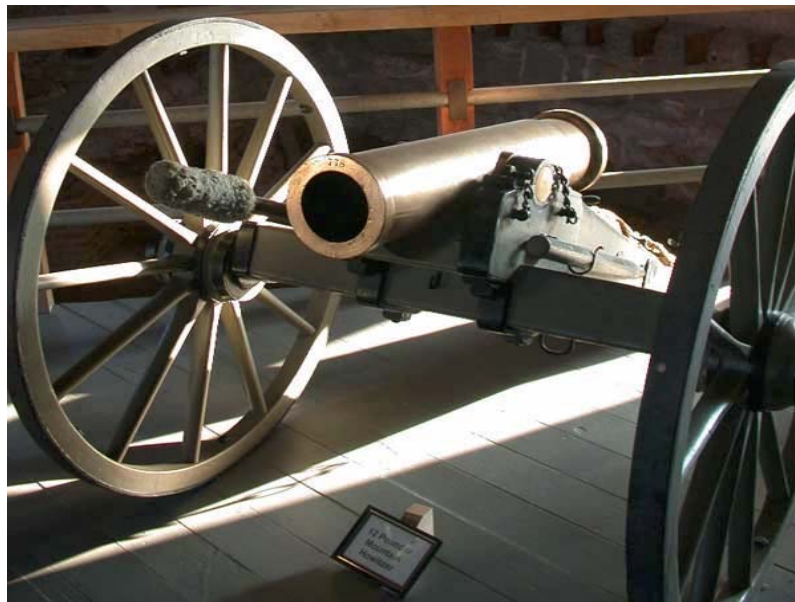


Bull Pup: The 1841 Mountain Howitzer

by

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Artillery has long been known as the queen of battle. Cannons first came into their own around the start of the nineteenth century. On Napoleonic-era battlefields all across Europe cannons devastated attacking infantry and it changed the course of a number of battles. The biggest limitation of the pieces was that they were large, heavy and cumbersome to move. The 1841 Mountain Howitzer, the smallest artillery piece and the one most neglected by historians, was invented by the French to fill the role of a lightweight, easily moveable gun that could keep up with infantry more easily than the bigger cannons. This gun has long been ignored, and yet the concepts that it embodied, including light weight and ease of movement, are in use even to today. Part of the reason it has been long ignored is that professional artillerymen, such as the Army of the Potomac's commander of artillery Major General Henry J. Hunt, felt that the howitzer was so outclassed that it was essentially useless. However, soldiers of other branches of the service were not as concerned with its short range as they were with its ability to magnify their own firepower in close-range duels between cavalry or infantry units.

The 1841 Mountain Howitzer was the smallest artillery piece to see any widespread use by the United States in the Mexican, Civil and Indian Wars. It was of light weight, but its short range turned many military officials against the gun. The mountain howitzer was most often made of bronze, with the barrel being 37 inches long and weighing only 220 pounds. By comparison the 12-pound Field Howitzer's barrel weighed 788 pounds, and the 1857 12-pound Napoleon Field Gun weighed 1,200 pounds. The howitzer was a 12-pounder, shooting the same projectiles as bigger 12-pounders, such as the Field Howitzer or the Bronze Napoleon, but it used less powder per round giving it a shorter range than that of other 12-pounders. It used half a pound of powder per round, as opposed to two and a half pounds in the Napoleon and a pound in the Field Howitzer. The Napoleon could fire a solid shot 1,619 yards at an elevation of 5 degrees, and the Field Howitzer could fire a shot 1,072 yards, while the Mountain Howitzer could only fire 970 yards. Rifled pieces outranged all of the smoothbores, with the 10-pound Parrot Rifle firing rounds 2,000 yards and the 3-inch Ordinance Rifle hitting targets up to 1,835 yards away. This short range quickly led to the Mountain Howitzer's replacement in most units on both sides in the Civil War.⁽¹⁾

However, in spite of its limitations, the Mountain Howitzer saw service in the 1846-1848 Mexican/American War and in various Indian conflicts both before and after the Civil War, in which it saw action in every theater. The Howitzer's 700+ pound weight meant it could keep up with fast-moving cavalry units. The piece was designed with two different carriages to allow it to be flexible for the army's changing needs. The Pack Carriage was designed so that three horses or mules with special saddles could transport the gun. One animal carried the barrel, another carried the carriage and a third carried the ammunition. The Prairie Carriage was similar to the carriages used by all the other field pieces. It was designed to be towed behind a two-wheeled cart, called a limber, by one or two animals, as opposed to the six that were required to move the Napoleon or the rifled guns. This conservation of horsepower made the piece popular in the South where horses were often hard to come by, and the ones on hand were in limited supply and often undernourished.⁽²⁾ This versatility made it very popular with the cavalry leaders on both

sides, such as Confederate commanders Nathan Bedford Forrest, John Singleton Mosby and John Hunt Morgan and with Union leaders John Chivington, Abel D. Streight, and James H. Wilson.

The mountain howitzer had a long duration of service, and served over much of the American continent. It was introduced to Federal service around 1840. The cannon was used in various Indian conflicts before 1846 and with numerous American units in the Mexican War. It resumed fighting in the Indian conflicts after 1848, serving almost continuously against various tribes until the end of the Indian Wars in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The howitzer was widely used by both sides in the bloody American Civil War. It saw action in conflicts over many thousands of square miles, ranging from Honduras to the Canadian border and from California to the defenses of Washington, D.C.

As a result of these factors the author has structured this thesis to present the record of the howitzer in the most concise manner, broken down by year and region. This will help to follow the evolution of its usage from a front-line artillery piece to its specialized use as a support for infantry and cavalry.

Primary sources were most important in identifying the usages of the mountain howitzer. Most historians neglect to distinguish between various types of artillery. They usually only refer to "artillery" or "cannons." The men who actually used the howitzers are usually the only ones who thought the mountain howitzer was important enough that it deserved specific identification. They also give insights into why the mountain howitzer was preferable in some situations to the bigger artillery pieces. Many of these cannoneers loved their howitzers, and did not want to exchange them for bigger cannons. They were the ones who had to haul them up the sides of steep mountains or keep up with swift-moving cavalry raids, and they appreciated the howitzer's light weight. Infantry and cavalry units that had attached mountain howitzers fought to keep them. They appreciated the extra firepower it brought to their skirmish lines. There is no shortage of first-hand accounts from all areas of the Civil War, and most who dealt with the howitzer had few complaints about its abilities and service.

1. Dean S. Thomas, Cannons: An Introduction to Civil War Artillery (Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1985), pp. 28-41.

2. Thomas, Cannons, p. 32.

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION

The development of a viable mountain artillery cannon began in France in 1821. The French had learned in the Napoleonic Wars that regular field artillery pieces were often too cumbersome to be able to go into many mountainous regions. The Spanish had used small howitzers that proved to be superior in mobility and usefulness to the opposing French guns. Development of a French model had stalled at the end of the Napoleonic era, but by 1821 the French army began again to look for a useful mountain gun. They tested 10 existing barrels from the earlier program and 50 prototype tubes, 30 guns and 20 howitzers. A gun was designed to shoot a projectile on a flat trajectory at a target, while the howitzer fired a round in a much higher, arcing flight. A howitzer could fire over friendly forces without the need of very much of an elevation, while guns required high elevations or clear fields of fire so that they did not endanger friendly soldiers. Finally they decided to go with the howitzer system for the new cannon.

Twenty-six prototypes were then tested and modified while looking for the optimum new system. On May 17, 1828, the French Ministry of War formally added the mountain howitzer to their inventory. Within a couple of years the French had developed the standard field carriage and the pack carriage for use with the new gun. The French never used the cannon in a war, but they licensed its production in America in the early 1830s.⁽¹⁾ In 1836 Secretary of War Lewis Cass added the French Mountain Howitzer to the artillery system of the United States Army. By 1839-1840 howitzers were beginning to equip several American artillery batteries.⁽²⁾ The Americans found ways to use the guns that had never occurred to the French, and they put it to widespread use against Indian warriors and each other.

Only three American companies are known to have produced mountain howitzer tubes, Cyrus Alger and Nathan P. Ames Companies of Boston, and Tredegar Iron Works of Richmond. Alger's foundry received the first contract to produce the mountain howitzer, and he delivered the first twelve tubes in May, 1837. Alger and Ames only produced a few barrels each year, but never in the large numbers that other types of artillery pieces were manufactured in, even in the tight budgets of the pre-Civil War years. By 1846 the ones made by Ames were only up to barrel number 25 in the army's records. In December, 1846, Ames received a contract to provide twelve new barrels to replace twelve lost in a shipwreck off the coast of Mexico in the war, but five of the "lost" barrels are known to exist today around the country. One was even found in the chapel at Fort Jay, Governor's Island, New York in its original packing crate, having never been removed or used after it was cast. The foundries also provided barrels for other buyers, such as one lost by Free-Staters in the fighting in Kansas in the 1850s, which later saw use by Missouri Confederates in the War. Two Alger barrels were also provided to the Navy for testing, and a smaller naval version would later see service with the Navy in every theater of the Civil War. Tredegar Iron Works of Richmond, the top Confederate foundry, is not known to have made any mountain howitzers before the War, but it did produce a few during the War for Southern use. Only 21 or so howitzers were known to have been made between February, 1862, and March, 1863, by Tredegar. Neither Ames nor Alger is known to have produced any barrels during the Civil War, but at least two Alger barrels have been found dated 1870 and with numbers outside of the original production series indicating that the army continued to see a use for them after the War was over. Over the production run these two companies made at least 442 mountain howitzers, 328 barrels by Alger and 114 by Ames.⁽³⁾

The following pages will detail much of the actions that the howitzer participated in throughout its career. These actions are broken down by theater and year. The combats described are exhaustive, but are probably not all inclusive.

1. Heinrich Dietz, "Guns of Interest," The Artilleryman, Spring, 1997, pp. 10-11.
2. William E. Birkhimer, Historical Sketch of the Organization, Administration, Materiel and Tactics of the Artillery, United States Army (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), p. 282.
3. James C. Hazlett, Edwin Olmstead, and M. Hume Parks, eds., Field Artillery Weapons of the Civil War (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1988), pp. 134-39 and 294-97.

CHAPTER 3: 1840s MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS

The mountain howitzer quickly entered active service with the small Army of the United States. In 1843, Philip St. George Cooke's 1st Dragoons used two Mountain Howitzers to end the rampage of a group of Texans along the Santa Fe Trail. "Colonel" Jacob Snively and a force of Texas Militiamen were raiding the Santa Fe Trail for goods which would aid the cause of the Texas Republic. Cooke cornered the Texans and induced their surrender by aiming the howitzers at them. Snively and his men quickly gave in to a superior force with two cannons. The light-weight howitzers had been able to keep up with a fast-moving force of cavalry through areas where heavier guns, which required more horses to move them, would have been unable to go.⁽¹⁾ "The Pathfinder" John C. Fremont took a Mountain Howitzer with his expedition from Fort Laramie, Wyoming to the Northwest Territory (Oregon and Washington) in 1843. The howitzer was intended to impress the Sioux and keep them from interfering with the expedition. He ended up losing the gun in a high mountain pass.⁽²⁾ The U. S. army decided to use howitzers in demonstrations for various Indian tribes to show them the might of America. In the spring of 1844 Major John A. Wharton and five companies of Dragoons demonstrated the howitzers for the Pawnees, Otoes and Sauks. Stephen Kearny had one to impress the Arapahos with in 1855. According to witnesses the Arapahos ran away and were very scared of the cannons and the exploding case shot they were firing.⁽³⁾

1. William A. Kupke, The Indian and The Thunderwagon: A History of the Mountain Howitzer (Tyrone, NM: Printed by the author, 1996), p. 9.
2. Ibid, p. 9.
3. Ibid, p. 9.

CHAPTER 4: THE MEXICAN/AMERICAN WAR OF 1846-1848

The Mountain Howitzer fared very well in the first war where it faced opposing artillery. Most of the howitzers saw action with the units fighting in what would soon become the southwestern United States. Stephen Kearny had several Mountain Howitzers with him as he moved along the Santa Fe Trail into New Mexico and then into California. He conquered New Mexico without a fight and soon moved off with part of his force to help conquer California. On December 6, 1846, Kearny, with 400 men and two howitzers, ran into a Mexican force at San Pascual, California, 40 miles east of San Diego. Kearny's force was surrounded at a location that was without water. Commodore Stockton sent 40 marines from San Diego to rescue Kearny. The reinforcements encountered the Mexicans and helped to drive them away, but not before Kearny's force had lost one of its howitzers to the Mexicans. The howitzer was later surrendered to John Fremont.⁽¹⁾ Kearny had left behind several howitzers with Sterling Price and the occupation forces in New Mexico. What had seemed to be a bloodless conquest of New Mexico ended on January 19, 1847 when local Mexicans and Pueblo Indians attacked the Americans at Taos, Mora, Arroyo Honda and the Rio Colorado.

Among the Americans killed in the uprising was Territorial Governor Charles Bent, Taos Sheriff Stephen Luis Lee, and circuit attorney James W. Leal. Sterling Price quickly departed Santa Fe with the 1st U. S. Dragoons and the 2nd Missouri Infantry to attack Taos which was the center of this rebellion. They had to fight at Canada and Embudo just to be able to reach Taos. On February 1-3, 1847, the U. S. forces battled the rebels around Taos, but were finally able to corner them in the nearby Pueblo and its church. They fired a six-pound Field Howitzer and four Mountain Howitzers at the thick adobe walls of the Pueblo and the church, but were not doing much damage to the walls. Holes were dug in the walls by the infantry, and shells from the howitzers were lit and rolled through the holes. Then the infantry rushed into the buildings and quickly conquered the rebellious locals. Price rounded up the leaders and executed 15 within a couple of weeks. This ended the resistance to American rule in the southwestern United States.⁽²⁾

In the early phases of the Mexican War Alexander Doniphan's Missouri force moved south from Santa Fe into Chihuahua to help conquer northern Mexico and join up with Zachary Taylor's forces. The Missouri Light Artillery Battalion was equipped with several batteries. Included was a section (two) of mountain howitzers, which were used against Mexican forces at Sacramento, Mexico on February 28, 1847. The section was detached from the rest of the Missouri Light Artillery's battery, and sent to the right to participate in an attack on the left flank of the Mexican forces. The Missouri Cavalry charged the Mexican lines and the howitzers accompanied them. The guns were unlimbered at fifty yards and they poured a destructive fire on the enemy's flank. This fire led to the rout of the Mexican forces and the fall of Sacramento. The Missouri soldiers captured two 9-pounders, one 6-pounder, seven 4-pounder cannons and three, small wall-mounted pieces.⁽³⁾ Doniphan's men soon joined with Zachary Taylor's forces and rather peacefully occupied most of northern Mexico.

Only a few mountain howitzers accompanied the main force under Winfield Scott into central Mexico. After the fall of Vera Cruz on March 27th the next American target was Jalapa. On April 8th David Twiggs led his division towards the town. It included a battery armed with mountain howitzers and rockets, and manned by detachments from the Ordnance Corps. They fired a few

rounds in the Battle of Cerro Gordo from April 12-18, but most of the Mexican guns were longer-range, heavier caliber and behind fortifications so the howitzers played only a minor part in the fighting.⁽⁴⁾ At Contreras, Mexico a United States battery under Lieutenant Franklin Callender fought on August 19th. Gideon Pillow ordered John B. Magruder's battery to keep the Mexican defenders occupied while infantry moved to attack them in the flank. Callender's battery was assigned to assist Magruder. The two batteries faced more and larger guns placed behind thick fortifications. The American guns were pounded by the Mexican pieces. Many of the cannoneers were wounded, including Franklin Callender. When night fell the decimated batteries were withdrawn. According to Magruder both of the batteries were crippled after that day's battle.⁽⁵⁾ Jesse Reno's battery fought at El Molino and Chapultepec. On September 12, 1847 Reno's howitzers were used to support a brigade of infantry in street fighting in El Molino. After the town was pacified Reno's howitzers helped to drive off multiple attacks from Mexican soldiers attacking from Chapultepec. On the 13th Reno's howitzers gave cover fire to Pillow's division as it attacked Chapultepec. They moved forward with the troops to give covering fire. The Americans were pinned at the base of the walls despite the attempts of the howitzers to drive off the Mexican defenders. In the end reinforcements joined Pillow's men and the fortress fell. The howitzers played an important part in the fall of the Mexican fortress.⁽⁶⁾

One of the most famous uses of mountain howitzers was by Hiram Ulysses Grant, better known as Ulysses S. Grant, at the San Cosme Gate of Mexico City. On September 13, 1847 American forces were approaching Mexico City from the southwest after the fall of Chapultepec. They were wanting to take two heavily fortified gates into the city, Belen and San Cosme. Grant was with the force attacking San Cosme. The Mexicans were entrenched behind stone walls and had artillery in the road to repulse any assaults. Grant and a force of volunteers crossed the road under a brisk covering fire from other Americans. He then discovered a church whose belfry would enable fire to be brought on the back of the San Cosme garrison. A force of Voltigeurs was discovered who had a mountain howitzer and Grant led them to the church. Several ditches were in-between the men and the church, but the howitzer was taken apart and the pieces carried by the men. They reached the church, climbed to the belfry and reassembled the gun. According to Grant their fire had a big effect on the morale of both the Mexican defenders and the Americans attempting to take the gate.

The shots from our little gun dropped in upon the enemy and created great confusion. . . . The effect of the gun upon the troops about the gate of the city was so marked that General Worth [commander of the forces attacking San Cosme] saw it from his position. . . . He expressed his gratification at the services the howitzer in the church steeple was doing, saying that every shot was effective, and ordered a captain of voltigeurs to report to me with another howitzer to be placed along with the one already rendering so much service. I could not tell the General that there was not room enough in the steeple for another gun.⁽⁷⁾

The mountain howitzer saw active service with many officers who would later use it in the Civil War and the Indian Wars which followed. They learned that it was out ranged by most other guns, but its light weight of the howitzer allowed it to keep up with the armies on the unimproved roads of Mexico and thus it proved its worth to many officers.

1. Ibid, p. 10.

2. John C. Waugh, Class of 1846: From West Point to Appomattox: Stonewall Jackson, George McClellan and Their Brothers (New York: Warner Books, 1994), pp. 84-86. Waugh discusses Price's military actions. Also, Kupke, The Indian and The Thunderwagon, p. 10. Kupke details the capture and execution of the ringleaders after the end of the rebellion at Taos.
3. Major M. Lewis Clark, Official Report of the Battle of Sacramento, March 2, 1847. Found at the University of Kansas Alexander Doniphan Web Site. Available: <http://kuhttp.cc.ukans.edu/carrie/kancoll/books/edwards/eapp.html>. 19 January 1997.
4. U. S. Office of the Chief of Military History, American Military History: Army Historical Series, pp. 175-76. Found at the Official Army Web Site. Available at: <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/amh/AMH-08.htm>. 22 June 1998.
5. Stephen W. Sears, George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1988), pp. 22-23.
6. Nathaniel C. Hughes, The Life and Wars of Gideon J. Pillow (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 98-101.
7. Ulysses S. Grant, Memoirs and Selected Letters: Personal Letters of U. S. Grant, Selected Letters 1839-1865 (New York: Library of America, 1990), pp. 105-09.

CHAPTER 5: 1850s MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS

In the summer of 1850 Companies G and I of the 1st Dragoons used a mountain howitzer at Rayado, New Mexico in an attempt to control the Navajos. There were never any battles with the Navajos, but the gun accompanied several punitive expeditions and it was fired as a demonstration on several occasions to discourage any resistance to American rule of the region.⁽¹⁾

Battery B, 2nd U.S. Artillery used them in a second campaign against the Navajos in Arizona and New Mexico in August-September 1851. Colonel Edwin V. Sumner led a U.S. force of several companies of infantry, four dragoon companies and Battery B, which had a 6-pound and a 12-pound field howitzer and two mountain howitzers. They departed Santa Fe on August 17th, heading first south to Albuquerque and then west to Cubero by the 27th of August. There they learned that Navajos had just raided the area and run off the towns livestock, so the Americans went in pursuit. They went all over northwestern New Mexico, in the area of modern Grants and Laguna Pueblo, in a vain attempt to attack the raiding Navajos. The American force recovered a number of stolen animals, but never encountered the Navajos they were pursuing. Finally the force gave up and returned to Santa Fe by September 24, 1851. The mountain howitzers were able to keep up through an area with little water or grass much easier than the larger howitzers because they required fewer horses to move them.⁽²⁾

Howitzers were used at Fort Laramie, Wyoming by the 6th U. S. Infantry. On August 19, 1854, Lieutenant John Grattan led a force of 6th Infantry and one mountain howitzer to retake a cow stolen by local Indians 15 miles east of Fort Laramie, Wyoming. The interpreter shouted insults at the warriors and acted like the Americans were planning to attack. The soldiers rode into the middle of the village and demanded the return of the cow and the arrest of the guilty parties. Historians are unsure what started the fighting or who fired first, but a short, brutal fight ensued. The soldiers and the warriors exchanged shots, and the mountain howitzer was also fired. In the end all of the soldiers were killed or died soon thereafter of their wounds. A larger force soon recovered the howitzer and the bodies. Within a year retaliatory expeditions began crushing all villages anywhere close to Fort Laramie who offered the least resistance to American domination. Dr. Robert Munkres points to this incident as the start of a period of almost a half-century of vicious and bloody Indian wars all over the western United States.⁽³⁾

The mountain howitzers saw a lot of action in the campaigns in the northwest against several different tribes. In 1856, U.S. Marines used them near Seattle. The Yakima and several other coastal tribes were fighting with American settlers. A force of 120 Marines, 55 local militiamen and one mountain howitzer skirmished with the Indians near Seattle and drove them away from the area.⁽⁴⁾ Another American unit used one at Big Meadow, Oregon. In March, 1856, U.S. regulars and Oregon Volunteers began a campaign to force most of the Indian tribes onto reservations and to end their resistance to American rule. A few small skirmishes were fought with the various hostile bands. Three bands had agreed to surrender to the Americans at Big Meadows, Oregon on May 26, 1856. 50 dragoons, 30 infantry and a mountain howitzer arrived to take the surrender, but the bands were not planning to give in without a fight. On the evening of the 26th two Indian women came to the American's camp and warned them that the bands were planning to attack the next day.

The U.S. force moved to a small, nearby hill and dug in. The battle began at 10:00 a.m. on the 27th when the Indians attacked from all sides at once, while others occupied nearby heights to snipe at the Americans. The howitzer and the infantry did most of the fighting as the short-range carbines carried by the dragoons were only useful when the assaults reached the defensive lines. The Americans improved their fortifications during the evening while the Indians kept up a constant harassing fire. A third of the U.S. force was killed or wounded, and a large portion of their ammunition was gone. The Indians massed for an assault from two sides on the tired Americans, but just as they began their assault reinforcements arrived to relieve the pinned-down Americans. The Indians were attacked from both sides at once and quickly routed. The howitzer enabled the trapped force to beat off several assaults and then helped break the back of the major Indian resistance in Oregon.⁽⁵⁾

Several mountain howitzers saw action in William Walker's 1856-1857 Nicaraguan Campaign. Nicaragua in the 1850s had few road systems and what roads were in existence were in very poor condition. The howitzers were the best cannon for fighting in the rugged hills and thick jungles which any army would have to move in. William Walker bought several cannons from America after his initial conquest of the country, including several mountain howitzers. In September and October, a rebellion began against his rule, led by conservative Nicaraguans and the armies of several neighboring states. On October 11th Walker attacked General Belloso's army at Masaya. Two howitzers were set up on a nearby hill and used to shell troops in a small plaza. A few

rounds and a charge by the infantry caused the enemy forces to break and retreat. Walker had to retreat when he found that his capital at Granada was under assault. Walker's force was shelled by artillery as they neared the capital, and a howitzer was rushed forward. It fired one blast at the enemy's battery, decimating the enemy cannoneers and Walker's men were soon able to seize it.

The rapid return of Walker saved Granada and the howitzers were vital to his successes against much larger armies with larger guns. Eventually the howitzers, and all of Walker's other artillery, were spiked and dumped in swamps before he was forced to leave the country in the early fall of 1856. The howitzers were the optimum type of gun for this region with few roads and thick forests.⁽⁶⁾

Once again mountain howitzers served in a second major campaign in the northwest in 1858. The U. S. Infantry used them against the Palouse Indians in Washington. The Indians had raided the Walla Walla Valley and killed two men. The other settlers petitioned the army to do something to stop the Palouses. Edward Steptoe led 158 horsemen out of Fort Walla Walla on May 6th to stop the raiding. This force included two mountain howitzers and a detachment of mounted U. S. Infantrymen to man them. They pursued the Palouses north into the lands of the friendly Coeur d' Alene and Spokanes. On May 14th Steptoe was warned that the Spokane planned to resist his entry into their land. He ignored the warning and kept pursuing the Palouses. On May 16th the soldiers discovered 1,000 Spokane, Yakima and Couer d'Alene drawn up awaiting them. A brief parley was held, in which Major Steptoe told the Indians that he was not planning to attack anyone, but was going to Colville, Washington to bring peace between the local Indians and the Anglo settlers. This seemed to satisfy the Indian leaders, but Steptoe decided to find a defensible position just in case the Indian force decided to attack him.

After the soldiers moved to place their backs to a nearby lake the talks with the hostile Indians resumed. The Indian leaders informed Steptoe that they considered his roundabout route to Colville, and the two mountain howitzers with his force, as proof that he had hostile intentions toward them. The leaders told him that there would be no canoes for him at the Spokane River, and that they would destroy his canoes on the Snake River to keep him from returning to Fort Walla Walla. Early on Monday May 17th the U.S. force began retracing its steps to leave the area and prevent a war from starting. At 8:00 a.m. some warriors opened fire on the rear of the column, but the soldiers did not return fire. Soon the whole column came under hostile rifle fire. The soldiers were able to occupy a nearby hill, and the howitzers were able to open an impressive, but relatively inaccurate, fire on the hostile warriors. Eventually all of the soldiers reached the hill. The soldiers began to move again as they headed for the needed water at the nearby To-hoto-nim-me Creek. The Indians pressed in on all sides of the column trying to break it. Major Steptoe decided to find a defensive position and dig in. A hill south of the creek was the chosen site. The men dug in while one howitzer was placed to fire down the slope and the other to fire along a nearby ridge. When the men were down to only a few rounds of ammunition each the Indians backed off their attacks, waiting for the next morning to wipe out the soldiers.

Major Steptoe decided not to wait for the next morning, but rather to get away while it was dark. Nez Perce scouts were sent to find a way through the Indian lines, while the howitzers were dismounted and buried. The Indians soon found the hill abandoned, but they did not pursue as the abandoned goods and equipment held their attention. Steptoe's command had lost twelve

soldiers and three allied Indians killed, ten soldiers wounded, 29 horses lost, and a large amount of equipment lost or abandoned. The hostile warriors admitted to losses around nine killed and 40 to 50 wounded. The soldiers soon ran into reinforcements from Fort Walla Walla and the safety of American lines.⁽⁷⁾

In August the army was searching for some of the Palouses who had killed Americans and then hid among the Yakimas. Several suspects were caught and executed, but the leading warriors were still at large. A force was organized to chase them down, and left Fort Walla Walla on August 27th. It included four companies of the 1st Dragoons, four companies of the 3rd Artillery acting as infantry, two companies of the 9th Infantry, 30 Nez Perce scouts and an artillery company with two mountain howitzers. They finally found Indian warriors on August 30th when they reached the Spokane Plain. On September 1st they ran into 500 Indians at four nearby lakes with more waiting in a nearby tree line. The 9th Infantrymen and one of the howitzers were sent to attack the Indians in the trees, while the dragoons and artillerymen attacked those out in the open. The howitzer fired a number of rounds and forced the Indians out onto the plain. There the combined infantry, artillery and finally the charge of the dragoons routed the Indians. The Americans pursued for a mile, but were unable to keep up with the faster and fresher Indian ponies. The howitzer fired a few rounds to scatter any small bands that would mass in the distance. The fire of the howitzer had decimated the Indians and enabled the Americans to win the Battle of the Four Lakes without any of the soldiers being killed or wounded. The Indians lost 20-60 killed and numerous others wounded.

On September 5th the force resumed its march across the Spokane Plain, where 500-700 Indians attempted to challenge their advance by attacking the flanks of the Americans. Both howitzers shelled the Indians, and knocked a limb onto one of the rogue chieftains severely injuring him. Soon the infantry and howitzers broke the Indians resistance and pursued them for 25 miles. Any pockets of resistance were easily broken up by the infantry or the howitzers. The Battle of Spokane Plain was similarly bloodless for the Americans, with only one wounded and none killed. Within two days peace overtures were extended by all of the hostile tribes, and ended any serious resistance to the influx of American settlers.⁽⁸⁾ The mountain howitzer played an important part in ending the Indian resistance. It was once again able to keep up with a fast-moving force through areas where larger guns would have bogged down, and it became the most-used gun in the Indian Wars.

San Juan Island off the Pacific coast of Washington was a flash point that almost started a third British/American war. The island had been claimed by both countries and the 1846 Oregon Treaty did not settle the question of who owned the island. While, both nations had settlers and officials on the island. The British had the largest number of people on the island. At the start of July a British-owned breeding boar escaped its enclosure and helped itself to the vegetable garden of a nearby American settler. The angry American shot the pig and was threatened with legal action by its British owner. A few hours later a delegation of British officials, including the governor's son-in-law, heatedly interrogated the Yankee and threatened to take him to a British jail. The settler then pointed out to the officials that he could treat them as he had the trespassing pig. They hastily retreated, but returned the next day with a squad of constables. They could not catch the Yankee because he had fled to the house of another American. Finally word of the British behavior reached the American department commander, General William Selby. He

disliked the English and rushed a detachment of American soldiers to the island to protect the rights of their settlers.

On July 27th a ship landed on the island, with a future Confederate general, Captain George Pickett, a six-pound field piece, two mountain howitzers, and 54 enlisted men. They quickly dug in and pointed the cannons along the most likely routes the British would have to take to attack them. British Governor Sir James Douglas threatened to jail Pickett and his men, while Pickett issued his own threats to arrest British leaders. Things continued to heat up for the next couple of weeks. The British continued to rush their own military forces to the area, and by the end of August three warships and a thousand soldiers, seamen and marines were on or around the island to stop the Americans from taking control. General Harney also sent more men and cannons to Pickett's fort. Eventually word of the dispute reached the respective governments in London and Washington, and they quickly came down hard on their posturing leaders in the region. Neither government was willing to start a war over something as small as a pig, and tensions on the island quickly eased.⁽⁹⁾

Colonel John Gibbon commanded Battery B, 4th Artillery in the late 1850s. It was equipped with four howitzers, while it assisted in the occupation of Utah after the 1859 Mormon War. They never fired them at the rebellious Mormons, but the howitzers did play a part in ensuring their compliance with the will of the United States government.⁽¹⁰⁾ By the late 1850s most front-line artillery units were replacing their mountain howitzers with bigger smooth bores, such as the Napoleon, or rifled guns, such as the 10-pound Parrot.

1. Kupke, The Indian and The Thunderwagon, p. 11.
2. Richard H. Dillon, ed., A Cannoneer in Navajo Country: The Journal of Private Josiah M. Rice, 1851 (Denver: The Old West Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 12-15.
3. Robert Munkres, "The Grattan Massacre," *Tombstone Epitaph*. Available at: <http://bobcat.etsu.edu/http/octa/grattan.htm>. 19 January 1997.
4. Kupke, The Indian and The Thunderwagon, p. 11.
5. Robert M. Utley, Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1846-1865 (New York: The MacMillan Company, Inc., 1967), pp. 183-86.
6. James C. Jamison, With Walker in Nicaragua: Reminiscences of an Officer of the American Phalanx (Columbia, MO: E. W. Stephens Publishing Company, 1909), pp. 127-30.
7. Utley, Frontiersmen in Blue, pp. 151-53. Also, Jack Dodd, "The Indians Have An Inning: To-Hoto-Nim-Me," Great Western Indian Fights (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), pp. 50-60. The gaps in the records of this era have led to some conflicts among historians. Utley says the howitzers were manned by the 6th Infantry and Dodd claims that honor for Company E, 9th Infantry. There is no easy way to resolve this conflict.
8. Utley, Frontiersmen in Blue, pp. 204-08.

9. Edward G. Longacre, Pickett, Leader of the Charge: A Biography of General George E. Pickett, C.S.A. (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, Inc., 1995), pp. 42-47.

10. Kupke, The Indian and The Thunderwagon, p. 11.

CHAPTER 6: THE CIVIL WAR: THE PRE-WAR SITUATION, 1860-1861

Because of their light weight and maneuverability mountain howitzers were placed in many coastal forts. They were intended to serve as a defense against landing forces trying to seize the fort, which could not be engaged by the large guns that were the main armament of the coastal forts. One at Fort Sumter, South Carolina was stationed there from before the war, and was manned by the 1st South Carolina Artillery as part of their service at the fort throughout the war. The howitzer never saw action as the fort was never directly attacked by a landing force.

Just prior to the Civil War mountain howitzers were stored at several of the forts in the western frontier, especially those in Texas. At Fort Davis, southeast of El Paso, the post ordinance consisted of one 6-pound field howitzer and two mountain howitzers. One was stored at Fort Stockton. However, the spokes on its wheel were loose from the extremely dry conditions in that region, and it was eventually sent back San Antonio. Two were assigned to Fort Chadbourne in central Texas. The San Antonio Barracks was the main arsenal for all of the frontier forts in the state. Twelve mountain howitzers were among the stores it contained. These seventeen mountain howitzers, and several more, were captured when the state seceded. Some would be placed in river defenses, and eight of them went with Henry Hopkins Sibley's expedition to New Mexico.⁽¹⁾ These two batteries would be used at the Battles of Valverde and Glorieta. Mountain howitzers would become one of the most common weapons of batteries fighting in the Trans-Mississippi Theater.

