Let the Battle Begin

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It was April 1864 and the Red River Campaign was getting stronger during the American Civil War. The Union soldiers marched for days down and across the Mississippi river and now they were headed north. The Union Major General Nathanial Banks could feel the victory of conquering Shreveport which was the capital of Louisiana. What Banks did not know was that Confederate Major General Richard Taylor and his army was waiting in Mansfield, Louisiana. On April 8th the real damage began where the Confederate forces 11 thousand strong had defeated 4,500 men from the Union Federal advance guard and forced them to retreat. The Union retreated south to the village of Pleasant Hill about fifteen miles away. Pleasant Hill was a small village with about fifteen houses that were about to be right in the middle of the largest battle fought west of the Mississippi River. With the Confederates jumping with joy; their job to keep the capitol safe was still not over. Since the Battle of Mansfield ended around sunset due to darkness, the Confederates returned back to their tents to doctor their wounds, receive a hot meal, and acquire some rest for tomorrow was a day that would save the south. That next morning Maj. Gen. Taylor gathered his army together with the wives and children staying behind. They begin to march south at the beat of the drummer boy to finish war. On the afternoon of April 9th Taylor launched a vigorous surprise attack upon the Yankees*. “The enemy began to reconnoiter the new position we had assumed at 11 o'clock on the morning of the 9th, and as early as 1 or 2 o'clock opened a sharp fire of skirmishers, which was kept up at intervals during the afternoon."*(Taylor). The Confederates being their attack with cannon’s blasting soon taking out the front line. The town is disrupted, horses running wild, and Banks is off guard. You can hear the sounds of the bugle playing, soldiers screaming, swords colliding, and most of all victory winning. The enemy lines were getting weaker on both sides. The Union army had 150 killed, 844 wounded, and 375 missing which established a total of 1,369 casualties and losses. The Confederate army had 1,200 killed and wounded, 426 captured with a total of 1,626 casualties and losses. The Yankees were fighting strong and successfully forced the Confederates off of the battlefield, but when Major General Banks realized he lost more men than attended; he retreated once again but this time it was for good. Officially the battle was a Union victory because of the fact the Confederates retreated first and the south had more casualties. However, Banks and his army retreated soon after the battle and never returned to capture the capital, Shreveport, many argue over who really won. Today, the real village of Pleasant Hill resides three miles south in order to be closer to the railroad and kept the same name since the old village had been abandon. Every year this small town comes together to re-enact the history that saved the south.

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Do you hear the drummer boy? Can you feel the pain? Have you ever seen history come to life? Well skedaddle to the battlefield where solider talk is understood. “Grab your Arkansas toothpick and come peacock about the old dog tent. Don’t be a dead beat, just dress high fluent, with an uppity attitude, and you’ll be fit as a fiddle.”(Arnold)