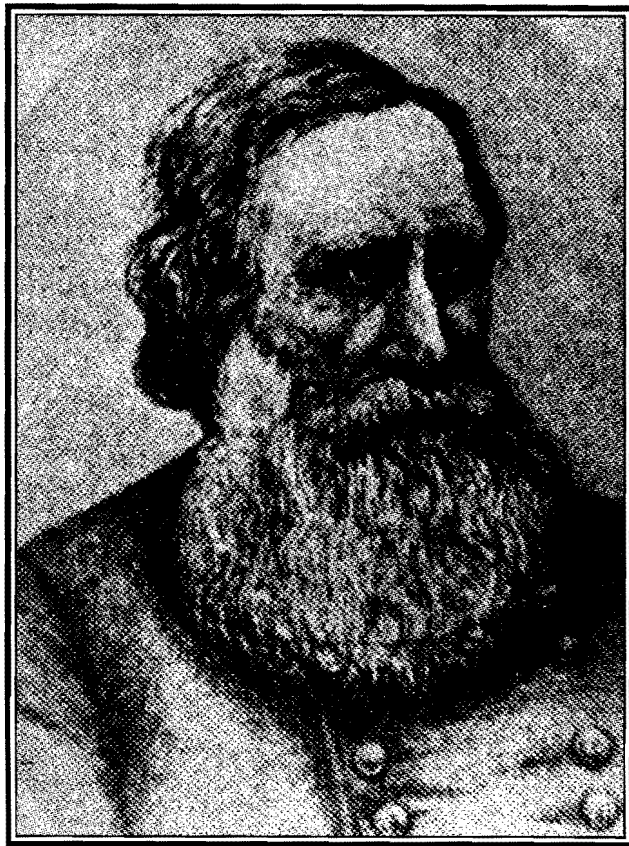
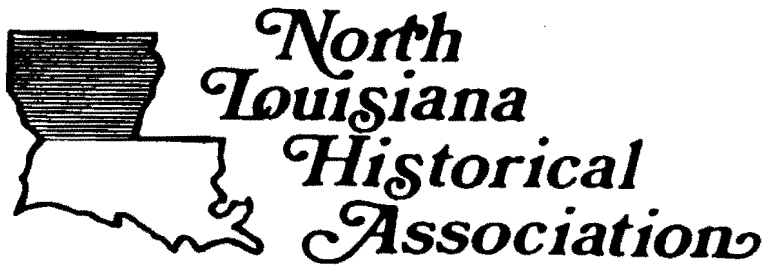


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GENERAL HENRY GRAY

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**GRAY'S 28TH LOUISIANA INFANTRY
CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA**

By

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INTRODUCTION

Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Jefferson Davis, Fort Sumter, Bull Run, Gettysburg and Appomattox Court House. These are the heros and events that most southerners associate with the Civil War. Even in Louisiana, few have heard of the Trans-Mississippi Department, General Richard Taylor, Camp Jackson or the Battle of Irish Bend. But chronic deprivation and camp disease were just as debilitating, and death on the battlefield just as frightening, whether serving with Lee in Virginia or Taylor in Louisiana. Although their struggles are little remembered today, tens of thousands of troops, both north and south, served in Louisiana from 1861 to 1865. One such unit was Gray's 28th Louisiana Infantry, CSA.

The 28th Regiment of Louisiana Volunteers, in the service of the Confederate States of America, was formed in Monroe, Louisiana in May of 1862. The regiment consisted of ten companies. Each company initially had approximately 100 men, although within months the regiment's effective strength was reduced by approximately one-half. The companies were independently formed in five contiguous North Louisiana Parishes - Bienville, Bossier, Claiborne, Jackson and Winn. This area includes present day Lincoln and Webster parishes. During the three years of its existence, this unit served almost exclusively in Louisiana. It served honorably and fought effectively in the battles in which it was engaged, including the Battle of Bisland, the Battle of Irish Bend, the Battle of Mansfield, the Battle of Pleasant Hill and the Battle of Yellow Bayou.

There has been some confusion regarding the designation of the various Confederate units, and this is particularly true with the 28th. When the unit was formed in May, 1862, all of the original enlistment papers referred to the unit as the "30th Regiment of Louisiana

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Volunteers."¹ It was not until October, when Colonel Henry Gray received his commission into Confederate service, that the unit started using the "28th" designation. Private W. H. King (Company B) noted the following in his journal on October 7, 1862.