Several regular army batteries were equipped with mountain howitzers when the war began. Battery A, 1st Artillery took four as they rushed south from Fortress Monroe, Virginia to Fort Taylor, Florida in January 1861. Mountain howitzers helped to hold several of the Florida forts when most of the others in the South were soon in Confederate hands.⁽²⁾ A 4-gun battery of mountain howitzers was sent, as part of an expedition from New York, to reinforce Fort Pickens, Florida. The howitzers were light, so that moving them would not require many men in a fort already out-numbered by the local secessionists. Also, their small carriages would enable them to move easily on the cramped walk-ways of the fort, or upon the sands of Santa Rosa Island. The timely arrival of this group of reinforcements staved off any attempt by the locals to seize the fort. Howitzers were a vital part of the forces that held onto Forts Pickens, Jefferson and Taylor. These forts kept several ports closed to the Confederacy which needed every port it could get its hands on.⁽³⁾

Howitzers were also used in defenses on both sides of the front lines. Many units were rushed to Washington D. C. when the war began to defend the capital. Among those units was the 7th New York Militia Regiment, which took along a mountain howitzer to defend the city.⁽⁴⁾ One was stationed as a part of the Chain Bridge defenses leading into Washington.⁽⁵⁾ The Confederates also used them in their defensive fortifications. Mostly because they did not have very many

cannon so they had to use every one they had, including the howitzers. At St. Augustine, Florida two howitzers were a part of its defenses.⁽⁶⁾ Fear of invasion along the larger rivers played a big part in the locations of defenses in the South. At Camp Beaumont, Texas, three miles south of the town of Jefferson, two mountain howitzers were placed at a sharp bend in the Neches River to intercept any Union invasion force.⁽⁷⁾ In the Texas Marine Department the hastily-converted merchant ships *C.S. Josiah H. Bell* and the *C.S. Uncle Ben* each had one mountain howitzer as part of their armament.⁽⁸⁾

Besides being out-ranged in any cannon-to-cannon duels the howitzer was also about the same range as the standard infantry rifles of the Civil War era. The Model 1861 Springfield Rifle Musket and the Model 1853 Enfield Rifle Musket were the two most prevalent rifles of the armies on both sides in the Civil War. 700,000 Springfields were made in the U. S. in the war years and an estimated 900,000 Enfields were imported by both sides. The average infantry arms had an effective range of around 800 yards, about the same as the mountain howitzer. Some of the sharpshooter rifles, such as the hand-crafted American rifle, had an accurate range of 1,000 yards and up to 1,500 yards for the British-made Whitworth rifle. So not only could most artillery out-range the howitzer, but most infantry rifles had about the same range. This made working on a howitzer a very dangerous proposition in any heavy fighting. The mountain howitzer was designed in an era when the standard infantry arms were short range, smoothbore muskets, but it was destined to see most of its service in an era of longer-range rifles and many of its cannoneers were killed or wounded because of this disparity in performance.⁽⁹⁾

1. J. J. Bowden, The Exodus of Federal Forces From Texas, 1861 (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1986), pp. 8-9, 11-12, 22-24, 27-28.

2. Captain I. Vodges to Colonel L. Thomas, 31 January 1861, War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies [hereafter OR, with appropriate series and volume numbers] ser. I, vol. 1, (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office [hereafter GPO], 1880), pp. 357-58.

3. Colonel Harvey Brown to Lieutenant Colonel E. D. Keyes, 15 April 1861, OR, ser. I, vol. 1, pp. 377-78. Brown discusses the taking of howitzers with his expedition. Also, Captain Montgomery C. Meigs to Brigadier General J. G. Totten, 25 April 1861, OR, ser. I, vol. 1, pp. 394-400. Meigs talks about the advantages of the mountain howitzers and the saving of the forts by the last-second reinforcements.

4. William C. Davis, The Battle at Bull Run: A History of the First Major Campaign of the Civil War (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), picture #10.

5. Ronald H. Bailey, Forward to Richmond: McClellan's Peninsular Campaign (Alexandria, VA: Time Life Books, 1983), p. 25.

6. George T. Ward to Secretary of War Leroy P. Walker, 10 May 1861, OR, ser. I, vol. 1, pp. 467-69.

7. Bill Winsor, Texas in the Confederacy: Military Installations, Economy and People (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1978), p. 10.

8. Winsor, Texas in the Confederacy, pp. 66-67.

9. Earl J. Coates and Dean S. Thomas, An Introduction to Civil War Small Arms (Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1990), pp. 16-23, 28-29, and 34-35. In these pages Coates and Thomas describe the standard infantry muzzle- and breech-loading rifles of the Civil War.

CHAPTER 7: THE CIVIL WAR: EASTERN THEATER, 1861

Mountain howitzers were involved in several of the more important engagements of the early period of the war in the east. In mid-June the Union forces were sending forward large reconnaissance parties. Two howitzers, belonging to the 2nd New York Infantry, accompanied 1,500 men of the 2nd, 3rd and 5th New York Infantries that were sent to Big Bethel, Virginia. The Confederates continually skirmished with them as they neared Big Bethel. The Union soldiers discovered that the Confederates had dug in on the edge of a wooded area. They formed to attack with the howitzers, and other artillery, sent a little farther up the road towards the enemy. The artillery opened fire as the infantry moved forward to assault the Confederate works. They were repulsed with heavy loss, at least heavy in terms of the early battles. The howitzers helped to cover the retreat of the Union troops from this early Confederate victory.⁽¹⁾

The artillery of Wade Hampton's Legion, under a future-Lieutenant General Stephen Dill Lee, was equipped with a pair of mountain howitzers while it awaited the arrival of a battery of Blakely rifled guns from England. Hampton used his power to get six guns for his battery while awaiting the arrival of the Blakeleys. These guns included four mountain howitzers and two rifled guns, all provided by the Tredegar Ironworks of Richmond. The battery missed the Battle of First Bull Run/Manassas, but were soon assigned to man the Freestone Point Battery on the Potomac River. They were attacked on September 25, 1861 by six, wooden, river-gunboats. The Legion's fire was more effective than that of the gunboats, but in the end they had to give up on blockading the Potomac and pulled back closer to the main Confederate lines along Powell's Creek. On November 9th the battery traded in their guns when their Blakeleys finally arrived from England.⁽²⁾

James McMullin and the four mountain howitzers of the 1st Ohio Battery were involved in a skirmish near Carnifax Ferry in West Virginia on September 10, 1861. An infantry brigade was dispatched to drive off a large group of troublesome Confederates who were entrenched along the nearby Gauley River. In the middle of the afternoon the Yankees advanced on the Confederate trenches only to be met by a hail of gunfire and cannon rounds from a six-gun battery. The Union's four howitzers, and two rifled guns of another battery, shelled the right of the Confederate line with devastating accuracy. Union Brigadier Henry W. Benham ordered two regiments to attack the Confederate's right with the artillery firing continually in support. The attacking Union soldiers were decimated by fire from the Confederates and their artillery. Their losses included one colonel killed and one wounded, as well as several other field officers

wounded. The mountain howitzers were credited by General Benham with performing very well, but the Yankees were unable to carry the Confederate works and eventually retreated back to their own starting point near Summersville, West Virginia.⁽³⁾

The second large battle of the war occurred at Ball's Bluff, Virginia. Union forces had withdrawn from much of Virginia after the disaster at Bull Run to train and recruit. Just after midnight on October 21, 1861, General Charles Stone's men began to cross the Potomac near Leesburg. These men began digging in as more and more troops were transported over the river. Among the Union forces was Battery I, 1st U.S. Artillery which had two mountain howitzers, and an unassigned rifled 12-pounder. Five companies were sent to seize the town of Leesburg at 2:30 in the morning. All of the Confederates in the area had been withdrawn to oppose another Union advance, except for one company of Mississippi infantry. The Mississippians stood behind a fence just outside of town and opened a destructive fire on the Yankees, killing and wounding 25 before their first man was wounded. This Union force soon retreated nearer to the main body when they witnessed Confederate artillery advancing through Leesburg. Two other Mississippi companies soon joined their comrades and helped drive the Union soldiers even closer to their main force. By early morning Confederate reinforcements were rushing to the area.

The Mississippians and the 8th Virginia Infantry advanced towards the Union lines taking only a few losses while inflicting a large number of casualties on the enemy. The Confederates continually sniped at the Union lines, picking off many of their officers. Two more Mississippi regiments soon reached the field and the Southerners planned to attack the Yankees, who were drawn up in a horseshoe shape with the artillery in the middle. The howitzers were kept firing by volunteers long after their crews had been picked off by the Confederate marksmen. Colonel Edward Baker was killed and the rest of the Union men broke and ran for the river. Some tried to act as a rearguard, but most ran for their lives. Many of the men were killed in the mad dash down the steep hillside of the Bluff, and others were drowned in the scramble to get across the river. Panic filled Yankee soldiers swamped two boats filled with wounded men, killing all of them. Over a thousand men had died in this minor engagement, most during the retreat. Also, the victorious Confederates captured all three of the artillery pieces, which would equip Southern units later on in the war and be used with devastating effect against their former owners.⁽⁴⁾

The Civil War: The Eastern Theater, 1862 Early in this year the main armies in the most publicized theater were still using the little howitzers. The Stuart Horse Artillery, under "the gallant" John Pelham, used two mountain howitzers at Blow's Mill, Virginia on May 4th. As the Confederate army was retreating before George McClellan's larger Union army, up the Yorktown Peninsula towards Richmond. Stuart was covering the retreat and a Union force was landed upriver to try and cut off the Confederates. Stuart's cavalry attacked the Yankees on a beach and cut their way through with only a few wounded. The howitzers fired only three rounds to break the Yankees and then to stop them from pursuing.⁽⁵⁾ Brigadier General J. E. B. Stuart complimented the small guns saying that "The mountain howitzers performed well, but the effect upon the enemy concealed in the woods could not be seen."⁽⁶⁾ They used the howitzers again the next day on the 5th at Williamsburg.

The advancing Yankees attacked the Confederate's Fort Magruder, which was manned by a small infantry force with Stuart's cavalry as support. The Rebels held up the Yankees while Stuart's

cavalry and howitzers attacked them on their flanks.⁽⁷⁾ Pelham placed his two howitzers and a 12-pound Blakeley rifle on the right side of Fort Magruder. He kept up a heavy bombardment on the Union forces until the arrival of General A. P. Hill's brigade, that was sent back by James Longstreet to help stop McClellan. Pelham then moved to the far left where he could fire directly into the Yankee flank. The Blakeley's elevating screw broke, but the howitzers stayed at this position until 5 p.m. After a short period of hard fighting the Yankees pulled back to the nearby woods, leaving behind a number of casualties and prisoners. All told during the battle the two mountain howitzers fired 286 spherical-case rounds and four canister rounds. The howitzers played an important part in slowing McClellan's advance and stopping them cold in front of Williamsburg.⁽⁸⁾

Vawter's Virginia Battery used two howitzers in West Virginia on May 10th. The Confederates were defending the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, and the Dublin Depot. Brigadier General Henry Heth united several scattered cavalry and artillery units to attempt and retake the crossings on the New River from West Virginia and nearby Giles Court-House. Heth's men advanced on the 9th towards the Union forces. The Yankees held a strong position along a ridge-line one mile from the Court-House. The Confederates easily drove them from this position and all they way through the town. The Yankees tried to rally to hold the New River Narrows, one of the few easy crossings from West Virginia. The artillery opened fire on the Union soldiers and quickly broke their resistance. According to General Heth the two howitzers were extremely accurate and destructive, one of their shells alone killed four Yankees. The Confederates drove the Union force back into the western half of West Virginia and eased their threat to the vital Virginia and Tennessee Railroad.⁽⁹⁾

Henry Heth continued his campaign in May, 1862, in West Virginia. With 2,000 men, 100 cavalry and three artillery batteries he fought around 1,500 Union soldiers, 150 cavalry and two mountain howitzers at Lewisburg. The smallest Union regiment was sent out from the town to stall Heth and allow the rest of the force to retreat. The howitzers, which could have provided a needed support, were part of the retreating force and played no part in the battle. This small Union force caused a larger Confederate battalion to fall back in a panic and this enabled the rest of the Union force to retreat unmolested.⁽¹⁰⁾

As a part of Stonewall Jackson's wildly successful Valley Campaign a battery of mountain howitzers, on pack-carriages so they could be broken down onto mules for movement, was assigned to him under Major John D. Imboden. Jackson wanted the howitzers for the fighting at Port Republic. He felt that the light-weight guns would be useful for blasting General Shields out of the mountains around the town. However, the guns are not believed to have seen any action because their mules acted poorly under fire. They tried to shake off their loads, but they were too securely attached to their backs to come off easily. So instead the mules rolled around on their backs to scrape off the artillery pieces. The gunners were never able to get the guns into combat because they spent all of their time fighting the mules. According to Jennings Cropper Wise, the foremost historian of the Army of Northern Virginia's artillery:

While the battery did not accomplish much from a military standpoint, it afforded rare amusement to the men of the Infantry. With the air of men seeking technical information, they would seriously inquire whether the mules or the guns were intended to go off first, and whether

the gun was to fire the mule, or the mule the gun. In the estimate of Jackson's artillery at Port Republic, Imboden's Battery was not included, for under the circumstances its guns could not be properly classed as effective ordinance. [\(11\)](#)

The howitzers, and their recalcitrant mules, were eventually sent back to Richmond. There the mules were sent to transportation units and the guns were either used to arm other artillery units or melted down to make larger guns at the Tredegar Iron Works. [\(12\)](#)

One of Pelham's two mountain howitzer went along on the Jeb Stuart's first ride around McClellan on June 12-15. Stuart assembled portions of the Jeff Davis (Ga.) Legion, 1st, 4th and 9th Virginia Cavalries and two artillery pieces from Pelham's battery. The guns were intended to quickly break up any resistance to allow the command to continue the reconnaissance expedition. The Confederate cavalry encountered only disjointed attempts to capture them and very little resistance overall, and the artillery pieces were never used on the ride. The guns easily kept up with the fast-riding cavalry and completed the expedition when the cavalry force returned to Richmond.

Robert E. Lee easily forced the much larger Union army to leave its positions close to the Confederate capital by attacking their flanks and playing on George McClellan's fears of the supposedly huge Southern army opposing him. As McClellan retreated Lee had to try and figure if he was heading for the York or James Rivers, either of which would allow naval support and withdrawal. Jeb Stuart and his cavalry were sent towards the York River hoping to stop the Union from moving that direction. Stuart cut the York River Railroad, but received orders from Lee to chase the Union forces which were now known to be heading to the James River. Before he could move out he ran into a Union gunboat at the White House, home of Lee's son, Rooney, and Stuart decided to attack the Yankees. At first he deployed 75 skirmishers with the best rifles to fire on the gunboats, but when the gunboats opened fire with their 11-inch guns he sent for John Pelham.

Pelham was only able to bring up one of his small mountain howitzers, but it would soon drive off the Yankee ship. Three companies of the New York Volunteers were put into rowboats, and sent towards shore to drive off the annoying skirmishers. However, just then Pelham opened fire on the *USS Marblehead* with his tiny cannon. One shell landed on the deck and that was enough for the captain in charge of the Union fleet. He recalled his infantry, and as soon as they were aboard he headed downstream so fast that he capsized and ruined one of his cutters. Pelham chased the gunboat downstream firing the howitzer at it often. Stuart reportedly laughed so hard at the sight of a powerful gunboat fleeing from a solitary howitzer that he was unable to ride. The Southern horsemen then regrouped and headed off in pursuit of the rest of McClellan's retreating army. [\(13\)](#)

One of Pelham's two mountain howitzers shelled Union forces from Evelington Heights at the end of the Seven Days Battles. By July 3rd George McClellan's grand army had retreated to the James River where they could be supplied by boat and receive the artillery support of the Union gunboats. Evelington Heights had been mistakenly left unguarded by the Union army. The Heights were a ready-made artillery position that would allow the Confederates to shell the

Union army with impunity from their gunboats. After the hard fighting of the Seven Days John Pelham had only one serviceable cannon left, a mountain howitzer. Stuart and Pelham saw the importance of the Heights and quickly occupied them with most of his brigade and the one cannon. Pelham was ordered to open fire with his howitzer, and caused widespread panic among the Union teamsters and the horses. Stuart believed that Stonewall Jackson and James Longstreet were nearby and rushing to reinforce his hold on the heights. Eventually Union soldiers and a lack of artillery ammunition forced Stuart and Pelham to retreat and Union soldiers occupied the Heights in numbers. This ended any chance of destroying the Yankees huddled along the James River. It was not until the next day that Jackson and Longstreet were close enough to reach Evelington Heights, but by then the Union army had too strong a grip on the hills to be dislodged.⁽¹⁴⁾

On July 21st a force of Union infantry, cavalry and artillery was sent from West Virginia to occupy Luray in the Shenandoah Valley. By late that same day they had taken the town without even seeing any enemy soldiers. Early on the 22nd a force of infantry, along with four companies of the 6th Ohio Cavalry and its two mountain howitzers was sent to scout the region around the Columbia Bridge and the White House Ford. At the ford the howitzers and some infantry ran into a force of 20 or so rebel cavalymen. A few shots were exchanged, but the howitzers opened fire on them and a couple of rounds sent the cavalymen fleeing to the south. The Yankees destroyed the bridge and retreated. The expedition discovered that the Valley was occupied by only a few companies of Southern horsemen and nothing else.⁽¹⁵⁾

On August 25th the 6th Ohio and its two mountain howitzers moved out again as part of Colonel John Beardsley's brigade as it did another reconnaissance in northeastern Virginia. At the town of Warrenton Springs they ran into Confederate cavalry who opposed their advance. The howitzers were brought forward to drive the Rebels out of the town. The Southerners brought up a battery of their own, and as its guns were of larger caliber it soon drove off the 6th's howitzers. Beardsley's men were able to discover that Jackson was heading through Thoroughfare Gap, on his way to attack Union General John Pope's flank in the extremely successful Second Manassas Campaign. However, by the time they arrived back at the main force of the Union army the battle had already begun. The brigade's howitzers and cavalry played no part in the Battle of Second Manassas.⁽¹⁶⁾ After the brigade's first reconnaissance Union soldiers had re-occupied parts of the Valley, but Stonewall Jackson would soon capture or chase away many of them in the Sharpsburg Campaign. Howitzers were rapidly proving to be unable to cope with longer-range guns on traditional battlefields. In the two main theaters of Virginia and Tennessee they were beginning to be phased out.

A mountain howitzer using a distinctive pack carriage fought in the Battle of Second Manassas. Stonewall Jackson had formed a defensive line in the shape of an upside-down fishhook, running roughly southwest to northeast with the hook at the northern end. He had assigned the tough Light Division under Ambrose Powell Hill to hold the hook at the left end of his line. The first series of Union attacks on August 29th fell on Hill's division. A small hill formed the middle of the Hill's position and the key to Jackson's line. Five Union divisions made repeated assaults on Hill's men and at times pushed into their lines, but they were never able to drive away the Confederates. Some of the hardest fighting of the war occurred in this small stretch of land. Brigadier General Maxcey Gregg held the far left of Hill's position, and after a lot of back and

forth fighting they were able to push back the attacking blue-coats towards the end of August 29th. As Gregg's men looked out over the fields they were surprised to see a mule cropping the grass calmly in the middle of this field. They were even more surprised to see a mountain howitzer attached to the back of the mule. This gun had come forward with the advancing Union infantry and its double-canister charges had mowed down many Confederates. This was using a howitzer to its greatest advantage. Its light weight enabled it to move easily up hills, and could have been evacuated even if the horses or mules pulling it had been killed. However, in the panic of being driven back the Yankee soldiers just left the howitzer behind. [\(17\)](#)

Major General Joe Hooker used several as he attacked the middle of Jackson's line. After one disastrous attack the retreating Union soldiers were being hard pressed by the Southerners. A battery of mountain howitzers from Robert C. Schenk's division, still on the backs of their mules, was rushed forward to stop the Rebels. Hooker's men found the sight of the battery to be highly amusing in spite of the battle that was raging around them. Despite the amusing nature of the battery it proved its worth by stopping the Confederate skirmishers who had pursued Hooker's men. According to Brigadier General Carl Schurz the howitzers were later lost, but they had bought time for Union officers to rally their men. [\(18\)](#) The howitzers were of too short a range to be a major factor in the battle though, and they could not stop Major General John Pope's poor tactical choices from causing the Union army to be routed and chased back to Washington, DC.

To locate the Army of Northern Virginia after the disastrous Battle of Second Bull Run (Second Manassas), various groups of Union infantry were sent on reconnaissances throughout northeastern Virginia. The 80th New York was on one such patrol through the region around Centerville and Fairfax Court-House. In the late afternoon of September 1st they occupied the Little River Turnpike about two miles from Fairfax. Just after they arrived a Confederate force also arrived and opened fire on them. The infantry skirmish continued for two hours with little change in the relative position of the two sides, until a force of Confederate cavalry arrived with a mountain howitzer. The howitzer was run up to within 200 yards of the Union lines, where it opened a heavy rain of canister on the Yankees. However, it was soon driven off by Union sharpshooters who killed and wounded several of the gunners. A longer-range gun soon arrived and opened fire from three-quarters of a mile away, much safer for the crew than the short-range howitzer. In spite of the fire of the cannon to which the Yankees could not respond, the 80th held on to the turnpike. By 10 p.m. reinforcements arrived and the Confederates withdrew. [\(19\)](#)

In September Union forces were being quickly driven out of all of the separate parts of Virginia. In the western third of the state, today's West Virginia, Confederate forces were massing to chase off the Yankees. The 34th and 37th Ohio Infantries were stationed at Raleigh Court-House with four mountain howitzers and two larger cannons, all under the command of Colonel E. Siber. Other regiments were massed at other possible points of advance for the Rebels. When he learned of the Confederates finally advancing the district commander, Colonel J. A. J. Lightburn, ordered the 34th, 37th and their artillery to fall back to Fayette Court-House, and the other units to other towns closer to the Ohio River. On September 10th the 34th and 37th were attacked at Fayette by a large force of Confederate cavalry. They were quickly surrounded, but Col. Lightburn rushed several units of Virginia (U. S.) and Ohio infantry to their aid. The whole force was then ordered to fall back to Gauley, West Virginia if they could not hold Fayette. The reinforcements caught up with Siber's men on the road to the Kanawha River and Fayette, who

were having to fight a continual rear-guard action against the advancing Southerners. Time and again the howitzers kept the Rebels at a distance and helped Siber's Yankees to make an orderly withdrawal.

On September 11th the 47th Ohio Infantry and its battery of mountain howitzers set up just outside of Gauley to help cover Siber's retreat. The howitzers fired continuously for several hours and forced the Confederates to stop until they could bring forward artillery to oppose the Union guns. Both group's howitzers enabled an easy withdrawal from Gauley. Siber's men and the other units continued their fighting withdrawal all the way to Charleston, West Virginia. On the 13th all of the guns amassed along the Elk River to try and stop the Rebels. The howitzers moved continually around the field of battle to help contain any Confederate attacks. They moved swiftly and easily, and wounded large numbers of the Confederates. In spite of the bravery of the Union soldiers the men were forced to abandon Charleston and retreat even closer to the Ohio border. However, it was an orderly effort with only a little of the Union stores lost and none of the artillery.⁽²⁰⁾

Several mountain howitzers were involved in the Antietam Campaign. Colonel Thomas T. Munford had been assigned with his Confederate cavalry brigade and a mounted battery to hold Crampton's Gap against the surprisingly rapid advance of McClellan's Army of the Potomac. A section of the Portsmouth (Va.) Battery was assigned to assist him and their equipment included two naval howitzers, the Navy's version of the mountain howitzer, which was used for any operations on land. The cavalry and the howitzers skirmished with the advancing Yankees for several hours. Eventually they were reinforced by four infantry regiments from two different Confederate brigades. They repulsed numerous Yankee assaults. Munford's battery and the section of the Portsmouth Battery were removed after a few hours because they had fired every round of ammunition that they had with them. After several hours Munford's cavalymen and the infantry were pushed out of the Gap, but they had held it long enough for General Lee to begin re-assembling his widely scattered divisions. They began regrouping at a small town known as Sharpsburg, Maryland.⁽²¹⁾ On the same day 24 Union mountain howitzers were captured when Harper's Ferry surrendered to Stonewall Jackson.

Jackson had surrounded the Union-depot town with very little opposition. Early on the 15th they opened artillery fire on the town from the heights surrounding it. Just as the Confederate infantry began moving forward to assault Harper's Ferry the Yankee garrison surrendered. The Confederates held 11,000 prisoners; took 73 pieces of artillery, including the 24 howitzers; and hauled away tons of much-needed supplies and ammunition. Jackson left Ambrose P. Hill to quickly parole most of the Northern soldiers and started a detachment southward with the captured supplies and prisoners. Jackson's men then rushed to rejoin Robert E. Lee at Sharpsburg.⁽²²⁾ Unspecified Union howitzers possibly fought on the 17th at Sharpsburg, Maryland. Colonel John B. Cumming, of the 20th Georgia Infantry, reported that his men on the far right of Lee's line at the bridge, later named after Union Major General Burnside, were shelled by mountain howitzers. As Burnside's corps advanced to take the bridge they opened fire on the Confederates with much of their artillery, including several mountain howitzers which were rolled forward by hand to the Union skirmish line. There are no Union report indicating that they even had any mountain howitzers at the Battle of Antietam, much less used them in the battle. Many infantry and cavalry units on both sides often kept one or two howitzers for the

added firepower and ease of movement, and these were often not listed on official records because they were not attached to officially sanctioned artillery batteries. However, they would have been ideally suited for lobbing shells at the Confederate sharpshooters who were dug in on the hillside behind the bridge, as opposed to longer-range guns which fire on a flatter trajectory which could not harm the sharpshooters without a direct hit.⁽²³⁾

At Blue's Gap, West Virginia Confederate Brigadier General John Imboden had a mountain howitzer. Union forces were moving back into the western and northern parts of Virginia after the Confederate retreat from Sharpsburg, Maryland. A Union raid was sent after John B. Imboden, the commander of the Confederate cavalry in West Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. Imboden had just captured a small Union garrison, but was being pursued by 500 Union cavalry. They failed to catch up to him, but they did capture his camp and all of its equipment. Among the supplies captured from Imboden were two brass mountain howitzers, three wagons full of rifle ammunition, 100 rifles, and all of its clothing and stores.⁽²⁴⁾ The main target of the Union advance was the re-taking of important towns, such as Charleston. Siber's brigade of Lightburn's Division used howitzers as it attacked nearby Confederates on October 29th at Charleston, West Virginia. They had one battery of rifled guns and one of mountain howitzers. The greatly out-numbered Confederates retreated without much resistance.⁽²⁵⁾

Stuart's Horse Artillery used a mountain howitzer at Upperville, Virginia on November 2nd. Stuart was in the midst of yet another raid into the rear of the Union army. On the 2nd they ran into a force of infantry and cavalry with 6 to 8 artillery pieces. Stuart posted his men behind stone fences to receive the enemy. They were outnumbered, but John Pelham and the Stuart Horse Artillery went a long way to equalizing the odds. The cannons held their position for most of the day, suffering heavily, but keeping the Yankees away. Pelham took a mountain howitzer alone to a hill on the Union flank. He opened fire on a body of Union cavalry waiting in a valley for a chance to gallop into Stuart's men. The Yankees used their numbers to force the Southern cavalymen to withdraw, but they contested every foot of ground. They finally withdrew to the main Confederate lines with only a few losses, while inflicting large losses on the Union cavalry in men, horses, supplies and prestige.⁽²⁶⁾

Howitzers were widely used with Burnside's force in North Carolina. The 3rd New York Cavalry used two of them at New Berne on November 11th. Reports had been received that a large Confederate force of infantry, cavalry and artillery was moving to attack Union-held New Berne. The 3rd New York Cavalry and its two howitzers went out on the Neuse Road to attempt to gain better information on the Southern army. The howitzers kept the Rebels at bay, but the Southerners were in such large numbers that the Union pickets were withdrawn to the town's fortifications without a fight. Within a day the Confederates pulled back several miles, and the pickets resumed their normal posts. Colonel Thomas Amory, commanding New Berne, planned to place one or two mountain howitzers with the pickets so that they could be better able to hold out against any large raiding force the Confederates might send against them.⁽²⁷⁾

The 3rd New York Cavalry and its two mountain howitzers were sent on December 15th on the road from Kinston to Goldborough to capture any stray Confederates that they might find and to distract the local Southerners from a large raid occurring south of Kinston. Nine miles from their base at Kinston they ran into a few cavalymen and heard a train coming from Goldsborough.

They fired five rounds of spherical case from their howitzers to complete the impression of a larger force being there. They later learned that the train had withdrawn fearing a Union attack. North Carolina was a neglected theater as far as the Union war effort went. Bigger, longer-range guns went to other armies, and the units in North Carolina were stuck with mountain howitzers. The howitzers did their job successfully in the marshy and heavily-forested stretches along the coast, where bigger guns might not have been so easily moved and used.⁽²⁸⁾

The Civil War: The Eastern Theater, 1863

By the start of 1863 the main Union and Confederate armies in the theater had mostly phased out the short-range howitzers. Many of them would continue to be used in lesser important areas of Virginia, such as in West Virginia, by guerrillas, and by the forces fighting along the Atlantic Coast. At Kelly's Store, Virginia unspecified Union howitzers fought on January 30th. Confederate forces had moved into the Union-held coastal plain to hold new areas open to foraging and to maybe retake some of the coastal towns that had earlier fallen to the Yankees. A Southern force under Brigadier General Roger A. Pryor was sent to hold the Federals at bay around the port of Suffolk and allow the foragers to move about the area unmolested. The Suffolk commander, John Peck, assembled a large force of 2,000 infantry, 500 cavalry and a number of cannons, including two mountain howitzers, to attack Pryor's Southerners. Brigadier General Michael Corcoran led the Union army out of the Suffolk defenses on January 30th before dawn. Just after 3 a.m. the two forces collided near Kelly's Store. Union cavalry easily pushed the Southern pickets back to their main battle line. Then as the two sides amassed facing each other all of the artillery on both sides opened fire and dueled until 6 a.m., without any serious damage to either army. The Union infantry lined up to attack, but Pryor's men did not await the attack and instead retreated quickly. The Yankees pursued them until 10 a.m. when they ran into a marsh, where the Confederates had dug in. The Union force stopped for two hours to eat lunch and resupply the men with ammunition. During this lull the Confederates continued their retreat without being attacked. The Yankee cavalry skirmished a few more times with the Southern rear-guard, but no large battles occurred and no artillery was involved after the early morning fight. By late on the 30th the Union force headed back to Suffolk having accomplished its mission of driving off Pryor's men and interrupting the Southern foraging efforts.⁽²⁹⁾

Mountain howitzers were still found in Robert E. Lee's defenses on the heights outside of Fredericksburg. They were easily moved around the hillside and were very effective against charging masses of infantry, and it would not be a big loss to the Southerners if they happened to be captured. Lee withdrew most of his men from the heights to attack Joe Hooker's main force in the Wilderness around the small hamlet of Chancellorsville. He left behind Jubal Early with only his division and a few brigades to hold their works. Hooker had hoped that the Confederates would abandon their works and had hoped to seize the town and their works while they were gone. The Union VI Corps, under John Sedgwick, moved across the Rappahannock River to seize the lightly defended Confederate works and to move on to attack Lee's main force from behind. At dawn on May 3rd the VI Corps crossed the river and seized Fredericksburg.

The 56 Confederate artillery pieces fired continually on them. Howitzers had been placed behind the famous stone wall on the left of Early's lines. At 300 yards they opened fire, mowing down large numbers of Northerners. The Yankees were repulsed several times, but eventually the

Union's superior numbers told and the Southerners were driven from their works. Thomas Neill's 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, VI Corps attacked the middle of the Confederate line and after a long, brutal fight seized the flag of the 18th Mississippi Infantry and several cannons, including one brass mountain howitzer. Sedgwick continued east to attack Lee's rear as planned, but Robert E. Lee had already contained Hooker and dispatched five divisions to attack the VI Corps. In the end Sedgwick was stopped and forced to retreat to Scott's Ford to their north, and most of the captured Southern guns were retaken by their owners.⁽³⁰⁾

One of the most famous users of mountain howitzers was "The Grey Ghost" John Singleton Mosby. He used one of them at Catlett's Station, Virginia on May 30th. Mosby had long been raiding Union supply depots, wagons, detachments and trains throughout northeastern Virginia. In order to allow Mosby to cause more damage and tie up larger numbers of Yankees, who might otherwise be attacking Robert E. Lee's army, the Virginia raider was given a mountain howitzer that had been captured from the Union army in 1861 at Ball's Bluff. For their first use of the gun Mosby set up an ambush for a Union supply train outside of Catlett's Station. They displaced a rail on the tracks and waited for the next train. A supply train began slowing when they noticed that a rail was missing. Mosby's men wheeled out the howitzer and opened fire.

One of the shells ripped through the boiler, causing a huge explosion of steam around the engine. The Rangers then rushed forward, grabbed as much of the Union supplies as they could, and raced away. Three companies of Federal cavalry pursued them closely. A short ways from the ambush 40 of Mosby's men stopped in the road and loaded the howitzer. They fired it a couple of times, but the Yankees got in close and Mosby's Rangers had to abandon the gun. However, they had destroyed a train, looted much of its cargo of supplies intended for Hooker's army, and increased the Union fear of John S. Mosby because he now had more men and even artillery. This access to field guns led to the detachment of many more Federals to guard their supply lines through the region known as Mosby's Confederacy.⁽³¹⁾

A mountain howitzer was used in one of the most bloody, and important, battles of the whole war at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. As two divisions of James Longstreet's 1st Corps moved forward to attack the 3rd and 5th Corps defending the Round Tops on the far left of the Union line. A mountain howitzer was used in the fighting around Devil's Den. First Lieutenant Page, 3rd U. S. Infantry, remembered a mountain howitzer being in the thick of the fighting. He said:

The rebels came from all directions for the guns, and lost all formation. They waved their battle-flags, a dozen being just in front of me. They came to where a number were shot down; then they recoiled, and retreated through the wheat field and woods. To my right and rear, among the rocks, I could see a twelve-pounder mountain howitzer at work. A soldier asked me what kind of a gun it was; he said it kicked over at every discharge.⁽³²⁾

Once again this howitzer is not listed in the army's records or in the single most comprehensive look at the use of artillery in the battle, Fairfax Downey's The Guns of Gettysburg. An infantry brigade more than likely held onto the gun, because of its extra firepower. The howitzer would have easily moved through the rocky landscape of Devil's Den and given the defenders a better chance to hold the Round Tops. This flipping over was a common design problem that always plagued the pack carriage. Its small axle-width allowed the gun to turn over rather than roll

backwards as most guns did when they were fired. The howitzer's canister rounds each contained around one hundred .58-caliber balls and would have cut wide swaths through the advancing ranks of John Bell Hood's division.

