



The drums and fifers created enthusiasm among the volunteers and helped recruitment as the proud soldiers marched through the Ozarks. (A reenactment photo)

CHAPTER 1

A Struggle for Power 1861

The Ozark region is defined by rugged highlands many miles above sea level in the south-central United States. This beautiful but merciless countryside consists of about 50,000 square miles of uplifted limestone in the southern half of Missouri and northern Arkansas, slicing off a wedge of southeast Kansas and cutting a path through northeastern Oklahoma. The Ozarks consist of four main sections: the Springfield Plateau, the Salem Plateau, the Boston Mountains, and the St. Francois Mountains. Several peaks in the Boston Mountains of northern Arkansas are more than 2,000 feet high. These wooded hills with their rocky soil, high bluffs, and deep hollows were the setting for a brutal backwoods conflict in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was warfare with a rough style and bitter flavor all its own, unique from the rest of the terrific struggle we know as the American Civil War.

The name “Ozarks” came from the frontier pronunciation of a term bestowed upon the region by early French trappers and explorers: “*Aux Arcs*.” A literal English translation of this term is “Of the Bows.” Some historians believe that the French were referring to the exceptionally fine bows made by the native Osage tribesmen from the strong wood of the numerous Osage orange or “*bois d’arc*” trees in the region. Some romantics claim that the early visitors were speaking of rainbows when they coined the term. Still others have a tale that the French were referring to the bends or “bows” in the meandering Arkansas

River near the extreme southern boundary of the Ozark region. Whatever the origin of its name, the Ozarks was a volatile and strategically important region when war cast its dark shadow over the rugged landscape.

A portion of the Ozarks had already experienced a bitter prelude to civil war several years before Fort Sumter was fired upon. Bloody feuding between slave-holding Missourians and Kansas abolitionists had begun back in 1855. Folks in the northwestern region of the Ozarks, not far from the Missouri-Kansas border, sometimes found themselves dangerously close to this terrifying violence. Sporadic fighting between Missouri “Border Ruffians” and Kansas “Jayhawkers” continued for the next six years until the arrival of the official war in 1861.

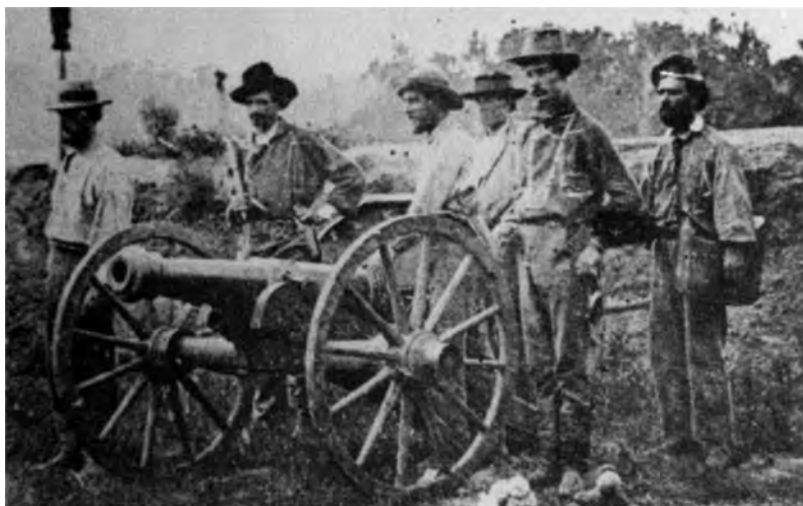
With the Confederate capture of Fort Sumter back east, it was time for everyone to choose up sides. Those who attempted to remain neutral in the Ozarks sooner or later found themselves or their loved ones victims of the war’s violence, causing them to forsake their neutrality for either defense or retribution. An example of how innocent people could get caught up in this cruelty can be found in the reminiscences of William Cloe, a young farm boy growing up in Fidelity, Missouri, during the conflict. “A bunch of thieves from Kansas ran in and my older brother and others gave chase . . . and scattered them. When they started back, they were about where Joplin is now, and it started raining. They went into an old stable for shelter. Someone lying in a trough shoved a pistol against my brother’s abdomen and shot him. He lived five days.”

Many folks in the Missouri portion of the Ozarks had Southern sympathies. They or their parents had originally arrived as settlers from Southern states, especially Tennessee and Kentucky. However, there was also a formidable number of Union sympathizers present in the region. Many men from the large population of German immigrants in the St. Louis area would march into the Ozarks as Federal soldiers during the war. These Union men would fight their fellow Missourians with

surprising zeal and deadly effect throughout the war. To the south, Arkansas had seceded from the Union, yet the majority of her Ozark hill folk remained stubbornly loyal to the Federal government. The southwest tip of the Ozarks in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) did not escape the war. Confederate representatives courted the tribes while New England missionaries preached loyalty to the Federal government. As a result, the region brought forth some hard-riding Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole warriors for both the Confederacy and the Union, while most Choctaw and Chickasaw sided with the South. So it was that the Ozarks, like the rest of America, had divided loyalties in the spring of 1861. Those divisions would fan the flames of war that set this beautiful region ablaze with violence for the next four years.

