

WHO LOST MISSOURI? THE UNEASY ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE MISSOURI
STATE GUARD AND THE CONFEDERACY, 1861-1862

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ABSTRACT

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Governor Claiborne Jackson of Missouri and his fellow pro-Secessionists tried to nudge the ostensibly neutral state of Missouri into the Confederacy. Taking advantage of controversial Federal actions, they were able to mobilize thousands of Missourians into the Missouri State Guard under commanding General Sterling Price. The Missouri State Guard had to win victories in order to raise popular support against the Federal government while fostering an alliance with the Confederate Army. It largely accomplished this task throughout 1861. By early 1862, however, the possibility of a Confederate Missouri was still lost. Despite a string of victories, Price and many within the State Guard hamstrung coordinated efforts with the Confederate army through poor discipline, short-sighted strategies, and the overbearing and ill-advised politicking and personal attacks conducted by Price and his supporters.

KEY WORDS: Missouri State Guard, Sterling Price, Claiborne Jackson, Confederacy, Ben McCulloch

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CHAPTER I

Who Lost Missouri?

Throughout 1861 and early 1862, the state of Missouri was a major battleground of the Civil War. It was a slaveholding state both above the Mason-Dixon Line and on the western frontier. In Confederate hands it would not only block Union invasion routes to the Trans-Mississippi and Mississippi River theatres, but strangle the North's Midwestern river trade while providing a potential launching point for incursions into states such as Illinois. Despite its strategic position, Confederate support for the state's military force, the Missouri State Guard under General Sterling Price, appeared half-hearted and lukewarm. A lack of Confederate military support resulted in several aborted campaigns. In the later war over memory, former State Guardsmen blamed Confederate General Ben McCulloch and other Confederate leaders, up to President Jefferson Davis, for the loss of Missouri. They claimed that if not for the prejudice and over-cautiousness of Confederate generals the state could have been won for the Confederacy. The Confederates should have acted more decisively in supporting them and been more on the offensive, and their reasons for failing to do so was linked towards their perception of Missourian soldiers as mere militia¹ The counter-argument, somewhat lining up with Guardsmen's accusation of prejudice, was that the Missouri State Guard was too poorly managed and ill-disciplined to ever secure the state and that Confederate assistance would have been pointless.² There is truth to both arguments. This thesis argues that the poor coordination between the State Guard and the Confederacy was not because of any disinterest, strategic blindness, or

¹ Thomas L. Snead, *The Fight for Missouri from the Election of Lincoln to the Death of Lyon*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1886, 254-255.

² Victor M. Rose, *The Life and Services of Gen. Ben McCulloch*, (Austin: Steck Company), 176-178.

refusal to work with Missouri's state troops. It was because of legitimate Confederate concerns based on Missouri's seeming non-committal waffling between neutrality, Unionism, and secessionism. While the state's governor, Claiborne Jackson, was all for the Confederacy, he had to be careful in how he guided Missourians towards that cause, as the majority of them wished to stay in the Union despite their support for slavery. When Missouri was finally recognized as a Confederate state, there were still unresolved issues that plagued efforts to get the state out of Union hands. One such issue revolved around Sterling Price, who was arrogant and insubordinate when dealing with his superiors and with men of equal rank. Price constantly hatched over-ambitious strategies instead of adopting a moderate approach, and lambasted those who refused to support his grand strategies. These issues resulted in the loss of Missouri to the Confederacy, which in turn hastened the loss of proper Confederate territory in 1862.

The Confederacy was fully aware that Missouri held strategic importance. It was ranked third in corn production and was no slouch in horses, mules, lead, and iron. It had major river and rail networks that allowed for military flexibility. Its most important resource, however, were thousands of potential recruits, and it in fact had the largest military-age white male population of any of the slave states.³ If the Confederates got its hands on the state, they could further constrain Union trade and transport along the Mississippi. They would have a potential launching point for invasions deep into the Midwest while obstructing invasions of its own territory. Even if it, along with Kentucky, were to somehow remain neutral, it would contribute to a 600 mile long secure border for

³ Joseph W. McCoskie, *The War for Missouri: 1861-1862*, (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing Inc., 2020). 18; Floyd C. Shoemaker, "The Story of the Civil War in Northeast Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. VII No. 2 (January, 1913), 65.

the seceding states.⁴ To many veterans of the State Guard, the lackluster Confederate support appeared to show great prejudice or ignorance. One believed the Confederate government had been blind to the situation in Missouri and too adherent to laws which were rendered useless by the war. They “lost to the Confederate cause the field service of thousands in north and central Missouri, the material for the best soldiers in the world.”⁵ A contributor to *Confederate Veteran* went so far as to claim that “President Davis didn’t want Missouri in the Confederacy. To have it in would only increase his difficulties by adding some six hundred miles of defensive border to those now threatened with invasion.”⁶

What these veterans failed to account for were two aspects of President Davis’ defensive policy. In trying to present the Confederacy as a legitimate nation seeking to defend itself, he was wary of approving military operations in a neutral state. After all, one of the justifications for the Rebellion was the right of states to choose their own association free of Federal interference, or what was more widely termed “coercion.” Davis applied the same tactic towards the other prominent western neutral state of Kentucky. Missouri’s government had many pro-Secessionists, Governor Claiborne Jackson among them, yet it declared an armed neutrality and conditional Unionism.⁷ The second aspect of Davis’ policy was the protection of all Confederate territory. This was calculated to maintain the support of various governors and other state leaders who would

⁴ Louis S. Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History*, (University of Missouri Press, July 6, 2012), 4.

⁵ Joseph Mudd, “What I Saw at Wilson’s Creek,” *Missouri Historical Review* 8, (January 1914), 89.

⁶ James E. Payne, “Early Days of War in Missouri,” *Confederate Veteran* 39 (February 1931), 60.

⁷ William Garrett Piston & Richard W. Hatcher III, *Wilson’s Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 101; Snead, 11-16.

not want parts of their states sacrificed for strategic purposes, as well as prove that the Confederacy was a nation that could protect its borders. This early war strategy proved to be a blunder, stretching military resources thin. The Secessionist presence in Missouri was just one voice clamoring for aid in the early days of the war. This enabled the Union to destroy scattered pockets of defenses such as Fort Donelson.⁸ As far as Missouri was concerned, this meant that various Confederate generals across the borders were unable or hesitant to provide much aid when it would mean exposing their assigned departments to invasion. On this count the Confederate government can be assigned some, but not all blame for the loss of Missouri. Nonetheless, the Confederacy did indeed have interests in Missouri and there was real aid sent in the form of weapons and later actual soldiers.

The State Guard, like the American Continentals with France in the Revolutionary War, had the task of showing its allies that it was possible to win Missouri, and that it was worth the cost. Thanks to several notable successes it succeeded in garnering support, but not enough to achieve its ultimate aim. Its commander, General Sterling Price, proved difficult to work with. He not only quarreled with Confederate officers, primarily General Ben McCulloch, but he was terrible at maintaining discipline. Some of his subordinate commanders proved entirely unsuited to military command. Elements of the rank-and-file themselves could prove unreliable or downright treacherous. Many would come for a battle and then leave to work at home, while others were as likely to loot from their Confederate allies and civilians as they would from defeated Federals. This gave them the appearance of a rowdy and unreliable militia force.

⁸ Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle that Changed the Civil War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 16.

These factors created grave tensions, but they do not adequately explain McCulloch's stubborn refusal to launch further operations in Missouri. The problem is that the passage of time silenced many of the key decision-makers' voices. General Price died only a couple years after the war, and his collection of papers and documents perished in an 1885 fire. Most of what is known about his views can only be pieced together by the observations of other persons, many of them biased veterans who revered him and others by bitter political and military rivals.⁹ Governor Claiborne Jackson did not even make it past the second year of the war, succumbing to stomach cancer in December 1862. General McCulloch was killed at the Battle of Pea Ridge on March 7, 1862. His right-hand man, Colonel James McIntosh, would have had some valuable insights, but he perished in the same fight. Thus the major decision-makers were never able to look back on this period with the benefit of hindsight and to provide narratives that might be coalesced into a more clarified central one. Whatever the issues between the State Guard and the Confederacy, they precluded any possibility of securing Missouri for the South in 1861 (though there would be one final, tangible opportunity in the early spring of 1862).

While there were few papers and almost no post-war writings that survived from many of the major participants, there is still a wide array of primary sources available. *The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* was of course valuable. In addition to providing a chronology of orders and details of the battles, several of its volumes provide insights into some of the tensions between the Confederacy and the Missouri State Guard. The absence of some commonly accepted information in contemporary reports disputes some of the traditional narrative. While I focus more on the Confederate correspondence,

⁹ Albert Castel, *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West*, (LSU Press, 1993), vii.

I do look at Union sources at points to ensure that dead Missourians and Confederates are not steering my perspective. Some additional information was found from the *Journal of the Confederate Congress*.

While Price, McCulloch, and others died during the war or did not live long past it, there is still an abundance of memoirs and recollections from other individuals. Thomas Reynolds, the lieutenant-governor of Missouri, left an unfinished draft of a book, published by the University of Missouri Press as *General Sterling Price and the Confederacy* (2009), that details his dealings with Price and Jackson.¹⁰ More fervently secessionist than Price, Reynolds is naturally more inclined to criticize his political and military decisions. However, he does counter-balance the gushing reminiscences of former Guardsmen. Thomas Snead's *War for Missouri* (1886) is considered one of the essential sources for this episode of the Civil War. While of course biased towards the State Guard, Snead is comparatively more honest and humble in listing some mistakes. Snead served as Price's adjutant-general and thus had both private insights into the command squabbles with McCulloch and the improvisational nature of the State Guard. He also served in Missouri's legislature and provides further information on the events leading to war.

Only two other major officers left their memoirs for posterity (many did not survive the war). Of the divisional commanders in the State Guard, only Jeff Thompson wrote down full memoirs. He waged a separate guerilla-style war in southeast Missouri, so there is far less on the main force under Price, but he did have his own imperfect

¹⁰ Reynolds stopped writing his book when he learned of Price's death. There are two interpretations of this action. The more heartwarming one is that stopped out of respect for the former general's death. The more cynical take is that with Price dead, there was no antagonist to fight in a post-war battle of memoirs.

relations with the Confederacy. Quarter-master General James Harding delivered a speech that has been edited and published by James McGhee as *Service with the Missouri State Guard* (2000). In charge of procuring and distributing supplies, Harding was aware of the many supply deficiencies of the State Guard and the improvisational solutions. Some of the lower-ranking officers and privates also left behind their recollections, with Ephraim Anderson providing one of the longer ones: *Memoirs: Historical and Personal; including the Campaigns of the First Missouri Confederate Brigade* (1868). Anderson's memoirs provide a good ground-level look. Veterans, and a few civilians as well, were eager to record their memories for posterity, and many of my sources include their articles from *Confederate Veteran*, the *Missouri Historical Review*, and the *Missouri Republican*, many of the last of these compiled in a series of books edited by Michael Banasik. Robert Bevier, a colonel in the State Guard, wrote a history of the First and Second Missouri brigades, which were created out of the State Guard at the start of 1862. The first half of this book is a general overview and the second contains some of Bevier's personal stories.

I also have looked at archived material, mainly from the Missouri Historical Society. These include various diaries, written-down speeches, and letters which flesh out the lives of the State Guard and the perspective of men still living in the historical moment. Also available are the journals of the Missouri state legislature that voted against secession and a more pro-Confederate convention later in the year.

Two Trails Publishing in Missouri has done much work to reprint primary sources as well as provide organizational data for research. Carolyn Bartels has created a roster of all known Guardsmen as well as a simple chronological overview of the war in *The Civil*

War in Missouri Day by Day: 1861 to 1865 (1992). Richard Peterson's *Sterling Price's Lieutenants* (1995) is very valuable for keeping track of the various units and officers, with footnotes adding pieces of biographical information on the main officers. Ezra Werner's *Generals in Gray* (1959) and a later sequel, *More Generals in Gray* (1995), have brief but helpful biographies of the generals who served in the Guard's ranks. There are several biographies of Price. The one I have used is Albert Castel's balanced *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West* (1993). Biographies have also been written on Thompson (though heavily reliant on his memoirs) and Jo Shelby, a famed cavalry officer who started with the State Guard.

Many secondary sources were valuable in filling in other details, as well as putting the memoirs and writings of the participants in their proper context. The Missouri Historical Company published county histories, published within living historical memory of the war. Joseph McCoskrie Louis Gerteis have written general military histories, the former covering the specific timeframe of this thesis. A much earlier military history is John McElroy's *Struggle for Missouri* (1909). This was written by a Union veteran so it provides a balance to the various pro-Confederate writings I utilize. And of course I used various battle histories on Wilson's Creek, the Siege of Lexington, and Pea Ridge.

CHAPTER II

The Half-Way State

Missouri had long held a special place in the nation's struggle with slavery. In fact, the solution to one of the great sectional crises was named after the state. In 1820 Missouri Territory was approaching statehood. It would be the first state admitted west of the Mississippi. The majority of the early settlers had their roots in Virginia or Kentucky (which itself was founded primarily by migrant Virginians). Because of this the new state was likely going to allow slavery. The slave states would have a two-seat lead in the Senate, upsetting the near fifty-year balance of free and slave states. Furthermore, abolitionists and others hostile to slavery believed it was unjust and even un-American to extend slavery to the new territories. Pro-slavery advocates countered that every state had a right to choose whether to be slave or free. The U.S. Government finally hit upon a solution. It would allow Missouri to be admitted as a slave state, but northern Massachusetts would become a whole new free state: Maine. Furthermore, the Missouri Compromise established a boundary between free and slave territory. Aside from Missouri, slave states would only be permitted below the latitude, 36 degrees 30 minutes, which included the new state's southern border. This same territory had to have been part of the Louisiana Purchase (The annexation of former Mexican territory decades later allowed Texas to be admitted as a slave state as well). This restored the balance of free and slave states and hopefully headed off any violent conflicts over the boundaries of slavery.¹¹

¹¹ Michael F. Holt, *The Fate of the Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension, and the Coming of the Civil War*, (New York: Hill and Wing, 2004), 5-6; Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate: Claiborne*

Despite its admittance as a slave state, Missouri's practice of the peculiar institution somewhat differed from its southern neighbors. While there were a considerable number of slaves, they were distributed across smaller landholdings rather than massive plantations. If a rural Missourian owned between 20 and 30 he was considered a large slaveholder. White immigrants valued slaves more as tools for hastening the taming of the western wilderness than for manning large fields. This did not necessarily mean easier working conditions, at least in the state's initial stages of development. Most slaves came with their masters from the more temperate climates of Virginia and Kentucky and had a shock when dealing with Missouri's harsh winters and steaming summers.¹²

Missouri's proximity to free states also ensured that by 1860 there was a sizeable minority of interstate migrants disinterested in or opposed to the institution. Its two, later three borders with free states provided various avenues for slave escapes. In 1837, a pro-slavery mob forced out David Nelson, a Missourian minister and Evangelical missionary who publicly expressed abolitionism and handed antislavery literature to both free and enslaved blacks. He continued to contest slavery from his Marion College in Quincy, Illinois. From this Evangelical college he recruited his students to help slaves in northeast Missouri. The slaves would escape to Illinois and then north to Canada. White Missourians did not take kindly to these intrusions upon slavery. Over the next couple decades they arrested and imprisoned several men for trying to guide slaves to freedom. Bands of Missourians, the Anti-Abolition Society, would sometimes cross over into

Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1959), 27-28.

¹² George Lee, "Slavery and Emancipation in Lewis County, Missouri, *Missouri Historical Review* 65:3 (April 1971), 295-296.

Northern states to capture suspected Underground Railroad conductors and in one case burned an abolitionist preacher's chapel down. This ended Marion College's war on slavery, but by the mid-1850s slave runaways were still on a marked increase. The added free soil presence in Kansas provided another escape route and the events of Bleeding Kansas provided further cover for abolitionist activities. John Brown himself was reported to have liberated 68 slaves in a border raid and then sent them to final freedom in Canada. In the east the growing link between Illinois and the city of St. Louis provided more routes and allies for runaways.¹³

Slavery in Missouri was more benign than it was in most other slaveholding states, but only in comparison. Smaller landholdings meant less need for bullying overseers. Through an 1824 law, Slaves who were carried by their masters into free states were allowed to make a case for their freedom. In fact the Dred Scott case was brought about when Scott, a slave, was taken to and from Illinois by his master. Scott used the 1824 law to sue for his freedom and it looked like the Missouri justice system would back him up. The Supreme Court, however, denied his freedom, now affirming that blacks in America, free or slave, had no rights to citizenship. This further solidified the existence and racial justification for slavery and also increased anti-slavery fervor in the North. Once again Missouri played a major role in the slavery-driven division in America.¹⁴

While Missouri lacked the staple crops associated with slaveholding, such as cotton, it nevertheless saw a major growth in slaves in the decades leading to the Civil

¹³ Benjamin Merkel, "The Underground Railroad and the Missouri Borders," *Missouri Historical Review* 37 (April 1943), 271-281; Lee, 308; Oleta Prinsloo, "'The Abolitionist Factory': Northeastern Religion, David Nelson, and the Mission Institute near Quincy, Illinois, 1836-1844," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (Spring 2012), 40-41, 59-60.

¹⁴ Silvana S. Siddali, *Missouri's War: The Civil War in Documents*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 12-14, 21-23; Phillips 124-127; Lee, 303.

War. The number of human property tripled to over 114,000 between 1830 and 1860, although in terms of percentage of the overall population it did shrink. Much of the cheap land available in the western part of the state was gobbled up by poor farmers unable to afford slaves, though the populace still affirmed slaveholding as a protected right. As in the South, slaveholding conferred a special status among its practitioners. One faction, the Boonslick Democrats, believed in an agricultural society guided by wealthy planters and merchants, with slave labor as an important component.¹⁵ They and other prominent Missourians shared the Southern fear that emancipation would lead to a violent race war.¹⁶ Most of these same Missourians, which included Sterling Price, Claiborne Jackson, Jeff Thompson, and others, would find their sympathies naturally inclined towards the Confederacy when the secession crisis arrived.

Missouri once again found itself at the center of the slavery issue with the admittance of Kansas and Nebraska as territories. The South realized at this point that the Missouri Compromise had put a severe limit on the extension of slavery, leaving most of the West as future free-soil states. Thus Southern Democrats opposed any further organization of the West into territories and states until slavery would be allowed. This put pressure on Northern Democrats to circumvent or flat-out nullify any compromises regarding westward expansion and slavery. Democrats in Missouri were themselves split into two factions, one sharing the southern Democrats' views and the other opposing the expansion of slavery into the territories in the hope that slavery would be gradually eliminated and the threat of sectional war thus removed. Spearheaded by Illinois senator

¹⁵ James E. Muench, *Five Stars: Missouri's Most Famous Generals*, (University of Missouri Press, 2006), 33-34; Phillips, 124-127.

¹⁶ Doris Land Mueller, *M. Jeff Thompson: Missouri's Swamp Fox of the Confederacy*, (Missouri University Press, 2007), 18.

Stephen Douglas, a coalition of Democrats across the nation devised the Kansas-Nebraska Act. In this Act Kansas and Nebraska were to be officially organized into territories and later states “with or without slavery as their constitution may prescribe at the time of their admission.” The inhabitants of the territories would thus vote to decide whether they would be slave or free. Controversially, this overturned the Missouri Compromise, which established that aside from Missouri no western territories above the 36 30 parallel could hold slavery. Naturally free-soilers did not appreciate how slavery’s limits had been dissolved and Southerners were actually worried that the territories would be voted into the free soil camp. Despite strong opposition and dire warnings, President Franklin Pierce and both houses approved the Act and passed it in 1854.¹⁷

The Kansas-Nebraska Act unleashed a wave of violence across the frontier. Much of the fault lay with pro-slavery advocates in Missouri. The majority of the prospective inhabitants of Kansas were free-soilers, but pro-slavery Missourians feared a free Kansas. This would mean that the state’s eastern, northern, and western borders would be ringed with free-soil states. There would be stronger economic and political anti-slavery pressure, not to mention slaves would have a new avenue of escape.¹⁸ They also believed the inability to grow slavery would end up destroying it. The lack of assumed necessary black labor to cultivate the South and the West “would convert this vast region, into a howling wilderness.”¹⁹

¹⁷ *Cong. Globe*, 33rd Cong., 1st Sess, 221-222 (1854; Holt, 93-101; H.C. McDougal, “A Decade of Missouri Politics – 1860 to 1870. From a Republican Viewpoint,” *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. III No. 2 (January, 1909), 127-128; Brooksher, 7-8.

¹⁸ Larry Wood, *Civil War Springfield*, History Press, (November, 2011. Kindle Edition, 2011), 11.

¹⁹ Siddali, 27.

Hundreds of Missourians crossed westward into Kansas. A good number of them had no intention of settling in Kansas, but thanks to a failure on the part of the local Federal authority to institute verified residency requirements, they were able to vote Kansas into a slave territory with pro-Southern leadership. In some parts of Kansas less than ten percent of the votes cast came from actual residents. Irrate at this blatant voting fraud, free-soilers created their own legislature. A civil war before the Civil War erupted. For years pro and anti-slavery factions fought in what was labeled Bleeding Kansas. This ensured that by 1861 Missourians both Union and Confederate would have had actual combat experience. Bleeding Kansas ended with a free-soiler victory, but it had warned the nation that the growing sectional tensions could bring the whole nation into an orgy of violence.²⁰

The 1860 election hammered home Missouri's unique position. It was the only state in the Electoral College to go over to the moderate Democrat Stephen Douglas while the southern states went for the more sectional John C. Breckinridge. The inhabitants did not care for the new Republican Party, yet were uneasy with the secessionist strain emerging in the South. They tended to have cultural and familial ties with the South, with a slave culture transplanted by Kentuckians and Virginians. But over time it developed stronger economic links with the Northern states. While the Mississippi River fostered trade with the South, the emergent railroad system made it much more profitable to sell resources to the east in Northern factories. The state found itself in an uncertain position after the election of Lincoln and the announced secession of several slave states. Should Missouri stay with the Union or join the fledgling Confederacy in

²⁰ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, (Oxford University Press, 1988), 146-147; Brooksher, 11-12.

seceding? In general Missourians wanted to stay with the Union and were hostile or at least hesitant towards talk of secession. An editorial in the *Western Journal of Commerce*, which had pulled for Stephen Douglas, stated that anybody who sought to initiate disunion or worse a war over the election of Lincoln when the Constitution was not visibly threatened was a “traitor.” Another pro-Douglas paper, the *St. Louis Republican*, expressed disappointment with the results of the election, but proudly stated that Missouri was the only one that “stood by the regular nominees of the Democratic Party” instead of chasing after the pro-Southern Breckinridge. It further pointed out that even if Lincoln were to attack protections for slavery, the House of Representatives would still be able to check his moves.²¹

Missourians were more divided on the issue of helping the North subdue the rebellious states through military force should war indeed break out. To those of pro-slavery or more specifically pro-Southern inclinations it was unethical for the Federal government to force them into a war against the South. Missourians began to see themselves as a neutral entity. Even more, they began to see their state as the great mediator, preventing the anticipated war from breaking out. They argued that Missouri was more a state of the West than North or South, and thus not as bound to the sectional divisions.²² This feeling was expressed in one local speech by the lawyer Robert S. Bevier, a future officer in the State Guard:

²¹ Siddali, 43-45; Brooksher, 30; Virgil C. Blum, “The Political and Military Actions of the German Element in St. Louis, 1859-1861,” *Missouri Historical Review* 42, (January 1948), 106.

²² Missouri Convention, *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State convention held at Jefferson City, March, 1861*, (St. Louis: George Knapp & Co. Printers and Binders, 1861), 83; The “Crittenden compromise” was a possible political solution to head off war. See page 16 for further details.

Hence if Missouri with the other border slave States should take her hand calmly, considerately, and firmly demand a redress for the aggressions of sectional parties - the passage of the Crittenden compromise or similar measures, and if that redress is not granted go out of the Union only after a full understanding with the other border States, and when they go with us. And these border States, or rather the central states, by assuming such a position, would command the respect of the extremists of both sections, and do more to save the Union and cement together its discordant elements than all the politicians of. Coercion is not for a moment to be thought of.²³

These feelings of neutrality and peace were not exactly shared by the winners of the 1860 state elections. The seat of governor had previously been occupied by Robert M. Stewart, a Democrat who agreed that the South had the right to take their slaves into the western territories, but was adamantly opposed to the idea of secession. His successor was of course another Democrat, Claiborne Fox Jackson.²⁴ Jackson had been born in another state currently advocating for neutrality, Kentucky. He had worked in the mercantile business for a while, but transitioned into politics. He associated with the Boonslick Democrats, upholding such values as slaveholding and hard currency.²⁵ He won the governorship by stressing a moderate stance, supporting Douglas in the national election, yet at the same time presenting himself as strongly pro-slavery. He did not advocate any secessionism in case of a Republican presidential victory, yet claimed to

²³ Robert S. Bevier, *History of the First and Second Missouri Confederate Brigades: Annotated and Illustrated*, (Saint Louis: Bryan, Brand, & Co., 1879), 286-289.

²⁴ Snead, 11.

²⁵ Phillips, 73-74.

uphold a state's right to pursue its own agenda above the nation's. This strategy won him the moderate Democrat vote as well as the support of rural pro-slavery Missourians. Jackson's civilian aide and secretary, former newspaperman Thomas Snead, described him as "tall, erect, and dignified; a vigorous thinker, and a fluent and forcible speaker, always interesting, and often eloquent a well-informed man, thoroughly conversant with the politics of Missouri and of the Union with positive opinions on all public questions." Snead insisted that Jackson "loved the Union, but not with the love with which he loved Missouri, which had been his home for forty years, nor as he loved the South, where he was born, and where his kindred lived."²⁶ Jackson publicly professed armed neutrality, yet his sympathies were indeed pro-Confederate. As a Boonslick Democrat he believed that slavery was an essential to a healthy westward-growing democracy.

As he would throughout his two years of governorship, he publicly displayed a desire for moderation, yet his true sympathies were heavily slanted in favor of the South. He could gain the support of many Missourians, yet only through obscuring his pro-Confederate leanings.²⁷ He had to walk a political tightrope, acting the part of neutral conciliator while searching for a way to bring Missouri into the Confederacy. Unfortunately this resulted in a mismatch between his words to the Missouri populace, his words to the Confederate government, and his actions. To one close observer he "changed his opinion... every hour of the day."²⁸

In his farewell address, exiting governor Stewart urged a moderate stance of neutrality. He proclaimed that Missouri was "able to take care of herself, and will be

²⁶ Snead, 17-18.

²⁷ Phillips, 227.

²⁸ Thompson, 59.

neither forced nor flattered, driven or coaxed, into a course of action that must end in her destruction.” It would not let slavery within her borders be threatened by “unfriendly legislation of the North, nor be dragooned into secession by the extreme South.”

Following up with his own address, Claiborne Jackson quickly set about stirring up pro-Southern sentiment. He claimed the Republican Party was a sectional power that would impose its agenda on the whole nation. He further lamented that Missouri was treating the danger to the South with “philosophical equanimity” and would unexpectedly find itself in the coercive grip of the North. He admitted that South Carolina had been hasty in pursuing secession, but that the North’s response was “more fatal” in its widespread attempt at suppression. He tellingly used the favored Southern term “coercion” in referring to the Federal government’s actions. Any support he expressed for the Union was conditional, matching the mood of Missourians in general. “So far as Missouri is concerned, her citizens have ever been devoted to the Union, and she will remain in it so long as there is any hope that it will maintain the spirit and guarantees of the Constitution.” Naturally any act of war against the South could be seen as “coercion,” thereby ensuring that Missouri’s government would not fight with the North.²⁹ At the end of his address he called for a “thorough organization of our militia” to ensure Missouri’s “honor and safety,” in other words armed neutrality.³⁰ This was the origin point of the Missouri State Guard, a consolidated force made up of pre-existing and future militia units.

The commander of the militia was senator and now Colonel Daniel Frost. Frost, a veteran of border skirmishes with Kansas Jayhawkers, was sent to the St. Louis Arsenal

²⁹ Snead, 18-22.

