

Alden McLellan, Sr.:
Last Services to the Confederacy

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Introduction

This narrative was written by Alden McLellan Sr. in about 1905. It describes the last months of his experience during the war. A cover page by his grand-daughter Anna McLellan Kastler says:

War Record, 1861-1865

Written by my Grandfather Alden McLellan (probably about 1905) (his own hand), given me by my father Wm. H. McLellan in 1933 when we cleaned the attic at 2108 Nap.[oleon] Ave.[nue] for him.

This note implies that it covers earlier years, but the dates seem only a way to designate which war (i.e., the "1861-1865" War), not to say that it covers all four years. It appears to be a self-contained narrative. The occasion for the document is not recorded, nor is the reason why he chose solely to record the last months of his war experience and leave out earlier memories. If it wasn't written simply for his family or posterity, perhaps it was written to present at a veterans' gathering or some other occasion, or perhaps as a draft for publication (though I don't know of any writings he may have published); these are only guesses, however.

Blakely (or Blakeley), the battle which McLellan describes, was part of US Maj. Gen. Canby's operation to secure the city of Mobile. Before Blakely, the town of Spanish Fort had fallen on April 8th to a brief siege, after which the US troops moved to secure the position at Blakely. The Battle at Blakely happened on what was basically the last day of major hostilities during the war, Sunday, April 9th, 1865. Lee had surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia just a few hours before the start of the "general" attack McLellan describes, shortly after 5 pm. As he also describes, however, hostilities continued for some weeks. In a discussion with his father in prison weeks later he still believed the war was ongoing, though his father did not, and after this, in the first days of May, several other prisoners on board his steamboat to Vicksburg were considering

an overthrow of their guards to escape. The South did not simply turn off its rebellion during the second week in April.

During the battle he describes being deployed against a unit of "negro troops"; these were the 73rd US Colored Troops (USCT), which fought in actions both on the afternoon leading up to the battle in several forays—McLellan describes combating these attacks—as well as in the assault (during which, as he describes, McLellan was helping in the field hospital). Hollandsworth's description of their role compliments McLellan's narrative:

At 5:45 p.m., the Union troops on the left advanced for a final assault. [Brig. Gen. William A.] Pile ordered his brigade forward, and the 73rd USCT rushed toward the Confederate fortifications. The abatis slowed them down, but the black soldiers kept going. Fortunately, most of the Confederate rifle fire passed overhead. Within minutes the black troops captured seven pieces of artillery and some prisoners. Some of the Confederates ran towards a white Union division on the left to avoid being captured by black soldiers. They need not have been worried, for Pile's men exhibited "excellent discipline" and treated their captives as prisoners of war.¹

As he describes his subsequent treatment as a prisoner on Ship Island McLellan's narrative also several times gives evidence of the USCT's professionalism, often in comparison to the lack of discipline shown by the white guards.

Ship Island, a long, narrow strip of sand and grass at the mouth of Mobile Bay, had been a prison holding Confederates since shortly after New Orleans had fallen to Farragut in spring of 1862. Forts stood there left over from the War of 1812. Units stationed there at the time included companies of the 74th USCT.² Its size has since been severely diminished by several hurricanes, including Katrina.³

¹ James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1995): 101-02.

² Hollandsworth, *Louisiana Native Guards* 99-100.

³ Natasha Trethewey, in "Elegy for the Native Guards," *Southern Spaces*, 10 June 2005, <http://www.southernspaces.org/contents/2005/trethewey/1b.htm>, includes modern images of Ship Island before and after Katrina next to illustrations of its history, including pictures of the USCT companies which were stationed there.

One aspect of the narrative which stands out is the bureaucracy and the travel involved. During the months as a prisoner McLellan moves from Blakely to the shore by a march, by boat to Ship Island, by boat to New Orleans and then by a march to jail, by boat to Vicksburg, and then by a march to be paroled; after release he travels by boat back to New Orleans. Documents are required at each point.

