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Sol Street: Confederate Partisan Leader

by Andrew Brown

Solomon G. Street, or Sol Street, was the son of Anderson Street, one of the pioneer settlers of Tippah County, Mississippi. The elder Street's home was about ten miles northwest of Ripley, the county seat, and about fifteen miles south of Saulsbury, Tennessee. Little is known of the early life of his son, who was a small boy when the family moved to Mississippi, beyond the facts that he was thirty years old in 1861, that he was married – his wife's name was Rhoda – and that he was making a good living as a carpenter when the Civil War broke out. Sometime between March and May 1861, he enlisted in the Magnolia Guards, a volunteer company that had been organized at Ripley in late 1860 or early 1861. The Magnolia Guards assembled at Ripley on April 30, marched to Saulsbury, and there took the cars for Corinth where they became Company F of the Second Mississippi Infantry.

The Second Mississippi was sent almost immediately after its organization to Lynchburg, Virginia, where on May 9 it was mustered into the provisional army of the Confederate States. On the same day Street was made third sergeant of his company and served in that capacity for more than a year. He was a giant of a man, possessed of a booming voice that carried into the farthest recesses of the regimental camp. After Sol Street had become a legend in North Mississippi, a survivor of the regiment recalled Sergeant Street's orders as he drilled his men: "Hold them heads up! Look fierce! Look mean! Look like the devil! Look like

This article was originally published in the July 1959 edition of *The Journal of Mississippi History*. Some of the language may be offensive because the article is a product of its time and place. The article is reprinted verbatim to reflect the scholarship as it was presented at the time.

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me!"¹ How well he succeeded in making the men of Company F look like the devil or Sol Street is not known, but it is a matter of record that they were good soldiers.

Street served with the Second Mississippi in the campaign of First Manassas in 1861 and at the battle of Seven Pines and in the Seven Days Battles around Richmond in 1862. While McClellan was being pushed away from the Confederate capital by Lee, however, affairs took an opposite turn in the West. On May 31, [P.G.T.] Beauregard evacuated Corinth, and within a month Federal troops were ranging far and wide throughout Northeast Mississippi, the homeland of the Second Mississippi. The news was not long in reaching Virginia; and in July a considerable number of the men in the regiment took advantage of a provision of the recently enacted conscription law, obtained substitutes, and returned to their homes. Among those who took this step was Sol Street; he obtained his discharge from the Army of Northern Virginia on July 28 and returned to Tippah County in August. There he found conditions even worse than he had feared. Not only was Union cavalry roaming throughout Northeast Mississippi almost at will, but Confederate and State authorities were bickering over responsibility for the defense of the region while neither was able to offer any effective resistance to the invaders. In the meantime property was being destroyed, slaves were being carried away, and the lives of noncombatants were in imminent danger. It became evident to Street within a matter of days after his arrival that the citizens themselves must provide such protection as Northeast Mississippi received.

Sol Street, Confederate Partisan Leader

The first step toward an adequate home defense was taken by William C. Falkner, the first captain of Street's Company F and later colonel of the Second Mississippi. Falkner had been defeated for the colonelcy at the reorganization of April 1862 and had returned to Ripley. There he recruited, almost entirely from Tippah County, a regiment of cavalry containing about 750 men known subsequently as the First Mississippi Partisan Rangers. The Rangers were mustered into Confederate service early in August and served creditably until the middle of November, when the Conscription Bureau, taking advantage of some irregularities in the regiment's organization, broke it up in a vain attempt to obtain conscripts

¹ Will Ticer of New Albany, son of J. P. Ticer of the Second Mississippi, related this story to the author in 1956.

for the regular Confederate forces.² Although Falkner later reorganized the regiment, the result of the Conscription Bureau's action was to leave Tippah and adjoining counties practically stripped of defenders. It was at this black time that Sol Street re-entered the picture.