It turned out at last that ours is the 28th Regt. from this state, Col. Gray having just received his commission. Slow work this, nearly 5 months in the service and the Col. just commissioned!²

The unit was known as "Gray's 28th" to distinguish it from "Thomas' 28th" which was also formed in May of 1862. Thomas' 28th was formed May 3 at Camp Moore, in Tangipahoa Parish, by the addition of five companies from South Louisiana to a battalion that had been formed by Colonel Allen Thomas for state service. Although now designated the 29th Louisiana Infantry, it was then frequently referred to as the "28th Louisiana Infantry (Thomas')." Often each unit was referred to simply as the "28th Louisiana Infantry," or the "28th Louisiana Regiment," and it requires some knowledge of the history of each unit to determine which unit is referenced.³

LOUISIANA IN 1862

After Louisiana seceded from the Union on January 26, 1861, and then joined the Confederate States of America on March 21, 1861, there was an outpouring of patriotic fervor. Many military companies were organized, and these independently raised companies were subsequently formed into artillery, calvary, and infantry units. It has been estimated that approximately 281 companies, or over 20,000 men, joined the Confederate service in Louisiana during the first twelve months of war.⁴ These units were sent east of the Mississippi to fill the ranks of Confederate armies located primarily in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia.

By early 1862, it had become obvious that the war would not be over quickly. In Tennessee, Fort Henry, on the Tennessee River, was abandoned on February 6, and Fort Donelson, on the Cumberland River, was surrendered with most of its defenders on February 16.⁵ Control of northern Arkansas was lost at the Battle of Pea Ridge on March 7 and 8.⁶ The Confederate defeat at the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee, in early April resulted in Federal

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control of the Mississippi River as far south as Memphis. As the losses mounted, both civilians and those in Louisiana government began to be increasingly concerned about protection of their home state.

New Orleans, which controlled the southern end of the Mississippi, was the obvious target. Preparations had been made to repulse the anticipated invasion there, and soon the expected Federal fleet was before New Orleans. On April 24, the fleet, under Admiral David G. Farragut, easily passed the weak defenses that had been established at Fort Jackson and Fort Philip on the Mississippi River below New Orleans. Once its river defenses were passed, New Orleans was captured without a fight, and the city was occupied by Federal troops under General Benjamin Butler on May 1, 1862.⁷

The Louisiana and Confederate governments were stunned. Belatedly, they acknowledged the need for troops to defend Louisiana, and the call went out once again for more volunteers. The need to repel the invading enemy evidently persuaded some men who had been reluctant to join a year earlier to join one of the companies then forming. In the 28th, only about fifteen percent of these new volunteers were young men under the age of twenty. Most were in their twenties and thirties, many with growing families and responsibilities to match.

The need for more troops, and the possibility of conscription, had been openly discussed, and may have been a factor affecting the decision of some to join. On April 16, 1862, President Jefferson Davis signed the Confederacy's first Conscription Act. It required service of all eligible males between the ages of 18 and 35.⁸ The desire to "do their duty," and avoid the stigma of being "conscript," caused many in North Louisiana to join the volunteer 28th.⁹

Private W. H. King was probably typical of many in the 28th. He volunteered, not because of patriotic sentiment, political ideals, or desire for adventure, but rather out of a sense of duty to his family, his friends, his state, and the new Confederacy. His farewell to his family was unlike the celebrations of the year before. The departure of a unit in 1861

frequently had the air of a great party, with the departing soldier eagerly anticipating their first battle, fearful only that the war might be over before they got a chance to take part. Now a year later, King realized that the war would be a long one, and the possibility that he might not return was all to real. His diary states that, "...despite every effort to keep a cheerful appearance, I could not refrain from weeping. I shall ever remember the scene..."

On May 6, 1862, he penned the following to explain why he volunteered.

...The enemy are putting forth every effort to make us (pay) tribute to their malevolent designs; our cause is bleeding at every pore; the rulers of the different departments of our government are calling loudly for more men in the field; many of my friends have already responded to the call of freedom, and offered their lives up freely for the glorious cause; and I can not, I will not, be a reproach to the name I bear.¹⁰

GENERAL HENRY GRAY

Though he had no military training, Henry Gray came from a family with a patriotic tradition. Both of his grandfathers had fought in the first War for Independence, and his paternal grandfather, Frederick Gray had been a major in that revolution. His father had fought in the War of 1812.

He was born in Laurens District, South Carolina, on January 19, 1816, graduated from South Carolina College (now the University of South Carolina) in 1834, and was admitted to the South Carolina bar. In the 1840s he moved to Winston County, Mississippi, where he served as the District Attorney. He also served in the Mississippi State Legislature, and ran unsuccessfully for Congress on the Whig ticket. Sometime during this period he became friends with fellow Mississippian Jefferson Davis.¹¹

He, along with other related families, moved to the Brush Valley area in Bienville Parish, Louisiana, about 1851. A plantation owner, he farmed and practiced law. Still active in politics, he became a state legislator. In 1860 he was narrowly defeated for a seat in the United States Senate by Judah P. Benjamin, who later served in the Confederate cabinet.

