

Lewis B. Parsons: Master Logistician and Operational Artist

A Monograph

by

MAJ Donald E. Huskey
US Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
US Army Command and General Staff College
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Name of Candidate: MAJ Donald E. Huskey

Monograph Title: Lewis B. Parsons: Master Logistician and Operational Artist

Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
Bruce E. Stanley, PhD

_____, Seminar Leader
Michael C. Manner, COL

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Kirk C. Dorr, COL

Accepted this 23rd day of May 2019 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, PhD

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Abstract

Lewis B. Parsons: Master Logistician and Operational Artist, by MAJ Donald E. Huskey, US Army, 59 pages.

On the eve of the American Civil War, the US Army found itself unprepared for the conflict. The mass mobilization of the Army overwhelmed the limited pre-conflict capabilities of the Union Army's Quartermaster Department. In December 1861, Lewis B. Parsons was assigned as the quartermaster for the Department of Missouri and initiated an immense undertaking, aiming to improve the Union's logistical support system and increase the efficiency of transportation on the Western river network. This study uses a structured, focused comparison of Lewis B. Parsons' use of the steamboat to support military operations during Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and the 1864 movements of Major General A.J. Smith's 16th Corps in the Western Theater. The results of the study will show how Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art to standardize the use of the steamboat as the primary platform to project power and support Union operations and ultimately facilitate the defeat of the Confederates in the Western Theater.

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Acronyms

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrinal Reference Publication
ALPL	Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
AQM	Assistant Quartermaster
BG	Brigadier General
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
COL	Colonel
CPT	Captain
CS	Confederate States
FM	Field Manual
LOC	Line of communication
LT	Lieutenant
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
LSA	Logistics Support Area
MAJ	Major
MG	Major General
QM	Quartermaster
RV	Rendezvous
US	United States

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Lewis B. Parsons: Master Logistician and Operational Artist

The subject of transportation in the conduct of war has always been one of primary importance; and the application of steam to transportation has perhaps as much modified the art of war as it has the pursuits of peace, and should, through its ability for more rapid concentration of troops and supplies at distant points, give greater vigor to a campaign, and vast advantage to the party having superiority in this respect. Not only has the world never before seen such vast armies so suddenly and so easily created, but never has it witnessed such *rapidity* in the transit of those armies for long distances, with their vast munitions and supplies.

—Lewis B. Parsons, *Report of GEN. Lewis B. Parsons to the Quartermaster General*

Introduction

On the eve of the American Civil War, the United States found itself unprepared for the conflict. The Union held the advantage in manpower, economic prosperity, agricultural capacity and had the industrial resources to overmatch the South. However, the Union lacked the organizational capacity to centralize efforts for movement of men and material to the point of battle. The Union Army grew rapidly from 16,000 troops to a force of over 700,000 within the first year of the war and would continue to grow to nearly 3 million men by 1865.¹ The mass mobilization of the Army greatly strained the limited pre-conflict capabilities of the United States Army Quartermaster Department. The War Department, in efforts to speed the process of organization sought assistance from the civil sector to augment their limited support infrastructure. Yet, in relying on civilian parties to provide needed material the process was left open to inefficiency, racketeering and unparalleled corruption.²

Further the Army's officer corps lacked the experience in conducting large scale combat operations and most had not operated in echelons greater than a company. The Mexican-American War was the last major conflict in which the Army took part, fourteen years earlier.

¹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 313, 322; National Park Service, "Civil War Facts," accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/facts.htm>.

² McPherson, 324.

Most officers only had experience serving in coastal defenses or policing the western frontier. The chaos of the rapid growth was rampant in the Western Theater, where there was an absence of standard methods to allocate movement assets and resources to fighting forces, and petty competition between various army commanders debilitated the Northern war effort and initially hindered the ability of the Union to attain its strategic goals.

The problems facing the Union Quartermaster Department were how to centralize control of resources, movement assets, and prioritize and manage distribution of troops and supplies to the various military departments. This endeavor required the foresight and managerial skills of an individual of supreme intellect. In December 1861, Lewis B. Parsons was assigned as the quartermaster for the Department of Missouri and initiated an immense undertaking to resolve the Union's problems in sustaining military operations to control the western river network and defeat Confederate forces in the region.³ This study will show how Lewis B. Parsons employed the theory of operational art to support the Union Army's operations in the Western Theater.

The purpose of this study is to use the lens of operational art to explain how the Union Quartermaster Department, under the direction of Lewis B. Parsons facilitated the successful execution of numerous campaigns, which enabled the eventual collapse of the Confederate Army. There is evidence that Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art to sustain the armies of the Western Theater and achieve Union strategic objectives during the American Civil War. Through standardization and management of steamboat operations to provide logistical support, Lewis B. Parsons enabled flexibility in planning, maintained operational tempo, extended operational reach, prevented culmination, and helped Union commanders mitigate operational risk.

The significance of this study is that it highlights Union logistics in the Western Theater, a topic not often covered. Furthermore, the overall focus of the study is on the use of the steamboat as the primary platform from which to project power within the Western Theater.

³ Harry E. Pratt, "Lewis B. Parsons: Mover of Armies and Railroad Builder," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 44, no. 4 (1951), 349.

While there have been numerous works on the use of railroads to support the armies of the Civil War or on the Union Navy's efforts on the Mississippi River, there are few that give attention to the Army's logistical operations throughout the vast network of western rivers and their use as highways into the heart of the Confederacy. Additionally, the study gives an overview of the use of operational art in planning theater level movement and logistics.

To avoid confusion, this study provided definitions of several key terms that are used throughout the monograph. The primary references used for identifying the Army's definitions of operational art, tempo, operational reach, culmination, risk and logistics are *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 1-02 Terms and Graphics* and *ADRP 3-0 Operations*. Operational art is "the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs, supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity and judgement, to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways and means."⁴ In *The Evolution of Operational Art*, John Olsen and Martin van Creveld further defined operational art as "the grey area between strategy and tactics, operational art spans the theory and practice of planning and conducting campaigns and major operations aimed at accomplishing strategic and operational objectives in a given theatre of operations."⁵ The Army defines tempo as the relative speed and rhythm of operations over time with respect to the enemy.⁶ It is the goal in military operations to maintain a higher tempo or act faster than the enemy to overwhelm the adversary's ability to react to one's own actions. In *Fighting by Minutes*, Robert Leonhard discusses frequency and tempo simply as the speed at which events happen.⁷ Leonhard also links integration of new technology

⁴ US Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication 1-02, Terms and Military Symbols* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 1-70.

⁵ John A. Olsen and Martin Creveld, *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

⁶ US Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 2-7.

⁷ Robert R. Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 11.

into military operations as being revolutionary in the ability to increase the overall tempo of military operations.⁸ Operational reach is the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities.⁹ Operational reach is further explained in *ADRP 3-0, Operations*, as the tether of the Army and a function of intelligence, protection, sustainment, endurance, and relative combat power.¹⁰ Culmination is the point in space and time at which a force can no longer continue its operations.¹¹ Military planners attempt to predict when units will culminate and plan to support culminating elements with the resources necessary to continue military operations. Risk is defined as the probability and severity of loss.¹² Commanders continually assess risk and accept risk when there is a high chance of creating an opportunity to seize, retain and exploit the initiative and attain decisive results.¹³ The Army defines logistics as planning and executing the movement and support of forces.¹⁴ Logistics integrates strategic, operational and tactical support of deployed forces while scheduling the mobilization and deployment of additional forces and material, to include maintenance, transportation, supply, field services, distribution, operational contract support and general engineering support.¹⁵ Earl Hess, in his book, *Civil War Logistics*, further describes logistics as the “focus on transportation of men, material, food, and animals in support of military operations in the field.”¹⁶

⁸ Ibid, 62.

⁹ *ADRP 1-02*, 1-70.

¹⁰ *ADRP 3-0*, 2-8.

¹¹ *ADRP 1-02*, 1-25.

¹² *ADRP 3-0*, 2-10.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5-5.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Earl J. Hess, *Civil War Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), xi.

The study uses the theory of operational art as a framework from which to explain how Lewis B. Parsons management of logistical assets enabled the success of the Union Army in the West. The study will highlight various elements of operational art that facilitated the success of Union operations. Specific elements covered in the study are tempo, operational reach, culmination, and risk.

The study tested four hypotheses to determine if Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art to provide the support the Union Army needed to successfully conduct combat operations within the Western Theater. Additionally, the study sought to identify whether U.S. strategic objectives were achieved due to successful Union campaigns, facilitated by reliable logistics. First, if Lewis B. Parsons enabled the availability of surplus military material that allowed flexibility and created options for Union commanders then there is evidence that he employed operational art. Second, if Lewis B. Parsons could ensure the Union maintained a higher operational tempo than the Confederates through the ability to rapidly move men and material then he used operational art. Third, if Lewis B. Parsons management of steamboats allowed the Union Army to extend their operational reach without culminating then operational art was employed. Fourth, if Lewis B. Parsons could mitigate operational risk through reliable logistical support, then he applied operational art.

This study is guided by several research questions. First, what were the political and military objectives of the Union in the Western Theater? Second, how did the Quartermaster Department facilitate the massing of men and material to provide Union commanders flexibility in planning their campaigns? Third, how did Lewis B. Parsons enable the Union Army to maintain a higher operational tempo than Confederate forces in the Western Theater? Fourth, how did Lewis Parsons increase the options available to Union commanders in the West? Fifth, how was the steamboat used to extend the operational reach of the Union Army? Sixth, how did Lewis B. Parsons assist commanders in mitigating operational risk? Seventh, how did Lewis Parsons and the Quartermaster Department anticipate, learn and adapt to the operational environment?

Finally, how did the outcome of the battles, operations and campaigns in the Western Theater influence the military and political objectives of the war?

While there were various technologies used by the Quartermaster Department to provide logistics to the Union Army, the study is focused on the use of steamboats in support of military operations. The study focuses on a technology which is currently not in operation on a mass level and is not understood in depth by most people. Therefore, the study will provide background information on steamboat operations, employment, range and capacity. Another limitation is that the focus is on logistics operations during the Civil War. Thus, the study will rely on secondary sources and require analysis of primary sources such as letters, reports, and journals.

The delimitations utilized by the researcher are in relation to the scope of the study. The study's focus is on the use of the steamboat in support of military operations from 1861 through 1865. Additionally, the study will cover operations in the Western Theater or the transit of troops from one theater to another via steamboat, oriented on the Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, Cumberland, Arkansas, Yazoo and Ohio Rivers.

This study assumes that the execution of strategic logistics and inter-theater movement of troops and material will continue to be complex and challenging for planners and logisticians alike. Also, it is assumed in the future the U.S. Army will have to deploy into contested environments and will benefit from the study of historic campaigns, such as the Union's efforts to control the western river network as a joint force that incorporated all warfighting functions.

The study is presented in five sections. Section one includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, hypotheses, limitations, delimitations, and the assumptions of the study. Section two presents the literature review, focusing on operational art, Union strategic goals, outlines basic data on steamboat operations and time distance analysis, and will show how Lewis B. Parsons provided flexibility, maintained operational tempo, extended operational reach, prevented culmination and mitigated risk using steamboats to project combat

power into Confederate strongholds. Section three presents two historic case studies of Union Army campaigns using steamboats for rapid transit and will highlight Lewis B. Parsons' use of operational art. Section four gives the final analysis of the study and answers the hypotheses and research questions. Lastly, section five will provide a summary of the study, findings, and conclusions.

Literature Review

This is the literature review; its purpose is to present the key sources from which the researcher has compiled the information pertaining to this report. This study highlights Union logistics in the American Civil War during several campaigns, expeditions and in support of transfer of troops between theaters of operations. While many previous studies have highlighted this topic, none have focused primarily on the use of the steamboat to facilitate the Union's operations and movement of forces. Additionally, the study links operational art to the efforts taken by Lewis B. Parsons, the Union Quartermaster Department's chief of river transportation, to achieve Union objectives.

The study uses the theory of operational art as a framework from which to explain how Lewis B. Parsons' management of logistical assets enabled the success of the Union Army in the West. The study will highlight various elements of operational art that facilitated the success of Union operations. Specific elements of operational art covered in the study are tempo, operational reach, culmination, and risk.

Many individuals have tried to understand the theory of operational art and put forth great effort to pinpoint its origins. Therefore, there are varying interpretations of what it means to practice operational art and how to best employ its elements in planning and execution of military operations. In US Army doctrine operational art is described as "the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs, supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity and judgement, to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military

forces by integrating ends, ways and means.”¹⁷ There are ten elements of operational art which are end state and conditions, center of gravity, decisive points, lines of operations and lines of effort, operational reach, culmination, basing, tempo, phasing and transitions and risk.¹⁸ Of these the study will primarily focus on operational reach, culmination, tempo and risk.