Brigadier General Julius White led parts of the 65th Illinois Infantry, 10th Kentucky Cavalry, Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, 14th Kentucky Infantry, 39th Kentucky Infantry, and Company M 2nd Illinois Light Artillery, in all about 950 men. They moved from eastern Kentucky into Confederate-held portions of West Virginia. They were ordered to scatter the local Southern forces and to destroy as much of the railroad at Bristol as possible. After Julius White's men skirmished on the July 6, with Southern pickets they went on to attack Gladesville, West Virginia on the 7th. There was some hard street-to-street fighting, but soon the Southerners were fleeing the town. The two howitzers of the 2nd Illinois only fired a couple of rounds. The battle was over so quickly that the artillery was not needed to break the Rebel resistance. There were a few more light skirmishes as the brigade burned track, destroyed food supplies and chased away many Confederates. As a testament to how light the fighting was for the Federals in the entire campaign Julius White's brigade lost only nine wounded and none of those were seriously hurt. [\(33\)](#)

The 1st South Carolina Artillery Regiment was officially assigned to man Fort Sumter and all of its guns in early 1861. A mountain howitzer was stationed at the fort to repel any assaults by ground forces on Sumter. They endured the continual bombardments of 1862-1863 and drove off Union warships trying to enter the vital harbor. During the bombardment on November 7th the mountain howitzer was struck by a shell and the bore was bent, but the commander felt it could be easily remedied by re-boring the piece. [\(34\)](#)

Union forces held many Atlantic Coast towns. From these bases they raided inland, destroying railroads and tons of supplies, and protecting pro-Union people living near them. In December cavalry patrols were sent out to bring in to the Union lines the families of Confederate deserters who had joined the Union army. 50 men of the 12th New York Cavalry, and one of its four mountain howitzers, were sent out to rescue the family of a Unionist North Carolina volunteer. They ran into a determined Confederate force blocking a bridge across the Chincapin Creek near New Berne, North Carolina on December 16th. The Confederates destroyed the bridge and fired on the Yankees, who could not cross the creek's steep banks under fire. The howitzer fired 18 shots during the brief fight and lost one cannoneer killed. After a half hour of fighting the 12th New York was forced to withdraw without bringing in the family of the volunteer. The howitzer was effective in moving through the dense North Carolina woods with the fast-moving cavalry, but it could do nothing about a destroyed bridge and steep banks which prevented the soldiers from crossing the creek. [\(35\)](#)

The Civil War: The Eastern Theater, 1864

In North Carolina the Confederates made constant, harassing attacks on any Federal outpost that seemed vulnerable. On February 1st they attacked a small post, with only one officer and 13 men, eight miles from New Berne. The guards had taken up the planks on the Batchelder's Creek bridge that they were guarding and held up the Confederates for several hours. However, the Southerners eventually crossed downstream and captured the small garrison. All the while the

outpost was fighting Federal reinforcements were rushing their way. They had reports that the Southern force was led by George Pickett and included 5,000 infantry and 16 cannons, but it is doubtful that there were more than a couple of thousand in a few, small brigades and one or two four-gun batteries attacking the Yankees. By noon the Rebels were closing on New Berne from all sides. The cavalry, including the 12th New York Cavalry and its two howitzers, were placed at Brice's Creek, south of the town, to stop the Confederates.

Soon Southern horsemen appeared and the artillery opened fire on them. The fire of the dismounted cavalry and the howitzers in the front line stopped cold the Rebel advance. When darkness descended the Confederates had made no attempt to attack, because of the heavy fire from the Union lines. Other Rebel forces had seized parts of the Federal defenses, and even captured and later burned the *U.S.S. Underwriter*, and captured several, smaller Union-held towns. However, the intense fire of the cavalrymen and their two howitzers kept the Confederates from taking New Berne, the object of the attack was a port the Confederates needed badly. The town was also the center of Federal operations in North Carolina. [\(36\)](#)

The 16th Virginia Cavalry spent the winter of 1863-1864 successfully raiding behind Union lines in West Virginia, as they had all of the previous winters of the war. Many of the men were from the region so they were able to operate with near impunity. Union forces repeatedly chased them, but rarely encountered the 16th and on even fewer occasions killed or captured one of the elusive Rebels. On January 26th Major James H. Nounnan and 40 men headed out on a raid of towns along the Kanawha River. A scout learned on February 2nd that the Federal transport, *B. C. Levi*, was anchored at the tiny river town of Red House, near Winfield. They learned the steamer was carrying Brigadier General Eliakim P. Scammon, commander of the Union 3rd Division and the counties of West Virginia that the 16th operated in. The frozen river and darkness forced them to tie up there, but the captain neglected to post any guards on the frigid evening. The raiders stole a small rowboat to cross the river and walked easily to the transport without causing any alarms to sound. Twelve men captured the steamboat without a fight. Scammon was captured as he exited his quarters, along with three other officers and 25 enlisted men.

The Rebels took the ship down-river at dawn, and took some of the medicines stored onboard. The raiders did not steal the \$1,600 in private funds being carried to Charleston, West Virginia, but they smashed the ship's 6-pound cannon and burned the *Levi*. The officers and one sergeant were taken with the partisans as prisoners. Word quickly spread to Federal leaders like the fires had spread on the *Levi*, and Union cavalry was soon rushing in pursuit of the bold Southerners. One hundred cavalry and two mountain howitzers, under Colonel Rutherford B. Hayes, a future President of the United States, raced down-river on a second steamer and chased the fast-moving Confederates. In spite of the best efforts of Hayes and other cavalry leaders the partisans stayed well ahead of them. The 16th quickly sent General Scammon on to Dublin, Virginia and the headquarters of West Virginia Department Commander, Major General Samuel Jones. Within a couple of weeks much of the 16th Virginia was surprised and captured, but the humiliation to Scammon and the losses with the *Levi* cost the Federal government much more than capturing a small partisan unit profited them. The howitzers were unable to play much of a part in the pursuit or later capture of the 16th, because the partisans had learned early on not to face Federal artillery when they had none of their own, if they could help it. [\(37\)](#)

Howitzers, both mountain and naval varieties, were used by the U. S. Navy in fighting the small, Southern torpedo boats that infested the numerous rivers and small coves all around Richmond. In early April the Yankees made a concerted effort to drive off or destroy these pests. On April 9th the *C.S.S. Squib* exploded a torpedo against the side of the *U.S.S. Minnesota*, severely damaging her. Admiral S. P. Lee, onboard the *Minnesota* during the attack, decided to try and eradicate the threat of the small, torpedo boats. Small launches were equipped with howitzers and sent up various rivers to hunt them down. The searchers were ambushed on April 14th along Pagan Creek, near where the Squib was hiding. A heavy amount of rifle fire was directed at the Yankee patrol boat. The howitzer was fired twice at the attackers, but after the Union lost Master Charles Wilder to the accurate Southern fire they decided to retreat. The affair was not a Union success, but it did show that howitzers were light enough to provide much needed artillery support for units trying to drive off the tiny, Confederate navy.⁽³⁸⁾

Early on May 9th Howell's Brigade of the 1st Division, X Corps was sent to take Chester Station on the Petersburg-Richmond Railroad. The section of track fell to other units, but Howell's men joined in the destruction of the station and the railroad tracks around it. By the evening of the 9th the brigade had moved towards the Port Walthall road junction to support other Yankee soldiers fighting at the nearby Swift Creek. Early on May 10th the men began tearing up the track from the Walthall Junction northward. A nearby force was attacked by a large Southern force so Howell's men stopped the destruction and quickly headed to their assistance. On their arrival they found the Federal force being flanked and forced back by the Rebels. Howell found the 1st New York Mounted Rifles and two mountain howitzers behind the lines and he raced these up to assist the force in holding the Rebels at bay. The horsemen and their two guns were placed on the extreme Union right and helped to stop the flank attack there. The Confederates were massed to hit this exposed flank, but the rapid fire of the 1st's howitzers and another battery tore their advance to pieces. Late in the day the Federals and the Southerners pulled away from each other. The Yankees dug in and as reinforcements poured in the battle ended and the Yankees were able to finish destroying large stretches of the vital railroad.⁽³⁹⁾

Benjamin Butler kept pushing his army to the northwest towards Richmond. On May 9th the cavalry protected the Union right in the morning and the left in the afternoon. The 1st New York Mounted Rifles and its two howitzers were among this group, and skirmished often with any of the numerous, nearby Confederates. Much of the cavalry was sent to destroy bridges so that reinforcements could not reach the Southerners south of the capital. On the 14th the 3rd New York and 11th Pennsylvania Cavalries, and the 3rd's mountain howitzer, were sent to the Flat Creek Bridge to make a demonstration of trying to cross the bridge. The horsemen were easily repulsed in three separate assaults by the defenders, Company B of the 17th Virginia Infantry. In spite of having the only artillery piece in the battle the Yankees suffered many more casualties. The 3rd New York suffered 25 casualties, while the defending Virginians had only three dead and a few wounded. A mountain howitzer was just too small to punch through any fortifications, especially if it was used by half-trained cavalymen who were not very accurate against a foe who was dug in. After a lot of hard campaigning, including a couple of relatively successful raids, the cavalry spent the rest of the Bermuda Hundred Campaign defending the flanks of Butler's infantry lines.⁽⁴⁰⁾

On June 9th four mountain howitzers were used by the 5th and 11th Pennsylvania Cavalries at Petersburg, Virginia. They had left camp on the 8th to attack and hopefully seize Petersburg, and draw away men from Lee's army, weakening him as he faced the powerful Army of the Potomac. As they headed for the important Petersburg Plank Road the cavalry was fired on by Confederate pickets on the Jordan's Point Road early on June 9th. The Yankees dismounted and moved to attack when the Southerners opened on them with artillery, but in spite of this they quickly and easily drove the Confederates away. By 10:30 a.m. the horsemen had reached the plank road and were only five miles from Petersburg. One squadron of the 11th Cavalry made a mounted charge on the thinly held works, but were driven back with great ease. The rest of the horsemen dismounted and advanced on foot, with two of the howitzers firing in support from the advancing lines. The Yankees faced a storm of bullets and canister balls, but they captured the forward redoubts and rifle pits, killing 30, capturing 40 men and one cannon, and wounding a large number of the Rebels. The Yankees were now within a mile of Petersburg, but the horsemen were tired and short on ammunition, so they waited for reinforcements to come up.

Once the infantry arrived the advance continued. When they got to within 150 yards of the town the Southerners opened an intense fire of bullets and cannon balls on the Federals. The horsemen and their howitzers were unable to advance any farther so they pulled back 50 yards to a nearby abandoned Confederate trench for shelter. The Federal column soon pulled back two miles. They had fought and bled, and then gave up their gains without a fight. The howitzers had done well, such as rolling forward by hand in the front lines, but they were too-short of range to be able to stand up to other guns, such as the field howitzers the Southerners were using. These outranged the small guns by 500 yards, and devastated the horsemen without the mountain howitzers being able to do anything to help their fellow soldiers. This somewhat successful advance was as close as the Yankees would get to the town until it fell the next April, and the war drug on for ten long and bloody months. ⁽⁴¹⁾

In mid-1864 as part of U. S. Grant's three-pronged attack on the South he sent Major General David Hunter, a native Virginia, to seize the Shenandoah Valley and end its usefulness as a breadbasket to the Army of Northern Virginia. He burned large stretches of the vital farmlands and many of the towns. The scattered regular and militia units attempted to stop him, but they were too few to do more than just slow him down. A large amount of stores had been given to the care of the cadets at the Virginia Military Institute, including a couple of mountain howitzers. In early June Hunter led his Federal army on Lexington. General John McCausland was quickly and easily pushed back towards the town. On June 11th the Yankees had crossed the North River, and VMI Superintendent Francis Smith decided to evacuate the town and save the public stores that were in his care. Hunter burned the Institute's buildings in retribution for Virginia's secession. The cadets held a pass at Balcony Falls to allow the wagon and refugees to escape, but they did not have to fight the Yankees who stopped to burn the farms around Lexington. The cadets had successfully evacuated a large amount of stores, including four brass smoothbores, two 3-inch rifles, a couple of mountain howitzers, and large amounts of rifle and artillery ammunition. The cadets turned over the howitzers, their old rifles and the ammunition to Confederate authorities, who quickly lost them on a canal they were trying to float them down when the ship overturned. The mountain howitzers would have been seriously out-ranged by the modern guns that equipped Union batteries, but they were lost without a chance to show if they could have been helped to slow the Federal invasion. ⁽⁴²⁾

In mid-June James Wilson's Cavalry Division was sent out by U. S. Grant to ride around Robert E. Lee's army in Richmond and Petersburg. They were to burn any supply depots that they might come across, and sever all of the railroads so that Lee's soldiers would have to deplete the stores on hand in the Confederate capital. Lee's cavalry and infantry reacted with remarkable speed, harassing the Yankee horsemen the whole way and causing them to do only a fraction of the destruction that they might have otherwise done. Wilson fought a number of large skirmishes with Lee's soldiers and used all of his artillery on a number of occasions to stave off his pursuers. By June 29th Lee's men had surrounded Wilson and his horsemen at Ream's Station, Virginia. Wilson ordered his men to cut their way out and return to Union lines any way that they could. In this disastrous raid the Union army lost 900 men killed, wounded or missing, and 30 wagons or ambulances and 12 artillery pieces were captured, including four mountain howitzers. Cavalry was never intended to stand up to infantry on its own, and while the howitzers were good at decimating any assaults they were not designed to stand up to bigger guns on their own. Other Union forces were supposed to have kept Wade Hampton's cavalry and Lee's infantry busy so that Wilson's men could raid with only a few, weak militia units to try and stop them. Wilson, Grant, Sheridan and Meade seriously overestimated the amount of surprise they would have, and did not give the horsemen enough weapons to be able to oppose regular infantry regiments and artillery batteries.⁽⁴³⁾

In July two mountain howitzers were still in place in the Union defenses around Washington, DC. Two forts were placed on the Virginia side of the bridge early in the war. The two howitzers were located on the District of Columbia side and loaded with double canister to sweep the bridge of any attackers. The commander of the defenses also intended to take the planks up off the bridge if any attacks came. Luckily for the Union government, in spite of a number of scares late in the war, no serious attacks came and the defenses on the Chain Bridge were never tested.⁽⁴⁴⁾

In mid-1864, in an effort to force Grant to detach some of his huge army, Robert E. Lee sent Jubal Early and the 2nd Corps into the Shenandoah Valley. They chased General David Hunter and his forces into West Virginia without much of a fight. After clearing the Valley the 2nd Corps advanced into Maryland. The Federal government was in quite a panic and sent a force from Washington to hold up Early long enough for reinforcements to arrive and save the capital. Lew Wallace, future territorial governor of New Mexico and author of Ben Hur, led a mixed force of depleted veteran regiments and untested garrison units to oppose the hard-as-nails Southern "foot cavalry." The two forces slammed into each other along the Monocacy River on July 9th. The Yankees held for a while, inflicting a large number of casualties on the attacking Rebels, but a flank force under John B. Gordon broke their flank late in the day. A Union mountain howitzer was involved in the fighting. Its rapid fire had helped the Yankees to hold the Monocacy bridge for most of the day, the only one on the route to Washington. It had done its job incredibly well, and was safely removed from the field. Wallace's men were chased off, but they held for most of a day and allowed a tough, veteran corps to arrive from Grant's army at Richmond.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In May 1863 the "Gray Ghost" John S. Mosby first requested a mountain howitzer, and said that he "could use it with great effect, especially on the railroad trains." He would soon get his chance to see how useful the guns could be.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Mosby had 300 men and two mountain howitzers in the "Great Berryville Raid" on August 13th. He found Phil Sheridan's wagon train lightly guarded by

only 700-800 men. Mosby opened fire with one of the howitzers, one breaking down before it could be brought to the fight, and at the same time his men attacked the train, easily routing the guards. The remaining howitzer fired a few rounds, but the carriage broke, rendering it useless. This was a common occurrence with the weak pack carriage. He captured 200 prisoners, killed or wounded a number of others, and destroyed 75 loaded wagons. He took away 200 beef cattle, 500-600 horses and a large amount of badly needed supplies. The Union army sent many men in pursuit of the bold raiders, but they never even came close to catching them. Mosby carried off the barrels and broke carriages of the two howitzers, and continued to favor the howitzer for his style of fighting and used several during the rest of the war.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The Confederates had a major food, salt, and leather manufacturing center at Saltville, in the southwestern part of Virginia. Several Union raids tried to seize or destroy the center, but they could never concentrate enough men to take the town. On October 2nd six mountain howitzers accompanied 4,200 cavalry and mounted infantry, one of the largest forces sent to destroy Saltville. The Federals shelled the town all day and assaulted it several times, but they were unable to make any headway in the Confederate works. The Federals withdrew at 5:00 p.m. after suffering a considerable number of casualties. The howitzers might have kept up well, but the powder charges they used to propel the rounds were not strong enough to punch through the thick dirt and wood fortifications that the Confederates had spent three years working on.⁽⁴⁸⁾

On November 29th the Federal forces in the Carolinas assembled 5,500 infantry and naval troops in three brigades, and three batteries of artillery for a raid against the food supplies and railroads in the area of Grahamville in southeastern South Carolina. Grahamville was a large depot and vital rail center just north of Savannah, Georgia. The naval brigade was the first to land and Brigadier General John Hatch sent it on ahead to occupy a crossroads two miles from the landing area. Eight light naval howitzers accompanied the sailors, drawn along by hand. They attacked and easily drove away a small Confederate force. By late on the day more troops had landed and Hatch decided to push hard for Grahamville. The naval and infantry soldiers marched all through the evening, but a lack of guides kept them from ever finding the right road to get to the town. Early on November 30th two mountain howitzers were detached from the rest of Hatch's force with four companies of the famous 54th Massachusetts Infantry to hold the oft-used crossroads. Soon, Confederates from the northeast tried to seize these crossroads and cut off Hatch's force, but they were quickly repulsed by the very accurate fire of the howitzers and the 54th. The crossroads and the rest of Hatch's force were saved by this small detachment.

The rest of the force continued on towards Grahamville, driving the Southern defenders for several miles. At Honey Hill the Confederates fell into pre-made defenses and repulsed a few Union assaults. The Union soldiers tried and failed to take the works, but they also repulsed several Rebel assaults on themselves. Artillery caissons continually raced back to the landing point to bring up new supplies of artillery and rifle ammunition, and without the soldiers holding the vital crossroads Hatch's men would have quickly been without ammunition to fight off the Southern assaults. Hatch was finally forced to call off the raid and return to the landing in the evening of the 30th. The raid did not accomplish many of its goals, but the mountain howitzers had proven their worth by saving the crossroads and with it Hatch's army.⁽⁴⁹⁾

There are no known uses of howitzers in the last year of the war. The war had mostly devolved into sieges of Petersburg and Richmond or small hit-and-run raids by partisan units, such as John Singleton Mosby. Larger guns had almost completely replaced the mountain howitzer and it was shunted off on less well-supplied theaters, such as the arena west of the Mississippi River.

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CHAPTER 8: THE CIVIL WAR: THE WESTERN THEATER, 1861

The western theater suffered a much more acute shortage of modern artillery pieces than the eastern theater in the early stages of the war. According to Union intelligence reports Confederate General Gideon Pillow had a number of mountain howitzers as part of his defenses around the vital point of New Madrid, Tennessee.⁽¹⁾ Two mountain howitzers and a rifled gun of Watson's Louisiana Battery accompanied the 1st Louisiana Cavalry to Bowling Green, Kentucky in November 1861. The guns would later be attached as part of the 1st Louisiana and would see fighting throughout Tennessee, Kentucky and Georgia with the regiment.⁽²⁾ At Johnson's Island in Ohio a prison was begun in late 1861 to house captured Confederates. Its guards were the Hoffman Battalion of Ohio Volunteer Infantry. At the main gate two blockhouses were built and each was equipped with a mountain howitzer to stop any escape attempts by the prisoners.⁽³⁾

The only known action seen by mountain howitzers in this theater in the first year of the war came at Belmont, Missouri on November 7th. Watson's Louisiana Battery was part of the Southern force sent across the Mississippi River to try and secure the river for the South. Brigadier General U. S. Grant decided to drive off this garrison and attacked it. The guns only had a small supply of ammunition and by the early afternoon they had exhausted their supply. At 2:00 p.m. a Union assault shattered the Confederate line. Forty-five of the battery's horses were killed and the guns were overrun. Southern reinforcements poured in from Tennessee, and Grant's men were forced back later in the day and four of Watson's guns were recovered, including the two mountain howitzers. The howitzers were soon detached and assigned to the 1st Louisiana Cavalry with whom they would fight for much of the rest of the war.⁽⁴⁾

The Civil War: The Western Theater, 1862

The mountain howitzers of the 1st Louisiana Cavalry skirmished with Union cavalry near Athens, Alabama on May 1st. Both sides were roughly the same size. According to Colonel James S. Scott, of the 1st Louisiana Cavalry, his Confederate cavalry brigade went ahead and attacked the Yankees first. The rapid cavalry attack and the fire of the 1st Louisiana's battery of mountain howitzers quickly, and easily, routed the Yankees. They captured 150 stands of arms, ammunition, commissary stores, and all of their tents and camp equipage. He reported the Union loss at 200 killed and wounded. While undoubtedly their casualties were more than likely not as high as he claimed it was still more than the Confederate loss of one killed and three wounded.⁽⁵⁾

The 2nd Kentucky (C.S.) Cavalry Regiment, under John Hunt Morgan, used them on July 11th at Lebanon, Kentucky during Morgan's First Kentucky Raid. They came upon a bridge over the Rolling Fork River, six miles from Lebanon. This bridge was guarded by a blockhouse and a large number of soldiers. There were too many Yankees for Morgan's men to assault the bridge, so Morgan called up the regiment's two mountain howitzers. The cavalrymen had developed a fondness for these guns, which they called "bull pups" after their bark-like reports. Basil Duke preferred these guns to the 3-inch Ordinance Rifles that would be assigned to Morgan for later raids. He said:

They can go over ravines, up hills, through thickets, almost anywhere, in short that a horseman can go; they can be taken, without attracting attention, in as close proximity to the enemy as two

horsemen can go-they throw shell with accuracy eight hundred yards, quite as far as there is any necessity for, generally in cavalry fighting-they throw canister and grape, two and three hundred yards, as effectively as a twelve-pounder-they can be carried by hand right along with the line, and as close to the enemy as the line goes-and they make a great deal more noise than one would suppose from their size and appearance.⁽⁶⁾

One shot from a howitzer was enough to send the bridge guards running back to Lebanon. They soon captured the town, 200 Union soldiers, and destroyed large numbers of guns and tons of stores and ammunition. The raid continued with inept and ineffective resistance by the Union garrisons throughout the region. Within a couple of weeks they were safely back in Confederate lines with an impressive raid to their credit and having instilled a lot of fear in the Union garrisons of Kentucky.⁽⁷⁾

The 6th Missouri (U. S.) Cavalry used howitzers on July 25th at Hudson's Bridge near Austin, Mississippi, in the northwestern part of the state. Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Wood led 100 men and the two howitzers of the 6th, and 90 men of the 8th Indiana Infantry from Helena, Arkansas on a raid to destroy supplies and chase off local partisan units. Along the way they burned the camp of the "Missouri Swamp Fox" They pushed on to destroy the depot at Austin, Mississippi that supplied General Thomas Hindman. First they would have to take Hudson's Bridge before they could attack Austin, but there was a Confederate force guarding the bridge. Wood brought up the howitzers, and after three or four rounds the Rebels fled and the bridge was in Union hands. At a second bridge the howitzers fired only one round before the Rebels fled once again. However, this time they had taken the planks off the bridge so that the Yankees could not cross it. So they were forced to retreat back to Helena. Overall the raid was a failure. They were unable to catch M. Jeff Thompson or to destroy Hindman's ammunition train. Also, they were unable to inflict any large numbers of casualties or to break up any Confederate units. But, they did tie up many units in chasing them and in guarding against a repeat of the raid, so some good came from Wood's raid into Mississippi.⁽⁸⁾

In mid-1862 Braxton Bragg led the Army of Tennessee into Union-held Kentucky to relieve Union pressure on other Southern states and to hopefully gain new recruits for his force. Confederate forces had begun to surround a Union garrison at Richmond, Kentucky and planned to lay siege to it. Before large numbers of Confederate infantry could move up, the Union soldiers sortied from the town and attacked the 1st Louisiana Cavalry, routing them and seizing one of their mountain howitzers. The cavalry fell back on Patrick Cleburne's division. The pursuing Union cavalymen ran smack into Cleburne's division. The infantry opened fire on the Union horsemen and routed them as they had done to the Louisianans. The Southerners captured 30 men, 100 rifles and some horses.⁽⁹⁾ The next day the battle continued around the town. Cleburne moved forward with his entire division. He found the enemy drawn up in line of battle a half mile of the town. Cleburne deployed three batteries to fire on the Yankees, and all they replied with was the one howitzer they had captured the day before. According to Cleburne the fire of the small gun was "pathetic." The battle continued to be only artillery and skirmishers for a few hours, but finally the Yankees advanced on Cleburne's right flank. Cleburne stopped their flanking movement and was able to break through the Union center. Soon the Union force was fleeing from the field in a panic. The town, and a large amount of supplies and weapons, easily fell to the Confederates and opened up a route for supplies to Bragg's army from farther south.⁽¹⁰⁾

As Bragg's army continued north they attacked many strategic, Union-held towns. One Union infantry brigade was besieged from September 14-17 at Munfordville, Kentucky. The siege began when Scott's Confederate cavalry brigade surrounded the town on September 13th and before dawn on September 14th he attacked. It took the mountain howitzers to drive in the Union pickets. Confederate infantry soon joined Scott's attack on Munfordville. The battle see-sawed back and forth all day with neither side giving or gaining much ground. On the 15th just after dawn the Confederates renewed their assault. When they got to within 30 yards of the Union line the Yankees opened fire, killing and wounding many and causing the rest of the Rebels to retreat. A few weaker assaults followed, but by 9:30 a.m. the Confederates settled down to a regular siege of the town. Around this time Confederate Brigadier General James R. Chalmers sent in a demand of surrender which was promptly rejected by the Union commander, Colonel John Wilder. Reinforcements continued to arrive for the Union defenders, so no more assaults occurred.

Instead on the 17th, as the Confederate forces continued to arrive around the town, including the corps of Leonidas Polk and William Hardee, the Union garrison was forced to surrender to overwhelming odds. The Southerners received several thousand rifles, four cannons of the 13th Indiana Battery, and a large amount of stores and ammunition. The howitzers did not play much of a role after Scott's initial assaults on the 14th. They were outranged by all four of the Union guns and they were quickly relieved by longer-range Confederate guns, which were arriving with their infantry units. They tried to set up the two howitzers on a hill to stop any reinforcements from reaching the garrison, but Scott had too few men to defend them from determined Yankee infantry. So he was forced to withdraw and wait for larger Confederate infantry and artillery units to come up and close off the route of reinforcements. While the Confederates won the battle they suffered 35 killed and 250 wounded, but the Yankees lost only 37 killed and wounded.⁽¹¹⁾

At Augusta, Kentucky on September 27th Morgan's 2nd Kentucky Cavalry skirmished with Union forces as part of his Second Kentucky Raid in support of Bragg's invasion of Kentucky. The howitzers had only recently rejoined the command after having to be sent to Knoxville for repairs. The "Bull Pups" were more than ready to keep up with Morgan's fast-riding raiders. As they approached Augusta they discovered Union militia waiting for them. Company A, 2nd Kentucky, and the howitzers opened fire on two river-transports, while the rest of Morgan's men attacked the town. The howitzers opened fire on the boats, one shell even penetrated the hull of the *U.S.S. Belfast*. The Union boats fired only three rounds each before they fled upriver. The militiamen were holding the rest of the Confederates at bay by firing from many of the buildings in the town. Things went from bad to worse for the Southerners, when the howitzers mistook some of them for Yankees and opened fire, wounding several men. Many of the militia tried to surrender, but when the Confederates tried to take their surrender other militiamen shot at them. The Rebels saw this as a deliberate attempt and brought the "Bull Pups" forward to blast all of the militiamen out of their hiding places. The howitzers were brought into town and their double-canister rounds blasted gaping holes in the doors and walls of the houses. Quickly all of the militiamen surrendered. Their resistance ended John Hunt Morgan's plan of crossing into Ohio to distract Union units from being able to oppose Braxton Bragg in Kentucky. All of the howitzers ammunition had been expended, and many of his men were killed, wounded and exhausted. Morgan had to rejoin Bragg's main force, and retreat when Bragg returned to the Deep South.⁽¹²⁾

To relieve some of the pressure on Bragg's forces John Morgan staged a small raid in October. They encountered only slight resistance until they fought at Lexington, Kentucky on October 16th. Two companies of the 4th Ohio Cavalry held the town, while the rest of the regiment was encamped two miles outside of the town. At dawn Morgan's men attacked the town and the camp. The howitzers accompanied the force attacking the camp. The battle did not go well, with one howitzer mistakenly lobbing a shell into the middle of one of Morgan's companies, but without injuring anyone. Quickly the men in the camp fled or surrendered, and the town's garrison soon followed suit. The battle ended so quickly that the howitzers had little impact on the outcome of the fight. [\(13\)](#)

When John Hunt Morgan expanded his command to a full brigade he added two rifled Ellsworth guns to his mountain howitzers and formed Cobb's Kentucky Battery. On December 6th Morgan led 1,400 men of two Kentucky infantry regiments and his own brigade. The object of the raid was to attack a Federal garrison at Hartsville, Tennessee on December 7th. They quietly surrounded the town in the early morning of the 7th. The howitzers were placed on the far side of the town to help keep the Yankees from escaping to the north. Two miles from Hartsville the dismounted Rebels attacked the Union pickets and drove them easily towards the town. The infantry joined in the attack and drove in the Union left wing. Resistance increased as they got closer to the town. The artillery fired from two sides of the town and after an hour and a half of fighting the garrison surrendered. Morgan had taken 1,800 prisoners, 1,800 stand of arms, two rifled cannons, and a large amount of ammunition and stores. Quickly he loaded up the captured goods and weapons and retreated back over the Cumberland River. It was a minor skirmish, but it increased the fear of Morgan. There was a resulting increase in the number of Yankees tied up at important supply depots to hold them against imagined raids by Morgan's hard riding horsemen. [\(14\)](#)

Morgan's 2nd Kentucky Cavalry next used a mountain howitzer at Elizabethtown, Kentucky on December 27th, as a part of his famous Christmas Raid. Morgan's cavalry surrounded the town and were surprised to receive a demand for the surrender of Morgan's force from the town. Morgan laughingly rejected their demand and responded with a surrender demand of his own. Both sides refused to surrender to the other and Morgan decided to attack. The Confederates easily got to the buildings at the edge of town, but the 800 Yankees pulled back into some brick buildings and warehouses facing to the south. The battery of two howitzers and two Parrots attached to Morgan's brigade opened fire on the Yankee defenders. Very quickly the fire of these cannons forced the garrison to surrender. The next day Morgan's artillery shelled a Union garrison at two wooden bridges, which had been the whole objective of the Christmas Raid. The shelling continued for two to three hours, and just as the Confederates moved forward to assault the defenses both bridges garrisons surrendered. Morgan then returned to the Confederate lines at a leisurely pace with all of his captured weapons, ammunition and assorted stores. Once again the howitzers saved many lives in Morgan's command by shelling Union soldiers out of their defensive works. [\(15\)](#)

John Morton's Tennessee Battery, attached to Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry division, used mountain howitzers at Parker's Crossroads in Tennessee on December 31st. The battery had been formed on December 27th by consolidating two rifled cannons under Captain John Morton and two mountain howitzers under Lieutenant A. W. Gould, previously attached to Napier's

Tennessee Cavalry Battalion. Forrest began a raid behind Union lines shortly after the formation of Morton's Battery. He learned that a Union brigade was rushing to join another one at Parker's Crossroads to prevent him from crossing the a river to get behind the Union front-lines. Forrest believed that artillery was most effective when fought at close ranges, such as rifle-range of about 300 yards. The howitzer was perfect for this type of fast moving and close in fighting that Forrest preferred. The artillery dueled for a while and Forrest held back his cavalry in case the second Union brigade arrived in time to oppose him. Finally the artillery opened a hole in the Union lines and allowed Forrest's men to break through to the town. Union reports state that every time they would try to reform Morton's guns would approach to within fifty feet of them and the Yankees would break and run before the cannons could fire. Just as the first brigade was about to surrender the second arrived and attacked Forrest's rear. The cavalry had a running fight to escape, and Forrest had to fight several rear-guard actions just to save his precious cannons. The battle may have been a loss, but the howitzers proved they could be devastating when used in the close-in fighting that Nathan Bedford Forrest loved.⁽¹⁶⁾

The Civil War: The Western Theater, 1863

John Morton's Battery's of mountain howitzers joined Nathan Bedford Forrest on a raid to Dover, Tennessee and the nearby Cumberland Iron Works in mid-January. Forrest attacked the iron works on January 28th. There were two Union infantry companies at the works, but they were quickly and easily captured without any resistance. General Joe Wheeler was supposed to attack Dover from one side while Forrest attacked from the other. Forrest got into position and waited for Wheeler to come up and attack. Morton's Battery exchanged fire with a single Federal gun, which they quickly hit and dismounted. Before Wheeler could arrive Forrest saw a large body of Union cavalry riding away from the town, probably trying to escape, and he decided to attack them. Forrest's men chased the cavalry back to their fortifications and attempted to attack the entrenched Yankees. They reached the Union trenches, but Forrest's men were cut to pieces by the fort's large siege guns firing huge rounds of double canister. Forrest was wounded in the fight, but the Confederates did not pull back until late in the day. The Union forces made no attempt to sortie from their fort and attack the heavily cut-up Rebels. So the Southerners were able to recover their dead and wounded, and to haul off all of the supplies captured at the iron works and in parts of the town. Morton's battery fought all day long, but they had to stay in hiding whenever the siege guns tried to fire on them. Howitzers would lose any contest against the larger smoothbore and rifled field pieces, and they stood absolutely no chance against huge siege guns. Forrest felt that he had been abandoned by Wheeler, who was a day late. At a meeting on the retreat Forrest hotly informed Wheeler that he would never serve under him again.⁽¹⁷⁾

Wilder's Mounted Infantry Brigade, one of the toughest units in the Union's Western forces, had howitzers added to the armament of its 18th Indiana Battery beginning in early February. Colonel Wilder had seen the benefits of mountain howitzers when he was besieged several months earlier at Munfordville, Kentucky. The howitzers could load and fire much more rapidly than rifled guns, and they were often used to stop Confederate infantry forces that would try to attack the rifled guns of the battery.