Upon the secession of Mississippi from the Union, Gray enlisted in a regiment from that state. President Jefferson Davis recalled him from service in Virginia and asked him to

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a regiment in Louisiana. He organized the 28th Louisiana Infantry in May, 1862, and was elected its colonel.¹²

General Gray was in Confederate service until he was elected, without his knowledge, to represent the 5th Louisiana District in the 2nd Confederate Congress. He took his seat on December 28, 1864. In addition to having led the 28th Louisiana Infantry, he had served as commander of the Louisiana Brigade made up of the 18th, 28th, and Consolidated Crescent Regiments in Brigadier General Alfred Mouton's (later Polignac's) Division. He was breveted to brigadier general under Richard Taylor (the only son of President Zachary Taylor) by E. Kirby Smith on April 15, 1864, after the death of Mouton at the Battle of Mansfield. This rank was eventually granted by Richmond, effective march 17, 1865.¹³ Major Thomas Pool was promoted to colonel (Lieutenant Colonel William Walker having died at Mansfield on April 8) and assumed regimental command after Mansfield on April 15, 1864.

Wounded at the Battle of Irish Bend, Gray survived the war to serve one term as a Louisiana state senator. He resigned his office after the death of his wife and retired from public life. He died on December 11, 1892, and was buried in Coushatta's Springville Cemetery, one of only two Confederate Generals buried in North Louisiana.¹⁴

JOINING UP

Records of approximately 986 members of the 28th have been preserved by the National Archives. The enlistment records of from 81 to 121 men from each company, with the exception of Company B, are still available. No enlistment papers are available in the set for this company from Bossier Parish. W. H. King's journal describes the completion of these papers for Company B on May 14, 1862, but they have apparently been lost. Most of the extant enlistment papers dated in May, 1862, were completed on a standard printed form. A few were on a slightly different version of the form, including at least one that stated the enlistment period was for twelve months. Some later enlistment papers, completed after the initial organization in Monroe, were handwritten, using wording similar to the

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printed forms.

It should also be noted that the paper of some of those that joined up in May of 1862 have apparently been lost. The National Archives Compiled Service Records include information, such as the soldier's date of enlistment, transcribed from the two surviving muster rolls of the 28th. There are numerous instances where a date of enlistment consistent with the original enrollment is given on the muster roll, but no enlistment paper is available.

The papers were completed in triplicate. It is believed that one copy was kept with the regiment as it moved, presumably by the regimental adjutant or the company clerk. This is inferred from the use of this data when medical discharges or other official papers were drafted. Orders, such as discharge papers, would include descriptive information, such as age, state of birth, height, hair color, and eye color, to help identify the soldier in question. The disposition of the other two copies is unknown. A copy may have been given to the individual soldier and one may have been sent to departmental headquarters. At least one account relates a situation in which supplies were not issued to soldiers who could not supply their "descriptive list," or enlistment paper.¹⁵

The enlistment paper consisted of an oath of allegiance signed by the enlistee, a medical certification of ability signed by the examining surgeon, and a certification by the enlisting officer that the enlistee was sober, of lawful age, and capable of carrying out the duties of a soldier at the time of his enlistment. It also included a form for the parent's consent in the event the enlistee was a minor, and a place to acknowledge the receipt of the fifty dollar enlistment bounty that was then being offered to volunteers. The form was apparently meant to be folded and filed, as there was a place on the center third of the back of the form, when folded into three equal portions, for the name and unit of the enlistee.

The first part of the form was for recording personal information sufficient to identify the enlistee. It included the enlistee's name, state and parish (or county) of birth, age, occupation, enlistment date and place, as well as a place for the signature of the enlistee and a witness. It included the terms of enlistment, which in this case were "three years of the

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War" for "duty, pay, rations, and clothing, as are, or may be established by law."

This informational portion of the form, providing identifying information about the enlistee, were as follows:

STATE OF LOUISIANA

TOWN OF ____

I, ____, born in ____ in the state of ____, aged __ years, and by occupation a ____
DO HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have voluntarily enlisted in this __ day
of ____ 1862, as a **SOLDIER** in the **ARMY OF THE CONFEDERATE
STATES OF AMERICA**, for the period of three years or THE WAR, unless
sooner discharged by proper authority.