Nothing is known of Street's activities from August through November 1862. He did not enlist in the First Mississippi Partisan Rangers. Possibly he was making plans to organize a military unit of his own, and biding his time until the moment came to strike. The breakup of the Rangers gave him an opportunity, and he seized it instantly. Early in December he obtained authority from Governor [John J.] Pettus of Mississippi to recruit cavalry for home defense, and almost entirely by his own efforts enlisted a company called the Citizen Guards of Tippah County, of which he was chosen captain. On December 15, 1862, the Citizen Guards were mustered into the Army of Mississippi (not, it should be emphasized, the Confederate Army) as Company A, Second Mississippi (State) Cavalry.³ The commander of the Second Cavalry was Colonel J. F. Smith.

Smith's regiment was a paper organization that saw only desultory fighting before it disbanded upon being ordered into Confederate service on June 4, 1863.⁴ Early in January of that year, however, Captain Street's Company A, Captain W. H. Wilson's Company D (which had been recruited largely by Street), and possibly another company were detached—one suspects that Street detached them on his own initiative—for “service along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad.” Thus began the operations of that irregular but highly effective group of fighters known as “Sol Street's guerilla band,” which for eighteen months was to be a thorn in the flesh of Federal commanders from Corinth to the outskirts of Memphis, and from Tippah County, Mississippi, to Hickman, Kentucky. To understand the nature of Street's operations, and the peculiar situation that dictated his policies, it is necessary to summarize conditions in Northeast Mississippi in the first part of 1863.

At the beginning of that year nearly all the Confederate troops in Mississippi were in the vicinity of Vicksburg. In March, however, Brigadier

² See W. C. Falkner file in Old Records Section, Adjutant General's Office (hereinafter cited as *A.G.O.*), National Archives. This file contains letters from Falkner to Secretary of War Seddon, J. W. Clapp, and others, that give a good account of the breaking up of the First Mississippi Partisan Rangers.

³ Muster roll Co. A, Second Miss. Cavalry, in Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss.; also *A.G.O.*, Sol G. Street file.

⁴ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880-1901), hereinafter cited as *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 3, 973.

General James R. Chalmers was placed in command of the newly created Fifth Military District of the state, which comprised the ten northern counties. Following orders, Chalmers set up headquarters at Panola (now Batesville) near the western edge of his district. The ostensible reason for the location was to watch anticipated Union movements from Memphis toward Vicksburg; but another and probably overriding objective was the breaking up of the increasing trade between citizens of North Mississippi and the merchants of federally held Memphis. The specific aim of the Richmond authorities was to prevent cotton from reaching the Federal lines; and so strongly did they stress the cotton angle that military objectives were often subordinated or even ignored. This was certainly the case in the location of Chalmers's headquarters.

As Chalmers had only a handful of soldiers, many of whom were none-too-reliable Partisan Rangers, he was obviously unable from Panola to protect a district which extended 120 miles east and west and 60 miles north and south. For assistance in the eastern part of his district he was forced to depend on such help as he could get from Brigadier General Daniel Ruggles, commanding the First Military District from headquarters at Columbus. Showing an almost unbelievable lack of perception, Ruggles remained in that pleasant little city, far removed from the Union armies, until someone in Richmond noticed what Ruggles should have seen long before, that most Federal raids from the Memphis and Charleston Railroad followed the Saulsbury-Ripley road. Ruggles was thereupon ordered to move his headquarters to Tupelo.⁵ The incident is worth noting as one of the few occasions when the judgment of the Richmond authorities was better than that of the men in the field. But even after the move to Tupelo, the important town of Ripley was fifty miles from Ruggles's hodgepodge of state troops at Tupelo and even farther from Chalmers's little force at Panola. Neither general was able to offer much opposition to the swift Federal raids into Tippah County, with the result that such protection as the citizens had was provided by Sol Street and his band.

The term "band" is used advisedly. Officially Street was captain of one company, but usually he was reinforced by Captain Wilson's Company and other irregulars. In fact, his organization at this time was a most informal one, and he doubtless was accompanied by men who never enlisted in any state or Confederate unit. Street located his headquarters in the almost impenetrable bottom of North Tippah Creek probably near his boyhood

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. LII, pt. 2, 460.

home. From this hideout Street staged his spectacular raids with a force that on many occasions totalled no more than thirty hand-picked men.⁶ The necessity for using only men of known trustworthiness was vital, for the northern part of Tippah County was a region of divided loyalties,⁷ and the danger of betrayal was ever present. Street's intelligence system was simple and effective. News of practically every Union foray was speedily brought to him by some enlisted or unenlisted "scout," and usually within a matter of hours the invaders found Sol Street's band hanging on their flanks, taking advantage of their knowledge of the country to do whatever damage they could.