Union artilleryman Albert Underwood recorded in his diary a skirmish on February 14th at Meridian, Mississippi. A large Union force was sent to attack several different groups of Confederate cavalymen in northern Mississippi, who had been making raids against Union supply points in Tennessee. At Meridian a small force was encountered guarding a Southern depot. A few shells were thrown by the mountain howitzers of an unspecified Union cavalry regiment and the Confederates abandoned the town to them. The Union force burned some more towns and fought small skirmishes with scattered Southern cavalry forces, and then they returned to Tennessee with only a few losses.⁽¹⁸⁾

After many of these Union raids from Tennessee and from ships off the coast many artillery pieces, including a number of mountain howitzers, were added to the defenses around Savannah, Georgia in March. Small forts with artillery were placed along many of the rivers that were deep enough for Union steamships to move up and transport troops to raid all over Georgia. Savannah itself feared that transports could land troops for an overland attack on the city. In the rush to fortify all of the rivers two 12-pound mountain howitzers were placed in the "ricer batteries" defending the smaller rivers. Several were placed in the forts on the river approaches to the port and the islands leading to the Atlantic from Savannah. One was placed on Genesis Point at Fort McAllister. A mountain howitzer was placed in Fort Jackson, and another in Battery Lawton on an island across the river, facing Fort Jackson. These were there to defend against infantry attacks on the forts, where the larger anti-ship guns could not be effectively used against infantry.⁽¹⁹⁾

Morton's Battery fought at Franklin, Tennessee on March 5th, as part of one of Forrest's numerous raids into Tennessee. Forrest's men had been repulsed in one assault and the Union garrison advanced to attack them before they could reform. Forrest rushed forward his two batteries, including the two howitzers of Morton's battery, and at point blank range they cut huge swathes through the advancing Federal infantry and drove off a Union battery. The Federals retreated to a ridge behind the railroad track running through the edge of Franklin. Morton found a high position which dominated the new Yankee line. The fire of Morton's guns and the rapid advance of Forrest's men forced the Yankees to surrender. Many others fled north or back into the Union fort across the river.

Forrest once again supplemented the fire of his men with artillery firing at point-blank range, and the artillery broke up every attempt by the Union infantry to make a stand.⁽²⁰⁾ Union forces were chasing John Hunt Morgan's brigade all over Tennessee with little success after yet another of his raids. One cavalry brigade came close to them, but the rear-guard used its mountain howitzers to repulse their pursuers on March 20th at Milton, Tennessee. A couple of rounds from the guns allowed them to escape and ended any serious pursuit of the brigade.⁽²¹⁾ Just before Morgan's force departed on their disastrous Ohio raid the howitzers were taken from them by Braxton Bragg. This came near to causing a mutiny among the cannoners and cavalymen who loved the howitzers with their ability to stay with the fast-riding men and to provide vital artillery support. To add insult to injury the howitzers were captured from Bragg by Union cavalry within a couple of weeks.⁽²²⁾

Confederate forces moved back into eastern Kentucky in mid-March. Major General Quincy Gillmore began massing his scattered garrisons to oppose the Southern army. He was quickly

able to assemble 1,250 mounted men, two large cannons and four mountain howitzers to stop the advance. The two armies finally fought on March 30th at Somerset, Kentucky. 6,000 Federals scattered all over western Virginia, eastern Tennessee and eastern Kentucky retreated before the advancing Confederates. Yankee intelligence indicated that Pegram had 3,500 men and six artillery pieces with him, while two other Southern forces of 1,500 and 750 men roamed in the area around him. Gillmore planned to attack Pegram before he could form a junction with the other two Confederate forces. After daybreak on the 30th the 1,250 Federals moved forward to attack Pegram's men on Dutton's Hill 3 miles north of Somerset, Kentucky. The artillery, in the center, began the battle thirty minutes after noon. As they shelled the Confederate line a Southern mounted force attacked the Union right flank forcing it back. At the same time Gillmore ordered the right and center to assault the Confederates on the hill. Most of the Confederate fire went high over their heads and the hill fell rather easily. The artillery and the men then turned to assist the embattled Union right flank. After several more hours of fighting Pegram's command retreated to southwestern Virginia. They had suffered around 300 casualties and left behind much of the supplies, livestock and other plunder they had picked up from the abandoned Union outposts. [\(23\)](#)

The howitzers of the 18th Indiana Battery saw their first combat on April 21st at McMinnville, Tennessee. After repeated skirmishes with Joe Wheeler's Confederate cavalry the Union high command decided to send a force to clean them out of some of the towns they had been staging out of near Union lines. On April 20th Wilder's brigade of mounted infantry, the 18th Indiana Battery's eight guns, and a cavalry brigade headed to McMinnville to evict John Hunt Morgan's cavalry brigade. Near dusk on the 21st part of the infantry attacked from the west while the battery and the rest of the Yankees circled and attacked from the east. After only a few rounds from the artillery, including the howitzers, and a cavalry charge, Morgan's cavalry scattered and raced for their lives. Wilder's men then set about destroying the depot with its bridges, 600 blankets, 30,000 pounds of bacon, tons of other foodstuffs, and numerous cotton gins and textile mills. The howitzers had performed superbly in their first battle with the 18th and would see action on numerous occasions after many other unit's howitzers had been replaced by longer-range pieces. [\(24\)](#)

Early on June 9th Colonel August Kautz of the 2nd Ohio Cavalry led a demi-brigade from Somerset, Kentucky, made up of detachments from his own regiment, the 7th Ohio Cavalry, the 54th Ohio Mounted Infantry and four pieces of Private Jesse Law's mountain howitzer battery. They were to make a demonstration towards the Confederates around Monticello, Kentucky. After crossing the Cumberland River, Kautz was joined by 300 more men of the 2nd Tennessee and 45th Ohio Mounted Infantries. This new force had skirmished earlier with the local Southern soldiers, and four or five miles past the river Kautz found the Southerners were drawn up in line of battle and ready to fight this large Union force. A section of the howitzers were brought forward, and after a few shells the Confederates withdrew. The Yankees continued pursuing them all the way to Monticello and through the town. The Federals held it for a few hours, and in the late afternoon they began heading back to the Federal base at Somerset, Kentucky. Towards evening the rear-guard came under attack by a regrouped Southern brigade. The first attack was repulsed by only two Federal companies, but the Confederates were massing in the nearby woods to attack again. Soon two Union regiments and a section of howitzers arrived. Their fire cut wide gaps in the Confederate ranks, and the fighting ended as evening came on. The

Confederates made no effort to pursue the Union brigade on June 10th. Colonel Kautz recommended Private Law for a commission and official command of the battery that he led. Kautz complimented Law for the accurate and destructive fire of his mountain howitzer. [\(25\)](#)

An unnamed Confederate Missouri Cavalry regiment used howitzers against Union positions at Memphis, Tennessee on June 15th. The Confederate leaders had come up with a plan to harass Union shipping on the Mississippi. Southern forces in Arkansas were chosen to attempt this interdiction, because they could move through unconquered lands while any Confederates in Tennessee would have to cross many miles of Union-occupied land. Two hundred and fifty men were dispatched by Sterling Price with a couple of mountain howitzers. They set up their ambush north of Memphis on the western side of the Mississippi by mid-June. They fired on a few transports, causing only a little damage, but a great amount of consternation among Union leaders in Arkansas and Tennessee. Many Federals were tied up running around on both sides of the river trying to catch the raiders and their artillery, but they easily made their way back to Confederate lines. The raids caused an uproar among Union leaders, but they did not cause a lot of damage and the Yankees quickly returned to their attacks on the main Confederate armies. [\(26\)](#)

The 18th Indiana Battery used its howitzers at Hoover's Gap, Tennessee on June 24th. The Union army was beginning its advance after six months of resting from its rough handling at the Battle of Murfreesboro in December 1862-January 1863. The 18th Indiana and Wilder's Mounted Brigade were attached to George H. Thomas's XIV Corps, and were ordered to move towards Hoover's Gap to the southwest. Nine miles from Murfreesboro Wilder ran into Confederate skirmishers. The cavalry pickets were easily driven back on the main Southern works five miles closer to the gap. The Federals captured a signal station at the entrance to the Gap so quickly that the equipment was left behind. In the rapidity of the advance many of the horses began to give out and the artillery had to be dragged forward by hand. The Yankees followed the Southerners so closely that the Rebels were unable to make a stand in the Gap. Confederate infantry of General William B. Bate's brigade began their march to the Gap at 2:00 p.m. Wilder's men dug in on the southern end of the Gap and rushed the artillery forward. The mountain howitzers were posted on the right side of the main road facing to the southeast.

At 3:00 Bate's infantrymen attacked the entrenched Federals. Two batteries of Southern artillery opened fire at 1,200 yards on the 18th Indiana Battery and caught the howitzers in a cross-fire which killed two gunners and all the mules of one gun. The 18th's rifled guns returned fire, dismounting one of the Southern guns and forcing them to change positions several times. The rifled guns continued to fire at the opposing batteries, and the howitzers fired double-canister charges into the advancing Confederate infantry and helped stop the Rebels 50 feet from the Union line. Then the howitzers helped drive off an attempt to seize the 18th's guns with great slaughter. Several other assaults followed, but the 18th's guns and the 700 seven-shot Spencers used by some of Wilder's men easily repulsed the Southerners. By 4:00 p.m. two Union infantry brigades had arrived and the Northern hold on Hoover's Gap was assured. Over the course of the battle the battery had fired 350 rounds, much of it double-canister which slaughtered many of the attacking Rebels. During the night Wilder's brigade and the 18th Indiana Battery were removed from the line to rest and resupply. [\(27\)](#)

The movement of the various Union corps forced Braxton Bragg to begin a retreat which would end up with the Confederates gone from most of Tennessee. Wilder's brigade and the 18th Indiana Battery's mountain howitzers saw action again at Tullahoma, Tennessee on June 28th. Bragg's headquarters and central depot had been located at Tullahoma since January 1863. Wilder was to cut the communication and supply lines, and interfere with the Southern retreat. Because they were to move quick and strike hard the 18th Indiana took along only two mountain howitzers. The rest of the battery was left behind to come up with the slower moving infantry. They had to detour far to the southeast, since many of the rivers were swollen and fast-moving with the beginnings of the melting of the winter snow in the mountains. Near Pelham, Tennessee they found a place they could finally ford a river, but the howitzers's ammunition had to be carried across on the shoulders of the horsemen. Later, they had to dismantle a saw mill to make rafts to float the howitzers across the Elk River. A few miles down the road, near Decherd, they ran into a Confederate stockade defending the vital railroad. The howitzers fired a number of rounds of canister, and the 80 Southern defenders beat a hasty retreat. The evening of the 28th Wilder's men tore up the track, destroyed a large amount of stores and telegraph equipment, and blew up the nearby railroad trestle. The next morning they had to ride rapidly eastward to avoid several Confederate cavalry brigades which were sent to capture them. Wilder's men continued to tear up any tracks and burn any stores they came across, and within a few days they had circled the Southern army and safely returned to the Union lines.⁽²⁸⁾

In mid-August the Union army began moving towards the Confederate bastion of Chattanooga. On August 21st the howitzers of the 18th Indiana Battery were assigned to guard Harrison's Landing on the river just above the town. The Rebels had used this crossing the year before to force Buell to retreat out of the area. The howitzers did not have to fire on any Rebels, but they did see a large number of them and the presence of Union infantry and artillery at the ford kept the Southerners from trying the flank attack again. The rest of the battery closed on Chattanooga and eventually helped to drive the Confederate garrison from the towns and the forts on its north side.⁽²⁹⁾

From the start of the war the Confederates had fortified and held on to the Cumberland Gap and prevented Yankee armies from easily raiding or invading eastern Tennessee or southwestern Virginia. In late August a Union force was sent to take the pass. The Southern garrison retreated into their fortifications in the Gap and the Yankees surrounded them on September 6th. The Federals burned a mill and tons of flour which were intended for Southern soldiers. On the evening of September 7th the Yankees attacked the pickets on the southern side of the pass. They used two rifled guns to fire at the pickets, and two mountain howitzers were used by the Leyden (C. S.) Artillery to engage the attacking Federals. Since it was at night only a few men were wounded on each side. On the morning of the 8th the Southern guns fired a couple of rounds at the Union force, but stopped when their leaders began talks to surrender the garrison. The vital Confederate hold on the Gap ended with its surrender on September 9th and allowed the Yankees to raid into the previously untouched regions of eastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia.⁽³⁰⁾

Mountain howitzers would play an important in one of the few decisive victories that the Confederates gained in the west. A dozen or so howitzers would fight on both sides, including the 18th Indiana Battery, John Morton's Tennessee Battery, and the 1st Louisiana Cavalry. The campaign began with Braxton Bragg's Confederates advancing towards William S. Rosecrans's

widely scattered Union army. Rosecrans was overly confident that the Southern army would be unable to stand up to the Federal army. He scattered his corps all over the countryside to try and find Bragg's men so that they could destroy the Southern army and end the war quickly. Braxton Bragg planned to destroy Rosecrans's scattered corps in detail. The first clashes were skirmishes between the advance cavalry scouts of both armies. The 18th Indiana's howitzers fought near Ringgold, Georgia on September 11th. Wilder's Brigade ran into John Scott's C. S. Cavalry brigade. Wilder had four mountain howitzers and Scott had two howitzers, among other guns. The 92nd Illinois Mounted Infantry and two of the 18th's howitzers deployed after they found Scott's men in line to receive them a mile north of Ringgold.

The Southern horsemen outnumbered the Federals and for a while they pushed the Union men back. The rapid fire of the men's repeating rifles and the howitzers stopped the Southerners from moving forward any more. They held until more of Wilder's men and rifled artillery could arrive. The rifled guns of the 18th Indiana decimated Scott's men and chased them out of the area. Scott lost at least thirteen killed and wounded, compared to only three casualties in the 92nd Illinois. Bragg's men failed to catch any of Rosecrans's units alone and the Federals saw their danger and rapidly rejoined Rosecrans in one area. The two armies then moved to attack each other head-on. Within a week they would slam into each other along a small river just south of the Tennessee-Georgia border.⁽³¹⁾

Nathan Bedford Forrest was always willing to attack the Yankees given even the slightest opportunity. He led Bragg's advance, and it was Forrest who discovered that the Federal corps were widely scattered giving the Confederates a chance to defeat them in detail. On September 10th he found two Yankee divisions alone across the Chickamauga River and sent to Braxton Bragg for some infantry to help him destroy these two divisions. After waiting a while he discovered Bragg had marched away without sending him any assistance. Forrest then attacked the two divisions with his cavalry near Tunnel Hill. The Yankees pushed the cavalrymen back for a while, but the range got to be so close and the fighting so intense that Forrest's men were able to repel the Yankees with numerous casualties. This lost chance to destroy part of the Federal army began the feud between Forrest and Bragg which would culminate with threats and the transfer of Forrest at the end of the Battle of Chickamauga.⁽³²⁾

Early on September 18th the Army of Tennessee resumed its advance on Rosecrans's Federal forces. Rosecrans's had realized his danger after the fighting with Forrest and other Rebel cavalry, and had begun concentrating his army. Forrest's cavalry and howitzers accompanied Bushrod Johnson's infantry at the head of the Confederate advance. Throughout the 18th Forrest worked to develop the locations and distribution of the enemy army. On the 19th he advanced towards the Federal-held Reid's Bridge. Here Forrest discovered that the Yankees had retreated a little closer to Chattanooga, so that the town could serve as a place of refuge in event of disaster. Forrest posted his two batteries, including the two mountain howitzers, to shell the enemy near the bridge while he awaited promised infantry support. The guns were deployed to the front of his lines, Forrest's favorite use of artillery, and they decimated several assaults on his position. Promised infantry supports failed to arrive quickly and Forrest's men paid the price, with about one-fourth of the division being killed or wounded. Forrest went back and hustled up Colonel Claudius Wilson's brigade, which promptly attacked and broke through the first two Union defensive lines.

They captured a Yankee artillery battery, but it was soon recovered by a Federal counter-attack. This attack went so far that it almost captured the Southern batteries. The dense forests behind the batteries forced the men to struggle to get the guns between the trees and away from the field. Forrest's men retreated, but the Yankee force had been so badly treated that it was unable or unwilling to pursue him beyond their recovered fortifications. Both sides continued to rush reinforcements to the area. A lack of concentration kept both armies from being able to outnumber and destroy their opponents. Forrest's men held the open ground where they had started the battle and the Army of Tennessee fell into line around them. The Union Army of the Tennessee also rushed to the scene of battle, and spent the evening of the 19th erecting fortifications that would be the line of the main battle on September 20th.⁽³³⁾

Forrest's men were the far right of the Confederate line and were under the impression that the battle was to resume at dawn, but it did not resume until 9:30 a.m. Major General John C. Breckenridge's division opened the assault and were stymied by heavy Union fortifications. Forrest then advanced his men, and horse batteries to find and turn the Union flank. Once again the howitzer was proving to be one the best guns for supporting infantry because they could be advanced by hand. While he was skirmishing with the entrenched Federals a separate column was discovered advancing from Rossville. Forrest turned his men and artillery on the new Yankee column. They were able to fight their way past Forrest to the Yankee lines, but it cost them many men. General George Thomas, soon to be famous as "The Rock of Chickamauga," had to send an infantry force to rescue this new column. Morton's guns kept the Yankees from being able to drive off the Southerners, but their fortifications kept the Confederates from routing them. In spite of the destructive power of the mountain howitzers at point-blank range and the fighting strength of Forrest's division the Southern right had only advanced about 600-700 yards by nightfall.

The fighting on the Confederate right had helped to mislead Rosecrans into moving troops around to stop the potential breakthrough of Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry. This inadvertently opened a hole in his right that allowed Longstreet's men to pour through and rout the Union army. Unfortunately for the Confederates, General Thomas continued to hold the Southerners back at Snodgrass Hill, allowing the rest of the Union army to escape back to Chattanooga. At dawn on the 21st Forrest's division continued the pursuit the fleeing Yankees. Morton's battery was right at the front of the advance. The battery fired a couple of rounds at a rear-guard unit, which fled back to the Union forts. When they neared the town part of his battery exchanged rounds with one of the Federal star forts, and some of its guns fired on several detachments of Federal soldiers. Forrest continually pleaded with Bragg to rush infantry forward and attack the Yankee army before it could regroup, but he was ignored for a variety of reasons and what could have been a total destruction of a Union army slipped through Braxton Bragg's fingers. Eventually Bragg's army arrived and a prolonged siege ensued of the Union garrison.⁽³⁴⁾

By mid-1863 the 18th Indiana Battery was one of the largest batteries in the Union army with six 3-inch rifled guns and four mountain howitzers. The howitzers were detached from the rest of the battery and accompanied the 92nd Illinois Mounted Infantry, also of Wilder's command, to another point along the Union line. They were sent to aid King's brigade which was being slowly pushed back by the Southern army. The rapid fire of double-canister decimated several

Confederate assaults, firing 778 rounds during the course of the battle. According to Colonel Smith D. Atkins of the 92nd :

Four mountain howitzers of Lilly's battery were with me on the 19th, and placed in position by General Reynolds, when I was ordered to dismount. The sergeant in command was wounded and I have no report, but cannot refrain from bearing testimony to the gallant manner in which their guns were manned, convincing me of their effectiveness at short range.⁽³⁵⁾

However, when the Union line began to crumble from the Federal right to left the infantry from King in support of the howitzers ran away. The cannoneers had to fight their way out through the onrushing Southern infantry. They fought so well that they were able to escape with three of the guns and the limber of the fourth howitzer. In the hard fighting at Chickamauga the crew of the 18th lost two men and six horses killed, and 8 men and 1 horse wounded.⁽³⁶⁾

John S. Scott's Louisiana Cavalry brought its battery of two mountain howitzers and two rifled guns with it when it joined Forrest in his movement on the Yankee army in early September. His 500 dismounted cavalry and the four guns fought with the entrenched Union men for several hours. They helped to push the Federals at the end of the day and pursue them as much as Braxton Bragg would allow. In his report Scott claimed that his brigade disabled one Union gun. They completely exhausted their artillery ammunition in the course of the battle, and withdrew back to the main Confederate lines. On the 21st they resumed their advance and participated in the seizure of Missionary Ridge and later in the siege of the Union garrison in Chattanooga. In the course of the fighting on the ridge the horsemen and the battery drove off an Ohio infantry regiment from the base of the hill and into the town.⁽³⁷⁾

While part of the Union army was trapped and besieged in Chattanooga, other forces were attempting to take control of eastern Tennessee. Colonel Wolford's mounted brigade was sent to the area near Athens to oppose a Confederate advance from western Virginia and northern Georgia. On September 25th Robert K. Byrd's brigade was attacked along a small river by a large Southern force of cavalry and artillery. The Federals were flanked and pushed back closer to Athens. Wolford's brigade and Law's Kentucky (U. S.) Battery of mountain howitzers, a part of Wolford's command, rushed to their assistance. The howitzers and Byrd's cannons opened fire on the Confederates, along with the Spencer-carrying 8th Michigan Cavalry, and drove the Southerners away. Off and on for the next two weeks the Yankees skirmished with the Confederates, but they did not have any large scale engagements after the 25th and the Federals were not seriously threatened again.⁽³⁸⁾

Bowen's 10th Missouri (U. S.) Cavalry Battalion fought on April 17th at the Great Bear Creek in Mississippi. Two cavalry regiments and two mountain howitzers were dispatched on April 14th from Corinth to Glendale, Mississippi to save a Union outpost under attack by Confederate cavalry and to distract the local Southern garrison from amassing against Abel Streight's raid through Alabama and Georgia. By the time they arrived the garrison had beaten the Confederates and was in pursuit of them, but muddy roads slowed down the pursuit especially the movement of the howitzers. At the Great Bear Creek they found the Confederates dug in to resist them. The howitzers joined other batteries in shelling the Rebels, and covering the cavalry as it forded the creek. The Southerners retreated slowly, fighting all the way. The Yankees pursued them all the

way into Alabama. Other Confederates attacked the rear of the Federal force and seized a battery of the First Missouri Light Artillery. The Rebels got away with one of the guns and stopped in a nearby stretch of woods. The howitzer section was brought forward to try and blast the Confederates out of the tree line. The Confederate began to advance in large numbers to attack, and the howitzers joined a section of larger field guns in firing on them. The howitzers helped to break the assault and to drive away the Rebels, but they were unable to recapture the lost artillery piece. The pursuit continued farther into Alabama. At Leighton, Alabama on the 24th of April the howitzers had to fight again. The battle began at Tuscumbia when part of the 10th Missouri and their howitzers were positioned in the center of the Union battle line and when the Confederates began retreating the howitzers fired on them to hustle them along. The Federal horsemen pursued them for a mile until they neared Leighton.

Here the Southerners again tried to make a stand. They fired on the Yankees with rifles and a battery of artillery which stopped the Union advance. The howitzers were brought forward, and fired repeatedly at the Southern battery. The Confederate artillery withdrew 500 yards and continued their fire. The howitzers followed them to a very close range, and silenced the enemy battery after a 20-30 minute duel. The Confederates retreated through town, but stopped 4 miles to the east when they had received reinforcements of a cavalry division under the feared horsemen Nathan Bedford Forrest. The Yankees retreated to Tuscumbia the next morning rather than face Forrest. The Federals moved back into Mississippi and marched to attack the supply depot at Tupelo. On May 5th 600 Confederate infantry drew up outside of the town and the Yankees moved to assault them. The howitzers were placed on a small hill to the west of Tupelo, and opened fire on the Confederates. Two Southern regiments attacked the Federals and the battle see-sawed back and forth, at one time coming close to the howitzers and the Confederates almost seized the guns. The battery cut down many Confederates and helped the Yankees to eventually win. The Federals burned all weapons and stores that they found, and returned to their home base at Corinth.⁽³⁹⁾

A battery of mountain howitzers participated in Streight's Raid through Alabama and Georgia from April 30th - May 3rd. The Federal leader had devised a plan to raid supply and communication centers, especially the main depot at Rome, Georgia, behind Braxton Bragg's front lines. They hoped to force him to retreat from his strong entrenchments in Tennessee and into weaker positions in northern Georgia. Almost 2,000 mounted Union infantry and a section of two mountain howitzers departed northern Mississippi on April 24th to burn their way through Alabama and Georgia. The "Wizard of the Saddle" Nathan Bedford Forrest was sent to stop this Yankee force. Forrest had to oppose one of the cover raids under Granville Dodge in northern Alabama, but he figured out it was a decoy and soon set out after Streight. On April 30th Forrest attacked Streight's camp at Day's Gap in north central Alabama, but Streight was already moving eastward. Forrest doggedly pursued him for the next three and a half days over 150 miles. Both groups continued pushing with little rest, and losing many men along the way as their horses or mules gave out. Often Forrest was slowed by the fire of Streight's two howitzers, but he never stopped hounding the rear-guard of the Federal force. The two groups fought almost continually during the dispute.

At the Alabama/Georgia border Streight's luck finally ran out. Reports reached him exaggerating Forrest's numbers, claiming a large Georgia militia force was between him and the main target of

Rome, and that much of their ammunition had been soaked and therefore ruined when they were crossing the Black Warrior River and Big Will's Creek. Forrest showed nearby and met with Streight to demand his surrender, while in the background his men and cannons rode in circles to make it appear that there were more Southern soldiers nearby than there actually were. Forrest was outnumbered almost 2-to-1 and had lost two cannons earlier to Streight, but he fooled Streight into surrendering. Streight's two howitzers joined Forrest's command and fought with him throughout much of the rest of the war. [\(40\)](#)

The 10th Missouri Battalion shelled Confederates at Florence, Alabama on May 28th. Florence Cornyn's mounted brigade left Corinth, Mississippi on May 26th on a raid into northern Alabama. They rode continuously for two days and early on the 28th they finally encountered their first Southern opposition. They advanced to within 800 yards of Florence, and were stopped by increased resistance of the infantrymen and two Confederate artillery pieces. Cornyn ordered up two of the four mountain howitzers of the 10th Missouri. The small guns fired only five or six rounds before the Confederate guns withdrew. The rest of the Southerners were quickly driven all the way through the town.

The Yankees found 30,000 rounds of rifle ammunition and 5,000 rounds of canister which were quickly destroyed. The Federals also burned a blacksmith and wagon-wheel works in Florence. After two hours Cornyn's brigade marched south on their return. The Confederates attacked the rear of the column constantly, until stopped by the Yankees who burned down a bridge over a large creek. On their trip back to Corinth the Federal cavalymen burned several more textile works, and large amounts of cotton and foodstuffs. They returned safely to Corinth on May 31st. [\(41\)](#)

After the surrender of the Confederate bastion of Vicksburg on July 4th the Union army began expanding the area it controlled and trying to destroy any Confederate supply depots or railroad equipment. Multiple columns were sent in various directions to attack any Southern forces they could find. One column, a cavalry division under General Peter Osterhaus, marched towards nearby Jackson, Mississippi, a railroad crossroads. It included two mountain howitzers attached to the 6th Missouri (U. S.) Cavalry. On the evening of July 8th, at the junction of the Jackson Road and the Raymond and Bolton Road, the Yankees met stiffening resistance from a Confederate division. Continually skirmishing with the Federals the Southern cavalry contested every foot of ground on the road to Jackson.

Several times the howitzers were brought forward, and their fire was credited with often forcing the Rebels out of their positions. Late in the evening the Yankees found the most of the Confederate division drawn up in line-of-battle to stop the Federal advance. The position was chosen so that the Union soldiers could only attack from the front. The howitzers opened fire and the 6th Missouri charged, and between the two the Southerners broke and ran without much of a fight.

Early on the morning of July 9th Osterhaus's men occupied Clinton and found the Southerners awaiting them one mile outside of the town. The cavalry dismounted and moved forward, while the howitzers fired on the Confederate lines. The Rebel cavalry hung on tenaciously, but were forced to retreat by the volume of the Yankee fire. The Union cavalymen pursued them to a

nearby stretch of woods and stopped to fight. This time the howitzers could not force them out of the positions, and a Southern battery was brought forward to attack the Union guns. Osterhaus had to order the howitzers to pull back until longer-range guns could be brought forward. With infantry and artillery arriving, and Union cavalry threatening their flanks, the Southerners withdrew once again.

On July 13th Osterhaus's division had closed to within a few miles of Jackson, and occupied it without a fight on the 17th. On July 21st the cavalry followed the march of the XIII Corps towards the Big Black River and back to Vicksburg. The howitzers had enabled the cavalry to destroy tons of Confederate supplies, miles of railroad and irreplaceable train locomotives and cars.⁽⁴²⁾

Union forces in the area of Corinth, Mississippi were continually plagued by Southern cavalry units which always fled when confronted, but always returned after the Federal forces had left the area. One such unit had returned to the region of Jacinto, south of Corinth. One Union cavalry force consisting of the 5th Ohio Cavalry, a mounted infantry company and four mountain howitzers patrolled the region on a regular basis to chase off any guerillas. They skirmished at Jacinto, Mississippi on September 7th. The Rebels did not put up much of a fight and fled after only a few rounds. This cycle of skirmish and flight continued throughout much of the rest of the war.⁽⁴³⁾

On September 27th Colonel Edward Winslow led a force of 900 men of the 4th Iowa, 10th Missouri, and the 4th, 5th and 11th Illinois Cavalries out of the town of Vicksburg. They were dispatched on a raid from the Union-held area around Vicksburg to destroy Confederate supplies, communications and railroads. The Union force began pursuing a Southern cavalry brigade that was in the area and had skirmished with Federal horsemen on various occasions. When Winslow learned that the Rebels had retreated towards Livingston and Jackson he crossed the Big Black River at Moore's Ford to chase them. He left behind one regiment and one of the guns to guard the ford. At dawn on September 29th the rest of the Federal force was attacked by a large number of the enemy and four cannons. The howitzer with Winslow's main force was quickly disabled, but was placed in a wagon and taken back to the Federal lines. After just an hour of fighting the Confederates broke off and the Yankees were able to continue on their way. The Southerners continued to nip at the flanks of Winslow's force, but were too weak to risk a general engagement with the larger Yankee brigade. In 96 hours Winslow's men had moved 126 miles, captured eight Rebels, destroyed 50 rifles, captured 100 horses and 50 mules, all this while losing only 2 men captured and none wounded.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Major General Joe Wheeler had led a large number of Southern horsemen on a raid behind Union lines in late September. On October 3rd Wheeler's men forced the 600-man garrison of McMinnville to surrender and spent the following day destroying Union stores and railroads. Many brigades were rushed to catch and destroy Wheeler's raiders. Wilder's brigade was the lead Union element racing towards the captured depot and began fighting with the rear-guard of Wheeler's force. They skirmished with them for quite a distance, but the Southerners were leaving so quickly that the Union artillery had a hard time just keeping up with their pursuing cavalry brigade, much less getting to fire any rounds at the scattered and retreating Rebels. Seven miles west of town the Yankees had driven the Confederate rear-guard into their main body so the Southerners had to make a stand at the edge of a nearby forest.

Wilder's brigade dismounted and formed to attack, while Captain Eli Lilly, founder of the 18th and the Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Company one of the largest American pharmaceutical companies today, and the 18th Indiana Battery positioned itself a half mile from the Rebel lines. All of the battery's guns opened fire, and after 30 rounds the Southerners fled from the field. While it was an extreme range for the mountain howitzers, Lilly was not one to let a gun sit idle when it could be flinging cannon rounds at the enemy. The rest of the brigade continued its pursuit for another 2 miles until darkness ended the pursuit. The brigade had marched 30 miles and had successfully fought a long, continuous running-fight with Wheeler's tough veteran horsemen. The artillery helped to end the resistance by the Rebels, and sped up their flight from the region. ⁽⁴⁵⁾

The 9th Illinois Cavalry used howitzers at Lamar, Tennessee on October 6th. Four howitzers attached to the 9th were dispatched from La Grange, Tennessee with 730 men of the 3rd and 9th Illinois Cavalries to attempt to block Confederate cavalryman James Chalmers's raid on Union rail lines. When the Federal commanders learned that Chalmers's and 2,500 horsemen were moving to destroy their small force on the south side of the Coldwater River they were ordered to move to and hold the depot town of Lamar, Tennessee. While the Yankees were crossing the river at dawn on October 6th the Southerners attacked the advance pickets on the north side of the river. They hoped to be able to cross to the far side and attack Federal rail and supply depots. The howitzers were rushed to the north side to prevent the Rebels from reaching the ford and blocking the Federal movement. According to Colonel La Fayette McCrillis, "Chalmers' battalion charged in column to gain the ford, but were driven back in great confusion and with considerable loss by a few well-directed shells." The battery fired 32 rounds in the short, brisk engagement. Chalmers let the Yankees keep the ford and moved to another one located three miles to the east at Lockhart's Mill. The Yankees retreated to the intersection of the Collierville and La Fayette roads at Mount Pleasant. They expected the Southerners to attack them, but they waited all day for nothing. In that time Chalmers's brigade had continued towards La Grange, Tennessee and the small Federal force picked up the pursuit at midnight of the 6th. They were left far behind by the fast-moving Rebels and had no more engagements with them in this raid. ⁽⁴⁶⁾

Braxton Bragg sent large portions of his cavalry to destroy Union lines of communication and resupply after his victory at Chickamauga. Federal leaders sent various garrisons out to stop the raiders. Two of the mounted opponents ran into each other near Shelbyville, Tennessee around 10:00 a.m. on October 7th. One regiment of George Hodge's Confederate Cavalry Division was hard pressed, so the rest of the brigade and its two attached mountain howitzers rushed to their aid. John Scott, of the 1st Louisiana Cavalry, had his brigade routed by the hard fighting Yankees. Hodge was able to keep his men together and to rally some of Scott's men. He formed then behind a fence running perpendicular to the Shelbyville road, and they fired a point-blank volley at the onrushing Federals. The Union horsemen were checked by this volley and the wounding of 30 or so men. Hodge brought up all of his men and the two cannons in this momentary lull in the fighting. The guns and the men fired into the Yankees again and again, but the Federals brought forward three longer-range artillery pieces and forced Hodge to retreat. Hodge fought a long, slow and controlled holding action against the numerically superior Union brigade, but many of his men and horses were wounded and killed.

