

Battle of the Big Blue

This painting depicts Union forces fighting Confederate soldiers at the Battle of the Big Blue River on October 22, 1864, the day before the defeat of Price at Westport. The artist, Samuel Reader, fought for the Union as part of the Second Kansas State Militia, whose members were almost all from Shawnee County. Reader served as an officer in the "field and staff" of the militia with the rank of First Lieutenant, Assistant Quartermaster. In the Battle of the Big Blue he was captured by Confederates, who were on their way to Texas when Reader escaped and returned to his farm in southeast Kansas. In this painting, which is housed in a gilded wood frame (not shown), timber fences flank both sides of a tree-lined road. A stone building and horse-drawn caisson (ammunition chest) are visible to the right, and a mounted cannon is on the left. Armed men, wearing brown and blue coats, are scattered along the road. The Union infantry skirmish line, marked by a federal flag, recedes into the background. Confederate forces, with Confederate flag, are visible in the background to the left. Elizabeth Reader, the daughter of the artist, donated the painting in 1909.

Creator: Reader, S. J.

Date: 1897

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