

SERIES 1, VOLUME 1

VOLUME OVERVIEW

Volume 1 of Series 1 covers the months of January and February 1861. Gubernatorial and federal elections were held in the Fall of 1860, and on the third day of the new year, Missouri welcomed a new governor and lieutenant governor, Claiborne Fox Jackson and Thomas Cate Reynolds, respectively. President-elect Abraham Lincoln would not be sworn in until March, which was the custom at the time.¹

This volume starts off with an article from December 1860. It is included because it discusses whether or not Missouri should have a state convention, a major theme throughout the volume. The purpose of this state convention is to vote on whether to remain with the Union or follow the Southern states and secede. A commissioner from Alabama, William Cooper, attempts to convince Missouri to join the South and secede from the Union.² But in mentioning the danger of a slave rebellion in the South if slavery is not allowed to spread, an editorial counters by questioning the South's desire to bring slavery to the new territories if slavery is "extremely dangerous." The slave question raises discussion of re-establishing the Missouri Compromise of 1820, as well as debates concerning the unsuccessful Crittenden compromise (text included in the annex). Other arguments pass over the slave question and focus on business, arguing that joining the South would cut off trade with the North, and St. Louis would no longer be the gateway to the West or a business and trade center. One article points out that Missouri needs population and manufactures, and "secession is the very way not to get them." It warns that seceding from the Union would cause the population to deplete, commerce and manufacturing to die, and "the very fountains of wealth and improvement [to] dry up."³

It should be noted, as discussed in an article published the first of January, that Maj. Robert Anderson had clandestinely moved his federal forces from the indefensible Fort Moultrie in South Carolina to Fort Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, after dark on Christmas Day 1860. (It is the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, that officially set off the Civil War.) Each time a newspaper article mentions Fort Sumter in the first two volumes, a mini image of the fort with a number is placed next to the relevant "mini maps" above the article's headline. The number represents a countdown of days to the start of the Civil War.

Another major theme in this volume is the rivalry between the *Missouri Democrat* (a Republican newspaper, despite the name) and the *Missouri Republican* (a Democratic newspaper). One of the first articles of the year is a letter to the editor, which refers to an editorial published in the *Missouri Republican* that insists Congress does not have the power to wage war on a seceding state (often referred to as "coercion" by Southern sympathizers and disputed by the *Democrat*). It (the letter published in the *Democrat*) says, "any act of war against federal authority by a person or a state is an act of treason," and "if Congress has not the power to punish treason, then the Constitution is *indeed* 'a rope of sand.'"⁴

The *Missouri Democrat* opposes Jackson, accusing him of falsely running as a Union man, yet soon after his election, showing his true colors as a secessionist, and this view has been gradually confirmed since, especially with Jackson's Inaugural Address,⁵ delivered the third of January. On the contrary, the *Missouri Republican* backed Jackson during the election and continue to do so until they will no longer be able to deny his secessionist tendencies, several months into the year. This disagreement in how Jackson is viewed is one of the major differences between the two leading newspapers of St. Louis. Essential Information #1, (FLP: Ser 1MD-Jan#2.1), further explains this rivalry.

This volume includes 15 "Essential Information" side bars explaining various topics addressed in the volume. These topics include: the newspapers of St. Louis, the extension of slavery, the Secession Convention, St. Louis political groups, the Metropolitan Police Bill, the Central Union Club and Safety Committee, the Wide Awakes, the Conditional Unionist, the four political parties, the Military Bill, and the Minute Men. While the *Missouri Democrat* published an article concerning a meeting of the Minute Men to organize themselves, Essential Information #5⁶ explains, through a quote taken from

¹ The presidential inauguration day was changed to January 20 in 1933, and the first held on that date was Franklin D. Roosevelt's second inauguration in 1937.

² The text of Cooper's speech is available in the annex of this volume, (FLP: Ser 1MD-Jan-Annex-3).

³ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-Feb#1.3).

⁴ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-Jan#4).

⁵ For the text of Jackson's Inaugural Address, see (FLP: Ser 1MD-Jan-Annex-12).

