

Information Sheet

R **Arnett, R. C.**
138 **Memoir, 1917.**
 One folder, photocopies and typescript.

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This is a memoir of the engagement at Fredericktown, Madison County, Missouri, on 21 October 1861, by a native of the town on whose farm the fighting occurred. Arnett claimed to have reported on Federal troop strength to Gen. M. Jeff Thompson before the battle.

The fight at Fredericktown was precipitated by Thompson's move toward St. Louis with 2500 Missouri State Guard troops. Union forces from Pilot Knob and Cape Girardeau, ordered to intercept Thompson, converged on Fredericktown only to find that the rebels had withdrawn. The Federals began pursuit and were attacked a short distance from town. Outnumbering Thompson's force by almost two to one, the Union troops finally broke the rebel line and forced them to flee toward Bloomfield. Worried that the rebels might take the opportunity to attack Cape Girardeau, the Union command broke off the pursuit.

Arnett's memoir of the battle compares favorably with official reports and published accounts, but it also includes two incidents not mentioned elsewhere. Although he was only twelve years old at the time of the engagement, Arnett says that he was asked by Gen. Thompson to go into Fredericktown to ascertain whether Federal troops from Pilot Knob had joined the force from Cape Girardeau. Arnett made it in and out of Fredericktown without difficulty, but it is not clear whether he returned with any useful information for Thompson. Arnett also recounts a meeting several years after the battle with Col. Leonard Ross of the 11th Missouri Infantry, who had returned to visit the battlefield. Ross, according to Arnett, claimed that Col. W. P. Carlin, commanding the Federal column from Pilot Knob, had been drinking and was unable to lead his troops. Ross then assumed command and led the troops into the battle.

This account appears to have been published in the *Fredericktown Democrat-News* (25 October 1923, p. 4, c. 2-5).

r132 *15 July 1982* *Madison County Historical Society* *Loaned for photocopying*

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