At 3:00 p.m. Hodge was ordered by Joe Wheeler to retreat to the new, Southern defensive line, and he continued on through Farmington to cross the Tennessee River at Muscle Shoals. George Hodge's brigade had lost one-third of its men, but he credited the howitzer battery with doing "terrible execution with their guns on the enemy." Wheeler's new line was eventually broken and they were pursued all the way to the Tennessee River and the main Confederate lines.⁽⁴⁷⁾

After trapping William Rosecrans's army in Chattanooga, and feuding with his own lieutenants, Bragg sent James Longstreet, the 1st Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia and a portion of the Army of Tennessee to destroy Ambrose Burnside and the Union army around Knoxville. Burnside's army was scattered all over eastern Tennessee. 1,200 cavalymen and six mountain howitzers were headquartered at Philadelphia, Tennessee. On October 20th part of Longstreet's command moving from southwestern Virginia attacked this force and routed them rather easily. The Rebels captured all six of the howitzers and a large portion of the force's wagon train. This Southern command advanced only a little farther into eastern Tennessee and was eventually chased back into Virginia. However, when they retreated they took all of their captured stores and cannons with them.⁽⁴⁸⁾

On November 3rd Collierville, Tennessee was occupied by the 3rd Cavalry Brigade attached to the 16th Corps to try and stop the raid of James Chalmers's Southern Cavalry Division. The brigade was scattered over fifty miles of road to guard railroad bridges and discover in which direction Chalmers was moving. They had two iron howitzers with the 8th Illinois Cavalry, four mountain howitzers of the First Illinois Light Artillery and two with the 2nd Iowa Cavalry. Early on the 3rd the pickets of the 8th Illinois were attacked by Rebel horsemen eight miles south of Collierville. The 8th pulled back to their fortifications around the town and awaited reinforcements. The exploding shells and double canister of the two howitzers helped to keep the Southerners at bay. The 2nd Iowa moved in on foot to attack the rear of the Confederates assaulting the town and their howitzers were placed in the center of their line. A brigade was sent to attack the 2nd and the howitzers cut many of them down. A few of the Rebels reached the guns, but they had little support and were quickly killed or captured.

At the same time the 1st Illinois Light Artillery reached a ridge to the east of the town while they were under heavy fire and many of their horses were killed. In spite of the losses of horses the artillerymen moved the guns into position by hand and opened canister fire on Chalmers's right flank. Soon the Rebels pulled back to escape the devastating fire of the mountain howitzers. Chalmers turned his attention from the town to drive off the pesky cavalry brigade. The 2nd Iowa and its howitzers were formed on the right, followed by the 7th Illinois and the 6th Illinois, and the 1st Illinois Artillery on the left. The Yankees attacked before the Rebels could move very far and soon drove them from the field with little resistance. The howitzers took out many of the Southerners. They pursued Chalmers southward, but were stopped eight miles south by Southern fortifications and nightfall ended the fighting. The Yankees captured 57 Confederates, injured a number and collected a number of abandoned side-arms. The howitzers kept Chalmers's men from seizing the town and others helped to drive the Southerners from the field. The stand of the 3rd Brigade stopped Chalmers's raid and saved the Union railroads and bridges that were the raid's target.⁽⁴⁹⁾

In mid-November U. S. Grant began sending troops to relieve the besieged garrison of Knoxville. One of the lead units was Wilder's Mounted Brigade and the ten-gun 18th Indiana Battery. Rains delayed the advance of the rescuers so that they did not approach Knoxville until mid-December. By this time Longstreet had given up on the siege and withdrew his men to the Morristown/Rogersville area. The cavalry from the Army of the Ohio was sent to attack Longstreet's cavalry. Wilder's Brigade was sent to aid the horsemen and the 18th's long-range guns were a welcome addition to the Army of the Ohio's Cavalry, which had only four mountain howitzers. The Union horsemen and their artillery skirmished constantly with the retreating Southerners, but the Yankees were more than content to see Longstreet just leave the area around Knoxville. In their own exhaustion they did not press him and his soldiers too hard.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The cavalry was not allowed to go into winter quarters with the rest of the Union army. Instead, they continually raided and skirmished with Longstreet's Confederates during the winter months. Two sections of the 18th Indiana, including one of mountain howitzers, accompanied a brigade to Dandridge, Tennessee on December 24th. They had seized the town with little resistance, but the Southerners began attacking them in force soon after that. Two Rebel cavalry brigades surrounded the Yankees in the town. They attacked the Union horsemen, but were beaten off by the fire of the Federal repeating rifles and their artillery long before the Southerners got anywhere near the town of Dandridge. The destruction of these attacks allowed the Federals to retreat to New Market without any more interference.⁽⁵¹⁾

On December 29th the Army of the Ohio's cavalry, some infantry detachments and part of the 18th Indiana Battery, in all about 2,500 men, were sent to attack a Confederate brigade foraging in the area around Dandridge. Early on the 30th the Federal horsemen discovered three Southern divisions, around 6,000 men, awaiting them halfway to Dandridge. The Union artillery was placed in the edge of the nearby forest along the Mossy Creek to await the Southerner's attack. The battle began around 11:00 a.m. when the Rebels moved forward. The Yankee guns cut down many of the men, but the Southerners continued to press forward. The fire of the Union repeating-rifles and the artillery stopped the Confederates before they got very close to the Federal lines. After this repulse the Southerners extended their lines so that they overlapped the Union left. Yankee infantry and cavalry charged the extending Southerners, captured 25 of them, and ended their plans to encircle the Union flank. For a while the fighting subsided other than Confederate artillery shelling their Union counterparts.

The Confederates shifted to the Union right and attacked it. However, they were quickly and easily repulsed. All day long the Rebels assaulted various points along the Union lines, but were repulsed by the intense fire of the artillery, including that of six howitzers with the Army of Ohio's cavalry and those with the 18th Indiana. Southern sharpshooters played with devastating effect on the Yankee artillerymen, and after three hours only two or three men remained able to work with each gun of the 18th Indiana Battery.

Slowly the Yankees withdrew several miles, cautiously pursued by the Southern cavalry. Around 3:00 p.m. Union reinforcements attacked the Southerners's left flank and quickly broke them. This short battle was quite intense for what was essentially a division-level fight. The artillery had kept the outnumbered Federals from being overwhelmed by the veteran Southern horsemen. The 18th Indiana's three guns fired a combined total of 512 rounds and this detail suffered

casualties of ten of the fifty men it took into the fight. The Federals suffered a total of 17 killed, 87 injured and 5 missing, and reports indicated that the Southerners suffered around twice as many. [\(52\)](#)

The Civil War: The Western Theater, 1864

In mid-February Nathan Bedford Forrest continued his relentless attacks on numerous Union posts throughout northern Mississippi. One of the scattered Yankee detachments was driven towards Okolona, Mississippi, the main Union stronghold in the area. During the night of February 21st two Southern brigades neared the town. On the 22nd mountain howitzers clashed as Morton's Tennessee Battery exchanged fire with Perkin's U.S. Battery and the 4th Missouri (U. S.) Cavalry. Bell's Brigade of Forrest's cavalry was cut off from the rest of Forrest's command, so he rushed to save them and crush the opposing Yankee army. The fire of Morton's battery helped to drive the Federal soldiers away from Bell's men and into their works around the town. The Union soldiers left behind several pieces of artillery. The six mountain howitzers of Perkin's U. S. Battery were forced off the road in the panic, but their carriages broke and the guns had to be spiked and left behind. Forrest's men were after revenge for the murder of one of their captains by the 4th U. S. Regulars earlier in the war and they furiously attacked the Yankees as they retreated from Okolona. Soon what had started out as an orderly retreat turned into a panicked rout. A few miles from town some of the Yankees made a stand with a large number of rallied infantry and their remaining artillery. This included the mountain howitzers of the 4th Missouri Cavalry. 1,200 Southerners, with only a couple of batteries in support, attacked the entrenched Yankees, carrying the first line easily. The second line stopped Forrest's men in their first assault, but a second attack broke the Union defensive line. This ended any serious attempts by the Union army to stop him on this day.

In their first engagement the Missouri howitzers helped to stop Forrest's pursuit for a short time. Morton's artillery was always to the front in the pursuits and the attacks, and his guns weakened the Yankees so that the outnumbered Rebels could break them. One of the 4th Missouri's howitzers was spiked and abandoned when its carriage broke, but the rest of the battery survived to fight another day. On the evening of the 22nd the pursuit was handed over to fresh Confederates, ending the battle for Morton's battery and Forrest's horsemen. General Smith, the Union commander, admits in his report that he had 5,000 men to oppose Forrest, at least two to one odds in the Union's favor. In spite of these advantages the Yankees were routed by Forrest's rapid attacks with howitzers in the front lines, and by his tough reputation. Forrest's cavalry had driven the Yankees over 50 miles in two days, and caused around a thousand to be killed, wounded or captured. [\(53\)](#)

In late May the Union forces in eastern Kentucky began advancing on nearby Confederates, both to protect the flank of John Schofield's Union army and to provide a diversion for the advance of Sherman's main force. On May 27th General Stephen Burbridge left Louisa, Kentucky with the 39th Kentucky Mounted Infantry, the 11th Michigan Cavalry and its two mountain howitzers. At the mouth of the Beaver River the Yankees planned to halt to erect a small fort that would help stop any raids by fast-moving Southern raiders. They found none of the expected forage so they were forced to return to Louisa. On June 4th the 45th Kentucky (U. S.) Infantry was forced out of Pound Gap by a large Southern force moving on the Virginia side of the mountains. When

Burbridge learned the next day that John Hunt Morgan, with reportedly 5,000 men, was moving through the abandoned gap he advanced with all the men he could find, including the mountain howitzers of the 11th Michigan and the 1st Kentucky Light Artillery, Battery C. Burbridge planned to move in behind Morgan and attacking him from behind. He soon learned that Morgan's men knew the territory intimately, and could not be attacked with any appreciable amount of surprise. He left parts of the 52nd and 37th Kentucky Infantries to hold Pound Gap should Morgan return that way.

Early on June 8th Burbridge took up a direct pursuit of Morgan with the most-rested horses of his command and two of the mountain howitzers. At dawn on June 10th he caught up with Morgan, who had just taken the small garrison at Mount Sterling. The plan called for a dismounted assault with the two howitzers as part of the mounted reserve, but one of the guns was mistakenly run forward to the front lines. The gun blocked the road and prevented the Yankees from completely surprising and possibly routing Morgan's raiders. Its horses were quickly killed, and it was captured before the men could even try to roll it away by hand. The 12th Ohio Cavalry rushed to retake the piece, and quickly did after some very hard hand-to-hand fighting. The Federals pursued them for several miles, until Morgan's men realized how small the Yankee force truly was. The Yankees dug in and, with the help of the remaining howitzer, repulsed the Southern horsemen after an hour and a half of intense fighting. Fearing Morgan would return with a detached portion of his command and help his men to rout the small Union force, Burbridge headed to Lexington with his wounded and the prisoners early on the 11th.

Here he learned that Morgan had already left the town, so he planned his pursuit with reinforcements from George Stoneman's cavalry division. Burbridge mounted as many as he could on fresh horses. They departed early on the 12th, skirmishing often with Morgan's men, but they were never able to bring Morgan to any pitched battle. By the late on the 13th Morgan was safely back within Southern lines. The howitzers in this campaign faced the same problems that all artillery did when opposing the fast-moving Southern raiders. If they could not catch up to any large force than there was nothing for the artillery to break so that the Yankee horsemen could finish them off. Artillery fire is wasted when dealing with the spread-out skirmishers that they spent most of their time fighting with on these raids.⁽⁵⁴⁾

William T. Sherman dispatched Brigadier General Samuel Sturgis and several thousand men in early May to find and destroy Nathan Bedford Forrest and his troublesome raiders. They were also assigned to burn several major depots, especially those in Tupelo, Mississippi. Forrest skirmished with them, and retreated, all the while assembling enough men to destroy Sturgis's command. Forrest decided he had to fight to save the massive amount of stores that were at Tupelo. He decided to make a stand at the intersection of the Baldwin-Pontotoc and Ripley-Guntown Roads, better known as Brice's Crossroads. He planned to get the Union cavalry far ahead of their infantry, destroy them and then fall on the tired infantry as it rushed forward to save their horsemen. Both sides had to deal with roads which had been turned into seas of mud by recent rains, and made it next to impossible to move guns or wagons. Even the light mountain howitzers were sinking up to their axles. The battle began early on June 10th with the numerically superior Yankees driving back Forrest's men. Among the Federal horsemen were the 4th Missouri Cavalry and two mountain howitzers. According to their commander they fired 112 rounds during the course of the day from their position in the front lines with the Union's skirmishers.

They helped stop several assaults by Forrest's men, and caused them to retreat. Just at this moment John Morton's two batteries, including two howitzers, arrived on the field after a herculean effort to move the pieces through the deep mud. The Federals were being forced back by the rapid fire of the Southern horsemen, but their infantry support was beginning to arrive on the field. The Confederate cannon were placed on a nearby hill and poured a destructive fire into the ranks of the Federals.

They cut gaping holes in the Union lines, and quickly silenced the fire of two Yankee artillery pieces which were the first large guns to succeed in reaching the field. Soon the Federals broke and raced for the rear in a panic. The two Union guns, 3-inch Rodman rifles, were captured in the panic and Morton's battery quickly exchanged its two mountain howitzers for them, making their battery a four-gun set of Rodmans, and turned the guns on their former owners. The 4th Missouri escaped with its two howitzers. Many of the Federals fled for the bridge over the Tishomingo Creek, and the tangled mass of men, horses, and wagons were cut to pieces by the amazingly accurate fire of Forrest's two batteries. The pursuit was ended by darkness, but Forrest had captured hundreds of men and scored one of his most decisive victories of the war. The howitzers had poured out a veritable hail of lead that cut down large numbers of men on both sides, but when they faced larger guns they were soon silenced and many of their gunners were killed or wounded. Howitzers were at their best in hit-and-run attacks, and even when they were used by skilled artillerists, such as John Morton, they were usually devastated by the larger guns before they ever got close enough to return fire. Artillerists who liked these guns all eventually gave them up when they could get bigger and better guns, such as Rodmans or Napoleons. Even proponents of the howitzer were not suicidal enough to get in artillery duels with longer range guns if they could help it. [\(55\)](#)

The Macbeth (South Carolina) Light Artillery used a howitzer at Morristown, Tennessee on October 28th. Late on the night of the 27th the howitzer was sent to General Vaughn's cavalry at Morristown. Early the next day the howitzer was rushed to where the Yankees were attacking Vaughn's lines. It opened fire on the Federal skirmishers at 600 yards, around its best effective range, and chased them back to their main lines. The solitary fire of the small gun did not slow the Union army down and it kept pressing the horsemen back. Soon the gun had used up all of its ammunition, except a few rounds of canister, so it was ordered to retire past the town to resupply. Before they could return the Southern horsemen had begun to retreat from the town with the Federals right on their heels. The sergeant commanding the howitzer tried to save it, but the cavalry stampeded and their artillery blocked the only road. The howitzer helped slow the Union advance, but superior numbers and firearms quickly routed the Southern cavalry force, and the howitzer and six of the eight crewmen were captured. [\(56\)](#)

The Civil War: The Western Theater, 1865

The 5th Regiment, United States Veteran Reserve Infantry, used howitzers at Camp Morton, Indiana from January to the end of the war to guard Confederate prisoners. Around 4,000 prisoners and several tons of Government property were at the camp. A full six-gun battery of mountain howitzers helped the veterans keep the prisoners in line and safeguard the stores. [\(57\)](#)

Mountain howitzers are not known to have been used in any combat in 1865 in this theater. As in the east they were replaced with the numerous longer-range guns. Even people who liked the guns, such as Nathan Bedford Forrest, were giving the howitzers up for the bigger guns. The small guns were then either melted down to make bigger guns or they were sent to small depots to serve as additional firepower in Confederate defensive lines.

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57. Captain J. W. DeForest to Brigadier General James B. Fry, 30 November 1865, OR, ser. III, vol. 5 (Washington, DC: U. S. GPO, 1900), p. 561.

CHAPTER 9: THE CIVIL WAR: THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI THEATER, 1861

On March 16, 1861 the people residing in the southern half of the territory of New Mexico, today the southern halves of New Mexico and Arizona, voted to secede from the United States and join the Confederacy as a territory. Colonel John Baylor and his 2nd Texas Mounted Rifles were dispatched from Franklin, Texas (today known as El Paso) to defend the new territory. Union Major Isaac Lynde held nearby Fort Fillmore with 97 men of the 1st U. S. Mounted Rifles, 400 men of the 7th Infantry, and four mountain howitzers. On July 24th Baylor moved with a small part of his command, less than 100 men, to Mesilla, the Confederate territorial capital. On the 25th Lynde moved with 400 men and the four howitzers to attack the Texans. The 7th was formed to support the howitzers at the edge of Mesilla. The Texans were waiting for them behind thick adobe fences and walls. Lynde fired only two shells from his howitzers before sending the

Mounted Rifles to attack, and these were at long range which limits the accuracy of the smooth bore considerably. The Texans fired a couple of volleys into the Mounted Rifles, killing one or two and wounding a couple more, but this was enough to send the unsupported horsemen retreating to Lynde's main force. Lynde quickly retreated with his whole force to Fort Fillmore. Seventy or so Texans had defeated a force of 400-500 because of Isaac Lynde's timidity.⁽¹⁾

At this point, according to Major Lynde, "Other officers, with myself, became convinced that we must eventually be compelled to surrender if we remained in the fort, and that our only hope of saving the command from capture was in reaching some other military post."⁽²⁾ At 1 a.m. on July 27th the Union troopers abandoned Fort Fillmore and began heading northeast to obtain water at the San Augustine Springs and then head on east to Fort Stanton. The men were devastated by the intense summertime heat of New Mexico, and unable to resist when the Texans caught up with them. The Texans soon overtook the exhausted Yankees, and easily captured many men and the four howitzers which were being towed behind wagons. Lynde claimed he could only field 100 infantrymen to oppose the oncoming Confederates so he decided to surrender the entire command.⁽³⁾ With only one minor skirmish the Texans had secured a new Confederate territory for the time being, as well as obtaining four mountain howitzers, many stands of rifles and a lot of needed military stores.

In Missouri, Union General Nathaniel Lyon moved southward from the Union-held region of northeastern Missouri to attack the pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard. On August 3rd they stumbled onto James Rains's 8th Division of the Missouri State Guard, just southwest of a wooded valley called Dug Springs. Lyons retreated to the northeastern end of the valley while leaving a battalion of regulars and a dragoon company to keep a watch on the enemy. Rains quickly moved forward the rest of his command, 700 or so men and two mountain howitzers, and then attacked the small Federal force. The Yankees beat back two assaults and then launched a counter-attack which broke the Missourians. However, just at this moment Lyon's sent orders for the Federals to retire. Rains assembled what men he could and attacked the retreating Yankees. They pursued the Federals for a while, but were driven off by the artillery of Lyon's main force. The Missourians then fled all the way back to the main Confederate body. This disgusted General Ben McCulloch and contributed a lot to the problems that would later plague the working relationship of McCulloch and his Confederate forces with the independent Missouri force of Sterling Price. The howitzers played only a small role in this skirmish, but proved their worth by keeping up with the mounted forces in the rugged, mountainous regions of southern Missouri.⁽⁴⁾

The Civil War: The Trans-Mississippi Theater, 1862

In Missouri and Arkansas both Union and Confederate forces were equipped with a large number of mountain howitzers, and would continue to use them long after the armies in the east had mostly replaced them with longer range weapons. Brigadier General Samuel Curtis launched a movement against the Confederates in Missouri throughout February. His force included over 9,500 infantry, 2,500 cavalry, and fifty artillery pieces, including four mountain howitzers. They skirmished with the Rebels every step of the way. For example, on February 12th, when the advance Yankee units were fired on by Confederate skirmishers. Curtis's four mountain howitzers were always accompanying the advance units. The howitzers opened fire on the

Rebels and forced them to continue retreating.⁽⁵⁾ At Flat Creek, near Chariton, Missouri, the Confederates set up a strong defensive position in an attempt to stop the Yankee force. They had several artillery batteries implanted in their works and these opened fire on the advancing Union cavalry. The howitzers fired back until more of the Union artillery could arrive on the field. These reinforcements drove the Confederates from their works and eventually led to their expulsion from most of Missouri.⁽⁶⁾

One mountain howitzer was attached to the 6th Missouri (U. S.) Cavalry. They, and the 3rd Iowa Cavalry, moved against Confederate infantry at West Plains, Missouri on February 19th. Companies A and B of the 6th and the howitzer attacked the town from the north. The Confederates fired only a few shots before they fled from the attacking cavalry. Union leaders believed the Confederates were holed up in the court-house, so they sent the howitzer to shell them out. According to Colonel S. N. Wood "Sergeant Moody opened fire upon the building with the howitzer. One shot with canister covered the entire front with bullet-holes. A shell passed through both walls and three partitions and then exploded."⁽⁷⁾ The Confederates lost 6 killed, 8 wounded and 40 captured. While the Yankees had no casualties at all. The howitzers moved quickly with the cavalry and helped to keep the Missouri Confederates off balance and easier to defeat. This forward movement by Union columns continued on into northern Arkansas.

One of the largest, and most influential, battles of the Trans-Mississippi Theater was the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas on March 6-8. Both sides would use several mountain howitzers in this fight. Brigadier Samuel R. Curtis had 10,500 Union soldiers and 49 artillery pieces, including 4 mountain howitzers, as he pursued General Sterling Price from Missouri into Arkansas. The Confederates, under Major General Earl Van Dorn, had about 15,000 men and 35-40 cannons, including several mountain howitzers. Van Dorn sent the Confederate forces on muddy mountain roads circling the Yankees to the north to be able to attack Curtis's force from behind. The Confederates attacked piecemeal, first Ben McCulloch on the Yankee left and later Sterling Price on the right. They drove back the Union soldiers, but they did not break. The loss of Ben McCulloch and James McIntosh caused many of the rebels to surrender. Curtis's men held on and the Confederates were forced to retreat, because their food and ammunition wagons were many miles away. In essence it was a draw, but the battle helped to secure Missouri for the Union.⁽⁸⁾ Much of the artillery with Price's Division was made up of mountain howitzers.⁽⁹⁾ The most important service in the battle was performed by those howitzers attached to Company A of Bowen's 10th Missouri (U. S.) Cavalry.

The 10th Missouri had been serving as part of the bodyguard force for General Curtis. They, and their howitzers, had skirmished with the retreating Confederates throughout Missouri in late February and early March. At the height of the main battle on the 7th, the Union center was being overwhelmed by the Confederates and reinforcements were rushed to them. Curtis dispatched the two companies of the 10th and its two howitzers to shore up the middle of the line. According to Major William D. Bowen:

[Colonel Eugene Carr] who instructed me to take position on the road between the Ninth Iowa and the Twenty-fourth Missouri. After firing 24 rounds my pack caissons were exhausted, and I fell back. Having resupplied [sic] myself with ammunition, took post about 300 yards to the left

of my former position, and threw spherical-case shot into the ranks of the enemy until, finding their heavy guns had our range, we fell back.⁽¹⁰⁾

The only effective tactic for mountain howitzers when facing longer-range guns was to retreat or be cut to pieces. The fire of Bowen's howitzers had kept the line from collapsing and contributed a lot to the retreat of the rebels. They shored up the line long enough for more reinforcements to arrive and save the day.⁽¹¹⁾ General Curtis described the service of these howitzers with his forces saying most succinctly. "These did good service at a most critical period."⁽¹²⁾

After the battle was over Federal forces in southeastern Missouri moved to eliminate troublesome guerillas along swamps of the Missouri-Arkansas border. With 500 men and two mountain howitzers Brigadier General John McNeil hoped to stop the partisans's annoying and destructive raids. They left Bloomfield, Missouri on March 9th, and on the 10th they had arrived at the Saint Francis River at Chalk Bluff, Arkansas. The Confederate guerillas held the ferry on the far side of the river, and skirmished inconclusively for a couple of hours. The howitzers were soon brought up to shell the Rebels. Their fire forced the Southerners to keep their heads down for the most part, and after three hours some Union soldiers were able to swim the river and bring the ferryboat back. The Yankees were able then to cross the river and secure the heights above it. The next day they advanced to the main base of the "Missouri Swamp Fox" M. Jeff Thompson. They found that he had evacuated it the day before, but they kept Thompson off balance and impeded his raids for a while. In the short campaign McNeil's men captured 60 Southerners and 65 mules or horses, destroyed 250 guns and destroyed a large amount of forage and food in the farms around Thompson's area of operations. The mountain howitzers had moved easily through a swamp that would have prohibited the movement of any larger guns.⁽¹³⁾

Howitzers attached to the 4th Iowa Cavalry shelled Confederates around Talbot's Ferry along the White River in Arkansas. In mid-April a brigade of cavalry was dispatched to raid Confederate defensive works and manufacturing centers in northern Arkansas. They destroyed a saltpeter works at Yellville, Arkansas. A Confederate force attempted to stop them at Talbot's Ferry. Two mountain howitzers were brought forward and they shelled the Confederates, who quickly withdrew. The Union cavalry eventually rejoined the rest of the Union army for the continuing advance into Arkansas.⁽¹⁴⁾ General Samuel Curtis reported that the Union cavalry and howitzers fought a small skirmish near Jacksonport, Arkansas on the White River. It was only a minor skirmish, as Civil War battles go, but 20 Confederates were killed and wounded.⁽¹⁵⁾

Howitzers were often assigned to infantry units guarding the supply wagons or railroads of the various Union armies. In June and July the 11th Wisconsin Infantry was guarding a supply train in far northern Arkansas, and they had a mountain howitzer with them. This howitzer was assigned to the 1st Indiana Cavalry. These infantry forces kept the guns when they advanced deeper southward into Arkansas. When General Steele's force reached the Bayou Cache on the Cache River he sent forward the four companies of the 11th, three companies of the 33rd Illinois and the mountain howitzer as advance scouts. On July 7th around a half mile down the road to Des Arc the Yankees ran into a large rebel force marching towards Steele. The howitzer did deadly work on the advancing Confederate soldiers, so they sent a heavy force to silence and capture the piece. Captain Partridge succeeded in saving the piece and after a short retreat it aided the infantry in stopping the Confederates. The 1st Indiana Cavalry soon arrived and put the

Confederates to flight, but it was the fire of the men and their howitzer which stopped Colonel Albert Rust's force of over 1,000 Confederate cavalry from making a surprise attack on Steele's Union division. The 83rd Illinois lost nine wounded and the 1st Indiana had one killed and nine wounded. The 11th suffered five killed and 39 wounded, mostly from the companies guarding and manning the howitzer, but reportedly just under 150 Confederate dead were found upon the field. [\(16\)](#)

Davidson's Peoria Illinois Battery used howitzers at Fayetteville, Arkansas on July 15th. A force of 750-1,000 cavalry and mounted infantry, and the two howitzers, were sent to attack the Missouri State Guard units encamped near Fayetteville. The men made two long night-marches and hid out in the woods during the day to avoid detection. They made it to where the Missourians were encamped, a little over 75 miles, in 36 hours. The Union column approached the Confederate camp and shelled the camp with the two guns. This was quickly followed by a mounted charge which routed the Rebels. They pursued the fleeing Missourians for 12 miles to the Cane Hill area, and stopped as their horses were beginning to give out. The men returned to Fayetteville, having fought a battle and traveled over 100 miles in under 44 hours. [\(17\)](#)

On July 24th a detachment of 300 Union cavalry was sent to intercept a group of Confederate infantry that was reported to be trying to cross the L'Anguille Creek, 4 miles southeast of Marianna, Arkansas. When they arrived early on the 25th the cavalry encountered a Union infantry force that had been dispatched from another command on the same mission. From them Colonel Robert Rombauer learned that the company of Rebel infantry had been routed the previous evening by yet a third Union force sent after them. It had some mountain howitzers and easily chased off the Confederates, who fled across the L'Anguille Creek. Rombauer and his cavalry continued south in an attempt to catch the fleeing rebels, but for the next day and a half they chased reported Confederate forces and never ran into any groups of Southern soldiers. [\(18\)](#)

In mid-August a force of Union cavalry from the Trans-Mississippi, including part of the 10th Missouri (U. S.) Battalion and its two howitzers, was sent on raids in Arkansas and Louisiana in support of one of U. S. Grant's early attempts to take the Confederate Gibraltar, Vicksburg. This force was to destroy supplies and ammunition, and to distract Confederate forces which might otherwise be free to combat Grant's movement down the Mississippi. On August 19th Colonel William Bowen and the 10th headed to Tallulah, Louisiana on the Vicksburg road. A mile from the town they discovered that the Confederates were drawn up in line-of-battle to stop their raid. The howitzers were brought up and after a few shells the Southerners retreated closer to Tallulah. 300 yards from the supply depot the Union soldiers discovered that the Confederates were once again drawn up to oppose them and this time they were heavily reinforced. Once again Bowen brought forward his howitzers and yet again the Confederates fled after just a few shots from the guns. The cavalry then preceded to destroy the depot which contained a large amount of food stores for the Confederate armies along the Mississippi. He also burned the telegraph station and a number of railroad cars. The men then retired to their transport boats and preceded back upriver into Union-held portions of Arkansas.

As they headed upriver they learned of a large number of Confederates near Greenville, Arkansas and decided to attack them. They chased the enemy for two miles, but the Rebels stopped and brought forward a four-gun battery to fight the Yankees. Bowen kept one of the

howitzers in the road and opened fire, while the other was sent through a corn field to attack the Confederates flank. The Confederates retired without replying to the fire of the howitzers. The Union force retreated to their boats and continued upriver. On the 25th, near Bolivar, Arkansas, they ran into another force of Confederates, and these were willing to put up a fight. The infantry occupied the town, but the cavalymen landed a half mile away. There they were attacked by a much larger Southern force. The only thing that saved them was the two howitzers. The howitzers fired until they were out of ammunition, but they were reinforced by another section of artillery and a Union gunboat which forced the Rebels to withdraw. They pursued the Confederates for a mile, and then returned to their transports and continued upriver to their base at Helena, Arkansas. All in all the howitzers proved their worth. They kept up with a fast-moving cavalry force, and gave it fire support which turned the tide in the Union's favor in four separate engagements.⁽¹⁹⁾

The 9th and 6th Kansas Cavalries used howitzers at Newtonia, Missouri on September 30th. Advancing Union cavalry attacked the Confederate-held town on September 29th as part of a plan to take the last few Confederate-held towns in Missouri. Brigadier General Frederick Salomon rushed numerous units to the assistance of the attackers, including the 6th and 9th Kansas Cavalries and their attached mountain howitzers. For a little while the Yankees actually got into part of the town, but their howitzers were too short-ranged to reply successfully to the large Confederate guns, so they had to retreat. They pulled back a mile to wait for Salomon, who marched with two infantry brigades to assist in the attack. When Salomon arrived at the battlefield he moved units around, and placed the 6th Kansas and its howitzers on the far-right of the Union line. Salomon believed he was outnumbered and kept the Confederates in check with artillery fire. At dusk he withdrew to the nearby Union-held town of Sarcoxie. Newtonia soon fell when other advancing units took other towns which forced the Confederate garrison to withdraw or be cut off from the South.⁽²⁰⁾

Company E, of the 2nd Kansas Cavalry was detailed to man two mountain howitzers on September 10th. They first used them near Old Fort Wayne, Arkansas on October 22nd. In October the Union army was advancing southward, re-crossing the field where the Battle of Pea Ridge had occurred just a few months before. The 2nd Kansas was assigned to obtain intelligence of the enemy's positions and numbers. On the 22nd the Kansans approached Maysville, near the Arkansas/Indian Territory border. Several miles east of the town, near a small hamlet called Old Fort Wayne, they encountered a large Southern force. The 2nd attacked rather than wait for reinforcements. The Kansans galloped across the field until they were within 300 yards of the enemy. There they dismounted, the howitzers opened fire near the right of the line, and then they charged the larger Confederate force. One of the howitzers was turned to the right to stop the fire of Confederate parties trying to flank the 2nd. They penetrated the Southern lines and even succeeded in capturing a Confederate artillery battery, which was quickly sent to the rear. Brigadier General James G. Blunt dispatched most of his cavalry and four mountain howitzers to pursue the retreating Confederates.⁽²¹⁾

They saw action again on November 6-7 at Cove Creek, Arkansas. An outpost had been placed at the junction of the Fayetteville and Cane Hill roads. A large force of Confederate cavalry was moving north and they wanted to take the small force. If they did then they would be on the flank of the Union army and force them to withdraw back into Missouri. 100 men and two mountain

howitzers were ordered to reinforce the garrison. At dawn on November 6th the detachment from the 2nd Kansas began moving to the outpost. After moving only four miles they ran into the garrison on the crest of a small nearby mountain range. The garrison had been driven from the outpost, but they were still fighting the advancing Southerners for every foot of ground. The detail of the 2nd joined them and they dug in on the hillside. The howitzers and rifle fire kept the Rebels at bay for most of the day. Towards the end of the day they were pushed off the mountain, but the cavalrymen were reinforced by part of the 11th Kansas Infantry and early on November 7th they retook the hilltop. They held the hill, but Confederate forces bypassed them to attack the rear of the Union army. The 2nd and the other Yankees joined the 1st Division in fighting along the crossing of the Illinois Creek. The division was forced to retire, but it did so grudgingly. The howitzers were drug slowly to the rear by hand, firing often to slow down the Southerners. The Union army pulled back several miles, many units going back into Missouri, but they lost very few men, supplies or artillery and were intact so that they could re-invade Arkansas whenever they chose to. [\(22\)](#)

By late November the Union army was moving back into the area around Cane Hill. On November 28th the Confederate cavalry division, under John Marmaduke, dismounted and prepared to defend the intersection against the Yankees. Their artillery included Bledsoe's two 6-pound field pieces and four mountain howitzers in Shoup's Battery of Jo Shelby's Iron Brigade. The enemy artillery began the fight at such long range that only the two 6-pounders could reply. The two howitzers of the 2nd Kansas advanced with the Yankee skirmishers and opened a hot fire on the Southern cavalry. Marmaduke's brigades were slowly forced back, but the enemy was often checked by flank attacks by one or the other of the brigades. They fell back to Newburg where they planned to make a stand. Twelve Union guns opened fire, which Shoup promptly responded to with all of his guns, even the howitzers. The duel lasted for thirty minutes with neither side doing any appreciable damage to the other. Marmaduke decided to retreat again along the Cove Creek Road, and seeing this the enemy made a rapid push to bag the cavalrymen.

