

SERIES 1, VOLUME 3 VOLUME OVERVIEW

Despite the overwhelming vote in the State Convention the previous month (covered in Vol. 2 of this series), discussion over whether Missouri should secede, adopt armed neutrality, or tenaciously cling to the Union continues on through May, covered here in Vol. 3. The arguments against armed neutrality are that it is “the first step to rebellion,”¹ and it is disloyal and cowardly. Ironically, a letter written by a secessionist makes evident the truth behind the Union argument. He, defending Gov. Claiborne F. Jackson, says he is not a secessionist but in favor of armed neutrality, “that is, to arm the state, ‘demand peace,’ and *if it is not granted, join our Southern brethren* in their efforts to persuade the North to behave itself”² (italics added for emphasis). Another editorial further demonstrates that Jackson’s “armed neutrality” is a mere ploy, and it warns that “Claiborne Fox Jackson is the full name...’Fox’ is the word. A sly and unscrupulous man is our governor, and he must be watched with hawk eyes.”³

The arguments against secession center mostly around its unconstitutionality. One editorial sums it up, claiming: “The conflict between free and slave labor, while it may have given rise to our present trouble, is not now the cause....The question is no longer as to the extension or limitation of slavery in the territories, but as to the right and policy of allowing a portion of the people to absolve themselves from their allegiance to the government at pleasure.”⁴ Congressman John Phelps, in a speech to a large crowd in Greene County, Missouri, declares secession unconstitutional and civil war acceptable “only when evils are so great that civil war is preferable.”⁵

Before Missouri is even involved in the civil war, there are numerous incidents reported of secessionists hounding pro-Union citizens. Fear and excitement results in errors being made. The steamer *Sir William Wallace* was fired across the bow due to mistaken identity. She ran close to the Missouri shore to make a landing at Bird’s Point, and her course seemed suspicious. Luckily, this was explained to the officers of the boat, and all ended well.

Further on the subject of pre-war shenanigans, the secessionist-leaning St. Louis police commissioners, hand-picked by Gov. Jackson the previous month, formally demands that Capt. Lyon remove U.S. troops from all places and buildings occupied by them outside the Arsenal grounds. The *Missouri Democrat* warns that the purpose is to give the governor and legislature a pretext for precipitating a revolution in the state, to bring the state military force into a collision with the U.S. troops and excite and inflame the disunion sentiment throughout Missouri into open rebellion.⁶

Preventive measures are taken by some railroad companies. They have addressed a notice to shippers of freight that says, “the railroad companies represented by the undersigned, will not carry goods contraband of war over their lines,”⁷ further specifying the labeling of packages and their receipts, which are destined for Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and western Virginia. President Lincoln authorizes Gen. James Lane to raise two regiments (these would be known as the notorious Kansas Brigade). Key players U.S. Congressman Col. Frank P. Blair, Jr., Col. Henry Boernstein (publisher of the *Anzeiger des Westens* newspaper in St. Louis), Col. Franz Sigel, and others ask the free states for money and supplies to help Missouri put down the rebellion, since their governor is opposed to the government of the United States, and neither he or the state government will support them in their Union cause. Nevertheless, the Home Guards in St. Louis are growing, and companies are formed from the 7th and 8th Wards.

In the meantime, great exertions are being made to enlist further recruits at Lindell Grove (Camp Jackson), the pro-South Minute Men headquarters throng with unemployed laborers, being apparently mustered into

¹ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#59).

² See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#37.1)

³ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#50).

⁴ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#33).

⁵ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#34).

⁶ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#37).

⁷ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#39).

military service. A special insert describes Camp Jackson, listing the regiments in camp.⁸ Meanwhile, at the federal level, Lincoln issues a proclamation ordering additional volunteers to join forces to increase the regular army and navy, and he asks for the cooperation of the citizens in order to suppress unlawful violence, enforce constitutional laws and restore peace and order.

On May 10, 1861, Capt. Nathaniel Lyon and his men surrounded Camp Jackson, commanded by Missouri Volunteer Militia (MVM) Gen. Daniel Frost, and without any shots being fired, brought about its surrender. Included in this volume is the correspondence between Frost and Lyon, exchanged just before Lyon marched into the camp. Lyon accuses Frost of being in open communication with the Confederate States and receiving at Camp Jackson, from said Confederacy, under its flag, large supplies of the material of war, most of which is the property of the United States. This volume has a special section for the Camp Jackson Affair, which includes a description of the peaceful surrender and the bloody incident that followed. As the captured militiamen were being marched to the Arsenal, a mob of pro-secessionist civilians attacked the Union troops, who were mostly of German origin. The troops responded by firing into the crowd, killing several civilians. In addition, the section includes a long list of related articles. A special section is also set aside for a list of the materials and men captured at Camp Jackson.⁹

As a consequence of the above-mentioned riot, the St. Louis mayor orders “all owners and keepers of bars, drinking shops, beer houses, and other places where intoxicating liquors are sold, to close the same forthwith, and keep them closed during the continuance of the present excitement.”¹⁰ Gen. William S. Harney is returned to the command of the Department of the West (he had been replaced in April due to his interference against Lyon and the latter’s attempt to protect the St. Louis Arsenal). Harney issues a proclamation, vowing that the “military force stationed in this department by the authority of the government...will only be used in the last resort to preserve the peace.”