In the book, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, John Olsen and Martin van Creveld further defined operational art as “the grey area between strategy and tactics, operational art spans the theory and practice of planning and conducting campaigns and major operations aimed at accomplishing strategic and operational objectives in a given theatre of operations.”¹⁹ Throughout their work Creveld and Olsen and their counterparts show examples of the manifestation of operational art from various nations from the Eighteenth Century to modern times. They also stress the continued adaptation of operational art and its continued relevance. In the work operational art is later simplified as the theory and practice of planning and conduction of operations or the art of campaigning.²⁰ Additionally, they stress that operational success depends on plans that are logistically feasible, and that logistics must be an integral part of a campaign plan and failure to do so throughout history has led failure due to logistical over-stretch.²¹ Their example shows exactly how important Lewis Parsons’ labors were to build Union capacity to sustain operations into the heart of the Confederacy.

Throughout research several other works covering the topic of operational art were referenced to gain a fuller understanding of the concept. Essential was *The Evolution of Operational Art*, by Georgii Isserson. Isserson was a Soviet officer and an early theorist of

¹⁷ US Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication 1-02, Terms and Military Symbols* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 1-70.

¹⁸ _____, *Field Manual 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 1-20.

¹⁹ John A. Olsen and Martin van Creveld, *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

²⁰ Olsen and Creveld, 224.

²¹ Ibid, 225.

operational art. The Soviets were some of the first to conceptualize the meaning of operational art and Isserson's works express the immense difficulties in operating on an extended battlefield much larger in depth than previously understood by military thinkers.²² The Russian development of operational art was partly due to the vast geography encompassing the Soviet Union and the large forces they controlled. During American Civil War, both nations controlled massive armies that fought over the wide expanses of the central and eastern United States and it could be said that various commanders and staff members were early practitioners of operational art. This theory of Civil War leaders practicing operational art was further reinforced by the writings of James Schneider in *Vulcan's Anvil* and his essay *Theoretical Implications of Operational Art*.²³ The latter essay was taken from *On Operational Art*, a compilation of works by various authors that also assisted in a greater understanding of operational art.²⁴ This study will continue to build the understanding of operational art and exhibit the presence of its elements throughout the Civil War era case studies.

This section defines some of the concepts that are essential to planning military operations. One of the main areas of emphasis is logistics, which will be further examined. Additionally, this section outlines some of the elements of operational art that are key to the execution of logistics in support of successful military campaigns. These elements are operational reach, culmination and tempo. Together these concepts enable the operational artist to forecast requirements and anticipate future actions to provide the commander with a greater amount of flexibility and a wider range of options.

²² G.S. Isserson and Bruce Menning, *The Evolution of Operational Art* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, 2013), 7-10.

²³ James J. Schneider, *Vulcan's Anvil: the American Civil War and the Foundations of Operational Art* (S. I: s. n, 2015).

²⁴ Michael D. Krause and Clayton R. Newell, *On Operational Art* (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1994), 1-29.

The first term that this study will analyze is logistics. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines logistics as the handling of the details of an operation, and within the field of military science explains it as dealing with procurement, maintenance, and transportation of material, facilities and personal.²⁵ The Army defines logistics as planning and executing the movement and support of forces.²⁶ Logistics integrates strategic, operational and tactical support of deployed forces while scheduling the mobilization and deployment of additional forces and material, to include maintenance, transportation, supply, field services, distribution, operational contract support and general engineering support.²⁷ In his book, *Civil War Logistics*, Earl Hess further describes logistics as the "focus on transportation of men, material, food, and animals in support of military operations in the field."²⁸

The second term, operational reach is little used outside of military circles. Webster's dictionary defines reach as stretching out, thrusting or to touch an object by extending a part of the body such as the hand.²⁹ Extending the reach of one's own forces and massing effects on the enemy is exactly what the commander wants and what staffs work to achieve. Operational reach is the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities.³⁰ Operational reach is further explained in *ADRP 3-0, Operations*, as the tether of the Army and a function of intelligence, protection, sustainment, endurance, and relative combat power.³¹ Additionally, operational reach is one of the pillars of logistics support provided by

²⁵ Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, s.v. "logistics," accessed September 19, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/logistics>.

²⁶ Ibid., 5-5.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Hess, xi.

²⁹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, s.v. "reach," accessed September 19, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reach>.

³⁰ *ADRP 1-02*, 1-70.

³¹ US Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication ADRP 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: United States Army, 2016), 2-8.

logisticians in unified land operations.³² It is perhaps the most essential element of operational art to ensure forces can continue driving towards the objective and defeat the enemy.

The third term this study will analyze is culmination, which the Army defines as the point in space and time at which a force can no longer continue its operations.³³ Military planners attempt to predict when units will culminate and plan to support culminating units with the resources necessary to continue military operations. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines culmination as “the highest or climactic point of something, especially as attained after a long time”³⁴ However, in military terms culmination is most closely linked with a stopping point or a close to an operation. Robert Leonhard in his book, *Fighting by Minutes*, asserts that culmination is the premature cessation of movement due to a combination of friction, enemy opposition and lack of preparation, and states that it is the goal to cause the enemy to culminate in their actions.³⁵ Carl Von Clausewitz further explains the phenomena of culmination of forces in the attack, losing strength and momentum, requiring a transition to the defense to rebuild strength to continue further offensive operations.³⁶ In conducting operational level logistics it is essential for planners to ensure forces are adequately supplied in order to prevent culmination.

The final element of operational art that this study will analyze is tempo, which the Webster’s dictionary defines as the rate or speed of motion or activity. The Army defines tempo as the relative speed and rhythm of operations over time with respect to the enemy.³⁷ It is the goal in military operations to maintain a higher tempo or act faster than the enemy to overwhelm the

³² US Army, *Field Manual FM 4-95, Logistics Operations* (Washington, DC: US Army, 2014), 1-1.

³³ *ADRP 1-02*, 1-25.

³⁴ Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, s.v. “culmination,” accessed September 19, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culmination>.

³⁵ Leonhard, 94.

³⁶ Carl Von Clausewitz, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret, *On war* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 528.

³⁷ *ADRP 3-0*, 2-7.

adversary's ability to react to one's own actions. In *Fighting by Minutes*, Robert Leonhard discusses frequency and tempo simply as the speed at which events happen.³⁸ Leonhard also links integration of new technology into military operations as being revolutionary in the ability to increase the overall tempo of military operations.³⁹ This study will show how Lewis Parsons incorporated and improved the use of the steamboat to revolutionize the military's transportation system to increase the Union Army's tempo through rapid movement of men and material throughout the Western Theater.

While there have been numerous volumes dedicated to a wide range of topics during the American Civil War, there are but few that cover logistics. Of the few works that highlight or are completely focused on Civil War logistics, most are solely focused on the use of the military railroad system. Also, there has been very little written on Lewis B. Parsons. Therefore, documentation on the use of the steamboat during the war and highlighting Lewis B. Parsons participation in the war effort has been limited.

There have been several documents that have assisted in gathering background information on Lewis B. Parsons. The most essential work found on Parsons is George Schottenhamel's work, *Lewis Baldwin Parsons and Civil War Transportation*. This document is an excellent work and is Schottenhamel's doctoral thesis written in 1954. It is a biography of Parsons and discusses his background, military career and gives a great overview of Quartermaster Department operations on the western rivers and the challenges Parsons faced in managing river and rail transportation. Other documents that were helpful in learning about Lewis Parsons was a 1951 article by Harry Pratt, entitled "Lewis B. Parsons: Mover of Armies and Railroad Builder" and an 1865 article from *The New York Times* entitled "Gen. Lewis B. Parsons," that announced his promotion to brigadier general and gave an overview of his service

³⁸ Leonhard, 11.

³⁹ Ibid, 62.

in the war. The researcher also benefited from access to Lewis B. Parsons' personal collection of manuscripts and correspondence held at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Research Library in Springfield, Illinois. The archives at the Lincoln Library contain numerous volumes of letters, written orders, reports, receipts and maps from Parsons' war service that gave further insight into quartermaster operations in the Western Theater. While these documents were helpful, they did not provide an adequate strategic context for what was happening throughout the various theaters of operation and did not always link the key events that Parsons' actions effected.

During research many works were compiled to find information about the various expeditions or campaigns to use for case studies, however they yielded little in the field of logistics. Most general histories of the Civil War or specific campaigns reviewed did not have a single mention of logistics, supply or the Quartermaster Department. Another misconception found in many of the histories was that the work of Army transportation officers in facilitating troop movements via steamboat were attributed to the Navy's Mississippi River Squadron. Additionally, many authors incorrectly combine steam transports with the Navy's flotillas since during major naval river operations there were typically Army contracted steamboat transports present. While the efforts of the Navy's riverine forces to secure the Western Rivers were noble and no doubt saved countless lives, they did not provide regular security to steamboats moving troops and supplies, minus a timeframe a few months after the fall of Vicksburg when it was mandated that river transports move in large convoys secured by gunboats.⁴⁰ However, this practice of convoy security was quickly revoked since it hindered the flow of logistics throughout the Western rivers.⁴¹ Typically throughout the war steamboats contracted by the Quartermaster Department carried troops and supplies throughout the river networks alone or in small convoys with no dedicated security elements besides the troops and crew onboard.

⁴⁰ George Carl Schottenhamel, "Lewis Baldwin Parsons and Civil War Transportation" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1954), 139.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Additional sources used during this study focused on logistics, steamboat operations and official government reports. Earl Hess' work, *Civil War Logistics*, is one of the best resources covering transportation and logistics operations during the war. Another key document used during this study was Parsons', *Reports to the War Department, by Brev. Maj. Gen. Lewis B. Parsons, Chief of Rail and River Transportation*. This work was completed in 1867 by the request of the government and several railroad and steamboat packet company executives to assess the effectiveness of Union transportation during the war. The researcher also referenced two works pertaining to steamboat operations, *The Pageant of the Packets; A Book of American Steamboating*, by Garnett Eskew and Lewis Hunters', *Steamboats on the Western Rivers*. Both works covered the terminology and procedures for operating steamboats that assisted in interpreting other source information focused on steamboats. The most useful historical study reviewed was the *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, that was compiled by the Government Printing Office between the 1880s and early 1900s. These volumes assisted greatly in understanding the timeline of movements and communication between commanders and quartermaster officers.

While some of the above works are very comprehensive in the review of logistics during the Civil War, none have focused primarily on Lewis B. Parsons' efforts to standardize the use of steamboats in support of military operations. Further none of the works are linked to the theory of operational art. This study proposes to link logistics, steamboat technology and operational theories to identify if Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art to provide the support the Union Army needed to successfully conduct combat operations within the Western Theater. Also, the study sought to determine if US strategic objectives were achieved through successful Union campaigns, facilitated by reliable logistics.

This study will use various elements of operational art to include tempo, operational reach, culmination, and risk to assess if Lewis B. Parsons applied operational art in preparation for the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and the movements of Major General A. J. Smith's 16th

Corps throughout the Western Theater. The authors of the existing literature have highlighted campaigns and logistics during the Civil War and have even presented some of the achievements of Lewis B. Parsons. However, this study seeks to fill the gap between previously published biographical information on Lewis B. Parsons, general histories of the Civil War and logistics and merge them with the theory of operational art.

Methodology

This study will use the structured, focused comparison methodology to assess the actions of Lewis B. Parsons in support of Union Army operations during the American Civil War. The structure is provided through eight research questions developed by the researcher to qualitatively assess the case studies. The method is focused through application of the questions to the two case studies analyzed through the lens of operational art.⁴² Through structured, focused comparison of the cases, this study seeks to test the hypothesis and determine if Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art.

This study will outline Lewis B. Parson's efforts to facilitate military operations during the American Civil War. The study will use Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and the various movements of Major General A.J. Smith's 16th Corps as its case studies. These cases were selected since they highlight various elements of operational art, show the importance of logistics planning, staging, pre-positioning of equipment and are early examples of inter-theater movement and transfers of forces over vast distances, in adverse conditions. Additionally, the cases show progression in the effectiveness of employment of the steamboat, combined with other technologies such as the railroad and telegraph to enhance the Union's ability to project combat power.

⁴² Andrew Bennett and Alexander L. George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 68-70.

This study collected data from various sources to include current United States Army doctrine as well as secondary works focused on the American Civil War and logistics. In addition, the study used various official government reports from the time to gain a basic understanding of the actual movement timelines for each case study as well as review communications between various command elements during major operations. Further the study will attempt to review primary sources to include letters, telegrams, logbooks and other archival documents to identify pertinent information not previously published.