³⁰ Snead, 25.

in late January to ensure that it would supply Missouri's military, not the U.S. Government's. It was indeed an impressive arsenal, with 60,000 muskets, plenty of ammunition for those muskets, 50 pieces of artillery, and machinery which could produce more arms and ammunition. If the arsenal's contents were to end up in the militia's hands, the Missouri State Guard would have no lack of equipment for armed neutrality, or even a war against the Federal government. While Frost set on his mission, Jackson was already writing to Confederate officials with requests for arms and ammunition. He even wrote the chief of ordnance in Washington D.C. for guns and a gun carriage to serve as a model.³¹

Jackson's lieutenant-governor was Thomas Reynolds, an avid pro-Southerner. On January 17, he delivered a speech to the state senate in which he argued for separation from the North, or preferably the deposing of Lincoln and his Republicans from power. He argued that one nation could not exist because the states did not share the same "domestic institutions." Half the states outlawed slavery while half practiced it, and even then slavery's perpetual existence was not guaranteed. Because the Union had not universally accepted and practiced slavery, it could not stand. He echoed the secessionist argument that if slavery could not expand west, then the society built on it would stagnate and die.³² As a slave state on the western frontier, Missouri had every right to sever ties with a government which would limit the expansion of slavery while proposing a policy (that would come to life in the Homestead Act) which would allow free-soilers to grab all the remaining land in the West. He further argued that the southern Confederacy would in

³¹ Claiborne Jackson to Hon. H.K. Craig, January 16, 1861, MHS.

³²Thomas C. Reynolds, "Speech of Lieut. Gov. Reynolds, on the Preservation or Reconstruction of the Union: delivered in the Senate of Missouri, January 17th, 1861." (St. Louis: George Knapp, 1861), 1-2.

fact be the legitimate United States of America, as so many of the prominent founding fathers were southern slaveholders and slavery originally existed in all the colonies.³³

With powerful voices advocating resistance to the Federal government or support for the Confederacy, Missouri had to clarify its position. In February Jackson's government called for a convention to "consider the then existing relations between the Government of the United States, the people and Governments of the different States, and the Government and people of the State of Missouri; and to adopt such measures for vindicating the sovereignty of the State and the protections of its institutions." In other words would Missouri side with the North, South, or try to stay out of the emerging conflict?³⁴ Tellingly, commissioners from already seceded states such as Georgia and Mississippi sat in on parts of the convention, sometimes joining in to make the case for secession and influence the delegates.³⁵ There was a hope among some Missourians that the convention would result in Confederate membership. First they would have to convince the Unionists. There were the Unconditional Unionists who were adamantly against any support for the Rebellion and the Conditional Unionists who might be persuaded.

Former governor Sterling Price was a major advocate of Conditional Unionism at the convention. Price and his family had originally lived in Virginia, moving to Missouri in 1830. Using his family's prominence, he pursued a career in politics. As a Boonslick Democrat he served in the state House of Representative for two terms and in one of

³³ Reynolds, 1861, 4-6.

³⁴ Missouri Convention, March, 1861, 3.

³⁵ Missouri Convention, March 1861, 23.

those terms as its speaker. He raised and led a regiment of volunteers in the Mexican War, in which he put down an uprising in New Mexico Territory. During his military tenure he proved to be stubborn and insubordinate. At one point he disobeyed orders to hold back in light of the war-ending Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty. He started a battle in which surrendering Mexicans were killed. Despite his blatant disobedience and the following unnecessary violence, he was regarded as a hero in his home state and won a term as governor in the mid-1850s. Now, in the Secession Crisis, he found himself once again deeply involved in politics.³⁶

In post-war writings Price was often portrayed as a noble conditional Unionist, but he could come off as a political opportunist, hitching himself to whatever the majority view was. Lieutenant-Governor Reynolds, a post-war critic, recalled how he briefly set aside his Conditional Unionism to ingratiate himself with Jackson's pro-secessionist administration. This got him an appointment as bank commissioner. However, having gotten when he wanted, he suddenly became a strong Unionist again, drawing others to his point of view through his considerable personality and influence.³⁷ Reynolds may well have blamed Price for the results of the convention, which would not affirm secessionism. If Price had come out more strongly in support of secession, then Missouri may have likewise come out more strongly on the Confederate side, resulting in more solid military and economic support from the South's emerging nation.

The Conditional Unionists held on to the unrealistic expectation of national peace. They pushed for the Crittenden Plan, a "compromise" that was being touted at the time as

³⁶ Thomas C. Reynolds, *General Sterling Price and the Confederacy*, (St. Louis: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 224; Castel, 3-7; Muench, 40.

³⁷ Reynolds, 23-24.

the way to avert war. Aside from affirming the geographic boundaries of the Missouri Compromise, the Crittenden Plan was by no means compromising, promising to decisively uphold slavery in the Constitution and to quell anti-slavery activism. Missouri hoped to work with delegates from the other unseceded slave states (which at the time of the convention still included future Confederate states such as Virginia and Tennessee) to promote such guarantees of continued slavery. The *Daily Republican* (not a pro-Republican party paper though the editorials and reporting showed a Unionist slant. In fact it was founded years before the party's formation) optimistically reported in January that the Crittenden Compromise would be accepted by Republicans and Democrats, as the majority of both factions earnestly desired the union's preservation. Only extremists centered in Massachusetts and South Carolina were calling for disunion with their obstinate, uncompromising attitudes. Neutral Conditional Unionism itself was too strongly inclined towards the South to survive as an idea. Price and other adherents pledged to stand with the South if the North resorted to force.³⁸ More realistic voices pointed out that even if the Southern states were let off in peace, Missouri would still be attacked. It was too far north and had too much control over major waterways to be allowed as an independent state, much less part of the Confederacy.³⁹ Unconditional Unionists further argued that Conditional Unionism was too confrontational, making demands for compromise or else. This would provoke heavier Federal interference in the state.⁴⁰

³⁸ Missouri Convention, March 1861, 23-24; Snead, 53-54; *Daily Missouri Republican*, 12 Jan 1861, 1.

³⁹ Snead, 62-63.

⁴⁰ Missouri Convention, March 1861, 105.

The delegates were in favor of slavery, and argued that it was a right passed down from America's founding generation, but some provided criticisms that attacked the foundations of the emergent Confederacy. One, Alexander Doniphan, a particularly respected Missourian, shared the Confederacy's belief that the Northern states had unconstitutionally assaulted slavery through improper legislation, and also had allowed mobs to hide fugitive slaves and "abduct" others traveling north with their masters. At the same time he found the secessionists to be foolishly misguided in their venture. The Confederacy was bound to fail because its platform was caught up on one single point: expansion of slavery. Eventually divisions along other interests would fracture it. There was no reason for Missouri to get involved in a single-issue dispute. He re-conjured the image of Missouri as the great conciliator state, that is was her "glorious mission...to aid in arresting the progress of revolution and in restoring peace and prosperity to the country."⁴¹ A few days later another delegate responded to a Georgian's insistence that Missouri should secede. He pointed out that all previous legislation regarding slavery had been bi-partisan and there was yet no approved legislation challenging to the existence of slavery or the inequality between whites and blacks. Therefore, rushing to secession and likely war over fearful speculation was a grave mistake. There was great hesitance in joining a war for slavery when slavery was not necessarily threatened by the Federal government.⁴²

The final verdict came up overwhelmingly against secession. About 110,000 of the 140,000 delegates cast their votes against it. In fact the bulk of the convention was

⁴¹ Missouri Convention, March 1861, 34-36.

⁴² Missouri Convention, March 1861, 52.

spent justifying this decision as well as figuring out a way to peacefully reassemble the Union. The delegates' final resolution noted that Missouri could not last against the North, as it was bordered by too many pro-Union states. It would be wiser to seek neutrality and avoid possible destruction. Though its sympathies still lay with the South, "there exists no adequate cause why Missouri should secede from the Union, and...she will do all that she can to restore peace to the same by satisfactory compromises." It instead should try to bring back the seceding states by showing how peaceful measures within the government and Constitution could work in lieu of violence.⁴³ The results of the convention were a serious blow to Jackson's hopes. There was pro-Southern sentiment throughout the state, but it was not strong enough to drive it into the arms of the Confederacy. Also his military bill, which sought to strengthen and organize the militia into a large defensive force, was put in limbo. He did have some reason to cling to his hope. The majority of delegates resolved that they would not support any "coercive" measures and would indeed "resist and oppose any attempt" to involve Missouri in these measures. Many of the delegates likely meant peaceful resistance, but even that might bring about rougher Federal measures and thus more incentive towards armed resistance. There was also a call at the convention for Federal soldiers to "withdraw" from their forts in the state, in the hopes that this would de-escalate tensions. This was a serious challenge to Federal authority and in fact raised the suspicions of Unconditional Unionists such as prominent house representative Francis Blair, Jr., the brother of President Lincoln's postmaster general Montgomery Blair.⁴⁴

⁴³ Snead, 78-80; Phillips, 239; Missouri Convention, March 1861, 24, 27.

⁴⁴ Missouri Convention, March 1861, 29-30, 46.

Secessionism looked more within Jackson's grasp on April 12. Secessionist forces in Charleston, South Carolina bombarded a Federal garrison in Fort Sumter. The Civil War had begun. Many continued to hope for Missouri's neutrality, but the incident spurred radical secessionists and fervent Unionists to action. Under the direction of Blair, who had a direct link to Lincoln through his brother, the Federal army reinforced the garrison at St. Louis Arsenal, while on the others side of the state Secessionists plotted to seize the weapons depot in Liberty. Jackson did not publicly support secession, but refused to raise any troops to suppress the Confederacy. The question remained that, if forced, which side would most Missourians take? A tragic occurrence in St. Louis would answer that question.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ McPherson, 291.

CHAPTER III

Missouri Swings South

Unionists and Federal officers in Missouri had good reason to believe the state might pitch in with the South. In St. Louis, the most important city in the state, pro-Secessionists formed the Minutemen, a militia group in opposition to similar pro-Union German organizations. These German groups, originating as the Wide Awakes, were the first of the Home Guards, a militia force created with the oversight of representative Francis Blair, Jr. Missouri's German immigrant population, which made up about half of St. Louis' inhabitants, was its most reliable Unionist element. They had fled their European homelands after the failed 1848 revolutions, seeking democracy and republicanism in America. They gave Missouri the sixth largest German-American population in the country. Of the over 88,000 who migrated there, about 50,000 were centered in and around St. Louis. They quickly grew loyal to their new national government and had little liking for the aristocratic slave-holding society of the South. Like most immigrant groups of the time, they had initially aligned with the Democrats, but shifted towards the Republican Party after the Kansas-Nebraska Act. They wanted free soil to the west, not out of any moral concern for the blacks, but because they did not want to have prospective prosperity ruined by competition with free slave labor.⁴⁶

As a result of these immigrants' views, anti-slavery politicians such as William H. Seward made statements such as "Missouri is Germanizing herself to make herself free." In turn, many native-born Americans treated them with contempt and distrust. They called them the "Damned Dutch" and even suspected those who voted Democrat of being

⁴⁶ Blum, 103, 107-108; Gerteis, 10-11.

“Black Republicans at heart.” They viewed the immigrants as “the means for carrying out the objects of the dastard enterprise,” that enterprise being Abolitionism. One Democratic judge wrote to Jackson (before he was governor) that “Yankee abolitionists & German radicals” were out to turn Missouri into a “second Illinois” and were already doing so in the city of St. Louis. The city’s district had gone over to the Republicans in the 1860 election thanks to the efforts of the Wide Awakes. The Wide Awakes were Germans armed with sticks and lanterns. Their job was to protect Republican events. When anti-Republican harassment threatened these events they would respond in force and drive out the perpetrators. The Minutemen recognized the political threat posed by the Germans and were eager to put them down. They blatantly flew the Confederate flag from their headquarters in the hope that this would provoke the German population. If the German militia struck first, then they could play off the prejudices of fence-sitters and rally them to the pro-Southern cause.⁴⁷ While the Minutemen did not achieve this aim in the intended way, something like it would indeed occur.

All across the state towns formed militia units. These could be split into three types. There were pro-Union militias, many of them who did not care about slavery one way or the other, but did not want to see their republic fracture. Germans were a heavy presence in these militias. Their Wide Awakes and Union clubs had quickly undertaken military training. Blair armed them with muskets, but was careful to purchase them from Illinois and Unionists rather than from the St. Louis Arsenal. Doing so would have caused a stir. Then there were legitimately neutral militias who vowed to fight anybody

⁴⁷ Gerteis, 10-11; Phillips, 118; Blum, 110-111; William Henry Schrader, (1844-1921), *Reminiscences*, MHS, 11; Siddali, 41; Goodheart, Adam, *1861: The Civil War Awakening*, (Vintage Books: 2011), 238-239.

who would make them choose a side. Finally there were the pro-secessionist militias, most of the larger ones in the north and west, which would help make up the State Guard, as well as furnish most of its officers. Many of these men had received the onset of war “with joy,” eager to strike a blow for southern independence. One town passed a resolution that the militia would stand up for “Southern Rights” while another saw its women sew together a Confederate flag for the men. Thompson stated in his memoirs that though his men had a seemingly neutral white flag with the Missouri coat of arms, the “Southern blood that was known to flow in our veins, was a sure indication of our proclivities.” The Minutemen in St. Louis plainly stated that in “the event of a disruption of this Union, the honor and safety of Missouri impel her to espouse the cause of the Southern states, and, in such case, we should endeavor to unite all slave-holding States in one Confederacy.” In some cases towns were so divided in sentiment that two militias sprang up in the same place. All claimed self-defense, but it was evident that most were prepared to pitch in with the Union or the Confederacy.⁴⁸

Governor Jackson himself was preparing for a fight, under the auspices of armed neutrality while at the same time pushing for secession in private correspondence. In one April 19 letter to David Walker, a representative from the still unseceded state of Arkansas, he wrote, “From the beginning my own convictions have been that the interest, duty, and honor of every slaveholding state demand their separation from the northern or non-slaveholding states.” Abolitionism was “the most damnable and hellish crusade that was ever waged against any people upon earth.” He urged Arkansas to secede as well due

⁴⁸ Piston, 27-28; Blum, 108-109, 116, 118; Thompson, 52; Suzanne Stacker Lehr, *As the Mockingbird Sang: The Civil War Diary of Private Robert Caldwell Dunlap, C.S.A.*, (St. Joseph: Platte Purchase Publishers, 2005) 14; Siddali, 63.

to strategic considerations. To the south of the state, it blocked a geographic joining with the Confederacy. In Jackson's mind Arkansas' secession would enable Missouri to freely exit the Union.⁴⁹

Jackson was disappointed that secession had not succeeded at the February convention, but he understood that Missourians' Unionism was mostly conditional. If he could prompt some unpopular Federal action, than he could convince his constituents that the Union did not serve and in fact threatened their interests. He would also play on their elevation of state over nation. Under his direction the state legislature passed a bill giving him control over St. Louis's police force. He hoped to use this to stack the police board with pro-secessionists, rendering the city's Federal arsenal vulnerable.⁵⁰ Around this time Jackson made David Frost, the commander of the militia, a brigadier-general of volunteers. At St Louis, Frost took control of the pro-secessionist Minutemen. He did this under the guise of an 1858 law which raised a militia force in each district of Missouri.⁵¹ This was the next step in the creation of the Missouri State Guard. Jackson and his associates also supplied Frost with weapons, including several artillery pieces shipped in from the Confederacy. While publicly proclaiming that the militia was only taking the St. Louis arsenal's contents to defend the state from anyone who would violate her neutrality, Jackson revealed different motivations in some of his private correspondence. "I do not think Missouri should secede today or tomorrow...I want a

⁴⁹ Claiborne Jackson to Hon. David Walker, April 19, 1861, MHS.

⁵⁰ Gerteis, 15.

⁵¹ Snead, 151.

little time to arm the state... Missouri should act in concert with Tennessee and Kentucky. They are all bound to go out, and should go together if possible.”⁵²

These actions did not go unnoticed by the Federal presence. Blair was dissatisfied with the commanders in St. Louis, finding them too cautious or perhaps even too sympathetic to rebellious elements. Indeed Major William Bell, in charge of the St. Louis Arsenal, was a Secessionist in collusion with Jackson and Frost. Blair particularly found the ranking commander, General William S. Harney, soft and inactive. Harney was a true Unionist, but was heavily embedded in pro-Southern culture thanks to his connections, including through marriage, to prominent pro-Southerners. Blair used his connections with his father Francis Blair, Sr. an influential ally of President Lincoln, to place Captain Nathaniel Lyon, an energetic and temperamental man of quick action and a sense of uncompromising morality, in charge of the St. Louis Arsenal.⁵³ Lyon indeed acted fast, using a steamer to move much of the arsenal’s contents across the Mississippi River to Illinois. He further fortified the arsenal with the German Home Guards.

On the other side of the state Governor Jackson ordered Captain George Moorman, a pro-Secessionist attorney, to take his militia, the Independence Grays, to the arsenal at Liberty and seize it. The mission was delegated to Henry L. Routt, an influential attorney in Liberty. Arriving at the arsenal with a force of mounted volunteers, Routt’s only opposition was Major Nathaniel Grant and a book of military regulations. Grant’s attempts to dissuade the men with the rules and articles of war came to naught.

⁵² Claiborne Jackson, “Saint Louis, April 29, 1861,” in *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Forty-Eight Congress, First Session, Vol. XV*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1884.) 3745.

⁵³ OR LII, 489; Blum, 120; Hans Christian Adamson, *Rebellion in Missouri 1861: Nathaniel Lyon and His Army of the West*, (Golden Springs Publishing, 1961), 21.

He had to stand aside while the Secessionists grabbed a brigade's worth of weaponry. Overall the Missourians seized 3 six-pound cannon, 12 cannon barrels, five caissons, 1,000 rounds of artillery ammunition, 1,180 muskets, 250 rifles, 119 carbines, 100 pistols, 420 sabers, 40 swords, 450,000 cartridges, 2,550 pounds of powder, and various other pieces of military equipment. All were carried away in wagons save for the big gun, which was ridden by a Guardsman waving his hat in celebration. Not all of the powder and ammunition could be carried, so it was for the time hidden in haystacks until they could be transported.⁵⁴ Jackson opened up a private correspondence with President Davis about this time. Davis approved of the seizure at Liberty, writing "we look anxiously and hopefully for the day when the star of Missouri shall be added to the constitution of the Confederate States of America."⁵⁵

Equipment was also expected from the Confederacy. Representatives of Jackson's government had already made contact with Confederate authorities in an effort to arm Missouri. They met Confederate officials in Montgomery, Alabama, to procure big guns for Frost's militia. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, shipped large crates of "marble" up the Mississippi. As it turned out these crates contained four artillery pieces, three cannon and one mortar, along with ammunition, all seized from the Federal arsenal in Baton Rouge.⁵⁶ With his artillery, Frost set his men on the outskirts of St. Louis on May 6. They named their base Camp Jackson.

⁵⁴ James E. Payne, "The Taking of Liberty Arsenal," *Confederate Veteran* 38 (January 1930), 15; W.H. Woodson, *History of Clay County, Missouri*, (Topeka, Kansas: Historical Publishing Co., 1920), 124; Michael Gillespie, "The Battle of Rock Creek," *Civil War Times Illustrated* Vol. 30 No. 1 (March/April 1991), 36.

⁵⁵ Snead, 168.

⁵⁶ Carolyn Bartels, *The Civil War in Missouri Day by Day: 1861-1865*, (Two Trails Publishing, 1992), 4; McPherson, 291; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies Vol. III*, (Washington D.C. 1894), 4-5.

Frost's militia had some Confederate arms, but was in a tricky position. They had moved into position too late. Francis Blair, Jr. and Nathaniel Lyon had acted quickly and already secured the arsenal. In fact, much of its contents were now stored safely across the river in Illinois. Still, Camp Jackson remained and Lyon wanted to do something about this potential threat, which everyone knew contained many "secessionists of the boldest and most radical stripe." General Harney, still overall commander in Missouri, restrained him. He ordered Lyon to stay put and focus only on defending the arsenal. Harney also commanded a stop to the arming of pro-Unionists in St. Louis. Blair intervened on Lyon's behalf and gave him the go-ahead. On May 10 Lyon marched the Home Guards out of St. Louis and approached Camp Jackson.⁵⁷

Frost asked Lyon what he was up to, only to learn that he and his men were to be arrested for unlawful assembly. A letter from Lyon accused him and his men of plotting to seize Federal property, of communications with the "so-called Southern Confederacy," and of accepting Confederate weapons and supplies, much of it stolen U.S. government property. Frost protested, assuring Lyon that his men had sworn an oath "to sustain the Constitution and the laws of the United States and of this State [Missouri] against all violence..." His men had all taken the same oath and had only flown US and Missouri flags. However, he admitted that in spite of Lyon's "unconstitutional actions", his men were unprepared for any battle and he thus had no choice but to "comply with your demand." Once Frost's men were disarmed and marched out as prisoners, Lyon found evidence that contradicted Frost's protests. Several of the avenues in Camp Jackson were named after prominent Confederates, including President Jefferson Davis and General

⁵⁷ *The Missouri Democrat*, Monday, May 13, 1861; *OR III*, 371-372.

P.G.T. Beauregard, the latter the South's preeminent war hero. He also found and identified the artillery pieces from the Baton Rouge Arsenal. Here was firm evidence of collusion with the Confederacy.⁵⁸

The seizure of Frost's militia proved unpopular with much of St. Louis' citizenry. Many were upset that the "German rabble, composed of soldiers of the lower element of the city, recruited from the saloons and dives" were marching prominent men from St. Louis to prison. As the Home Guards escorted the prisoners through the streets, onlookers hurled curses and insults at them. A favorite was "Damn the Dutch!" Words turned to violence when shots were heard. This spark to violence remains unclear. Initial reports were heavily biased. Pro-Secessionists claimed that the undisciplined Home Guards cracked under the barrage of insults and fired vengefully into the crowd. Lyon's report as well as other Union sources claimed the crowd had fired on the soldiers first, most specifically one drunkard who stumbled in front of the procession and used his pistol. Whatever the cause, the violence was lopsided in the Home Guards' favor. 28 civilians were killed and dozens more wounded. Worse, there were women and children present in the throng and some of these were among the victims. The most infuriating image that came out of the event was one child who was shot out of his mother's arms.⁵⁹

As tensions rose following the Camp Jackson Affair, the Federal authorities offered parole to the prisoners. Many refused, feeling that their arrest had been completely unlawful and in violation of Missouri's state power. One officer, Emmett MacDonald, "would not sign the Parole of honor," stating that he had "already sworn to

⁵⁸ *OR III*, 4-9, 371-372.

⁵⁹ Daniel O'Flaherty, *General Jo Shelby: Undefeated Rebel*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 57-58; *OR III*, 9.

defend the Flag and Constitution of my Country and I was not to be intimidated by a lot of Dutch.” He ended up in an Illinois court arguing against the illegality of the entire Camp Jackson Affair. His objection that state militia could not be disarmed by the Federal government actually received some serious consideration, but the trial never concluded as he and the others were released. Despite his protestations of loyalty to Constitution and country, MacDonald would join most of the Camp Jackson men in the State Guard to fight these ideals. Most of those who accepted the terms of parole would violate them, arguing correctly that their imprisonment was not exactly lawful. Curiously Colonel Frost not only honored the terms, but when he was released he did not join the State Guard, waiting until Missouri made serious strides towards forming official Confederate units.⁶⁰

As tragic as it was, the Camp Jackson Affair was a boon to the pro-secessionist cause. An aggressive Federal commander, with the backing of the Federal government, had imprisoned the state’s local defense force. He further had recruited the foreign-born men who fired upon men, women, and children. The Camp Jackson Affair “thrilled the State from centre to circumference, and aroused every sentiment of opposition.” Many saw the incident as “invasion, outrage, war – indicating a fixed determination to trample on all the rights, laws, securities, and guaranties of the State.” Thousands who had preferred to stay in the Union while sitting out the war were irate that the Federal government had disarmed and imprisoned their own people. Even a few Unionists questioned their allegiance and some would join the State Guard for a time before their

⁶⁰ Emmett MacDonald, Letter to Sister. 20 May 1861, WICR30997, Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield Civil War Museum, Republic, Missouri; William Jeffrey Bull, *Missouri Brothers in Gray: The Reminiscences and Letters of William J. Bull and John P. Bull*, (Iowa City: Camp Pope Bookshop, 1998), 13; Gerteis, 24-25.

anger cooled and they reverted to their previous stance.⁶¹ A fairly recent immigrant from Illinois was sufficiently stirred to join the militia against the Federal forces. In the northwestern town of Lexington, Confederate flags sprang up, the American flag “set afloat to the winds from all public buildings of the town.”⁶² Jackson’s military bill, which had been stalled for weeks, was speedily passed on May 11, the day after the massacre. Sterling Price was named commanding general of the Missouri State Guard. Given his Conditional Unionism, Price represented his state’s profession of armed neutrality. This appointment was not necessarily well received among pro-Southern elements in the MSG, creating “considerable doubt about our position.”⁶³

Thousands of Missourians now rushed to join the State Guard. The question was could Jackson, Price, and other pro-Confederates effectively channel the outrage into long-lasting Union fervor? Could they convince the majority of Missourians to embrace secessionism and even admittance into the Confederacy? The Missouri State Guard was further recruited and organized. Ironically, in trying to buy time for the recruitment and arming of thousands of Missourians, as well as balance Missourians’ unique political stances with the Secessionist inclination of themselves and their close associates, Jackson and Price made it difficult for Confederates to provide further support.

On the Union side, General Harney sought to calm emotions and avert a civil war within the Civil War. On May 12 he issued a proclamation that promised to preserve peace. He called on local authorities to aid him and for the people “to abstain from the

⁶¹ Bevier, 291; Anderson, 13; Phillips, 52.

⁶² Dr. J.F. Snyder, *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. VII No. 1 (October, 1912), 1; Susan A. Arnold McCausland, “The Battle of Lexington as Seen by a Woman,” *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. VI No. 3 (April, 1912), 127.

⁶³ Thompson, 55.

excitements of public meetings and heated discussions.” He further announced his intention to use disciplined regular army troops instead of the Home Guards. In a letter to current Secretary of War Simon Cameron he suggested bringing in a regiment of Irish troops to counteract the presence of the reviled German soldiers.⁶⁴ A few days later he issued another proclamation in response to the passage of Governor Jackson’s military bill. He saw the bill as another incendiary incident. He implored Missourians to disregard the bill and think instead of how their state’s destiny was much more tied to the Union than the rebellious states. He pointed out that the militia camp had a street named after Bereaugard and was partially supplied by arms taken from a federal arsenal in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This shows that Harney was aware of the Confederate connections of the Jackson administration, yet unlike Lyon he sought to avert a secessionist Missouri through moderate, peaceful methods rather than aggressive action.⁶⁵

Harney communicated with Sterling Price, asking him to disband the State Guard. Price responded that this would violate the state’s laws, but did temporarily disband his concentration of Guardsmen at Jefferson City. Men were technically sent home, but to train and organize within their divisions.⁶⁶ The two came up with a truce, the Price-Harney Agreement. The Federal army would control the area around St. Louis while the State Guard would manage the rest of the state. These forces would be peacekeepers, with the Federal Army protecting the rights of Secessionists and the State Guard ensuring that Unionists were not harmed. While the truce was in effect the military bill was to be revised. In post-war writings, veterans of the State Guard and Jackson’s government saw

⁶⁴ OR III, 370, 373.

⁶⁵ OR III, 371-372.

⁶⁶ OR LIII, 689.

this as a promising deal that was violated by Lyon. But what actually occurred under the State's Guard's jurisdiction shows that the Secessionists did not honestly carry out their end of the deal.