This Transcription

Rather than an edition, what follows is a literal transcription of McLellan's text, including his strike-outs (some of which actually help make sense of his story), spelling, and grammar. The only change is that at times punctuation has been silently, but sparingly, added for readability. Square brackets [xxxx] surround all text which has been added, and carats ^xxx^ surround text which he superscripted in his document, presumably while proofreading. I have added occasional footnotes in the document; these were not in the original, of course. The superscripts and strikeouts suggest that the document was re-read by him for accuracy, though he also seems to have written it straight through at a sitting.

Forty years ago I gave my last services to the Confederacy. It was at Blakely Alabama on the Apalachie [*sic* – *Appalachee*] river about fifteen miles from Mobile April 9th 1865. I was with the 1st Missouri Brigade¹ under ~~Col. Elijah Gates, Commanding~~ Capt. A. C. Danner² Brigade Quartermaster, Commanded by Col. Elijah Gates,³ under Brig. Genl. F.M. Cockrell.⁴ We left Mobile on March 24th 1865 by boat. After arriving at Blakely our command went out several times but did not have any serious engagement until after the investment of the place ^April 28th^ by a heavy force of Federals, & upon the evacuation of Spanish Fort which occurred on the night of 7th April, that garrison passing Blakely on the 8th April on their way to Mobile. Then the whole Federal force ^about 20,000^ attacked Blakely. Our work extended in a circle about 3,000 yards each flank on the river. We had about 27,000 men many of them the old & young [*page 2*] reserves from Alabama who occupied the right of our work. The Missouri & other troops occupied the center and left. About 5pm on Sunday April 9th 1865 the attack was general. The Missouri troops being sent to the left on two occasions to repulse some negro troops there. About this time the Federals came over our work on our right and moved down toward the left. When we saw this many made their way to the river but there was ~~but~~ little or no means of escape except in a few old boats & planks. About this time I was at the field hospital being detained by the surgeon in charge to assist in amputating a leg of a wounded man ^which I was required to hold above the knee^. As soon as I could be spared the Hospital Steward ^& I made a^ run for a wharf to get planks to escape. I was on the wharf throwing down four planks.

¹ The 1st Missouri had a long history during the war which began in December 1861, and included service at Vicksburg and Franklin; it's not clear how long McLellan served in the unit.

² This would be Albert Cary Danner from Mobile, Alabama.

³ Col. Elijah Gates (1827-1915) had commanded Missouri units in the Mississippi theatre throughout the war. He had been captured at least twice, and had lost his left arm at the Battle of Franklin.

⁴ This would be Francis Marion Cockrell (1834-1915), also wounded at Franklin, and after the war, from 1875, a U.S. Senator from Missouri for 30 years.

The steward took two & I came down to get my plank but another fellow was floating off on them. By this time the Federals were on the bluffs of the river, about 100 yards off, and were firing at every thing in the river [page 3] some of the shots whizzing quite near to me. I concluded not to take a plank ride just then, and was busy fastening a \$20 gold piece in the lining of my cap and dropping my watch into my boot leg, when a Federal called out "Say you fellow with a green shirt on come up or you will get hulled (shot) next time." I made my way to the bluff where others of our men were. In a short while a Federal Corporal and one man took another officer & I and we started for the rear. When we got at the work there was several explosions. Some of the incoming victorious troops had got where the subterra shells that we had placed in front of the work and were more or less injured. They talked very ugly towards us so our guard had us sit down ^a little in one side^ until the troops ^had^ passed. On our way to the rear our guard ^we^ stopped at a wagon train and ^our guard^ got us some coffee & crackers. While there a Federal abussed [sic] us for being rebels & our Guard told him to leave but he did not [page 4] until the Guard gave him a slap that rolled him over and told him to go off and attend to his mules. We then were taken to where the other prisoners were bivouacked for the night. The next morning we started for Greenwood, on the east shore of Mobile Bay. After going about three miles we were counter march into the abandoned Spanish Fort, which was under fire of a ^Confederate^ Battery in the march towards Mobile. (Since, I have learned it was Battery Gladden in charge of our late Maj. E. Durrive⁵). After remaining in the Fort a while we again started for Greenwood and the next day was shipped by transport to Ship Island off the coast of Mississippi.

