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Over all these many years, the story surrounding the Civil War in Helena has been essentially focused around the seven Confederate generals and also the historical day of 4th July, 1863, battle. The story of Helena in the Civil War, however, is much more multifaceted. It starts with the breakaway crisis and the blast of partisan youth taking up arms in the sectional battle. The Confederacy never protected Helena. Many soldiers from Helena left to faraway places beyond the Mississippi River to fight various other battles.   
Helena, Arkansas was one of the numerous cities situated along the line of the Mississippi that was occupied by the Union forces in the course of 1862. During the summer of 1863, the Union occupation of Helena essentially met two objectives. First objective is that, it helped in safeguarding the supply line to the troops besieging Vicksburg that was along the Mississippi. The second reason was that it offered a prospective base for any kind of attack on Little Rock, the state capitol. Being a river town just farther from Vicksburg, the Yankees considered this place to be an excellent staging location, and thus supplied dump for the battle that was fought below Vicksburg. “ Major General Samuel Ryan Curtis took it from the Confederates in July 1862 and the Yankees were determined to keep it.”   
This particular Battle of Helena, Arkansas is probably the battle that took a backseat in the American war history when compared to the numerous other battles that were fought in the course of the American history. Quite a few of the battles that took place the Trans-Mississippi Theater, except the Pea Ridge, garnered any attention hardly, when compared with the battles that took place in the East. One of the largest aspects that put this particular Helena battle in the shadow is that it was fought on the same day on which Vicksburg admitted defeat and Lee was freeing at Gettysburg on the 4th of July, 1863.   
The Union army trailed into Helena on a hot and dusty day in July 1862, and they remained there forever. The existence of numerous such Union soldiers transformed the history of Helena. The army also brought in several slaves who had fled their households in search of freedom.   
This is the story of the Union army and also the slaves who accompanied the Union soldiers. Not just this, it is also a tale of all the people who were left behind, citizens those who were loyalists of the Confederacy had to face the army that occupied Helena. It is a tale of illness and bereavement that spread upon the soldiers of the North. It is also a tale of the people; moral people, courageous people, normal citizens as well as spiteful people who were caught in the most catastrophic events in the elaborate American history. It is an account of how all these people dealt with, endured and perished trying to do their best for their own lives, as well as their loved ones.   
Gen. Samuel Curtis, in contrast to many other commanders of the Union in the earlier years of the Civil War, was not keen on returning the escaped slaves to their masters. As a matter of fact, due to him men being obstructed by impediments by the slaves, he stated any slave entering his lines to be “ contraband of war.” He also went to an extent where he issued free papers to them. Curtis practiced complete war as he marched with his troops into Helena, scorching everything that could possibly help either the Confederate army or anybody supporting the Confederacy. Needless to say, for Gen. Curtis freeing slaves was just another tool. Irrespective of the wide range of reason, Helena transformed into a refuge of freedom for the slaves of Arkansas .   
When the Union army entered Helena, it hardly had any provisions and numerous Contraband - escaped slaves, those in need of food and shelter. There were soldiers who were wounded and ill. Irrespective of the numerous adversities, the soldiers who had paraded through dirt and midsummer heat were pleased to be staying in Helena. According to the narration of a soldier in the 13th Illinois Infantry the entrance of the troops into Helena is described as follows:   
“ With three rousing cheers, such cheers as the Thirteenth only can give, we close our columns, and with firm and steady step to the music of our band, pass through the streets of Helena, the strongest and healthiest regiment in the grand Army of the Southwest.”   
When Gen. Curtis trooped into Helena along with his soldiers, he was unsure if he would stay there; however, but the town’s location made it a treasured strategic resource. Contraband, often endowed with hardly any choice, constructed a Fort named after Gen. Curtis and four batteries, A, B, C and D, on the Crowley’s Ridge. All these constructions were built as defenses that helped in safeguarding Helena from any kind of assault of the Confederates placed in the Little Rock. “ On the 4th of July, 1863, the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg and the day that Vicksburg finally surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant, nearly 8, 000 Confederate soldiers under the command of General Theophilus H. Holmes attempted to retake Helena.” The Confederates hit the Batteries A and D at the first light, and after many hours of bloody and rebellious battle, the attack came to a halt.   
The battle was extremely bloody and rebellious. Approximately 239 Union soldiers were slayed, injured or went missing. The number of soldiers of the Confederate was nearly seven times this number. To be precise, 1, 696 Confederate soldiers were murdered, injured, or missing. The Battle of Helena resulted in the Union securing a stronghold on the Mighty Mississippi. The ferocious battle also substantiated the fact that it was the last and the most important Confederate attack in Arkansas.   
At the break of day, when all the other attacks were being stalled, the attack on Battery C started. After three anterior assaults, the Battery C was finally grounded. Orders were given for a detachment of the soldiers of the Confederate on Battery C to take the Fort Curtis that was just beneath the battery. The assault was unsuccessful in the face of Union heavy weaponry and trivial arms fire. The Confederates withdrew; the trailing Union infantry captured numerous men. By mid-day, the battle concluded, and the Confederates withdrew.   
After the ghastly defeat at the battle of Helena, General Theophilus H. Holmes, in his painful report, held everyone but himself responsible for the ghastly defeat at the Battle of Helena. His entire troop was scrambled to pieces. Out of the total 7, 646 soldiers with whom the battle started, 173 were slayed, 687 injured, and 776 gone missing, and this equals to a total of 1, 636 men.   
Post this rebellious battle, Helena transformed into becoming a Union headlock in Arkansas that was largely controlled by the Confederates. Supplies and army flooded in and out of the town, facilitating maneuvers in surrounding areas of Mississippi, Louisiana as well as Arkansas.   
It was left to the army as well as the general public of Helena to attend to the injured and to lay the dead to rest. The unpleasant smell of rotting men and horses was almost unbearable. According to Benjamin Pearson of the 36th Iowa, who led a burial detail, “ One of the most disagreeable & sickening jobs of my life.”   
Another solider from Wisconsin recollected that a good number of the soldiers, with the help from the Rebels, were involved in entombing the dead, and the sad unkind task was not accomplished any sooner after the battle.   
Actually, it is said that this task of laying the dead men to rest to many days and even weeks to be completed. Even after the battle ended, military operations continued in Helena, and they did not completely stop.

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