This study uses several research questions focused on operational art to analyze the data collected and compare the two case studies. The first research question is what were the political and military objectives of the Union in the Western Theater? Once answered this question will be used throughout the study to determine whether the results of each case study helped achieve the political and military objectives. The second question is how did the Quartermaster Department facilitate the massing of men and material to provide Union commanders flexibility in planning their campaigns? It is expected that this question will show how the availability of men and material allowed Union commanders the ability to attain forces to conduct operations within their areas of operations. The third question assesses how Lewis B. Parsons enabled the Union Army to maintain a higher operational tempo than Confederate forces. It is expected that this question will show that the steamboat allowed the rapid transit of forces, as well as enabled the Union to have excess supplies on hand to extend their reach. The fourth question is how did Lewis Parsons increase the options available to Union commanders? It is anticipated that this question will highlight the range of flexibility afforded to Union commanders due to the efforts of Lewis Parsons and his subordinates in the Quartermaster Department. A fifth question is how was the steamboat used to extend the operational reach of the Union Army? The researcher expects to find that the use of steamboats allowed rapid movement of forces and the ability to pre-position stocks of supplies far forward and in excess to allow the Union Army to push further into the interior of Confederate territory. A sixth question focuses on how Lewis B. Parsons assisted

commanders in mitigating operational risk. This question will likely show that the increase in options enabled by a steady flow of men and supplies created predictability in sustainment and reduced the risk to forces operating far forward of main commissary depots. The seventh question explores how Lewis Parsons and the Quartermaster Department anticipated, learned and adapted to the operational environment. This question is expected to show the ability of the Quartermaster Department to modify their operations and adapt to better support forward deployed elements. Finally, the last question is how did the outcome of the battles, operations and campaigns in the Western Theater influence the military and political objectives of the war? It is expected that this question will show how the results of each case study were nested with the overall accomplishment of the Union's priorities in attaining its objectives throughout the Civil War.

The methodology section of this study highlighted the primary purpose for the research and outlined the research questions that will assist in analyzing the study. The study used two case studies to show the importance of standardized management of the steamboat in support of military operations to rapidly project combat power. Structured, focused comparison was used to analyze the case studies. Additionally, several research questions oriented on various elements of operational art were used to further validate the study's hypotheses.

Case Studies

This section will outline the two case studies and answer the structured research questions presented in the previous section. Through answering the research questions, the study will analyze and compare the use of steamboats in support of Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and the numerous movements of Major General A.J. Smith's 16th Corps in 1864. The cases are similar in that they present examples of the steamboat being used to rapidly project combat power throughout the theater of operations, while the results of each study vary. The Chickasaw Bayou is typically looked at as a failure and its significance as a shaping operation to

set the conditions for future operations is typically overlooked. The multitude of movements conducted by A.J. Smith's 16th Corps showcases the Union's ability to move forces throughout a theater, providing flexibility and options. This section is divided into two subsections, one for each case study. The subsections each begin with the historical background of the case study and proceeds to answer the research questions.

Table 1. Mississippi River Mileage Chart

	St. Louis	Sulphur Springs	Cape Girardeau	Cario (Miss/Ohio)	Columbus, KY	Memphis	Helena, AR	Friar's Point (RV 1)	Gaines Landing (RV 2)	Milliken's Bend (RV 3)	Young's Point (Yazoo)	Vicksburg	Natchez	Port Hudson	Baton Rouge	New Orleans
St. Louis	0	24	130	184	209	429	507	525	641	781	793	802	877	987	1007	1144
Sulphur Springs	24	0	106	160	185	405	483	501	617	757	769	778	853	963	983	1120
Cape Girardeau	130	106	0	54	79	299	377	395	511	651	663	672	747	857	877	1014
Cario (Miss/Ohio)	184	160	54	0	25	245	323	341	457	597	609	618	693	803	823	960
Columbus, KY	209	185	79	25	0	220	298	316	432	572	584	593	668	778	798	935
Memphis	429	405	299	245	220	0	78	96	212	352	364	373	448	558	578	715
Helena	507	483	377	323	298	78	0	18	134	274	286	295	370	480	500	637
Friar's Point	525	501	395	341	316	96	18	0	116	256	268	277	352	462	482	619
Gaines Landing	641	617	511	457	432	212	134	116	0	140	152	161	236	346	366	503
Milliken's Bend	781	757	651	597	572	352	274	256	140	0	12	21	96	206	226	363
Young's Point (Yazoo)	793	769	663	609	584	364	286	268	152	12	0	9	84	194	214	351
Vicksburg	802	778	672	618	593	373	295	277	161	21	9	0	75	185	205	342
Natchez	877	853	747	693	668	448	370	352	236	96	84	75	0	110	130	267
Port Hudson	987	963	857	803	778	558	480	462	346	206	194	185	110	0	20	157
Baton Rouge	1007	983	877	823	798	578	500	482	366	226	214	205	130	20	0	137
New Orleans	1144	1120	1014	960	935	715	637	619	503	363	351	342	267	157	137	0

Source: Created by author with use of maps and data from the following sources: Warren Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days: A Geographer's View of the Vicksburg Campaign* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000); Benton R. Patterson, *The Mississippi River Campaign, 1861-1863: The Struggle for Control of the Western Waters* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2010); *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series 1. Volume 17: Pt 1: Reports* (Washington: G.P.O., 1880.), 598-696. (hereafter referred to as OR, Series 1. Vol. 17); Lewis B. Parsons, *Reports to the War Department, by Brev. Maj. Gen. Lewis B. Parsons, Chief of Rail and River Transportation* (St. Louis: George Knapp, 1867), 7, 9-18, 53; US Army Corps of Engineers, *2015 Flood Control and Navigation Maps, Mississippi River: Cairo, Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico, Mile 953 A.H.P to Mile 22 B.H.P.* (Vicksburg, MS:US Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, 2015); _____, *Navigation Charts, Upper Mississippi River, Index Map*. US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, Accessed on 14 December 2018, <https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/Navigation-Charts/Upper-Mississippi-River/>.

Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou Expedition

The Chickasaw Bayou expedition was a shaping operation of a larger campaign conducted by General Grant to invade Northern Mississippi against the Confederates under General John C. Pemberton, with Vicksburg as the Army's final objective. While the majority of Grant's forces moved overland through Northern Mississippi, Sherman's Corps would move via the Mississippi River, isolate Vicksburg from reinforcement and material from the Trans-

Mississippi, secure Grant's right flank, establish a foothold for staging follow-on forces near the city, and if practicable attack and seize Vicksburg.⁴³ Another factor driving the haste of the operations was that Grant wanted Sherman's forces to reach Vicksburg before Major General John McClernand could conduct his own opposing river expedition against the city which was approved by President Lincoln.⁴⁴ From December 20, 1862 through January 2, 1863 a joint force comprised of Sherman's Corps and Admiral David Porter's Naval Gunboat Flotilla embarked from Memphis, Tennessee and Helena, Arkansas down river aboard over sixty steamboat transports procured by Lewis B. Parsons.⁴⁵ Avoiding the main defenses of Vicksburg, the force moved up the Yazoo River and disembarked on landing sites near Johnson's Plantation in the Chickasaw Bayou on December 26, 1862. From the 26th through the 28th of December Sherman's four divisions moved inland on the known avenues of approach, skirmished with forward elements of the Confederates, and conducted reconnaissance of the rebel defensive positions. On 29 December Sherman would initiate a three-pronged assault on the bluffs of the Walnut Hills, which was repulsed by Confederate defenders.⁴⁶ An additional attack was planned for the 31st of December against Haines' Bluff but was cancelled due to heavy fog, after which Sherman withdrew his forces back down the Yazoo River.⁴⁷ Once reaching Milliken's Bend on the Mississippi River, Sherman and Porter linked up with McClernand who took charge of the combined force. Sherman's expedition did not attain a great military victory and failed to seize

⁴³ Michael B. Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign That Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 111.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 105.

⁴⁵ William L. Shea and Terrnce J. Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 46-47; OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 614-616.

⁴⁶ Christopher R. Gabel, *The Vicksburg Campaign, November 1862 – July 1863* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 2013), 23-24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 25; Note: Contemporary histories refer to the Northern edge of the Confederate defensive position as Snyder's Bluff. Snyder's Bluff is synonymous with Haines' Bluff. This report will use Haines' Bluff throughout the study since most primary sources such as official reports and letters from the expedition refer to the area as such.

the city of Vicksburg nor the northern defenses along Haines' Bluff. However, Sherman was able to gain intelligence on the defenses around the city and establish a base of operations at Milliken's Bend that would facilitate Union operations throughout the Vicksburg Campaign. The first question of inquiry is what were the political and military objectives of the campaign? One of the main political objectives for initiating a campaign to seize Vicksburg was to control access to the Mississippi River. Free navigation on the Mississippi was of vital importance to Union leaders, especially politicians in Mid-Western states such as Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois whose states economies were agriculturally based and reliant on the Mississippi River to transit their products.⁴⁸ Confederate control of the river threatened the legitimacy of the US Government internationally and was an economic burden that increased domestic political risk. The political strain and immediate need to open the river are highlighted in Abraham Lincoln's emphasis on securing the river and his approval of John McClernand's river expedition that rivalled Grant's operations.⁴⁹ The military objectives associated with the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition were to control the Mississippi River north of Vicksburg, isolate the Trans-Mississippi from the rest of the Confederacy, bypass the main defenses of Vicksburg, establish a lodgment for follow-on operations and if feasible seize Vicksburg.⁵⁰ Additionally, Sherman's expedition was part of a larger operation undertaken by Grant in Northern Mississippi to threaten Vicksburg and Jackson from the north by conducting overland movement. In conducting the river expedition Sherman was to protect the Army of Tennessee's right flank and was to resupply Grant's forces along the Yazoo River.⁵¹ While Chickasaw Bayou did not afford a decisive victory for the Union, the efforts of Lewis B. Parsons to facilitate the expedition were not in vain.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 9; OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 614.

⁴⁹ Gary M. Gildner, "The Chickasaw Bayou Campaign" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, Master of Military Art and Science Thesis, 1991), 25.

⁵⁰ OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 614; Gildner, 8.

⁵¹ OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 610.

Sherman was able establish Milliken's Bend and later Young's Point as staging bases for pre-positioning of supplies to support future operations that would be pivotal in the Vicksburg campaign. The Vicksburg campaign, paired with the seizure of Port Hudson, Louisiana assisted the Union in attaining its military objective of seizing Vicksburg and the political objective of controlling the Mississippi River.

The second question posed was how the Quartermaster Department facilitated the massing of men and material to provide Union commanders flexibility in planning their campaigns. Sherman's ability to conduct the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition was enabled by the efforts of Lewis B. Parsons and his subordinate transportation officers of the Quartermaster Department. Since October of 1861 Lewis Parsons assumed the role of chief of river and rail transportation for various departments of the Union Army. During this time Parsons was able to improve the logistical nodes throughout the western river and rail networks and identified talented subordinates to manage each vital point. The primary logistical hubs used to support the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition were St. Louis, Missouri; Cairo, Illinois; and Memphis Tennessee. At these locations respectively, Parsons placed Captains Charles Parsons (his brother), Austin C. Woolfolk, and G. L. Fort.⁵² Throughout 1862 CPT Woolfolk and Lewis B. Parsons worked diligently to improve the rail terminus linked to the port facility at Cairo. In doing so they allowed for the stockpiling of mass amounts of supplies and movement and staging of troops from states east of the Mississippi River at this vital point. Upon the Union capture of Memphis in June 1862, Lewis B. Parsons and the Quartermaster Department also worked to establish that city as a key node that would eventually act as the primary depot for operations against Vicksburg and acted as the staging area for three of Sherman's four divisions. Parson's and his brother also coordinated with the Assistant Surgeon General at St. Louis to establish a General Hospital in Memphis which

⁵² Parsons, 21-22.