⁵ This would be Capt. Edward Durrive, Jr.; according to Arthur Bergeron, Jr., *Guide to Louisiana Confederate Military Units 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989) 127, 129 he was in charge of a company in the 23rd Louisiana Infantry, later combined into the 22nd Infantry. Several companies of the 22nd participated in the defense of Spanish Fort. Bergeron does not record that he worked in an artillery battery. Durrive's war record describes him as a "General and Staff Officer."

The troops captured at Blakely were the 1st Missouri Brigade Col. Elijah Gates, the Alabama boy reserves, Genl. Thomas,⁶ part of Holtzclaw's Brigade,⁷ Barry's Miss. Brigade⁸ [*sic*], 1st Miss. Light Artillery & several Light Batteries, Gens. St. John Liddell⁹ and F. M. Cockrell, about 2700 men. The General Officers were not taken to Ship Island.

^After arriving on the Island^ we were correlled on the sand just below the Light House, and the men next beyond us ^all under negro guards^. When we landed we were halted, and the men were passing a short distance from us [page 5] when a tall Arkansaw fellow held up is [*sic*] hand and called out to his Captain, "Hello Captain the bottom rail is on top." Then the nigger guard made a lunge at him with his gun. The bayonet struck the man's hip, who made a jump pressing his hand on his hip. The limit or dead line of our Camp was a low ridge made by scraping the sand. The men had no protection from sun or rain. The officers had small A tents. The rations were good. The water bad, as we only got the seepage [*sic*] from barrels sunk $\frac{3}{4}$ their length in the sand near our camp. The wood we had to bring 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles from east end of the Island. While on the Island the news came of the assination [*sic*] of President Lincoln. This was an unfortunate thing for the Southern Country and we felt the effects of it right then, by the guards treating us very ugly, abusing & shooting us when ever an opportunity offered. One night a man stood up to shake the sand from his blanket, he was shot. Capt. J.W. Barklay¹⁰ of the 1st Mo. Cavalry and I was preparing a meal by a pile of sand, that we had fixed for the purpose, and

⁶ General Thomas was in command of the "boy reserves," so-called because they were composed largely of school-age boys.

⁷ Called Clayton's Brigade earlier in the war, from Alabama. This would be James Thadeus Holtzclaw (1833-1893), who had fought in a long series of battles including Shiloh in 1862 where he had been badly wounded. He was apparently in command of a combination of several units at Spanish Fort and Blakely.

⁸ This unit is not clear; there was a company of the 35th Mississippi called "Barry's Guards."

⁹ Gen. St. John Liddell (1815-1870) was in charge of an Arkansas Brigade during the war which had fought at, among other battles, Chickamauga. Liddell was second in command at Blakely, and had apparently been in charge of constructing the fortifications (the "work") there.

¹⁰ John W. Barclay is recorded as a 1st Lt. and then an Asst. Quartermaster in the 1st Missouri Cavalry.

the Captain was telling of something that occurred to him – before the war [page 6] he used the word "nigger." Immediately the guard who was passing, and heard the word, commenced abusing us for calling them "niggers" and he make such a noise that the officer of the guard & others of the guard came to him. Then we left and went into our tents and laid down. ~~While on the Island~~ I received a box from Home containing a pair of pants & a blanket which I was much in need of, and other small things, some of which was taken before it reach me. We were on this Island about three weeks, then were transported to New Orleans.

There was an amusing thing occurred between the white & colored troops as we left the Island. When we went on board the transport the colored guard was stopped. They had come prepared to go on the transport, and there was several consultations between officers of white & colored troops before the colored guards were allowed to come on board, and then they were required to keep themselves at the bow of the boat. The white soldiers were not friendly toward their colored comrades. At midnight the colored guards went on duty, then all prisoners had to keep inside the boat. The relief that occurred near me was very unmilitary. The colored guard [page 7] approached in proper form & saluted and asked for instructions. The white guard, who was leaning on his gun, look at the relief very surly and said "stand there" and walked off trailing his gun.