Street's first recorded brush with the enemy was on January 5, 1863. On that day Major D. M. Emerson left Bolivar, Tennessee, with a detachment of the First Tennessee Cavalry (Union) and independent companies of "Tippah and Mississippi Rangers."⁸ His objective was Ripley. About fifteen miles south of Bolivar, Street ambushed the raiders and killed one Union soldier. Emerson later reported that some of the attackers were dressed in Federal uniforms, which indicates that Street already had adopted a favored mode of camouflage in the bushwhacking war in the west. Both sides used it. A conspicuous example is supplied by the Union Colonel B. H. Grierson's famous raid through Mississippi in the spring of 1863, when part of his force was garbed in Confederate butternut.

After his first brush with Street, Emerson decided to leave well enough alone and returned to Bolivar. Three days later, however, Colonel Edward Prince of the Seventh Illinois Cavalry led a detachment from La Grange to Ripley in search of the elusive partisan. Prince failed to locate Street, but from the Union standpoint the raid was successful in that Lieutenant Colonel Lawson B. Hovis of the First Mississippi Partisan Rangers was captured at his home in Ripley.⁹

By the middle of February harassed Union commanders had learned that Street's band was likely to turn up anywhere between the Mobile & Ohio and Mississippi Central railroads, and anywhere between the Ripley-Salem line and Bolivar.¹⁰ On February 25 it captured two privates

⁶ Ripley *Southern Sentinel*, September 6, 1895.

⁷ See Headquarters map file, Map S5 (RG-77), in Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, National Archives. This map, made for General Rosecrans in 1862, shows an area in north Tippah County as "UnionNeighborhood."

⁸ *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, 331.

⁹ *A.G.O.*, Lawson B. Hovis file.

¹⁰ *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, 349.

and two sergeants of the Seventh Illinois who had straggled behind their command.¹¹ By this time Federal commanders were taking a serious view of Street, whom they consistently described as “the noted guerrilla.” General Hamilton managed to send a man whom he described as “one of my best spies” to Street’s camp. In due time this emissary returned with a report that the heavy guns at Vicksburg were being dismantled and the place evacuated.¹² As the report was groundless, and as Street’s men could have little knowledge of what was going on at Vicksburg in any event, it is obvious that the “guerrillas” recognized Hamilton’s “scout” for what he was and sent him on his way rejoicing with plausible but erroneous information.

March 1863 was a busy month for Street’s band. Being short of almost every kind of equipment, they for some time had eyed hungrily the provision- and supply-laden trains that puffed heavily over the tracks of the Memphis and Charleston and Mississippi Central railroads. The Partisans knew that every mile of track and every station on the Memphis and Charleston was guarded so closely that it was out of the question for a small unit to do any serious damage on that line. However, Private Archer N. Prewitt of Street’s Company A, a native Tennessean, learned that the Mississippi Central was not guarded so closely, and that a pay train was scheduled to run from Bolivar to Grand Junction on March 21. This chance to get good Yankee dollars was too good for Street to miss. On the night of March 19 he took about eighty of his own and Captain White’s companies, and, after riding all night and crossing the Memphis and Charleston near Saulsbury, hid in the woods all day of the 20th. After nightfall Prewitt led the band to a deep cut on a curve about three and a half miles north of Grand Junction. The men removed the rails on the outside of the curve and hid in the bushes. Soon after sunrise of the 21st a southbound train entered the cut, and before the engineer realized what was happening the locomotive and five cars were piled up. Street’s men emerged from cover, firing as they came. About twenty or twenty-five Negro soldiers were aboard. These, when they glimpsed the ragged Confederates charging toward them, stood not on the order of their going but took helter-skelter to the woods, where some of them were captured later.

Unfortunately for Street, the train wrecked in the cut was not the pay

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 340.