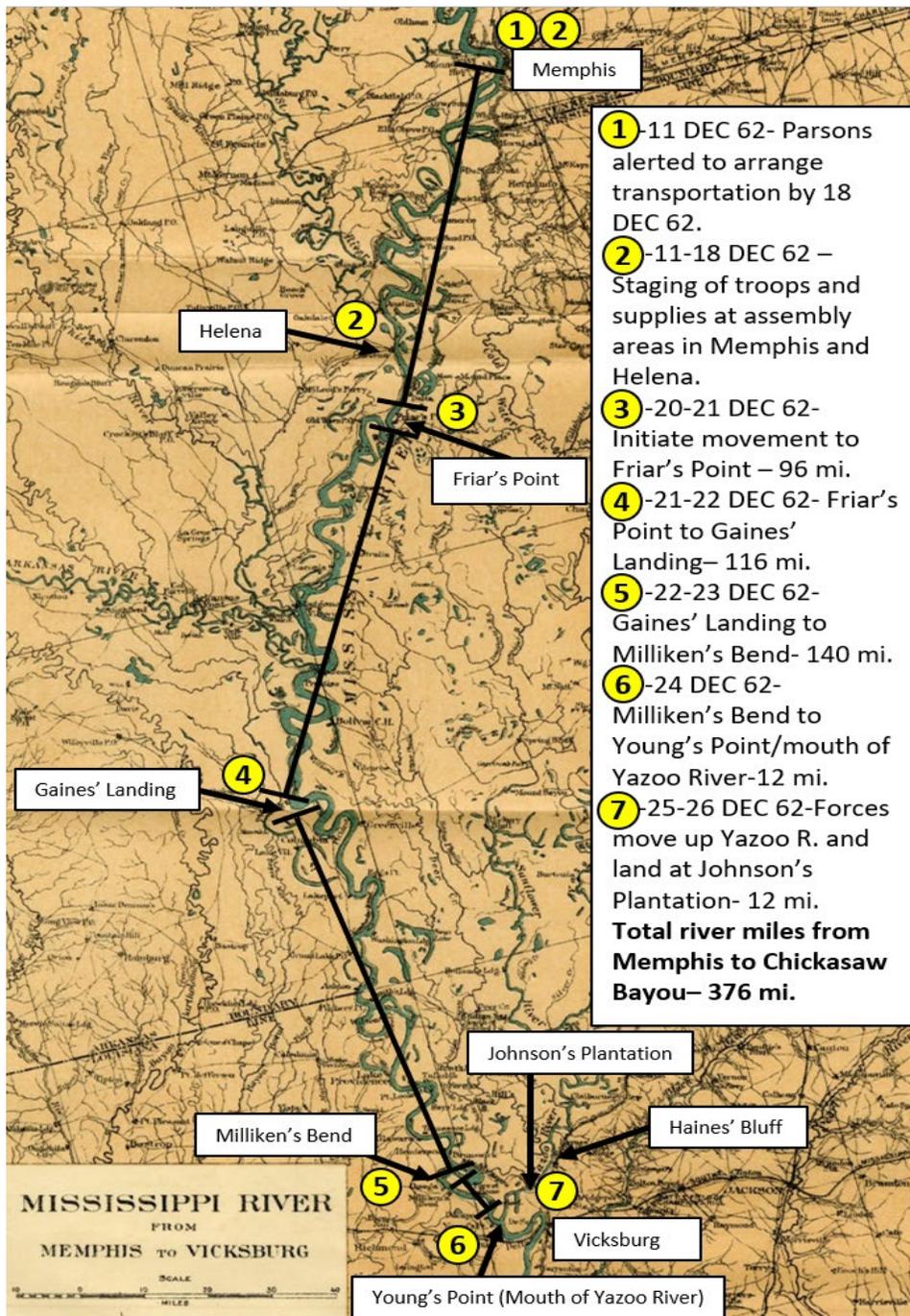


Figure 1: Chickasaw Bayou Expedition, River Movement of Sherman's Corps, 20-26 December 1862. Developed by author, map from "Mississippi River from Memphis to Vicksburg," University of North Texas, accessed 11 December 2018, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph284655/m1/1/>.

would be the primary point of evacuation for the expedition and would provide all medical supplies necessary to support the operation.⁵³ The Quartermaster Departments efforts to improve each logistical node allowed them to have the resources and facilities to temporarily stage and transport troops rapidly throughout out the Mississippi River Valley. On December 11, 1862 Lewis Parsons was sent a telegraph from General Grant that notified him to be prepared to transport Sherman's Corps of over 30,000 men in vicinity of Vicksburg within a weeks' time.⁵⁴ The fleet needed to support this endeavor was estimated to be forty to fifty steamboats, but was later determined to require sixty vessels, at the time there were only eight such craft available.⁵⁵ Parsons immediately alerted his subordinates to start necessary movement to acquire the necessary steamboats at points along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, and moved directly to Memphis to oversee preparations for the expedition. The work done by Parsons and his subordinates in the months leading up to the initial alert order for the Chickasaw Expedition allowed them to quickly arrange transportation and access stockpiles of material to support Sherman's forces. By December 18, 1862 Parsons had acquired the sixty transports and all supplies needed to support the operation, troops and rolling stock were loaded and the expedition was underway by 20 December, delayed forty-eight hours due to low water levels.

The third question is how Lewis B. Parsons enabled the Union Army to maintain a higher operational tempo than the Confederates in the Western Theater. Lewis Parsons' efforts to standardize the use of the steamboat for military operations and adoption of a contract system made access to privately owned transports readily available for use within a short time frame. Further the Union was able to use the western rivers as super-highways to rapidly move forces throughout their area of operations. The speed of movement was increased with every key node

⁵³ Letter from R.C. Wood, Assistant Surgeon General of St. Louis to Charles Parsons, December 20, 1862, Lewis B. Parsons Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL (hereafter referred to as Letter from xx to xx, Date, Parsons Papers, ALPL)

⁵⁴ Schottenhamel, 174.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

gained such as Memphis, Tennessee; Columbus, Kentucky; Corinth, Mississippi; and Helena Arkansas. Each node was improved and linked waterways to rail networks, further increasing Union capacity and the efficiency and speed at which the Quartermaster Department could support the Union Army. The Confederacy was faced with a time crisis and engaged in a war of points. Every day the war was prolonged the Union increased in industrial capacity and with every key node attained the river and rail networks were improved, cutting down times between depots and giving the North greater access and capability to penetrate the Southern interior. It took Sherman five days to move 32,000 troops from Memphis to the mouth of the Yazoo River, a major feat undertaken during winter low water stages, deep in enemy territory. By 26 December Sherman had landed his entire force at Johnson's Landing on the Chickasaw Bayou and began moving elements along all main avenues of approach. There was little the Confederates could do to oppose the landing and were only able to repel Union forces when their defenses were directly engaged.⁵⁶ To respond to Sherman, General Pemberton had to divert forces from Northern Mississippi and request a division from General Braxton Bragg's Department of Tennessee, further weakening the overall Confederacy's disposition and flexibility in the Western Theater.⁵⁷

Another question is how Lewis Parsons was able to increase the options available to Union commanders. During the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition Lewis Parsons increased the options available to General Sherman by his arranging of resources at key nodes during preparation and through access and control of transportation assets. Parsons accompanied Sherman on the expedition as an aide, in which capacity he was able to control all logistical tasks and keep the commanding general informed of resource availability, status of transportation assets and controlled the support network established at the landing site.⁵⁸ After numerous

⁵⁶ OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 605-606.

⁵⁷ Gildner, 158.

⁵⁸ Letter from MG William Sherman to Lewis Parsons, December 28, 1862, Parsons Papers, ALPL.

assaults against the Walnut Hills positions were repulsed, Union forces were at a stalemate. Sherman devised a plan to conduct an envelopment of the Confederate position with an assault against Haines' Bluff. Parsons was essential in the planning and preparation for this attack. After receiving the order Parsons made ready the transports for 13,000 men of Major General Steele's reinforced division.⁵⁹ Parsons supervised the loading of eleven steamboats under cover of darkness and by the morning of December 31, all troops were loaded, boats supplied with fuel, units re-fit and resupplied, and ready for action, less than twelve hours after notified of the plan.⁶⁰ The attack was eventually called off due to heavy fog and inclement weather conditions which along with intelligence of Confederate reinforcements, and a greater knowledge of Grant's situation in Northern Mississippi factored into Sherman's decision to withdraw his corps back to Milliken's Bend. The withdraw order was given late on the evening of the January 1, 1863. Lewis Parsons was pivotal in this action as well, readying the sixty transports and all animals, supplies and rolling-stock for re-embarkation. By 0530 on the morning of January 2nd the entire force was loaded, all government property was accounted for minus the damaged sections of pontoon bridge and movement began back to Milliken's Bend.⁶¹ Once at Milliken's Bend the force was met by Major General John McClernand who assumed command of the consolidated force newly named the Army of Mississippi. Due to the readiness of the force and availability of supplies on hand McClernand was able to conduct a 300 mile movement up the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers to seize Arkansas Post and completely secure the Mississippi River as a line of communication for continued operations against Vicksburg.⁶²

The fifth research question asked how the steamboat was used to extend operational reach of the Union Army? Lewis Parsons used steamboats to extend operational reach by

⁵⁹ OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 624.

⁶⁰ Schottenhamel, 180.

⁶¹ OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 631-632.

⁶² Schottenhamel, 182.

increasing the efficiency of the river transport system, properly anticipating the needed supplies to sustain the Army's operations and enabling Sherman to employ combat power extended distances from his base of operations. Early use of the steamboat by the Army was very inefficient, unreliable, slow and wasteful. To remedy this situation Lewis Parsons moved to shift from a charter to contract system, where shippers were paid a set price by the 100 pounds or item transported.⁶³ This system saved money for the government, while profitable for steamboat owners. The contract system caused boat crews to move with the largest amount of tonnage possible at greater speeds. Decreased travel time and greater tonnage increased profit yields while benefiting the military with greater access to supplies and rapid movement to various points throughout the theater. The standardized transport system emplaced by Parsons enabled Quartermaster Department agents throughout the theater to have access to stockpiles of supplies, rolling-stock and animals, aided them in determining the amounts of these items that could be carried by the steamboats and helped more accurately assess the quantities of supplies needed for various formations to conduct prolonged operations.

Typically, during the Civil War armies had great difficulty campaigning in the winter due to road networks predominantly constructed of dirt that would turn into mud and become impassible.⁶⁴ In the Western theater this was not a factor due to numerous rivers that allowed Union commanders to move their forces on steamboats and maintain pressure on the Confederates. A western river steamboat could carry between 500 to 1,800 tons of supplies; sufficient to sustain a force of 40,000 troops for two days.⁶⁵ The average transport participating on Chickasaw Bayou Expedition was loaded with a regiment of infantry with an ambulance, five supply wagons and thirty two horses or an artillery battery with six guns, fifteen wagons and gun

⁶³ Hess, 42.

⁶⁴ Archer Jones, *Civil War Command and Strategy: The Process of Victory and Defeat* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 44.

⁶⁵ Gabel, *Staff Ride Handbook for the Vicksburg Campaign*. 12; Hess, 42.

carriages and between ninety and 101 horses.⁶⁶ During the expedition each Soldier departed Memphis or Helena with five days rations and sixty rounds of ammunition, all regimental wagons were loaded with five days of supply and an additional supply of ammunition and every brigade train was loaded with another 200 rounds per soldier.⁶⁷ Upon landing at Johnson's Plantation on the Yazoo River, wagons and ambulances were offloaded in preparation to support their units combat operations and regimental quartermasters resupplied all troops with two days rations. Most supplies were distributed among the regiments and brigades pre-loaded in their wagon trains and on their designated steamboats. In addition, Parsons arranged for the steamers *Champion*, *Robert Allen*, *Lady Jackson*, and *D. G. Taylor* to act as commissary supply ships to support the divisions and established the *General Anderson* as the ordnance transport which artillery batteries and division quartermaster officers would conduct ammunition resupply.⁶⁸ The *Des Arc* would hold the excess medical supplies and the *City of Memphis* would later act as a hospital ship.⁶⁹ In planning this way Parsons and his quartermaster subordinates enabled ease of offloading at landing sites and efficiency in casualty treatment and resupply operations. Upon landing Parsons established Johnson's Plantation as the Logistic Support Area and ensured all was ready to support forward movement of Sherman's force.

While the expedition on the Chickasaw Bayou only lasted roughly two weeks, Parsons planned, resourced, and loaded the transports with the supplies that sustained the force for a period of twenty-seven days without outside resupply. The remaining supplies on hand allowed an additional round trip movement of 600 miles in support of the attack against Arkansas Post

⁶⁶ Rodney C. Lackey, "Notes on Civil War Logistics: Facts and Stories," US Army Transportation Corps, accessed 30 December 2014, http://www.transportation.army.mil/History/PDF/Peninsula%20Campaign/Rodney%20Lackey%20Article_1.pdf, 14-22; OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 618.

⁶⁷ OR, Series 1. Vol. 17, 618, 620-621.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 614-615.

⁶⁹ Gabel, *Staff Ride Handbook for the Vicksburg Campaign*, 65.

and return to Millikens' Bend to establish the supply depot that would support future operations against Vicksburg. The one logistics limiting factor of the expedition was its fuel capacity, being undertaken during a period of severe coal shortage in the region. Anticipating a possible culminating point with coal, Parsons worked with the transport fleet to resupply fuel by use of wood cutting details to ensure continued support to Sherman, while maintaining reserve stores of coal for upriver movement. Parsons overall preparations helped extend Sherman's operational reach, enabling him to operate unhindered 300 miles from his base of operations in Memphis and provided a mobile logistics support infrastructure via the steamboat fleet that ensured freedom of action and prolonged endurance of the force.