We arrived at Milneburg before day and was placed in Bath Houses until the train took us to Elysian Fields street depot. From there we marched to St. Joseph, between Carondelet & Baronne streets, where we stood in the middle of that street for some time until we got instructions from some officer quartered in that vicinity where to place us. While here, the Citizens living nearby kindly brought us Coffee, Bread, Cigars, Tobacco, etc. which was largely scrambled for and thankfully received. We then marched to the Cotton Press on Press St. &

District which is now part of Depot of the N.O. & N.E. R. R. As we passed down Royal between Marigny and Mandeville streets I saw my aunt, Mrs. George McLellan,¹¹ and others of her family standing in front of their residence. I stepped outside the guard, to their astonishment, but was greeted cordially and affectionately, the white guards passing along, but when the colored man came along he soon motioned me into the ranks. While in Prison my father & mother visited me. The former wished me to remain, as he thought [page 8] that the war was over, but I didn't think as he did, and in a few days, about 200 of us were marched to the Levee in the 3rd District and put on the Hurrican [sic] Deck of the steam boat Mollie Able, Capt. Dan Able,¹² and taken to Vicksburg Miss. for exchange. The men came from Ship Island via the mouth of the Mississippi river. On the march from the Prison to the boat I was given more things than I could carry but my comrades helped me. As the boat was starting off my Father was waving his handkerchief to me, when a Federal officer compelled him to stop doing so.

Our trip in the Boat was very pleasant. Some of the Lady passengers played on the piano that was in the cabin. We had our heads in the sky light windows listening and singing such songs as we knew. The first morning out, Pilot Rich. Britton had Capt. Bradford and I up in the Pilot House taking coffee, but the guard soon had us down. I found in the state room of Pilot Britton a number of things for me having been placed there by my family. Through the kindness of Mr. Britton, agent of the Boat, Lieut. O.F. Guthrie of 1st Mo. Cav'y¹³ and I was allowed to get our meals at table in Cabin, except the night before [page 9, a short page] we arrived at

¹¹ This is the family of George Merrill McLellan and his wife, Victoria Depass. The couple had no children, so "others of her family" are George's in-laws. They were still living on Royal in the 1880 census, and in 1870 were living next to the household of Ann Depass, Victoria's mother, and her family.

¹² Capt. Dan Able was apparently from St. Louis, and the "Mollie Able" was a 296 ft. long "sidewheel wooden hull packet." (see <http://www.riverboatdaves.com/>). Richard Britton, mentioned below, does not appear on this index.

¹³ An "O.F. Guthrie," also apparently "O.T.," appears in the 3rd Battalion of the Missouri Cavalry, and in the 1st/3rd consolidated regiment of Missouri cavalry.

Vicksburg. When we was denighed [*sic*] that privilege because it was rumored that the Boat was to be captured by the Prisoners and landed so that we could escape – such was the case but several of us persuaded Col. Gates and those in favor of the capture not to do so ~~until we were taken above Vicksburg~~ [*page 10*] unless ^{^we were^} taken above Vicksburg. We landed at Vicksburg May 5th, 1865 and as we passed ashore Capt. Able said "I am very proud of you, but am pleased that you are landing."

While standing on Levee at Vicksburg a young Alabama officer was approached by some young negros, who told him that they had been slaves in his Father's family and they wanted to give him some money, but it was declined. Later they brought some eatables which was accepted, and the colored boys seemed pleased. We then was transported by train to the Big Black river where we was relieved from guard. The exchange Officer at Vicksburg as a compliment to us, us being the first batch of Exchange Prisoners for them, had put on the train a ration of sugar and coffee for each of us. Quite a number of us had sampled the sugar before this was known, but returned the unconsumed portion badly mixed with tobacco matches etc. with appologies [*sic*].

When we arrived on Ship Island all was required to deposit their money and valuables with the Federal Quartermaster and [*page 11*] were allowed to purchase from the sutler to the value of money deposited. When we were discharged all the valuables & balance of monies ^{^due to us^} were returned. The Rail Road from Big Black to Jackson Miss. had not been rebuilt and we walked to Jackson. When about five miles from Jackson three of us who were used up by the walk met a colored man with a mule & wagin, whom we persuaded (much against his will) to haul us to Jackson. I was unable to wear one boot on account of blistered foot. The next morning I was awoke from my couch in State House square by the passing of mounted men on