Jackson and Price saw the Price-Harney Agreement as a way to forestall Federal advances while they tried to cobble together an army in the countryside. Secessionists seized 15,000 pounds of lead at Lebanon to make more bullets. In St. Joseph Jeff Thompson led a pro-secessionist throng in taking down an American flag and tearing it to pieces. They quickly hoisted the Confederate banner in its place. There were also many incidents of harassed Unionists. German immigrant Nicholas Haerle headed a pro-Union meeting in Lexington's courthouse. Not long into the meeting 50 secessionists barged in and rushed the stage. They seized the American flag and when Haerle attempted to stop them they beat the Unionist badly, shooting him in the leg. While Hearle was recovering at home the mob returned and told him, in the name of Jefferson Davis, to leave or suffer the consequences. Hearle had to flee for his life. Harney further asked Price about a troubling concentration of Guardsmen near the Arkansas border. This suggested that the State Guard was in contact with Confederate forces. Between this and the attacks on Unionist civilians he might have to raise more Home Guard units.⁶⁷

Price quickly denied any involvement by the Missouri state government or State Guard in these events, and professed ignorance of any interventionist actions by the Confederacy. If the rumors proved true, he claimed he would see to the immediate exit of the Confederates from the state. As for the attacks on citizens, Price insisted they were

⁶⁷ OR III, 378; Editors of the Missouri Historical Company, *History of Lafayette County, Missouri*, (Saint Louis: Missouri Historical Co., 1881), 329-330; Larry Wood, *The Siege of Lexington, Missouri: The Battle of the Hemp Bales* (History Press. 2014, kindle edition), loc. 94-118; Snead, 185-187.

the actions of rash individuals. He warned that to raise more Home Guard units would be “injudicious, if not ruinous, to the peace of the State.”⁶⁸ Governor Jackson and his cabinet publicly supported the Price-Harney Agreement, but in private correspondence with President Davis complained that it was another method of subverting local state power, as it still left eastern Missouri under the rule of the Federal government. Lieutenant-Governor Reynolds admitted that the governor himself had no proper authority to contact a foreign power for aid, as Missouri was still “nominally” Union, but considering the unusual and unprecedented state of affairs felt that it was his own “high moral duty” to approach the Confederacy and prepared to travel to Richmond to foster further relations⁶⁹

While Price and his associates took advantage of the truce and pulled the wool over Harney’s eyes, other pro-Confederate Missourians found the Price-Harney Agreement detrimental to their efforts. General Thompson and other avid secessionists lambasted the “temporizing and vacillating” attitude of their leaders. Thompson felt that “we were sold” by the agreement, especially when he was ordered to temporarily disband his militia. He himself ignored the agreement and left the state in search of Confederates willing to provide arms and other equipment.⁷⁰ Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Reynolds sought official Confederate support. While he was able to get some, it was impossible to get full acknowledgment as a member of the Confederacy until Missouri passed a secession ordinance. Confederate officials in Arkansas and other nearby states appeared hesitant to supply arms, promises of military intervention, or other assistance in light of the Price-Harney Agreement. They could not discern whether it was a genuine neutrality

⁶⁸ OR III, 378-381.

⁶⁹ OR LIII, 692-694.

⁷⁰ Thompson, 55, 60-61; Phillips, 256.

act or was a “reprehensible” trick to buy time for a military buildup as well as to negotiate entry into the Confederate cause. There was even a theory that Jackson and Price were steering the state back to unionism. A Missouri commission was assembled to go to Richmond, Virginia, and meet personally with President Jefferson Davis to remove such doubts and gain firmer support.⁷¹

While the commission traveled east, major developments ended the Price-Harney Agreement and finally plunged Missouri into full war. The Union leadership tired of Harney’s peace-seeking efforts. Citing incidents of harassment and armament across the state, Blair and Lyon reported that the truce did not promote Missouri’s neutrality, but instead provided cover for a festering rebellion. This led to Harney’s dismissal at the start of June, and Lyon took his place. After learning of his dismissal, Harney continued to argue that there was no great secessionist threat in Missouri, that the stories were exaggerations and rumors. “My confidence in the honor and integrity of General Price, in the purity of his motives, and in his loyalty to the Government, remains unimpaired.” He cited Price’s presidency at the State Convention that voted against secession. Price’s actions since then only “served to confirm the high opinion of him I have for many years entertained.” Harney was evidently a victim of Price’s attractive personality.⁷² While many within the Confederacy could not figure out the stance of Jackson’s government and the Missouri State Guard, the Union was much quicker to label them as rebellious. The problem was that by publicly proclaiming armed neutrality, Missouri did not make any solid commitment to the Confederate cause. Yet even if it did not come out on the Confederate side, its actions still displayed a rebellious attitude towards the Federal

⁷¹ Reynolds, 32-33.

⁷² OR III, 383.

government. An uncooperative state, even one not in the Confederacy, endangered and hampered the Union war effort in the West, especially one with valuable river access and rail networks. Also, there were many Missourians who wanted to serve with the Union, and the Federal government did not want to have their wishes to serve their country precluded by local government.

Lyon's ascendance to command threatened the Price-Harney agreement. Price even saw his appointment as a violation of the agreement and grew bolder in his recruitment and armament of the State Guard. However, not everyone gave up on the truce and a meeting was arranged. Governor Jackson, Price, and Thomas Snead met up with Lyon and Blair at the Planters' House near St. Louis. Jackson and Price's strategy was to converse more with Blair, who they believed could be reasoned into prolonging the agreement. However, Lyon hijacked the conversation. Though his manner was more impassioned, he proved to be well-informed of Missouri politics and held his own in arguing and debating with Price and Jackson. The meeting dragged on for several hours as the participants argued in circles. Price and Jackson insisted the Federal government had no right to raise troops in Missouri, while the Union side claimed that the Missouri State Guard was subverting Federal authority. Lyon finally came to a dramatic conclusion that did not bode well for peace.

"Rather than concede to the State of Missouri the right to demand that my Government shall not enlist troops within her limits, or bring troops into the State whenever it pleases, or move its troops at its own will into, out of, or through the State; rather than concede to the State of Missouri for one single instant the right to dictate to my Government in any matter however unimportant. I would see you, and you, and you,

(he pointed to the three Missourians as he said these words) and every man, woman, and child in the State, dead and buried. This means war. In an hour one of my officers will call for you and conduct you out of my lines.”

With that war had finally arrived.⁷³

Jackson did take advantage of this to declare Missouri’s war against the Federal government and stoke his Secessionist agenda, while still not outright announcing any alliance with the Confederacy. He started with a list of “unprovoked and unparalleled outrages” on the part of the Federal government. “The solemn enactments of your Legislature have been nullified, your volunteer soldiers have been taken prisoners, your commerce with your sister States has been suspended, your trade with your own fellow-citizens has been and is subjected to the harassing control of an armed soldiery, peaceful citizens have been imprisoned without warrant of law,” and, raising the specter of Camp Jackson, “unoffending and defenseless men, women, and children have been ruthlessly shot down and murdered...” Jackson lamented that:

All our efforts toward conciliation have failed. We can hope nothing from the justice or moderation of the agents of the Federal Government in this State. They are energetically hastening the execution of their bloody and revolutionary schemes for the inauguration of civil war in your midst; for the military occupation of your State by armed bands of lawless invaders; for the overthrow of you State government; and for the subversion of those liberties which that Government has always sought to protect; and they intend to exert their whole power to subjugate you, if possible, to the

⁷³ Snead, 198-199.

military despotism which has usurped the powers of the Federal Government...You are under no obligation whatever to obey the unconstitutional edicts of the military despotism which was enthroned itself in Washington, not to submit to the infamous and degrading sway of its wicked minions in this State...Rise, then, and drive out ignominiously the invaders who have dared to desecrate the soil which your labors have made fruitful...⁷⁴

Despite this militaristic call to arms, Jackson still declared near the end of his proclamation that “Missouri is still one of the United States,” a concession to Conditional Unionists with some ramifications. This put Missouri outside the Confederacy, yet in obvious opposition to the Federal government. This put it in danger from the Union army while not adequately inviting protection from the Confederacy.⁷⁵ A comparison can be drawn to Kentucky’s own attempt at neutrality. Kentucky’s governor Beriah Magoffin was also pro-Southern in his sympathies. Unlike Claiborne Jackson, however, Magoffin respected the majority of the Kentuckians’ views, which was armed neutrality, and had no intention of thwarting the majority of the state through schemes. While both the Union and Confederacy plotted to swing Kentucky into their camp, Magoffin never gave them sufficient pretext. Kentuckians who wanted to fight for the Confederacy had to exit the state and enlist in the national Confederate army. While Kentucky would still become a battleground, both in the conventional and guerilla sense, it at least chose a side, the Union, before it entered the war. The cause of this was a Confederate movement into the southwestern corner of the state, a movement which violated its neutrality. Kentucky’s

⁷⁴ Governor’s Proclamation, June 12, 1861, Claiborne Fox Jackson File, Mss. 2447.

⁷⁵ OR LIII, 696-698.

move towards the Union after Confederate intervention likely set off warning bells for the Confederacy. A Union shift in Missouri could occur if similar actions were committed there. Kentucky also did not expose its militia army to danger until it was ready to choose a side.⁷⁶ By contrast the Missouri State Guard in 1861 was exposed. It would have to go it alone for a bit, and it needed to organize and supply itself fast.

⁷⁶ McPherson, 294-297; William C. Davis, *The Orphan Brigade: The Kentucky Confederates who Couldn't Go Home*, (Doubleday, 1980), 24-25.

CHAPTER IV

Price's Army

The Missouri government naturally gave command of the State Guard to the popular and histories Sterling Price. In addition to his experience in the Mexican War, he was an inspiring and prominent figure who could easily rally thousands to the cause. It was also believed that he would be more level-headed than the other officers who were taking command of the volunteers.⁷⁷ Most post-war accounts by State Guardsmen were enamored with him for his bravery and general kindness (which sometimes translated to soft discipline). In the memories of the State Guard he was like George Washington. One former Guardsman provided the following glowing description of him from the Battle of Lexington:

During the heaviest part of the combat, General Price galloped up, covered with dust, his fine face glowing with the excitement of exercise, and his eye kindling with the fire of battle. Perfectly self-possessed, he seemed not to heed the storm of grape and canister, and taking his position in the rear of the battery, directed the handling of the guns. Many of the officers urged him to retire or dismount, but with perfect coolness he kept his position. While here, I observed a grape-shot strike his field glass, breaking it in pieces. Without the slightest apparent emotion, he continued giving his orders. Remaining about twenty minutes, he retired, leaving a

⁷⁷ Reynolds, 25-26.

lasting impression upon his men, who have ever loved him as their chief, and admired as their ‘beau ideal’ of honor, and chivalry.⁷⁸

Yet Price had his contemporary critics. Among them was Lieutenant-Governor Reynolds. Reynolds recalled how in the Mexican War, Price disobeyed orders to hold back and instead attacked and defeated a Mexican force. This victory ended in what could be considered a massacre of Mexicans. Reynolds “was struck” by how proudly Price recalled this act of indiscipline. He theorized that this successful violation of military orders revealed a “tendency...to action independently of his official superiors, almost to the extent of insubordination.”⁷⁹ Reynolds believed he detected in Price another pattern of “confident predictions of success, bold advances, bewilderment when real danger of failure appeared, and precipitate disorderly retreat from it.” Price would boldly seek battle, but balk if events proved more difficult than anticipated. If Reynolds is to be believed, Governor Jackson came to recognize this pattern and regret his appointment of Price as “the greatest mistake of his life.”⁸⁰ But these are arguments made with hindsight, when Price’s strategic and tactical failings, and more importantly his poor relationship with Confederate leaders, were known. At the time Price was the best option to rally and unite thousands of Missourians in an ostensibly Missourian cause.

The idea of the Missouri State Guard was not unique. Several other states had their own state guards, some formed prior to the war. Arkansas had its own state troops which would fight alongside Missourians at Wilson’s Creek. The other neutral border

⁷⁸ Ephraim Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal; including the Campaigns of the First Missouri Confederate Brigade*, (Saint Louis: Times Printing Co., 1868), 65.

⁷⁹ Reynolds, 14.

⁸⁰ Reynolds, 31-32.

state, Kentucky, formed a State Guard a year earlier in response to John Brown's raid. Since it was formed to prevent any major slave uprising, the Kentucky State Guard was mostly made up of pro-Confederates. Because of this Unionists viewed it with the same level of intense suspicion which they directed towards the Missouri State Guard.⁸¹ The MSG stood out because when it did fight, it would technically do so as its own separate faction instead of mustering into Confederate service.

The Missouri State Guard was to be divided into nine divisions. These were not traditionally-sized divisions and in fact were very uneven in their numbers. Each division was made up of men from one of the nine assigned military state districts. As a result, divisions representing more fervently secessionist areas from the west and south of the state had a tendency to be much larger, while those in the north and east had difficulty coalescing amidst the presence of Federal army units or lack of southern sentiment. Also, many of the listed units within the divisions were greatly under-sized according to military norms. Some of the "regiments" were little larger than a company. This meant that there were proportionately more officers in the ranks. In fact, it was so hard to keep track of the various units that they were referred to by their commanding officers' names.⁸²

The head of each division was a prominent Missourian with some military or militia experience. As politicians they were all good at inspiring men to sign up and notably most were pro-Southern and defenders of slavery in their chosen careers. Only a couple of them had professional soldiering experience, but most did have involvement in

⁸¹ Davis, 1980, 9.

⁸² Peterson, 24.

past military conflicts against the American Indians or in the Mexican War. There were actually about a dozen West Point And Virginia Military Institute graduates among the generals and other officers who provided valuable knowledge and leadership. In short, though there were few professional officers in the highest ranks, there was much military experience spread around. The issue was the difficult conditions for training the men, as the State Guard would constantly find itself responding to a fluctuating political situation in the early months of 1861 and then constant Federal incursions.⁸³ The generals of the State Guard, Price included, sported massive staffs. This was criticized by some as a ridiculous proliferation of officers, calculated to enable generals to put their relatives and friends in high-ranking positions. Defenders have stated that without the war department apparatus of the regular armies, the State Guard needed these oversized staffs to compensate.⁸⁴

The First Division represented the southeastern portion of the state, bordering Arkansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Nathaniel W. Watkins was given command of the division, but chose only to fill its ranks with his political influence before resigning. Having been born in 1796, he reasoned he was too old to actually lead his division on campaign and left his position to be filled by an election. The winner was Jeff Thompson, who in the pre-war militia had risen to the rank of captain and division inspector. As a prominent citizen and former mayor of the town of St. Joseph, he was pushing for Missouri's secession before almost anyone else. He had taken down the American flag in

⁸³ Peterson, 14-15.

⁸⁴ Peterson, 21.

St. Joseph and replaced it with a Confederate one.⁸⁵ Ironically St. Joseph, Thompson's residence, sat in the northwestern and thus opposite corner of the state from the First Division's district. Believing Missouri to have been "sold" to the Union by the Price-Harney Agreement, Thompson was en route to southern territory in hopes of serving in the regular Confederate Army when full war was declared in Missouri. On the way back he literally rode into the camp of the First Division and delivered a fiery pro-secession speech that got him elected to command. One veteran recalled that "with the exception of Gen. Price, there is, perhaps, no man around whom the Missourians would more enthusiastically rally..."⁸⁶ Thompson would end up waging a separate campaign from Price, fighting a guerilla-style war in his corner of the state. Despite resorting to less conventional means of warfare, he would have a somewhat more harmonious relationship with neighboring Confederate forces across the Mississippi River.

The Second Division, in Northeastern Missouri, was handed to Thomas A. Harris, a consul for a railroad. Harris was a military enthusiast who went off to fight at the age of 12 in the admittedly bloodless Mormon and Honey Wars (the latter was a border dispute between Missouri and Iowa), and likewise was unable to fight in the Mexican War because it ended right as his regiment was ready to leave Missouri. Harris did go to West Point, but for unknown reasons did not graduate. In 1861 he initially found his division himself cut off from the rest of the State Guard, given his geographic location. Despite the occupation of his assigned district by Federal troops, he managed to raise 2,000 men.

⁸⁵ Doris Land Mueller, *M. Jeff Thompson: Missouri's Swamp Fox of the Confederacy*, (Missouri University Press, 2007), 2, 26; Thompson, 43; Peterson, 39.

⁸⁶ Thompson, 58, 62; "The First Naval Victory on the Mississippi River, by Gen. Jeff Thompson," from H.W.R. Jackson, "Our Naval Victories and Exploits of Confederate War Steamers, etc.," (Atlanta, Georgia: Intelligencer Steam-Power Press, 1863) from Thompson, Meriwether Jeff (1826-1876), Papers, 1854-1935, MHS.

Northeastern Missourians, as described earlier, had a bitter feud with Illinoisan abolitionists. Like Thompson Harris would wage more of a hit-and-run war until he was able to link up with the main body of the State Guard.⁸⁷

The Third Division, situated in the central northern region, fell to John Clark, Sr., a fiery secessionist who owned 160 slaves. From Kentucky he had moved to Missouri to practice law, taking a break to fight in the Black Hawk War (he also nearly got into a duel with Claiborne Jackson when the future governor exposed a private letter of his and criticized its contents and spelling). Starting in 1857 he represented Missouri in Congress, and was still there while he was raising troops to fight the United States government. This effectively made him a traitor-in-office and Congress expelled him.⁸⁸

William Y. Slack led the Fourth Division, in the northwest. Like many other Missourians Slack was born in Kentucky. He practiced law, but had military experience under Price in the Mexican War.⁸⁹ As a member of the state legislature he mainly represented slaveholding society despite having no slaves himself. He was “an able debater at the law and on the stump” and successfully campaigned for Buchanan in the 1856 election. He was one of the few true disciplinarians in the Guard, but was beloved by his men because he had risen from shared humble roots.⁹⁰ He would be held in high

⁸⁷ Bruce S. Allardice, *More Generals in Gray: A Companion Volume to Generals in Gray*, (Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 121-122; “General Thomas Harris,” *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. XXXVII No. 1 (January, 1942), 112; Harris is best known to Civil War aficionados from an episode in *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, 131-132.

⁸⁸ W.D. Vandiver, “Reminiscences of General John B. Clark,” *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. XX No. 2 (January, 1926), 223, 232; Gerteis, 28; Piston, 37.

⁸⁹ Ezra Werner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders*, (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1959), 278.

⁹⁰ Piston, 37-38; Burchett, 87; Y. Slack to Mr. W.Y. Slack, July 11th, 1880 from Slack, William Yarnel (1816-1862), Papers, 1847-1880, MHS.

regard by both Price and Governor Jackson, the latter once telling him “You and Gen. McBride are my salvation.”⁹¹

The Fifth Division, the northwesternmost division, fell to Alexander Steen, who unlike most of the divisional commander had actually been born in Missouri. Steen was the third choice for this position. The first choice, Prominent Mexican War veteran and politician Alexander William Doniphan refused to fight for secession and the second choice, Jesse Morin, felt likewise. On paper Steen was the most qualified Divisional commander in the State Guard. His father Enoch Steen was a Union Army officer (who would stay loyal to the stars and stripes in this war). Steen himself had performed well in the Mexican War, receiving commendations for his repeated bravery. He returned to the army in the 1850s to fight Indians until wounded in 1857. He was named a lieutenant colonel by Claiborne Jackson and was supposed to be at Camp Jackson, but happened to be off on other business when Lyon took it. His credentials were impressive enough that he was made a captain in the Confederate army. Despite his position in the regular army, he decided to stick with the MSG.⁹²

The commander of the Sixth Division was Mosby Monroe Parsons, a Mexican War veteran who then served as Missouri’s attorney general from 1853 to 1857. After that he was elected to the state senate and was an avid supporter of joining the Confederacy. He was so ardent in his cause that he lambasted Governor Jackson for supporting Douglas over Breckinridge and for agreeing to the Price-Harney Agreement.⁹³

⁹¹ Unknown to Mrs. Slack, December 26, 1863 from Slack, William Yarnel (1816-1862), Papers, 1847-1880, MHS; See the paragraph on McBride and the Seventh Division for more information.

⁹² Preston, 154; Allardice, 215-216.

⁹³ Werner, 228-229; Burchett, 76.

Since Thompson, the head of the original First Division, was waging a separate campaign, Price took to calling Parsons' men the First Division in his reports.⁹⁴ The Sixth Division came out of the center of the state.

James H. McBride commanded the Seventh Division in the center south. McBride had served as a lawyer (fellow law practitioners made up his staff and soldiers addressed him as "judge" rather than general), president of the Springfield Bank, and representative in the State House. He had an intimate relationship with his officers and men, holding them together by his personality rather than discipline. A staff officer recalled him as a "clear-headed, silent, courageous man." However, his popularity with his men did not earn much approval from his superiors. Price found McBride too lax in discipline, a damning statement considering that ill discipline was a recurring problem throughout the entire army.⁹⁵ Snead had a more optimistic assessment in his post-war contribution to *Battles & Leaders of the Civil War*, recalling that "while there was no attempt at military discipline, and no pretense of it, the most perfect order was maintained by McBride's mere force of character, by his great good sense, and by the kindness with which he exercised his patriarchal authority."⁹⁶

James Spencer Rains, an avid politician, headed the Eight Division. The eighth military district was situated along the volatile border with Kansas and thus had a large pro-Southern recruiting pool. He started his career as a Whig, but switched to the "Know-Nothing" American party when the former Whigs turned secessionist. Despite his initial

⁹⁴ OR LIII, 710.

⁹⁵ Allardice, 155-156; Ai Edgar Asbury, *My Experiences in the War 1861 to 1865 or A Little Autobiography*, (Kansas City: Berkowitz & Co., 1894), 3; Brooksher, 149.

⁹⁶ Snead, *Battles & Leaders*, 271.

opposition to secession, he gladly accepted a position in the MSG. His only good qualification was his ability to raise thousands of troops and he indeed headed the largest division in the State Guard. He was said to be too kind and let his subordinates and men run all over discipline. It was unfortunate for the State Guard that he did not follow his anti-Secessionist beliefs (ironically Rains would still retain command of his district in 1864, albeit nominally). Known for his over-drinking, he was unpopular with a good many other officers as well as politicians, so much so that a Tenth Division was almost formed to reduce his command. Rains' performance would be a major factor in Confederate General Ben McCulloch's unwillingness to assist the Missourians.⁹⁷ He was somewhat countered by a few competent officers under him, Robert Weightman being a notable example. Weightman had a somewhat violent past, having been expelled from West Point for knifing a fellow student in the face. Years later he got into a serious incident after he disputed an accomplished horse ride in his paper. The horseman confronted him with a pistol and Weightman responded by knocking aside his weapon and killing him with his dagger. Despite his willingness to engage in frontier violence, he proved an able colonel and leader of men, meriting praise and laments from Confederate battle reports after his death at Wilson's Creek.⁹⁸

The Ninth Division was given to Meriwether Clark Sr., a descendant of famed explorer William Clark and a West Point graduate with Mexican War experience. This division practically never came into existence, as it lay right in the same district as St. Louis. It was impossible to get units together with in the midst of a thick Federal presence. Furthermore, the St. Louis area held the largest concentration of the state's

⁹⁷ Allardice, 190-191; Piston, 38; Peterson, 24, 209.

⁹⁸ Payne, 58-59; OR III, 106; Peterson, 212.

Unionists. The few units that did materialize and were able to reach Price's main army were often placed under the leadership of other divisional commanders.⁹⁹

For many recruits the ability to actually make it to a sizeable MSG force was an adventure in itself. Those in Federal-occupied territories could not just march to Price's army in regiments. In addition to Federal patrols there were still many pro-Union civilians ready to snitch on recruits. The Guardsmen had to travel piecemeal in small groups or even as individuals. One group of 600 men found this out the hard way. They undertook an impressive 19 hour march. Their grueling trek yielded no reward, as the tired men were surprised by Federal cavalry and forced to surrender. A civilian they had encountered the day before had turned out to be pro-Unionist and had ratted them out.¹⁰⁰ Another recruit, Robert Caldwell Dunlap, was captured with half of his company by Federal cavalry. To secure his release he had to take an oath not to fight against the Union. As soon as he got home, he decided he could violate his oath since in his view President Lincoln had violated the Constitution.¹⁰¹

One team of river pilots ducked out of ferrying Federal soldiers, slipping away while the commanding Union officer was distracted by two women. They instead signed up in the State Guard as mounted soldiers. One of them, Absalom Grimes, recalled that their horses had to be donated by pro-Southern citizens, and that "no two soldiers wore the same equipment. It would be useless for me to try to describe the appearance of that brigade when mounted. Nothing was uniform except that we all rode astride." Their "sabers" were actually refashioned metal tools. This group was notable for including Sam

⁹⁹ Peterson, 290; Gerteis, 29-30.

¹⁰⁰ T.A. Scott, "Experiences of Missourians," *Confederate Veteran* 7 (April 1899), 22.

¹⁰¹ Lehr, 16-17.

Clemens, the future great American author Mark Twain. If Grimes is to be believed Clemens had a string of misfortune on the trip south, including having to ride a four foot mule.

The journey proved to be as dangerous as it was humorous. Absalom Grimes claims that while he and his fellow recruits were camping out at a barn Federal soldiers arrived. Grimes fired off his double-barrel shotgun and then bolted onto his horse to join the rest in fleeing. Clemens was left behind on his undersized mule and when he caught up was almost mistaken for the enemy and shot. Clemens then injured his ankle while escaping from a barn fire. On top of this he was also suffering from a boil. Clemens considered himself too unfit to continue on, thus exiting the war and saving himself for future literary achievements.¹⁰²

Many of the recruits were also tasked with bringing valuable supplies along with them, including ammunition and powder taken from the Liberty Arsenal and hidden in caches across northwest Missouri. One, Ai Edgar Asbury, “was entrusted with three large wagonloads of powder” to be delivered to the State Guard. The powder was stored in “kegs, half barrels and barrels, with some boxed in tin cans”. The wagons had to go over very rough roads, and their cases began to crack, leaking powder. This kept the drivers “watching and frightened all the way” because one wrong move could engulf the supply team in an explosion. They also had to navigate the large presence of suspicious Unionists. Two of Asbury’s fellow drivers grew so worried that their mission would be

¹⁰² Absalom Grimes, *Confederate Mail Runner*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 2-18.

discovered that they lost their courage and went home, leaving Asbury to manage all three wagons by himself.¹⁰³

Asbury made it with his powder, which was fortunate for the State Guard because it was in a constant shortage of essential supplies from weapons to food. However much the Confederacy struggled to maintain its armies in the early years of the war, the State Guard had it worse. It of course could no longer receive Federal assistance and since it was not part of the Confederacy it could receive scant financial support from that quarter as well. In fact, to pay for the formation and equipage of the State Guard, Jackson's government took \$500,000 from Missouri's banks, and by extension its citizens. The expectation was that once Missouri was a Confederate state, its government would repay the people with public bonds. The banks appear to have mostly approved this, expecting that the furor generated by Federal actions would indeed result in a Confederate Missouri. Pro-Confederate towns and counties borrowed money from the banks to fund their local State Guard units. They and the bankers expected a quick Confederate victory and the return of their money through the promised bonds. This financial scheme proved to have dire consequences for the state. When Missouri's secession did not occur, the money was not paid back to thousands of civilians and the Federal government was not going to give relief to those who funded its enemies. As a result Missourians later found themselves in desperate economic circumstances and more likely to turn to desperate measures such as guerilla warfare and robbery.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Asbury, 3-4.

¹⁰⁴ Mark W. Geiger, "Indebtedness and the Origins of Guerilla Violence in Civil War Missouri," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 75, No. 1 (Feb. 2009), 51-53, 58.

The government's seizure of half a million dollars did somewhat alleviate the State Guard's supply problems. It could be used to purchase goods from seceded states. James Harding was the Guard's quarter-master general, and he found his task unenviable. Harding had received this position back in February and had set about modernizing an arsenal of flintlocks and outdated cannon. He got ahold of some bullet molds from St. Louis and started to produce ammunition. He successfully converted flintlocks into rifled guns, but was unable to make them effective beyond short ranges. More successful was the rifling of three large guns, but these were lost when Lyon seized Camp Jackson.¹⁰⁵

Harding found himself traveling the bordering Southern states in search of equipment he could buy. He went all around the Western Confederacy to procure supplies. He found that regular Confederate units were having their own logistical issues. In Arkansas he was able to gain \$10,000 in bonds from its government, but little else. He had better luck at Fort Pillow in Tennessee, where General Leonidas Polk gave him a considerable amount of supplies. However, delays would ensure that these supplies did not make it to the State Guard until winter.¹⁰⁶

While Harding was away Price put his nephew, Major Thomas Price, and his chief aide Thomas Snead in charge of ammunition and ordnance, a job Snead admitted he was ill-suited for. He could not identify the various types of artillery and knew nothing about ammunition. Fortunately for this particular man he was able to gather a few lower-class people who knew how to devise ammunition on their own. One of these, a mechanic named Andrew M. McGregor, was valuable for devising ammunition molds.