A sixth question focused on how Lewis Parsons assisted commanders in mitigating risk. Lewis Parsons helped mitigate risk for Sherman by reducing uncertainty, setting conditions to create opportunities, and increased flexibility to generate multiple options. Through assured assets and reliable logistical support Parsons reduced some of the elements of uncertainty inherent in conducting operations deep in enemy territory, beyond one's own support network. Parsons also assisted Sherman by providing transportation needed to quickly deliver overwhelming combat power into a region thought impenetrable by the Confederates. Additionally, Parsons was able to maintain consistent logistical support and a transport fleet capable of quickly moving mass formations throughout the region within a narrow planning window, enabling the options for a shift in forces towards Haines' Bluff, the rapid withdrawal of the Army to Milliken's Bend, and the successful attack on Arkansas Post.

The seventh question explores how Lewis Parsons and the Quartermaster Department anticipated, learned and adapted to the operational environment. Prior to the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition, Lewis B. Parsons and his subordinates anticipated operational needs, as well as made various adaptations to improve the methods of support during and after the expedition. The main issues facing Parsons prior to the expedition were a limited number of available transports and a regional coal shortage. Since October 1862 there were schemes to conduct an operation against

Vicksburg. Both Parsons and his superior Colonel Robert Allen anticipated such an operation, stockpiled supplies and improved key nodes for such an endeavor, but both were not prepared when they received the execution order of December 11, 1862.⁷⁰ However, Parsons quickly alerted his staff and sent out key subordinates to major logistics nodes to commandeer and direct transports to Memphis. Parsons also sent Captain John Scudder to Cairo tasked with detaining transports and gathering enough coal to sustain the steamers for thirty to forty days.⁷¹ Fortunately, by December 15th, they acquired roughly fifty steamboats and by December 20th had obtained 2,640 tons of coal.⁷² Various adaptations and lessons learned during the expedition include the use of barges in conjunction with the transports increasing tonnage by 400 to 800 tons per barge, improved joint interoperability between the Army and Navy, need for non-standard administrative river transportation to move mail, messages, political entities, enemy prisoners and the need for dedicated transports to move medical supplies and evacuate casualties.⁷³

The last research question is how did the outcome of the expedition influence the military and political objectives of the war? The initial push of Sherman's corps towards Vicksburg was the first step towards dominating the Mississippi River Valley. The operations conducted by Porter's Mississippi Squadron and Sherman's corps surrounding Vicksburg acted as an initial reconnaissance for the Union and set the stage for all follow-on operations against the city. Key logistics nodes that facilitated Union success in the Vicksburg campaign were established by Parsons at Milliken's Bend, Lake Providence, and Young's Point. Also, the landing site at Johnson's Plantation was later used by the Navy and Quartermaster Department in May 1863 to stage supplies in support of Union forces conducting demonstrations to isolate the cities northern

⁷⁰ Letter from COL Robert Allen to Lewis Parsons, December 11, 1862, Parsons Papers, ALPL.

⁷¹ Schottenhamel, 175.

⁷² Ibid, 177.

⁷³ Hess, 39; Letter from Lewis Parsons to MG John McClelland, January 27, 1863, Parsons Papers, ALPL.

defenses during the siege. The repulse of Sherman's forces led the Confederates into a false sense of security and strengthened the perception of invincibility around Vicksburg, underestimating the Union's resolve and logistics capability to sustain continued action against the city. Further the Confederacy shifted forces from other departments to strengthen Vicksburg while reducing their overall flexibility and defensive capability in Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia. The Union gained full control of the Mississippi River once Vicksburg fell on July 4, 1863, followed five days later by the surrender of Port Hudson. With control of the Mississippi River the Union Army could move freely to the Gulf of Mexico, further extending operational reach, cutting-off Confederate forces in the Trans-Mississippi theater, and allowing Union commanders to focus effort on other regions of the Confederacy and conduct expeditions farther into Southern territory, supported by the improved river-based logistics system. Additionally, the efforts of the Quartermaster Department in the west contributing to the control of the Mississippi River helped achieve a great political victory for the Union government. The opening of the Mississippi River allowed farmers in Mid-Western states once again to conduct commerce on the waterway, it decreased the influence of Northern political entities that sought a settled peace with the South, increased Abraham Lincoln's political standing, and enhanced the legitimacy of the United States government against the Confederate cause on the international stage.

Movements of Major General A.J. Smith's 16th Corps

The year 1864 was a pivotal period in the war. The year prior saw the issue of the Emancipation Proclamation, defeats of Confederate Armies at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga, the Mississippi River in Federal hands, the coastal blockade tightened, and the initiative shifted in the Union's favor. This allowed General Grant as commander of all Union forces to execute his consolidated strategic plan, focused on destruction of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and Sherman's seizure of Atlanta and subsequent March to the Sea.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ William T. Sherman and Michael Fellman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 368.

In the Western Theater, Lewis B. Parsons and the Quartermaster Department were challenged with supporting multiple efforts. In addition to routine sustainment operations Parsons had to support expeditions against hostile Native American tribes, response to increased activity of regular and irregular Confederates in Missouri, strengthen the Union position in Arkansas, reduce Southern strength in Trans-Mississippi Louisiana and Texas, and deter the threat of French territorial expansion from Mexico. However, the Quartermaster Department's main effort was to stockpile supplies in Nashville and Chattanooga to sustain Sherman's Army on its campaign through Georgia. Another major effort for Parsons was to provide transportation throughout the theater, which can be best highlighted by the numerous movements of Major General Andrew Jackson Smith's 16th Corps from the Army of Tennessee.

From January to December 1864 Grant and Sherman frequently called on Smith's corps to move rapidly in support of various department commanders in the Western Theater. In February Smith's Corps took part in Sherman's Meridian Expedition. From March to May 1864 the 16th Corps was detached from the Army of Tennessee to support Major General Nathaniel Banks' Red River Campaign. The plan called for a clearance of Southern forces from Northern Louisiana by means of a three-pronged attack conducted by Major General Steele from Arkansas, Smith attacking via the Red River to Alexandria where he would link up with Banks' Army attacking through the Bayou Teche Valley.⁷⁵ Smith's Corps departed Vicksburg on 12 March, entered the Red River on the 13th, disembarked the next day and captured Fort DeRussy.⁷⁶ On May 16th Smith occupied Alexandria, Louisiana, where he awaited Banks' Army, which arrived on March 26th, nine days behind schedule. The campaign was prolonged by frequent delays and Banks' forces were forced to withdraw after the defeat at the Battle of Sabine Crossroads. This

⁷⁵ Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel. *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV, Part I* (New York: The Century Co., 1888), 349. (Hereafter referred to as *Battles and Leaders*)

⁷⁶ Schottenhamel, 254.

allowed Confederate General Sterling Price to move into Arkansas to interdict and defeat Steele's column at the Battle of Jenkins' Ferry.⁷⁷ During the withdrawal, Smith's Corps acted as Banks' rear guard and was released upon reaching Alexandria in May 1864. In June, Smith was staged at Memphis and called to secure supply lines supporting Sherman's Atlanta Campaign and in July defeated Confederate General Nathan B. Forrest at the Battle of Tupelo.⁷⁸

September found Smith's forces split with his 1st Division under Major General Joseph Mower assigned to Steele in Arkansas and his 3rd Division at Cairo, preparing to take part in Sherman's March to the Sea.⁷⁹ The corps was diverted to assist General Rosecrans in response to Confederate General Sterling Price's Missouri Raid. Smith transported his force by way of steamboats to St. Louis to protect the city while Mower and the cavalry pursued Price overland.⁸⁰ Price was forced to shift his focus to the Missouri capital at Jefferson City and later Kansas City. Smith's Corps moved from St. Louis to Jefferson City, consolidated with Mower and continued its pursuit of Price throughout October. The Southern raid culminated at the Battle of Westport, where Price was defeated and forced to retreat from Missouri.

After Price's Raid, Smith's Corps was marched back to St. Louis where it spent two weeks refitting and prepared to re-join Sherman. While in St. Louis, Smith was once again diverted, this time to support Major General George Thomas in Tennessee. On November 24th, the 16th Corps departed St. Louis embarked on steamboats along the Mississippi, Ohio and Cumberland Rivers. Smith's Corps arrived in Nashville on November 29th through 30th in time to reinforce the city and assist Thomas in defeating General John B. Hood's Confederate Army of Tennessee.⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Battles and Leader*, 375.

⁷⁸ Schottenhamel, 268.

⁷⁹ OR, Series 1. Vol. 41, Part 3, 78.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Sherman, 373; Schottenhamel, 268.

The first research question focuses on the political and military objectives linked to the various campaigns in which General A.J. Smith's Corps participated. The military objectives of the Red River Campaign were to defeat and remove Confederate forces from Southwest Arkansas and Northern Louisiana, disrupt Rebel supply operations in the Trans-Mississippi Theater, and breach the relations between the populace and the Confederate government.⁸² These objectives directly supported the political goal of securing Louisiana and Arkansas and strengthening the provisional Union governments in each state. Many Union commanders disapproved of the operation, Banks and Grant included. Grant saw it as a diversion from his strategic campaign plan and hoped for a quick clearance and hand off of the Red River Valley to Steele's command in Arkansas, allowing Banks to move against Mobile, Alabama.⁸³ However the campaign had been advocated for some time by both Lincoln and General Halleck as a means to target the Southern economy, seize large quantities commodities such as sugar and cotton for government use, disrupt Confederate trade bypassing the blockade through Mexico and to deter possible French territorial expansion.⁸⁴ In 1861 several European powers invaded Mexico to extract payment of loans, however, over two years later French forces still remained, and it was feared they may exploit the Confederacy's weakened state to attain Texas and portions of Louisiana. These fears were reinforced by factions in Texas seeking to restore the Texas Republic and due to interactions between state officials and the French consul in Mexico.⁸⁵ The United States government wanted to ensure at the end of the war that all its former territory would be retained.

⁸² Ibid, 246.

⁸³ Ulysses S. Grant and James M. McPherson, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 391.

⁸⁴ Schottenhamel, 246; William R. Brooksher, *War Along the Bayous: The 1864 Red River Campaign in Louisiana* (Washington: Brasseys, 1998), 3-5.

⁸⁵ Brooksher, 7.

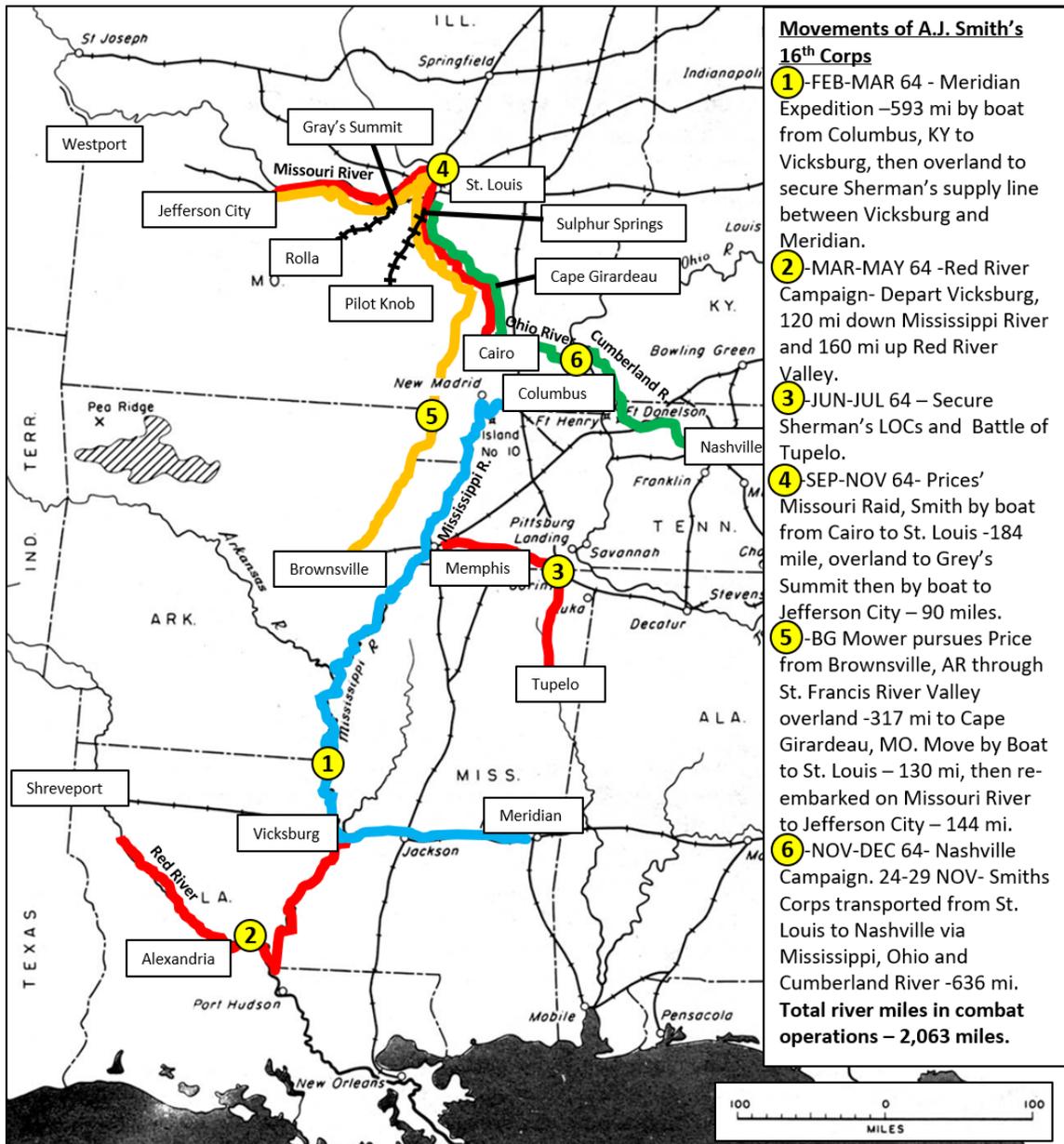


Figure 2: The 1864 movements of MG A.J. Smith's 16th Corps. Developed by author. Map from "Civil War Operations," The University of Texas at Austin, accessed 10 January 2019, https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/civil_war_operations.jpg.

