

[ALL ENTRIES](#)[MILITARY SCIENCE](#)[INDIVIDUALS & UNITS](#)[UNITS & ORGANIZATIONS](#)

13 Jan 2025
<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/wrights-arkansas-cavalry-12217/>

Wright's Arkansas Cavalry (CS)

The Twelfth (Wright’s) Arkansas Cavalry Regiment was a Confederate cavalry unit that served in the Trans-Mississippi Theater during the American Civil War. Participating in military engagements in Arkansas at **Mount Elba**, **Easling’s Farm**, **Poison Spring**, and **Marks’ Mills**, along with Price’s Missouri Raid, it was stationed in Texas when Confederate forces in the Trans-Mississippi Theater surrendered on May 26, 1865.

The unit was organized at **Camden (Ouachita County)** on December 17, 1863, composed of seven companies and designated the Second Battalion Arkansas State Troops under command of Lieutenant Colonel John C. Wright. In January 1864, three more companies were assigned, bringing the battalion to full regimental strength; it was re-designated the Twelfth Arkansas Cavalry, with Wright promoted to colonel. It consisted of companies from **Arkansas**, **Ashley**, **Bradley**, **Calhoun**, **Chicot**, **Drew**, **Jefferson**, and **Saline** counties.

Stationed at **Princeton (Dallas County)** initially, Wright’s Regiment conducted scouting and picketing operations in January and February 1864, guarding against enemy advances from **Little Rock (Pulaski County)** or **Pine Bluff (Jefferson County)**. In February, it was assigned to Colonel **William A. Crawford**’s Cavalry Brigade, of Major General **James F. Fagan**’s Cavalry Division, and relocated to **Monticello (Drew County)**. On March 30, 1864, Crawford’s and Brigadier General **Thomas Dockery**’s brigades attacked and attempted to destroy a Union force under Colonel **Powell Clayton** at **Mount Elba (Cleveland County)**. In repeated assaults, the Confederate forces failed to drive the enemy forces away from their position along **the river**. A Union counter-attack resulted in a hasty retreat by Confederate forces to Monticello. The day prior, unknown to Confederate commanders, Clayton’s cavalry attacked and captured the Confederates’ wagon train at Easling’s Farm on Longview Prairie in Ashley County, including almost 300 men.

During the April 1864 **Camden Expedition**, Wright’s regiment assaulted a Union supply train at Poison Spring on April 18, 1864, assisting in its capture. Seven days later, with Wright in command of Crawford’s Brigade, they engaged a large Federal force at Marks’ Mills, capturing all the wagons and artillery, along with most of the troops. Afterward, the regiment continued to scout and picket areas of south-central Arkansas for the remainder of the summer.

In August 1864, Major General **Sterling Price** started north on his disastrous Missouri Raid. His forces were composed of two Missouri cavalry divisions and Fagan’s Arkansas Division. Wright commanded his regiment as part of Slemmon’s Brigade, Fagan’s Division. Its first major engagement occurred on September 27, 1864, near Pilot Knob, Missouri. Union forces took refuge in Fort Davidson, which proved to be impenetrable to Price’s repeated assaults. Fagan’s division was required to cross open ground in the face of withering fire, incurring heavy casualties among his regiments. During the night, Union forces slipped out, making a full escape, while Price moved westward across the state.

During late October, Wright’s regiment fought numerous running battles in an attempt to escape converging and superior Union forces. October 21–22 witnessed Wright’s men fighting on the Little Blue River and at Independence, Missouri. Fagan’s division, as rear guard, was attacked and lost many men. At Westport, Missouri, on October 23, Price attempted to attack enemy forces to his front and rear. Unable to overpower either of the Union commands, Price attempted to escape southward through Kansas. On October 25 at Marais des Cygnes River, Fagan’s division, including Wright’s regiment, attempted to hold Union attackers in check. After heavy fighting, they were overwhelmed, losing many men. After crossing the river, Wright engaged the enemy at Mine Creek, Kansas, losing more of his already depleted regiment. The swollen Marmiton River forced Price to make yet another stand, costing Wright even more men.

Managing to escape the determined Union cavalry, Price’s forces retreated back into Missouri but were surprised on October 28 in a sudden attack near Newtonia. With only a weak attempt at defense, most of Price’s remaining forces rapidly retreated southward through Indian Territory and Texas, before finally returning to **Washington (Hempstead County)** on December 2, 1864. During the entire operation, Wright’s survivors marched over 1,400 miles, losing many men in the numerous battles and skirmishes.

The remnant of the regiment saw no fighting for the remainder of the war and was stationed in southwestern Arkansas when General **Kirby Smith** surrendered the department on May 26, 1865. Though ordered to Shreveport, Louisiana, to receive their **paroles**, the regiment simply disbanded without formally surrendering. Most individually journeyed to their homes, receiving their paroles at various locations along the way.

For additional information:

Bearss, Edwin C. *Steele’s Retreat from Camden and the Battle of Jenkins’ Ferry*. Little Rock, AR: Eagle Press, 1990.

Rushing, Anthony C. “Rackensacker Raiders: Crawford’s First Arkansas Cavalry.” *Civil War Regiments: A Journal of the Civil War* 1.2 (1990).

Williams, Charles G., ed. “A Saline Guard: The Civil War Letters of Col. William Ayers Crawford, C.S.A., 1861–1865.” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 31 (Winter 1972): 328–355.

———. “A Saline Guard: The Civil War Letters of Col. William Ayers Crawford, C.S.A., 1861–1865, Part II.” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 32 (Spring 1973): 71–93.

Anthony Rushing
Benton, Arkansas