¹⁰⁵ James E. McGhee, *Service with the Missouri State Guard: The Memoir of Brigadier General James Harding*, (Springfield, Missouri: Oak Hills Publishing, 2000), 7-9.

¹⁰⁶ McGhee, 38-39.

The practical experience of these men worked wonders and they daily produced “heaps of bullets, and buck-and-ball cartridges – enough for the immediate wants of the State Guard.” Ammunition shortages were further alleviated after some military successes. Later on, captured round shot from the Battle of Carthage was used to cast molds, giving the artillery pieces actual big shot to spout instead of collections of rocks and small metal objects. Men in the rank-and-file were encouraged to fashion their own cartridges and quickly became experts at “home-made ammunition.” Many of the bullets were made with lead from the Granby Mines in Southwest Missouri. Later on, visiting Confederate ordinance officers would identify this location as indispensable to the war effort in the area and garrison it.¹⁰⁷

Artillery was greatly lacking, but the State Guard was able to scrounge together pieces from various arsenals and militia units. Lexington, the first center for State Guard organization, provided “Old Sacramento,” a 12-pounder brass cannon captured years earlier in the Mexican War. The main function of this dated gun had been to contribute to the fireworks on July 4th. “Old Sac” was a celebrity, and supposedly Colonel Hiram Bledsoe of the artillery would embrace and kiss its barrel after a good performance.¹⁰⁸ In the various battles the large guns often had to be loaded with improvised shot, such as collections of rocks. Like those creating ammunition for the hand weapons, some of the more industrious Guardsmen fashioned their own moulds for shot and used them whenever they had a break from marching.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Snead, 240-242; Castel, 29; OR LIII, 766-767.

¹⁰⁸ McCausland, 128.

¹⁰⁹ McGregor, 3.

There was a severe shortage of rifles. Some companies were fortunate enough to have been in on the sacking of Liberty arsenal, while various militia outfits would have already possessed Enfield rifles or other modern weaponry. The majority of Guardsmen had to bring along their personal firearms. These consisted chiefly of squirrel and hunting rifles. The recruits were practiced shots with them, but the rifles had limited range. In an encounter with Federal troops, they could expect to be hit by volleys of fire well before they could return the favor. One veteran recalled that nearly all his comrades “were armed with shotguns and rifles; it is not, however, to be inferred that all were armed, for some had no guns at all.” Up to the Battle of Wilson’s Creek there were hundreds of men in Price’s command who marched on the campaign trail without any weapons. At best some, like the experienced hunters amongst them, may have carried long knives for close combat.¹¹⁰

The officers attempted to train troops using General William J. Hardee’s highly praised manual of tactics. The men proved to be comically ill-suited for Hardee’s tactics, not through any personal deficiency, but because at the time most were armed with a plethora of hunting rather than standard military rifles. Harding commented, “A force using bayonet and formation tactics without actual bayonets and ranged rifles is not a very imposing or formidable looking movement.” Some Guardsmen, fancying themselves to be expert shots, argued that it would be wiser to fight from the cover of trees and fences and pick off Lyon’s men.¹¹¹ Occasionally there was a man with a

¹¹⁰ Snead, *Battles and Leaders*, 271; Anderson, 25; Mudd, 1909, 393.

¹¹¹ McGhee, 23-24; Hardee was a Confederate general and happened to be posted in neighboring Tennessee. Ironically he was among the generals who consistently refused to provide assistance to the State Guard out of concern from their indiscipline and suspect battle-readiness.

bayonet. One tall and imposing volunteer attracted attention for being the only man in his company to have both a musket and a bayonet. However, he had no scabbard for his bladed extension and insisted on keeping it affixed to the barrel of the musket at all times, even when it was unwise. For example, while using his ramrod to reload his weapon in the heat of battle he slashed open his hand.¹¹²

The shortage of proper military weapons was accompanied by a shortage of proper uniforms. The State Guard had the appearance of an armed civilian mob, which was not far from the truth. Snead recalled, “In all their motley array there was hardly a uniform to be seen, and then, and throughout all the brilliant campaign on which they were about to enter there was nothing to distinguish their officers, even a general, from the men in the ranks, save a bit of red flannel, or a piece of cotton cloth, fasted to the shoulder, or to the arm, of the former.” (A Confederate soldier supposedly once mistook General Price, who was wearing a civilian jacket, for a local farmer and guide).¹¹³ There were uniformed units, storied militia units such as the self-described Washington Blues and Independence Grays. As with many early Civil War units on both sides, the different Guard units created a varied assortment of colors that could cause confusion on the battlefield. There were men in blue, men in gray, some with brown pants sporting red-stripes, and others dressed in the French Zouave style.¹¹⁴ What the Guardsmen did not lack were proper flags. The units did not sport the traditional American or the

¹¹² Thomas H. Bacon in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 51-52.

¹¹³ Snead, 238; William Watson, *Life in the Confederate Army, being the observations and experiences of an alien in the South during the American Civil War*, (New York: Scribner and Ward, 1888), 196.

¹¹⁴ Peterson, 306-307.

Confederate flag, but Missouri's state flag, a blue field with golden coat-of-arms on both sides. The cavalry were to wield nine-foot long guidons with M.S.G. in large gold letters. There was variety here as well, however, with many units adopting unique flags, all with the Missouri coat of arms, but twists such as the First Division's black field with red crosses.¹¹⁵

Food and shelter were other major concerns. In his centennial history Bruce Catton humorously referred to the State Guard's commissary as "the nearest cornfield."¹¹⁶ That was no exaggeration. Like other Confederate armies throughout the war, the soldiers found themselves having to constantly pluck their sustenance from the miles of cornfields. At times it was the only proven edible source of food. One way to spice up their diet was to make lye hominy out of the corn.¹¹⁷ When there was no corn around the guardsmen might be able to rely on lean beef. As for their horses, of which there were many, they had to content themselves with prairie grass. Finally, there were few tents and no real way of paying the troops.¹¹⁸

With all these issues of supply and poor disciplinary measures, the State Guardsmen often took it upon themselves to loot. While all armies in the Civil War were guilty of looting to some extent, the State Guard's actions alienated parts of the Missouri citizenry and, worse, potential Confederate allies at a crucial time. The soft leadership of officers like General Rains meant indiscipline on the battlefield as well as off it. The officers in other units could be expected to at least make serious attempts to prevent or

¹¹⁵ OR LIII, 695; Peterson, 303.

¹¹⁶ Bruce Catton, *Terrible Swift Sword*, (Doubleday & Co. 1963), 15.

¹¹⁷ Payne, 59.

¹¹⁸ Snead, 239.

punish looting, but this was a rare quality in the Missouri State Guard of 1861 and early 1862. One Missourian officer recalled two years later, in a letter to President Davis no less:

In the beginning of the war I thought and hoped everything could be carried on with that decency and regularity that characterized the old army in the field. I soon learned that where untrained officers had to discipline untried men, all of whom were their equals, many their superiors, no such thing was possible...I resigned rather than command a regiment in a mob, and Price's Missouri State Guard became nothing more.¹¹⁹

Confederate generals questioned the reliability of allies who might panic under heavy artillery fire or conversely rush off to action without orders. These were indeed factors that frustrated General Ben McCulloch and Colonel James McIntosh in their summer 1861 campaign.

Without pay and with few supplies, the question is what motivated the rank-and-file of the State Guard, and to what extent did these men devote themselves to military service? In his memoir published several years after the war, veteran Ephraim Anderson had a chapter that gave the prototypical Confederate narrative, that the men fought for states' rights and personal freedom rather than slavery. In fact in this chapter and throughout most of his book, he did not mention slavery at all. In his own recollections Snead dramatically stated that in the State Guard:

there was hardly a man who could not read and write, and who was not more intelligent than the great mass of American citizens; not one who

¹¹⁹ OR XXII part 2, 1060.

had not voluntarily abandoned his home with all its tender ties, and thrown away all his possessions, and left father and mother, or wife and children, within the enemy's lines, that he might himself stand by the South in her hour of great peril, and help her to defend her fields and her firesides. And among them all there was not a man who had come forth to fight for slavery.¹²⁰

This justification, labeled the Lost Cause narrative, has been roundly criticized in the last few decades of Civil War historiography as a myth. But the case is not as clear with the Missouri State Guard. It was true that many pro-secessionists and slavery advocates were within the ranks, especially in command positions. Thompson wrote to an associate years after the war:

I tell you plainly that I never fought the United States because I hated the United States. I never fought the North because I hated the North. I did not desire to be one iota freer than I was under the flag of the Union; but there was an abstract political principle of States rights and four thousand millions of dollars worth of African slaves that I thought could only be saved out of the Union...I was a fair, square, and consistent enemy of Abolitionism and those who fought their battles...¹²¹

Even non-slaveholders felt a stake in the institution. The largely non-slaveholding citizens of southeast Missouri, for example, were firmly pro-Confederate because black slavery was a measuring stick for white freedom. Of at least 35,000 men to pass through

¹²⁰ Snead, 238; Anderson, 116-123.

¹²¹ Letter to George D. Prentice, Esq., June 16, 1867 from Jeff Thompson Papers, 1854-1935, MHS.

the ranks of the Guard, about 20,000 would stick to national Confederate service for the rest of the war or take up arms as guerillas and partisans. Yet many of the men were indeed motivated by state over national loyalty. The Camp Jackson Affair had seen Federal troops and German outsiders gun down men, women, and children, and the Federal, not Confederate, Army was the one that had invaded the state. Sometimes peer pressure could induce men to pitch in. One man remembered years later that the young son of a family recently arrived from Ohio devoted his service (and indeed lost his life) to the Confederacy, despite having no familial, geographic, or ideological ties with it.¹²² Yet many also came to believe that it was in Missouri's best interests to stick to the Union, or grew disenchanted with the Confederate alliance. They did not feel the threat to slavery that their southern neighbors did. It was not unheard of for men to desert the State Guard or even join a pro-Union militia. One, John McKown from St. Louis, joined the State Guard because he felt that the Federal Government had acted out of the bounds of the Constitution in Missouri, but months later he mustered out and quickly signed up in the Union Army, revealing lack of interest in the overall Confederate cause. It should be noted that his cousin Williams had been among the first to sign up with the Union and this caused much dissension within the greater McKown family.¹²³ This weak allegiance to the Confederacy applied to the Guardsmen's families as well. One veteran recalled a youth who joined the State Guard and died at the Battle of Lexington, yet his family became staunchly pro-Unionist later in the war. He further noted that one young lady who waved a Rebel flag and expressed hatred for the Federals married a Union veteran

¹²² Schrader, 19, MHS.

¹²³ James W. Goodrich (ed.), "The Civil War Letters of Bethiah Pyat McKown. *Missouri Historical Review* 67, (January 1973), 231, 242.

and devout Republican after the war.¹²⁴ For a considerable number of Guardsmen allegiance to Missouri could be followed at the expense of any devotion or alliance to the Confederate cause. The Guard also shed members for other causes. In the 1861 campaigns there were many men who would join up for a battle for a few days and then leave to work on their farms. As harvest time approached in 1861, thousands in Price's Army left, with or without permission, to tend to their livelihoods.¹²⁵ Others simply decided that soldiering was not for them. Ironically one of these deserters was William Quantrill, who re-entered the war as an infamous anti-Federal bushwhacker when he was caught up in the partisan violence of the countryside.¹²⁶

These factors go a long way in explaining some of the tensions that would wrack the Missouri-Confederate alliance. Several times in 1861 Price threatened to act without regard to McCulloch's authority or harassed him to attempt a reconquest of the whole state instead of a more careful military campaign. McCulloch likely felt that the Missourians were too dead-set on setting Trans-Mississippi Confederate policy. He certainly was not enthused with the constant desertions, short enlistment terms (little more than six months),¹²⁷ lax security, and other disciplinary issues riddling his allies. As long-term partners, the State Guard was not a reliable force except as a buffer between Arkansas and the Union Army.

¹²⁴ O'Flaherty, 53; Schrader, 21-22, MHS.

¹²⁵ McGhee, 45-46; Cutrer, "Price and McCulloch are Fighting Each Other Harder than They are Fighting the Enemy: Divided Command and the Loss of Missouri," in *Confederate Generals in the Trans-Mississippi*, Vol. 2, (University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 8; In several 1861 battles, civilians rushed in from the countryside to pitch in and grab some loot before heading back home. Though their transitory service caused issues, they did provide more punch in the battles and reduced the strain on logistics when they left.

¹²⁶ Duane Schultz, *Quantrill's War: The Life and Times of William Clarke Quantrill*, (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 69.

¹²⁷ Peterson, 24.

The historian Albert Castel is perhaps correct in stating that Price's main mission of rescuing Missouri from the Union was "the tragic yet natural miscalculation of his entire career."¹²⁸ Secession was simply not that popular a cause among his men except as a way to free Missouri. Their ties with the Confederacy could only be maintained as long as they were convinced that the Federal government was out to suppress and oppress Missourians. Also, in such a divided state, unsure Missourians were likely to back a winner, and that meant Jackson and Price needed to win some battles soon.

¹²⁸ Castel, 284.

CHAPTER V

The Carthaginian War

In military terms the State Guard now found itself in a dicey position. It was still not ready for a full war and its forces were scattered across the state. Price quickly ordered the State Guard's main armory at Jefferson City moved south to Boonville, considered more defensible thanks to a sympathetic populace. Clark's Third Division was to gather there. If driven out it would merge with Parsons' Sixth Division further south. As soon as Price reached Boonville he headed north to Lexington. There had been skirmishing near there and he felt that this was where the action would be. But as it turned out Lyon was bringing the bulk of his force to bear on Boonville, moving much faster than anticipated. He intended to capture or drive out Jackson and his government. Governor Jackson found himself in charge of military operations and sent a force under John S. Marmaduke north to delay Lyon. While Marmaduke fought Lyon, Parsons could make his way up to bolster the defenses.¹²⁹

Parsons' men used whatever horses and wagons were available to reach the battlefield. They did not get past Boonville, however. Upon arriving there they were displeased to find a scarcity of weapons, and not all of it military grade. Ephraim Anderson described the men's predicament. "Our company had about eight guns, and these were the common rifle and double-barreled shotgun... Whether to go on or, or turn back, was now the question. Arms, but of a rather indifferent description, could be obtained at home, and without any, our commands would not be very efficient."

¹²⁹ Snead, 211-212.

Ultimately, with battle imminent, the company captains decided it would be better to wait and hope that Jackson's government would deliver the promised arms.¹³⁰

Lyon and Marmaduke met on June 17. The battle seemed to start well for the State Guard. This was due to Lyon's overestimation of enemy strength. He responded slowly to the opening shots by deploying his artillery. Once Lyon had set everything up, the State Guard learned how outmatched it really was. The Union artillery had considerable effect on the green Guardsmen. Sharpshooters within the Guard's ranks had boasted that they would pick off Federal officers and discombobulate the enemy. Now, with shells bursting around them, they found themselves unable to focus and line up their shots. The Guardsmen who had enthusiastically rushed to their state's defense "began to realize we had taken no child's play on our hands." Marmaduke withdrew to a dense wood and some buildings to form a stronger defense. Lyon responded by bringing up his whole force into line of battle. Marmaduke was then ordered to fall back to meet with Parsons. However the undertrained MSG found it difficult to withdraw under fire and instead found itself in a rout. Kelly's Company, the best-trained unit in the State Guard at the moment, had been left behind to man Boonville's defenses. A mounted group of 80 men arrived to support them but, upon seeing the superior Federal force, they had a democratic vote and elected to ride away without a fight. With no support, Kelly was forced to withdraw.¹³¹

The 80 mounted horsemen were part of Parsons' division, which was sent to stem the tide of retreat. But with little arms themselves, they could not do much good.

¹³⁰ Anderson, 15-17.

¹³¹ Snead, 212-214; Andrew McLean McGregor, *Rambling Reminiscences of an Old Soldier during the War Between the States*, (Hattiesburg: 1912), 1; McGhee, 29, 32-33.

Furthermore the men in the Sixth Division came across Marmaduke's routed men, all telling terrifying stories of a great, bloody defeat. Parsons' men joined the mass of fleeing Guardsmen.¹³² Many historians have argued that for its miniscule numbers in participants, losses, and time, the Battle of Boonville was decisive, throwing off the State Guard before it could effectively organize and placing most of the state's important locations under Federal control. The one-sided defeat certainly had an effect on Missouri's mind-sets. One semi-literate soldier admitted that they all "kam near getting seard to death" and "hat to run like turkis." He and some of the others, disenchanted by the panicked defeat, switched sides days later. Following the battle, Lyon issued a proclamation offering amnesty to any Guardsman who switched sides or simply left the army. Hundreds took him up on this offer and hundreds of potential recruits shied away from replacing the MSG's losses. Others abandoned their wagons and ran into the woods. Over the following weeks those that did not give up tried to make their way to Price and his army. This proved to be difficult as the Union now controlled the Missouri River and all its crossings. One advantage was that the men were in civilian attire and, if they traveled in small bands, could slip through the guards and sneak across the river.¹³³

Snead recalled that this tiny battle was a "stunning blow" to Missouri's southern sympathizers. The ripple effects from this encounter "did incalculable and unending injury to the Confederates." The quick defeat and the rout of Jackson's government made outright secession impossible. Furthermore, the MSG at or coming toward Boonville dispersed, leaving a large chunk of Missouri open to Lyon's men. The battle was a serious logistical as well as political blow. The territory lost included the wealthiest, most

¹³² Anderson, 17-18.

¹³³ Mengel, 4; Anderson, 19-21.

populous, and pro-MSG counties, putting a strain on the MSG's already thin resources.¹³⁴ Quarter-Master General Harding, already low on means of transportation, also had little time to get the State Guard's supplies out of town. He was able to evacuate the ammunition and powder in a large water cistern. Everything else had to be destroyed. The victorious Lyon reported that "Two pieces of artillery were taken (iron 6-pounders). Considerable camp equipage and about 500 stand of arms of all sorts were taken. About 60 prisoners taken were released upon oath to obey the laws of the General Government and not oppose it during the present civil troubles."¹³⁵ In terms of killed and wounded, both sides only suffered under 20.

Things were not going well on the diplomatic front either. When Lieutenant-Governor Reynolds and the Missouri commission reached the Confederate capital at Richmond, they found that doubts about their state's status plagued the highest levels of Confederate government. President Davis told Reynolds of the contradictory behavior displayed by Missouri's leadership. Particularly he said the Confederacy was confused by the alternating support and opposition to the entry of Confederate troops. He asked, "If I agree to send Confederate troops into Missouri at your request, can you give me any guarantee that Mr. Lincoln may not propose and Governor Jackson assent to the agreement rejected by General Lyon, and compel these troops to retire before their joint forces?" Reynolds himself did not know and could give no guarantee.¹³⁶ Not helping matters was the failures of the State Guard. Victory was needed. Fortunately victory was around the corner.

¹³⁴ Snead, 214-215.

¹³⁵ McGhee, 29-30; OR III, 13-14.

¹³⁶ Reynolds, 36-37.

The armies in Missouri found themselves in a race. Price's force was rushing south from Lexington to escape entrapment by two Federal forces and then to link up with the rest of the Missouri State Guard, under the command of Governor Jackson himself. Price himself rode alone and ahead of his men, making his way for Arkansas. There he hoped to facilitate a Confederate intervention under General Ben McCulloch.¹³⁷ One of the pursuing Federal forces was Lyon's, fresh off its victory at Boonville. The other was led by General Franz Sigel, a German immigrant who had gained his position through military experience in the Revolution of 1848 and more importantly his massive popularity among other German immigrants, a large pool for recruitment. He would go down in history as one of the most incompetent long-running Union generals and his actions in the summer of 1861 would presage that reputation. His gray-clad German-Missourian troops pursued Jackson's force, occupying Springfield along the way. Sigel's occupation of the prominent Missouri town was heavy-handed. Citizens who may or may not have been treasonous were arrested, exacerbating local anti-German sentiment. However, many of the citizens remained staunch Unionists as evidenced by a later mass exodus following a Confederate victory over a month later.¹³⁸ Around this time General John C. Fremont, the first Republican presidential candidate and a frontier hero, was put in overall command of the Union's western theatre. He would manage the Unionization of Missouri from St. Louis while Lyon led the main force in the field.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ David C. Hinze, *Carthage: Border War in Southwest Missouri, July 5, 1861*. 55.

¹³⁸ Larry Wood, *Civil War Springfield*, (History Press. November, 2011. Kindle Edition), 30.

¹³⁹ Brooksher, 110.

While pursued by Sigel, the State Guard's fortunes started to change. A group of German Home Guards was reported to be in their way of retreat at Cole Camp, Benton County. Upon arriving there on June 19, they learned that a battalion of 350 State Guardsmen had already surprised the camp at night, driving out or capturing the Germans (who were undisciplined and fairly drunk). This small victory cleared the way for a successful retreat and also added several hundred Guardsmen to the ranks of the main force. Jackson's army then came across two artillerists, Captain Henry Guibor and Lieutenant William Barlow. They had been captured at Camp Jackson and were keen to disregard the rules of parole. These were trained artillerists and put together a fairly effective battery. Rains and Slack's divisions, marching from Lexington, linked up with Jackson. Parsons had seniority, but Rains had more men (3,000) and more knowledge of the area, so Jackson placed him in command. Jackson also had tension with Parsons, remembering that he had strongly opposed secession. This caused considerable confusion in the chain of command, with battle reports going to both Jackson and Rains.¹⁴⁰

By the start of July the fight was back in the Missouri State Guard. Hearing that Sigel had encamped at the town of Carthage, the State Guard was imbued with "new life" and marched quickly to confront him.¹⁴¹ Now Sigel felt threatened and marched west to buy time for Lyon to come to his aid. Sigel was understandably worried given the disparity in numbers. He had 1,100 men and the State Guard 6,000. He may have been less worried if he knew that a third of the opposing force lacked weapons of any kind, and of those who possessed them many held short-ranged hunting rifles. If he fought the

¹⁴⁰ Kenneth E. Burchett, *The Battle of Carthage, Missouri: A History of the First Trans-Mississippi Conflict of the Civil War*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Incorporated Publishers), 10, 76-77, 84; Snead, 215-216; Hinze, 74; Snead, 217-219; Brooksher, 100-101.

¹⁴¹ Carthage (Mo.). Civil War battle memoir. MHS.

battle correctly, Sigel could utilize his technological edge for a victory. The forces met on July 5, west of Carthage. It was a clash of Missourians against Missourians, a microcosm of Americans against Americans.

The Missouri State Guard took position “on a high ridge of prairie, gently sloping southward, with undulations to a creek about one mile and a quarter distant. In front of our right was a large field of corn extending to the timber on the creek.” Because of the inexperience of most of the MSG officers and the lack of time to train the men, the infantry could not really form proper lines of battle, only a jagged approximation. Unarmed men either stood behind the lines or stood with the others to bolster the army’s appearance. Rains sent the mounted men, many of them also unarmed, on the flanks. Seeing this large force arrayed against him, Sigel halted his men and unlimbered his big guns. His infantry took cover behind a low hill and in the timber.¹⁴²

By the standards of the great Civil War battles, the artillery duel was light on casualties, but was still a tremendous experience for the green soldiers. The Guardsmen were ordered to lie down, letting most of the shells fly over them. The men were not so much nervous as frustrated at having to sit still and not fight the enemy. The rebel guns did not hit many targets, but effectively kept the equally green Federals on edge, sending them scurrying for cover in the timber. The stalemate was broken by the mounted men. Both Parsons and Rains sent theirs towards the Federal flanks. Many of the horsemen were unarmed and could only hope to intimidate or distract the enemy. They succeeded in this, convincing Sigel’s artillery to divert fire towards them. The decisive moment came when men under future famed cavalry raider Jo Shelby tore down a rail fence and

¹⁴² OR III, 20-22; S.H. Ford, *Reminiscences of S.H. Ford*, (1909), 3.

got into Sigel's flank, just as the Union battery there ran out of ammunition. Threatened by the masses of horsemen crawling towards his rear, the German-born general ordered a withdrawal.¹⁴³

What followed was a running battle. Sigel's force had to cross many creeks to get back to Carthage and skirmishes erupted along the crossings. Governor Jackson had a tremendous opportunity to trap the much smaller Federal force, but his army was too inexperienced to pull off such a move. Neither he nor Rains had the skill to quickly coordinate a pursuit. Everybody surged forward at once in what adjutant-general Snead admitted to be a "rabble." The divisional and brigade commanders tried to find ways to cross the fords under enemy fire or to find paths that would take them around the enemy. Promising routes turned out to be detours or required halts to dismantle obstacles such as rail fences. Parsons even donated his private carriage in order to get the men across one of the creeks faster. Mounted units split off in an attempt to run ahead of the enemy. Sometimes the horsemen did make it in front of a unit of retreating Unionists, but did not have the strength of arms to effectively stand in their way. Others were distracted by the prospect of looting ditched Federal supplies.¹⁴⁴

The battle reached the town of Carthage itself. There was no solace for Sigel's column. The disorganized elements of the State Guard continued to harry it. One group of Rebels entered the town from the west and broke ranks at the sight of Federal artillery, looking for buildings, fences, and other structures from which to snipe. This was another tactical mistake on the part of the Guardsmen, who were now too scattered and unable to

¹⁴³ OR III, 21-26. Burchett, 121-122; O'Flaherty, 69-70.

¹⁴⁴ OR III, 31, 34, 37; Snead, 226.

seize the artillery for themselves. The Federals successfully escaped the town and headed back for Springfield. The Guardsmen's entrance into Carthage was received with much jubilation. One woman walked outside and hurrahed for Confederate President Jefferson Davis even as the bullets were still flying about.¹⁴⁵ The MSG continued the chase, aided by civilian gifts of food and water.

Sigel's army escaped with a loss of 44 men. The State Guard lost about 200, likely as a result of continually charging into artillery and musket fire in their pursuit and from confronting superior weapons. Still, the battle was a major victory. The State Guard had averted disaster and scored a major morale-booster at the same time. Even better they had defeated an army composed largely of the despised German "Dutch." The Battle of Carthage was up to that point the greatest battle of the Civil War, though it would be rapidly eclipsed by First Bull Run and dozens of others. The Guardsmen had fought in a disorganized and shoddy manner, but they had also proven themselves brave and resourceful, and their success bolstered their enthusiasm.

During the battle other pleasing developments occurred at the southern border. Price's trip to Arkansas was successful. The commander there was General Ben McCulloch. Like Price McCulloch had not come out of West Point or any other military academy. However, their issues with West Point were slightly different. As discussed earlier, Price had been an insubordinate officer in the Mexican War. His insubordination had met with success and thus he felt that West Point generals were not all that great. McCulloch's issue with West Point was not so much with the men it produced than the idea of the academy. As a fervent Jacksonian Democrat, McCulloch saw West Point as

¹⁴⁵ W.H. King, "Early Experiences in Missouri," *Confederate Veteran* 17 (October 1909), 503; Carthage (Mo.). Civil War battle memoir, 4.

the center of a military caste that blocked leadership opportunities for experienced frontier warriors such as himself. McCulloch was indeed a seasoned soldier. He had aided in the successful Texas Revolution of 1836. As a Texas Ranger he had provided valuable service in the Mexican War and frequently fought Indians on the West Texas frontier. Seeing that McCulloch was a popular and prominent figure in his home state of Texas, the Confederate government gave him a sizeable command based in the Trans-Mississippi. McCulloch's assigned goal was to defend his home state and Arkansas (where he was based), as well as Confederate allies in Indian Territory (Indian groups such as Cherokees and Creeks were, like Missourians, wracked by internal divisions and would also likewise suffer a brutal civil war within a civil war). Before Price came to gain his aid he had already considered a major offensive into Missouri from Arkansas, believing this would fulfill the objective of defending Indian Territory by bringing Missouri to the Confederate side as a buffer state. Henry Rector, the Governor of Arkansas, had enthusiastically supported the plan and offered 8,000 state troops towards McCulloch's force. However the Confederate government nixed the plan. Under Davis' direction it wanted to fight a defensive war and considered Missouri a Union state. Since Jackson had not been able to convince the majority of the need for secession, there was no justification to invade it. Though never afraid of a fight and often desirous of offensive action himself, McCulloch was reasonable and cautious in how he executed his duties. The Secretary of War, Leroy Walker, further discouraged him from going beyond his mission parameters, which was to defend Arkansas and Texas and to coax undecided inhabitants of Indian Territory to the Confederate cause.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Snead, 232-233; Piston, 19-20; Thomas W. Cutrer, *Ben McCulloch and the Frontier Military Tradition*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2000, hoopla edition), 79.

