



GENERAL CYRUS BUSSEY

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Brevet Major General Cyrus Bussey is one of the two living Generals Iowa had in the Civil War, Major General Dodge being the other. As he was an active politician, a radical Democrat, living in a hotbed of Copperheads, when the war broke out, I visited him a few days ago to get a little of the unwritten history of his evolution from a Democrat—for at that time every Democrat in the North was considered a Southern sympathizer—to a supporter of the “blood-thirsty usurper, Lincoln,” as Henry Clay Dean used to call him.

Born in Trumbull County, Ohio, in 1833, when four years old, Cyrus went with his father, a Methodist minister, to Indiana, and at fourteen entered a dry goods store at Dupont, Indiana, as clerk, and, mastering the business, at sixteen began on his own account, at which he was quite successful. In the meantime, he fortified himself for the activities of business life by a rigid course of study several hours each day.

In 1855, he came to Iowa, and settled at Bloomfield, Davis County, where he acquired a prosperous business, took an active part in politics, was an attractive and forceful speaker, and a leader in civic affairs.

In 1859, he was elected to the Iowa State Senate by the Democratic party, and served in the session of 1860.

He was a delegate to the Charleston Convention, and served in the adjourned session in Baltimore, which nominated Stephen A. Douglas, and took part in the campaign of that year for his election.

The firing on Fort Sumter, in 1861, caused great excitement in Davis County, many of whose citizens were natives of slave states. Many Democrats sympathized with the South, and were opposed to coercion. The Republicans, to make a point against the Democrats, called a meeting by

handbill, inviting "Cyrus Bussey, Senator; Harvey Dunlacy, and Marvin Hotchkiss, Representatives, to come out and show their hands." The meeting assembled at the Methodist Church, which was packed to the doors. Bussey made a patriotic speech. Referring to the constitutional provision allowing the creation of a public debt for war purposes, he said:

"I am not only willing to put my *hand* in the treasury, but my *arm* to the shoulder, to provide money to put down the Rebellion."

The two Representatives declined to speak, and they voted against all bills introduced to aid in suppressing the Rebellion. When the meeting adjourned, an excited crowd of Democrats met Bussey at the door, where the editor of the Democratic paper published in Bloomfield said to him: "You have made a d—d fool of yourself. The Republicans and Abolitionists have brought the war on the country, and Democrats should let them fight it out." Bussey replied that if he could not be a Democrat and be a patriot, he would cease to be a Democrat.

The extra session of the Legislature convened on the Fifteenth of May, 1861. Bussey's position was well known. He was tied evenly between the parties. Before the meeting, he informed Senator J. F. Wilson that he would vote with the Republicans for all war measures. He was appointed a member of the Military Committee of the Senate, and voted for the bill reported by that committee appropriating one million, two hundred thousand dollars for war purposes. Five other Democrats voted for the bill, leaving a large majority of Democrats against it. Governor Kirkwood, fearing so much opposition in the Senate would retard enlistments and build up an anti-war party in the state, sent for Bussey, and asked him to urge his Democratic colleagues to vote for an appropriation of eight hundred thousand dollars, and he spent the entire night, visiting Senators at their rooms, stating his opinion that from what he had learned among Southern men in Washington and at the Baltimore Convention, that every man in the South would fight for the Confederacy; that it would be a long war, and they could not afford to place themselves on record against preserving the Union. Half a dozen Senators agreed to vote with him for eight hundred thousand dollars. When the Senate convened the next day, Bussey moved to reconsider the vote by

which the bill appropriating one million, two hundred thousand dollars had passed. Jarias E. Neal, of Knoxville, who opposed all war measures, arose and said he was pleased to see that the Senator from Davis was putting himself right on the war question, and in favor of his party; that he had great respect for him, on account of his father, who was the station minister of the Methodist Church at his town of Knoxville, and had been pained when he voted with the Republicans. The motion to reconsider was adopted. Bussey then moved to appropriate eight hundred thousand dollars, which brought Senator Neal again to his feet, who said he was greatly disappointed in the Senator from Davis, who seemed bent on destroying himself. The bill thus amended passed, with six Democratic members voting against it.

Bussey was the youngest member of that body, being not yet twenty-six years old when elected, and no member rendered more important service, or exerted a wider influence. Governor Kirkwood wrote the President that he was greatly indebted to Bussey for the passage of laws which enabled him to comply with his requisitions for Iowa's quota of troops.