At the forefront of this advance was a group of four howitzers, including the 2nd Kansas's two pieces. Shoup's guns planted themselves atop a mountain crest and firing fast and furiously they were able to stop the Yankees and save Marmaduke's supply train. A couple of the howitzers were disabled in the fight, but the cavalry supports held on long enough for them to be placed on pack mules and saved to fight another day. The hill was so steep that the advancing Union soldiers had to haul any guns up by hand, and all they succeeded in moving were the four howitzers. The other pieces were much too heavy to be moved that way. At the intersection of the Fayetteville and Van Buren roads they made another stand. Once again the howitzers and cavalrymen kept up a hot fire, but a much-larger Union army forced them to continue the retreat. Marmaduke's men succeeded in determining the strength and composition of the enemy. This skirmish was a small opening portion of the advances of both armies which would lead to the Battle of Prairie Grove just a week or so later, in early December. [\(23\)](#)

The second largest battle in the Trans-Mississippi Theater occurred at Prairie Grove, Arkansas on December 7. The Union Army of the Frontier continued to move south into northern Arkansas, while the Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi headed north to attempt to drive the Union army out of Arkansas and hopefully Missouri, too. To stop the advance of the Confederate forces Brigadier General James Blunt massed his forces in the area around Cane

Hill and dug in. The 2nd Kansas was placed at the Cove Creek Road Intersection where the Fayetteville and Van Buren roads intersected. There were only a few hundred of the Kansans and their two howitzers, and on December 5th several thousand Confederates drove them away after only a slight skirmish. The Southern army was trying to flank General Blunt's position at Rhea's Mills and to keep his reinforcements from reaching him. Both armies maneuvered on the 6th trying to discover the exact location of their enemies. The battle began at dawn on Sunday, December 7, when the Confederates shelled the Yankee skirmishers from the heights of the nearby Boston Mountains. Blunt replied with fire from two mountain howitzers, but neither side did any damage to the other. Blunt pulled back all of his force to Rhea's Mill so that the Confederates could not block the road that Union reinforcements would have to travel on.

General Blunt dispatched the 6th Kansas Cavalry and two howitzers to harass the rear of the Confederate flanking force. They pursued the Rebels for two or three miles, firing on them with the howitzers the whole time, until the Confederates drew up for battle forcing the 6th to withdraw. The regiment had done a good job though. They slowed the Confederates down and allowed reinforcements to come to Blunt unimpeded. The cavalry brigades, including the howitzers of the 3rd Wisconsin, and the 2nd and 6th Kansas Cavalries, fought hard and kept open the lines of communications between Blunt's force and the approaching reinforcements under General Herron. Around 1:45 p.m. the two Union forces joined together near Rhea's Mills, called Prairie Grove. The battle settled down to a series of straight-forward charges by both sides which were cut to pieces by artillery and rifle fire. The 2nd Kansas Cavalry was dismounted and joined in the fighting around a grove of woods in front of the Union right. Their two howitzers were sent forward to join in the fighting for these woods. They stopped on a small knoll to the right of the woods and opened fire. They poured canister into a large mass of Confederates until they had run out of ammunition and most of their horses had been shot down. The 2nd's men then rolled the howitzers off the battlefield by hand. The Southerners moved farther to the Union right to flank the Yankees. Blunt rushed men and artillery to stop them, including the howitzers of the 3rd Wisconsin Cavalry. A Union battery of six 10-pound Parrot Rifles was about to be overrun, but the 3rd's two howitzers opened fire with double-charges of canister, which helped drive back the Confederates. The fire of the howitzers allowed the Parrot battery to concentrate on a Confederate battery, which it drove off after dismounting two of their guns and wounding a number of the cannoneers. The fighting continued all over the field until well after dark.

Around daylight on the 8th General Hindman asked for a truce to care for his casualties on the field. Blunt later learned that the Confederates had begun retreating the night of the 7th, and left behind a small group to care for their wounded friends. The Federals suffered 1,148 casualties, including 167 killed and 798 wounded. The Rebels suffered a little more, but they had fewer men to begin with and could not tolerate such heavy casualties. The howitzers performed admirably all over the field, from the cavalry attacks on the Confederate rear to fighting in some of the hottest spots all over the field of battle. ⁽²⁴⁾

James Blunt's Army of the Frontier began to move forward after the Battle of Prairie Grove in late December when they learned that Confederate forces might be planning another offensive of their own. Blunt left behind his trains and rushed forward with 8,000 of his best soldiers and thirty artillery pieces. A few miles north of Van Buren the Union cavalry ran into two Southern cavalry regiments guarding one of the few decent fords in the area. They brought up four of their

mountain howitzers and shelled Confederate positions at Dripping Springs, Arkansas on December 28th. The Rebels soon fled and the Yankees seized the crossing. Here they took 100 prisoners, a large amount of supplies, four river boats and a ferry boat which were intended to move the Confederates across to attack Blunt's army. The ferry was captured trying to cross the river with retreating Confederates. A howitzer shelled it until it surrendered and returned to the Yankee's side of the river. The boats enabled the Union army to continue moving south and seize Van Buren, a central depot and concentration site for the Rebel forces in Arkansas.⁽²⁵⁾

Mountain howitzers also played an important part in the Confederate Campaign in the New Mexico Territory. This campaign was as important in its own way as the more famous campaigns back east. If the Confederates could conquer the New Mexico Territory then they would have access to the goldfields of Colorado and the ports on the Pacific coast of California. In January a brigade of Texans under Brigadier General Henry Hopkins Sibley entered the territory to reinforce the secessionist government of the Confederate territory of Arizona. Sibley's Texans were moving up the east side of the Rio Grande near Fort Craig. They both skirmished on February 20th with little accomplished by either side. On the 21st 850 Union soldiers, and six artillery pieces, under Major Benjamin Roberts sortied out from the fort to attack the Texans and to hold the only ford over the river in the immediate area. Four of the six pieces were mountain howitzers under Lieutenant Alexander McRae. They ran into a force from the 2nd Texas which was also attempting to secure the ford. The Yankees barely held onto the ford and sent to the fort for reinforcements, while the Texans pulled back to an abandoned river bed 500 yards away. The howitzers furiously shelled the Confederate line from the west bank of the river.

Both sides rushed more troops to the battle. Six mountain howitzers arrived with the new Texans to oppose the six Federal guns. Around 2:30 p.m. the Federals were able to cross two 24-pound field howitzers and McRae's four mountain howitzers. McRae was sent to the left of the Union line to pin down the Confederates while other Yankees attacked on the right. Two more field howitzers would join McRae later in the battle. Colonel Thomas Green of the 5th Texas decided to attack first, going after the Union artillery opposite the Confederate right. The Texans moved a mountain howitzer forward by hand to support their assault. Just before the Texans attacked the Union forces had unwittingly abandoned the center, on McRae's right flank, to support the Union right. An assault by the Texans was barely stopped, and all available Union reinforcements moved to this part of the field. As the Texans on the left were retreating those on the right attacked McRae's position. Texas riflemen occupied the positions just abandoned by the Union center and began picking off McRae's cannoneers. The combination of the Texans onslaught and fire from the six Texas mountain howitzers was too much for the Union troopers who quickly abandoned the field, many running all the way back to Fort Craig. Lieutenant McRae was killed fighting for his cannons. This effectively ended the Battle of Valverde. The Union forces retreated to Fort Craig, which kept much needed supplies out of Sibley's hands. While the Texans would continue their march ever farther northward.⁽²⁶⁾ McRae's former battery was then sent back to Texas and eventually it went on to Louisiana with the survivors of Sibley's brigade. The battery would continue to gain fame as the Valverde Battery in the 1864 Red River Campaign through the end of the war.

Later in the campaign howitzers dueled again at Glorieta on March 28th. The mountain howitzers of Sibley's 4th and 5th Texas Mounted Rifles opposed mountain howitzers manned by Lieutenant Claflin's 1st U.S. Cavalry, Company G. Union forces, mostly Coloradans, were advancing south from Fort Union in northeastern New Mexico to stop the invading Texans. As they moved south along a road near Glorieta at Pigeon's Ranch they stumbled onto the oncoming Texans. The Union batteries were deployed on a small elevation on and to the left of the road. The Texans were located among a tree-line and their batteries opened fire on the Union guns. The artillery of both sides killed and wounded many of their enemy's men. Within an hour the Yankees were forced to pull back. Both sides kept up a steady fire and attempted to flank the other, but for four hours the lines stayed unchanged. The Yankees were forced to pull back once again to a third defensive position. The Texans made several assaults on the Union lines and their howitzers kept up a constant fire.

At one point it looked like the Texans were going to seize the battery of large field howitzers led by Captain John Ritter of the 5th U. S. Infantry. The mountain howitzers were told to hold up the Texans long enough for the larger guns to escape, even to the point of sacrificing themselves if need be. Finally after fighting all day the Union forces pulled back to the camp that they had left that very morning.⁽²⁷⁾ The Confederates had won the battle, but they lost the war. Local militia under Major John Chivington had flanked the Texans with a daring march over a mountain pass and destroyed their wagon train. The Texans had to retreat because there were no supplies to be acquired in the area. In the end the lack of supplies, caused by New Mexico's sparse arid land and the locals who hid or burned their crops to keep them out of the hands of the Texans, led to the disastrous retreat of Sibley's brigade all the way back to San Antonio.

During Sibley's retreat southward mountain howitzers saw action at Albuquerque on April 8th and at Peralta on April 15th.⁽²⁸⁾ At Peralta Union cavalry overran part of a Confederate wagon train. They captured a mountain howitzer, seven wagons, loaded with much needed supplies, and killed six, wounded three and captured 22 of Sibley's men. Throughout June howitzers continued to participate in the pursuit.⁽²⁹⁾ Eventually the Texans abandoned most of their artillery. Three howitzers, one field and two mountain, were abandoned near the town of Polvadera.⁽³⁰⁾ Eight of their mountain howitzers were buried in Albuquerque and recovered long after the war.

In May Battery A, 3rd U.S. Artillery under Captain John B. Shinn and Company E, 1st California Infantry led by Lieutenant Thompson, both of the California Column, were equipped with howitzers for their movement towards New Mexico. Sections of howitzers moved with the supply trains into the rebellious territory to occupy Fort Yuma, just across the border between California and Arizona.⁽³¹⁾ In July the California Column moved into the western half of New Mexico, into what would soon be Arizona. On April 15 a dozen Californians skirmished with ten Confederates at Picacho Pass. It was over very quickly with three Confederates captured and a couple wounded. The Yankees had three killed and three wounded. Overwhelming numbers forced the Confederates, under Sherod Hunter, to retreat from Tucson. Colonel James H. Carleton delayed his entry into Tucson until the arrival Captain Shinn's 3rd U. S., Battery B. The first time they were used was to fire a salute in Carleton's honor.⁽³²⁾

Union forces had been heading east from Tucson bound for Mesilla, the Confederate territorial capital. In early July a force of 126 men escorted 242 head of cattle and 22 wagons eastward.

Water was very rare between Tucson and Mesilla, and every source of it was vital. Captain Thomas L. Roberts of Company E, 1st California Cavalry moved ahead with 60 infantry, eight cavalry and two mountain howitzers to secure the vital water source at Apache Pass. The rest of the force followed them. At noon on July 15th the advance force stumbled into the abandoned stage station with its nearby water source. Unbeknownst to them at least 200-300 Apache warriors under Cochise and Mangas Coloradas awaited them in the hillsides around the pass. The Apache launched their ambush just as the men moved towards the pass. One soldier was killed and a teamster wounded in the first Apache volley. The Union soldiers were pinned down 600 yards from the badly needed water. A couple of soldiers were killed trying to get to the water. Eventually the gunners were able to bring their howitzers to bear on the Apaches. This made all the difference and saved the column. Years later Cochise reportedly claimed that he was confident of killing every person in this column. The exploding shells of the howitzers soon scattered the Apache warriors and made the largest Apache against U.S. army battle in Arizona history a victory for the soldiers. In all the Yankees lost three killed and several wounded, while the Apaches losses have been estimated at anywhere between 10 and 70 killed. Apache warriors later told reporters that the howitzers were all that saved the soldiers. The Apache withdrew and Colonel Carleton set up a fort at the Pass to hold the vital water source.⁽³³⁾

A howitzer of the California Column was part of the occupying force for the captured Confederate territorial capital at Mesilla, New Mexico. Two of the mountain howitzers attached to the 1st California Cavalry were stationed in the town for a couple of months to ensure that the townspeople did not try to oppose them. They never fired at any rebellious townspeople, because most of the rebellious citizens had fled when Sibley's Texas Brigade retreated to San Antonio. The fight had been knocked out of the remaining citizens.⁽³⁴⁾

Spaight's Texas Battalion used howitzers in its opposition of Union landing forces near Sabine Pass, Texas on October 29th. Union forces regularly sailed past the town in the Pass as they sailed upriver in the course of making raids. Company A of Spaight's Battalion set up at the edge of the town awaiting the raiders. When the Union transport was within 100 yards of the company they opened fire with their rifles and two mountain howitzers. They wounded quite a few people packed onto the transport. The Yankees quickly withdrew and thereafter only raided at places clear of cover for the Confederates and within supporting range of the Union gunboats.⁽³⁵⁾

Mountain howitzers were to play a vital role in wars against the western Indian tribes in the Civil War years. In many states throughout the West the regular army units were pulled out when the Civil War started, to fight in the more important theaters in the East. Also, many of the men of these territories left home to join the growing Union armies. Many Indian tribes saw this as their chance to push the white man out of their home lands. In Minnesota the Sioux began attacking settlers in August. The winter of 1861-1862 had seen the Sioux reduced to near starvation by a poor crop the previous fall. To make things worse Congress delayed the payments owed to the Sioux for lost lands, and the traders would not extend any credit to the tribe. On August 4 a large Sioux force surrounded the headquarters of the Upper Sioux Reservation and the 5th Minnesota Infantry along the Yellow Medicine River. Another force broke into the agency warehouse to get flour for their starving families. Lieutenant Timothy J. Sheehan aimed a mountain howitzer at the door to stop the theft, but at the same time he persuaded the local Indian Agent to issue flour and pork, and this ended the uprising for the moment.

In the Lower Sioux Reservation, below the Redwood River, things finally exploded into warfare on August 17th. Four Sioux youths returning from an unsuccessful hunting trip decided to kill the Jones family because they seemed to have food when the Sioux did not. After refusals to give the Indians liquor the young men opened fire on the whites. In the end they had killed three men, one woman and a teenage girl. The next day all of the Sioux bands in the area went to war, fearing that the whites would attack them for the deaths of the women. They destroyed the Lower Sioux Reservation headquarters on August 18th and killed 13 whites. White settlers fled to Fort Ridgely, 15 miles east of the agency. In 20 Minnesota counties the Sioux killed, took hostages, looted and burned without stop. In all more than 400 settlers died on August 18th alone. By August 20th Chief Little Crow assembled 400 or so warriors to attack Fort Ridgely which held only 180 men who could fight. The fort's biggest advantage was that it held a number of artillery pieces, including several mountain howitzers. The artillery held off the first attack on the south and east sides. Little Crow did not attack again until he had received around 400 new reinforcements. On August 22nd he planned to overrun the defenders in a mass attack. Some warriors tried to use outlying buildings as places to safely fire on the settlers. The artillery destroyed these buildings and drove off the Indians near them. The all-out attack from the southwest was decimated by several pieces firing double charges of canister. The settlers had three killed and 13 wounded in the fighting, and an estimated 100 Sioux were killed or wounded. The failure to take the fort had confined the Sioux to the western portion of Minnesota and away from the more populated eastern valleys and the large city of St. Paul. [\(36\)](#)

While the Sioux were rampaging throughout Minnesota the state government was assembling a large militia force to oppose them. Regiments were called up and assembled in the area around the capital of St. Paul. Former governor Henry Hastings Sibley, not to be confused with the Confederate General Henry Hopkins Sibley, was appointed to command the expedition against the Sioux. Soon they had assembled three regiments of infantry and an artillery battery equipped with mountain howitzers. Most of the good artillery and infantry rifles had left the state with their regiments heading to the theaters of the Civil War. The majority of the men were equipped with older European rifles, not as good as the British Enfield or the American Springfield, and it took a while to assemble a good amount of ammunition for the large number of different calibers. Finally in late August the 1,400-man brigade was trained and ready, and they advanced to relieve the besieged settlers.

On August 27th they relieved Fort Ridgely and nearby New Ulm. A detachment of 200 searching for the Sioux camped at Birch Coulee on the night of September 1st. Near dawn on the 2nd the Sioux attacked the mounted force. The soldiers were pinned down without water for 31 hours. By the 3rd a relief force of 1,200 arrived, including the 3rd Minnesota Battery, which used its howitzers to quickly drive off the Sioux warriors. However, the soldiers had 24 killed and 90 horses dead, while later interviews with Sioux leaders indicated that they had only two killed in the fighting.

Fort Abercrombie, North Dakota saw howitzers used on September 3-29 by Vander Horck's Minnesota Volunteers. They had been surrounded early on in the uprising by large numbers of Sioux. The settlers and soldiers fought numerous skirmishes over the course of their siege, and many credited the artillery with being the reason that they were not overrun and destroyed. Also, many of the people had older .69 caliber rifles and were quickly running out of ammunition,

which would mean the Sioux would soon be able to wipe them all out. However, they opened up some of the canister rounds for the howitzers, on the advice of an older soldier, and discovered that these older rounds contained .69 caliber bullets. This enabled the soldiers and settlers to hang on until relief arrived. Sibley had relieved all of the towns and forts that were under siege by mid-September and then continued in pursuit of the Sioux. More reinforcements continued to arrive in Minnesota to fight the Indians, including the veteran 3rd Minnesota Infantry. This regiment had been captured at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, but the Confederates quickly paroled them so that they could return home to fight the Indians.

At dawn on September 23rd Sibley and 1,600 men were surprised to find that they had been surrounded by the Sioux at Wood Lake, Minnesota. The 3rd Minnesota Infantry discovered the Sioux and a fight began, ending the Sioux's planned ambush. 300 Sioux rushed the camp, but were quickly repulsed after hand-to-hand fighting in the midst of the camp. The cannons opened fire in all directions, cutting down many warriors and making many others flee from the battle. Nearby ravines, which the Sioux were using as ready-made defensive trenches, were eventually cleared by artillery fire and advancing skirmishers. The 3rd Battery's howitzers fired hundreds of rounds, including many canister charges, in the course of the two-hour battle. The warriors tried to swarm up a nearby ravine, but the howitzers sprayed it with double canister rounds and easily kept the Sioux at a good distance. The Sioux withdrew when their chief, Mankato, was killed by a cannon ball. This battle was a decisive victory for Sibley and marked the end of organized Sioux resistance. Several months of punitive expeditions followed in Minnesota and the Dakota Territory where many of the Sioux had fled. By the end of October Sibley had captured around 2,000 Sioux men, women and children. He sentenced 303 to hang, but President Lincoln commuted the sentences of all, but 40 who were hung in December. ⁽³⁷⁾

The Civil War: The Trans-Mississippi Theater, 1863

Howitzers would always be an important weapon in the theater most-neglected by the Washington and Richmond governments. The best of everything, including long-range field pieces, went first to the armies in Virginia and Tennessee. New cannons became even more scarce in the Southern army after the fall of Vicksburg and the cutting-in-half of the Confederacy. Patrick Connor's 3rd California Infantry had two with them in a campaign against the Shoshone along the Bear River in Utah. In the mind of Colonel Connor they had been assigned to the state to ensure the loyalty of the Mormons. They were also ordered to stop any possible uprisings by the local Indian tribes. Connor seized on the slightest pretense of an uprising to build a reputation as a top-notch military leader and to gain a promotion. A report came in on January 19 that a group of miners had been attacked by a group of Shoshone and one of them was killed. The Indians had told other white settlers that they would continue to attack the locals to get revenge for their mistreatment by Major Edward McGarry, Connor's top lieutenant and rabidly anti-Indian. McGarry had executed four Shoshone warriors over an unproven report that they might have stolen some cattle. Connor assembled 69 infantrymen and two howitzers to attack the Shoshone village on the Bear River. Along the way they were joined by a similar number of cavalry.

The Indians had fortified their camp on a bluff. It had steep sides and the warriors had constructed steps to fire on the Union soldiers without exposing themselves to return fire.

Connor left behind his wagons and artillery in his desire to win a quick and decisive fight over the Shoshone. He ordered his men to make a head-on assault, and they were easily repulsed by the entrenched warriors. Connor then sent the cavalry to attack from both flanks. After four hours of hard fighting they succeeded in routing the warriors from their defensive line. The village was destroyed with many women and children killed in the fighting. Connor claimed that his men had killed between 250 and 300 Indians, probably not that high, and suffered 21 killed and 46 wounded. The howitzers could have easily blasted the warriors out of their positions, but due to Connor's rush to gain fame the artillery had been left behind with the wagons. Thus many of Connor's men paid the ultimate price for their leader's ambition. The evening of the 29th the soldiers had to camp on the sub-zero battlefield, and then trek back many miles to Salt Lake City through a large, fresh snowfall. [\(38\)](#)

In the Trans-Mississippi most of the fighting was done by large forces of cavalry. Cavalry raids continually moved behind the front lines destroying the supplies of both sides. The newly formed militia battery, the Arkansas (U. S.) Light Artillery, participated in a Union raid through northwest Arkansas in March. They attacked supply depots, wrecked river-boats, destroyed bridges, killed livestock, and generally forced large numbers of Confederates to chase them all over Arkansas trying to stop their raid. The howitzers easily moved with the cavalry and shelled Confederate garrisons throughout the region, helping to drive away many Southern soldiers and making it much easier for the cavalry to continue on their raid unimpeded. [\(39\)](#)

The 2nd Missouri (U. S.) Cavalry and several attached howitzers fought at Chalk Bluff, near St. Francis, Missouri on March 10th. The "Missouri Swamp Fox" M. Jeff Thompson had been raiding Union towns all over southeastern Missouri, so a large Federal force was sent to stop his raids. Thompson planned to attack the Union garrison at Cape Girardeau, but put off the plan when he learned that a large Union force was chasing him. Thompson moved to Chalk Bluff, near St. Francis on the Missouri/Arkansas border, to try and stop the advancing Federals. The Yankees tried to seize the ferry to get over to the other side of the river. Thompson with only 16 men, kept up a constant fire on the Federals and held them at bay. The Yankees brought forward two mountain howitzers, and with his men's rifles, they opened a heavy fire on Thompson's men. The Swamp Fox withdrew only after his men had exhausted all of their ammunition. They had slowed the Yankees down and were able to safely withdraw deeper into the swamps that they operated with relative impunity from. [\(40\)](#)

Howitzers were always part of the arsenals of the under supplied Confederate Missouri forces, but from time to time the Missourians actually had better artillery pieces than their Federal opponents. In mid-March Missouri General John Bowen dispatched part of his division to assist Louisiana Confederates against Yankee forces pushing them back towards the last Southern bastion on the Mississippi River, Vicksburg. They found the Louisianans quickly falling back before the advancing Federals. Colonel Francis Marion Cockrell decided to attack the Yanks who were disorganized and divided as they moved through the swampy, flooded region. He found the Union soldiers at Joshua James's Ione Plantation near New Carthage, Louisiana. This was one of the few pieces of dry, solid land found for many miles. The Federals had spent their time fortifying the plantation, which they were using as a base for raids east towards Vicksburg, and throughout northeastern Louisiana. On April 8th the Missourians and Louisianans attacked the Yankees. The Yankees quickly responded with fire from two mountain howitzers. The

Federals held on for a while, but the devastating fire from the Southern field howitzers was too much for them. The Northern mountain howitzers were unable to take out the Southern guns, and soon had to retire from the field. The Federal infantry quickly broke and ran, and the Confederates occupied the plantation. Cockrell set up an ambush south of the battlefield for any counterattacking Yanks. Late in the day Federal soldiers returned and the Southerners left the plantation luring them towards the ambush. However, darkness quickly fell and the Union re-occupied the plantation without a fight. The Southerners had retaken a Federal advance post, but had then given it up without a fight.⁽⁴¹⁾

In the Indian Nations the Cherokee Legislature was planning to meet at Webber's Falls along the Arkansas River to coordinate the efforts of their warriors with the rest of the Confederacy's soldiers. Stand Watie's brigade was assembled to protect the legislators. Colonel Phillips led his brigade of Kansas and Indian cavalry and a battery of small howitzers to attack Watie and prevent the legislature from meeting. At dawn on April 25th he attacked Watie's men. The howitzers opened fire and the Union cavalry charged the Southern camp. Within a few minutes Confederate Indians were routed, fleeing for their lives, and the legislators fled, having never started their assembly. Phillips kept the Assembly from coordinating and streamlining their efforts on behalf of the Confederacy. He then moved his command to the Lee's Creek Road to prevent Confederate forces in Arkansas from joining Watie's men to attack him.⁽⁴²⁾

On the same day Battery D of the 2nd Missouri (U. S.) Artillery fought at Cape Girardeau, Missouri. John S. Marmaduke had led a large force of Southern cavalry and ten artillery pieces, including two mountain howitzers, on a raid into Union-held Missouri. Many Southern details were sent to pick up recruits and supplies or to destroy many Yankee depots, which they did with very little resistance. One of Marmaduke's targets was Cape Girardeau, held by around 500 men and a few artillery pieces. The Federals sortied out to meet the advancing horsemen on April 24th. Three-quarters of a mile from Cape Girardeau they drew up to await the Southerners. At dawn on the 26th Marmaduke's men attacked. The Northern field pieces and the larger guns of the Union fort opened fire on the Confederates. Many men were cut down and their assault stalled for a long while. They then tried to attack the Yankee's right flank, but here too they were stopped by well directed artillery fire. An attacking force on the Union left was also driven away. Two mountain howitzers on the left even drove off a Confederate battery. The Federals had taken only a few casualties and they held the field until nightfall ended the fighting. During the night Union reinforcements arrived and Marmaduke's men continued their raid, leaving the town's garrison behind them. The garrison and a number of other units pursued Marmaduke's men until May 2nd. They skirmished the whole way with the howitzers of both sides being continually in use. The Southern mountain howitzers were too small to do any damage to the Union fortifications and the men sheltered behind them. However, the Yankee howitzers had helped an outnumbered Northern force stop the advance of the Southern raiders and hold out until reinforcements could arrive.⁽⁴³⁾

In late April Marmaduke's horsemen began returning to Arkansas after this relatively successful raid behind Union lines. They had captured a large number of Federal soldiers, seized weapons and supplies, burned forts and bridges, and they brought back a number of recruits and a large stock of desperately needed horses. Federal forces from all over Missouri had tried to run Marmaduke down and destroy him. On several occasions they fought with his rear guard. The

Southerners first stopped at Crowley's Ridge, a few miles south of Bloomfield, Missouri. Yankee horsemen caught up and attacked the Rebels, quickly driving them from their camp. The guns of the 2nd Missouri (U. S.) Light Artillery forced them to abandon three positions over several miles. Two mountain howitzers joined a mounted charge by a Union regiment that forced them from one of these positions. The howitzers moved rapidly, stopping every little bit to fire of the Confederates. The pursuit continued for many miles, but they ended up doing very little damage to Marmaduke's division and he soon was safely back within Confederate lines.⁽⁴⁴⁾

On June 26th a small Union brigade of infantry, cavalry, and four artillery pieces was sent to accompany a supply train from Baxter Springs, Kansas to Fort Blunt in the Cherokee Nation. On July 1st they found a Southern force posted to stop them across Cabin Creek in the Indian Nations. A 12-pound field howitzer of the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteers and two mountain howitzers of Major Foreman's 3rd Indian Home Guards opened fire on the entrenched Rebels. The artillery fire allowed Union scouts to check and see if the train could cross the river. Finding it too deep to ford the Yankees dug in and waited on its level to subside. Early on July 2nd, having discovered that the river's level had gone down enough to allow the men to cross the creek they prepared to attack. The Confederates, including Stand Watie's and James McIntosh's Indian brigades and two Texas regiments. The Union howitzers were posted in the center and far right of the line. At 8:00 a.m. the Union artillery opened a brisk fire to cover the assaulting Federal soldiers. It continued for forty minutes without letup. The artillery stopped shooting and the men moved to attack. At first the Yankees thought the Rebels had already left their positions, but as they reached the far shore the Southerners suddenly rose up and delivered a devastating volley. Major Foreman of the 3rd Indian Home Guards was seriously wounded in the opening volley and the Yankees pulled back in some disorder.

