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CIVIL WAR EBB AND FLOW, 1862-1864

Between September 1, 1862, and July 3, 1863, the citizens of Huntsville and Madison County were free from Federal occupation. However, as the Civil War continued, the Tennessee Valley once again became important to Union forces as they moved eastward to capture Chattanooga, one of the important railroad centers. After General Ormsby M. Mitchell was relieved of his command in Huntsville, General Don Carlos Buell took over as commander of the Army of Ohio. During the later part of the summer, he moved his troops to Tennessee where his progress toward Chattanooga was slowed almost to a halt by the activities of Colonel John Hunt Morgan and General Nathan Bedford Forrest. These Confederate raiders were both successful in their forays. Morgan led his "Kentucky Cavaliers" through his home state where he won four battles and created confusion behind Federal lines before returning to Tennessee. Forrest attacked Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and captured the whole Federal garrison stationed there.

After his retreat from Corinth, Mississippi, General Braxton Bragg moved his army eastward to Chattanooga where he headed the Confederate "Army of Tennessee." The armies of Buell and Bragg faced each other at Perryville, Kentucky, on October 8, 1862. This battle ended in a draw, but Bragg was forced to withdraw from Kentucky, thus ending his offensive to secure that state's commitment to the Confederate cause.

General William S. Rosecrans soon replaced Buell and on December 31, 1862, he attacked Bragg's forces at Stone River, not far from Murfreesboro. After three days of fighting, Bragg retreated; but Rosecrans' army was so weakened that he did not take the offensive again in East Tennessee for six months.

Meanwhile, General Ulysses S. Grant's army moved westward from Corinth and easily captured Memphis, but he had greater difficulty in defeating the Confederates at Vicksburg. With the aid of Union naval forces, he crossed the Mississippi River below the city, and after several victories in the spring of 1863 he laid siege to Vicksburg and on July 4, 1863, forced the Confederate army under General John C. Pemberton to surrender.

Once again the Memphis and Charleston Railroad became important to the Federal cause as Grant began to move his troops eastward to aid in the capture of the key rail center at Chattanooga. On July 3, 1863, Huntsville was re-occupied by Federal troops who remained in control of the city until the war ended. This second period of occupation brought greater discomforts to the citizens. The two diaries contained in this issue tell of the many hardships endured by families during the last two years of the war.

The Editor