¹² *Ibid.*, pt. 3, 106.

train, but a construction train carrying a considerable amount of supplies. When the pay train itself came into sight a few minutes later, its engineer saw the wreck in time to stop and back up toward Bolivar. The Federal paymaster, however, jumped when it appeared that his train would ram the wreckage, and was captured.¹³

After taking all the material they could use, Street's men set fire to the cars and began a leisurely retreat toward Ripley with sixteen white prisoners and "sixteen free Americans of African descent." Thus did General Chalmers, in reporting the affair, pay his respects to the recently promulgated Emancipation Proclamation.¹⁴ Among the prisoners was the paymaster. He was mounted on a mule during the retirement, and not being accustomed to such a mode of transportation over rough roads, suffered severely before he reached the fastness in Tippah Bottom.¹⁵

Street's capture of the train brought him into contact for the first time with Colonel Fielding Hurst of the First Tennessee Cavalry (Union), whom the Confederates designated "the notorious Colonel Hurst." Though a native of Bethel, Tennessee, and a slaveholder—throughout the war he was always accompanied by his two body servants Lloyd and Sam¹⁶—he had turned against the Confederacy early in the war, and had become one of its most vindictive foes. Appointed colonel by Governor Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, he recruited a body of "Tory" troops who, according to both Federal and Confederate evidence, were notorious for their freebooting proclivities. Hurst was far from unique in this respect. Many of the "independent" companies, battalions, and regiments attached to both the Union and Confederate forces held the same reputation. Street's band was no exception. In fact, one alleged act of robbery on their leader's part led to his violent death.

The acts of lawlessness with which the record of the war in North Mississippi and West Tennessee is studded were due to the fact that neither of the armies ever exercised firm control of the country, and that the fighting was nearly always on a small scale. It was true guerrilla warfare, which is a dirty, stealthy business under all conditions but especially under such conditions as prevailed in the region in 1863. From the Confederate viewpoint the situation was aggravated by stringent regulations against trading with the enemy, joined with the close

¹³ Ripley *Southern Sentinel*, September 6, 1895, *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, 471.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 471.

¹⁵ Ripley *Southern Sentinel*, September 6, 1895.

¹⁶ *A.G.O.*, Fielding Hurst file.

proximity of enemy-held Memphis. All soldiers, regular and irregular, had orders to confiscate cotton going to Memphis and merchandise coming out of Memphis, and to "bring it to headquarters." Human nature being what it is, soldiers more often than not failed to take the offending articles to headquarters.

On the day after the affair near Grand Junction, Hurst led about one hundred of his Federals from Pocahontas to Ripley, ostensibly to catch the train-wrecker. When he could not find Street, his trip turned into a horse- and cotton-stealing expedition. The only military result of the raid was the killing of Colonel John H. Miller, whom Governor Pettus had sent to Tippah County to organize scattered small units in that area into regiments.¹⁷ Street was informed of Hurst's raid, and assumed that he would remain in Ripley that night. He therefore led his force of Partisans to the town after dark, intending to capture the Union pickets and possibly retrieve some of Hurst's booty. When Street learned that the Tennessean had retired toward Pocahontas, however, he followed immediately, and by taking a side road through the bottom of Muddy Creek reached Jonesboro ahead of the enemy. On a steep hill about a mile south of Jonesboro part of the Mississippians ambushed and captured Hurst's rear guard of eight men, and the prisoners were taken to Ripley by a detail commanded by R. J. Thurmond. In the meantime Street with the remainder of his men took another side road, got in front of Hurst about a mile and a half south of Pocahontas, and charged the enemy recklessly. When the attack failed because of wet powder and inferior numbers, Street retired toward Ripley. Remarkably enough, not one of his men was killed in the skirmish; only one was wounded and two captured. The Federal loss, other than the eight men captured, is not known.¹⁸ Hurst reported to his superiors at Memphis that Street had been desperately wounded. This was not the first nor the last time that the guerrilla was erroneously reported disabled.¹⁹

After the fighting near Jonesboro and Pocahontas, Colonel Hurst announced that he would not grant the rights of prisoners of war to the captured members of Street's band. This threat, Street realized, was one that had to be countered by higher authority than his own. Although he had been operating independently with little or no regard to the wishes or plans of General Chalmers, he was forced to take the matter to Panola. Chalmers immediately wrote "Col. Hurst, U.S.A." that Street commanded

¹⁷ Ripley *Southern Sentinel*, August 8, 1894.