⁶ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-Jan#21.1).

the memoirs of C.S.A. Gen. Basil Duke, that the chief objective of the semi-political and military Minute Men “was the capture of the [St. Louis] Arsenal.”

The Wide Awakes, one of the topics of the “Essential Information” side bars, as mentioned above, are disbanded, and a new Central Union Club is formed, which welcomes as its members “every Union man of good character,”⁷ whatever his party affiliation. Several letters to the editor ask that citizens lay aside all questions of party and, instead, focus on “union.” One such article, a letter to the editor, stresses that with the issue of secession, there is only the “question of union or disunion,” that there is no middle ground.

A couple of articles mention the rumor of a possible attack on the St. Louis Arsenal. In one, the rumor specifically names Gov. Jackson as giving orders to seize the Arsenal, while another mentions invaders from the South, as well as the Minute Men. In an effort to mislead secessionists and deter an attack against the Arsenal, Capt. Nathaniel Lyon, who arrived in St. Louis some time in February, releases a detailed report on the Arsenal’s supposed present condition, its means of defense, preparations to repel assaults, the names of the officers in command, the discipline of the troops, and the health of the men.

Articles include reflections on who should be in Lincoln’s cabinet once he is in office. Names mentioned are: Edward Bates, who will be appointed US attorney general and serve during Lincoln’s first term in office; U.S. Sen. Simon Cameron, who will serve as Lincoln’s secretary of war until the end of 1861; the lawyer, Montgomery Blair, who will be appointed postmaster general and serve during Lincoln’s first term in office. However, President-elect Lincoln, according to his future secretary, John Hay, refuses to make any announcements of his intentions in regard to the selection and disposition of his ministry until after his inauguration. Also introduced in this volume, but not a potential candidate for Lincoln’s cabinet, is U.S. Congressman-elect Frank P. Blair, Jr., younger brother of Montgomery Blair and a key player in Missouri’s struggle to remain in the Union. Another individual who is introduced in this volume but will not be a key player until the latter half of the year is Judge Hamilton R. Gamble, a candidate for delegate to the state convention, favored by both Unconditional and Conditional Union men.

Letters to the editor and editorials presenting the opinion of the *Missouri Democrat* argue against several bills pending in the House—repeal of the School Mill Tax, the Bank Bill which attempts to establish bank paper as the legal currency of the state in place of gold and silver coins (referred to as a “swindle” by the *Democrat*), and the Military Bill, described in one of the editorials as the “crudest, most dangerous, disgusting and contemptible” piece of legislation ever submitted to the General Assembly of Missouri.⁸ A letter to the editor describes the bill as an “unmistakable disunion document.”⁹ Also discussed are the terms Unconditional Unionist, Conditional Unionist (accused of being secret secessionists), and Unconditional Secessionist. Editorials emphasize the necessity of allowing only Unconditional Union candidates to be delegates at the state convention, and each candidate from St. Louis presents an acceptance letter stating their loyalty to the Union.

The Missouri State Convention opens in Saint Louis on February 28. An article published the day before points out that secessionists may regret that they forced a convention on the people, as they “have called into existence a power that can easily turn on them and crush them out of political existence.” In a prophetic turn of phrase, it points out that the Convention has the power to throw out the whole state legislature, the governor, and to completely reorganize and remodel the constitution of the state.¹⁰ And so it would occur during the second session of the Convention in July 1861.

Sidebars include a background history of Bloody Island, a rendezvous for duelists, background information on the antislavery zealot, James Montgomery, and a history of the Southwest Expedition.

In order that the reader can quickly scan articles of interest, the original newspaper headlines have been modified to something more descriptive of the contents. Original headlines were often generic, with the name of the town from which the news derived or, in some cases, there was no headline. While all articles (except those in the Annex) were published in the *Missouri Democrat*, some were reprinted by the *Democrat* from other news sources. These are clearly stated. The date given for each article corresponds with the date of publication and not necessarily when actually written.

⁷ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-Jan#28.1).

⁸ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-Feb#16).

⁹ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-Feb#21.1)

¹⁰ See (FLP: Ser 1MD-Feb#35.1).