The oath of allegiance followed. The enlistee pledged,

And I ____ do solemnly swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the
Confederate States of America, and that I will serve them honestly and
faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whomsoever; and that I will
observe and obey the orders of the President of the Confederate States and the
orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles
of War.

Sworn to and subscribed at __ this _ day of __ 1862. Before __ Recruiting
Officer. ____ (The enlistee signed the oath or made his mark.)

The Examining Surgeon's Statement followed.

I CERTIFY ON HONOR that I have carefully examined the above named
Soldier and that in my opinion he is free from all bodily defects and mental
infirmity which would in any way disqualify him from performing the duties
of a soldier. ____ Examining Surgeon

Next came the certification by the Recruiting Officer. He stated,

I CERTIFY ON HONOR That I have minutely inspected the Soldier ____
previously to his enlistment, and that he was entirely sober when enlisted: that

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to the best of my judgment and belief, he is of lawful age: and that in accepting him as duly qualified to perform the duties of an able-bodied soldier, I have strictly observed the regulations which govern the recruiting service. The soldier has __ eyes, __ hair, __ complexion, is _ feet _ inches high.
 ___ Recruiting Officer. (Signed by the Recruiting Officer.)

At the bottom of the form was a receipt for an enlistment bonus, or bounty. Some of the enlistment forms were signed indicating receipt of the bonus, others were not. From W. H. King's journal, it is doubtful that anyone actually received their bonus at the time of enlistment. The receipt reads as follows:

RECEIVED OF ___ of the Confederate States Army, this day of ___ 1862, FIFTY DOLLARS, being by way of bounty, for ENLISTING in the Army of the Confederate States for Three years or THE WAR.
 WITNESS: ___ (SIGNED TRIPLICATES)

W. H. King's journal gives a detailed description of the completion and signing of these papers, which he referred to as "descriptive lists." His journal entry for May 14, 1862, reads as follows.¹⁶

About 8 o'clock, A. M., the deputy mustering officer appeared & after a little bustle & stir-around, such as men of his caliber are want to do on such occasions, we were all called into line, & nine men - myself for one - were selected to take Descriptive Lists of the different members of the company. We were conducted into his office & the necessary material furnished us for doing the work assigned us, & we at once set about it.

A controversy arose over the matter of the fifty dollar enlistment bonus. The enlistees were asked to sign a receipt for the bonuses, even though they had not yet received the money. After reassurances from their captain and mustering officer that they would be paid soon, the process continued.

After each man's list was taken in triplicate, & he signed the receipts annexed to each, he then went before the examining surgeon, Dr. Roan, who gave them certificates of ability of disability. And in this connection I will state a noteworthy fact. The surgeon in each certificate certified that he had strictly

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examined the subject, & found him either qualified or disqualified to discharge the duties of a soldier. No, I witnessed the examination? of several, which consisted in a few careless interrogatories by the surgeon if the subject desired a discharge. If no complaint was made, certificates of ability were signed by the surgeon without hesitancy. Many able looking men got certificates of inability simply by complaining of some slight infirmity or broken constitution; (others) got certificates of ability by simply manifesting a willingness to become soldiers.

THE MEN OF THE 28TH

A profile of the men who made up the 28th can be derived from the information contained on the enlistment papers.

Occupation

This unit was made up almost exclusively of farmers. Of the 986 enlistment papers in the survey, 935, or almost 95 percent, listed their occupation as "Farmer." This of course is no surprise given the rural nature of the parishes in which the companies were formed. Sixteen other occupations were also mentioned. Eight either listed no occupation, or the listed occupation was indecipherable.

The Industrial Revolution was well underway by the mid 1800s and the industrial arts were represented. Eleven listed their occupation as "Mechanic," probably working in the numerous cotton gins and saw mills that were in the area. Two listed their occupation as "Engineers."

The merchant class made up the next largest contingent. Eight men were listed as "Merchant" or "Grocery Keeper," including four who were foreign born. Two "Clerks," a "Bookkeeper," and a "Printer" were also counted.

Education also had an important part in many North Louisiana communities, and five members of the 28th listed their occupation as "Teacher," "School Teacher," or "Literary Teacher."

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The necessary crafts of the day had representation. There were two "Shoemakers," two "Carpenters," and two "Tanners." There was also a "Blacksmith," a "Brick mason," and a "Cooper," or barrel maker.

Completing the list were a "Physician," a "Daguerrotypist," one photographer, and one soul who listed his occupation simply as "Gentleman."

Literacy

Although the true literacy rate could not be ascertained from the enlistment papers, an estimate of some basic level of ability to read and write was made by counting those who displayed the ability to sign their name. Approximately twenty-two percent of 827 papers were signed with a mark. Therefore, approximately seventy-eight percent could write, and presumably read, at some level. Most displayed a strong signature of an educated man. However, based on their crude signature, it is probable that some could not write anything other than their name. A higher percentage of illiteracy was found in Winn Parish companies, particularly among those with French surnames. English may have been a second language to some of these.