Ten days after the extra session had adjourned, the Governor appointed Judge Caleb Baldwin of Council Bluffs; John Edwards, Speaker of the House; William B. Allison, of Dubuque, and Senator Bussey, Aide de Camp on his staff, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel of Cavalry. Bussey was directed to adopt measures to protect the Iowa border in the counties of Davis, Van Buren and Lee. A company was organized in each county, under a law authorizing the organization of a mounted regiment, passed at the extra session. The state was without arms or means of defense. It was known that the Rebels were organizing for service in the Confederate Army in all the border counties of Missouri. Bussey sent a young Irishman, who had been in his employ, to Missouri, with instructions to go into the Rebel camps and remain there until he became convinced they intended to make a raid into Iowa, when he was to return and give notice. Bussey then went to Saint Louis to see General Fremont, who had just taken command of the Department of Missouri. Arriving there, he found the General alone in his room at the residence of his father-in-law, Tom. Benton. He there explained

to the General that the enemy was organizing in northeast Missouri in force; that a raid into Iowa was probable, and asked arms and ammunition to arm Iowa's Home Guards. The General replied that he did not have arms even to arm regiments organized for service in the army, and had no guns for Home Guards. Bussey then asked for fifty thousand rounds of ammunition. The General replied: "You have no guns; what would you do with ammunition?" Bussey said he would feel more secure with the ammunition.

The order was given, and Captain Callender shipped from the arsenal that evening fifty thousand rounds of ammunition, which was placed in store. Bussey then represented to Fremont that the Fifth Infantry, Colonel Worthington, and Sixth Infantry, Colonel McDowell, were in rendezvous at Burlington, and if they were moved to Keokuk, their presence there would give full protection. Fremont, by letter, authorized Bussey to order the two regiments to Keokuk. He went immediately to the telegraph office and telegraphed to Colonel Worthington and Colonel McDowell to move at once with their regiments to Keokuk, and report to General John Pope, commanding north Missouri, at Quincy, Illinois. Having accomplished all that was possible in one interview, Bussey took the boat that night for Keokuk, and arrived at his home in Bloomfield upon the evening of August First. About eleven o'clock that night, he was called upon by his Irish emissary, who informed him that General Martin Green, with fifteen hundred Rebels, were shoeing horses and would leave in thirty-six hours to make a raid into Iowa to steal horses and rob the banks in the towns on the Iowa border, naming Keokuk. Bussey left Bloomfield before daybreak next morning, and drove to Keosauqua, twenty-five miles, in one hour and a half. Taking a train at Summit, he arrived at Keokuk at noon, warning the people he met to organize for defense. Having notified the railroad people that their road was in danger, he went to the law office of Samuel F. Miller, late Justice of the United States Supreme Court, to ask him to call a meeting of citizens to plan to defend the city. While talking with him, John Given, well known to many residents of Des Moines as late Superintendent of the Iowa Division of the

Rock Island, but then ticket agent at Keokuk, came into the room with a bill of lading for one thousand guns and equipments, just arrived at Keokuk by train, consigned by the War Department at Washington to Council Bluffs, to arm the Fourth Iowa Infantry, Colonel G. M. Dodge. Dodge had gone to Washington in person to secure the guns. They were to be shipped by boat to Hannibal, Missouri, thence by rail to Saint Joseph, thence by boat to Council Bluffs. Bussey notified Given that he would take possession of the guns, and to hold the train ready to move in two hours. The ammunition his foresight had secured fortunately fitted the guns. It was loaded on the train, except sufficient to arm a company of one hundred men, under Captain W. W. Belknap, late Secretary of War, and a company of one hundred men under Captain Hugh J. Sample, both of whose companies were armed with those guns. About four o'clock, Bussey left Keokuk with the freight train.

At Athens, Missouri, Colonel David Moore was in camp with about three hundred Union Missourians, who had been driven from their homes by Green's Rebels, and Moore had applied to Bussey for arms and ammunition to arm his men. Bussey armed two hundred of them and supplied them with ammunition. At Farmington, he left one hundred guns with Captain O. H. P. Scott, and at Summit two hundred guns for H. C. Caldwell, late Judge of the United States Court of Appeals (who, after brilliant service in Bussey's regiment in the war, succeeded him as Colonel, and, after forty years' service on the United States Federal Bench, is still living in Los Angeles), to arm the company of Captain Maine, who was later killed in a fight at Kirksville, Missouri, and one other company. Arriving at Ottumwa, Bussey hired wagons, loaded three hundred guns and ammunition, traveled all night, and arrived at Bloomfield, where three hundred men were organized and armed. After one day, he returned to the railroad and took a train for Keokuk.

