

# Civil War

After the War with Mexico, interest in the militia faded. Again, it must be remembered that Arkansas was still a very sparsely populated state. In 1860, with a total population of 435,450, the five largest cities in Arkansas were Little Rock (3,727), Camden (2,219), Fort Smith (1,530), Pine Bluff (1,396) and Fayetteville (967).

While militia units did exist - the Little Rock Guards are one example – there is little evidence to document militia activity prior to 1860. However, by 1861, with the nation in a turmoil over the secession issue, the militia was growing strong in Arkansas. There were two regiments in Pulaski County, four companies in Phillips County, two in Jefferson County, and at least one in Prairie, White, Saline, Hot Springs, Montgomery, Monroe and St. Francis counties.

For Arkansas, the Civil War started about three months before the shelling of Fort Sumter. On February 5, 1861 militia companies began assembling on Little Rock. These units made it clear that they had come to take the Little Rock Arsenal in response to an order from Governor Rector, who denied any knowledge of such an order. Regardless, in order to prevent bloodshed, the Arsenal's commander, Captain Totten, offered to evacuate the Arsenal if his command was assured safe passage out of Arkansas. Governor Rector agreed, and on February 8, 1861, the Arsenal was occupied by the militia units.

After the shelling of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, military activities in Arkansas increased. President Lincoln issued a proclamation on April 15<sup>th</sup> calling for 75,000 troops from the "Militia of the several states" to impose law in the seceding states, with details coming from the War Department. Arkansas' Adjutant General responded to the War Department on April 27<sup>th</sup>:

Sir: I am directed by his excellency the governor to acknowledge the receipt for Special Orders, No. 106, from the War Department at Washington. That order is based on the presumption of the State of Arkansas being willing to furnish the quota of troops required of her for the Federal Army - -a presumption entirely improbable, and, I can assure you, utterly impossible.

Further, I have to inform you that I had the honor on Tuesday night, April 23, 1861, at Fort Smith, to order the seizure of the person of Maj. R. C. Gatlin, Fifth Infantry, as prisoner of war, and who is now at large on parole of honor not to serve against the State of Arkansas or the Southern Confederacy.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant.

EDMUND BURGEVIN

Adjutant General of Arkansas



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