Age

The average age of the volunteer in the 28th was twenty-six, presumably older than the age of a typical volunteer a year earlier. Those that gave their age as nineteen or less made up only about fifteen percent of the contingent. The rest were equally distributed between age twenty and age thirty-four. Approximately twenty-six percent were 20 to 24; twenty-eight percent were 25 to 29; and twenty-six percent were 30 to 34. The age was not given or was illegible for eleven men. The balance, approximately thirty-nine men, were 35 years old or older. The oldest man listed his age as fifty years. Some of the older men may have been "substitutes," a practice that allowed soldiers to pay someone else to take their place, if they could afford to do so.

Place of Birth

An interesting fact revealed by the enlistment data was that less than fifteen percent

of the men whose enlistment papers were available were actually born in Louisiana. In fact, more people were originally from Alabama (26%), Georgia (22%), and Mississippi (21%) than from Louisiana. There were also sizable contingents born in South Carolina (6.5%), Tennessee (3%), North Carolina (2%) and Arkansas (2%).

All eleven Confederate states were represented, with five born in Virginia, five born in Florida, and one born in Texas. There were also some from the border states of Missouri and Kentucky.

One man (Captain James Brice of Company H) was born in "Indian Territory," the area that later became the eastern portion of the state of Oklahoma. Three northerners signed up, with one each from Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Maine. Remarkably, only five could not give their place of birth.

Ten men listed their birthplace as out of the United States. Three were from Prussia, two from Ireland, one each from Poland, Germany and France. One identified his birthplace only as "Europe," and one was born "On the Atlantic."

It is remarkable that almost all (96%) of those that listed their state of birth also knew the county in which they were born. This awareness of their origins seems to reflect the emphasis that existed at that time on state and local government. The "birth state" data clearly reflects the east-to-west migration pattern prevalent between 1820 and 1860. This distribution of origins also helps explain the common bond, based at least partially on kinship, that linked the states of the Confederacy.

FOR THREE YEARS OR THE WAR

They signed up for "three years or the War." As it turned out, the War lasted almost exactly three more years. The 28th spent almost all of that time in Louisiana, serving from Berwick City (present day Morgan City) and Vermilionville (now Lafayette) in South Louisiana to Shreveport, Vienna, Monroe and Tallulah in North Louisiana. Much of their time was spent in Central Louisiana, at such places as Mansfield, Alexandria and Trinity (Jonesville). Their only out-of-state assignment was during the winter of 1864 when they

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spent approximately three months in Monticello and Camden, Arkansas, in anticipation of a federal attack on that region.¹⁷

1862 - The Beginning

After forming in May of 1862, the unit stayed camped at Trenton (West Monroe) until June 3, when they started to move to Camp Jackson, a training camp in Jackson Parish about five or six miles north of Vienna. Largely without arms, they trained there until July 11, at which time companies started moving back to Monroe.

From July until November 9 they were primarily stationed east of Monroe guarding the new railroad between Monroe and Vicksburg. The unit was frequently split into smaller commands, and the exact location of each contingent is difficult to determine. It is known that they had camps near Delhi on Bayou Macon (Camp Edwards) and north of Tallulah (Camp Oak Grove). During this time diseases related to camp life, particularly measles and dysentery, reduced the ranks of effectives to less than one half the original strength. The poorly drained land east of Monroe was considered particularly unhealthy, and King's journal is full of references to the sick and dying. Company B was typical of the companies in the regiment, and King's journal for November 5 recorded the following. "Lt. Marks said in a fit of anger during drill, 'It is a perfect shame to have 75 men here, & never more than 25 or 30 fit for duty.'"¹⁸ Such was the condition of the little army that Brigadier General Richard Taylor found late in the summer of 1862, when he arrived in Louisiana after being reassigned from the 2nd Louisiana Infantry, where he had served with distinction under General "Stonewall" Jackson.¹⁹

The 28th left Monroe, ostensibly bound "for the salt works in St. Mary's Parish," on November 9. Private King noted that Colonel Gray was insistent that each company contain at least fifty men, even if they had to be carried in wagons. However, he went on to observe that he noticed one company with but fourteen men.²⁰