¹⁸ Ripley *Southern Sentinel*, September 6, 1895.

¹⁹ *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 3, 147.

“a regular organization of State troops turned over to Confederate service,” and that his men were therefore entitled to be treated as prisoners of war.²⁰ Chalmers closed his letter with the warning that “in case of a persistent refusal to extend them such courtesies, the Genl. will retaliate upon your command, some of whom are now prisoners in our hands.”

Chalmers now made the first of many efforts to bring Street’s band of irregulars into formal Confederate service. The organization, as Chalmers wrote Hurst, had been turned over to Confederate service, but only on paper. On April 2—the same day he wrote Hurst—Chalmers addressed an order to “Captain Solomon G. Street, commanding Citizen Guards of Tippah County” to assemble his company at New Albany. Instructions were also given to assemble all other independent companies in the vicinity at the same place for the purpose of organizing them into a battalion or regiment.²¹ The wording of the order shows that Street was the recognized leader of all state troops in Tippah County. The captain did not obey the order, if indeed he ever received it. Instead, he remained in state service for another four months, although on occasion he did cooperate with General Chalmers. On May 21 his band was part of about 300 Confederates who beat off a Federal attack at Salem. In that skirmish six of Street’s men were captured.

Late in May the bitter enmity between the Union troops and Street’s band came to a head. On May 27 Major General William Sooy Smith, commanding the Union cavalry at Memphis, charged that two of Street’s men, named Kesterson and Robinson, had murdered two Union prisoners in cold blood, adding that “their excuse that the prisoners were trying to escape is so notoriously false that your own men heaped upon them the execration they so richly deserved.” Smith threatened to place in irons and shoot four prisoners from Street’s command if Kesterson and Robinson were not turned over to him.²² This time Street turned the matter over to General [Daniel] Ruggles, saying only that the prisoners had actually been shot while attempting to escape. Ruggles wrote Smith that he was having the matter investigated, and in the meantime was having four prisoners of Smith’s placed in irons.²³ There the matter stood for a time.

Late in July, Street took his company to Okolona. From that town,

²⁰ Captured Confederate Records in possession of the War Department, National Archives, Letters and telegrams of Chalmers’s command, CCVII, 39-40.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Special orders Chalmers’s command, CXCIX, 17.

²² *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, 224.

²³ *O. R.*, Ser. II, Vol. V, 714.

on July 29, he wrote the War Department at Richmond,²⁴ stating that he “had power over” three companies and asking authority to recruit a battalion of cavalry for Confederate service. As Confederate authorities took a dim view of the enlistment of additional cavalry units, Street received no answer. A few days later his command received pay for the period December 15, 1862, to April 15, 1863. The muster roll made at the time, however, includes the names of all men who joined the company up to August 1. The total number of names on the muster roll—the only one of Company A in existence—is 113 rank and file, of whom 82 had enlisted when the company was originally mustered into state service. Of these, thirty-eight were at that time present for service; forty-one were absent without leave; four were on detached service; eight had been “claimed” (as deserters) by Confederate units; one had died in camp, and twelve had been captured. The roll shows none killed, though some of the men listed as captured are known to have died of wounds. In all probability the maker of the roll simply omitted the names of the men killed in action.²⁵

The men named on the muster roll of Company A were not all of Street’s band. A list prepared by a survivor and published in 1895 contains sixty-nine names, seventeen of whom are not on the roll. His account of the fight with Hurst at Pocahontas adds another name, that of R. J. Thurmond.²⁶ Granted that some of the men named were members of Captain Wilson’s company, it is most likely that others on this list never enlisted, but joined Street temporarily for one or more of his skirmishes.