Arriving at Croton, opposite Athens, a battle was being fought between Green's forces, with artillery, and the Home Guards, under Colonel David Moore, who had been reinforced by Captain Scott and other Iowa companies. Moore had barricaded the streets and made a gallant defense. Captain Belknap and Sample, with two hundred men and three companies

of the Sixth Iowa Infantry, arrived from Keokuk and soon drove the enemy from the field. The loss in the engagement was about sixty men killed and wounded. The next day, Colonel Moore and his Home Guards, with several hundred Iowa militia, followed Green's forces forty miles into Missouri, driving him out of the country. That great victory, defeating the first effort of the enemy to raid in Iowa, was due to the energy and ability of Bussey in utilizing the means that came in his way. He did not do all that, however, without opposition. The Governor had written him: "You have my full authority to do whatever you may find necessary to do to protect the lives and property of the people." Adjutant General Baker got after him, and, with some of his "energetic idioms," sharply criticised (sic) him for doing things which he, as Adjutant General, should do. Judge Baldwin also rebuked him savagely for stealing Dodge's guns, but later apologized, saying he did just right. When the Governor and Baker received Bussey's report and understood the facts, he was warmly commended.

The battle of Athens was fought on the Fifth of August, 1861. On the Tenth of August, Bussey went to Saint Louis and reported the seizure of Dodge's guns and the use he had made of them. General Fremont seemed pleased, and requested him to return at four o'clock, saying he would in the meantime communicate with the War Department. When he returned, he was handed authority to raise a regiment of cavalry. He returned to Keokuk at eleven o'clock on the night of the Eleventh, went immediately to the office of the *Gate City*, and had a handbill printed calling for volunteers for a cavalry regiment, leaving Keokuk with them next morning. In ten days, he had nearly twelve hundred men in camp at Keokuk, many of them with horses. So soon as a mustering officer could be had, they were mustered in as the Third Iowa Cavalry. Thus came his political evolution.

His regiment was ordered to join the Army of the Southwest, where he was greatly needed. To record in detail its great achievements, which added brilliant luster to the name of Iowa during the war, would require many pages.

Early in February, Colonel Bussey left Benton Barracks with his regiment, and with bad weather and terrible roads, in four days reported to General

Curtis, two hundred and twenty miles away, making the cavalry march the greatest on record. General Curtis immediately increased his command to a brigade, with which he took part in the bloody battle of Pea Ridge.

Referring to that battle, the General said: "The battle of Pea Ridge, all things considered, the great disparity of the forces, twenty-six thousand Confederates against ten thousand five hundred Federal troops, the former, on the morning of the Eighth, occupying a ridge with timber and fences covering much of their line, while the latter's whole line, from right to left, was in the open plain, without protection, was the greatest victory of the Civil War; that to General Curtis belongs the credit of it, and not to General Sigel, as was persistently stated immediately after the battle. On the contrary, Sigel was severely criticised (sic) by General Halleck for his action on that occasion. When the battle commenced, on the morning of the Seventh, General Curtis' forces were completely surrounded; both armies were within musket range of each other when the fighting ceased that night. General Curtis ordered Sigel and Davis to move during the night, and form on the left of Carr's Division at Elkhorn, with all their available forces, and be ready to renew the battle at daylight at that point, as the enemy would concentrate his whole force there. At daylight, Davis' whole division was in position on Dodge's left, in front of the enemy. At sunrise, Colonel Davis opened the fight. At seven o'clock, when the firing was going on, Sigel, with his two divisions, was in camp a mile away. At eight o'clock, all the troops and batteries of Sigel's divisions arrived and formed on the left of Davis. It is but justice to say that had Sigel been in Germany, the divisions of Asboth and Osterhouse would have slept on their arms in front of the enemy; both were excellent officers and commanded excellent troops. When our position became critical, General Curtis ordered a charge along the whole line, and, with a universal shout, our boys moved forward. The Confederates held their ground until the last moment, when it gave way. General Van Dorn knew the day was lost, and ordered young Churchill Clark to withdraw his guns. When about retiring, he fell, decapitated by a shot from one of our batteries.

The enemy's infantry interposed with desperate resistance while the guns were being withdrawn, and then retreated down the gorges of the mountain into Cross Timber Hollow. Their whole army was demoralized.