Now, however, Lyon's army was barreling down Missouri. If the State Guard was destroyed, then Arkansas could be next and Indian allies to the west would feel less inclined to support the Confederacy. In fact thousands of Arkansans under General Nathaniel Pearce came north with McCulloch, reasoning that the "the best defense" for their state "was to fight her enemies as far away from her soil as possible." McCulloch and Price rushed north with 3,000 men, with more Confederate soldiers marching behind them. They wanted to rescue Governor Jackson's army before it was crushed and were pleasantly surprised to see that he had won without their assistance.¹⁴⁷ Now the Confederates had finally entered the state. The State Guard greeted the arrivals with careless enthusiasm. Some fired off their guns in excitement and sparked a keg of gunpowder, sending themselves flying through the air. William Watson, a soldier in the 3rd Louisiana, did not specify if there were any deaths from the accident, but noted it as his first indication that the State Guard had more "zeal than discipline."¹⁴⁸

Combined with the State Guard, the temporary Army of the West posed a numerically powerful force and had a chance to deal Lyon a major defeat. For a brief moment Price and McCulloch, as well as the Missouri State Guard and the Confederacy in general, were on the same page. Upon seeing McCulloch, the Guardsmen cheered. Snead recalled:

We were all young men then, and full of hope, and looked with delighted eyes on the first Confederate soldiers that we had ever seen, the men all dressed in sober gray, and their officers resplendent with gilded buttons,

¹⁴⁷ OR III, 39; Snead, 74; N.B. Pearce, "Price's Campaign of 1861," *Arkansas Historical Association* 4 (1917) 338.

¹⁴⁸ Watson, 191.

and golden braid and stars of gold. To look like these gallant soldiers; to be of them; to fight beside them for their homes and for our own, was the one desire of all the Missourians, who, on that summer day, stood on one of their own verdant prairies, gazing southward.¹⁴⁹

But shortly Price and the MSG would pick at and reveal tensions that would frustrate the effort to take Missouri out of the Union.

¹⁴⁹ Snead, 237-238.

CHAPTER VI

Victory and Disunion

The feud, or perhaps more accurately the seeds of the feud between Price and McCulloch began shortly after their union in southern Missouri. The exact origins of the tensions and when they truly began are hard to discern. Much of the reasoning was given in hindsight during partisan bickering in the papers. After McCulloch and Price linked up with Jackson, the Army of the West retired to the southwest corner of the state to train and organize. McCulloch also wanted the MSG to go to an area where it could be better supplied, noting that many in its ranks had a “disposition to leave” due to “scarcity of supplies.” Price, however, was insistent that they move soon and start taking back Missouri. McCulloch assented and planned a move towards the town of Springfield. Not only did Springfield hold supplies, but Lyon, the man to be defeated, was concentrating his forces there.¹⁵⁰

Lyon himself was having issues. His aggressive pursuit of the State Guard had left his army on a thin supply line and in hostile territory. He was also not just confronting a massive if under-armed militia army, but a Confederate counter-invasion as well. He wrote Fremont for further aid, but the Pathfinder was dilatory and disorganized in his response. Lyon, feeling desperate, withdrew for Springfield. If there was a time to strike him, it was now.

An oft-cited reason for the split is over the quality of the State Guard. McCulloch was accused of “prejudice” towards what he perceived as a rabble of undisciplined and poorly equipped soldiers. One accuser said he was unqualified for his major assignment

¹⁵⁰ OR III, 744.

and let the West Pointer James McIntosh, his right-hand man, distort his opinions of the State Guard. However, the MSG not only contained some well-organized militia units, but at the time many Confederate units in other states were still finding their footing. It had some unique issues, but was not too different from other early war units. Also, as a rough-and-tumble Westerner himself, McCulloch would have had no prejudice towards frontiersmen well versed in hunting, Indian-fighting, or other forms of violence and hard living. The roots of the Price-McCulloch divide likely originated in matters of command. McCulloch never criticized the Missourian rank-and-file in his reports, only writing that they needed competent leadership to mold them into first-rate soldiers. It was at this level of the army that the two generals began to experience tensions.

Price's rank of major-general was clearly higher than McCulloch's of brigadier-general. On the other hand McCulloch was a Confederate general, and he viewed the MSG as a raggedy militia outfit. Arkansas General Nicholas Bartlett Pearce added to this confusion. Pearce actually did not head a Confederate outfit, but a division of Arkansas State troops, an outfit similar to if better equipped than Price's. Pearce was uncertain as to who he was to answer to, as he was part of General William Hardee's department rather than McCulloch's. He called a meeting to settle the matter. It was soon established that McCulloch, having been assigned command of much of the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department, was indeed in charge, a decision that Price himself suggested without McCulloch's prodding. Despite this understanding, Price and the Missouri State

Guard immediately set about to challenge the Texan's authority in what they saw as Missouri's interests.¹⁵¹

Aside from continually pestering McCulloch to move fast and hard against the enemy, Price's first troublesome action concerned the thousands of unarmed men under his command. McCulloch did not want to have a mob of such under-equipped men in his rear for two reasons. First they would be a drain on resources that could be used for the fighting men, of which he already had plenty. Price's Army was already a logistical drag, with volunteers coming and going as they pleased and no proper system for distributing supplies. Secondly, if they made contact with the enemy they, having no means of defending themselves, would likely panic and throw the entire army into confusion. He ordered Price to leave them behind and the Missourian appeared to consent. 50 miles of marching later, the unarmed men still clung to the army. It is unclear how much involvement Price had in this disobedience. McCulloch reported that these men mostly came from Clark's Third Division, and that Clark himself had knowingly disobeyed his orders. However, there were further orders from Price's command on July 30, calling for the unarmed men to follow, but one day to the rear. He must have had some knowledge at least. It is likely that these orders were made after the fact, a result of the MSG's failures in discipline. One veteran from the unarmed group reminisced that he and his fellows stole Confederate tents and followed the army, determined not to miss a battle.¹⁵²

The Rebel and Federal armies made contact on August 2. As at Boonville, the following event was little more than a skirmish, but had dire consequences for the

¹⁵¹ J.F. Snyder, "The Fight for Missouri," August 15 1886 in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 44-46; Pearce, 1913, 338; Piston, 135-136; Hardee commanded northeastern Arkansas.

¹⁵² OR III, 108, 745; OR LIII, 718; Cutrer 8.

Rebels' alliance. Lyon realized he could not just keep retreating. His foes would catch up to him and hundreds of Unionist civilians in Springfield would be abandoned. He decided the best defense was an offense and he marched his army out of Springfield in the direction of the enemy. His scouts reported that Rains' Division was at Dug Springs. To confirm this, he sent forward a small force under Captain Frederick Steele. Rains, leading an advance guard of 400 mounted men, reported Steele's approach and called for reinforcements. McCulloch sent Colonel James McIntosh with 150 of his mounted Arkansas riflemen to investigate (a staff officer of Rains later criticized McCulloch for sending a scouting rather than a fighting force). Meeting Rains, McIntosh relayed McCulloch's cautious orders not to provoke a major battle, as most of the Rebel Army was still coming up. McIntosh ordered Rains to stay put and the two sides traded sporadic and ineffectual artillery fire.

The terrain was marked by heavy brush and vegetation and McIntosh and Rains could not gauge the strength of the Federal force. Steele himself was uncertain what he was up against and deployed artillery on his flanks. The mutual probing eventually ignited a heated skirmish. It got too heated for Rains' horsemen and they were soon in a "regular stampede." One Arkansan veteran from McIntosh's command implied that Rains' mistake was keeping his men mounted. He recalled that in the face of artillery shells, "his horses were very disorderly and could scarcely be kept in ranks." McIntosh blamed the men. He derisively reported "the command of General Rains, as I expected, came down upon us in full flight and in the greatest confusion." He himself tried to stem the rout, but soon saw that it was a vain hope and ordered a general retreat. In their flight the Missourians went far, leaving 200 tethered backup horses to be captured by the

Federals. Rains blamed McIntosh for not sending promised reinforcements. McIntosh countered that he did not command much men at the moment and they would be wasted fighting alongside the apparently panicky Guardsmen. McCulloch sided with McIntosh. He rode up to meet the retreating men, “exhausting his whole vocabulary of vituperation...in denunciation of the Missourians.” As far as he was concerned Rains had aggressively provoked a fight without proper reconnaissance and then shamefully bolted, causing mass confusion among the advance units. He now felt that the State Guard, about half his army, was unreliable. If its generals could not control their men, then what would happen in a full-on battle? For their part the State Guard felt that they were being unfairly maligned based on one incident. One officer pointed out later that the Federals reported a few men killed and wounded, evidence that at least some of Rains’ men stood their ground and fought. To their chagrin the skirmish at Dug Springs was alternatively titled the “Rains Scare.”¹⁵³

McCulloch and Price were now butting heads constantly. Lyon, learning how far outnumbered he was, retreated back towards Springfield. Price continually insisted that McCulloch go on the attack, but the Texan was hesitant to do so. He was afraid of a repeat of Dug Springs on a greater scale and wanted a firmer grasp of what he was up against. Pearce, the commander of the Arkansas regiments, agreed, finding the Missourians’ incessant call for action “clamorous and unjust.”¹⁵⁴ According to Thomas Snead, Price finally convinced McCulloch to move in a dramatic moment on August 4.

¹⁵³ OR III, 47-52, 745; Piston, 139-141; Snead, 254; Watson, 197; A.V. Rieff, “Dug Springs,” in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 27; J.F. Snyder in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, 35; Brooksher, 155-157.

¹⁵⁴ General N.B. Pearce, “Oak Hill or Wilson’s Creek,” in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 70.

Price told McCulloch that he was older than him, senior in rank, had experience from the Mexican War, and was in charge of a force twice as great as his. But he would willingly put all his men under McCulloch's command if they could just launch an attack on Lyon. "If you refuse to accept this offer, I will move with the Missourians alone, against Lyon. For it is better that they and I should all perish than Missouri be abandoned without a struggle. You must either fight beside us, or look on at a safe distance... I must have your answer before dark, for I intend to attack Lyon tomorrow."¹⁵⁵ This is one of the great myths of the 1861 Missouri campaign, accepted at face value for decades by both veterans and historians alike. One veteran summed up the myth in his claim that Price displayed "a magnanimity of which history presents but few examples in military leaders" by letting the more pessimistic McCulloch take command.¹⁵⁶ It was a picture of a superior man subordinating himself to an inferior for the good of the cause. First of all, it is impossible for Snead to remember such a long and epic speech by Price word by word. Secondly it would have been odd for McCulloch, a seasoned Texas Ranger and veteran himself, to accept such a condescending speech in awed silence. Thirdly this scene furthers the idea that McCulloch and other Confederate generals ultimately lost Missouri by failing to heed the strategies and advice of Price. Any regrets or failures linked to the following battle could be laid at McCulloch's feet rather than Price's, as he had command. The most unusual aspect of the tale concerns the change in command arrangements. According to Nathaniel Pearce, it had already been agreed that the State Guard would be placed under McCulloch. However, Price very well may have threatened to attack on his own. He had disobeyed orders to stay put in the Mexican War. He was

¹⁵⁵ Snead, 255-256.

¹⁵⁶ Bevier, 41.

the commander of a military force under Missouri, not the Confederacy, and thus saw himself as only answerable to the chain of command in a voluntary sense.¹⁵⁷

Whatever occurred on August 4, McCulloch finally planned an attack out of his camp along Wilson's Creek. He reiterated his plans for unarmed men to stay behind and Price seemed to consent to his orders. "No unarmed man will be permitted to march with or follow the army. No wagons will move with the command."¹⁵⁸ McCulloch's sudden willingness to move is often attributed to pressure from Price. He claimed in a future report, however, that he had received a promising letter from General Leonidas Polk in Tennessee. Polk and General Gideon Pillow had been in contact in General Jeff Thompson and his MSG First Division. Pillow in particular was quite taken with General Thompson's "earnestness and anxiety for service" and believed that with coordination the Confederacy could seize most of Missouri. Even an invasion of Illinois was considered. The plan was to send up to 12,000 Confederates into the state from the east. This force would be a link-up between Pillow's men and another group from Arkansas under General William J. Hardee. This force would move in a northern direction, getting between Lyon and the prize of St. Louis. Though the State Guard might fail him again, McCulloch now expected better organized Confederates in Lyon's rear.¹⁵⁹

McCulloch's enthusiasm was literally dampened by rain on August 9. The Guardsmen's cartridges were not adequately protected against the elements, as most of the men had no cartridge boxes and used their pockets instead. With half his force unable

¹⁵⁷ Snead, 255-256.

¹⁵⁸ OR III, 108.

¹⁵⁹ OR III, 745; Thompson, 73-74; Gerteis, 54-55.

to function, McCulloch had to cancel the attack.¹⁶⁰ As fate would have it the anxiety-ridden Lyon had changed his mind again and was coming out of Springfield to strike the Rebel camp. Thanks to the civilian attire of the State Guard and the ease with which its members could come and go, it was not difficult to send Unionist Missourians into its camp as spies. He thus had an accurate view of the enemy's positions. The battle plan, partly devised by Sigel, was audacious in how it disregarded military maxims. In the face of a force that outnumbered them two to one, they would divide the army. Sigel would take his men on a roundabout march and come from the south. Lyon would attack from the north, occupying his enemy's attention. Lyon and Sigel pinned their hopes on surprise, as well as the inferior weaponry of the State Guard, to even the odds.¹⁶¹

Surprise was achieved for both thrusts. As luck would have it Rains, encamped in the north above Oak Hill, had withdrawn his pickets without either providing replacements or notifying McCulloch. As a result Lyon's wing caught him almost unawares (one veteran claims that Rains was sending out fresh pickets, but a Unionist civilian had informed Lyon of the break in picket duty, giving him a window of opportunity). If not for foraging wagon teams that spotted the Federals, Rains would have been caught even more by surprise. Lyon's force drove the Eighth Division from its camp and endangered the entire rebel force. At the time McCulloch, McIntosh, and other officers were having breakfast. A messenger arrived and reported the surprise attack, claiming that 20,000 Federals were on the way. McCulloch's initial reaction was that

¹⁶⁰ John D. Bell, "Price's Missouri Campaign, 1861," *Confederate Veteran* 22 (June 1914), 318.

¹⁶¹ Piston, 174-178; Pearce, 1913, 342.

Rains was panicking again, but artillery fire to the north disabused him of that notion.¹⁶²

McCulloch acted swiftly. Finding Siegel's surprise rear attack more concerning, he led elements of the MSG and the 3rd Louisiana Regiment south. Price was ordered to meet Lyon from the North, and did so with 3,100 of the State Guard. Many of the men were in the process of getting breakfast. Some went into battle with a rifle in one hand and a piece of bread in another, while one was literally covered in blood as he had been slaughtering a sheep for meat.¹⁶³

Price effectively found himself in temporary command as he formed his divisions into a long line. This proved a little difficult at first as "hundreds of panic-stricken men, some wounded, many on foot and many others in all sorts of wheeled vehicles," rushed to the rear from the opposite direction. These were the unarmed men who added to the Rebels' early confusion. General Pearce recalled that one of his battalions was "literally run over by this rabble."¹⁶⁴ The central geographic feature of the MSG's part in the battle was Ox Hill, which the Federals had quickly overrun and occupied.¹⁶⁵ It would soon be renamed in the combatants' memory as Bloody Hill, as both sides fought for its control in an hours-long slugfest. It was the first great battle west of the Mississippi and known as the Bull Run of the West. The reason for the fierce, casualty-high fighting can be partly attributed to the undisciplined and amateur nature of units on both sides, but also their western character. McCulloch's assessment of the State Guard based on the Rains Scare

¹⁶² Rose, 138-139; Snead, 268-271; Piston, 192; J.F. Snyder, "Recollections of Wilson's Creek," October 10 1885 in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 83; Bacon, 104.

¹⁶³ Brooksher, 206-207; Bacon, 101

¹⁶⁴ Snyder, 1885, 83; "Third Texas Cavalry at Wilson's Creek," December 12 1885 in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 96; Pearce, 1913, 339.

¹⁶⁵ Piston, 203.

proved to be a great extrapolation. For the most part these were hardened frontiersmen, not likely to give up the fight so soon even in their first legitimate battle. At the same time they were reckless and made amateur errors. For example, the officers of McBride's Seventh Division did not understand the importance of skirmishers in feeling out the enemy. As a consequence the men, armed with hunting rifles, ran en masse into outranging Federal musketry. "Disheartened," they had to take cover behind a crest on the hill until one Captain Tribble boldly led them on an advance. They neared the enemy with considerable loss, but were finally able to respond with their own rifles.¹⁶⁶

On the matter of rifle ranges, the State Guard did benefit from thick brush lining the top of the hill. If careful or lucky, they could use the brush as cover for getting into range. They were sometimes able to draw the Federals into close-quarters ambushes, many experienced squirrel-hunters scoring headshots with their hunting rifles. Some of the men also contended with massed fire by taking irregular skirmish formations, so as not to lose too many men in one shell burst or volley (these improvised spaced out formations were actually adopted by some generals in the last year of the war).¹⁶⁷ The State Guard's use of artillery was very poor. Because of the lack of big guns, the Guard had never created the position of Chief of Artillery. There was no one directing all the guns to focus on specific targets or counter-battery fire. Thus the Union guns battered away the Rebels without serious resistance.¹⁶⁸ The cavalry was also mishandled. Rains ordered Jo Shelby to repeat his successful flanking maneuver from the Battle of Carthage.

¹⁶⁶ John James Sitton, "Memoir," John J. Sitton Collection, 1860-1913, MHS, 3-4.

¹⁶⁷ Snead, 274; Bell, 319; Bacon, 112.

¹⁶⁸ Peterson, 19.

The cavalry would strike the Federal flank and rush up Ox Hill, in rear of their battery. Given the much greater intensity of the battle and the more difficult terrain, it went very poorly this time. James Totten, the commander of the battery, turned a couple of his guns and, supported by infantry, quickly beat off the attack. The cavalry wisely spent the rest of the battle on foot.¹⁶⁹ A final issue during the battle was the lack of an effective hospital corps. With no stretcher teams, men in the firing line took it upon themselves to carry wounded men to cover, thinning ranks in action. They then “returned to their places in the battle line and continued their bloody work.”¹⁷⁰

The battle also had several unusual episodes, attributable to both the hardscrabble and amateurish nature of the dueling armies. One chaplain amidst the State Guard told his men to aim for the stomachs of the enemy. This would give them a slower death, allowing more time for the unsaved to find redemption in Christ (Federals suffering agonizing deaths from such wounds were likely not appreciative). General Parsons had not been able to eat breakfast due to the dawn attack, and resolved to get his morning meal in. He thus faced his horse away from the battle so he could eat with some semblance of peace.¹⁷¹ Colonel Benjamin Rives, the commander of the 4th Cavalry in Slack’s division, rushed to the fray absent of any of his men so that he could lend a hand with his own rifle.¹⁷² At least dozens, if not hundreds of the unarmed men that exasperated McCulloch, “marched boldly to the front to be shot at” until they were able

¹⁶⁹ O’Flaherty, 84.

¹⁷⁰ Bell, 416.

¹⁷¹ Joseph A. Mudd, “What I Saw at Wilson’s Creek,” *Missouri Historical Review* 8, (January 1914), 100.

¹⁷² Virginia Easley, “Journal of the Civil War in Missouri: 1861, Henry Martyn Cheavens,” *Missouri Historical Review* 56, (October 1961), 22.

to obtain “guns from the dead, wounded, and prisoners.”¹⁷³ Artillery officer Hiram Bledsoe had to use sacks of buck shot to load Old Sacramento, the Mexican War relic.¹⁷⁴ Another artillerist fired a cannonball just to get rid of a pesky sharpshooter in a tree. It split the tree in two and “literally blew him to pieces.”¹⁷⁵ The entire battle had a strange flow to it. The two lines would advance, fire at each other, and then withdraw for a bit. This resulted in periods of eerie silence amidst otherwise frantic fighting.¹⁷⁶

Price displayed his one great quality as a general, his capacity to inspire his men. He rode back and forth along his entire front, purposefully going to where the fighting was the hottest and urging his men to stand firm or to reinforce a wavering section of the line. This naturally put him in danger. Several bullets damaged his clothes. One hit him in the side, prompting him to joke to an officer “That isn’t fair; if I were as slim as Lyon that fellow would have missed me entirely.” Despite the pain, he kept so calm that his men were unaware of his wound until the battle was over.¹⁷⁷

Despite their initial surprise, the State Guard-Confederate army soon swung the battle in their favor. Sigel beat a retreat, enabling McCulloch to go north with the rest of his army, “in the nick of time” recalled one survivor who noted that the MSG’s lines were thinning out. Lyon now had to face the entirety of McCulloch’s army with a much reduced force. Still, the battle went on for a while with great intensity. Lyon, like Price, was in the thick of the fighting and himself wounded twice. He grew despairing, realizing

¹⁷³ Ford, 4.

¹⁷⁴ Dr. Flavius J. Lindsey, “Cowskin Prairie and Wilson’s Creek,” in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 63.

¹⁷⁵ Snyder, 1885, 85.

¹⁷⁶ Snead, 274-275.

¹⁷⁷ Snead, 286.

that Siegel had failed in his part of the battle. In a heated moment when Missourians and Arkansans broke through the Union's front line, he decided to personally lead a counterattack. His bravery cost him as he was shot through the heart. Sturgis took command and, seeing that victory was impossible, ordered a retreat, a daunting prospect given how close the lines were to each other. Nevertheless the Federals successfully extricated themselves thanks to an orderly fighting withdrawal and exhaustion on the Rebel side.¹⁷⁸

The Confederates and Guardsmen had scored a great victory. The Federal Army was finally in retreat. The price was high, however. Snead calculated the losses and the number of men involved. He estimated that 732 of Price's men were killed, wounded, or missing, out of 1,317 overall casualties for the Rebel side (later figures put it at 724 with 173 killed and 551 wounded). One soldier in Rains' division claimed "we could hardly walk for fear of treading on" the dead and wounded. The tally among the officers was staggering. Most suffered a wound of some kind. Division commanders Slack and Clark were wounded in the leg, the former suffering a laceration. Colonel Benjamin Rives, commander of the Fourth Division's cavalry, took Slack's place while Clark's was taken by Colonel Congreve Jackson, an infantry officer, and then Price's eldest son Edwin Price. Clark and Slack would both be offered positions in Confederate Congress during their recoveries. Clark would accept and become one of Price's main political allies as a senator. Slack, on the other hand, surprised many by replying "he would not have it under any circumstances... He was where he wanted to be." Many of the best infantry and artillery officers under them were mortally wounded, with many reports and post-war

¹⁷⁸ Bell, 319; Pearce, 76; Piston, 264-268, 283-286.

recollections making special mention of Colonel Richard Weightman's death.

Weightman had been the only officer in the State Guard that consistently earned the praise of McCulloch, and had fallen after sustaining three wounds. Overall the combined Army of the West suffered 277 dead and 945 wounded for a total of 1,222 casualties. The Federals suffered 258 killed, 873 wounded, and 186 missing for a total of 1,317.¹⁷⁹

McCulloch's opinion of the State Guard after this battle was mixed. "Our men were at great disadvantage, on account of the inferior weapons, but they fought generally with great bravery... Want of arms and discipline made my number comparatively small." On the other hand he saw that the rank-and-file were fierce and brave soldiers. His after-action reports even commended the divisional commanders for their gallantry, except of course for Rains.¹⁸⁰ One point of contention was the superiority in Federal intelligence. They had surprised the Army of the West and exploited its weak spots. William Watson of Louisiana wrote that this was due to the inability of the State Guard to keep out civilians. A group of ladies profusely expressing support for the cause had walked into camp and was given a thorough tour by Price. It was suspected they had been spies, and a naïve Price had given them all the information they wanted.¹⁸¹

A disturbance erupted over a battery of captured guns. The 3rd Louisiana had overrun a Federal battery and then had to leave them as they further pursued the enemy. Guardsmen, always looking for a way to make up for their deficiency in supplies, swooped in and took the guns, harnesses, and horses for themselves. Price further

¹⁷⁹ Snead, 286, 289; Snyder, 1885, 87; Easley, 22-23; Unknown to Mrs. Slack, December 26, 1863 from Slack, William Yarnel (1816-1862), Papers, 1847-1880, MHS; Peterson 107, 136; Vandiver, 230; Piston 337-338.

¹⁸⁰ OR III, 106.

¹⁸¹ Watson, 231.

infuriated the Louisianans by crediting the guns' capture to his own men in his report, perhaps confusedly mixing them in with two guns captured by mounted Missourians and Texans. McCulloch insisted to Price that the guns had been stolen and the general agreed to return them to their rightful captors. While there is no evidence that Price had been aware of the thievery, he returned the guns without their horses and harnesses.¹⁸²

The Federal Army soon abandoned Springfield, allowing the Missouri State Guard to enter. McCulloch issued a proclamation to the divided town that cast him in the role of liberator, yet he called for Missourians to act, aware that the state was far from being in Confederate hands. He knew that without enough support from the state's civilian population, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for any future military operations in the area to achieve their political end goals. His proclamation was calculated to engender pro-Confederate feeling while appealing to Missourians' desire to be independent in their decision-making. This showed that, contrary to some accusations that he was blind to Missourians' sensitivities, he was aware that the state was not a guaranteed hotbed of pro-Confederate sentiment. Of course, he still hoped that he could rally thousands of its civilians to the Secessionist cause.

...I have come among you simply with the view of making war upon our Northern foes, to drive them back, and give the oppressed of your State an opportunity of again standing up as freemen and uttering their true sentiments... Your beautiful State has been nearly subjugated, but those true sons of Missouri who have continued in arms, together with my force, came back upon the enemy, and we have gained over them a great and

¹⁸² OR III, 746-747; Pearce, 73-74. Cutrer, 21; Bacon, 127.

signal victory...If the true men of Missouri will rise up and rally around their standard, the State will be redeemed... Missouri must be allowed to choose her own destiny...I have driven the enemy from among you. The time has now arrived for the people of the State to act; you cannot longer procrastinate. Missouri must now take her position, be it North or South.¹⁸³

Once in Springfield, McCulloch and Price broke over strategy. McCulloch believed the army should halt at Springfield, finding it the best position given the circumstances. He felt that after the loss in men and the expenditure of ammunition, the combined army was not yet up to the challenge of retaking Missouri. Pearce's Arkansans were heading home. Other men were too sick to continue or were needed to honor a protective treaty with allies in Indian Territory. This left McCulloch with only 2,500 men outside of the State Guard. Much of the State Guard still consisted of undersupplied and unreliable men. In the days following the battle, many of the new recruits left, some satisfied with having taken a part in a single battle and others shaken by its aftermath. One doctor with a heavily critical diary believed many of the men left because they were "disgusted on account of the incompetence of the General Officers," mainly their failure to pursue the enemy immediately.¹⁸⁴

Many veterans believed McCulloch had passed up an opportunity to destroy the rest of Lyon's army. Many historians have echoed this viewpoint, believing that McCulloch could have used the vast number of horsemen in his army to mount a pursuit

¹⁸³ OR LIII, 109.