their way to cross the Mississippi river. Amongst them was a messmate of mine named Charles Crouch.¹⁴ When he saw me he called out "Go away drowned man. You were published in Mobile papers as being shot and drowned at Blakely," and ^he^ rode off, telling me I had better get to Maridian soon as our mess were dividing. It had been agreed by our mess, that if anything happened to any of the mess, his plunder was to be divided between those left. Hence I was [page 12] anxious to get to Maridian, and as I could not get a pass to go by the train, determined to try my luck so when Lieut. Anderson entered ^the train^ with a guard and told all that had no passes to get out, half the car left. When my turn came I held up an old pass and Anderson shoved it back & passed on. I had told him ^in the morning^ why I wanted to go to Maridian. At Maridian met my brother-in-law C. A. [sic] Fayssoux¹⁵ and Sam Rousseau,¹⁶ found my horse and other thing [sic] all right, stood in line all the afternoon and got my Parole being the last one signed that day. ^It was^ No. 200 dated May 10th 1865, signed by Col. W. R. Miles, CSA¹⁷ & Col. Henry Bertram 20 Wisconsin Vol. USA.¹⁸ That evening I got my horse and that of Capt. Fayssoux into a freight car and went to Mobile. There I tried several times ^during the day^ to get ^an order for^ transportation on the boat ^to New Orleans^ but failed. When the boat "N.P. Bank" was about ready to start, the Captain took our Paroles, went to the transportation office, and got order for transportation. The next morning (May 13, 1865) we arrived at West End. Our baggage was transported to the City on the Military R.Rd. then running along side New Basin

¹⁴ A Pvt. Charles Crouch appears in two cavalry regiments: Hardie's Battalion, Cav. Reserves for Alabama, and the 9th Regiment of Missouri Cavalry (Elliott's). It's not clear to me what "messmate" signifies: was this a relationship from training (like boot camp), or from campaigning, or from prison?

¹⁵ This is Callender Irvine Fayssoux, who married McLellan's sister Sarah Antoinette.

¹⁶ McLellan does not mention here whether he was a veteran, but a Private Samuel Rousseau appears in the 15th Regiment of the Louisiana Infantry (Co. K), which was Capt. Charles McLellan's regiment that had served under Lee in Northern Virginia.

¹⁷ Col. William R. Miles commanded the 32nd Regiment, also called Miles' Legion, of the volunteer Louisiana Infantry.

¹⁸ Col. Henry Bertram appears in the 20th Wisconsin Infantry; his unit had fought at Spanish Fort and Blakely.

Canal ^to St. Joseph^. Maj. Rich. [page 13] Robinson¹⁹ and I riding our horses home. My folks then lived on St. Mary corner Camp St. As I passed along New Basin & up Camp St. several persons waved their hands to me but usually look [sic] about and even stepped inside their doors or windows before doing so. My home coming was different from what I had expected. It was especially sad, not only on account of the failure of our cause, but of the absence of my dear Brother Capt. C.W. McLellan,²⁰ who was killed near Richmond Va. June 1/64. I found my folks quite well. I immediately went to work with my father ^W.H. McLellan^ then of the Firm of Nicholson & Co. Paving Contractors and Stone Dealers with yard & office at cor. Magazine & Robin St. They with Messrs. Henry Hart & John Petit had a franchise for the street Rail Road subsequently called the St. Charles St. RR Co.²¹ which they constructed in 1866. I was made secretary, & later President & superintendent where I was continually in service until 1899.

[page 14] I subsequently learned that the Hospital steward [sic] that got away on Planks from Blakely reported that when he was about half way across the river and the firing was the worst he heard a splash behind him and looked back, saw the two planks floating without any body on them, concluded I was shot and drowned, and so reported it in Mobile and the report got to New Orleans, but my mother was not told of it until after I was there a prisoner.

¹⁹ Maj. Richard S. Robinson appears in the 12th Regiment, 8th Division, Missouri Cavalry State Guard.

²⁰ Capt. Charles McLellan served in the 15th Louisiana Infantry in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia; he was killed just before the battle of Cold Harbor.

²¹ Joseph H. DeGrange worked for the St. Charles RR for much of his career after the war as well; it is very likely that he and McLellan met there. McLellan's son Alden Jr. married DeGrange's daughter Helen.