1863 - The Teche Campaign

The regiment was split once they arrived in South Louisiana. Some of the troops may

have been assigned to the salt works at Avery Island south of New Iberia. Companies F and G of the 28th, plus additional men from the 18th and Crescent regiments, under the command of Company F's Captain Robert H. Bradford, were assigned to man a small gun battery on the Atchafalaya at Butte la Rose. They rejoined the main contingent at Camp Bisland on March 24.²¹ The 28th was stationed at or near Camp Bisland, just north of Brashear City, from November, 1862, until the Battle of Bisland on April 13, 1863. Colonel Gray was in command during part of that time.²²

The 28th's first major engagement with the Federal forces occurred on January 14, when a force led by Union General Godfrey Weitzel successfully led an expedition to sink the Confederate gunboat Cotton. King, who was not present, noted that "Our loss was light. Two of our company were killed, & several wounded, one of whom died in the hands of the enemy, having been taken a prisoner after he was wounded." The 28th's camp, on a plantation about three miles south of the main fort, was referred to as Camp Battery Fusilier.²³

In April Union General Nathaniel Banks again sent a force to Camp Bisland. The Confederates held off several attempts to take the fort on April 13. However, Banks had sent an encircling force to make an amphibious landing north of Bisland, hoping to trap General Taylor's army. Taylor had anticipated this move and had scouts watching for just such a landing. But when notified of it by his scouts, it was almost too late for his little army to extricate itself without fighting its way through Union lines.²⁴

Taylor began withdrawing his forces during the night of April 13. A rear guard action against the Union forces was conducted beginning early on April 14. The 28th arrived at Irish Bend at Franklin just before the attack began, and they were rushed into place in the line. A fierce fight soon followed, with charges, and countercharges. Although records are incomplete, many of those in this action, known as the Battle of Irish Bend, (or Nerson's Woods) were killed or captured. Though their losses were heavy, it was a success for Taylor, because this holding action was able to check the Union forces until almost all of

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Taylor's able-bodied men could be withdrawn along the only available road north toward Opelousas. Unfortunately, many of the sick who could not travel (including Private King) were left behind, and they were captured.

Taylor withdrew northward as far as Natchitoches to escape Bank's army and did not turn south again until May 20. The Teche country, abandoned by the Union forces, was reoccupied by Taylor, who recaptured Brashear City in a daring amphibious raid on the lightly held Union position on June 22. The large amount of stores captured helped sustain the badly provisioned Confederate troops for months. A soldier in Walker's Texas Division noted in his journal on October 5, some four months later, having met the 28th on the road near Moreauville, that they "...were nearly all dressed in Federal uniforms that they had captured in Brashear City. They were a fine body of troops and did good service in Attakapas country."²⁵

The 28th stayed in the bayou country until Bank's started his fall offensive, since dubbed "The Great Texas Overland Expedition." Several significant skirmishes, but no great battles, occurred. Taylor withdrew to around Alexandria, and the ill-conceived Union offensive fizzled before a decisive battle could be fought. By November Bank's forces had again withdrawn to New Orleans.²⁶

For the 28th, 1863 closed with a long march under bitter winter conditions. On December 18, General Alfred Mouton's division went into winter camp near Alexandria. However, Gray's Brigade, including the 28th, 18th, and Consolidated Crescent, was ordered to Monroe to help protect an expected, and desperately needed, shipment of arms that was scheduled to cross the Mississippi. Since July, when Vicksburg and Port Hudson had fallen, and the Union forces had gained control over the Mississippi River, the flow of men and supplies between the Trans-Mississippi Department and Confederates on the east side of the river had been dangerous and unpredictable.

After marching fourteen to twenty miles a day, Gray's Brigade was camped about thirty-two miles southwest of Monroe on Christmas Eve. They marked the occasion with

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speeches by Colonel Gray, Colonel Armont, Colonel Beard, Major Canfield, and Captain Claiborne. They reached Monroe on the 27th, crossed over the Ouachita on flatboats and a small steamer, and camped near the landing.²⁷

The year closed on a bleak note with the bitter winter weather. Felix Pierre Poche, on Colonel Gray's Brigade staff, note the following in his diary on December 31.

Today we had a terrible day, calculated to leave us with a vivid memory of the last day of this sad year which ends today. The weather was extreme. In the morning it rained and later it snowed, and the ground froze. One can well understand the misery and suffering of our poor soldiers without tents, and particularly no fire due to the poor quality of the firewood.²⁸

The next day captain A. W. Wyatt (later Lieutenant Colonel) of the Consolidated Crescent also noted the effects of the cold weather. "At Monroe. The ponds frozen and the boys sliding on ice...The ground too cold to lie down. Pitiabile at night to see them nodding around camp-fires with only one blanket. This is soldiering, this is."²⁹