¹⁸⁴ Ford, 4.

and shatter the retreating enemy. One writer claimed this failure “virtually eliminated any chance...to reverse the flow of military and political fortune in Missouri.”¹⁸⁵ This is hindsight, and McCulloch had many reasons not to go after the enemy. The commanding general noted that his army was dangerously low on ammunition, rations, and other supplies, further making an offensive movement difficult. The only way to compensate seemed to be looting, an act which disgusted the Texan. The presence of thousands of unarmed men had resulted in a looting spree that spread anti-Confederate sentiment among the civilian population. These looters also stole from their comrades-in-arms, picking up captured enemy rifles or even weapons dropped by Arkansans and Louisianans. One later accusation was that they stole tents as well, depriving many Louisianans of shade from the late summer heat. McCulloch did not have the influence to restrain the Missourians from these actions. Price to his credit tried to act, finally installing a provost-marshal. He further issued an order stating that all men leaving the State Guard had to turn in their weapons. It is not known how carefully this rule was observed. After all, many of these weapons were personal firearms.¹⁸⁶ Price did manage to prevent a heinous act by General Rains. Finding a Federal hospital with much of the wounded enemy, Rains had the medical supplies seized and transported towards his camp, leaving the Union surgeon to treat his charges without the necessary equipment. Price was furious at this horrid treatment of wounded Federals and ordered the supplies

¹⁸⁵ Brooksher, 232.

¹⁸⁶ OR III, 109; OR LIII, 727-728; Gerteis, 74; Rose, 185.

returned.¹⁸⁷ Despite a major victory and Price's attempts to stem looting, the alliance was in danger of falling apart.

McCulloch claimed in a December report, intended to counter charges of neglect and prejudice towards Missouri, that he had provided Price with a smart strategy. He believed that while assuming the defensive, the Missourians could convene a secession convention and officially join the Confederacy. By putting the State Guard under Confederate jurisdiction, this would enable more coordination and co-operation while also rallying all pro-Secessionists to the cause. Staying put would also bring them in marching distance of support from Texas and Arkansas. Price was disappointed in his ally's stance. He wanted to move now, with an eye towards advancing to the Missouri River in the north. He believed that to sit still or make a retrograde movement towards the Arkansas border would deny the State Guard all the fruits of its recent victory.¹⁸⁸

Price was perhaps encouraged by a message from Governor Jackson. Jackson had been unable to procure further arms from the Confederacy, but did receive an appropriation of \$1,000,000. He optimistically stated to Price that soon all available arms and Confederate soldiers that could be spared outside Virginia would converge on Missouri to rescue it from the Union.¹⁸⁹ This was indeed an unrealistic expectation. In fact, the secondary incursion into Missouri from Confederate forces in Tennessee and Arkansas, which had encouraged McCulloch, had fallen apart before it began thanks to disagreements and animosity between Hardee and Pillow, as well as the indecisiveness of

¹⁸⁷ Dr. E McD. Coffey, "Two Stories About Gen. Price," September 19, 1885, in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 132-133.

¹⁸⁸ OR III, 747-749.

¹⁸⁹ Series LIII, 722.

Polk. Hardee and Pillow had different ideas on how to proceed into Missouri. Polk, who should have settled the matter quickly, instead balked upon learning of a concentration of Federal forces in eastern Missouri. Hardee gave up on the feasibility of a Missouri campaign. He believed the country in southeast Missouri could not support any sizeable army. He further stated that he had no such army in the first place. General Thompson, who had helped bring together this planned operation, had to have been very disappointed. He had been clearing the way with successful surprise attacks and bragged that he had stopped all Federal supply traffic for ten days. He was later forgiving of the cancellation in his memoirs, noting that “the peculiarities of the country” would have made an invasion from the southeast difficult. But he did lament that “the personal jealousy which has so often injured our cause” might have played a part in aborting the campaign.¹⁹⁰

McCulloch ultimately decided it would be pointless to keep his army so far into Missouri. This resulted in much disappointment and resentment among the Missourians, one doctor bitterly noting in his diary, “Sigel ran like a coward at Wilson Creek and McCulloch was too coward to catch him.”¹⁹¹ McCulloch could not do much where he was. Other assistance was not forthcoming and he had other duties to attend to in other states and territories. Since Price was not willing to stay put, he could not put up an effective defensive posture either. As they departed southward, some of the Louisianans took revenge for the theft of the captured guns, seizing a wagon train bearing clothes for

¹⁹⁰ OR III, 139; OR Series I, Vol. 53, 729-731; Thompson 82-83; Gerteis, 56-57.

¹⁹¹ Dr. John Wyatt, “A Confederate Diary (August 1, 1861-January 9, 1862) Part 1,” *White River Valley Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 36 No 3, (Winter 1997)
<https://thelibrary.org/lohist/periodicals/wrv/V36/N3/W97toc.htm>

the State Guard.¹⁹² Though his Confederate support waned for the moment, Price was determined to build upon his triumph at Wilson's Creek. Late in August he set north for the State Guard's greatest achievement.

¹⁹² Cutrer, 22.

CHAPTER VII

High Tide of the Missouri State Guard

Price's Northern Missouri Campaign had two major objectives. One was to take the bank at Lexington, which held money that could fund the State Guard's war efforts. Another more urgent matter was the rescue of Harris' Second Division. Being in the northeasternmost part of the state, Harris' division had been separated from the rest of the State Guard by Lyon's movements and had to lie low as it received recruits. Harris did try to contribute to the July and August campaigning by ordering small, but noticeable military movements. These induced Fremont to divert reinforcements from Lyon, though given Fremont's slowness these Federals may have never made it to Springfield in the first place. Harris' recruiting and raiding efforts went quite well thanks to Federal mismanagement. The commanding Federal officers had been heavy-handed and intrusive in managing northern Missouri. This resulted in a pro-State Guard population.¹⁹³

As he moved north, Price had to leave contingents of the State Guard behind to protect his supply lines. 400 men stayed in Springfield. Another small force under Colonel John Weidemeyer was left to guard the supply line at Osceola. One might think that Price's force would have been greatly reduced by the time he reached Lexington, but there were in fact many enthusiastic volunteers that hopped onto his army, as well as scattered elements of the State Guard who had been unable or unwilling to leave their home counties to join the campaign in the south. The western border counties of Missouri were the most reliably Secessionist, as its inhabitants had a long, violent history with free soilers in Kansas. By the time Price reached Lexington he would have an army of 18,000.

¹⁹³ Floyd C. Shoemaker, "The Story of the Civil War in Northeast Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. VII No. 3 (April, 1913), 113-114; Bevier, 51-52; *History of Lafayette County, Missouri*, 339.

“With an army increasing hourly in numbers and enthusiasm,” Price overwhelmed any Federal garrison that got in the way. These garrisons abandoned their positions, some making their way to Lexington. The Guardsmen were also encouraged by a friendly civilian population. Everywhere they went they were greeted with pitchers of waters and many treats. One Guardsman recalled, “Often fruit and water were dispensed with fair hands; bright eyes greeted us joyously, and rosy lips murmured forth hopes for our success and triumph.” Price joyfully reported that “citizens vied with each other in feeding my almost famished soldiers.”¹⁹⁴

The only serious fight on the way to Lexington occurred at Dry Wood Creek. The opponents were Jim Lane and his Kansas Brigade, situated across the border at Fort Scott. Lane hoped to slow down or turn back the State Guard with an ambush, a difficult plan considering he had less than 1,000 against an army over 10,000. The Kansans hid in the dense trees around Dry Wood Creek. Their ambush was successful, catching the Missourians by total surprise. Lane’s big guns even scared some of the still non-battle-tested Guardsmen, prompting many of them to volunteer for horse guarding duty. But Price had simply to move the mass of his army forward and Lane’s men withdrew. Fighting continued in prairie grass, much of it 7 to 8 feet in height. This dry grass proved to be a danger. In several spots the fighting started fires and kept the men tending to the combustible artillery caissons on their toes. Heavily outnumbered, the Kansans saw no hope for victory and retreated to the safety of Fort Scott. The Missourians lost 2 killed and 23 wounded, the Federals 111 killed and wounded. It was a major victory that raised

¹⁹⁴ Return I. Holcombe, *History of Greene County, Missouri*, (St. Louis: Western Historical Company, 1883), 367-368; John M. Weidemeyer, “Memoirs of a Confederate Soldier, 1861-1865,” 3; Wood, 2014, loc. 477-497; Anderson, 26, 52; OR III, 185-186.

morale, moreso because the enemy included the hated Jayhawkers. Ephraim Anderson noted, “many of those who had been plundered and outraged by them were in our ranks.”¹⁹⁵

The Missouri State Guard reached Lexington on September 11 to find it manned by 3,500 men under Colonel James Mulligan. Mulligan, a Chicagoan, led a collection of units that had entered the town in response to Price’s northward march. These included his own 23rd Illinois, German Home Guards, the Union 13th Missouri, a battalion of army reservists, and one artillery battery. Expecting Price, they had already dug trenches and felled trees and fences to make barricades.¹⁹⁶ One Union colonel described the layout of the defenses, centered on a Masonic College:

The college is on a bluff about 200 feet above low-water mark, and from 15 to 30 feet higher than North or Main street. Third street runs along the top of the bluff. Close to and surrounding the college building was a rectangular for of sods and earth about 12 feet thick and 12 feet high; with bastions at the angles and embrasures for guns. At a distance of 200 to 800 feet was an irregular line of earthworks protected by numerous traverses, occasional redoubts, a good ditch, trous-de-loup, wires, etc., etc. Still farther on the west and north were rifle-pits. The works would have required 10,000 or 15,000 men to occupy them fully. All the ground them the fortifications to the river was then covered with scattering timber. The

¹⁹⁵ Anderson, 50-51, John James Sitton, “Memoir,” John J. Sitton Collection, 1860-1913, MHS, 5; McGregor, 4.

¹⁹⁶ James A. Mulligan, “The Siege of Lexington,” from *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War Vol. I*, (Century Company, 1887), 307; OR III, 172.

spring just north and outside of fortifications, was in a deep wooded ravine...¹⁹⁷

This was to be the true test for the State Guard. Though it had numerical superiority in manpower and artillery, it would have to fight an entrenched enemy without any Confederate support. Federal reinforcements could potentially come in from around the state. Price's whole army was not up yet and he had to wait for the rest to arrive before pushing on the town. As his men came up, a running series of skirmishes erupted. At first Price made for a bridge, but the Federals burned it down, forcing him to turn west and use Independence Road, the main avenue of approach. Hidden Federals in the adjoining cornfield surprised the advance MSG cavalry with a volley, sending panicked horses running back into the infantry. Artillerists from the Sixth and Eight Divisions hurried up their guns and their shells drove the Federals out of the fields. The fight continued along the road, passing through cornfields, an orchard, a cemetery, and finally the streets. General McBride, commanding the Sixth Division, wrote the Federals "fled like rats" into their earthworks. Skirmishes broke out along the entrenchments, with one band of Rebels managing to get onto a breastwork and plant their flag. However, the MSG could not break through and the artillery sparred for the rest of the day. To the pleasure of Guardsmen lying in the orchard for cover, fruit was torn from the trees and plopped down alongside them, allowing them to snack without endangering themselves. When the dust cleared, the combatants were shocked to learn, despite the long and

¹⁹⁷ Mulligan, 308.

furious fighting, that casualties had been extremely light. Each side had only suffered 25 killed and wounded.¹⁹⁸

Despite his subordinates' insistence on a breakout assault the next day, Mulligan opted to wait for Fremont to send relief. In hindsight he may have slapped himself for passing up an opportunity. Price's force was again very low on ammunition (the artillery had eventually resorted to collections of rocks for ammunition) and not yet at full strength. Price waited. "It is unnecessary to kill off the boys here. Patience will give us what we want." When he had his full force and the rest of his ammunition, then he would take the town.¹⁹⁹

The next few days were marked by skirmishing and potshots. One resident recollected decades later that small bands of impatient Guardsmen would slip into the town only to engage in pointless skirmishes. Men on both sides were kept awake by slow but frequent cannon fire. Many of the besiegers protected themselves by "hugging the ground" by a plank fence. The fence absorbed the shocks of the blasts, an indictment of how weak the improvised shells were becoming.²⁰⁰ Day by day more Guardsmen arrived, supplemented by temporary recruits from the surrounding area. The defenders wondered when their relief was going to come. Fremont had indeed ordered several forces to make for Lexington, but these columns were scattered and uncoordinated. One by one these rescue efforts petered out or were blocked by other MSG forces. On September 17, 600 Federal soldiers tried to block Parsons' 3,500 man division, which had missed out on the

¹⁹⁸ Wood, 2014, loc. 531-649, Anderson, 65.

¹⁹⁹ McCausland, 134.

²⁰⁰ McCausland, 130; Uncle John to Francis, September, 1862 from Wilson Family, Papers, 1898-1926, MHS.

previous campaign, from reaching Price's army. At the Battle of Blue Mills Landing, Parsons' army braved canister fire to overwhelm and drive off the Federals. Parsons' Seventh Division then blocked a relief column under Sturgis by seizing all the boats along his march route. Four regiments of Indiana men departed from Jefferson City in steamers. After disembarking they mistook each other for the enemy and lost a dozen men killed and wounded. Their officers were so embarrassed that they slunk back to the capital. Jim Lane, with his recently defeated Kansans, was also ordered by Fremont to come to Mulligan's relief, but he had his own plans involving the town of Osceola.²⁰¹

By September 18 Price was satisfied with his strength. He had a rough 5 to 1 advantage in men and 3 to 1 in artillery (with the Federals themselves having to improvise ammunition much like the State Guard). The ammunition shortage was alleviated by the possession of Lexington's blacksmith shop and a warehouse on the riverbank. The forge in the blacksmith shop was used to mold projectiles for the artillery. Thus the Rebels could continually hurl shot and shells at the Federals with little fire in return, though as at Wilson's Creek they failed to coordinate all their might on specific targets. One youthful artillery officer, Churchill Clark, used fiery shot on the Masonic College in the hopes of burning it down. The shells were too slow to do their work and were tossed out before they could set the building ablaze.²⁰²

Price sent Mulligan a demand for a peaceful surrender, but was rejected. The Federal commander was more receptive to a message urging civilians to leave the area. Many went into the countryside or into secure indoor locations, but just as many were

²⁰¹ OR III, 173, 181-182, 195; Wood, 2014, loc. 921-937, 1363-1431.

²⁰² Dr. J.F. Snyder, "The Capture of Lexington," *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. VII No. 1 (October, 1912), 3-4.

eager to witness a battle and did not the generals' advice. The Guardsmen from all directions advanced "as one dark moving mass, their guns beaming in the sun, their banners waving, and their drums beating-everywhere. The defenders recalled that "as far as we could see, were men, men, men, approaching grandly."²⁰³ The most furious and controversial part of the ensuing fight centered around the Anderson House, located on the west side of the Federal lines. The Guardsmen found this house to be a good spot from which to snipe at the Union soldiers. Mulligan ruefully claimed in his reminiscences that the house was a hospital and off-limits, but this was an unrealistic expectation. Even the editors of his entry in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* pointed out that he had "no military right to expect" that such a strategic spot should be ignored and that he could be equally culpable for having the hospital put in such a spot in the first place. The sharpshooting certainly raised the ire of the nearby Federals, who assaulted the house. The charge sent its occupants scurrying, save for several wounded men and sharpshooters trapped on the top floor. The Federals bayoneted most of the surrendering men. One surviving Guardsman named W.H. Mansur would have been executed by firing squad if a less temperamental Federal had not rushed him out of the house to safety.²⁰⁴

Many of the defenses held on the 18th, but the Guardsmen did seize strategic points that worsened the Federals' situation, most importantly the cisterns that gave the Federals fresh water. On the 19th they did not make any assaults, but fired at the Federal

²⁰³ Mulligan, 309; Wood, 2014, 957.

²⁰⁴ Mulligan, 310-311, Bevier, 56; W.H. Mansur, "Incident of the Battle of Lexington, Mo.," *Confederate Veteran* 23 (1915), 496; Wood, 2014, loc. 1225.

earthworks from trees and upper floors. The artillery on both sides dueled, running so low on ammunition that they reused each other's recently cast and sub-par balls.²⁰⁵

A truce was declared early in the evening and once again Price asked for Mulligan's surrender. Though his men were running low on water and weakening with thirst, Mulligan refused, holding out hope that relief would finally come. Meanwhile, the men of Harris' Second Division were fashioning a new weapon in the riverside warehouse. They were taking hemp bales and fashioning large moveable breastworks out of them. The plan was to advance towards the Federals' lines with these protective devices. The Guardsmen would get close enough to use their shorter-ranged weapons and inflict greater pressure on the defenders. There has been disagreement over who came up with this idea. Naturally Harris got much of the credit as it was his division, while others credited Captain Thomas Hinkle, one of Price's staff officers. With or without Hinkle's direction, Harris ordered 132 hemp-bales prepared for the 20th. The soldiers tied the bales together with large coils of rope and dunked them in the Missouri River to make them fireproof. The next morning wagons carried them out to the men for the assault.²⁰⁶

Harris' men moved forward under the cover of their makeshift shields and across terrain dotted by convenient six-foot tall pawpaw bushes. The hemp bales proved to be a work of genius. Bullets could not penetrate them. Even the artillery could not do the job. Out of shells, the Federals could only hurl weaker balls which glanced off the hemp. One veteran approvingly remembered, "Each bale was put in charge of three men and rolled up the hill: by keeping it in front, the men were protected from the enemy's fire, while our

²⁰⁵ Wood, 2014, loc. 1322-1341.

²⁰⁶ Bevier, 106; OR III, 191-193; Anderson, 73; R.C. Carter, "A Short Sketch of My Experiences During the First Stages of the Civil War," 4. MHS; Peterson, 35.

riflemen directed their aim at every head that was raised above the breastworks.”

Mulligan recalled, “Round-shot and bullets were poured against them, but they would only rock a little and then settle back. Heated shot were fired with the hope of setting them on fire, but they had been soaked and would not burn.” Those Guardsmen with shorter-ranged hunting rifles and shotguns were now close enough to deal some real damage. Despite this, Mulligan was still determined to fight it out. It took a long argument with his subordinates to finally convince him that further resistance was useless. Over 3,000 Federals surrendered and became prisoners of the State Guard.²⁰⁷

The MSG suffered about 150 killed and wounded. Aside from the full surrender, the Federals suffered almost 40 killed and 117 wounded. While the hard casualties among the soldiers were still light compared to great Civil War battles, the Siege of Lexington had a dramatic effect on the citizenry and their possessions. One farmer lamented that many of his friends and neighbors’ homes had been burned in the crossfire. Much of the farmland had also been burned up, resulting in the loss of entire crops. He further described the sight of “Horses Mules Men & Hogs lying in all directions some dead whilst others maimed & mangled.”²⁰⁸

The Missouri State Guard was ecstatic. They had marched far north and taken out an entire Federal force, as well as beating back several others across the state. They now had the supplies and money of Lexington at their disposal. In his report Price gushed with pride over the successes of his men. “This victory has demonstrated the fitness of our citizen soldiers for the tedious operations of a siege as well as for a dashing charge. They

²⁰⁷ Anderson, 73; Mulligan, 312; Hockaday, Isaac, “Letters from the Battle of Lexington: 1861,” *Missouri Historical Review* 56, (October 1961), 57; Wood, 1503, 1602, 1710.

²⁰⁸ Hockaday, 55-56.

lay for fifty-two hours in the open air without tents or covering, regardless of the sun and rain and in the very presence of a watchful and desperate foe, manfully repelling every assault and patiently awaiting any orders to storm the fortifications. No general ever commanded a braver or a better army. It is composed of the best blood and the bravest men of Missouri.” In addition to the prisoners, the State Guard acquired “5 pieces of artillery and 2 mortars, over 3,000 stands of infantry arms, a large number of sabers, about 750 horses, many sets of cavalry equipments, wagons, teams, and ammunition, more than \$100,000 worth of commissary stores, and a large amount of other property. In addition to all this, I obtained the restoration of the great seal of the State and the public records, which had been stolen from their proper custodian, and about \$900,000 in money, of which the bank at this place had been robbed, and which I have caused to be returned to it.”²⁰⁹ As usual there were disciplinary problems. Many of the captured goods were placed in the courthouse to prevent their theft. However, the guards themselves looted the place, forcing an angry Price to replace them with an entirely new set of men. As Ordnance officer J.F. Snyder, charged with guarding the house, lamented, “our army was such a free democracy that my feeble efforts to check that petty rapine, and enforce discipline, were but partially successful.”²¹⁰

The MSG stayed still, enjoying the fruits of victory and planning their next move. Governor Jackson himself arrived to witness his State Guard’s triumph. One veteran recalled the wave of euphoria. “Doubts and fears were left to the past, and the dawn seemed to appear and brighten the horizon, dissipating the mists and clouds that had

²⁰⁹ OR III, 188.

²¹⁰ Snyder, 6.

shadowed and darkened our earlier fortunes.”²¹¹ However, McCulloch’s warnings about a rushed northern invasion without proper logistics proved prophetic. Despite a string of victories and the resultant captured goods, the State Guard found itself ill-equipped to press the offensive. The captured Federal ammunition could only do so much to make up for the State Guard’s depletion. Hundreds of their horses were infected with a disease that crippled them. Their riders had to guide them on foot. Price had rallied enough to create his largest army, but had no means of maintaining and keeping it together.²¹²

Finding it hard enough to feed and supply his own army, Price was not willing to keep the thousands of prisoners around. Before leaving on parole, the Federal soldiers had to take an oath. They could not take up arms against Missouri or the Confederacy until they had been officially exchanged. A few actually escaped the oath by disguising themselves as Guardsmen, an easy feat thanks to the Rebels’ lack of proper uniforms. The majority, after having to take the oath, were forced to listen to an angry speech by Governor Claiborne Jackson. Jackson harangued them for sticking their noses in Missouri’s business and violating its sovereignty. To offset this, Price praised their gallant defense in a brief speech before having them marched out of Lexington.²¹³

Price had hoped that by marching into central Missouri and scoring victories he would enable thousands of Missourians to publicly flock to the secessionist cause. “It was a delusive hope,” as both potential soldiers and supporting civilians were more interested in protecting personal life and property than risking themselves for “any mere abstract principle.” Also, hundreds of Guardsmen took on furloughs to help with the harvest at

²¹¹ Anderson, 77.

²¹² Grimes, 25.

²¹³ Wood, 2014, Loc. 1863.

home, or simply to escape danger. Thousands of men did approach to join the Guard during its time at Lexington, but a good number of these dispersed for two reasons. First many prioritized their farms, which were approaching harvest time, and secondly many of the recent volunteers heard of concerning Federal movements.²¹⁴

There were two such Federal movements in late September that threatened Price's Army. To the south, Jayhawker General Jim Lane re-entered Missouri and led a raid on the town of Osceola, one of Price's chief supply bases. Wiedemeyer's contingent of Guardsmen there fired a couple of volley before the assailants drove them off. Lane's Kansans then embarked on a drunken spree of looting and violence, burning almost every building down and executing nine civilians. It was a harbinger of the kind of war Missouri would descend into the following year. This event was a logistical blow to the State Guard, but it did lead to increased anti-Union sentiment, a potential source for new State Guard recruits. The pro-Confederate Missourians were incensed, with Governor Jackson threatening to have Kansas burned "from one end to the other." A few weeks later, 300 Guardsmen crossed into Kansas for a retaliatory raid. This is the only known foray into "foreign" territory by the State Guard. They struck the town of Humboldt on October 14, taking its citizenry and Union militia completely off guard. They looted the town and burned much of it down.²¹⁵

The other movement under Fremont was at the moment much more concerning. The Lincoln administration had been deluging Fremont with criticisms of his dallying

²¹⁴ Snyder, 8-9; Anderson, 77.

²¹⁵ Weidemeyer, 4, MHS; Castel, 60; Albert Castel, *William Clarke Quantrill: His Life and Times*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 1962, 37-38, 41; Watson Stewart, "Personal Memoirs of Watson Stewart," http://www.kancoll.org/articles/stewart/ws_section06.htm, accessed March 29, 2021; John W. Fisher Diary, Oct. 1861 to Jan. 1862, 3, 6-9, Wilson's Creek National Battlefield.

and ineffective management of his disparate forces. Fremont also heard rumors (which were true) that the War Department was considering his removal after he issued a controversial proclamation on August 30. Responding to the rise of the State Guard and the defeat at Wilson's Creek, he had decided to place the state under martial law and emancipate the slaves. While Fremont was a former Republican Presidential candidate and free-soiler, it is unclear how much this played a role in this decision. More likely it was done for pragmatic reasons in the vein of other Union generals confiscating Secessionist property. However, other generals had done this in actual Confederate territory. Fremont announced the emancipation in a state that could still swing into the Union camp. Fremont's martial law and emancipation proclamation raised the ire of even Missourian Unionists. After all, non-German unionists in the state generally supported slavery and had stayed faithful under the belief that the Federal government would not actually dare to abolish slavery. The martial law was also carried out with heavy-handedness. The Lincoln administration was understandably worried how this would influence Missourians' support or hostility to the war. The nightmare scenarios that slaveholders in the border states associated with emancipation could lead them to embrace Confederate protection. Lincoln tried to diplomatically steer Fremont towards retracting his policies, then had to order him outright to do so. Fremont's emancipation proclamation at best freed two slaves if one of his biographies is to be believed, and despite some positive reactions to it in the North, it put him on very shaky ground with Washington. Feeling pressure from above, Fremont went all-out in assembling a massive 20,000 man army. He first marched for Price, but his army moved so slow that the State Guard commander caught wind of his approach with plenty of time to spare. Knowing

that his men were under-equipped to fight such a large force, he ordered his men south. The order was obeyed, but with some grumbling. The men thought they were unbeatable, and one commented “we thought how silly” General Price was “retreating southward with such a formidable array of men at his command.”²¹⁶

To add insult, the withdrawal happened under ominous weather, with constant rain and gloomy clouds. The rain made the roads muddy and soaked the soldiers, an uncomfortable experience given the temperature was falling as well. It was a struggle to find a spot dry enough to mount a tent, and men had to sleep on the chilled ground. At one point the Guardsmen came upon a flooded marsh. The men had to walk through two feet of water so cold that ice was forming on top. They then found the Osage River greatly flooded. All the Rebels had for crossing was one flatboat, which was used by Harris’ division. The rest of the men had to chop down the surrounding timber, using the logs as bases for planks. These hastily constructed rafts had an “irregular and uneven surface”, but they got the job done. Heavy ropes were tied to trees on either side of the river and used to pull the rafts back and forth. In this manner Price’s army made it over the Osage, albeit slow enough that those who reached the other side took to fishing to pass the time. Some were even able to stay in the homes of sympathetic citizens, enjoying warm meals and dances with the ladies. The Guardsmen reached the town of Neosho, well ahead of Fremont, but it had been whittled down to 7,000 men. Most of the losses were desertions.²¹⁷ Their privations did not end either. The men found themselves low or

²¹⁶ Castel, 56-57; Lemuel Amzi Donnell, *Diary, Aug. 1861 – Jul. 1865*, 3, MHS; Anderson, 81; John C Fremont, “In Command in Missouri” in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War Vol. I*, (Century Company, 1887), 285; Siddali, 102-103; Tom Chaffin, *Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American Empire*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 464- 472.

²¹⁷ Bevier, 309, Anderson, 84-86; Grimes, 25.

out of everything. There was no available forage save some corn. A few men “tried wildcat.”²¹⁸

McCulloch withdrew his Confederate force south into Arkansas and urged Price to follow suit. He explained that a withdrawal into Arkansas’ Boston Mountains would provide a “very advantageous” defensive line with easier access to food and other supplies. A battle could be fought on the Rebels’ own terms. Price, however, was reluctant to take the Texan’s advice. Though Price was being tactically unsound, he did have the understandable fear that leaving Missouri, even temporarily for a more favorable battleground, would send a message to the state that he had abandoned it.²¹⁹

Meanwhile, Thompson continued his guerilla war to the east. His raids were generally successful, but his reports to the commanding Confederate General in the West, Albert Sidney Johnston, were laced with frustration. He continually implied that further co-operation from regular Confederate forces would do great wonders in eastern Missouri. For example, when he announced a successful demolition of a bridge, he hinted at the benefits of more material Confederate aid. Johnston simply congratulated him and made no guarantees. A few days later on October 18, he announced his intention to take a supply rich Federal outpost. He wrote, “Had I with me a few Confederate regiments I could take Ironton by Sunday, and capture 12,000,000 rations and an immense quantity of forage...” If he only had one brigade sent in he would succeed for sure. The aid did not arrive.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Uncle John to Francis, September, 1862 from Wilson Family Papers, 1898-1926, MHS.