Another important factor that shaped the campaigns of 1864 was the upcoming elections. The Confederate governments main political goal was to attain independence, the 1864 elections provided an opportunity to achieve that goal. If Lincoln could be defeated, another candidate

would be more likely to settle for a negotiated peace to end the war. In authorizing Price's Missouri Raid the Confederate government hoped to achieve the political goals of re-gaining control of Missouri and Arkansas and disrupting Union elections.⁸⁶ Price's military objectives were to defeat Union forces occupying Missouri, draw significant Federal forces away from other regions, attain supplies from Federal depots, seize key population centers and gain recruits.⁸⁷ General Rosecrans' objectives were to protect St. Louis and Jefferson City, while maintaining contact with Price's forces to eventually interdict and defeat him. The military objective for the Union's 1864 operations in Tennessee was to defeat General Hood, with political objectives of maintaining Tennessee as a Union stronghold and prevent political embarrassment of a large Confederate force operating freely in Federally occupied territory.⁸⁸

The next research question focuses on how the Quartermaster Department massed troops and material to provide flexibility to Union commanders. By 1864 Lewis B. Parsons and his subordinates had further improved the adaptations highlighted in the previous case study, increasing the effectiveness of the transportation hubs throughout the theater, linking river ports to rail and road networks, and gained better access to steamboats to support rapid movement of forces such as A.J. Smith's 16th Corps. In every case where Smith's Corps was called the Quartermaster Department ensured his forces were adequately supplied and provided with the necessary transports to move to the point of need.

During the Red River Campaign, Smith's forces were moved immediately and supported Banks' Army, taking Fort DeRussy and securing Alexandria twenty-four hours prior to the planned time of occupation. Once at Alexandria Union forces had enough supplies on hand to allow them to continue operations. Low water conditions made river movement difficult,

⁸⁶ Mark A. Lause, *The Collapse of Price's Raid: The Beginning of The End in Civil War Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2016), 1-3.

⁸⁷ OR, Series 1. Vol. 41, Part 1, 630.

⁸⁸ Jones, 214.

quartermaster representatives provided flexibility by pushing ahead lighter draught vessels that could pass the Alexandria falls, which allowed forward movement of maneuver elements.⁸⁹ Alexandria was established as the Logistics Support Area and the remaining heavier steamboats were offloaded and supplies transferred to wagons for road movement.⁹⁰ While the overall results of the Red River Campaign were not desirable, Union forces were never in want of supplies. The availability of stockpiles of supplies throughout the depots in the Western Theater allowed Sherman to simultaneously initiate his Atlanta Campaign while the Red River Campaign was being conducted.⁹¹

The increased access to transports also facilitated the rapid movement of Smith's 3rd Division from Cairo to St. Louis in time to prepare the city for defense against Price. During Price's Raid Parsons assigned one of his most trusted subordinates, Captain L.S. Metcalf directly to the 16th Corps to assist in their supply and transportation. In this capacity Metcalf was able to arrange rail transportation of Smith's 3rd Division towards Jefferson City on the Missouri Pacific Railroad. When it was found that Rebel guerillas had destroyed much of the line, Metcalf coordinated to have the troops march directly to the Missouri River at Dozier's Landing where they were met by transports and continued their pursuit of Price.⁹² Metcalf was also essential in arranging the movement of Smith's 1st Division and cavalry under Mower. The 1st Division was at Cape Girardeau where they embarked on steamboats up the Mississippi River, received a quick refit of supplies and horses from the depot at Benton Barracks in St. Louis, then re-embarked on lighter steamboats to account for low water conditions on the Missouri River and moved to Jefferson City where they linked up with A.J. Smith.⁹³ The readily available access of supplies

⁸⁹ *Battles and Leaders*, 350.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Sherman, 367, 375.

⁹² Parsons, 53.

⁹³ OR, Series 1. Vol. 41, Part 1, 327-328.

allowed Smith's Corps to continuously pursue Price and transition back to St. Louis where Metcalf arranged the material for their refit and provided transports to transfer the corps to General Thomas in Tennessee.

The third question of inquiry is how Lewis B. Parsons enabled the Union to maintain a higher operational tempo than the Confederates in the Western Theater. Lewis Parsons and his subordinates coordinated the necessary supplies and transportation to enable A.J. Smith's 16th Corps to move rapidly throughout the theater overwhelming the ability of the Confederate commanders to react and counter their movements. In the Red River Campaign Smith, in conjunction with Admiral Porter moved into the Red River Valley so rapidly that they were able to capture their first objective, Fort DeRussy before the Confederate Trans-Mississippi Theater commander General Kirby Smith could reinforce the position or shift forces to counter Smith's movement.⁹⁴ The combined force then moved on to secure Alexandria and await link-up with General Banks. In his report of the actions during the campaign, Kirby Smith states that A.J. Smith's Corps "advanced with such celerity on Fort DeRussy, that General Taylor was not allowed time to concentrate and cover the important work" compelling Confederate forces to quickly withdraw seventy miles north of Alexandria to reorganize.⁹⁵ Whatever advantage A.J. Smith and Porter gained was lost in the ten days spent waiting for the arrival of General Banks. This delay allowed Confederate General Richard Taylor to recover from Smith's attack and coordinate the defense of the northern Red River Valley.

During Price's Raid, the rapid movement of Smith's Corps into Missouri via the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers allowed them to continually pursue Southern forces throughout the state. This rapid movement maintained pressure on the Confederates, denied them respite and limited access to recruits and resources in the state. Additionally, the speed of Smith's pursuit

⁹⁴ Sherman, 367.

⁹⁵ *Battles and Leaders*, 369.

affected Price's decision making cycle, causing him to abandon his original objectives of St. Louis and Jefferson City and shift towards Kansas City where Union General Samuel Curtis awaited to check his advance.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the ability to maintain a higher operational tempo is highlighted by the speed at which Smith's Corps moved from St. Louis to Nashville. In five days, Smith's Corps was able to embark on steamboats, travel over 500 miles to support General Thomas, arriving just in time to defeat General John B. Hood.⁹⁷

The fourth research question was how Lewis Parsons was able to increase options available to Union commanders. Increasing the range of options available to a commander during a campaign can best be highlighted through the movements of Smith's Corps during Price's Missouri Raid. The improvements of logistic nodes and the knowledge of the various rail stations and river landing sites in Missouri paid dividends, greatly increasing the options available to General Rosecrans. Captain Metcalf used his knowledge of key nodes to assist in the placement of Smith's forces and ensured they were adequately sustained at each site. Smith's 3rd Division initially moved up river from Cairo and staged at Sulphur Springs, Missouri just south of St. Louis.⁹⁸ This site afforded access to the Mississippi River and rail access south to Pilot Knob. At the time Price's location was unknown; by placing Smith's Corps at Sulphur Springs Rosecrans could move them to block or envelope Price from the west by rail or east by river. Smith was later repositioned near the Missouri River at Gray's Summit, Missouri to provide greater protection to St. Louis to which it was linked by rail and road and had rail access to Rolla in the south.⁹⁹ This position provided a wide array of options for transporting Smith quickly by several means to

⁹⁶ Schottenhamel, 264-265; *Battles and Leaders*, 376.

⁹⁷ Parsons, 53.

⁹⁸ Dick Titterington, *A Day Late and A Dollar Short: The Fate of A.J Smith's 16th Army Corps during Price's 1864 Missouri Raid* (Overland Park, KS: Trans-Mississippi Musings. Press, 2014), 37; OR, Series 1. Vol. 41, Part 3, 175.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 176.

various points. Eventually Smith was moved by river to Jefferson City, which was also a point that offered various options of employment with links to the river, roads and rails.

The fifth question explores how the steamboat extended the Union Army's operational reach. Throughout 1864 the steamboat was used as the primary platform for force projection and movement of supplies in the Western Theater. While Parsons and his subordinates had access to numerous rail networks, steamboats offered the ability to move greater tonnage and higher numbers of troops. The typical Civil War era train operated with ten to fifteen rail cars, each with a roughly ten-ton capacity, totaling between 100 to 150 tons of freight per train; while the smallest steamboat had a capacity of 250 tons or greater and could move a regiment.¹⁰⁰ Parsons priority for early 1864 was to supervise the mass shipment of supplies by steamboat to Nashville in preparation for Sherman's Atlanta campaign. This was prioritized since the Cumberland River would be at peak water level between February and May, beyond that window navigation would be difficult. In that four-month period there were over 614 ship loads of freight delivered at Nashville equaling over 158,016 tons.¹⁰¹ The vast supplies at Nashville delivered by steamboat allowed Sherman to operate 250 miles beyond his base of operations and to continue moving to the Georgia coast.¹⁰² Steamboats in the Red River Campaign allowed Smith's 16th Corps to operate for two and a half months, extended over 400 river miles from its base of operations in Vicksburg. A culmination point was nearly reached in mid-April when the transports and gunboats ran low on coal but was averted by quartermasters mandating daily wood cutting parties and foraging of local fence posts for fuel.¹⁰³ The steamboat also allowed A.J. Smith to pursue Price through Missouri, 250 miles beyond his base at St. Louis. While the 16th Corps was not transported by boat past Jefferson City, the Missouri River continued to be a vital line of

¹⁰⁰ Lackey, 81; Hess, 72.

¹⁰¹ Parsons, 48.

¹⁰² Schottenhamel, 260.

¹⁰³ *Battles and Leaders*, 363.

communication, allowing for the coordination of resupplies at various landing sites transferred to the Corps by wagon.¹⁰⁴

The sixth research question focused on how Lewis B. Parsons assisted commanders in mitigating risk. During 1864 Lewis B. Parsons primarily aided Union commanders in mitigating risk by enabling rapid movement of supplies and men to the point of need in times of emergency. On two occasions Parsons facilitated the movement of A.J. Smith's Corps to secure the supply lines of Sherman. First in January 1864, Smith with 7,000 men was moved via steamboat from Columbus, Kentucky to Vicksburg, where he moved overland to support Sherman.¹⁰⁵ The second occasion was in the summer when Sherman's supply lines were attacked and he ordered Smith to defeat General Nathan Forrest's forces in Mississippi and secure his lines of communication.¹⁰⁶ After the Red River Campaign General Steele's forces were defeated at Jenkins' Ferry, allowing Price free reign throughout Arkansas. It was believed that Price would attack either Fort Smith or attempt to seize Little Rock. To mitigate this risk Parsons surged the rate of supplies on the Arkansas and White Rivers and provided transports to move reinforcements to strengthen the state's defenses.¹⁰⁷ The river transport system managed by Parsons enabled a corps size element to be moved anywhere within the Western Theater within a few days. This ability was used in response to Hood's invasion in Tennessee, which was mitigated through reinforcing Thomas with Smith's 16th Corps just in time to beat the Confederates at the Battle of Nashville.¹⁰⁸ Another tool Parsons used to mitigate risk was the adoption of a quartermaster liaison officer to be

¹⁰⁴ Parsons, 52.

¹⁰⁵ Parsons, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Sherman, 427.

