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James Fleming Fagan (1828–1893)

James Fleming Fagan was a politician and United States marshal from [Little Rock \(Pulaski County\)](#) who is best remembered for his service as a Confederate general. Fagan's service to the Confederacy includes leading Arkansas troops at the [Battle of Shiloh](#), the [Battle of Helena](#), and the [Action at Marks' Mills](#).

Born in Clark County, Kentucky, on March 1, 1828, James Fagan was the older of two sons of Steven and Catherine Fagan. The family moved to Little Rock in 1838, where Fagan's father worked as a plasterer during the construction of the [Old State House](#) before his death in 1840. Two years later, his mother married Samuel Adams, who was a former state representative, current state senator, and future state treasurer and acting governor.

Fagan fought with the Arkansas Mounted Volunteers unit during the [Mexican War](#) and achieved the rank of lieutenant. At the end of the war, Fagan returned to run his stepfather's farm in [Saline County](#). He also served as a [Whig](#) in the state House of Representatives from 1852 to 1853 and in the Senate from 1860 to 1862. In 1851, Fagan married Mura Ellisiff Beal, with whom he had three daughters before she died in 1869. He later married Lizzie Rapley.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Fagan quickly raised a company of volunteers for military service. This company became part of the [First Arkansas Infantry Regiment](#). The unit was organized in Lynchburg, Virginia, on May 19, 1861, where Fagan was elected colonel. The First Arkansas was present at the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run) on July 21, 1861, where, late in the day, it supported an artillery battery. The unit spent much of the next year on garrison duty near Fredericksburg, Virginia. In February 1862, the regiment was transferred to the Confederate Army of the Mississippi. On April 6–7, 1862, the First Arkansas participated in the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee, where it suffered a forty-five-percent casualty rate.

Fagan left the regiment on July 11, 1862, and received a promotion to brigadier general on September 12. He was transferred to the Trans-Mississippi Department and was placed in command of a brigade that consisted of the Twenty-seventh, Twenty-fourth, Thirty-fifth, and Hawthorn's Arkansas Infantry regiments. The brigade was placed under the command of Lieutenant General [Theophilus Holmes](#), commander of the Confederate District of Arkansas.

Early in the summer of 1863, Holmes was ordered to help relieve some of the pressure being placed on Vicksburg, Mississippi, by the Union army. Holmes decided to attack [Helena \(Phillips County\)](#), a Union stronghold on the Mississippi River.

Fagan's brigade followed the rest of the army from Little Rock toward Helena and traveled on trains and steamboats for most of the journey. The Confederate army was reunited outside Helena on July 3, 1863, and the attack was launched the next day.

Holmes ordered the attack to begin at daybreak, and under these instructions, Fagan launched his attack at first light. Major General Sterling Price, who commanded the units left of Fagan's brigade, did not begin his attack until dawn, fully an hour later. Fagan's men took some rifle pits but were unable to capture Battery D, their main objective. More than half of the casualties suffered by Fagan's division were men who were pinned down by fire from positions that Price was supposed to attack and capture.

Fagan and his men retreated back to Little Rock, which fell to Union forces from Helena on September 10, 1863. Retreating with the rest of the army into southwestern Arkansas, Fagan was soon given command of a cavalry division.

The next action that Fagan participated in was repulsing the Camden Expedition. Fagan commanded the Confederate forces in the Action at Marks' Mills, a resounding victory for the Confederates. His division participated in the pursuit of Brigadier General Frederick Steele toward Little Rock, and at the end of the campaign, Fagan was promoted to major general on April 25, 1864.

Fagan led his Arkansas division in Price's raid across Missouri in the autumn of 1864 and returned to take command of the District of Arkansas in December 1864. Fagan continued in that post until the surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Department in May 1865. He was paroled on June 20, 1865.

After the war, Fagan accepted an appointment from President Ulysses S. Grant and served as a United States marshal from 1875 to 1877. In 1877, he became the receiver for the Land Office in Little Rock and served in that position until 1890, when he was defeated in his campaign for state railroad commissioner. He also commanded some of Joseph Brooks's militia during the Brooks-Baxter War.

Fagan died in Little Rock on September 1, 1893, and he is buried there in Mount Holly Cemetery.

For additional information:

Morrow, Jno. P., Jr. "Confederate Generals from Arkansas." *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 21 (Autumn 1962): 231–246.

Warner, Ezra J. *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959.

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Last Updated 6/1/2009

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