²¹⁹ Cutrer, 149-150.

²²⁰ OR III, 224-226.

As his First Division suffered setbacks at the end of October, Thompson similarly implored Polk and Hardee to send men, but Polk did not and Hardee reiterated that it was unfeasible to spend resources on east Missouri.²²¹ The issue was that Confederate forces at the moment were spread thin, due to the idea that the best way to gain legitimacy as a nation was to hold onto as much territory as possible. Thus Johnston continually professed and encouraged support for the Missouri State Guard without intending to spend his resources on it. He appeared to see them as a diversionary force, alleviating Federal pressure on his side of the Mississippi.²²² The unfortunate truth was that the State Guard was only one voice clamoring for the attention of the Confederate government. In addition to holding onto the vital waterways in the West, the Confederacy was answering Texas' pleas for more protection on the Gulf Coast and on the western frontier. Arkansans wanted more of its fighting men on its own soil rather than abroad. Around this time Confederate Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin ordered two Texas regiments to join McCulloch and strengthen the Reel position in Missouri. This shows that the Confederate government did have a major interest in Missouri. The regiments, however, were diverted by the commanding general in Texas to bolster the coastal defenses. Missouri was not being ignored. It was simply a victim of an unwieldy grand strategy.²²³

Late in October Fremont neared Springfield. The advance guard was led by Major Charles Zagonyi, a Hungarian and the head of Fremont's colorful personal bodyguard. Zagonyi and the bodyguard had been mocked as window dressing for the ostentatious Fremont and felt they had a lot to prove. On October 21 he sped ahead with over 300

²²¹ OR III, 227-228, 235-236.

²²² Gerteis, 112.

²²³ *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion Vol. IV*, (Washington D.C. 1894), 145.

horsemen against what he thought was about 400 Guardsmen, but was surprised to run into over 1,000. Astoundingly, his cavalry charges were successful. His men were so gaudily dressed and audacious that when they burst into town the Guardsmen mistook them for a fancy mounted militia unit and cheered them on. The bodyguard turned and fired their revolvers into the spectators. Zagonyi was able to push the surprised Guardsmen out of town. His losses were high, however, with many men dead, wounded, or scattered. One of the lost horses ended up in the hands of McBride's division. McBride literally had to stop two of his staff officers from dueling each other over the prize.²²⁴ This small action raised the alarm of the State Guard. One Guardsman wrote to his wife that, with Fremont's large army close by and fresh "recruits coming in every day," he expected "a heavy battle." He overestimated the State Guard at 30-40,000 men and was confident that they would "thrash [the Federal Army] again."²²⁵ But no heavy battle came. A messenger reached Fremont and informed him that he was relieved of command. His provisional successor, General David Hunter, then made an odd decision. Gathering the officers, he declared "Gentlemen, we will not fight tomorrow" and pulled his 40,000 man army back north, conceding southern Missouri to the State Guard. If one of his letters to the War Department is to be believed, he had mistakenly believed that the Missourians had fled into Arkansas. This still doesn't explain why he made no effort to cement control over southern Missouri.²²⁶

²²⁴ Wood, 2011, 55-65; Asbury, 8-9; "Capt. Johnnie Wickersham," December 18, 1886 in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part One: 1861*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2010), 138-139.

²²⁵ "Moses J. Bradford letter to Malissa Jane Bradford and his mother, Frances Neely Bradford - Nov. 1, 1861," in Bradford, Moses Jasper (1833-1865), Letters, 1861-1865, MHS.

²²⁶ Lieut. Henry Voelkner to Mr. and Mrs. Voelkner, November 27, 1861 from Voelkner, Henry, Letters, 1861-1862, MHS; OR III, 569.

This retrograde move, which enabled Price to keep a strong foothold in the state, likely contributed to the proceeding political proceedings. On October 21 a second secession convention met at Neosho. In the Confederacy's view the MSG's string of victories over Federal forces was justification enough for Missouri's legitimacy as a member state. As for the reasons for secession, the delegates accused the Federal government of "reveling in unbridled power" and in using a "brutal soldiery" to displace the legal state troops. The convention sought to move towards three goals:

1. Of an ordinance dissolving all political connection between the State of Missouri and the United State of America.
2. Of an act of provisional union with the Confederate States of America.
3. The appointment of three commissioners to the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America.²²⁷

Naturally, with all the delegates being pro-Southerners secession was approved and the Confederate constitution ratified.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, That all political ties of every character now existing between the Government of the United States of America and the people and government of the State of Missouri are hereby dissolved, and the State of Missouri resuming the sovereignty granted by compact to the said United States upon the

²²⁷ Missouri, General Assembly, House of Representatives (Confederate), Journal, 1861, 14-16.

admission of said State into the Federal Union, does again takes its place as a free and independent republic amongst the nations of the earth.²²⁸

There were obvious issues with the legitimacy of this move. No Unionists were present for it, meaning that not all Missourians were represented. In fact only 19 senators and 68 representatives were let in on the convention and many did not even attend in person. They were now part of a new state government with little actual authority over much of Missouri. Back in July, Jackson's blatant support for the Confederacy and armed conflict with the Union Army led his governorship to be disregarded. Hamilton R. Gamble, a former attorney and judge, took his place as provisional governor, and the state legislature declared Jackson a traitor. The Unionist government held sway over most of central, eastern, and northern Missouri. Jackson saw this new government as a Federal puppet. He rationalized in a letter to President Davis that since the Federal army had overrun so much of Missouri, he had no recourse but to move ahead without a vote of the people, now represented by Gamble's government.²²⁹

The announcement of Missouri's entrance into the Confederacy filled the State Guard with newfound hope. Surely the South would send more men and supplies to protect what was now one of its states. McCulloch's force was also nearby and had moved north a little, another promising sign. Surely now Missouri could be taken out of the grasp of the Union. An article in the *Missouri Army Argus*, the State Guard's newspaper, prophesied, "The hand of Providence can be discerned in many events affecting our safety and our interest. The destiny of Missouri is now and forever the destiny of the Confederate States,

²²⁸ OR LIII, 753.

²²⁹ OR LIII, 755; Phillips 268-269.

and our future, contemplated in the light of history and by the aid of just induction, is a bright and glorious future.”²³⁰ However, it turned out that there were still obstacles in this alliance, and the State Guard was about to face a dire test.

²³⁰ Siddali, 112.

CHAPTER VIII

Losing Missouri

The MSG's win-loss ratio was thus far impressive, but there were circumstances that enabled these triumphs. The Union Army in Missouri had been uncoordinated and misled. Lyon had effectively taken most of Missouri in just a couple months, but his campaign withered and died with him as Fremont failed to support him. Price's movement towards the Missouri River had benefitted from sloppy and dilatory movements on the part of the Federals. The State Guard was spared in November when Fremont was replaced by Hunter, who called off a 20,000 man invasion. On November 9 the academic William Halleck was installed as the new commander of Federal forces in the West. Halleck was far from the striking and inspiring figures of Lyon and Fremont, but he had plenty of intelligence and was carefully making plans for a three-pronged Union invasion of the western Confederacy.

As Halleck set up his plans, the government in Richmond approved Missouri's admittance to the Confederacy. Claiborne Jackson's government and the MSG had to operate within new conditions. Article I promised military aid to drive the Union out of the state. Article II put all Missouri military forces under control of Jefferson Davis. It would no longer be purely a state defense force. Article III furthermore put almost all public property under national Confederate control. One of the conditions was that the Missouri State Guard had to be reorganized into Confederate service. Davis pointed out that the Confederacy could not effectively aid the MSG in the past because of its "anomalous condition." Even now it was still a state rather than Confederate force. Davis recalled that even after the recognition of Confederate statehood, Missourians still

deluged him with “unreasonable complaints” that no aid was furnished, even though they themselves had not organized themselves in a manner that would welcome such aid.²³¹

The MSG finally had a sizeable break from campaigning. The objective that winter was to complete its training, aided by Confederate resources. While there was a respite from the Union Army, it was difficult adjusting to camp conditions. As the heart of winter set in, foraging expeditions targeted civilian property, tearing down rail fences for firewood as they had no axes to take down trees (some veterans insisted that it was Unionist fences that were targeted). The State Guard was hit by another wave of desertions, and rather than blame the hard conditions, the faithful targeted the inactivity of early 1862. “Active military operations would have immediately aroused all the fire and energy of the troops,” claimed Bevier, but instead the men found themselves bored while living in sub-par conditions.²³²

Thanks to desertions and expiring terms of service, the State Guard was in desperate need of more men. Those who had chosen to stay and enter Confederate service believed that their future freedom was at stake, their arguments echoing the motivations of others within the Confederate rank-and-file. One man considering re-enlistment admitted to his wife that he was giving up a chance to “live at home in peace.” He believed that if the State Guard and the Confederacy in general was defeated, then “our condition will be worse than the Negroes.”²³³ On November 25 Price distributed a Confederate call for one-year volunteers. The men were to enlist as state troops and be

²³¹ Confederate States of America, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865 Vol. I*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 482; Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, Vol. I*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881), 426-427.

²³² Anderson, 130-131; Bevier, 65.

²³³ Moses J. Bradford letter to Malissa Jane Bradford and family – Dec. 8, 1861 in Bradford, Moses Jasper (1833-1865), MHS; Castel, 61.

paid by the Missouri state until a transfer to Confederate service was completed. The MSG was to be reorganized into Confederate brigades, with the men electing most of their officers. These elections were invaluable. The State Guard was greatly over-officered, and the consolidation of the small regiments into full-sized regular army ones meant that about half of the officers would lose their positions. After months of campaigning, the men knew which of their amateur military officers were proven leaders and which needed to be shunted back into political or legal careers. Thus the Missouri units ended up with effective leadership and command structures. These reorganized units would primarily be infantry, as the Confederacy would not expect mounted units without all the proper equipment of the cavalry.²³⁴ This reorganization produced some divisiveness. Many men preferred to remain in the State Guard, believing their state to have primacy over the Confederacy. In turn, the Confederate Missourians began to see them, much like McCulloch and McIntosh had, as an undisciplined militia force that would drag them down.²³⁵

Desiring much more men, Price added a second proclamation on November 26, exhorting Missourians to flock to the cause. He noted that out of a military age population of 200,000, only 5,000 now served in the State Guard's ranks. Not wanting to alienate his potential recruits by impugning their bravery, he acknowledged that there was a lack of organization and equipment that may have held off volunteering. Now that the Guard was finally getting proper aid, and now that the farmers had finished the fall harvest and winter preparations, there was nothing to stop Missourians from leaving their homes and helping cast off Federal rule. By staying at home to protect their lives and

²³⁴ OR VIII, 693-695; Anderson, 111.

²³⁵ O'Flaherty, 95; Anderson, 132.

property, they in fact had endangered it by letting the Union forces and Jayhawkers run rampant throughout the state. “I must have 50,000 men. Now is the criss of your fate; now the golden opportunity to save the State; now is the day of your political salvation...” He asked for volunteers to bring along valuable supplies such as tents, weapons, blankets, etc. Remembering the hundreds of holiday soldiers who would melt away after a battle, Price implored recruits to “Come to the Army of Missouri, not for a week or month, but to free your country.”²³⁶ For this purpose he set up a separate camp near his own where recruits would be processed prior to joining one of the units.²³⁷

The new call for recruits produced less than hoped for results. Recruiters did get thousands of men to sign up. However, many of these were in the north, which was once again nearly cut off by Federal forces. To both protect and hasten their travels to his army, Price dispatched cavalry to escort them and screen their movements. These cavalymen would go on forays to find or create recruits. They then had to guide the recruits to the main army while dodging both Federal units and Jayhawkers, the latter noted by one diarist to have riddled one hopeful Guardsman with 14 bullet holes. Also, pro-Southern, or more accurately in some cases anti-Federal men decided they would rather join guerilla outfits, among these one under former Guardsman William Quantrill. These men were opposed to the Union Army, but would expend much of their energy fighting similarly irregular pro-Union Jayhawkers along the Kansas border.²³⁸ Conditions in camp, despite incoming Confederate assistance, remained very rough for a time. Since food and supplies were low, Guardsmen had to leave Springfield and fan out into

²³⁶ OR VIII, 695-697.

²³⁷ Farley, 10.

²³⁸ Castel, 61-62; Fisher, 100-101, Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield.

neighboring towns to find a better place to stay. By February, however, more supplies and organization saw the men were “faring sumptuously.”²³⁹

While his force was still reorganizing, Price and some of his political friends were causing trouble with the other Confederates. The Missouri Commission in Richmond was hurling accusations at McCulloch, charging him with abandoning Missouri and passing up an opportunity for victory. Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin seriously considered these charges, writing to McCulloch, “I cannot understand why you withdrew your troops instead of pursuing the enemy when his leaders were quarreling and his army separated into parts under different commanders. Send an explanation.” McCulloch did more than that, choosing to visit Richmond personally to state his case.²⁴⁰

This left McIntosh in charge. McCulloch’s right-hand man now found himself dealing with Price’s incessant demands for action. Seeing the irregular violence unfolding to the north, Price wanted to move at the “earliest practicable day” and restore control up to the Missouri River. With McIntosh’s men, he could push to the river and create a safe route for which northern Missourians could reach his army.²⁴¹ About a week later he received McIntosh’s reply. McIntosh found an offensive towards the Missouri impractical. He felt that his men did not have enough warm clothing or rations to campaign “in the depth of winter over the bleak prairies of Missouri.” Furthermore, he had already had to detach men to assist allies in Indian Territory and was staying on call to assist in the defense of Memphis on the Mississippi. To a general in Richmond, McIntosh wrote that he considered Price’s plan for a massive winter campaign “almost

²³⁹ Simpson, 2, MHS.

²⁴⁰ OR VIII, 699, 701-702; Farley, 10.

²⁴¹ OR VIII, 702.

madness.”²⁴² Price was so furious with his refusal that he sent a message to Davis himself, begging him to flat-out order McIntosh to come to his aid. Davis assured him that “we here have not forgotten you; but, on the contrary, have been most anxious to give to Missouri all the aid in our power.” He told him that the Confederacy had no troops to spare save those in Arkansas, and they were similarly in need of reorganization.²⁴³

Frustrated by another refusal for a cooperative campaign, Price vented his frustrations towards General Polk, believing that McCulloch’s inaction “engendered” dissatisfaction “in the minds of the people of Missouri” and led them to “doubt whether the Confederate Government really sympathizes with them and desires to aid them.” The editor of the *Missouri Army Argus*, repeated these criticisms, expanding them to include the central Confederate government in Richmond. The editor’s article spread throughout the South (its arguments echoed in similar bitter editorials by other Missouri papers) and a furious McCulloch responded with his own article. This article did little to soothe relations, as he accused the State Guard of being little more than a rabble of ill-disciplined militia. McCulloch’s story seems to line up better with the facts. His specific attack on Rains’ leadership of the Eight Division matches his omission of the same general when commending MSG generals for their bravery in August. Also, his accusations of reckless offensive schemes by Price matches up with the Missourian’s lucky drive against Lexington and his demands to McIntosh for a dead-in-winter offensive. In his defense, Price as a politician may have cannily realized that a rescue of Missouri from Jayhawking would foster pro-Southern sentiment, but he displayed some

²⁴² OR VIII, 712.

²⁴³ OR VIII, 714-716.

strategic myopia. McIntosh already had to remove some of his force to assist in Indian Territory and Johnston's western line along Kentucky's southern border to the vital Mississippi River was seriously threatened at several points.²⁴⁴

The Missourians also caused consternation over the command structure of the Trans-Mississippi. They wanted a unified command to ensure more cooperation. Lieutenant-Governor Reynolds claimed that the Missouri commission made a very unreasonable request. It asked that General Price be given command of all forces not just in his home state, but Arkansas as well. Not only could Davis not grant this yet since Price was still technically a state rather than Confederate general, but this would anger any officers and soldiers loyal to McCulloch. For similar reasons it was unfeasible to place McCulloch in overall command. Governor Jackson recommended Davis' friend Braxton Bragg (whose egregious flaws as a commander were not yet known at that point), but Davis settled on the younger West Pointer Henry Heth. This was immediately challenged. The Missourians did not want someone "young and undistinguished." The Missouri delegates in Richmond were horrified at the prospect, arguing that "utter ruin...would follow us in the future if some stranger to our troops and people should be placed in [Prices's] stead." They were so adamant that Price should retain control that Heth agreed to refuse the appointment shortly after having already accepted it.²⁴⁵

Davis did not cave in and choose Price. Instead he found another West Pointer that better satisfied Governor Jackson and other leading Missourians. James Earl Van Dorn, an experienced cavalry Indian fighter, was the approved choice. Van Dorn was a

²⁴⁴ OR III, 729-730; 743-749; Castel 63; Rose, 183.

²⁴⁵ Reynolds, 41-44; OR LIII, 761-762.

rising star. Hailing from Mississippi, he soon was leading Texans in capturing or driving out Federal troops in their state. He was called to Virginia to lead the Confederate cavalry along the Potomac, but did not stay long as he accepted command of Price and McCulloch's forces. He was a highly energetic and reckless man, and this behavior extended beyond military life to his interactions with the ladies. Van Dorn left for the west on January 19. He arrived at Pocahontas, Arkansas on January 29.

As Van Dorn came west, the State Guard was undergoing its transformation. Two brigades, the 1st and 2nd Missouri, had been formed. Colonel Henry Little, Price's valuable adjutant-general, was now field commander of the 1st Missouri. A career army officer before the war, he put his qualifications to good use, fine-tuning the men's drilling. Slack, who had been proven to be one of the better divisional commanders, was rewarded with the 2nd, though his rank fell from brigadier-general to colonel. The rest of the force was still the State Guard, though in much smaller numbers. Colonel James P. Saunders, the current commander of the Fifth Division, reported that his "force consisted of the remainder of regiments reduced to skeletons by expiration of time and transfer to Confederate service." The Fifth Division in fact had less than 1,000 men. Another officer listed one regiment as having only 75 men. These were men had either refused Confederate service or were awaiting a transfer to a Confederate brigade, the third of which was being organized under Colonel Colton Greene. Of the division commanders who had served in the summer of 1861, only Thompson, John B. Clark, and Rains remained in command of the First, Third, and Eight Divisions respectively. On February 7 Daniel Frost, who had surrendered his men in the Camp Jackson Affair, made his return to Missouri. After his parole, he chose to go to the Confederacy and become a general

there. Upon learning that Missouri was now part of the emerging nation, he agreed to go west. At Memphis he collected a group of new recruits and fellow paroled Guardsmen, along with six gifted cannon from the Confederacy. He made a hard trek through the Boston Mountains and arrived with frostbitten, but fresh men and guns. Until reorganization was completed he was handed command of both the Seventh and Ninth Divisions.²⁴⁶

Right after Frost's arrival the State Guard found itself in crisis. Halleck had launched a three-pronged invasion of the western Confederacy. The first prong under General Ulysses S. Grant would go for Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee River while the second under General John Pope would go directly for the Mississippi River. The westernmost of these prongs, General Samuel Curtis' newly christened Army of the Southwest, was to seize the rest of Missouri, defeating disparate groups of guerillas and Guardsmen in detail. Once Curtis had solidified control over the countryside and gathered his force, he was to hit Price and drive him out of the state. Compared to Fremont's army the year before, Curtis' was considerably smaller, consisting of about 14,000 men. However it was much more competently organized and led and moved much faster. Despite his proclamation the previous November and constant recruiting efforts, Price had fallen far short of the 50,000 men he had hoped for. What he did have was not concentrated at his base at Springfield. The Federal forces in the state in fact were already turning the tide against the State Guard. One by one Halleck's Federals, in order to secure the various railheads in Missouri, defeated and drove away contingents of Guardsmen

²⁴⁶ Moses J. Bradford letter to Malissa Jane Bradford and family – Feb. 7, 1862 in Bradford, Moses Jasper (1833-1865) MHS; OR VIII, 321; Anderson, 114; William Jeffrey Bull, *Missouri Brothers in Gray: The Reminiscences and Letters of William J. Bull and John P. Bull*, (Iowa City: Camp Pope Bookshop, 1998), 19-21.

from important locations. At the Battle of Mount Zion Church a regiment under Caleb Dorsey was scattered in less than an hour. Many of those who fled took individual or small group journeys to join the main force under Price. Much worse was the Battle of Roan's Tan Yard. John Poindexter outnumbered a Union cavalry force 800 to 450, but was effectively defeated due to the enemy's superior weaponry.²⁴⁷ These small actions formed the prelude to Curtis' larger final thrust.

The Missouri Confederates and Guardsmen were not ready to fight this force. Curtis came upon them fast near Springfield, prompting Price to order a hasty retreat. In his later report Price claimed that he knew the enemy was coming after him, but, hoping for reinforcements from Arkansas, "held my position to the very last moment." This is contradicted by other sources, who recalled that their withdrawal south was immediate. Many Guardsmen had to leave their suppers cooking over the fire. Somehow Quarter-master general Harding had not received the order to retreat and was caught off guard. Working as fast as he could with his wagons, many of them civilian property that was "requisitioned," he was able to haul away nearly all supplies in his immediate vicinity save for "one keg of mule shoes, one box of trousers and a few tents." Having run out of wagons, he had a mounted unit put on the trousers and drape the tents over the pommels of their saddles, meaning he only lost the keg of mule shoes. However the MSG overall still lost 60 wagonloads of supplies in their necessary haste.²⁴⁸

The First Missouri Cavalry mounted a charge that slowed the Union Army. What followed was a torturous fighting retreat south, "one of the severe tramps of the war."

²⁴⁷ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Halleck: Lincoln's Chief of Staff*, (Louisiana State University Press, 1962), 17. 23--24; Bull, 23; Gerteis, 135-129.

²⁴⁸ OR VIII, 756; Bull, 23; McGhee, 56-57.

The retreat was cold, often rainy, and conducted over difficult terrain. If there was any time for sleep, many of the men found themselves unable to do so because of the uneven rocky ground.²⁴⁹ The heroes of this retreat were young Churchill Clark and his battery. He displayed a level of skill that showed the growing maturity of the Missouri artillerists. He constantly unlimbered his artillery to slow down the Federal advance cavalry, often in the form of ambushes. These resulted in seven short skirmishes from February 12 to February 25. Usually the Federals were slowed by Clark's battery, enabling the rest of Price's force to gain some distance. Then Clark's battery would limber up and catch up with the infantry. This formula was broken at one point when the Union cavalry overtook a small contingent of Missouri cavalry, then surrounded Clark's battery. The artillerymen grabbed whatever rifles and pistols they had, as well as sponges and other tools, and fought the Federals until infantry came to the rescue.²⁵⁰

Clark and men from the 1st Missouri also broke the formula by setting a trap at the town of Keytsville. Clark set up his battery to face down a lane, with the infantry hiding behind the brow of a hill. The cavalry came down the lane "at a brisk trot, sabers rattling, laughing gaily and merrily". Clark screamed the order to fire and the four cannon blasted their contents. The horses panicked, throwing riders to the ground. The riders wheeled about and rode straight back into those behind them, causing a traffic jam. This gave Clark's battery time to reload and fire again. The second cannon volley was much deadlier, hitting the jam-packed cavalry and killing and wounding men and horses alike. The enemy scattered. Happy to have this small victory, the Rebels went back to the

²⁴⁹ Bevier, 24; Uncle John to Francis, September, 1862 from Wilson Family, Papers, 1898-1926, MHS; William E. Vaughn Diary, 13, MHS.

²⁵⁰ Bull, 24; Bevier, 90.

retreat. Approaching the Arkansas border, the State Guard hoped to see McCulloch's force, but learned it had already retreated itself. Thus, with "heavy hearts," they crossed into Arkansas, leaving their home state in Federal hands.²⁵¹

The pursuit continued into Arkansas. The State Guard met up again with McCulloch's force at the supply base at Fayetteville. The reception of the Missourians was mixed. William Watson believed that as at Wilson's Creek, Price had been lax in intelligence-gathering and had been fooled by Unionists. This resulted in him being once again surprised by a Union army and now the entire Confederate presence in the area was in trouble. Watson also suggested a dark truth about Price's vision of a Confederate Missouri. "...Many thought that the people of Missouri were not so much devoted to the Southern cause as Price had led himself to believe."²⁵²

Once again there was great disagreement. Price believed that, united once again, they could make a stand, but McCulloch argued that a retreat was necessary. Also, thanks to a lack of communication likely caused by an inoperable telegraph line, the Texan had not been aware of Price's retreat and had no time to prepare. Thanks to McCulloch's refusal, Price had no choice but to continue his retreat. In the end the Confederates had to burn all the supplies they left behind, accidentally setting parts of the town on fire as well. As it happened Curtis elected to stop short of the town, finding Sugar Creek to the north much more defensible. His army's fast and hard marching, quite a feat in the "sterility and rockiness" of the Ozarks, had outpaced his supply lines.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Anderson, 148-151.

²⁵² Watson, 275-276.

²⁵³ Knight, loc. 51-52; Shea, 309; Farley, 18.

Morale was mixed among the Guardsmen. “Some called for transfer (which was never granted), some wanted to go to infantry, some wanted to remain cavalry, some wished they had never enlisted...” Those wishing to become infantry got their wish, adding to the ranks of the still incomplete 2nd Missouri Brigade, while Guardsmen wishing to remain cavalry joined Gates’ regiment.²⁵⁴

During this respite from pursuit, Price and McCulloch met their new commander. Van Dorn, meeting them on March 3, proved to be a wise choice for uniting the western forces, creating “a sort of harmony between the two generals.” As a West Pointer with years of experience fighting Indians, he appealed to McCulloch’s wish for a qualified leading officer. His strategy, though it has received criticism in military histories, appealed to the Missourians. He proposed to lead his army back into Missouri. He believed the Union Army of the Southwest had halted for reinforcements, and thus he needed to strike them now. First he would defeat Curtis, then “to St. Louis – huzzah!” He wanted to start immediately. The mood improved among the Missourians. “We wer all in good Sperits and perfectly ready to start home. It does seam that every soldier is cheered up and feels fooley assured of a grait victory.”²⁵⁵

Van Dorn has been criticized for planning and executing an ambitious campaign so quickly and in late winter. Though he provided an ammunition train and an extra day of rations for each division, he ordered all other supplies left behind.²⁵⁶ However, there were some factors in his favor. Curtis was far ahead of his base of supplies and exposed.

²⁵⁴ Simpson, 5, MHS.

²⁵⁵ Castel, 68; OR VIII, 283; Colonel R. H. Musser, “The Battle of Pea Ridge,” in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part Two: 1862*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2011), 20; Vaughn, 18, MHS.

²⁵⁶ Shea, 56-58.

Van Dorn also had a sizeable numerical superiority over him. Curtis had 10,500 men. Van Dorn was able to bring together 16,500.²⁵⁷ Van Dorn's force was split into two wings. The State Guard and Missouri brigades, the largest element on its own, made up one wing under Price. McCulloch was to lead the other wing. In addition to his own men, he had Albert Pike's Indian Brigade, consisting of Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Creeks, and several units of Arkansans. The Arkansans' interests aligned well with the Missourians. Seeing how the Federals would enter their state after pushing the State Guard out of theirs, Arkansas' government had been vainly trying to convince the Confederate government to send all Arkansas units back to the state.²⁵⁸ Thus Van Dorn's plan, which had the objective of pushing the war northward, was widely approved, though even Price was surprised by how fast he intended to execute it.