¹⁰⁷ Schottenhamel, 262.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 260; Sherman, 368.

assigned to headquarters during major operations, further ensuring all supply and transportation needs were accommodated.¹⁰⁹

The seventh question is how did Lewis Parsons and the Quartermaster Department anticipate, learn and adapt to the operational environment? In December 1863 Parsons was named Head of Western River Transportation, in addition to the Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas, Red and White Rivers, he gained control of the Ohio, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers. This allowed Parsons to enact several drastic reforms to improve the transportation network in the West to include adoption of the contract system on all western rivers, development of a system to track steamboats in the theater, improved telegraph connection to all key nodes linked to civilian rail stations, and designated St. Louis as the main western logistics hub to command and control all other nodes.¹¹⁰ Moreover to improve efficiency he placed trusted subordinates at all major nodes.¹¹¹ Also Parsons and the Quartermaster Department made adaptations based off shortfalls of previous operations. The Quartermaster Department, Medical Department and US Sanitary Commission worked together to refit several steamboats as hospital ships, two such ships the *Woodford* and *Red Rover* supported the Red River Campaign.¹¹²

Improved coaling practices similar to modern refuel on the move operations were adopted at major ports consisting of large coal barges positioned to allow two or more vessels to load no more than a pre-designated rate of coal, supervised by a transportation officer.¹¹³ Another adaptation linked to fuel was the contracting of civilians to manage wood lots along the major rivers. The average steamboat burned between twenty-five to thirty cords of wood per day and if

¹⁰⁹ Schottenhamel, 248; Parsons, 15.

¹¹⁰ Hess, 63; Schottenhamel, 207.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 208.

¹¹² Ibid, 256; *Battles and Leaders*, 350; R.C. Wood to Charles Parsons, December 20, 1862, Parsons Papers, ALPL.

¹¹³ Schottenhamel, 183-184; Lewis B. Parsons to CPT William Fitzgerald, January 27, 1863, Parsons Papers, ALPL.

not fully stocked would need to stop twice daily to cut wood for fuel.¹¹⁴ In 1864 Parsons developed a contract for over 150,000 cords to be staged in woodlots between Memphis and New Orleans.¹¹⁵ In adopting wood lots Parsons reduced the reliance on coal, established pre-designated fueling points along rivers, allowed ships to reduce weight, increasing speed and reduced government spending. Other adaptations developed were the increased use of barges and flatboats towed by steamers to increase tonnage, lashing of steamboats to vessels such as gunboats in low water stages to aid in power and ease of navigation, greater predictability of conditions on various rivers allowing quartermasters to surge shipping during windows of peak water levels and greater coordination between river and rail nodes.¹¹⁶ The adaptations made by Parsons and his subordinates especially the telegraph and tracking systems enabled greater speeds of support, asset visibility, and coordination throughout the Western Theater.

The final research question is how did the outcomes of the campaigns influence the military and political objectives of the war? At the end of the Red River Campaign the Confederate Trans-Mississippi forces still controlled the Red River Valley since no Union forces remained and their supply operations were disrupted for a period of few months but returned to normal after Union forces withdrew from the valley.¹¹⁷ The only effect that occurred as a result of the campaign was the damage to the local economy with farms destroyed, crops and livestock seized and an estimated sixty million dollars of cotton destroyed and over 6,000 bales of cotton seized by the Union government.¹¹⁸ It could not be determined if the campaign had any influence on the French governments territorial ambitions besides the fact that there was no seizure of any border territory. A major implication of the campaign was that it threw off the timing of Grant's

¹¹⁴ Schottenhamel, 228-229; Hess, 53.

¹¹⁵ Schottenhamel, 229.

¹¹⁶ Hess, 39; *Battles and Leaders*, 363; Parsons, 48-52.

¹¹⁷ Gary D. Joiner, *One Damn Blunder from Beginning to End: The Red River Campaign of 1864* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 172-173.

¹¹⁸ Brooksher, 234; *Battles and Leaders*, 361.

coordinated plan for all his theater commanders and delayed the operation against Mobile by nearly eight months.¹¹⁹ However none of the shortfalls of the campaign were attributed to the Quartermaster Department who made every effort to fully support the operation. The results of the Union actions during Price's Raid were very favorable. The rapid movement of A.J. Smith gave General Rosecrans the additional combat power needed to deny Price the ability to seize St. Louis or Jefferson City, enabled him to respond to guerilla threats in other parts of the state, and ultimately ejected Southern forces from Missouri and secured the state for the Union. Price's Raid was the last major Confederate action in both Missouri and Arkansas. Additionally, the Confederates were unable to interfere with the election and Lincoln was reelected, carrying seventy percent of Missouri votes.¹²⁰ Furthermore, in the Missouri state elections the radical Republican factions beat the conservative element in the state government, therefore allowing the state constitutional convention to pass legislation to abolish slavery in Missouri, since as a border state it was not covered by Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.¹²¹ The shift of A.J. Smith's 10,000 men to Nashville in a matter of days evened the odds for General Thomas and allowed him the ability to shift from defensive to offensive operations.¹²² As a result Thomas was able to defeat General Hood's army, forced it into full retreat, and pursued it into Alabama.¹²³ This allowed Thomas to save the capital of Nashville, secure the state of Tennessee for the Union, and set conditions for his forces to aid in the operations against Mobile and the eastern Confederacy, thus helping end the war.

¹¹⁹ Grant, 386-387.

¹²⁰ McPherson, 788.

¹²¹ Ibid; Lause, 190.

¹²² OR, Series 1. Vol. 45, Part 1, 34.

¹²³ Jones, 214.

Findings and Analysis

By using the empirical data collected from the case studies, this section will conduct a structured, focused comparison of Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and the various 1864 movements of A.J. Smith's 16th Corps. The comparison will be presented in two parts, the findings and the analysis. The findings portion will compare all the data collected to the eight research questions. Next, the analysis portion will take the results of the findings to test the study's four hypotheses. The goal of this section is to determine if Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art to support combat operations in the Western Theater and to achieve strategic objectives.

The first research question is: what were the political and military objective of the Union in the Western Theater during the various campaigns studied? The primary political objective of the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition was to open navigation of the Mississippi River. The military objectives for Sherman's expedition were to gain control of the Mississippi River from Memphis to Vicksburg, isolate the Trans-Mississippi department from the rest of the Confederacy, establish a lodgment for follow-on operations, link-up and resupply Grant on the Yazoo River and if feasible seize Vicksburg. The political objectives associated with the 1864 campaigns in which A.J. Smith's 16th Corps took part were to keep the Trans-Mississippi states of Arkansas and Missouri within Federal control and to secure Western Louisiana for the Union cause. The main political objectives that drove the Red River Campaign were to deter French forces occupying Mexico from exploiting a weakened Confederate government to expand into former Mexican territory, disrupt Confederate trade and seize Southern commodities such as sugar, turpentine and cotton. A major factor driving Confederate operations in 1864 was to influence the upcoming Union elections to sway events against the Lincoln administrations favor. The military objectives of the 1864 campaigns were linked to General Grant's overall plan to defeat the Confederacy. These objectives were to disrupt Confederate supply operations in the Trans-Mississippi, secure

the Red River Valley up to Shreveport, Louisiana, protect major population centers and state capitals such as St. Louis, Jefferson City, and Nashville, and defeat the armies of Confederate Generals Kirby Smith, Richard Taylor, Sterling Price, and John Bell Hood. The results of the objectives identified in the first question are examined later in the final research question.

The second question is: how did the Quartermaster Department facilitate the massing of men and material to provide flexibility to Union commanders in planning their campaigns? During Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and the movements of A.J. Smith's 16th Corps the actions of Lewis Parsons and the Quartermaster Department were essential in providing Union commanders with the flexibility needed to conduct planning and execution of their campaigns unhindered. Parsons made great efforts to improve the Union's support and transportation network throughout the Western Theater. The stockpiling of equipment, rolling-stock, pack animals and various other supplies at key nodes provided commanders with the materials needed to sustain large forces for extended periods of time. The massing of troops and material was further improved through linking road and rail networks to port facilities.

The third question is: how did Lewis B. Parsons enable the Union Army to maintain a higher operational tempo than the Confederacy? Lewis Parsons was able to increase the speed of support through knowledge of asset availability and increased standardization of the use of transportation assets. The preparations of the Quartermaster Department allowed Union forces to move rapidly throughout the theater within a short timeframe. During the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition, Parsons attained supplies and transports to sustain and move 32,000 troops within a week of notification. Sherman was able to arrive within five days of departure from Memphis at the mouth of the Yazoo River and mass an overwhelming force deep into enemy territory, creating a dilemma for the Confederacy which they had to counter by drawing reinforcements from other departments. The speed at which Sherman's forces arrived allowed the Confederates little opportunity to oppose their movement. During the campaigns of 1864 Parsons' subordinates were able to move a corps anywhere within the Western Theater in less than a week, further

increasing the Union's operational tempo. While the overall Red River Campaign was stalled, the speed of the initial actions taken by Admiral Porter and A.J. Smith to seize Fort DeRussy and capture Alexandria took Confederate forces completely by surprise and denied them the ability to carry out a coordinated defense and compelled their withdrawal. The 16th Corps' speed of movement during Price's Raid prevented the Confederates from achieving their objectives and the availability of transports and supplies allowed Smith to continually pursue them out of Missouri. Additionally, the speed at which Smith's Corps was transferred to Tennessee saved the city of Nashville and enabled the defeat of General Hood.

The fourth question is: how did Lewis Parsons increase the options available to Union commanders? During the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition Lewis Parsons was able to increase options available to General Sherman by establishing Johnston's Plantation as the expedition's logistic support area and ensuring the transports remained in a high state of readiness. Parsons' actions allowed Sherman the ability to shift forces throughout his area of operations, highlighted by the planning and preparation for the cancelled envelopment of Confederate forces at Haines' Bluff, the withdraw to Milliken's Bend and the subsequent movement to seize Arkansas Post. In 1864 Lewis Parsons and his subordinates continued to improve the logistics support infrastructure and used combinations of transportation methods that were not conceivable in earlier portions of the war to further increase the options available to Union commanders. One of the key factors that made this possible was the complete domination of the Mississippi River. The movement and positioning of A.J. Smith's 16th Corps throughout Price's Missouri Raid is a prime example of the arranging operations conducted by the Quartermaster Department in the Western Theater. The placement of Smith allowed Rosecrans the greatest range of options to shift forces throughout his department, protect population centers and make the best use of the road, river and rail networks throughout the state to employ various forms of maneuver to maintain pressure on Price's Army.

The fifth question is: how was the steamboat used to extend operational reach of the Union Army? In the first case study the steamboat was used to move over 32,000 Union troops

deep into Confederate territory, over 300 miles from its base of operations in Memphis. The amount of supplies Parson's allocated aboard the transport fleet enabled Sherman's forces to operate unhindered for nearly a month without outside resupply. In 1864 Parsons used the steamboat to further increase operational reach, supporting various efforts throughout the Western Theater. These efforts included shipping supplies via steamboat to Nashville in preparation for Sherman's Atlanta campaign, support to expeditions against hostile Native American tribes on the Upper Missouri River over 2,200 miles from St. Louis, and numerous other campaigns and transfers of troops throughout the western river network.¹²⁴ The numerous movements of A.J. Smith's Corps in support of various department commanders, highlights the Quartermaster Departments increased capability to use the steamboat to project power throughout the theater at much greater distances and for longer duration, not possible earlier in the war.

The sixth question is: how did Lewis B. Parsons assist commanders in mitigating operational risk? During the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition Parsons was able to mitigate risk by reducing some the uncertainties involved in operating in enemy territory and ensured the reliability of logistical support far from Sherman's base of operations. In 1864 Parsons was better able to mitigate the operational risk of various department commanders by providing the transportation necessary to move A.J. Smith's 16th Corps anywhere in the theater within a week. Also, in times of emergency Parsons provided Union commanders the flexibility to mass men and material in a specific department, while maintaining support to the other departments. An additional risk mitigation tool adopted by Parsons in 1864 was the designation of a Quartermaster Department officer to act as a liaison, physically accompanying major troop movements.

The seventh question is: how did Lewis Parsons and the Quartermaster Department anticipate, learn and adapt to the operational environment? In 1862 Parsons and his subordinates anticipated the operational requirements for a river expedition against Vicksburg, however they

¹²⁴ Parsons, 14.

were not fully prepared when the execution order was given and had to quickly acquire the transports and coal to support the operation. The numerous movements of A.J. Smith's Corps and the efficiency of the logistics support network in 1864 shows the progression of the Quartermaster Department. By 1864 Parsons was given complete control of all river operations west of the Allegheny Mountains, enabling him to implement several necessary adaptations identified in previous operations to better provide support. Some of these adaptations included adoption of the contract system standardizing the shipping rates on all western rivers, development of a system to track all steamboats in theater, improved telegraph connection linking all nodes, creation of civilian contracted wood yards to ensure fuel for transports, designated vessels for use as hospital ships and establishment of St. Louis as the central hub for Western Theater logistics. The greater control and standardization of logistics and transportation systems in 1864 allowed Parsons to increase the overall coordination and speed of support throughout the theater.

