

Photo of the Month

**The Last Reunion of Pea Ridge Veterans
By Nathan Redman, Research Assistant**



Last reunion of Battle of Pea Ridge veterans
Elk Horn Tavern, Pea Ridge, Arkansas
October 26, 1926
Neg. # N009570

*Then let us clasp in friendship true
The hand that once we sought to slay
One flag for all. Red white and blue
One country for the blue and gray.*

This verse, which was found in *History of Benton County* by J. Dickson Black, sums up the sentiment of the pictured men. These men returned many times to Elk Horn Tavern to honor the battle that they fought in. The Battle of Pea Ridge, also known as the battle of Elk Horn Tavern, was fought on March 6, 7, and 8, 1862 in the vicinity of Elk Horn Tavern and Leetown. Pea Ridge was the largest and bloodiest battle west of the Mississippi River and a turning point in the campaign for the west and the Civil War as a whole.

Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn had intended to sweep the federals off the field at Pea Ridge on his way into Missouri. His plan was to capture St. Louis, allowing him to gain control of the Federal supply lines and thus cripple the Union Army. The Union victory at the battle ensured that Missouri remained in Union control, and that the federal supply lines remained intact. On March 9th as the Confederate Army was in retreat and the Union Army was regrouping, many a soldier no doubt felt lucky to have survived and

happy that the battle was over.

Little did these Pea Ridge veterans know that their experiences at Elk Horn Tavern and with each other were far from over. Twenty-five years after the battle, a meeting was held at Bentonville, Arkansas to schedule a reunion, which was to coincide with the unveiling of a monument honoring the Confederate dead. This, the first of many reunions at the battlefield was held on September 1, 1887. During the reunion, people noticed that many Union soldiers from the battle had attended ceremonies.

These men who had been enemies of the Confederate soldiers being honored asked to be allowed to pay their respect to the Confederate dead. A speaker that day said, "The white dove seemed to spread her wings alike over all. And harmony reigned supreme as men from both armies honored the dead at this battlefield."

This first reunion sparked the creation of the Reunion Association of the Blue and the Gray. The initial reunion held by the Association occurred on Oct 16, 17, and 18, 1888. The following year another reunion was held; this one with an even better turnout. At this reunion a large monument, topped with the Goddess of Liberty was unveiled; honoring the men of both sides. The inscription on the monument reads:

*Spirit of eternal light,
Keep silent vigil o'er the brave
The untarnished Blue
The unsullied Gray
In peace and love unite*

*Proud heroes have fallen,
And Over their grave,
Our hearts are united,
Our country to save.
Over the dead the living bend,
And up to their God their voices send
That in Liberty's crown of eternity's day,
The Blue and the Gray.*

Many more reunions were held over the years; men who had been bitter enemies on the field of battle became lifelong friends at these reunions. The photo this is reported to be the last reunion of the veterans of the battle of Pea Ridge, 64 years after the battle. This wonderful photo came from the Oct. 26 1926 addition of the *Rogers Democrat*. The pictured men are identified from left to right top row as:

- Captain J. Wade Sikes, Rogers, AR., 2nd AR Mounted Rifles
- Peter Woodring, Waterloo, Iowa, Co. H, 37th Illinois Infantry
- G. W. Lewis, Garfield, AR, member Guibors Battery, 1st MO Artillery
- Julius Heidenrich, Chicago, IL, Co. K, 59th IL Infantry
- Captain C. L. Pickens, Pea Ridge, AR, Co. F, 14th AR Infantry
- Henry Williams, Rogers, AR, 2nd AR Mounted Rifles
- F. H. Foster, Pea Ridge, AR., Co. F, 14th AR Infantry
- A. J. Callis, Bentonville, AR Co. 9, 2nd AR Cavalry
- E. W. Mullins, Springdale, AR, 2nd AR Mounted Rifles
- J. B. Ausmud, Rogers, AR, Co. 2, 119th Illinois Infantry
- E. W. McClure, Cross Timbers, MO, Co. B, 115th MO Infantry
- E. B. Test, Gentry, AR, Co. G, 2nd Kansas Cavalry
- Reed Brown, Gentry, AR, Co. K, 33rd Wisconsin Infantry
- J. W. Lewis, Garfield, AR, Co. D, 2nd AR Mounted Rifles

Seated from left to right:

- E. L. Morgan, Garfield, AR, 64th MO Infantry
- R. B. Pratt, Porter, OK, 3rd Iowa Cavalry
- Juliuw Krueger, Iola, KS, Co. F, 37th Illinois infantry
- A.E. Gage, Chicago, Illinois, Co. F. 37th Illinois Infantry
- R. W. Woods, Bentonville, AR, Co. F, 14th AR Infantry
- Captain Orin Parker, Bentonville, AR, 10th AR Battery
- G. W. Gamble, Rogers, AR, Co. F, 14th AR Infantry
- W. A. McCurdy, Miami, OK, Co. E 16th MO Cavalry
- E. E. Taylor, Paden, OK, Member Guibors Battery
- M.T. Harris, Garfield, AR, Co. F, 37th AR infantry
- Tom Roughton, Gentry, AR, Co. L, 2nd Kansas Cavalry

This photo conveys the importance of these reunions. These men went from being sworn enemies, fighting in the bloodiest period of American History, to a group of old friends sitting around reminiscing about the glory days. People today can learn a lot from these veterans. They harbored no ill feelings toward one another, they understood that each and every man, Union or Confederate, Blue or Gray, had shared similar experiences and had served with honor and bravery on the field of battle.