Another consequence of the Camp Jackson Affair is the passing of the Military Bill,¹¹ in effect as of May 14. As a result of said bill, the Missouri State Guard is created, and Sterling Price is appointed major general, in command of the state forces. The MVM regulars are scattered, some joining the State Guard at Jefferson City, and the former headquarters of the Minute Men is abolished. Gen. Harney issues another proclamation, this time denouncing the Military Bill as “an indirect secession ordinance,” and that it “cannot and ought *not* to be upheld or regarded by the good citizens of Missouri.”¹²

A few articles address the issue of the German soldiers, who are blamed for the violence during the march to the Arsenal from Camp Jackson. Some articles condemn Germans (the ethnicity, not just soldiers) as dangerous, while others defend them as law-abiding people.

Several articles describe outrages against Union men throughout Missouri, particularly in the northern and southeastern parts of the state. One correspondent reports that Gov. Jackson’s camp at Jefferson City was reinforced, and the Warsaw (Benton County) company’s captain has given orders to shoot all Union men. Another correspondent reports that revolvers were slyly addressed to Col. Frank Blair as a means of smuggling weapons destined for secessionists. The arms were seized and taken to “the gratified gentleman to whom they had been so considerately directed.”¹³ Near St. Joseph (northwest Missouri), secessionist M. Jefferson Thompson’s troops have erected batteries, stopped trains, and detained government stores. (Thompson, a key player, would soon join the Missouri State Guard and receive an appointment as general, in command of the southeastern military district.) A riot takes place in St. Joseph, the Union flag is torn down from the post office building, and it is replaced with the “States’ Rights” flag. The secessionists sink a steamboat on the Osage River because Gov. Jackson is reported to have been “afraid Frank Blair intended coming up and using her for one of his army transports.”¹⁴ One letter to the editor is a plea to the

⁸ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#36)

⁹ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#56.1).

¹⁰ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#66.2).

¹¹ For the text of the Military Bill, see (FLP: Ser 1MD-May-Annex-2).

¹² See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#90).

¹³ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#113).

¹⁴ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#128).

administration at Washington to do something “without delay,” and wishing that the Administration would have “a good idea of the situation.”¹⁵ It cites several examples of persecution against Union men throughout the state. Another letter explains that the Unionists are unarmed, unorganized, and overawed, and “if the federal government desires Missouri to remain in the Union, she must immediately take armed occupation of it.”¹⁶ Still another letter points out that the “reign of terror” is still underway, and asks, “How long before we get relief from the federal troops?”¹⁷

Near the end of the month, state troops are reported to have left Jefferson City, all but two companies. The report also states that eighteen cannons have been secretly removed from the capital, and a rumor is spread that Gov. Jackson met with Confederates, who have proposed furnishing Missouri with a large number of men and stand of arms to get her out of the Union by fall.

A blockade is completed at Cairo, where the heights are fortified, and Col. Richard J. Oglesby is placed in command during Gen. Benjamin Prentiss’s absence. A report is provided on the hospital and condition of its patients at Camp Defiance, in Cairo.

An agreement is signed between Gen. Harney and Missouri State Guard Maj. Gen. Price on May 21. Special inserts include the text of the agreement¹⁸ and Harney’s announcement¹⁹ to the people of Missouri informing them of the aforementioned agreement.

Due to the Price-Harney agreement (which its opponents felt was a stall tactic on the part of Price to allow the Missouri State Guard more time to organize), Gen. Harney is again relieved of command of the Department of the West (this time permanently). Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, in command of the Department of Ohio (which would include the state of Missouri for a brief period before she was transferred to the Western Department), suspends the work on the fortifications at Cairo.

A secret meeting is held in St. Louis to secure the removal of Capt. Lyon. Hamilton R. Gamble and James E. Yeatman, were sent to Washington to secure Lyon’s removal, but Capt. James B. Eads, designer of the squadron of steamers used on the Mississippi River during the war, and Franklin A. Dick, a lawyer and assistant adjutant general for Lyon during the Camp Jackson Affair, were in Washington at the time. As soon as Gamble and Yeatman’s mission was made known, Eads and Dick counteracted it by informing the Sec. of War of the facts. Lyon was then appointed brigadier general of the First Missouri Brigade. (Years later, Yeatman would retract his criticism of Lyon’s action at Camp Jackson in a letter written to Gamble, who was then governor of Missouri.) Capt. Lyon receives a letter from the Adjutant General’s Office giving him the authority to enlist troops. The letter explains that the “object is to maintain the authority of the United States and protect the peaceable inhabitants of Missouri.”²⁰

The state of Arkansas secedes (May 6), and North Carolina follows a couple of weeks later (May 20). The *Missouri Democrat* publishes an extract from a private letter from Paducah, Kentucky, which says that a convention is called for Kentucky’s counties west of the Tennessee River to secede from the state. (Kentucky, however, never seceded from the Union, nor did any portion of the state secede from her.)

¹⁵ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#127).

¹⁶ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#133),

¹⁷ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#132).

¹⁸ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#128.5).

¹⁹ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#128.4).

²⁰ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-May#131).