The eighth research question is: how did the outcomes of the battles, operations and campaigns in the Western Theater influence the military and political objectives of the war? This question outlines the results of the objectives identified in the first research question. While Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou Expedition did not result in a decisive victory, it did achieve one of the primary military objectives of establishing a foothold at Milliken's Bend, which supported Union efforts to seize Vicksburg and penetrate further into Confederate territory. Sherman's initial actions against Vicksburg were the first steps to achieving one of the United States' main political objectives of controlling the Mississippi River Valley. The Union's actions during the Red River Campaign failed to yield the desired results other than temporarily disrupting Confederate operations in the Trans-Mississippi Theater, damaging the local Southern economy in the Red River Valley, and attaining limited commodities for the Union government. The effects the campaign had on French forces in Mexico could not accurately be determined. The actions of A.J. Smith's 16th Corps during Price's Missouri Raid assisted the Union commander

of the Department of Missouri, General Rosecrans to achieve his military objectives which were to protect St. Louis and Jefferson City, defeat Price's Army and secure Missouri and Arkansas from further Confederate invasion. Additionally, the movement of Smith's Corps into Missouri prevented Confederate interference with the 1864 election, which resulted in Lincoln's re-election as president. The transfer of the 16th Corps to General George Thomas in Tennessee allowed the defeat of General Hood's Confederate Army of Tennessee and secured the capital of Nashville and the state for the Union.

The study's first hypothesis asserts that Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art by enabling the availability of surplus military material that allowed flexibility and created options for Union commanders. The empirical evidence from both case studies suggests that this hypothesis is supported. Upon his assignment in 1861 as an Assistant Quartermaster of the Department of Missouri in St. Louis, Lewis B. Parsons observed many issues that hindered transportation operations and developed a vision for increasing the efficiency and capability of the Quartermaster Department. Parsons' innovations exhibited in both cases displayed how the massing of military material and the amplified rate of speed at which troops could be delivered throughout the theater increased the overall flexibility and range of options available to Union commanders. Throughout the war Parsons and his key subordinates continued to modify and improve their support to the Union Army, while linking civilian industry and integrating emerging technology to enhance the overall logistic support network.

The study's second hypothesis claims that Lewis B. Parsons used operational art by ensuring the Union maintained a higher operational tempo than the Confederates through the ability to rapidly move men and material. The findings from both case studies support this hypothesis. The Chickasaw Bayou Expedition exhibited Parsons' ability to provide the necessary transportation and supplies within a short timeframe to move a corps sized element into territory the Confederates believed to be impenetrable. However, Sherman's ability to exploit the opportunity gained by his rapid arrival in the Yazoo River Valley was prevented by a

combination of Confederate raids against Union supply lines and depots which compelled the withdrawal of Grant's overland forces and a lack of coordination between General Bank's Union Army of the Gulf and General Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland to fix Confederate forces in Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. In 1864 the use of A.J. Smith's corps as an operational level reserve to reinforce various commanders within the theater highlights the increased operational tempo of the Union Army and its ability to overwhelm and prevent Confederate commanders from achieving political and military objectives and helped shift the initiative strongly in the Union's favor.

The third hypothesis asserts, that Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art in the management of steamboats which allowed the Union Army to extend its operational reach without culminating. The evidence collected in both case studies supports this hypothesis. The Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and the 1864 movements of Smith's 16th Corps outline the value of the steamboat as the primary platform to deliver troops and material throughout the theater and to sustain operations for extended intervals. The various operations described in this study could have been conducted without the steamboat but would have taken far much longer to complete. The advantage in the steamboat was its speed and the sheer volume of military freight that could be carried on each vessel. The effectiveness of the steamboat was limited in the winter by freezing rivers and during low water stages, but these patterns were known by quartermaster officers and accounted for in planning. The steamboat acted as a mobile depot, providing support to maneuver forces well beyond their base of operations and enabled quartermasters representatives to stockpile large quantities of material and increase the Union's operational reach in the Western Theater.

The final hypothesis asserts, that Lewis B. Parsons applied operational art if he could mitigate operational risk through reliable logistical support. The empirical evidence from the study supports this hypothesis as well. In both case studies Lewis Parsons and his subordinates mitigated operational risk by ensuring Union forces were sufficiently supplied throughout the

Western Theater. Additionally, the ability to quickly move large quantities of material and troops diminished the risk of a Union force being isolated and destroyed. This was highlighted by Parsons' efforts to strengthen the Union position in Arkansas after the Red River Campaign and in the movement of Smith's 16th Corps to reinforce Union armies in Missouri and Tennessee.

The thesis of this study asserts that there is evidence that Lewis B. Parson employed operational art and that through standardization and management of steamboat operations to provide logistical support, Parsons enabled flexibility in planning, maintained operational tempo, extended operational reach, prevented culmination, and helped Union commanders mitigate operational risk. The empirical evidence gathered from the case studies suggests that all four hypotheses are supported. This affirms that Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art in planning and arranging assets in support of Union operations in the Western Theater.

Conclusion

This study compared General Sherman's 1862 Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and the 1864 movements of Major General A.J. Smith's 16th Corps to determine if Lewis B. Parsons employed operational art in planning and supporting Union operations in the Western Theater. There have been limited historical works focused on the Quartermaster Department's actions in the West and even fewer highlight the effectiveness of using the steamboat to deliver troops and material in support of combat operations. One of the main goals of this study was to fill this gap. The empirical evidence collected during this study supports the thesis which asserts that Lewis B. Parsons used operational art to sustain the armies of the Western Theater and achieve Union strategic objectives, through standardization and management of steamboats, which enabled flexibility in planning, maintained operational tempo, extended operational reach, prevented culmination, and helped Union commanders mitigate operational risk.

Lewis B. Parsons' application of operational art was analyzed by use of structured, focused comparison of the two case studies. Empirical data was collected from a wide range

primary and secondary sources using the eight research questions to compare the findings and analyze the four hypotheses of the study. The research questions sought to show how Lewis Parsons adapted the Quartermasters Department's operations to enable commanders with greater flexibility, increased options, extended operational reach, maintained a high operational tempo, while mitigating risk, as well as identified the political and military objectives of Union operations in the West and highlighted how their outcomes influenced the overall outcome of the war.

The comparison of Lewis Parsons' actions to enable Sherman's Chickasaw Bayou Expedition and support of the numerous movements of A.J. Smith's 16th Corps is significant for leaders that will use operational art to plan and support future military operations. The evaluation of both case studies highlighted the importance of understanding political and military objectives to focus the efforts of commanders and staff, while arranging resources in time and space to allow a joint force to overwhelm enemy opposition and achieve the desired endstate. During the Chickasaw Bayou Expedition Parsons with short notice attained the resources required to move and sustain a large formation deep into Confederate territory, while retaining flexibility and preventing culmination of the force. After the expedition Parsons continued to improve the support network and standardize the use of the steamboat which increased the efficiency and speed at which Union forces could be employed throughout the theater. The continued progression, extended operational reach and ability of the Union to conduct operations at a much higher tempo than the Confederates can be observed in the 1864 movements of Smith's 16th Corps. The rapid movements of Smith's Corps exhibit the heightened state of readiness and proficiency facilitated by the Quartermaster Department.

The study shows the value of applying operational art in planning and the importance of logistics in setting conditions to for successful military operations. In the Western Theater Lewis Parsons established a well-organized, reliable support network that provided Union commanders

with a wide range of options to continuously maintain pressure on Confederate forces. The system was continuously improved, further enhancing the effectiveness and speed of support.

While conducting this study there were vast amounts of information and data collected that provide starting points for future research. This study focused on logistics and application of operational art within a single theater, however Lewis B. Parsons' innovations in military transportation were eventually adopted throughout the entire Union Army. Future research could focus on intra-theater movement and transfers of forces in support of General Grant's overall strategic plan of 1864-1865 and how the movements helped achieve Union victory. A great example of this was Parsons' masterful use of river, rail and sea-faring vessels to transfer Major General John Schofield's 23rd Corps from Tennessee to Virginia, then to the Carolinas. Lewis Parsons' personal papers and manuscripts housed at the archives of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library contain vital documents that provide unlimited potential for future analysis of the Quartermaster Department's transportation operations and logistical support to combat operations.

Most general histories and assessments of American Civil War campaigns are incomplete and do not offer a holistic view of the armies and their various warfighting functions. To gain a better understanding of the overall war effort an analysis of the Quartermaster Department's efforts to provide resources and transportation to the Army is essential, especially in the Western Theater where the vast river network enabled greater speeds of movement and access to Confederate territory. The study contributed to building a more complete understanding of the application of operational art and the intricacies of the logistical support required to facilitate successful planning and execution of military campaigns. Further the study presented evidence to suggest that Brigadier General Lewis B. Parsons was an early practitioner of operational art and his foresight, initiative and adaptive leadership developed the US Army Quartermaster Department into an efficient and cohesive organization that set the conditions for the Union attain victory in the Civil War.

Annex A

Modern and Civil War Era Movement Capabilities

Movement Asset	Personnel/ Unit	Amount to move Corps (20,000 PAX)	Weight Capacity (2,000lb/Ton)	Rate of Speed (Cruise/Max)	Time to travel 1,000 miles	Fuel Capacity	Range	Notes
Modern Movement Assets								
C-5	N/A	N/A	142.5 ton	518	2 Hours	51,150 Gal	5,500 mi	
C-17	102 Para/134 Seat/Co	150 to 196	85 ton (18x 463L pallet)	515 mph	2 Hours	35,546 Gal	2,785 mi	Cargo- 134 seat/w pallets or 54 PAX w/13 Cargo pallets. 1x M1 Tank, 3x Stryker or 6x ASV.
C-130	64 Para/92 Seat/ Co (-)	218 to 312	22.5 ton	336 mph	3 Hours	8,955 Gal	2,360 mi	Cargo - 6 Pallets, or 2 -3 x HMMWV, 2x M113, or 1x Stryker
CH-47	33/PLT (-)	607	13 ton	167/196 mph	5 - 6 Hours	1034 Gal	450 mi	Sling 1xHMMWV w/105mm
UH-60	11/SQD	1,819	4.5 ton	140/180 mph	6 -7 Hours	362 Gal (Can carry up to 1100 Gal of fuel with use of external)	368 mi	Sling 1x HMMWV or 1x 105mm
LMTV M1078	14/SQD (+)	1429	2.5/ 6 towed	35/60 mph	17-28 Hours	56 Gal	300 mi	
M915/Mil-Semi	N/A	N/A	20 ton	35/60 mph	17-28 Hours	100 Gal	300 mi	
Civil War Era Movement Assets								
Soldier	N/A	N/A	40 lbs	2.3-3.7 mph	34-84 days (at 12-30mi/ day rate)	N/A	12-30 mi/day	Time/Distance varied due to weather/terrain conditions
Wagon (6xMule/Horses)	1 x Muleskinner	N/A	1.5 ton	1.4 mph	34-84 days (at 12-30mi/ day rate)	Horse-26lb feed (x6=156lb Total) Mule-23 lb Feed (x6=138 lb Total)	12 -30 mi/day	Time/Distance varied due to weather/terrain/ road conditions
Corps Train (256x wagons)	256x Muleskinners	N/A	384 tons	1.4 mph	34-84 days (at 12-30mi/ day rate)	1,536 Animals (Horse - 20 ton/day) (Mule - 18 ton/day)	13 -30 mi/day	Time/Distance varied due to weather/terrain/ road conditions
Rail Car	40/PLT	500	9-10 ton	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Train w/ 20 cars	800/Regiment	25	180-200 ton	25-30 mph	34-40 days	Fuel Car= 10 ton of coal or 5x Cords of wood. 1xcord or ton of coal = 35/50 mi	300-400 mi/day	
Steamboat	600 - 1000/ Regiment	20 to 33 Steamboats	500 -1800 ton	100-150 mi/day	7 -10 days	Per Day Wood-25 Cords (50 tons) Coal-1,700 Bushels (68 tons)	100-150 mi/day	Weight of cargo and speed determined by water level and weather condtions

Created by author. Data compiled from the USMC *MAGTF Planners Guide*, Earl Hess' *Civil War Logistics*, and Rodney Lackey's "Notes on Civil War Logistics: Facts and Stories."

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