campaign of 1864); Havis' Georgia
Battery; 30th Mississippi Infantry; 3rd Mississippi Battalion/45th Mississippi Infantry
(Hardee/Cleburne issue from spring 1864) and the 3rd Tennessee Infantry
(Buckner/Hardee pattern, January 1862 issue).

2nd Arkansas Infantry Flag Provenance

As the flag of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry was never sent to the U.S. War Department we can only speculate some of its history while filling in with known facts. The 38th Illinois Infantry seems to have retained the flag for a time long enough to have it decorated with their capture details. Colonel Daniel Gilmer was killed in action at Chickamauga in northwest Georgia in mid-September 1863. As mentioned, he was a pre-war friend of Abraham Lincoln and perhaps that gave him the clout to retain the flag for a time. We do not know for certain if he still had the flag at the time of his death.

The flag next shows up in February 1864 as one of the relics displayed at the Northern Ohio Sanitary Fair held in Cleveland. In the *Register of the Museum of the Northern Ohio Sanitary Fair*, the flag is listed on Page 15 as – *C. Goddard, Cleveland. Item 305. One Battle Flag, 2nd Arkansas Rebel Reg't, taken from Liberty Gap, Tenn.*

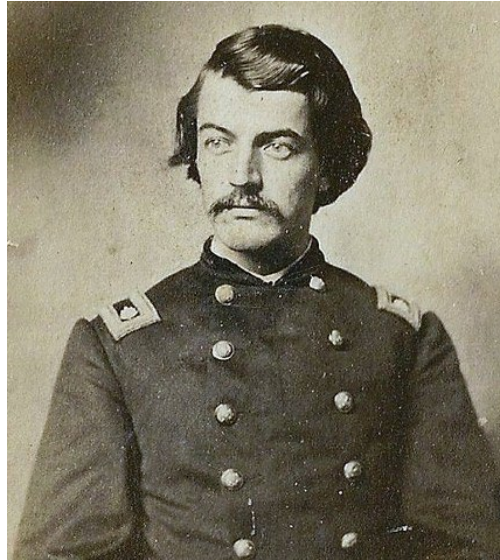
C. GODDARD, CLEVELAND. 299, Rebel Captain's Uniform Coat. 300. Pod of Cotton, from battle field of Stone River. 301. Cap used by Gen. Rosecrans, in his "Night Cap Brigade. 302. Solid Shot from Stone River battle field. 303. One Hotchkiss, from do. 304. One Rebel Trumpet, do. do. 305. One Battle Flag, 2d Arkansas Rebel Reg't, taken from Liberty Gap, Tenn.



The flag was one of several captured Confederate colors as well as flags of Union units that were loaned and donated to the fair for display to the public. The sanitary fairs were held across the north in the larger cities to raise money for the U.S. Sanitary Commission to aid injured Union soldiers. Other Confederate flags listed included the ensign of the ironclad CSS Atlanta; the flag of the 3rd Louisiana Infantry (listed as the 1st) captured at Corinth; the signal flag from the blockade runner S.S. Kate and others.

The fair published its own newspaper, the *Sanitary Fair Gazette*, which began publication on February 23, 1864 and ended at the fair's completion on March 9th. The paper offered fair news, lists of exhibits, sales from artifacts and donated items and

much more. This paper was supplemented by the regular Cleveland newspapers including the *Cleveland Daily Leader*.



Lt. Col. Calvin Goddard (1838-1882) responsible for display at Sanitary Fair where flag was last known

C. Goddard was Lt. Colonel Calvin Goddard. Born in Norwich, Connecticut in February 1838, Goddard was the grandson of one of the state's leading judges and bore his name. He attended college at 16 but soon got into a business career becoming an accountant in a commission house in Cleveland. He then moved to Chicago and worked for the Merchant's Loan and Trust Bank in that city, where he was residing when the Civil War began.

Returning to Ohio, Goddard joined the 12th Ohio Infantry in early January 1862 with the grade of First Lieutenant. Before then he was an aide to Ohio's Governor William Dennison assisting in the raising of troops in the state. The 12th Ohio was soon posted to western Virginia where he became known to native Ohio General William S. Rosecrans. After Rosecrans' campaign in that area was completed and he was transferred further west to fight in West Tennessee and northern Mississippi later in 1862, Goddard went along as part of his staff with the title Acting Assistant Adjutant-General. Army AG's were the paper pushers for the commanding officers and handled all sorts of items from issuing orders in the commander's name to basic army correspondence. Rosecrans grew to trust Goddard and cited him for special notice in the Battles of Iuka and Corinth in Mississippi. Goddard was also pre-war friends with Simon Perkins and may have mentioned him to Rosecrans who appointed him as a captain in his quartermaster department. Perkins would rise to several high levels of supply responsibility in Nashville and Knoxville, Tennessee during the war.