The Federals opened a heavy fire with rifles and all of the artillery for twenty minutes, and then kept up the fire to cover the assaulting column. The Yankees suffered only three or four wounded, and drew up in line of battle. The Southerners drew up 400 yards away to await the Yankees. Colonel Williams ordered one company of the 1st Kansas to attack the center to determine the size and disposition of the Rebels. Surprisingly the one-company attack not only penetrated the Southern line, but also broke it and put the whole Confederate force to flight. They pursued the Rebels for five miles, killing a number and dispersing the rest. The artillery had shaken up the enemy who lacked any artillery of their own, and played a big part in helping a small number of Yankees to easily disperse a much larger force of Southern and Indian infantry. The Yankees only suffered one killed and twenty wounded. While the Rebs probably suffered many more killed, wounded and captured.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In Louisiana on March 30th a Yankee force was ordered to explore the possibility of securing a road connecting Richmond and New Carthage on the Mississippi River. They hoped then to have an easier access to supplies. As the force moved towards Richmond they encountered a strong, mounted Confederate force, which they soon drove away. However, the Yankee commander felt he was not strong enough to hold the town so he retreated. A second, stronger Union force, consisting of the 6th Missouri Cavalry and its two mountain howitzers, was sent out on April 2nd to permanently occupy Richmond. On the 3rd the Missourians were sent toward New Carthage, along with two Illinois cavalry regiments and two mountain howitzers attached to them. The Rebels burned every bridge before the Federals and slowed them down, but by dawn of April 6th

the Federals were approaching the town. At James's Plantation, a mile and a half from New Carthage, they ran into a small Southern force. The plantation was the only dry land for a ways around so the Yankees had to have it to continue their advance. The two Illinois mountain howitzers joined the 69th Indiana Infantry in driving away the Confederates after an hour of fighting. They were left behind to hold the important plantation. The Missouri howitzers continued forward as the only remaining Union artillery. On the 7th they shelled a Confederate force at Dunbar's Plantation and easily drove it away. By the 10th of April more Union divisions were sent to assist General Osterhaus in securing the route. Infantry skirmishing continued every day until the 17th. So many Union soldiers were in the area that the Southern soldiers had to abandon New Carthage without any more resistance. The howitzers performed well moving through the marshy region without bogging down, and providing artillery support which drove off many Confederate soldiers from in front of Osterhaus's division. ⁽⁴⁶⁾

The Confederate's Valverde (Texas) Battery, captured from McRae at the Battle of Valverde in New Mexico, fought Union forces at Fort Bisland, Louisiana on April 12-13. They had taken many months to move east from New Mexico to San Antonio, and they stayed there for several months resting and recruiting more cannoneers. In late 1862 they were sent to Louisiana to stop any Union invasion of Texas from the east. On April 12th Union commander of Louisiana, Nathaniel P. Banks, dispatched 12,000 men to attack the Confederate's Fort Bisland on the Teche River. By nightfall they were close to the fort and began shelling it. The Valverde Battery was posted in the trenches around the fort and fired back at the Yankee artillery. One section was heavily damaged, but they helped to repulse the infantry assault on April 13th. The Federals were cut down in large numbers, and never got closer than 60 yards to the fort. After darkness the Union force retreated back down the river. ⁽⁴⁷⁾

The 39th Mississippi Infantry used mountain howitzers in its defense of Port Hudson, Louisiana on May 27th. As a part of U. S. Grant's campaign to take the Confederate Gibraltar, Vicksburg, a second force was sent north from New Orleans to besiege and take another Southern bastion on the River, the river town of Port Hudson. Among the Union force moving towards the fortified city was a thousand-man Black regiment. They surrounded Port Hudson on May 25th and the siege continued until July 7th, three days after the fall of Vicksburg. Two days after surrounding the Port Hudson-Confederates General Banks ordered the first assault on their works. The Black soldiers were placed on the extreme right of the Union line. The battle began early in the morning and continued until well after dark. The Yankees advanced over a 600 yard wide clearing, continually under fire from Southern rifles and cannons. Two mountain howitzers were in the stretch of works held by the 39th Mississippi Infantry. They served on the guns, which could put out more balls in one shot than if the men had been using their rifles. The howitzers fired hundreds of canister rounds into the advancing Federals and cut many down. The Blacks suffered over 40% casualties. The regiment was wrecked, and did not participate in any other assaults on the Southern fortifications. Over the four week siege Nathaniel Banks attacked the Confederate works three times, and cost the Union army 4,363 casualties with nothing to show for it. The Confederates lost 623 in the course of the siege, but they surrendered the entire of garrison of 6,300 men and 51 cannons. The fall of Port Hudson completely severed the Confederacy and reopened the Mississippi to Union armies and traders. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

In Texas the Southern leaders were cobbling together a naval force to try and fend off the much more numerous Union fleet. Some were gunboats that they captured from the Yankees or bought in Europe and Mexico. Mostly they took common steamboats and re-equipped them with steel or cotton armor and whatever artillery happened to be available at the time of the conversion. Mountain howitzers were not used for ship-to-ship fighting by the Union navy, but the Southern navy often had no choice but to use the small guns. Two mountain howitzers on the *C. S. S. Josiah H. Bell* and the *C. S. S. Uncle Ben* participated in fending off Union attempts in the region near Sabine Pass, Texas on June 24th. They did not fight pitched naval battles, but their presence ended the previously constant naval raids by the blockading fleet.⁽⁴⁹⁾

On July 17th one of the most important battles in the far west occurred at Honey Springs in the Indian Nations. Mountain howitzers used by the 6th Kansas Cavalry and Lee's (C. S.) Light Battery both saw action. At daybreak on the 17th a force of Union cavalry, infantry and artillery ran into Douglas Cooper's brigade of Southern Indians and Texans posted under the cover of a stand of timber along Elk Creek. Skirmishers of the 6th Kansas drove the Southerners from the trees after a difficult fight of an hour and a half. They turned the right of the Rebel line and forced them to pull back. The howitzers of the 6th Kansas and three howitzers in Lee's Light Artillery fired continually, but the artillery were not much of a factor in the fight. The cavalry drove the Southerners from the tree-line, then mounted and pursued the retreating soldiers. Stand Watie's Indians and the Texans did not pull back far. They tried to make another stand in the same woods, but the mountain howitzers and some other artillery opened fire and quickly routed them. Cooper lost 200 men killed, wounded and captured, and one of Lee's mountain howitzers. The Southerners fled in some disorder and the Yankees gave up their pursuit after a few miles. Two Southern brigades neared the area and the Union army soon retreated. The war in the Indian nations had degenerated into a series of raids and counter-raids by the opposing armies.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The fighting against various Indian tribes had moved from Minnesota into North Dakota in late 1862. Nearly 4,200 men, mostly from Minnesota and Iowa, had assembled under Brigadier Generals Alfred Sully and Henry H. Sibley. Sibley led several Minnesota infantry regiments out on July 26th in an attempt to run down the warring Indians. The 7th Minnesota Militia Infantry marched with a battery of mountain howitzers. On the 27th the Yankees skirmished with Indian warriors trying to steal or kill the teams pulling their wagons. They encamped near Stony Lake and began marching early on the 28th. The 7th was at the rear of the Union line. Indians appeared south of the lake and quickly circled to attack the 7th and the Union rear. The 7th occupied broken ground south of the lake, and posted a section of mountain howitzers on the nearest elevation. A few shots from the howitzers caused the Indians to withdraw quickly and quite a distance. Two other mountain howitzers and two 6-pounders fired from other points on the Union line, cutting down many warriors and chasing off many others. The Yankee column was able to continue its march and the Indians stopped attacking them for a little while. Neither side had the energy to continue fighting at this time.⁽⁵¹⁾

Later in the campaign the 3rd Minnesota Battery fought at Killdeer Mountain almost continuously from July 28th to August 12th. Brigadier General Alfred Sully had led a separate column of Minnesota and Iowa militiamen in pursuit of the warring Indians at the same time as Sibley's force. At the same time Sibley was under assault Sully's force was also attacked on July 28th at Killdeer mountain, by a very large force of Indian warriors. The Indians claimed a force

of only 1,600 while Sully said he was attacked by 6,000. No matter which estimate was correct it was one of the largest forces of attacking warriors ever seen in the entire course of the Indian Wars. Sully formed a square with his men and placed the artillery, including four mountain howitzers, in the middle of the square. Each edge of the Union square was reported to be a mile long. The square marched 75 miles and by August 12th they had reached a new supply base on the Yellowstone River. The artillery often fired exploding shot and canister to keep the Indians away and allow the square to move unimpeded. Artillery often saved outnumbered army forces throughout the course of the Indian Wars.⁽⁵²⁾

In late July the Union Army of the Frontier began moving forward to try and capture the Arkansas capital of Little Rock. Throughout the first week of August they pursued elusive Confederate detachments, but could rarely even encounter them, much less fight the Rebels. The cavalry division skirmished with a large Southern cavalry force at Brownsville on the 23rd, and easily pushed the outnumbered Confederates out of the way. They continued pushing southward and pursuing the Rebel horsemen. On the 29th a small Union force skirmished 12 miles south of Brownsville. On the 30th Colonel J. F. Ritter's larger brigade and Stange's 2nd Missouri (U. S.) Light Artillery, Battery M, made up of four mountain howitzers, were sent out in the same direction to drive off the Rebels. They fought at Bayou Meto, Arkansas only 8 miles from Brownsville. The howitzers blew gaping holes in the Southern lines and disheartened many others. Ritter's dismounted horsemen pushed forward and forced the Confederate cavalymen to retreat. The Federals had only five wounded and the Rebels left nine dead on the field. The fire of the howitzers and the rapid attacks of Ritter's men enabled the Yankees to capture intact three bridges and the railroad over the Bayou Meto. The Federal horsemen continued to push southward, learning that the Southerners were entrenched north of Little Rock awaiting the Federals. The Yankee infantry pushed forward slowly and eventually took the capital after a series of short sieges and rapid maneuvers.⁽⁵³⁾

On August 31st the Arkansas (U. S.) Light Artillery was called up to Federal service to help the Yankees fight Southern guerillas and it was equipped entirely with mountain howitzers. They were the only Arkansas Federal Battery formed in the course of the war. They served for almost a year and were mustered out on August 10, 1864. 25 members of the battery had died in their year of Union service.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The Union cavalry division had spearheaded the attempt to seize the Arkansas capital of Little Rock. They had a number of artillery pieces, including six mountain howitzers of Stange's 2nd Missouri, Battery M and Lovejoy's Merrill Horse Artillery. Two of Stange's howitzers were sent to accompany the lead regiment of the Union advance. Outside of Arkadelphia they continued to find abandoned equipment, destroy arms and ammunition, and to capture a large number of Confederate stragglers. On September 10th the lead regiment, the 8th Missouri (U. S.) Cavalry, encountered stiffening resistance in the hard-to-cross Bayou Fourche, just a few miles from Little Rock. They found two artillery pieces and a large Confederate force, mostly Marmaduke's Cavalry Division, dug-in and awaiting them. Stange's two howitzers were brought forward and opened fire on the Southern guns. The fighting surged back and forth for a while, with the Confederates claiming they had captured Stange's two guns. However, after a bit the Confederates were forced to retreat again and leave behind the two Union guns. The Federals continued to pursue the Rebels ever closer to the capital. On the 11th four mountain howitzers

were sent along with the lead horsemen to continue the pursuit, but they found that the Southerners had not stopped retreating from the fight at the Bayou the night before. The Confederates had pulled out of the works before Little Rock without a fight and continued to head south. On the 12th the horsemen continued to pursue the Rebels, picking up a large number of prisoners. Every time that the Southern rear-guard tried to make a stand Stange's mountain howitzers quickly broke up their resistance.⁽⁵⁵⁾

On October 4th Major General James G. Blunt, his staff, and two companies of cavalry left Fort Scott, Kansas for Fort Blunt in the Cherokee Nation. At dawn on the 7th as they neared a fortified camp at Baxter Springs, Kansas they were attacked by Missouri guerillas under the notorious William Clarke Quantrill. The camp and the column were attacked at the same time. The column was wiped out quickly and easily by the tough horse raiders, with only 10 of the 100 men and General Blunt escaping to the camp. Many of the corpses were later found scalped, castrated and with single bullets through their heads. The camp was attacked, but the fire of the black garrison, the dismounted white cavalry, and the mountain howitzer of the 3rd Wisconsin Cavalry killed a lot of the guerillas and ended any chance of the garrison being slaughtered. The first attack before dawn on the 7th actually got some of Quantrill's men through the breastworks of the camp, but they were driven off after some hard hand-to-hand fighting. After being repulsed Quantrill reformed his men for a second assault. This was to be a more careful assault by the raiders. Quantrill formed his men in a more-traditional line of battle, but before they could move forward the garrison opened fire with its cannon. The howitzer had been quickly rolled outside of the camp and its fire broke Quantrill's men and ended the attack. The fighting in Missouri and Kansas was some of the most vicious of the entire Civil War and Quantrill's men were some of the toughest and meanest. But the fortitude of the black garrison and the fire of the howitzer decimated William Clarke Quantrill's attack and saved the lives of most of the garrison.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Union corps and armies made repeated forays into Louisiana throughout the fall. The Confederate cavalry was pushed back in late October by one such Federal advance. Washington, Louisiana fell to the Yankees on October 23rd and Richard Taylor rushed infantry and artillery to help his hard-pressed horsemen. Among the forces rushed to the area was the Valverde Battery, which included in its arms a pair of mountain howitzers. The Valverde Battery and the remnants of Sibley's Texas Brigade from New Mexico had reported to Louisiana in early March, some of the few reinforcements that Richard Taylor had ever received. Taylor formed his 11,000 or so men in line-of-battle near Moundville and dug in to await the expected Federal advance. The Southern artillery was planted to cover the road that the Yankees would have to take to move their wagons and cannons. They also wanted to fire on any large, solid pieces of land where infantry could form to attack him. After waiting for a while Taylor sent two infantry regiments forward to Washington with the cavalry. Here they found that the Yankees were already retreating towards Opelousas, rather than futilely attacking Taylor in a strong, prepared position. Taylor was a genius at maneuvering his outnumbered men so that the Federals had to attack him on ground he had chosen and had dug tough, defensive trenches. Many Yankee generals learned not to attack Taylor, even when they outnumbered him, unless they had no choice, or both sides had blundered into each other and were not already entrenched.⁽⁵⁷⁾

In late 1863, General Frederick Steele occupied the Confederate Arkansas capital of Little Rock. The Confederates were driven many miles south of the town by the superior numbers and arms

of the Federals. The Southern cavalry division of John Marmaduke, always one of the best Confederate units in the Trans-Mississippi, was sent to attack the large Union advance post at Pine Bluff. This would hopefully encourage other Yankees to retreat if it fell. The division crossed the Saline River between their base at Princeton and the targeted town. Soon after dawn Marmaduke sent a demand for surrender to the town's garrison, but the 600 Yankees showed their defiance by fortifying the public square at the middle of the town. They placed cotton bales as defensive walls to fight behind, and they planted six mountain howitzers and three steel rifled guns so that they commanded every street leading into the square. Marmaduke's 2,000 men and eight cannons hastily occupied the Yankee's camp and all the rest of the town. The brick courthouse in the square was filled with sharpshooters and the Confederates discovered that in combination with the nine Federal guns the square could only fall to a massed assault. The Southerners exchanged fire for a while with the Yankees, but the Union guns kept them at bay.

By 2:00 p.m. Marmaduke decided the cost of overwhelming the Yankees would not be worth the gain. As they pulled back the garrison advanced from their works and attacked the Southern horsemen, but were quickly and easily driven off. The Yankees reported 11 killed and 27 wounded, and the Southerners suffered 40 casualties in the brief skirmish. Marmaduke failed to capture the garrison, but he showed the Yankees that the Southern army still had the ability to mount a major attack. Steele ended the random, widely scattered Union forays southward. Instead, he kept his army more concentrated and left more of the farmlands of Arkansas in Confederate hands.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Richard Taylor's army continued its pursuit of the various Yankee divisions raiding Louisiana throughout late October and early November. General Thomas Green led his cavalry division and an infantry brigade in pursuit of the Yankees who had attacked Washington, Louisiana just a week previously. Early on November 3rd Green's force continued moving on the Federal camp eight miles south of Opelousas. The Federals were 5,000-6,000 men of the XIII Corps serving as the Union rearguard and awaiting the Southerners, while the rest of the Union army was four miles farther south. Green planned for one brigade to move from the east and distract the Yankees, while other units, including the Valverde Battery, attacked from the northwest. The infantry began the battle by driving down the only road and clearing it for the movement of artillery. The dismounted horsemen and the infantry continued their assault on the main Union lines, while all of the Confederate guns, including the two mountain howitzers of the Valverde Battery, opened fire on the Yankees who were using a nearby ditch for a defensive trench. Green had unknowingly stumbled upon a much larger Federal force than he thought. His men attacked the blue coats several times, but the numbers told and the Yankees forced them back little by little.

For a time the soldiers of both sides halted and an artillery duel ensued, but neither side's guns did much damage to their enemy. Union cavalry got behind the Confederates and tried to cut them off so that they could capture or destroy Green's infantrymen. Green's cavalry kept the road open and allowed the infantry to successfully leave the field. The Yankees pursued the Rebels, but were held at arms length by the fire of the light batteries. In all the infantry lost 21 killed, 82 wounded and 38 captured out of 950 men, but they captured 600 and killed or wounded 200. The short, little battle was a tactical draw, and the artillery never had a chance to produce a victory.⁽⁵⁹⁾

At Fayetteville, Arkansas on November 7th the 1st Arkansas (U. S.) Cavalry and its two mountain howitzers were sent out to rout a Southern brigade at nearby Yellville. The Union horsemen moved quickly, skirmishing several times with guerillas. On the 9th they learned that the Rebels had moved towards Huntsville and they raced off in pursuit. Around noon they encountered the Confederates. The howitzers and the dismounted Yankee horsemen moved forward to attack. The Southerners beat them to the punch and attacked first, but were easily driven off. Five exploding case rounds from the guns and three volleys from the horsemen caused the Confederates to flee in great panic from the field. The 1st Arkansas raced after them for many miles. An hour after sunrise on November 10th they attacked the Rebels again. Five rounds from the guns again sped the Southerners on their way. Seven miles below Kingston the Confederate horsemen attempted to make a stand near the base of a mountain. They skirmished for a while, but when the howitzers came up the Rebels left without waiting to be shelled again. The Yankees pursued them until dark. On the 11th the Union horsemen stopped and fed the men and the horses. Early on the 12th they pursued the Rebels again. The command was split up, with 136 men and one howitzer continuing the pursuit. The pursuit went on for a couple more days, but they only caught some scattered stragglers. The rapid pursuit of the 1st Arkansas and the destructive fire of the howitzers demoralized this Southern force and ended their ability to fight the Yankees for a long time. [\(60\)](#)

Fighting in the Indian Territory had descended into a series of retaliatory hit-and-run raid by Union or Southern Indian forces in late 1863. In mid-December the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Indian (U. S.) Regiments headed, and one mountain howitzer, into Southern-held parts of the Territory. Early on December 18th the Yankees found Stand Watie's men formed up in line-of-battle to receive their attack. The Union force quickly brought their howitzer to the front. After a couple of shots by the howitzer the Southern line broke. The Yankees pursued them for a mile or so, but the Confederates soon rallied and launched a counter-attack. The rebels were easily driven off by the howitzer, but the Southern soldiers stayed on a nearby hill and sniped at the Union soldiers for several hours with no real damage being done to either side. The Union commanders acted like they were retreating to lure the Southerners out into the open. They then rushed up the howitzer, and after a couple of rounds the Confederate Indians again broke and ran. However, this time they made no appreciable attempt to rally. In spite of driving off Watie's raiders the Union had little to show for the affair. The raids by Watie, and others, continued without letup. The war descended from this point into a series of strategically useless, but almost unstoppable, raids and would continue this way throughout the rest of the Civil War in the Indian Territory. [\(61\)](#)

Howitzers were used constantly against various Indian tribes during the course of the Civil War. Mostly because their light weight allowed them to keep up with cavalry chasing the fast moving Indians and required few horses or men to move them. Also, the bigger guns were mostly reserved for the more vital theaters of the war, not for attacking rebellious Indians. In California several tribes used the distractions of the war in the east to allow them to attack the white settlers. California officers learned where a large number of these raiding warriors were encamped in mid-December. On December 25th one company of the 1st California Mountaineers, from Fort Gaston, was sent against the Indians. The volunteers moved to surround the warriors, but they pulled back after one of their men was seriously wounded. A mountain howitzer and another company were sent to reinforce them on the 26th. The Indian warriors were holed up in several log-cabins in a forest clearing 25 miles north of the fort. They kept up a heavy fire on the

soldiers and the thick log wall prevented the Volunteers from doing much damage Wto the Indians.

The howitzer was rushed forward, and after a couple of practice rounds it began to play with great effect on the cabin walls. The soldiers decided to use the howitzer to destroy the Indians, rather than take the cabins by storm, which would have resulted in many of them being injured or killed. Overnight, while the soldiers awaited more howitzer ammunition, many of the Indian warriors escaped in the darkness. Two Indians were found dead in the houses, and evidence indicating that several more were wounded. The Californians found horses and mules, saddles, rifles, swords and numerous other objects stolen in raids in all of the cabins. The howitzer's fire taught the Indians that thick walls could not protect them from the fire of American soldiers, so they were forced to turn increasingly to hit-and-run raids and ambushes. ⁽⁶²⁾

The Civil War: The Trans-Mississippi Theater, 1864

One of the strangest and most unique uses of a mountain howitzer came in Montana. Vigilantes started rounding up and hanging any criminals they found around Bannack, Montana in January 1864. On one day alone they hung three members of the Plummer Gang, including its leader. When no more of Plummer's men were found the Vigilante Committee started looking for other criminals. On the 13th the townspeople learned that Jo Pizanthia, a Mexican that they believed was a wanted bank robber, was holed up in a log cabin built against the base of a hill above the town. A large group headed for the cabin, and two leaders went up and demanded that Pizanthia surrender himself. They got no answer and decided to go into the cabin to look for him. Just after the two men entered the cabin shots rang out and they both came stumbling out with gunshot wounds. One man soon died of his wound. This enraged the citizens and they wanted Pizanthia's head. The cabin had thick walls which would stop bullets and the people were unwilling to risk themselves in storming the place. Several years before all of this a mountain howitzer barrel had been left behind by a wagon train when its carriage broke. The townspeople drug it close to Pizanthia's house and set it on a box. The first round they loaded was exploding shot, but they forgot to cut the fuze and it went completely through the cabin before burying itself in the ground without exploding. The second exploding shot also went all the way through without exploding.

The exasperated citizens decided to try solid shot to drive the wanted man out. The would-be cannoners aimed at the chimney of the cabin which they believed was where the man was hiding. The shot knocked a large hole in the side of the house, and the citizens poured their fire through the hole, but there was no return fire. A small party rushed the cabin, where they found an unconscious Jo Pizanthia pinned under the door which the cannon had knocked loose. One vigilante emptied his pistol into the unfortunate criminal, and then the crowd drug his body outside and hung it from the nearest telegraph pole. They then turned back and completely demolished the cabin. It was then set on fire and Pizanthia's corpse was tossed on the impromptu pyre. It is surprising that the vigilantes did not injure themselves, firing a cannon with heavy recoil sitting loose on top of a box, or that they did not kill someone on the far side of the cabin as their shells punched through it. ⁽⁶³⁾

Mountain howitzers were a common sight in the various Indian conflicts that occurred during the Civil War. The better guns were mostly reserved for the Civil War fighting, and the short range howitzers were shunted off to the less important theaters of battle, especially to units fighting rebellious Indian tribes. From mid-1863 to mid-1865 the 7th Iowa Cavalry was one of the regiments assigned to protect Americans from Indian attacks. For most of their service in the West they had two or more mountain howitzers assigned to posts they were stationed at. They rarely used them in any battles, but the mere presence of the howitzers often served to scare off any potential attacks by hostile Indian warriors. Captain Eugene Ware worked his men on the guns often so that they would know how the howitzers worked, and how to gauge distances and flight times for their shells. The guns were set up to be visible to any tribesman and used as a veiled warning to Sioux and Pawnee chiefs during 1864 peace negotiations. The cavalrymen appreciated the light weight of the howitzer, which enabled it to move quickly, and the added firepower it gave outnumbered soldiers defending a fort against hostile Indian warriors.⁽⁶⁴⁾

From March 10th to May 22nd a large number of mountain howitzers served on both sides in the Red River Campaign in Louisiana. Major General Nathaniel Banks led portions of the XIII, XVI, XVII and XIX Corps, and a huge flotilla of ironclads and transports, from New Orleans, intending to cut Louisiana off from Arkansas and to eventually invade Texas from the newly captured heart of Louisiana. At the same time Major General Frederick Steele was leading his army deeper into Arkansas so that the Confederates could not concentrate their scattered garrisons to try and stop Banks's invasion. Early on Banks's men encountered only small Southern garrisons and quickly captured many key Red River forts, such as Fort De Russy. By April 2nd the Federals had arrived at Natchitoches, Louisiana, in the northwestern part of the state. As they neared the Grand Ecore area the river began falling threatening to trap the boats, especially the deeper-draft gunboats.

On April 7th at Carroll's Mill the Confederates had finally concentrated enough manpower that they made their first serious stand against Banks. The Southern horsemen and the Valverde Battery, with its mountain howitzers, stopped along the Ten Mile Bayou. The Union cavalry attacked. The artillery of both sides poured shot and shell into their enemy. Twice the Yankees pushed the Confederates across the stream, and twice the Southerners pushed them back, with the help of the Valverde Battery. When darkness fell the Confederates held the only source of drinkable water for miles around. The Union cavalry suffered a number of casualties, and its failure to secure the water forced many Yankee soldiers to fight the next day with no water to drink. Richard Taylor used the time that this battle bought him to assemble all of his available forces, including reinforcements from Arkansas and Texas, to stop Banks's advance on Shreveport and eventually Texas.⁽⁶⁵⁾

On April 8th Union howitzers were used at the Battle of Pleasant Hill or Mansfield. Several batteries of Iowa and Missouri howitzers accompanied Bank's Union forces. They were opposed by several Confederate howitzers, including those of the Valverde Battery. Once again the Yankees finally pushed the Rebels from the field of battle. Late in the day the Yankees were pushing for the vital Sabine Cross-roads, but here the Confederates dug in to stop them. The Union soldiers were rushing for the junction when the Southerners opened a hail of lead on them from the infantry and cavalry, as well as from all the cannons that could be placed to stop the Union push. The rapid fire of the men and the artillery cut huge wholes through the ranks of the

Yankee soldiers. This time it was the Yankees who were forced to retreat, pursued the whole way by Taylor's men. Banks decided erroneously that he was opposed by the whole 22,000-25,000 Confederate army in the Trans-Mississippi theater. He decided to retreat to New Orleans. The Federal army's steamboats were trapped by the falling water and Banks almost had to lose or destroy them. Eventually Union engineers dammed off part of the river, raising the water level so that the ships could escape the shallows.

By mid-May Banks's army had returned to New Orleans, but with nothing to show for it other than a large number of casualties. They had captured 23 cannons and 1,500 Confederate soldiers. He had not succeeded in any of the campaign's objectives and held no new portions of the state. He also lost a large amount of supplies and ammunition, a number of cannons and wagons, including two mountain howitzers and 16 larger guns lost with the cavalry's wagon train. The mountain howitzers used by both sides proved their worth in this campaign. The howitzer was light and small, so it fit better into Union transports than bigger guns did. Its light weight allowed it to move through the dense forests and swampy marshes of northwestern Louisiana where bigger artillery pieces would have been prohibited from going or easily trapped. The best service the guns did was in the close-in fighting of early April. The thick stands of trees in the battlefields prohibited much long range shelling of the enemy. The howitzers discharged a hail of 150 or more .58-caliber musket balls when they were firing double-canister. This load was devastating to the soldiers it was aimed at. Howitzers helped Banks's cavalry push rapidly through any Southern resistance early in the campaign and they helped Richard Taylor blunt Banks's advance, and save northern Louisiana and east Texas for the already beleaguered Confederacy.⁽⁶⁶⁾

While Richard Taylor was defeating Banks in Louisiana, the Confederates were forcing Union General William Steele to retreat northward rather than keep pushing south to link up with Bank's army. Steele, desperately in need of supplies, had sent out a number of expeditions around Camden, Arkansas to gather all the food and forage they could find. The Southern cavalry worked to stop these expeditions and starve Steele out of middle Arkansas. On April 18th the Rebel horsemen lay in ambush for the Union foragers at Poison Spring. A Union cavalry force, with a battery of four mountain howitzers, advanced to attack the house that spies had told them was Jo Shelby's headquarters. Shelby expected them and had prepared an ambush.

Collin's Battery was masked in the trees and the howitzers set up in front of it at almost point-blank range. The Yankees opened fire on Shelby's headquarters, but were greatly surprised when Collin's guns opened up on them. The howitzers were facing the worst fears of every artillery battery, but especially of any battery of short-range mountain howitzers. They were driven off so quickly that they never even had a chance to respond. According to John Edwards, Shelby's chief of staff, "There never was a fire more effective, and never a battery more rapidly silenced and driven away." Union infantry attempted to break Shelby's men, but Shelby's hard-fighting horsemen and Collin's surprisingly accurate battery decimated the Federals and drove them away. Steele was forced to return to Camden without his much needed food, and soon he gave up the campaign and returned to Union positions in northern Arkansas.⁽⁶⁷⁾

In late March the 5th Kansas Cavalry and its two mountain howitzers were sent to scout the Confederates in the area around Camden and Monticello, Arkansas. A small detachment

discovered that the Southerners were making preparations to leave Monticello. The 5th's commander, Colonel Powell Clayton, planned to move to Mount Elba, Arkansas to block the Confederate movement. On March 28th he had assembled a force of 500 infantry, 600 cavalry, four mountain howitzers and two steel rifled guns to oppose any Rebel movement. The entire Yankee force arrived near Mount Elba around 4:00 p.m. and drove off their pickets. At dawn on the 29th Clayton took most of the cavalry and three of the cannons, at least one being a howitzer, and advanced in the direction of Camden and Monticello, leaving the infantry and three of the guns at Mount Elba. Various detachments of horsemen were sent out to destroy any of the Southerners's depots, pontoon bridge and wagon trains that they might encounter. The raiders returned by the next day having successfully destroyed a large number of wagons and capturing over 250 prisoners.

Early on the 30th the Southern horsemen assaulted the infantry at Mount Elba and demonstrated against a small Union force left to watch them near Monticello. Realizing the Monticello detachment was in no danger, Clayton immediately rushed reinforcements to the Mount Elba force, but found that the infantry and artillery had easily repulsed the Confederates. He massed all of his artillery, and a few rounds sped the retreating Rebels on their way. The Southerners broke and raced away in "the wildest confusion," according to Colonel Clayton. They pursued the Rebels for five miles, capturing a number of prisoners, but the Confederates tore up a bridge over the Big Creek and halted their pursuers. Two Confederate brigades were involved in the fighting and lost over 400 men killed, captured or wounded. The Yankees had destroyed 35 wagons loaded with stores and ammunition, a pontoon bridge over the Saline River and captured 300 horses and mules. All the while they lost only two killed and eight missing. The howitzers and the rest of the artillery broke the attack on the infantry at Mount Elba, and demoralized the Southerners so that their retreat turned into a total rout.⁽⁶⁸⁾

After this rout of the Southern brigades the Union army kept up continual pressure on the rest of the Southern army in northern Arkansas. From April 10th through the 15th the two armies were continually fighting with each other from Prairie D'Ane to White Oak Creek. Among the Union forces engaged was the cavalry and Captain Gustave Stange's 2nd Missouri Light Artillery, Battery M, both equipped with mountain howitzers. On the 12th the Federals outflanked the Confederates and forced them out of their works on the Prairie, and pursued them as they retreated several miles to the White Oak Creek. Early on April 15th the Yankees attacked the Southerners again. The Rebels opened fire with five artillery pieces on the advancing Federals, and the Union mountain howitzers of Stange and the cavalry were among those that replied to the fire with impressive accuracy. The cavalry moved to attack the Southerners flanks. The combined pressure of the frontal assault and the flank movements forced the Confederates back. The fire of the mountain howitzers, which advanced with the infantry skirmishers, pushed the Southerners back two miles. The Yankees pursued the Confederates the rest of the day until they came to Camden. The pursuit was halted when night fell. The Federal mountain howitzers helped to drive the Confederates from many miles of fertile and important Arkansas farmlands and hay fields with a relatively small number of casualties.⁽⁶⁹⁾

In late August Sterling Price mounted a large-scale invasion of Missouri. He destroyed large stretches of railroads, numerous bridges, and captured many, scattered Federal garrisons. He also wanted to recruit men and gather horses to replenish his depleted brigades. It took the Union

leaders a while to make a concerted effort to destroy the Southern raiders. By mid September they began moving to encircle and destroy Price's horsemen. On October 12th the 5th Missouri (U. S.) State Militia Cavalry was sent to scout the Confederate-held town of Boonville, Missouri. A few miles from the town he ran into 300 Southern cavalry, and after a short fight drove them back on their second line which had 800-900 more men. The 5th had two mountain howitzers and brought them up to the battle line. After a few rounds the Confederates withdrew to a third line, where they had two artillery pieces of their own. The 5th held up and awaited reinforcements, but were soon ordered to rejoin the rest of their division at California, Missouri. They only lost 2 killed and 4 wounded, while the Southerners reportedly suffered a lot worse in the fighting. The pursuit of Price would continue for a long while.⁽⁷⁰⁾

Cavalry raids deep behind enemy lines depend on rapid movement and the surprise it brings. However, Sterling Price had encumbered himself with a huge train of captured wagons, refugees and unarmed recruits. All of these greatly slowed down his column. He refused to destroy the wagons so that they could move faster, until it was too late to save many of his men.

Jo Shelby's Iron Brigade led the advance of Price's army on the Union bastion at Lexington, Missouri. In the afternoon of October 19th they discovered 2,000 cavalry and eight mountain howitzers drawn up to stop them, several miles from the town. The veteran Southerners slammed into the inexperienced garrison and militia force. The fight was brisk for a while, with many men being cut down in the flying storm of shot and shell, but the Yankees were soon broken and pursued for many miles.⁽⁷¹⁾ On October 21st the 11th Kansas Cavalry rushed with its two howitzers to rescue the remnants of this force at the Little Blue River. The Confederates were attacking this small force to destroy them and to gain the vital ford so that they could delay their pursuers. The four howitzers of the 11th Kansas and the 10th Missouri opened fire on the attackers, and soon drove them back. The 11th's guns were pulled back from an open position in a field because the Southern sharpshooters were killing many of the cannoneers. In spite of their losses the larger Confederate force kept coming and eventually flanked the garrison, forcing it to retreat once again. The howitzers were often moved by hand, keeping up a continual hail of lead on Price's men. The fire of the small cannons allowed the Union soldiers to escape from what might have been their encirclement and capture.⁽⁷²⁾

The Federal pursuers were able to catch up to Price's men because of this and other stands made by small garrisons at all of the possible river fords. The 5th Missouri fought at the Big Blue River on October 22nd. They caught up to the retreating Confederate column and attacked its rear-guard. The howitzers opened fire on the Southerners, and demoralized the defenders at the river. The fire of the cavalrymen's repeating rifles and the canister of the mountain howitzers soon broke the rear-guard and chased them for five miles. They captured a large number of prisoners and a couple of artillery pieces, including a mountain howitzer. Samuel Curtis withdrew the rest of his army to Westport and allowed the Confederates to pass.⁽⁷³⁾

On October 23rd the single largest battle west of the Mississippi River was at Westport, Missouri. Samuel Curtis marched his massed army out of the town to attack the Confederate rear-guard and try to destroy Price's force. Twenty-nine thousand men on both sides collided in battle. The redoubtable Jo Shelby was acting as Price's rear-guard once again. Although outnumbered, the rapid fire of the cavalry's artillery and the accuracy of the veteran Southerners soon drove off the

Federals, killing and wounding a large number of them. Shelby and Fagan's men won this battle, but elsewhere Sterling Price's other units were losing the war. At the Big Blue River, Alfred Pleasanton attacked John Marmaduke's division and quickly routed it. Shelby and Fagan raced southward to save the rest of Price's wagon train and the army. They slowed Pleasanton and allowed the army to continue its escape. As the days wore on the Federal commanders tightened the noose around Price's three divisions. Sterling Price's refusal to burn the 500 or more slow wagons or leave behind the horseless recruits only helped the Union's efforts to catch him.

