

## Meriwether Lewis Clark and Samuel Clark

### Introduction

The Clark family and their patriarch, Meriwether Lewis Clark (eldest son of William Clark), exhibited hesitation about war as hostilities grew during the secession crisis of 1860–1861. Meriwether commented to one of his sons in December of 1860, “My own feeling is that both the South and North are wrong and have gone too far in their abuse of each other and should retract.” However, when the South seceded, Meriwether and his son Samuel Churchill Clark became active supporters of the Southern cause in Missouri.

### During the War

When the war broke out, Meriwether Lewis Clark was appointed brigadier general for the 9th Division of the secessionist militia the Missouri State Guard. Samuel left West Point on July 1, 1861, never to return. He returned to his family home in St. Louis briefly before heading to Richmond to apply for a Confederate commission, eventually making his way to Lexington, Missouri, on September 13, 1861. At Lexington, Samuel would join the Missouri State Guard as a colonel. Samuel “supervised three six pound artillery pieces and their cannoneers” during the siege of Lexington on September 18. He describes his experience in the battle: “I won a gold meddle in the fight from my brigadier general for shooting down one of the flags which were on the breastworks. I felt a little queer when I saw the stars and stripes fall by my own hand, but still went on.”

His father wrote to him the next month from New Madrid, MO, describing how he had fared to that point. He had left St. Louis on September 17 and traveled “about in every direction to avoid the patrols and pickets of the enemy.... I arrived at Pitman's Ferry on the Arkansas line where we learned that Gen. Hardee had left for Point Pleasant on the Mississippi. We followed on and overtook him at that place. I have then proceeded to Columbus and had interviews with General A. J. Johnston and Polk. Whilst there last Monday the enemy sent their gunboats down from Cairo and they bombarded the place...shells fell about us and one within 20 feet on a high bluff near our 32 rifle cannon.”

In October, Samuel received an appointment as captain of the 1st Battery of Artillery, 4<sup>th</sup> Division, Missouri State Guard, but by the end of the year both father and son had joined the Confederate army. In fact, Meriwether signed off on his own son's appointment as cadet in the Corps of Artillery.

In November, Samuel was killed at the Battle of Pea Ridge after being decapitated by a cannonball. Shortly before his death he wrote his father, saying, “I am very comfortably situated and ready to give the “Feds” 200 rounds at a moment's notice. Good bye and may god bless and preserve you always will be the prayer of your most devoted son.”

Although he was most certainly crushed by the loss of his son, Meriwether continued to serve in the Confederate army. Following the war, Clark became a

faculty member at the Kentucky Military Institute. He died in Kentucky on October 28, 1881.