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SPEECH OF GENERAL EWING IN CELEBRATION OF HIS BATTLE AT PILOT KNOB HELD AT HIS ST LOUIS HOUSE

Fellow Citizens: I acknowledge, in behalf of that portion of my command which fought at Pilot Knob, this very handsome compliment, and tender to you and to the citizens of St. Louis their thanks for them.

Coming here with but a few of the officers of the command, I left the whole of it at Rolla, turning over to Gen. McNeil the men worn out with fighting and watching for the defence of that important post, and by taking them he was enabled to collect for duty an equal number of fresh men, who have now reached the front of the enemy before Jefferson City.

When those left at Rolla, now under the command of the gallant and unyielding Fletcher, shall hear of this warm greeting, it will cheer them and nerve them for newer efforts. I venture to say if Price attempts Rolla on his retreat South they will give him a warmer reception than he received at Pilot Knob. They learned there and on the retreat, and taught the enemy, too, some lessons in the "no surrender" theory of warfare, and I venture to say that every man of them though they doubtless regard it a rugged schooled philosophy, is prepared to act by that theory, and stand to it to the end.

I may be pardoned here in presenting in a brief moment the *point* that was to be made by the defence of Pilot Knob. It is a mistaken notion to suppose that the authorities ever expected to hold that point against the great army of Price. General Rosecrans had no right to be called upon or to expect to have to meet with his small and scattered forces the huge army with which Price is now invading this State. The army which was to have met Price, that was prepared for him, was upon the Arkansas, and the authorities here could not suppose that Price would be permitted to pass from the front of that army into the State of Missouri.

But it came. The forces under General Rosecrans were scattered throughout the whole State, and it was important to have a few days to collect it and to gather in the spare troops in the adjoining States. Pilot Knob was merely used to delay the march of Price for two or three days -- that was the whole value of that point -- that was the whole purpose that I had in going there, merely to beat back the surging billows of the invasion until the note of preparation could be sounded, and sufficient forces collected. It was never regarded as the best defensible against artillery, but merely against a cavalry or infantry force. It served the whole purpose. I had guns enough, ammunition enough, men enough to do anything I could have done at Pilot Knob. I accomplished the object -- delayed Price at least three days, and then led him for four or five days longer on a fruitless chase. Whatever may be thought of it, it cannot be charged to Gens. Rosecrans, Smith or anybody else, that by their withholding reinforcements or in any other way the effort [vied ?] of its accomplishment. It really deserves, I think, the honorable notice that has been given it, for the battle itself was a

fierce one. The fort lies, you all know, like a penny in the bottom of a saucer -- lying in a little round valley, surrounded and overhung by five mountains over five hundred feet in height from all sides of which it was commandable by artillery and by sharpshooters. With two-thirds of his forces, Price attempted the assault. You know the result -- not in any official form, but by the authentic rumors that have reached you. I may surely say that during the two days he lost in that struggle 1,[300 ?] men, and he got as the result of his trouble, not the splendid warehouse filled with Quartermaster's stores, not 100,000 rations that Colonel Haines sent down there, not the enormous magazine filled with shot and shell, but a heap of blackened ruins in the fort, and the hill-sides filled with his dead and groaning wounded. His ferocity sharpened by the retreat he started on the pursuit, and Providence, and artillery, and fast travelling, saved us. We marched towards Potosi. On reaching Caledonia, my advance met the advance of Shelby, who had been ordered down, I assert here publicly, with his guerilla friends under Reeves and Freeman, to murder the garrison, if captured. We met his advance at Caledonia -- whipped it, and taking the alarm, turned off on the Rolla road.

Travelling though the darkness of night which was pitchy black, gave us a start, and them, instead of taking the direct road to Rolla, by taking a road which leads over the divide between the waters of the Courtois and the Huzzah, which road leads down into a mountain gorge on a line of retreat which saved us. We reached this mountain ridge where it was impossible to flank us. We had scarcely planted our feet upon it when they came yelling on our track. The ridge was one of the mountain spur of the Ozark range. As I looked out upon the [dun ?] heather of the mountain sides, and heard the enemy coming, I felt forcibly reminded of the stirring description of the chase in the Lady of the Lake:

*"Yelled on the view the opening pack,
Glen, rock and cavern paid them back, [line misquoted from Walter Scott's text]
To many a mingled sound at once
The awakening mountain gave response;
The falcon from her cairn on high,
Glimpsed on its rout a wandering eye, [line misquoted]
Till, far beyond her piercing ken,
The hurricane had swept the glen."*

And when after reaching Harrison Station, and after three days and nights of toil, watching and fighting we eluded the enemy and made good our retreat to Rolla. I [felt ?] that Marmaduke and Shelby called back by Price like the [taffied ?] hounds.

*"Back limped, with slow and crippled pace,
The sulky leaders of the chase;
Close to their master's side they pressed,
With drooping tail and humbled crest."*

There was in that struggle, however, aside from the more stirring incidents of the fight and the pursuit, very peculiar marks. I had gathered into the fort the new companies of Fletcher's regiment, which had been raised down on the extreme border of Arkansas -- men who had sternly withstood the ravages and fierce assaults of civil war, but at last almost in

despair, abandoning their families and little farms had joined the service for the purpose of aiding in finishing the fight. They were the men who in many a lively fray for the last three years had watered the bridle paths of that border with the blood of the murdering guerillas. They were the men who under the lead of Leper, Powers, McMurtry and other leaders had made that border fearful to the guerillas. They were in the first and opposed to them the guerilla bands of Freeman and Reeves. They had been fighting to the death for the last three years these very men. Hardly ever was there a beleaguered army opposed by an army composed of men animated with such intense hatred to them. Do you wonder that they stood on the parapet fighting as if each man was fighting for his very existence? Do you wonder that I never thought of surrendering them? I would have sullied myself to have suffered the idea to have entered my mind.