As the force made its way back to Texas Jo Shelby's division led the way, because he was the best fighter and was expected to quickly brush aside any Yankees that got in the way. John Marmaduke's and James Fagan's divisions brought up the rear. Price had only around 13 artillery pieces, several of which were mountain howitzers. Two much-larger divisions of Samuel Curtis's Army of the Border chased the Missourians. In all Curtis had about 8,000 men and 38 artillery pieces, of which 22 were mountain howitzers. Price's forces stopped to rest about 20 miles into the southwestern corner of Missouri. They planned to move again at midnight, but the continually troublesome train took many hours to get sorted out and start moving. The slow train would allow the Yankees to soon catch Price's army again, and almost led to its annihilation.⁽⁷⁴⁾

On October 25th at the Battle of Mine Creek, near Charlot Prairie, Missouri just a few miles from the Missouri/Kansas border, the Federal cavalry again closed with Price's retreating army. James Fagan's and John Marmaduke's divisions were attempting to stop the Yankees for the rest of the army to continue fleeing. Part of the wagon train got across Mine Creek, but some wagons overturned and hopelessly blocked the crossing. Fagan and Marmaduke dug in to try and stop the Yankee cavalry. Twenty-six hundred Federals hit the Confederates like a tidal wave, and quickly routed them. 500 Confederates were killed or wounded and another 560 captured, including Generals Marmaduke and Cabell. Jo Shelby's division had been leading Price's advance and they were rushed to the rear to save the day. The Southern horsemen dug in behind a stone wall two miles north of the Marmaton River and awaited the Union attack. Around 3:30 p.m. the Union soldiers attacked without artillery support and were repulsed easily. A section of mountain howitzers and one of 3-inch Rodman rifles soon arrived and began shelling the Southern lines. Shelby had only three cannons remaining after the numerous earlier skirmishes in the campaign, and he was slow to use them for fear that they would be captured like most of the rest of the Southern artillery. Many of Shelby's tough veterans began leaving the field on their own, including his own celebrated Iron Brigade. The Federal horsemen received no reinforcements since they were so far ahead of the rest of the army and in spite of the demoralization of many of his men, Shelby had succeeded in holding up the Yankees for the rest of the day. By midnight the wagon train finally got across the Marmaton River. It was at this point that Price ordered the train destroyed, further demoralizing the men who had bled to save it.⁽⁷⁵⁾

On October 28th a small part of James Blunt's 1st Cavalry Division used mountain howitzers at Newtonia. He had only a 1,000 men, two large artillery pieces and two mountain howitzers, but the Rebels were not expecting to be attacked and panicked. The howitzers were placed in Blunt's front line. Jo Shelby was once again called on to save Price's army. His force outnumbered Blunt, and was moving on both of his flanks. However, the rapid and destructive fire of the cannons stopped the Rebels. Shelby sent a massed charge against the center of Blunt's thin line, but the fire of the cavalrymen's repeaters and the canister of the 1st Colorado Battery's howitzers

broke the charge. Both sides had suffered a large number of casualties in the fight, and that evening the Southerners withdrew into northwest Arkansas. This was the last major battle of Price's disastrous Missouri Campaign. By November 7th Sterling Price led what was left of his command across the Arkansas River in the Indian Territory and later on to Texas. At the river the Yankees stopped their pursuit, but Price was never much of a threat to them again. By December 15th Sterling Price had only 3,500 of his original 12,000 men remaining. Price had taken some of the elite units of the Confederate Army of the Trans-Mississippi with him, and by the time the expedition was done many of his men were either captured, killed, or too burned out to fight any more. ⁽⁷⁶⁾

In the pursuit of Price the Federals hounded him out of northwestern Arkansas and into the Indian Territory. A mountain howitzer was used by the 1st Arkansas (U. S.) Cavalry in an attack on Fayetteville, Arkansas on October 28th by some of Price's men trying to get into southern Arkansas. Several hundred rebels moved in on the eastern side of the town and dug in on the steep bluffs of the East Mountain. Several companies of the 1st were sent to attack the heights, and the howitzer supported them by shelling the Confederates and forcing them to change their positions several times. On the third assault the Yankees drove the Rebels from the heights, finding 12 dead Southerners that had been left behind. The Confederates gave up and headed southwest, towards Texas. ⁽⁷⁷⁾

The 1st California Infantry used its howitzers against the Comanches at Adobe Walls, Texas on November 25th, and Colonel Kit Carson credited the small guns with saving their lives. Kit Carson led 400 men, and two howitzers, into northern Texas to pacify several of bands of the Kiowa and Comanche tribes. On November 24th Carson's Ute and Apache scouts discovered that the Kiowas and Comanches were encamped nearby. Kit Carson's men attacked a relatively small encampment of Kiowas on the Canadian River and quickly routed or captured most of the Indians. Unbeknownst to the soldiers there was a large Comanche village, missed by the scouts, just a few hundred yards down the river. Carson had his men unsaddle their horses and prepare for breakfast, planning to destroy the Kiowa village and then rejoin his wagon train and its infantry escort. Around 1,000 Comanche and Kiowa warriors attacked the soldiers and chased them to a nearby hill that served as a natural fort. At this time the howitzers came up and opened fire on the Indians. The accurate fire of the guns stopped several massed, mounted charges by the Comanche on the Yankee soldiers. The warriors soon began to stay out of their range and stay spread out, so that they would not make an easy target for the "guns that shot twice," as the Indians referred to the use of exploding shells. The gunners loaded them at the base of a nearby hill and then rolled them up to the top. Only a gunner remained with the pieces, aiming them and then lying flat on the ground to avoid the Indians's fire.

When the howitzers were fired they would roll, sometimes flipping over and over, all the way back to the bottom of the hill. Carson marched upon the second village to try and keep the Indians from saving their horses, shelters and supplies. The warriors set fire to the grass behind Carson's men, and it forced him to retire to a nearby hill. The Indians soon attacked the soldiers again, but the howitzers cut down many of them and forced them to leave the soldiers alone. The howitzers also kept the Kiowas from being able to rescue very much of their tents and supplies. The fire of the howitzers kept the Indian warriors at bay, and eventually caused them to give up and retreat once the rest of their tribes had gotten a safe distance away. Carson lost two killed

and 10 wounded, and the Kiowa and Comanches probably losing quite a few more. The soldiers had destroyed a large amount of tents and supplies of the Kiowa, which eventually forced them to accept a treaty and go onto a reservation.⁽⁷⁸⁾

As soldiers had been pulled east to more vital theaters of war various Indian tribes saw this as their chance to drive off the white settlers who were taking their lands. The Cheyennes and Arapahoes, among others, killed large numbers of settlers all over the western territories. Local Union forces were too small to do much good against them. Governor John Evans of Colorado forced the United States government to let Colonel John M. Chivington lead a large force of Colorado volunteers out to destroy several warring Indian tribes in late October. The troops moved out in a driving snowstorm. When they got to Fort Lyon in southeastern Colorado they learned of a nearby Cheyenne encampment. At dawn on November 28th what would come to be known as the infamous Sand Creek Massacre began. The men rushed the village from all sides while four mountain howitzers used by Company C of the 3rd Colorado Cavalry and the 1st Colorado Cavalry dropped shells among the Indians. The warriors were surprised, but they did not panic and run as expected. The warriors formed a line along the bluffs beyond the creek in crudely-made rifle pits. Their fire cut down many of the Colorado soldiers for a while, but they were soon driven off when the howitzers began dropping shells on top of them.

The Cheyenne warriors kept up their resistance alone or in small groups, but none of it was as massed or as destructive to the soldiers as the line on the bluffs. The soldiers went through the camp killing or capturing a large number of old men, women and children. They also destroyed much of the tribe's horses, shelters and supplies intended to see them through the winter. Around 500 Cheyenne were killed, mostly non-combatants, such as women, children or old people. The Coloradans suffered nine killed and 38 wounded. The settlers of the region mostly applauded Chivington's expedition and many wanted all of the warring tribes to receive a similar treatment if they would not stop attacking the settlers. American newspapers in the east disdainfully described Chivington's massacre of a peaceful group of Cheyenne. The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War called him before them. John Chivington was censured for not bothering to find out that this tribe was already at peace and under the government's protection, but no other punishment was handed out for this shameful and needless episode.⁽⁷⁹⁾

The Civil War: The Trans-Mississippi Theater, 1865

Even in the far west the war was beginning to wind down. Sterling Price's men had been used up in his disastrous raid in late 1864. In Arkansas and Louisiana the war settled down to a series of raids with few large battles being fought. Most of the fighting done in this theater for the rest of the war was against rebellious Indian tribes. The *C. S. S. Josiah H. Bell* used howitzers in its defense of the Sabine River throughout the last months of the war. The converted steamer was armed with two mountain howitzers and one 32-pound howitzer, and it helped to keep the Union navy from attacking the area.⁽⁸⁰⁾

An unidentified U. S. regular infantry force used mountain howitzers at Julesberg, Colorado on January 7th and again on February 18, 1865. Warring Cheyenne and Arapahoe attacked the small town in January, mostly in revenge for the Sand Creek Massacre. The settlers and a detail of soldiers quickly withdrew to the nearby Camp Rankin, later renamed Fort Sedgwick. The

warriors assaulted the fort, but were driven off by the fire of two mountain howitzers assigned to the fort. Fourteen soldiers were killed in the fighting that day. The Indian warriors had learned early on not to assault an American fort that had artillery support. In mid-February most of Sedgwick's garrison was sent to Fort McPherson, Nebraska, and the Indians unknowingly had their best chance to attack the town again. One group attacked the town while two others waited to fall on any relief column from the fort. The remaining garrison was too small to come to the town's assistance. Once again the townspeople fled to the fort, and this time the warriors torched the town. Fifteen men of the McPherson detail returned to the fort during the fighting, and using a mountain howitzer they cut their way through the warriors to get into the fort. The Cheyenne and Arapahoe surrounded the fort and tried to set it on fire with flaming arrows. During the evening the Indians gave up and withdrew. The town was gone, but the mountain howitzers had helped to save the lives of the townspeople and they soon rebuilt their town.⁽⁸¹⁾

On June 2nd at Fort Rice, North Dakota the 1st U. S. Volunteer Infantry, ex-Confederates who were better known as Galvanized Yankees, used howitzers. At dawn the fort was surrounded and attacked by hostile Indian warriors. Colonel Dimon led part of his men out of the fort to occupy some bluffs behind the fort, and the warriors offered no resistance. They withdrew from the area and Colonel Dimon sent his mounted infantry, 60 allied Indians, and a mountain howitzer in pursuit. At the Crystal Palace Bluff, a couple of miles from the fort, the Indians tried to make a stand. The howitzer rushed up, threw a few shells their way and the Indians fled in a panic. For several miles small groups of hostiles opened fire, without doing much damage, while losing a small number of their own warriors killed or captured. Colonel Dimon respected the usefulness of the howitzer. He also realized it could save an outnumbered fort without having to fire at Indians who knew the damage it could do to them.⁽⁸²⁾

The 11th Kansas Cavalry used them on June 3rd along the Platte River in the Dakota Territory, now a part of Wyoming. Six Indians appeared on the opposite side of the Platte River from the small outpost, hoping to lure soldiers out after them. Instead of chasing them the 11th opened fire with its mountain howitzer. After a few rounds, and the loss of two horses, the warriors withdrew behind some nearby bluffs. Then a group of the soldiers left the post to speed them on their way. This post was on a main army supply route and the fort was to be the scene of some of the hardest fighting of the Indian Wars.⁽⁸³⁾

Fort Rice was attacked a second time on July 28th. The 1st and 4th United States Volunteers were still stationed at the fort with two mountain howitzers. When the infantry discovered early in the morning that they were surrounded the two cannons were quickly rolled outside the walls of the fort. Lieutenant Colonel John Pattee knew that attacking Indians would have no chance against the walls of a fort defended by artillery and rifles. The fighting was heavy for three hours, but the fire of the mountain howitzers quickly drove off the hostile, Sioux warriors. By late in the morning the Sioux withdrew from sight, suffering a heavy number of casualties while the fort had only one killed and a few wounded. The soldiers kept on guard throughout the evening. Around midnight Pattee ordered the guns to fire "fireballs," an early version of flares consisting of saltpeter, sulphur and antimony, out over the prairie. They saw no hostiles, and at 2 a.m. the battle was declared officially over and most of the men were allowed to return to their quarters.⁽⁸⁴⁾

On July 25th a force of Cheyenne again attacked the Platte Bridge Station garrison. Once again the soldiers refused the attempt to lure them from the safety of their fortifications and instead opened fire with the 11th Ohio Cavalry, Company G's howitzer. The soldiers soon learned that a small wagon train was surrounded about 25 miles from the fort. At 7:30 a.m. Lieutenant Caspar Collins led only 25 men of the 11th Kansas, about a fifth of the fort's manpower, out to relieve the train. A second group of 10 men went to the far side of the bridge to keep it open in case the detail had to return quickly. Collins's detail never got near the train. They were surrounded by the Cheyenne and attacked him on all sides. After several of the soldiers were wounded Collins ordered a retreat. Three men were killed as they raced for the safety of the main garrison. Collins was killed trying to buy time for his men to escape. The 10-man detail at the end of the bridge kept up a brisk fire to cover Collins's retreating men and then they all raced for the protection of the fort. Later in the morning a detail was sent to repair the telegraph lines, but the howitzer soon fired to warn them to return quickly to the fort. The Indians attacked any scattered soldiers they found, killing the few they found. The wagon train was soon seen nearing the fort from the west, but its 20 remaining men were soon surrounded and wiped out.

By early evening the soldiers had suffered 28 killed and many wounded, but they got word out to a nearby post and by the next afternoon a relief column of 50 men had arrived. By nightfall the Indians had withdrawn from the area. The 11th Kansas's commander had not used the howitzer to its best advantage and many of the Federals paid the ultimate price for his poor tactics. The gun should have at least been advanced where its canister rounds could have played on the massed Indians chasing Collins's detail and the wagon train. It might have been able to save some of the men killed by the Cheyenne and Sioux. The fort would continue to see numerous skirmishes until it was abandoned in October, 1867. [\(85\)](#)

Several columns were sent out to pacify the warring tribes centered in Montana in mid-August. It was one of the largest campaigns against hostile Indians since the Sibley-Sully campaigns in 1863-1864. The "Left Column" was made up of the 7th Iowa and 11th Ohio Cavalries, 200 allied Indians, part of the 6th Michigan Cavalry and a portion of the 2nd California Cavalry with its two mountain howitzers. They were accompanying 184 wagons to set up a new fort on the Powder River. By August 11th the column had reached the upper Powder, and three days later they began building Fort Connor along the Bozeman Trail. On August 22nd part of the column, with the howitzers, moved out to attack any Indians they could find. Early on August 29th they attacked an Arapahoe village of around 300 lodges along the Tongue River in Montana. The Arapahoes fled, but soon attacked the soldiers who were destroying their village. The outnumbered soldiers would have been over-run except the two howitzers kept up a brisk fire and forced the Indians to stay at a safe distance. The Arapahoe gave up and the column returned to Fort Connor. The Arapahoe reportedly lost 35 killed, and the howitzers kept the column's losses at only seven wounded. The campaign continued for a number of months, with several new forts being built, but it would be over a decade before the northern tribes were pacified. [\(86\)](#)

One of the new forts being built was Fort Philip Kearney, Wyoming. Unattached U. S. mountain howitzers were used in October near the fort. A wagon train coming from Fort Laramie was attacked by the Sioux as it neared Fort Philip Kearney. A company of infantry was placed in wagons and a mountain howitzer were sent to their relief. The Sioux withdrew after only a few rounds from the soldiers and the cannon, and the train was brought safely to the fort. The train

proved to be carrying the announcement of a peace treaty signed with all of the tribes of the Northwest, and assuring the fort's commander that the hostilities with the nearby tribes were ended.⁽⁸⁷⁾

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CHAPTER 10: POST-CIVIL WAR INDIAN WARS

As the Civil War died down more resources and troops were available to clamp down on the numerous Indian tribes attacking American settlers in the Western frontier. The howitzers stationed at Fort Philip Kearney, Wyoming almost saw action on December 21, 1866, in one of the more famous battles of the Indian Wars era, the Fetterman Massacre. A wood train was under attack by the Sioux. A rescue party made up of 81 men of the 18th Infantry and 2nd Cavalry went out under Captain Fetterman to rescue the train. Fetterman, disdainful of the Sioux, was surrounded and cut off far from the fort. 94 additional men were sent out, under Captain Ten Eyck, to try and rescue Fetterman's command. He reported the far valley as being full of Indians, and requested a mountain howitzer to help rescue Fetterman. General Carrington could not send one because there were no horses left to move it. The howitzer was light enough that it could be rolled by hand, but there were not enough men to spare to be able to take one out to by hand, and none knew how to work it anyway. ⁽¹⁾ The howitzer kept that Sioux from trying to overrun the fort, but it could do nothing to help Fetterman's command, which was completely wiped out.

At the same time that Fort Kearny was under constant attack, the Sioux and their allies also attacked nearby Fort C. F. Smith. The hay party was protected by an unimposing stockade-style fort, with brush and thin logs for the walls. The Indian warriors first attacked the hay detail that was 2½ miles north of the fort at 10:00 a.m. The Sioux went with the standard tactic of provoking a volley and then attempting to overwhelm the defenders before they could reload their muzzle-loading rifles. But they got a rude shock when they found that the twenty-man infantry guard was equipped with the new Springfield breechloader-rifle. The soldiers easily stopped several assaults and inflicted heavy casualties on the attackers. All the while only suffering three dead, the lieutenant commanding the detail, a private, and a civilian hay-contractor, and three wounded. The fort was unable to move to their aid until a wood detail to the south had returned in the early afternoon. At noon a mountain howitzer was run outside the walls, and after a few shots forced the Indians to pause, allowing the wood detail to return relatively easily to the fort. At 4:00 p.m. a platoon was sent to rescue the hay detail, which had been fighting continually for six hours. A large group of Indians blocked the platoon, and an additional two companies and the howitzer were sent to assist them. The enlarged rescue force was able to force its way through the warriors to relieve the hay detail. They brought back all the survivors and the bodies of the dead, and all the animals of the hay party. The mountain howitzer was used to its full advantage in this fight. The gun's lightness enabled it to be repositioned rapidly so that it was firing almost continually, and most Indians rarely attacked any group of soldiers that had artillery support. ⁽²⁾

The howitzers of Fort Philip Kearny were used again on August 2, 1867. In what would come to be known as "The Wagon Box Fight," on August 2nd a wood detail was again surrounded by the Sioux. This detail hid inside the bodies of the wagons, which were detached from the axles and sitting on the ground. They held off several assaults, but were beginning to run low on ammunition. As the last assault that would have overran the defenders began reinforcements

arrived. These included a mountain howitzer. Red Cloud had sustained heavy losses in the battle, and the fire of the cannon and the approach of fresh U. S. forces forced him to flee. The Sioux were forced to leave many of their dead and wounded on the field.⁽³⁾ A howitzer was often stored in forts for just such an emergency as a detail under attack. It was light enough that one or two horses, or a detail of a few men, could move it over any terrain and it was simple to aim and fire for untrained personnel.

The 10th Cavalry had one with them as they went into combat on August 2, 1867, along the Saline River in Kansas. An Indian raiding party had attacked the Kansas Pacific Railroad, killing five or six men, and running off with one hundred or so horses and mules. A company of the 10th under Major Arms, with one howitzer was sent in pursuit. They were accompanied by Buffalo Bill Cody as its scout. A large group of Indians was discovered along the Saline River and an attack was launched by the Buffalo Soldiers. The howitzer was placed on a knoll with 20 men to guard it while the rest of the company advanced. Suddenly, the guards were seen racing towards the rest of the command with a large number of Indians in pursuit, while more celebrated around the captured howitzer. The Indians treated it like a powerful, magical totem which they had no idea how to use, and according to Buffalo Bill they made no attempt to leave with it or to use it against the soldiers. Arms quickly recaptured the piece, but not before the Indians destroyed its carriage, rendering it useless. The 10th was under attack from two directions by larger forces, so they had to abandon the barrel of the howitzer and retreat to Fort Hays. The howitzer was sent out by the army in this instance to scare the Indians by its very presence alone. Cody indicated that the 10th's men were not trained in how to work the piece and it was a waste of time to take it with them.⁽⁴⁾ In the post-civil war era the army rarely trained any of its men to use the artillery pieces stored at the frontier forts. Unless a unit had trained artillerymen or an officer who forced the men to learn to use cannons they were rarely much use in an engagement with fast-moving Indian raiding parties.

A Wells Fargo freight train stopped at Fort Phil Kearny on October 29, 1867 and picked up an escort of 42 soldiers and a mountain howitzer. Three days later, only 32 miles from the fort, they were attacked by a party of Sioux. The Sioux reportedly wanted the howitzer to use in their battles with United States forces. The siege would last from November 2-5 at what would be called the Battle of Goose Creek. 300 Indians made repeated attacks on the Americans, but the howitzer's fire decimated their warriors and broke every assault. Eventually help arrived from the fort, with only 9 of the besieged being killed. Without the howitzer all of them probably would have died.⁽⁵⁾

An unattached howitzer was involved in lifting a siege at Beecher's Island, Kansas on September 22-23, 1868. A force of scouts under Lieutenant Forsyth was surrounded by 700 Cheyenne warriors, under the famous war chief Roman Nose, on an island in the middle of the Republic River in Kansas. 100 troopers of the 10th Cavalry were dispatched with two mountain howitzers to relieve the scouts. Detachments eventually reached the surrounded scouts, but the Indians had already left. The relief and their howitzers never fired a shot at the Cheyenne. However, the Cheyenne reportedly left because of the approaching reinforcements. The relief column brought along desperately needed medical assistance for the wounded scouts.⁽⁶⁾ As a result of the fight at Beecher's Island, and other such raids by the Cheyenne, General Phil Sheridan decided to come down hard on several tribes by attacking their winter camps.

As a part of the campaign to crush the unpacified tribes, George Custer and the 7th Cavalry led one column south to find hostile Sioux, and Cheyenne. They attacked the Cheyenne at the Washita in November. A second column was dispatched from New Mexico. Brevet Major General George Getty led 563 men, including four troops of the 3rd U. S. Cavalry under Major Evans, two companies of the 37th Infantry and four mountain howitzers. They were to head east along the South Canadian River in northern Texas. A third column moved east from Colorado into the Indian Territory. They were pursuing Kiowa and Comanche bands that had not surrendered. Mostly they did not encounter any Indians until late December, 1868. On Christmas Day, Getty's column came upon a village of Comanche and a village of Kiowa at Soldier Spring on the North Fork of the Red River in southwestern Indian Territory. Evans began the battle by using the howitzers to shell the Comanche's village. The Comanche and Kiowas counterattacked and drove him back. Both sides fought throughout the day. In the end the Indians withdrew and the soldiers held the village. They burned a large number of shelters, but even more important to the Indians was the loss of most of their supplies. Several tons of buffalo meat alone were destroyed by the 3rd Cavalry. The battle did not end the resistance of these tribes, but it did hurt them greatly by taking the food and shelter that was intended to see them through the winter. This loss physically weakened them and forced many to stop resisting the rule of the Americans. [\(7\)](#)

Wheaton's 21st U. S. Infantry used howitzers in a protracted campaign against the Modoc Indians in northern California. The Modocs had turned a region called the Lava Beds into an impressive stronghold. They had taken a natural field of lava-made hills and then set up towers, breastworks, and bombproofs. Animals were even brought in to feed the tribe through any siege by the U. S. army. The Modocs were continually fighting with the Anglo residents of northern California and southern Oregon for control of the region. In late December, 1872, settlers and Indians battled near Tule Lake, with the Modocs retreating into the Lava Beds. The settlers called on the army for help. By the end of the year 225 regulars and 100 Oregon and California militia had assembled to clean out the Modocs. On January 17, 1873, the army advanced into the lava field with two mountain howitzers firing to cover their movement. They stopped firing because of fog making their fire more dangerous to their fellow soldiers than to the Indians. Eventually the soldiers were pinned down by the Modocs, and forced to retreat.

The Battle of the Stronghold ended with seven Regulars killed and nineteen wounded, and 2 militiamen killed and nine wounded. The army did not use the howitzers to their full advantage, leaving them behind when their ability to move where other guns could not would have allowed them a chance against the entrenched Indians. The Lava Beds had enabled 60 or so warriors to defeat almost 350 U. S. soldiers. A second attempt to defeat the Modocs occurred on April 15-17, 1873. Once again two forces moved into the lava field, while the howitzers and several mortars bombarded Indian positions. This combination of an infantry assault and artillery fire forced the Modocs to abandon the immediate area, leaving behind three dead men and eight women. They retreated farther into the fields, but eventually were forced completely out of the lava fields. The Modocs were not as difficult for the army to deal with once they had lost their fortress. [\(8\)](#)

Company D, 5th U. S. Infantry used a howitzer at McClellan Creek, Kansas in November, 1874. The family of an ex-Confederate soldier had been moving west since 1870. They had worked

their way to Kansas by August, 1874. It had taken them four years to make it to Kansas, and when they were only a few days from their destination they were attacked by a party of 19 or so Indians. The father, mother, 14 year old son, and two girls were killed in the attack, and four other girls were taken captive. Lieutenant Frank Baldwin was dispatched to stop these raiders with Company D, 5th Infantry, Company D, 6th Cavalry, 12 Indian scouts and one mountain howitzer. Near McClellan Creek, Kansas he came across a group of one hundred or so Indians and their families. Baldwin moved forward to attack the Indians who had occupied a ravine. The howitzer was used to clear stretches of the ravine which would have allowed the Indians a tough defensive position, and a chance to attack the flanks and rear of the U. S. soldiers. The Indians retreated and stopped to fight. The howitzer was used two more times to break their lines and force them to flee. The warriors held out long enough to allow their families to escape, but they lost most of their supplies and tepees. The two youngest girls captured in August were found and freed. The older two girls were eventually returned to the army later in the winter at Fort Sill by these same Indians, who were forced onto the reservation by the loss of their shelters and supplies.⁽⁹⁾

One hundred and twenty five Nez Perce warriors and almost 700 others moved 1,300 miles as they fled from the control of the United States in the summer of 1877. General Oliver O. Howard pursued them with orders to force the Nez Perce onto a reservation. The Nez Perce stopped to rest in the Big Hole Valley, Montana in August. They did not notice the approach of 162 men of the 7th Infantry under Colonel John Gibbon. The men of the 7th drug a mountain howitzer with them through the thick forest as they approached the Indians' camp on August 8th. The men of the 7th, and 34 civilian volunteers, attacked the camp before dawn on the 9th. They soon held the south end of the camp, but the warriors assumed sniper positions and forced the soldiers to retreat. The soldiers were pinned down on Battle Mountain for 24 hours. The mountain howitzer was able to fire two rounds at the Nez Perce before it was captured and dismounted by them. The Indians kept a small contingent to force the soldiers to stay on the hillside, while the rest helped with the retreat southward. The Nez Perce had "won" the fight, but they lost 60-90 killed, of whom two-thirds were old people, women and children. The 7th lost 29 killed and 40 wounded in the Battle of the Big Hole, but they had destroyed the fighting ability of the Nez Perce. The resistance of the tribe would now be in their attempt to flee to Canada rather than in battles with U. S. soldiers.⁽¹⁰⁾

Oliver O. Howard continued his war against the Nez Perce and other rebellious tribes in the Bannack War of June-September 1878. With 900 men and nine mountain howitzers he pursued, skirmished on a few occasions with some small bands, and eventually forced them all onto reservations. The howitzer was still proving its worth in the late 1870s. It could keep up with the fast-moving columns through heavily wooded regions, and be there to give them a vital source of artillery support.

1. Brady, The Sioux Indian Wars, pp. 24-33.
2. John S. Gray, Custer's Last Campaign: Mitch Boyer and the Little Bighorn Reconstructed (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), pp. 68-71.
3. Brady, The Sioux Indian Wars, pp. 50-57

4. William Cody, The Life and Adventures of Buffalo Bill. Available at the PBS Archives of the West at <http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/wpages/wpgs670/w67bbauto/w67bb07.htm>. 21 May 1998.
5. Kupke, The Indian and The Thunderwagon, p. 29.
6. Brady, The Sioux Indian Wars, pp. 96-108
7. Robert M. Utley, Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1969), pp. 149-54.
8. Utley, Frontier Regulars, pp. 200-10.
9. White Deer Land Museum, Brief Summary of the Battle of McClellan Creek, pp. 1-4. Found at <http://www.pan-tex.net/usr/p/pampa-hist/red.htm>. 11 February 1998.
10. The Big Hole National Battlefield web site. Found at <http://www.halcyon.com/rdpayne/bhnb-battlefield.html>. 11 February 1998.

CHAPTER 11: OTHER POST-CIVIL WAR ENGAGEMENTS

Two mountain howitzers are an important part of the heritage of the Louisiana National Guard, and even today they are on display in their main headquarters in New Orleans. The Reconstruction Era was a period of high tensions and political violence by the former combatants of the Civil War trying to establish their separate control of the local and state governments. In September, 1874, the Republican governor, William P. Kellogg, sent Federal troops and the Republican-dominated Metropolitan Police to establish the local government that he wished for New Orleans. On the 14th local citizens, mostly ex-Confederate soldiers, fought the police at the foot of the Canal Street, and during the fight they stole two mountain howitzers from the policemen. The guns were quickly hidden somewhere in the city. Governor Kellogg offered a large cash reward for the return of the two guns, but no information about their whereabouts was forthcoming. When the first free election installed the Nicholls's government and ended Reconstruction the mountain howitzers miraculously reappeared. Redemption and Resurrection, as the two guns were known, were placed in the arsenal of the Louisiana National Guard and remain today a symbol of the heroism of both sides in the war and the harsh post-war occupation of the South. ⁽¹⁾

A mountain howitzer was a non-firing, but influential, part of the Lincoln County War in July 1878. Major Dudley was asked to come to the aid of people in Lincoln by the Dolan-Murphy-Peppin faction. He decided to go to Lincoln and separate the two factions to save the innocent non-combatants. On July 19th Dudley led a force from Fort Stanton of four other officers, eleven men of the 9th Cavalry, 24 men of the 15th Infantry, a Gatling gun and a mountain howitzer, both manned by the infantrymen. When they approached Lincoln they discovered the two factions were each holding large sections of the town and sniping at each other. Dudley informed both factions not to shoot at his men or he would open fire on that faction. The Montano store was a bastion of the Tunstall-McSween faction in Lincoln. Dudley pointed the howitzer at it and

threatened to open fire if any bullets were fired from the store. The men inside fled to the Ellis store. Here too Dudley used the howitzer to force the men to abandon a strong defensive position. Dudley, and the howitzer, played an important role in the eventual victory of the Dolan faction, and their backers of the Santa Fe Ring.

Two-thirds of the McSween men fled from Lincoln, decisively shifting the balance of power in the fight for the town. Dudley placed his men between the two factions, but in such a way that Dolan's men could fire without coming near hitting any soldiers. While McSween's men could not return fire for fear of Dudley opening fire on them. Eventually, because of Dudley's interference, Dolan's men attacked the McSween house and set it on fire. Some of the men who had fled from the Montano and Ellis stores attempted to come to McSween's aid, but Dudley aimed the Gatling gun and the howitzer at them and forced them to stay away. In the end McSween was killed and the Dolan-Peppin faction was in control of much of the cattle trade throughout southeastern New Mexico. Dudley's howitzer was a big part of why they were victorious.⁽²⁾

The usefulness of mountain howitzers did not end at the turn of the twentieth century. A mountain howitzer was supposedly stolen from El Paso, Texas around 1910 by a group of locals who donated it to the Madero faction in the Mexican Revolution. It was reportedly smuggled across the river at Fabens, and given to Colonel Antonio Villareal. After this it is said to have been hauled over 200 hundred miles and to have seen action at Ojinaga and Camargo. At Ojinaga it was used to knock down the walls of an adobe church which Diaz loyalists were using as a defensive post. The howitzer was returned to El Paso in 1917 or so. This is a local tale, but no one is sure if a Civil War-era cannon was truly used or even as to exactly which type of cannon was used. The mountain howitzer would have been the perfect gun for the rebels to have used though. Its light weight would have enabled it to keep up with a minimum number of horses to pull it. It would have been better able to cross the deserts of northern Mexico than any heavier guns. No one will probably ever be able to prove or refute whether a howitzer truly served in the Mexican Revolution.⁽³⁾

1. Evans J. Casso, Louisiana Legacy: A History of the State National Guard (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company 1976), pp. 262-64.
2. Robert M. Utley, High Noon in Lincoln: Violence on the Western Frontier (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), pp. 96-104.
3. Kupke, The Indian and the Thunderwagon, pp. 19-21. Also, M. Belding DeWitter, "Revolutionary El Paso, 1910-1917," Password: Journal of the El Paso County Historical Society, vol. 11-12 (El Paso, TX: Texas Western Press, 1968), pp. 46-59, 107-19 and 145-59. Ms. DeWitter talks about the McGinty Cannon, a brass 6-pound field piece that served in Mexico. However, this does not mean that it was the only Civil War era cannon to be used in the Mexican Revolution.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION

When the mountain howitzer was used within the limits of its design it could be a very effective artillery weapon. It needed to be used at close range, such as Nathan Bedford Forrest placing it among his front-line riflemen. Also, it was at its best when it was used in lightning-quick artillery raids where the howitzer was set up, fired, and moved before larger guns could be brought to bear on it. The howitzer was never meant to get into artillery duels with longer range guns. Many artillery units soon replaced it with bigger guns, but the howitzer would always remain popular with infantry and cavalry units that triumphed over their enemies because of its added firepower.

It served all over the United States, in Mexico and even in Central and South America. The howitzer was used from the early 1840s almost to the end of the nineteenth century. This was wider service than almost any gun in the Federal arsenal during this period. Indians learned not to attack any unit that had accompanying artillery. The fierce Apaches of southern Arizona learned this lesson at the hands of two mountain howitzers at Apache Pass, Arizona. In fact a few tribes even tried to capture some pieces for their own use. It played a role in almost all of the conflicts with the major tribes. The howitzer helped U. S. soldiers to take Mexico City, and it caused Billy the Kid's faction to lose the Lincoln County War. It served along the American/Mexican border against bandits from both sides, and it even lived on to see action in the 1910-1920 Mexican Revolution. The mountain howitzer provided very effective artillery support for fighting units in every war, units which might otherwise have had to go into battle with just their rifles. Its ease of movement allowed the howitzer to stay with the groups it was assigned to and it saved many lives by supporting them in their battles.

The idea of a light, easy-to-move howitzer that could move with front-line troops did not die when the model-1841 Mountain Howitzer was finally retired from United States service. Mule-borne pack artillery was used by the American army in the 1898 Spanish-American War and the ensuing Philippine Insurrection. Also, modern mountain howitzers were in use by several major powers in World War One, and even by the American army in the Philippines in 1942 against the Japanese.⁽¹⁾ During the brutal fighting in Italy mountain guns were often the only artillery support that could accompany Allied armies deep into the rugged mountain ranges that were used as defensive positions by Axis forces. With few, or no, roads only lightweight guns could keep up with the troops. Also, the distances between hillsides were often so small that a mountain gun could be more effective than bigger artillery pieces. They were closer to the front lines so they could see where their rounds were most needed, and often the artillerymen could see where their fire was landing and shift it accordingly much quicker than bigger guns far behind the lines. The mountain howitzer had proven to the world that in many cases a light gun was more useful than heavier, longer-range guns. Even today the small howitzer lives on in the arsenals of many of the world's major powers.

First-hand accounts of many soldiers contain references to the uses of the mountain howitzer, and it is highly likely that for every mention of the howitzers there are likely many other incidents where it was used that were omitted or lost. Soldiers who used the howitzer within its limitations loved the cannon and fought to keep it with them.

The mountain howitzer helped to show military leaders, and historians, that bigger is not always better. This gun kept up with fast-moving infantry and cavalry where bigger guns would have been left far behind. It saw as long a period of service as any cannon of its era, and the ideas it embodied are still in use by many militaries of today. For all of its influence the howitzer has long been ignored by historians, and it deserves more respect and attention.

1. David A. Norris, "Confederate gunners affectionately called their hard-working little mountain howitzers 'bull pups,'" pp. 20, 90.

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