After the conclusion of the Kentucky Campaign in late October 1862, Rosecrans was promoted to command the Department of the Cumberland replacing Don Carlos Buell and his Department of the Ohio. The Army of the Ohio was first renamed the 14th Corps:

Left, Center and Right Wings but after Stones River was renamed as the Army of the Cumberland. Goddard was promoted to major and after Stones River, when the army's Chief of Staff, Lt. Colonel Julius Garesche was killed in action at Stones River, Goddard stepped up to be the temporary Chief of Staff with the new grade of Lieutenant Colonel. With General Order No. 35, dated February 28, 1863, however, Rosecrans promoted future U.S. president Brig. General James Garfield to his Chief of Staff position. The order stated, *"The General commanding feels the highest satisfaction in testifying to the signal ability and zeal of Lieut. Colonel C. Goddard, Assistant Adjutant General, and Chief of Staff, and believe his services are as highly appreciated by the officers of this army. But it is deemed advisable, for the interest of the service, that there should be a General officer also on duty at these headquarters."*

Goddard remained on Rosecrans' staff through the Tullahoma and Chickamauga Campaigns in 1863 and remained on staff when Rosecrans was removed at Chattanooga and replaced with Major General George Thomas. After the battles for Chattanooga concluded, Goddard resigned his commission after November 27, 1863 and returned to civilian life.

He returned to Cleveland and in early 1864 became part of the committee for the sanitary fair in that city with the post of secretary. Like the former staff officer he was, Goddard was responsible for all communications for the fair. His wife was part of the committees to secure relics for the fair. In addition to his secretarial duties, Goddard was also part of the Committee for War Memorials, Relics and Curiosities which secured artifacts from Union Army officers and men plus their families as well as captured Confederate items. Somehow, Goddard had obtained the flag of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry and donated it for the fair for display along with other artifacts of the Tennessee campaigns while adjutant under Rosecrans. Ironically General James Garfield who was their commander opened the Cleveland sanitary fair.

Goddard then moved to New York working for the Wells Fargo Express Company as its treasurer and later was the financial officer for a railroad in that state. He worked as an accountant for several firms in the city and elsewhere and was an officer of the Edison Electric Light Company. He resided in New York until about 1890 when, due to health reasons, he moved to Chicago again to work for another railroad firm then building the elevated transit railroad in that city. The toils of his job soon worsened his health and Goddard moved to California where he died in 1892 in San Francisco at the age of 54.

Both the *Sanitary Fair Gazette* and the *Cleveland Daily Leader* mentioned the sale and auction of relics from the fair while it was going on as well as after its conclusion. Some of the military and scientific relics from the fair became part of the collections of the Cleveland Library Commission for possible inclusion in a local museum.

It is very possible that the flag of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry was sold at the fair. The banner simply disappears after March 1864 and became the subject of the queries as to where it was that have already been cited earlier in this report.

I became aware of this flag's existence in mid-February 2023 when I received an email from the curator of the Zaricor Flag Collection who is also a member of NAVA (North American Vexillological Association). The latter organization had been contacted by the flag's then owner informing them of its existence. Nava contacted me as none of their membership studied Confederate flags to the level that I have over 35 years.

The owner, based in Oklahoma, also reached out to an appraiser who was able to secure the flag for Poulin Auctions for this sale. The flag owned by a longtime Oklahoma attorney was only item other than unrelated legal documents found in safety deposit box by widow years ago. Its history of how obtained is unknown but cherished as kept at bank as long as widow could remember. She believes it was taken as legal fee maybe 40 years ago, but was not sure it didn't descend in family.

The flag has been kept in a safety deposit box for many years which, along with the fact that it was practically brand new when captured, also served to protect it from any deterioration in color or cloth.

How the flag left the Cleveland Sanitary Fair in 1864 and ended up in Oklahoma in 2023 will remain a mystery.

Conclusion

The 2nd Arkansas' flag is among the finest & most historical battle flags known.

Hardee flags in the privately owned are very rare and most of those captured in battle are in museums today. Serious flag students are aware that this flag's capture was so famous and it was missing that in the 1970s a fake 2nd Arkansas Infantry Hardee flag was made that circulated for some time before its analysis proved that it was a fake.

Greg Biggs
Military Historian
April 20, 2023

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Liberty Gap maps courtesy of Blue & Gray Magazine.