Street’s last fight as captain of Company A took place late in August, when he attacked a Union forage train between Pocahontas and Ripley. On this occasion, with the Kesterson-Robinson affair fresh in their minds, the Federal soldiers squared accounts in a brutal manner. Two of Street’s privates, John Carraway and Moses Crisp, were captured and without further ado taken to a bridge over Muddy Creek and shot. Ruggles promptly held two Federal prisoners as hostages, but as in the original case there is no record of the final disposition of the case.²⁷ In all probability the accounts were simply allowed to stand as balanced.

After the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, large numbers of Federal troops based at Memphis and in West Tennessee were shifted to the vicinity of Chattanooga. An immediate result was that Confederates

²⁴ *A.G.O.*, W. C. Falkner and Sol G. Street files.

²⁵ Muster Roll Co. A, 2nd Miss. Cavalry, Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

²⁶ Ripley *Southern Sentinel*, September 6, 1895.

²⁷ *O. R.*, Ser. II, Vol. VI, 224.

in West Tennessee were able to operate more freely than had been possible before, and some of them took advantage of the relaxed pressure to move into North Mississippi, where they had some hope of obtaining arms and equipment. Conditions in Mississippi also improved. In August, Major General Stephen D. Lee was placed in command of all cavalry in Mississippi, and soon brought a semblance of order into the harried Fifth Military District. He brought many state troops into Confederate service and augmented them with units from Tennessee. One of the largest of these Tennessee units, about a thousand strong, was brought to Orizaba (about seven miles south of Ripley) late in July by Colonel R. V. Richardson. Within a matter of weeks Richardson had accumulated an even larger command,²⁸ and was signing himself “Col. commanding NE Miss.”

Richardson, a daring and successful partisan fighter, had had his share of troubles with both sides. In March, 1863, Joe Johnston, who had no use for guerrilla fighting, charged him with “great oppressions” and recommended that his authority to recruit be withdrawn.²⁹ To keep the score even, on March 15 the Union commander sent Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson after him, saying of his men, “I am assured by high Confederate authority that they act without and against orders and are simply robbers to be treated as such. The gang must be exterminated and the sooner the better.”³⁰ Grierson’s expedition came to nothing.³¹ In fact, when he made his famous raid to Baton Rouge a few weeks later, he had to fight Richardson all the way to Central Mississippi.

In Richardson, Street found a kindred spirit. Moreover, he was given no choice but to attach himself to the regular organization. On September 1 the partisan leader resigned his Mississippi commission³² and transferred his men to the Confederate army. They were not incorporated into a regiment, but fought as “Street’s Battalion” under Richardson’s command. This battalion participated in Chalmers’s attack on Collierville in October, the first offensive movement in that area on the part of the Confederates since the battle of Corinth a year before. About this time Street abandoned the hideout in Tippah bottom and shifted his base to Orizaba.

In November, Street, probably at Richardson’s suggestion, took his

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 3, 564.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 654.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

³² *A.G.O.*, Sol G. Street file.

battalion on a raid into West Tennessee. He stopped first at Whiteville, where he rested for two days before moving to Cageville (now Alamo). He then moved through Dyersburg and after crossing the Obion River killed a well-known Unionist whom he described as “the notorious Tory Jim Dixon, who lost his life by refusing to surrender.” He continued north to Hickman, Kentucky, where he killed one Union soldier and captured nine men and forty horses before moving into Madrid Bend. There he continued his recruiting—actually conscripting—activities with some success and then started south. At Meriwether’s Ferry on the Obion River his rear guard was driven in by a detachment of the Second Illinois Cavalry. Two Confederates were killed, and Street himself and twenty-nine of his command were captured.³³ The Union commander lost no time in reporting his trophy: “I attacked the devils at Meriwether’s Ferry at noon yesterday. I whipped them and killed eleven men and also took Sol Street and 55 men, also one wagon load of arms and some horses.”³⁴ “Colonel” Street, however, was not one to remain long in durance. After being a prisoner for about twelve hours he made his escape and overtook his command near Whiteville, where he learned that some of his horses had escaped near Reelfoot Lake. Immediately he retraced his steps to Madrid Bend, drove off a Union force engaged in conscription duty, retrieved most of his lost horses, and then settled down to a conscription campaign of his own.³⁵