Men! Never was there a moment in that siege or in the retreat when I dreamed of giving up as long as I had a rifle or a sword to raise in resistance. (Cheers.) It might be said that I had a right to expect that my men would be treated as prisoners of war. No they would not have been. Look at the fate of Major Wilson, the soldier, the gentleman, the fearless, spotless Christian, taken by them in fair fight as he was at Pilot Knob, stripped of hat, coat, vest, shoes, stocking, and made to walk through their camp, jeered at and driven by those hell hounds he had been fighting. An now the rumor reaches us, too well, alas, authenticated, that he has been given over to Tim Reeves to be murdered. If he is, I hope that the memory of his peerless character and of his atrocious murder will rouse the authorities to a revenge so swift and terrible that henceforth these men will have to act as soldiers or on both sides the black flag will be raised.

Ah! gentlemen, you little know you who have lived here in quiet in St. Louis, the character of that loyal people. You little know the hardships these loyal men of Southeast Missouri have endured. When I have marched by their ruined farms, and have seen their wives and children, shoeless, half-starved, eking out their existence in loneliness, I have bowed down in spirit before the heroic patriotism of these men and worshiped it. None of us have made sacrifices -- no man whose family has been in security and beyond reach of the terrible hazards of war has made sacrifices compared to them. Honor them, reverence them, aid them. Do as much as you can to relieve them, and after all that, you who enjoy your quiet homes here, will not discharge one-tenth of your debt of gratitude to them.

There was another striking feature of that siege. Price brought with him the pretended Governor of Missouri, and Tom Fletcher, God bless him, [cheers] left the place where I had put him on duty at Cape Girardeau, without orders, knowing that his six companies were then at Pilot Knob, and that his presence would be of the utmost service to them, obeying that instinct of duty that shows the true soldier and the true man, came to Pilot Knob, and was the last man to get into the fort before the drawbridge was raised. His arrival reassured and made confident the loyal men of these border counties who had rallied to the service at his call. They felt that he was willing to take all risks which I called on them to take, and they looked to him as their trusted, reliable leader. He did his duty to them in the siege and on the march most nobly, and you cannot honor him too highly for it. I have no doubt it is felt very much by both armies as if the Governorship of Missouri depended upon the contest between them. If General Price succeeds, or if his peace friends (cheers) succeed, you will doubtless have Reynolds for Governor and Legislators to make laws for you chosen from his armies. (Cries of "Never, " "Never.") That is what peace now means.

That is what amnesty now means. That is what cessation of hostilities now means. All that Price asks is to be left alone. Why! he wanted peace there at Pilot Knob. He didn't want to fight us, and he didn't want us to fight him. Almost before the fighting had fairly commenced he sent in a flag of truce. We fought him one whole day to keep him out of the Arcadia Valley. At night he broke through our lines and got in. He filled it full with his large army in the night. Then in the morning the contest was for the gap between Shephard and Iron Mountain, leading into the valley where the fort was. I had placed on the nose of Shephard mountain a battalion of the 14th Iowa infantry, whose presence there, with Major Wilson with his cavalry, made it impracticable for the enemy to force the gap without great loss. He wanted to get artillery to bear on Wilson and those Iowa men. He wanted a little time and he sent in a flag of truce. I sent another section of artillery to Wilson, and ordered him to reply to the flag with canister. [Cheers.] Afterwards when he had forced the gap and got possession of the top of the mountain, their lines were being formed for the assault, and it was desirable to have our artillery stopped while he was marching down the valley, which our guns commanded, and then there appeared an enormous white flag. Above a large rock Marmaduke was sheltered marshalling his forces. We turned the artillery on the rock and scarred it thoroughly and the flag disappeared again. It was ungracious not to listen to him, for he certainly meant peace; but it occurred to me that he didn't mean to surrender to me, and I knew devilish well I didn't mean to surrender to him. The amnesty talk, the peace talk is a flag of truce dodge exactly. Had we received the first flag of truce he would have had his artillery in position so as to have shelled us out. Had we received his second flag he would have had his storming party at our counter-scarp before we would have been ready to open fire. This Western rebel army use the flag of truce in the field as infamously as Forrest did at Fort Pillow. In politics I don't pretend to talk about purposes, but I say the effect of flags of truce on our western fields and of proposed armistices are exactly the same.

No. The portion and destiny of Missouri is to be settled by fighting now, this fall, not by peace talk, and the loyal people, the men without distinction of party, who wish this monster expelled with violence and blood from this State, owe it to themselves to unite, form one solid, compact body through the State, take and hold possession of it, and expel from it the men who will not be loyal to it and to the general Government. [Cheers.]

Colonel Baker, Commander of the Post, being called for by the assembled multitude declined speaking, but proposed to the crowd that they should listen to Major Williams, of the 10th Kansas and Major Murphy, two of the heroes of Pilot Knob. Major Murphy was loudly called out, but as Col. Baker expressed it, the man who never ran from his foes, had this time deserted his friends. Major Williams appeared and asked to be excused from making a speech.