Curtis responded with a retreat towards a more favorable position. Van Dorn first tried to cut off and bag Sigel's two German divisions at Bentonville. The entrapment was undone by bungling on both sides and Sigel escaped (one Missourian wryly noted years later that Sigel had a lucky habit of always escaping the State Guard; at Carthage, Wilson's Creek, and now Bentonville). The Federals took position on the heights behind Little Sugar Creek. Not wanting to assault these heights, Van Dorn hatched another ambitious plan. He would put his men on a circuitous route that put them in the Federals' rear, catching them by total surprise. His route was the Bentonville Detour. Unfortunately the Federals had already considered that this route might be used and had cut down timber to create obstructions. The night of March 6 was spent clearing these obstacles. The Confederates had to hack their way through with axes while traversing "rough and

²⁵⁷ OR VIII, 755.

²⁵⁸ OR LIII, 781-782.

mountainous” terrain.” To save time Van Dorn sent McCulloch’s men on another road. Because of this McCulloch ran into the enemy near the village of Leetown on March 7, completely separated from the commanding general and Price’s wing. The following Battle of Pea Ridge was thus two battles within close proximity.²⁵⁹

The fight for McCulloch went well at first, but there were several failures to press the advantage. Tragedy also struck the force’s leadership, as both McCulloch and then McIntosh were killed. Left in the hands of the far less inspiring Albert Pike, the Confederate effort in this area petered out. Price’s fight was at Elkhorn Tavern, under the supervision of Van Dorn. Elkhorn Tavern was a large building situated on a hill and served as Curtis’ headquarters. Van Dorn uncharacteristically grew cautious, passing up an opportunity to quickly smash the Federals around the tavern. He instead spent valuable time having the Missourians form up in battle lines, the State Guard in the east and the official Confederate units in the west. This gave time for Union Colonel Eugene Carr to bring up the rest of his surprised division. Price sent forward a skirmishing force comprised of his personal escort. At 10 AM they came upon the Federals and “succeeded in bringing on a general engagement,” buying time for the arrival of the First and Second Missouri Brigades. They quickly seized several heights from which they gained a commanding view of the Federal encampment. From these their artillery did effective work. The batteries were able to unlimber under heavy fire and once ready created a “living wall of fire which Missouri may well be proud of.” The Federal batteries were driven back. Several infantry counter-attacks were likewise handily repulsed. As at Wilson’s Creek, Price was lightly wounded, this time with a “bullet hole in his wrist, a

²⁵⁹ L.W. Truman, “Battle of Elkhorn,” *Confederate Veteran* 11 (1903), 551; Franz Sigel, “The Pea Ridge Campaign” from *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War Vol. 1*, (Century Company, 1887), 319-320.

very painful wound.” His arm in a sling, he continued to lead his men, attempting to get into Carr’s right flank. Curtis sent timely reinforcements to prevent this.²⁶⁰

By attacking against the Federals’ rear, the Missourians found themselves in possession of many spoils of war. They captured several enemy guns that had been hurried to stem the tide of their assault. Frost’s Guardsmen were fortunate enough to make an assault on the encampment around Elkhorn Tavern. Most of the Missourians had not eaten in thirty-six hours. Driving the Federals off, they came upon “a large quantity of sutler’s and subsistence stores” to relieve their famishment. However, there were major losses as well. Colonel Slack was severely shot in the hip, near his Wilson’s Creek wound, and had to be taken off the field. He died on March 20, ironically on the same day the Confederate government granted his commission as brigadier-general. Price saw that his men had made several major gains and had repulsed every counter-attack. Sensing success, he ordered his whole line forward at once. This drove the Federals back further through their camps and across a field. The Second Missouri Brigade repulsed a final counterattack before nightfall ended the fighting. The Missourians had to sleep where they had battled, still holding their weapons. Though cold and tired, they were optimistic. Colonel Thomas Rosser, taking the wounded Slack’s place, reported the views of the men. “Having been successful in every instance, officers and men were sanguine that victory was ours, and that the following day would make successful our arms.” Battle reports and veterans make it sound like nightfall prevented them from pressing further

²⁶⁰ OR VIII, 307, 327; Paul C. Yates, “Incidents from Battle of Elkhorn,” *Confederate Veteran* 14 (1906), 62; Truman, 551-552; Shea, 156-158.

and achieving victory, but in fact the Federals, though constantly pushed back, had prevented any decisive breakthrough and inflicted heavy casualties on the attackers.²⁶¹

On the night of March 7, the men went to sleep right where they had stopped fighting, “on the wet ground without blankets,” still in shooting range of each other.²⁶² It was the largest battle the State Guard had been in yet, though perhaps not as ferocious as Wilson’s Creek. It was also the first battle where they had to contend with the mass overnight moaning and crying of the wounded. One veteran recalled the grisly scenes he came upon during the night. “The wounded of both sides were still lying thickly around, in the woods down by the road and down by the spring. Broken down wagons and dismounted cannon, dead horses and small arms thickly strewn the ground, with the numerous killed of both sides, told of a terrible conflict.”²⁶³ Orderly sergeant Ford had to endure the sounds of the Union wounded in his front and found himself unable to do nothing. “I awoke the tired guards that were off duty and had them build a great big log fire out of the quantity of trees lying all around us. I then had all the wounded brought and placed around it, and had their canteens all filled with water to quench their thirst, which is terrible when one is wounded and bleeding profusely. The thankful expressions those men gave me was more than enough to pay me for my care of them.” General Price

²⁶¹ OR VIII, 312-313, 323-324; Leach, 4; Shea, 186; Unknown to Mrs. Slack, December 26, 1863 from Slack, William Yarnel (1816-1862), Papers, 1847-1880, MHS.

²⁶² Simpson, 8, MHS.

²⁶³ Hunt P. Wilson, “The Battle of Elkhorn,” in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part Two: 1862*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2011), 56.

sent one of his aides to request the fire be put out, lest it attract enemy fire, but upon learning the reason for it let it keep burning.²⁶⁴

The next day the Union, having shifted men from its left to right flank to bolster it, went on the offensive. Since Van Dorn had cut off their escape route with his flanking march, many Federal officers believed they were attempting a breakout rather than an actual defeat of the Confederates. At seven in the morning the battle resumed “with great fury” as artillery fire riddled the Missourians’ ranks. Those Missourians resting in the woods found themselves engulfed in a “cyclone of falling timber and busting shells.” Sigel then led an attack that gradually pushed the Confederates back. In the following engagement Churchill Clark, the youthful battery commander who had been a star at the Siege of Lexington and the retreat from Missouri, was decapitated by round shot. Curtis did not realize how well-timed his attack had been. The Missourians’ wagon train, in a “strange and criminal mistake,” had been left far behind on the long march and the men were dangerously low on ammunition. One of the Missouri batteries was now literally firing “spare trace-chains and blacksmith tools.” Van Dorn ordered a general retreat. The Second Missouri obeyed, disengaging efficiently. However, the First Missouri did not respond in time and broke in a more disorganized fashion.²⁶⁵ What followed was another rough retreat southwards, with the extra burdens of dangerously low rations and hundreds of wounded men. One Missourian recalled that he and his comrades had to drag their wagons “by hand through swamps and sloughs” and worse abandon many of their

²⁶⁴ Ford, 5.

²⁶⁵ Leach, 4; Truman, 552; Bevier, 103; Shea, 228-230, 246; Sigel, 326-329; Wilson in *Confederate Tales of the War in the Trans-Mississippi Part Two: 1862*, (Camp Pope Bookshop, 2011), 59.

wounded comrades.²⁶⁶ They got back to where they had started, no closer to regaining their presence in Missouri.

Van Dorn later claimed in his report that the collapse of his right wing as well as a lack of food and ammunition put him in a tight spot and necessitated his withdrawal order, but it appears that he actually had intended to continue the battle and it was the heavy Federal cannonade and assault that forced the decision. Regardless, Missourians were irate and for years afterwards insisted that if they had stood and fought the Federals would have collapsed. One reminiscing veteran even depicted Price with “tears in his eyes” as he begged for four, two, or even just one half-hour to halt the Federal attack.²⁶⁷

Very well may Price have cried. The Battle of Pea Ridge proved to be the last of the early battles for Missouri, and was even fought in Arkansas rather than his home state. This was not so clear at the time. Van Dorn was already thinking out another northward movement into Missouri. His returning optimism may have been a misreading of General Curtis’ movements. Curtis had turned north instead of pursuing the Confederates south. Van Dorn believed the Federals had been so shaken that they had abandoned their drive into Arkansas. As it turned out, hundreds of Missouri Guardsmen had decided to ditch the Confederate army and go back home. There were so many deserters that Curtis mistook this for a continued Rebel movement towards Missouri. Van Dorn boldly claimed “I was not defeated, but only failed in my intentions. I am yet sanguine of success, and will not cease to repeat my blows whenever the opportunity is

²⁶⁶ William N. Hoskin (1841-) Civil War Diary, 1862-1865, MHS.

²⁶⁷ OR VIII, 284; J.A. Mathes, “Battles in Trans-Mississippi Department,” *Confederate Veteran* 2 (1894) 79.

offered.”²⁶⁸ Price, recovering from a swelling of his arm wound, also regained his enthusiasm. He stated in his communications with the government in Richmond that “with such additions to my force as I am led to believe will shortly be made, although not officially advised of them, I do not question my ability to penetrate aggressively the heart of Missouri.”²⁶⁹

Van Dorn’s assessment of the Missourians should be noted. Like McCulloch he listed “bad discipline” as a cause of concern, but in this case he was likely referring to McCulloch’s wing itself, which fell apart upon the death of its commanders. In fact he was impressed by Price’s men. “I have never seen better fighters than these Missouri troops and more gallant leaders than General Price and his officers. From the first to the last shot they continually pushed on and never yielded an inch they had won, and when at last they received the order to fall back they retired steadily and with cheers. General Price received a severe wound early in the action, but would neither retire from the field nor cease to expose himself to danger.” Henry Little, commander of the First Missouri, particularly impressed Van Dorn with his “coolness, skill, and devotion” (William Shea, Pea Ridge’s main historian, shares this assessment, considering Little to have been the only effective commander in the Confederate ranks).²⁷⁰

Van Dorn and Price’s plans were put on hold when Albert Sidney Johnston requested his men in Tennessee. Johnston was desperate to reverse the Confederacy’s fortunes in the west and planned a knockout blow against the Union army at Pittsburg

²⁶⁸ McCoskrie, 102; OR VIII, 286, 790.

²⁶⁹ OR VIII, 792; The outnumbered Federals incurred over 1,300 casualties while the Confederates suffered about 2,000.

²⁷⁰ OR VIII, 285; Shea, 313.

Landing on the Tennessee River. Thus the Missourians who signed up with the Confederacy to rescue their state from the Federal grasp were now to fight in foreign states. Missouri was lost.

CHAPTER IX

After the Guard

Van Dorn's Army of the West never made it to Pittsburg Landing. They were too late to make it to the battle there. The fight there, better known as the Battle of Shiloh, was a Union victory and the Confederates had to regroup at Corinth. However, Van Dorn's army was still wanted east of the Mississippi. Much to their growing discontent, the Missourians in his force learned that their home state had fallen low on the Confederacy's list of priorities. The would-be nation was in dire straits in April of 1862. It had lost its footholds in Kentucky and Missouri. The Union naval cordon along its coasts was tightening. Its defenses on the Tennessee River were falling one by one and a massive consolidated Federal Army had emerged in Tennessee, poised to strike even further south. In the east, General George B. McClellan's equally massive Army of the Potomac had landed on the Virginia Peninsula and was within a few days' march of the capital at Richmond. The loss of Missouri hastened the loss of Confederate control over the northern Mississippi, with effective resistance on the western side of the river eliminated. The war west of the Mississippi was to become a secondary theatre. While early battles such as Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge would have their place in thousands of history books, other episodes would be relegated to the fringes, if mentioned at all. As if to symbolize this change in circumstances, Governor Claiborne Jackson had to step down thanks to a battle with stomach cancer. The more openly pro-Confederate Reynolds ascended to his place.

The men in Price's army made their final decision. About 4,000 went east with Price. The rest, the remaining State Guard, stayed west under the command of Mosby

Parsons. Parsons was instructed to return to Missouri and reorganize the men “into companies, battalions, and regiments, according to law.”²⁷¹ Indeed, the State Guard actually survived for the entire war, but in name only.²⁷² Van Dorn’s Army of the West landed at Memphis, Tennessee, on April 15. It made its way to Corinth, the center of the Confederate military at the moment. There they saw the impressive earthworks set up by General Pierre G.T. Beauregard. Remembering his capture of Lexington, Price was dismissive of these fortifications, ironic considering he would lose much of his men assaulting these same earthworks later in the year. There was no great battle for Corinth, as it was abandoned in the face of an overwhelming force under Halleck. While the Confederate leadership in the west desperately tried to figure out how to reverse their fortunes, Price made a trip to Richmond, arriving in June.²⁷³

The citizens of Richmond greeted Price with enthusiasm, but Missouri’s general quickly became a great nuisance, and perhaps a serious threat, to President Davis. Price wanted his men re-assigned back to Arkansas, from which they could make another attempt to reclaim Missouri. He had the support of Van Dorn who, prior to Price’s arrival, sent a letter to the president with the message, “the love of the people of Missouri is so strong for General Price, and his prestige as a commander so great there, wisdom would seem to dictate that he be put at the head of affairs in the West.”²⁷⁴ Davis was not convinced, likely remembering the command feuds that Price had been a part of. Also

²⁷¹ OR VIII, 814.

²⁷² Parsons and his men ended up in northern Arkansas, where they served as a brigade at the Battle of Prairie Grove. They became official Confederates and would assist in the 1864 Missouri campaign.

²⁷³ Castel, 83-84.

²⁷⁴ Thomas Snead, “With Price East of the Mississippi,” *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* Vol. II, (Century Company, 1887) 723.

Braxton Bragg, one of Davis' firmest friends, had just been installed as the new commander in the central Confederacy. Bragg wanted to keep Price, or more accurately his hard-fighting men as the Union threatened to cut deep into the vitals of the South in Tennessee and Georgia. Davis, who was always biased towards loyal friends, naturally bent to his wishes.

The following meeting between Price and Davis grew heated, though to what extent is uncertain. The two sources for this encounter are Snead and Reynolds. Snead described Davis as "contemptuous" in the discussion, growing more and more frustrated. Price threatened to resign and try to take Missouri without the Confederacy's help. Davis said he would be greatly surprised if Price won any victories in such conditions. Angered by this attack upon his generalship, Old Pap slammed a "fist down upon the table with a violence which set the inkstands and everything upon it a-dancing." Reynolds added that after they stormed out, Snead was so furious that he tore the Confederate insignia off his uniform. He and Price seriously considered returning to Missouri under the "bear flag," in other words retaking command of the State Guard. Despite Price's actions of disrespect, Davis did promise to send the Missouri brigades back, with the vague qualifier "as soon as it could safely be done."²⁷⁵

Rumors of disloyalty on the part of Price provided further tension. One of Price's sons, Edwin Price, had served in the State Guard as a brigadier-general and commander of the Fifth Division. While leading recruits to the State Guard in February of 1862 he was intercepted and captured. Though paroled, he opted out of the MSG and then declared himself as a Unionist. This led to a conspiracy theory that Price and his son were

²⁷⁵ Snead, 1887, 724-725; Reynolds, 45-46.

forming plans to create a separate Northwest Confederacy, aligning Missouri with northern Midwestern states. This would be accomplished with the aid of Democrat copperheads in such places as Illinois and Ohio. More tangible was the prospect of a separate western Confederacy. Congressmen from the Trans-Mississippi states of Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Missouri felt abandoned by the central government and did openly consider forming a separate entity so more of their fighting men would not be siphoned off to the east. Thomas Reynolds claimed that other delegates from Missouri later told him of a scheme to forcibly remove Davis from the presidency and have Price installed as a ‘generalissimo.’ These potential challenges to Davis’ authority, and the Confederate government in general, were not wanted at a time when a large Federal army was at Richmond’s doorstep.²⁷⁶

No such takeover occurred. Price left before the battles for Richmond went underway. These battles ended in a Confederate victory and disenchanted elements within the government either warmed back up to Davis’ administration or did not dare make a move against it at this time. As for whether an anti-Davis faction really considered installing Price as the new leader of the Confederacy, the only firm source appears to be Reynolds himself. It is hard to prove to what extent this scheme was seriously considered and how close it came to execution.

Price returned to his men, serving under Bragg and Van Dorn. His men performed bravely, but failed to achieve victory at the Battles of Iuka and Corinth. Price finally lost patience and went to Arkansas, leaving his battle-hardened Missourians. Their paths would grow far apart. The Missouri brigades were part of the surrendered garrison at

²⁷⁶ Reynolds, 46-48; Peterson, 107.

Vicksburg in July of 1863. After their parole they fought in the 1864 Atlanta Campaign. Jeff Thompson's men also continued their war. Under intensifying Federal pressure in Missouri, they crossed over the Mississippi. They were supposed to finally link up with the rest of the former State Guard at Corinth, but ended up manning a "cotton-boat fleet" to defend the vital port city of Memphis. Thompson actually scored a naval victory, but could not prevent the ultimate fall of Memphis. He returned west to wage more irregular warfare in southern Missouri and Arkansas.²⁷⁷

Price saw it his duty to retake Missouri and constantly badgered his various superior officers in the Trans-Mississippi to give him an opportunity. The Trans-Mississippi Department was always too far short of men for any major offensive operation, much less the conquest of an entire state. In the meantime Price was never able to recapture the glory of 1861. He commanded Arkansans and Missourians, but a good number of the latter had not been part of the State Guard. His battle record saw much more defeats than victories, though the blame could be shared with other incompetent generals. The State Guard's political leader, Claiborne Jackson, also suffered misfortune. He succumbed to his affliction on December 7, 1862, on Arkansas rather than Missouri soil.²⁷⁸

Though Price and the Confederate Army remained confined to battlefields in Arkansas, Tennessee, and elsewhere, Missouri was not free from violence. Bands of guerillas, known as Bushwhackers, sprouted up across the state. Former Guardsmen

²⁷⁷ "The First Naval Victory on the Mississippi River, by Gen. Jeff Thompson," from H.W.R. Jackson, "Our Naval Victories and Exploits of Confederate War Steamers, etc.," (Atlanta, Georgia: Intelligencer Steam-Power Press, 1863), 3-4; Mueller, 61-63; The best book on the Battles of Iuka and Corinth, in which the Missouri brigades played a large part, is Peter Cozzens' *The Darkest Days of the War: The Battles of Iuka and Corinth*, University of North Carolina Press, August 7, 2006.

²⁷⁸ Phillips, 273.

made up much of these bands and one, William Quantrill, became their most famous leader. These men committed irregular and far more violent warfare, not above killing Unionist civilians and surrendering soldiers. Actually commissioned as a colonel, Quantrill was in correspondence with Price (only one of his reports to Price has survived). Price assumed that all the stories about Quantrill, including the infamous Sacking of Lawrence, Kansas, were fictions of Union propaganda, and if confronted with evidence to the contrary, made the excuse that the Federals had violated the rules of war first. The State Guard also continued to operate in a fashion, though given the circumstances of tightened Federal occupation it copied the tactics of the Bushwhackers. One colonel, Joseph Porter, had been sent to northern Missouri to recruit more men. He formed a cavalry regiment, the Northeast Missouri Cavalry, for the purpose of raiding Federal and Home Guard outposts. Porter's regiment were to send most of the captured weapons and supplies south for use by the Confederacy. Porter's actions aroused the anger of the Federals, who lumped him in with the guerillas. He was accused of condoning the murder of non-combatants and prisoners, which some of his men indeed penetrated. In the Palmyra Massacre ten prisoners taken from Porter's regiment were executed as criminals.²⁷⁹

In the summer of 1864 Price finally got his permission to return Missouri. His superior, General Kirby Smith, envisioned a larger version of several previous raids by famed cavalry commanders John Marmaduke and Jo Shelby, both former officers in the State Guard. The plan was for Price to drum up recruitment and seize or destroy the various stocks of Federal supplies throughout the state. Price had more ambitious goals.

²⁷⁹ Mudd, 1909, 14, 59, 299-302; McCoskrie, 113-116.

He sought to reach and seize Jefferson City and St. Louis before the November elections. Missouri's secessionist politicians would be brought along to the capital, where they would be voted in. This would thus bring the entire state into the Confederacy. Governor Reynolds even came along to ensure that Price did not cut him out of a potential Confederate Missouri.²⁸⁰ The entire campaign quickly fell off the rails, largely due to Price's agenda. He brought along a massive wagon train of poorly-conditioned vehicles, along with a host of pro-Confederate civilians who had fled the state years earlier. Price had up to 20,000 men, many of them unarmed and undisciplined. While the Guardsmen had these qualities, this current batch of new recruits were more interested in looting or were conscripted Arkansans with no interest in risking their lives for the Confederacy, much less Price's personal goal to redeem Missouri.

Price got a late start thanks to a delay in ordnance delivery, meaning that diversionary thrusts in other parts of the Trans-Mississippi had already played out. This resulted in better prepared Federal opposition when his army entered the state in early September. Price's force suffered heavy casualties in its first major engagement at Fort Davidson and he abandoned any hope of taking one of the major cities. He moved for the easier targets, but was defeated several times more, due to a combination of inflexible leadership and his long, slow baggage train. One by one he had to abandon his objectives and he returned to Arkansas having lost nearly half of his army. One other factor in his defeat was the attitude of Missourians. In 1861 the Camp Jackson Affair and Lyon's aggressive heavy-handedness had united Missourians of all stripes. By 1864, however, the majority of Missourians had chosen Unionism or neutrality thanks to less

²⁸⁰ Castel, 204-207; Reynolds, 122-131.

controversial Union commanders as well as the depredations on civilians and their property by Confederate guerillas and raiders (though Federal soldiers and Kansas Jayhawkers committed similar acts). In fact, Price's army continually had to contend with native Missouri militia. Even if he did seize Jefferson City or one of his other great objectives, there was no chance the state would go into the Confederacy. Thus Price waged a campaign with impossible end goals and set himself up for failure.²⁸¹

Governor Reynolds was so furious with Price's performance that he made it his mission to destroy his reputation. Price spent the rest of the war countering attacks in the press by Reynolds and delivering his own. When the war did come to an end in May 1865, with Union victory, Price, Reynolds, Shelby, and other Missourians fled to Mexico. They were among the Trans-Mississippi Confederates who refused to live in the reformed Union. Once in Mexico some of them took political and military roles under the Austrian Emperor Maximilien (Maximilien was installed as ruler by the French, who took advantage of the Civil War to seize Mexican territory without United States interference). As for Price, he and several hundred other Confederates formed a colony in northern Mexico, with hired Mexican labor servicing their plantations. Emperor Maximilien was deposed and executed and the more democratic government that took his place wanted his American supporters gone. Price returned to Missouri and was greeted as a hero. The stress of the last few years had gotten to him, however, and after a bout with several illnesses he died on September 29, 1867.²⁸²

²⁸¹ Castel, 188-255.

²⁸² Castel, 273-279; Reynolds, 7-9.

Snead, Thompson, and others chose to remain in the restructured Union and resume some semblance of their pre-war lives. Like other veterans, the former members of the State Guard held reunions. Unfortunately for them, Missouri had furnished many more men for the Union Army and pro-Union militia. Thus veteran and memorial organizations in the state did not lean their way and were likely to commemorate the defeats of their Confederate brethren as heroic victories. Thompson was the most visible of the former commanding officers. He was determined to help restore the South through modern methods. He mainly did this through his engineering talents. Notably he was involved in public works and the draining of some of the same swamps he had fought and hidden in.²⁸³

Though wracked with guerilla violence, Missouri would ultimately become a valuable asset for the Union, providing over 100,000 men to its army.²⁸⁴ Apart from its military contribution, its' political policies under Governor Gamble would shift towards Republican stance. The Emancipation Proclamation, which freed slaves in rebellious territories, did not extend to Missouri. However, the momentum of emancipation began to have its effect even on Missouri's Democrats. With the 13th Amendment likely to pass on the Federal level, the State Legislature was keen to get ahead and almost unanimously abolished slavery on January 11, 1865. The overall argument for emancipation was not only that slavery was wicked and contrary to "republican principles," but had been the prime cause of disunion. Missouri's preference for Conditional Unionism had been shed

²⁸³ M. Jeff Thompson Obituary, 1876 from Thompson, Meriwether Jeff (1826-1876), Papers, 1854-1935, MHS.

²⁸⁴ Combined Books Editors, *The Civil War Book of Lists*, (Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, Combined Books, 1994), 22.

by this point, lost thanks to the aggressive actions of the Secessionists and the Unconditional Unionists in 1861.²⁸⁵

It would be unjust to entirely blame the Confederacy's lost opportunity to have Missouri on Price, Governor Jackson, and the State Guard. The Confederate commanders in neighboring states could have coordinated better to assist, even with their own logistical and strategic issues. On the Union side some of their commanders in 1862 did an effective job of launching offensives against southern Missouri. However, many mistakes were made by the pro-Confederate Missourians. The most justified issues were on the political end. Claiborne Jackson and others could not fully endorse allegiance to the Confederacy as there were too many conditional Unionists in the state and even in the state military. They had to use underhanded methods to trigger the conditions that would turn these Unionists against the Federal government. This meant, however, that the Confederate government, operating on certain political norms, would not send wholesale support in men and material. It was not until Lyon's force threatened to penetrate through southern Missouri into Confederate territory that McCulloch led his army to help.

The State Guard's indiscipline was another major factor. This was somewhat excusable as aggressive Federal actions deprived it of any good amount of time for training and supply. The Missourians soon proved themselves brave fighters at Wilson's Creek and those who stuck around long enough to enter Confederate service were considered some of the best soldiers. But their propensity for looting or taking leaves of absence without permission put their reliability into question. Indeed the State Guard's

²⁸⁵ *Journal of the Missouri State Conventions, held at the City of St. Louis, January 6 April 10, 1865*, (St. Louis: Missouri Democrat, 1865), 13-14; Harrison Anthony Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1805*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1914), 238-240.

numbers fluctuated constantly. Hundreds of men would come for a fight and then leave once it was done. Others would melt away during moments of great hardship, such as the cold retreat from Lexington in late 1861 and the winter retreat the following year. It was much easier to desert when they were not only in their home state, but were in a state occupied by Federal forces. There were also many who were all for Missouri and not for the Confederacy. Many declined to enter Confederate service in 1862 and made their way home instead. It would not be surprising if some of them served in the militia that opposed Price's 1864 expedition.

Price and his supporters were perhaps most responsible for derailing coordination with the Confederates. Many singled out McCulloch, McIntosh, and even President Davis for prejudice and apathy towards Missouri. These accusations would have more validity if not for Price's track record post-Pea Ridge. Price was always butting heads with his superiors and associates. He got into a heated argument with President Davis in June of 1862. He quarreled with the commanders of the Trans-Mississippi. He even became a bitter enemy of other Missourians, foremost among them Marmaduke and Reynolds. The only constant in these strained alliances was Price himself. He was described by many as vain and arrogant. He thought only of his own cause, the liberation of Missouri from the Federal government. Though he served the Confederacy for the rest of the war, he could not put the national Confederate cause ahead of his own, even though a victory for that cause could perhaps achieve his personal one. Price was likely only tolerated in his high position because of his one great quality. No matter his strategic and tactical flaws, he could always garner enthusiastic loyalty from his fellow Missourians. The Confederacy

likely never removed him from his position as a major general because to do so would alienate Missourians in their camp.

The leadership of Missouri's pro-Confederate elements ultimately held more blame for the loss of Missouri. Price was difficult to work with and the politicians were not strong enough in their overtures. If the Missouri State Guard had taken a more cautious approach in the wake of Wilson's Creek and did not strain relations with McCulloch, the Confederacy could have maintained a considerable foothold in south Missouri while Guardsmen in occupied northern Missouri waged a guerilla war (with supporting raids and supply runs from the south). Also, a modest approach to retaking Missouri might have guaranteed more willing and better coordinated aid from other Confederate forces along the Mississippi. The alliance between the State Guard and Confederate Army instead faced serious tensions, tensions which lost the state and better enabled and hastened the rapid Federal takeover of most of the Mississippi. The loss of Missouri was a major loss for the whole Confederacy.

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