1864 - The Red River Campaign

Very few arms ever made it across the river, and the 28th was not called upon to go in that direction. After a month of camping, marching, and countermarching near Monroe, they recrossed the Ouachita on January 31, and began marching toward Alexandria, which they reached on February 9.³⁰

In March, Union General Nathaniel Banks began his spring offensive. Confederate General Richard Taylor began concentrating his forces near Alexandria. Captain e. P. Petty, 17th Texas Infantry in Walker's Texas Division, describe the retreat from Bayou Des Glaize from March 12 through March 17th to his family as follows. He said,

...You can say that your poor ol daddy was in the grand skedaddle from Bayou De Glaize in March 1864 and that for 5 days and nights he never pulled off his over coat or shoes, but slept with all on and he marched day and night and lived on coarse cornbread & poor beef etc., was weary and foot sore...

Walker's and Mouton's divisions met at Bayou Huffpower on March 14, so the 28th took part

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in "the grand skedaddle."³¹

So began what was to become the most significant and most successful service of the 28th. The defeat of Banks' much superior (both in numbers and munitions, but apparently not in determination or fighting spirit) Union army at the Battle of Mansfield (or Sabine Crossroads) and the Battle of Pleasant Hill thwarted Union plans to capture Shreveport and invade Texas.³²

Taylor retreated until he found a time and place to fight that gave his outnumbered band a chance for success. Banks provided that opportunity when he chose a path to Shreveport that veered away from the Red River and the protection of the Union gunboats. On April 8 Taylor formed a line of battle at the edge of a cleared field about three miles south of Mansfield at an intersection known as Sabine Crossroads. The battle began about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, with a classic infantry charge across an open field against relentless cannon fire. The charge, led by Gray's Louisiana Brigade (of Mouton's Division), consisting of the 18th, 28th, and Consolidated Crescent Regiments, lasted for approximately thirty-five minutes, and ended with the Union forces in full retreat. The combined Confederate forces pushed them back about three miles until dark and fresh Union troops stemmed the Confederate advance.

The victory was won at great cost. General Mouton and many of the line officers of the Louisiana Brigade, including Lieutenant Colonel William Walker of the 28th, were dead. Casualties in these regiments were estimated at over thirty percent either dead or wounded. Total Confederate casualties were estimated at approximately one thousand of the eight thousand engaged, while Union casualties were over two thousand.³³

The next day, at the Battle of Pleasant Hill, Brigadier General Camille de Polignac's (General Mouton having been killed) Division was held in reserve until late in the day. They were called into action after the Union counterattack had dashed the hopes of another grand victory. Like the day before, the fighting was intense and casualties were high, but this time it ended without the decisive result of the day before. A tactical draw at the Battle of

Pleasant Hill resulted in a strategic victory for Taylor and the South when Banks withdrew his forces and headed back to Alexandria during the night of April 9. Banks' intentions of sacking Shreveport, and taking the fight to Texas, were thus derailed.

A dispute occurred between Taylor and his superior, General E. Kirby Smith, commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department. Taylor wanted to pursue Banks. General Smith was more concerned about the Union army under General Frederick Steele that had been simultaneously approaching from the north. General Smith withdrew much of the force that had been committed to Taylor and personally led the army in a fruitless (and some might say disastrous) battle on April 29 at Jenkin's Ferry on the Saline River in Arkansas as he pursued the already retreating General Steele.³⁴

The 28th remained in Louisiana with the forces trailing the Union army retreating toward Alexandria. With his troop strength reduced by casualties and General Smith's Arkansas campaign, General Taylor could harass, but not seriously impede, Banks' movement. Meanwhile, Admiral Porter's Union fleet was attempting to back down the falling Red River and over the shallows of Alexandria. Banks was able to safely return to Alexandria, and through some clever engineering, was soon able to get the fleet over the shallows there.³⁵

The 28th suffered additional casualties and men captured at the Battle of Yellow Bayou on May 18. After burning Alexandria, Banks' army retreated through Marksville, Mansura, and Moreauville on the way to Simmesport on the Atchafalaya. Both sides formed line of battle, skirmished, and exchanged artillery fire near Mansura on May 17. The next day the Confederates engaged the Union troops in a savage fight near Yellow Bayou. It ended at dark with both sides occupying the ground they started the day with. Casualties were estimated at about 500 for the Confederates and about 267 for the Federals. So ended the Red River Campaign.³⁶

In August, the 28th, along with the rest of Polignac's Division, was in eastern Louisiana in the vicinity of Harrisonburg and Sicily Island. At the end of August, 1864, they

were ordered north to Monticello, Arkansas, in anticipation of a Union thrust there. They remained at Monticello from September 20 until October 2, when they were ordered to Camden, Arkansas. After working on fortifications there, they were ordered back to Louisiana. They went into winter quarters at Camp Magruder near Minden, Louisiana,³⁷ then in January moved to near Pineville.