While Street was fighting Yankees and conscripting men and horses in Kentucky and West Tennessee, Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest was at Okolona creating an army with which to invade his home state of Tennessee. He had been led to believe that Richardson would bring about a thousand men to his colors; but that hope proved illusory as Richardson’s men, Street among them, were scattered far and wide. The indefatigable Forrest, however, did not let the absence of Richardson’s men deter him. On December 3 he crossed the state line near Saulsbury, while Chalmers and Lee made an opening for him by diversionary attacks at Moscow and Ripley. Once inside Tennessee, Forrest and his 450 men began an intensive recruiting and conscription campaign, and when they slipped back into Mississippi on the night of December 27, the command numbered more than three thousand men. Many of them were untrained, more had no arms, many were unwilling conscripts; but they were the material from which their commander forged one of the greatest cavalry

³³ Sol G. Street to R. V. Richardson, December 1863, in *A.G.O.*, Sol G. Street file.

³⁴ *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXXI, pt. 1, 570.

³⁵ Sol G. Street to R. V. Richardson, December 1863, in *A.G.O.*, Sol G. Street file.

organizations in the long history of war.³⁶ Street's battalion, and the men and horses he had gathered in Madrid Bend, were among the troops that poured across the state line that wintry night.

On January 25, 1864, Forrest formally organized his newly created "Forrest's Cavalry Department," which included all cavalry commands in North Mississippi and West Tennessee. General Order no. 2, dated the same day, grouped his scattered units into four small brigades. Street's battalion, with Marshall's regiment, Catlin's command, and the Twelfth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Tennessee formed the First Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General R. V. Richardson.³⁷ On February 4 the Fifteenth and Sixteenth regiments and Street's battalion were combined to form the Fifteenth Tennessee, commanded by Colonel F. M. Stewart. On the same day Street was appointed Major.³⁸

Until he came under the command of Forrest, Street had been a daring and, in his own sphere, a brilliantly successful leader, but he had never been a good subordinate. He changed almost instantly, and from a reckless individualist was transformed into a "good hand" even by the exacting Forrest standard. One result of the transformation was that his name dropped from the records. No longer was he Sol Street, the famous guerrilla, but now he was Major Street of the Fifteenth Tennessee. He did not participate in the Sooy Smith campaign of February 1864, having been left in Central Mississippi; but under the command of Colonel J. J. Neely, who succeeded Richardson as brigade commander on March 9, he took part in Forrest's campaign in West Tennessee and Kentucky in March and April, the campaign was highlighted by the capture of Fort Pillow. At the conclusion of that campaign his career came to a sudden end near the scene of some of his greatest triumphs.

On May 2 Forrest closed his headquarters at Jackson, Tennessee, sent his long trains southward to Corinth, and moved with most of his command, including Street's men, to Bolivar. There he skirmished with an expedition sent from Memphis under the command of General Samuel D. Sturgis, and bivouacked a few miles south of the town. While Street was riding into the camp, a young soldier named Robert Galloway shot him, inflicting a mortal wound. Years later Galloway related that Street's band had killed his father for the purpose of robbing him, but had been

³⁶ The movements of Forrest during this period are taken from Robert S. Henry, *First with the Most Forrest*, 203-216.

³⁷ *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. XXXII, pt. 2, 614.

³⁸ *A.G.O.*, Sol Street File.

frightened away before they found his money; another version, told by members of the Street family, is that Street had burned Galloway's cotton to keep it from falling into Federal hands. But whatever the facts were, young Galloway—he was only sixteen years old—enlisted in the Confederate army and when Street was pointed out to him by a friend during the fighting at Bolivar, lost no time in taking his revenge. He escaped after the shooting, but was captured and taken before Forrest, who in a towering rage told him that a drumhead court martial would see that he was shot at sunrise. He managed, however, to escape during the night and made his way to the Union lines at Memphis. After the war he moved to Illinois.³⁹

So ended the career of Sol Street, who operated on a small scale and in a comparatively obscure theatre of war, but who was yet one of the most successful and most feared of the Confederate partisan commanders.

³⁹ Private Hubbard's Notes, in Robert S. Henry, ed., *As They Saw Forrest*, 156-157.