

# FORT DEFIANCE



## *Defending the River*



These are the remnants of Union Fort Bruce. In September 1861, the Confederate defense line in the western theatre extended from Columbus, Kentucky, to Cumberland Gap in East Tennessee. It included most of the Cumberland River and protected the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad, as well as the major supply base at Nashville. The three small forts constructed at Clarksville were integral parts of this perimeter.

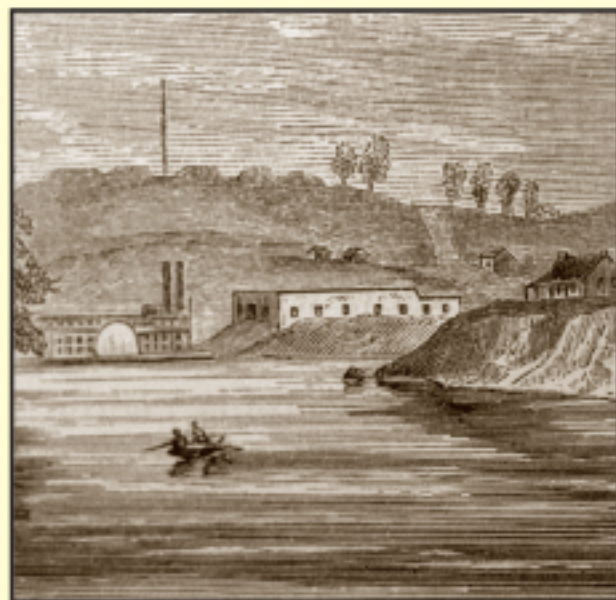
Confederate Gen. Albert S. Johnston ordered West Point-trained engineer Maj. Jeremy F. Gilmer to “arrange the works for the defense ...

at Dover, Clarksville, and Nashville.” Gilmer hired an experienced civilian, Edward Sayers, to execute the construction. Sayers constructed Fort Sevier on a hill overlooking the Cumberland and Red rivers, Fort Clark south of here where the two rivers merged, and Fort Terry northeast of here on the Red River. In January 1862, Sayers reported, “work progressing very well now; 200 slaves and 50 soldiers at work; 24-pounders mounted; one 12-pounder also mounted.”

After the fall of Fort Donelson on February 16, 1862, the Union navy headed upstream for Clarksville. Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote found the fort deserted and flying a white flag. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ordered the other earthworks destroyed but spared Fort Sevier. In December



*Map of Forts Sevier and Clark, New York Times, Mar. 4, 1862  
Courtesy Edward Winn*

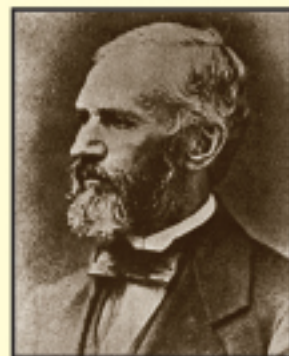


*Fort Bruce, from Benson J. Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War (1868)*

1862, Col. Sanders D. Bruce's brigade command expanded the fort and occupied it for the rest of the war. Renamed Fort Bruce, it provided a safe haven for local freedmen, many of whom joined the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT). Later called Fort Defiance, the origin of the name is unclear.



*Col. Sanders D. Bruce  
U.S. Army Military History Institute*



*Maj. Jeremy F. Gilmer  
Courtesy Randy Rebel Collection*