1865 - The Final Days

The last few months of the War were spent in Alexandria, Mansfield and Minden areas. No major engagements were fought. The time was spent trying to replenish depleted ranks of the army, and providing food and clothing for the haggard troops. However, because of their access to supplies from relatively prosperous Texas, and the lack of significant engagements after the Red River Campaign, the troops in the area did not suffer nearly so badly as some in the Eastern Theater. The soldiers spent their time drilling, discussing the news from armies in the east, and speculating about the future, given the increasingly probable defeat of the Confederacy.³⁸

When word reached the troops of Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox, Virginia, on April 9, 1865, most knew the end was near. The regiment camped on Bayou Cotile until May. It was marched to near Mansfield, where many units were being concentrated. General E. Kirby Smith could not convince himself to surrender his command, even though his army was rapidly disintegrating. By the time the Trans-Mississippi Department was officially surrendered on June 2, by General Simon Bolivar Buckner, most of the troops had already disbanded and gone home.³⁹ Some later reported to Shreveport or Monroe to sign paroles.

Conclusion

Thus was the fate of Gray's 28th Louisiana Infantry. Composed mostly of farmers with small land holdings, they were not quick to rush to the secession banner. But once called upon to defend their homes and way of life, they rose to the challenge. They displayed that combination of courage in battle, but antipathy for command and camp life,

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that frequently characterizes volunteer soldiers.

Reluctant rebels in the beginning, they became an effective fighting force and served their cause honorably and well. They were usually outmanned, always fought with inferior arms and chronically suffered from shortages of supplies and equipment. Yet when they fought, as they did at Bisland, Irish Bend, Mansfield, Pleasant Hill and Yellow Bayou, they fought well, displaying no lack of courage, pluck or determination.

They fought on their home soil, their adopted state for most, to preserve the way of life that they had carved out of the wilderness in the first half of the 19th century. Most were not motivated by any great ideological compulsion, but rather just wanted to be left alone to raise their crops and rear their families. Caught up in a war not of their making, driven by loyalty to their families, their communities and their home state, they fought on for three long years. They suffered the hardships common to those who fought for the Southern cause in that war - deprivation for all, disease for most, death for many, and finally, for those that survived, defeat.

Though many of their descendants still inhabit the piney hills of North Louisiana, the memory of their sacrifice is now all but forgotten. The symbols of their struggle, once held so dear, have now become anathema to some. Few understand the complex political, social, and economic issues that resulted in the War for Southern Independence. Fewer still know the story of the men of the 28th Regiment of Louisiana Volunteers, Confederate States of America.

ENDNOTES

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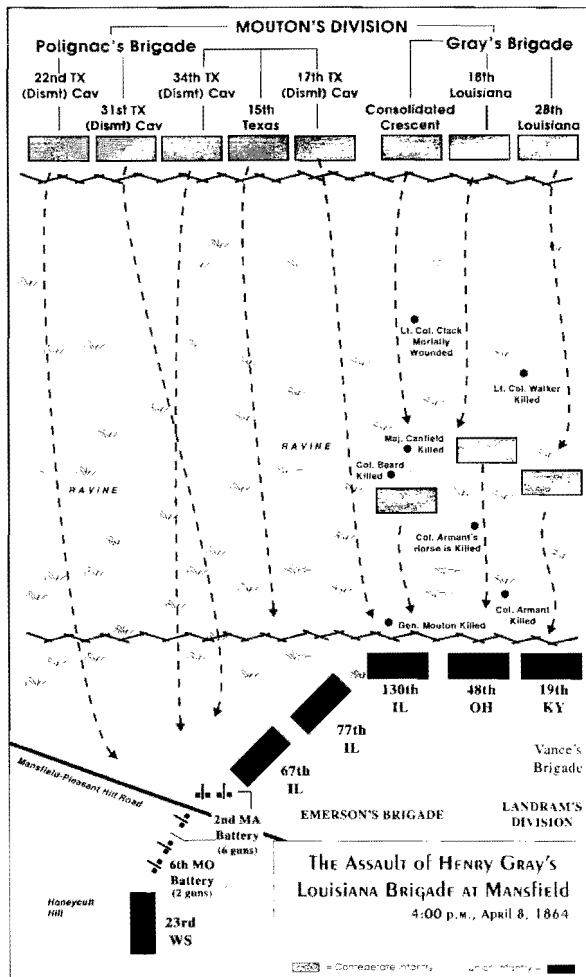
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