"An hour or two after the battle, I returned with nearly one hundred prisoners and reported to General Curtis. He was writing dispatches announcing his victory, and while thus engaged, he received a message from General Sigel, eight miles north on the Springfield road, saying: 'The way is open to Springfield; come on.' General Curtis sent a reply, saying: 'They who sleep upon the battlefield are known to be the victors; you will return here with your command forthwith.' General Sigel returned to the battlefield on the evening of the Ninth.

"March Nineteenth, General Halleck wrote General Curtis: 'I was by no means surprised at General Sigel's conduct before the battle of Pea Ridge. It was precisely what he did at Carthage and Wilson's Creek.' "

On the First of February, 1865, General Bussey was assigned to command western Arkansas, the Indian Territory, and Seventh Army Corps, with headquarters at Fort Smith, a most trying position, his predecessor having utterly failed to govern a very large and intensely disloyal population, while dishonest contractors had cheated and swindled the Government, defied its officers, and a lawless and uncontrollable riff-raff had swarmed around headquarters, but he soon had order restored and so maintained it as to receive high commendation not only from his superior officers, but the loyal people of that whole section. He held this command until September Twenty-ninth, 1865.

In December, 1862, his name headed a long list of Brigadier Generals sent to the Senate at Washington for confirmation, and to date from November Twenty-ninth, but the Senate adjourned without action. On January Fourth, 1864, he was promoted to Brigadier General for "special gallantry," when he received his well-earned and long-delayed star. March Thirteenth, 1865, he was promoted to Brevet Major General, for gallant and meritorious service during the war.

At the close of the war, he went into the commission business in Saint Louis, but deeming New Orleans a better field during the Reconstruction

period, he went there, and at once took high rank among business men, was elected President of the Chamber of Commerce, held the place six years; was chairman of the committee which obtained the Government appropriation for the Ead Jetties improvement of the Mississippi River.

When the new Louisiana Constitution was adopted, he was strongly urged for Governor and United States Senator, but declined, preferring to devote his energies to improving the commercial and industrial interests of the city, its railroad facilities, and the development of trade with Brazil. His labors for the prosperity of the city were recognized in many ways by the resident population.

In 1868, he was a delegate to the National Republican Convention, which nominated Grant for President.

In 1880, he was one of the famous "three hundred and six" delegates in the National Convention who voted for General Grant for a third term as President. The same year, he was sent as a delegate to the Ecuminical (sic) Methodist Church Conference at London, and on the way, by special invitation, attended the great meeting at Liverpool to express sorrow at the death of Garfield, and in a speech of great eloquence and pathos, presented the resolutions adopted.

In 1881, he removed to New York and engaged in business, but kept up his old-time interest in politics, and in 1884, stumped New York and New Jersey for Blaine. In 1882, he gave the address on laying the corner stone of the new Cotton Exchange in New Orleans. In 1889, President Harrison appointed him Assistant Secretary of the Interior. He now resides in Washington, and is practicing law, but contemplates making his home ere long in Des Moines, with his daughter, Mrs. Isaac L. Hillis.

In 1888, he visited Des Moines and was received with great enthusiasm by the people generally. The Twenty-second General Assembly was in session, and under a suspension of the rules, the following resolution was adopted in the Senate:

"WHEREAS, The Honorable Cyrus Bussey was, at the commencement of the Rebellion, a member of the Senate of Iowa, and at once resigned his seat in this body for the purpose of serving our common country on the

field of battle, to uphold our flag and perpetuate the union of states; and,

"Whereas, He served with distinguished courage and ability during the war, receiving promotion to the rank of general officer for gallant conduct; therefore,

"Resolved, That a committee of three Senators be appointed to arrange a reception on the part of the state for the Honorable Cyrus Bussey."

The reception was held in the Senate Chamber, the members of both houses being present, with many prominent citizens. The General was escorted to the dais by Governor Larrabee, and an enthusiastic demonstration in honor of him as a soldier and citizen was given.

The General voted for Douglas and Lincoln for President. Since then he has been a Republican, and says he is now a "Standpatter." He is nearly six feet high; of erect, rather slender physique; nervous, sanguine temperament; quick of mental or bodily movement; punctilious in all he says or does; optimistic, looks on the bright side of everything; has a remarkably retentive memory, days, dates and events of the war being as of yesterday; bears well the burden of his years and strenuous army life; is a very rapid speaker; vivacious, witty, genial and social. His varied experiences, the men and things he has rubed (sic) up against, make him a pleasing and interesting conversationalist.

September Second, 1906.