One of the most critical military problems west of the Mississippi River when war officially arrived concerned the fate of Missouri. The “Border State” was disputed territory, dividing the far Western Confederacy from the North. Its position was vital for control of the mighty Mississippi River, which flowed along its entire eastern boundary. The Missouri River, another important waterway of commerce and transportation, also passed through the state near the northern boundary of the Ozark region. Whoever controlled the most populous state west of the Mississippi had access to vast grain, livestock, and mineral resources. Missouri ranked third nationally in corn and pork production. Missouri mules, and horses too, were known throughout America. Lead mines in the southern portion of the state could provide either side with all the bullets needed for the entire war effort. The fate of Missouri was to be determined through the battles fought in the Ozark region.

Gov. Claiborne Fox Jackson of Missouri was a man of strong Southern sympathies. He made no secret of it when he publicly described Pres. Abraham Lincoln’s call for troops to suppress the South’s rebellion as “illegal, unconstitutional, and revolutionary.” He began arming and drilling the state militia



These Kansas artillerymen, veterans of the Missouri-Kansas border war, which began long before the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter, proudly pose with their cannon. (Photo courtesy Civil War Museum, Carthage, Missouri)



Problems created for slave owners in western Missouri and northwest Arkansas by Kansas abolitionists fueled the fires in the Ozarks. Such problems became secondary to the major issue of the right for states to challenge the Federal government in 1861. As the war in the Ozarks progressed, such original problems became simply defense, vengeance, and survival. (Photo courtesy Civil War Museum, Carthage, Missouri)



A second state convention was held in Arkansas on May 6, 1861. Although under David Walker's leadership, the Unionists succeeded in preventing the state from secession, the delegates voted 65-55 to secede at this second session. Walker then called for unanimous support to secede. Former state senator Isaac Murphy of Madison County, Arkansas, was a strong Union supporter and friend of Walker's but was one of only four who voted "no" to Walker's proposal. Such political division among state leaders over secession was common throughout the South. (Photo courtesy UALR Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas)

at a site outside St. Louis appropriately dubbed Camp Jackson. However, in St. Louis itself, a fanatically loyal U.S. Army captain prepared to break up the encampment. Placed in charge of the United States Arsenal in St. Louis, Capt. Nathaniel Lyon secretly moved most of the arsenal's weapons across the Mississippi into Illinois, in case the militia decided to drop by unexpectedly. A couple of weeks later, on May 10, 1861, Lyon had mustered several thousand troops and marched to Camp Jackson. They surrounded the 690 militiamen, and the camp surrendered without a shot fired. But when Lyon chose to march his prisoners back to the arsenal, through the streets of St. Louis, his bloodless victory turned very messy. A violent mob of Southern sympathizers lined the streets and hurled bricks and stones, along with their jeers, at the victorious Federals. Shots rang out, and several soldiers fell. The troops responded with deafening volleys of musketry, and before it was all over, 4 soldiers and 28 civilians lay dead. The next day the violence continued, as a column of 1,000 German-American troops was attacked in the streets. Once again, four soldiers fell with mortal wounds, while nine civilians lay dead.

At the state capital, Jefferson City, the infuriated Missouri legislature took war measures. Governor Jackson placed Sterling Price, a former Mexican War general and ex-governor of Missouri, in command of the new, reorganized militia, the Missouri State Guard. As war fever spread across the state, there were a couple of attempts to negotiate a truce. However, compromise ended in failure at the second meeting as Lyon, bearing his new rank of brigadier general, stood up in the room at the Planter's House Hotel in St. Louis and announced, "Rather than to concede to the state of Missouri for one single instant the right to dictate to my government [the Federal government] in any matter however unimportant, I would see you, and you, and you, and you, and you [pointing to everyone in the room], and every man, woman, and child in the state dead and buried." He then turned to Governor Jackson. "This

means war. In an hour one of my officers will call for you and conduct you out of my lines.”

Governor Jackson and Major General Price knew that Lyon was dead serious. Indeed, he had made war on men, women, and children earlier in his military career while fighting Indians out west. Lyon was the victor of the infamous Bloody Island Massacre at Clear Lake, California, in 1850. Jackson, Price, and their aides did not wait for an escort from Lyon but left immediately for Jefferson City, burning railroad bridges and pulling down telegraph wires along the way. At the capital, they drafted a proclamation to the people of the state, telling their side of the story and calling for 50,000 volunteers to resist Federal aggression and protect the lives, liberties, and property of the citizens. They then decided to withdraw from the capital in favor of a better defensive location.

Wasting no time, Lyon took most of his army up the Missouri River by steamboats to the undefended state capital and took Jefferson City without firing a shot. He then proceeded farther upstream to the town of Boonville, on the northern edge of the Ozarks. Governor Jackson and a contingent of his Missouri State Guard occupied Camp Bacon east of town. Although Jackson's recent proclamation had called for 50,000 volunteers, only 1,500 enlistees had reported to Camp Bacon, and many remained unarmed. Most of the rest of the State Guard, about 3,000 men, held the town of Lexington to the west. A few militiamen were at Tipton to the south, with the State Guard's only serviceable artillery battery. There were a couple of iron cannon barrels at a makeshift armory in Boonville but they were not yet mounted on gun carriages. There was also an assortment of various outdated flintlock muskets being converted to percussion-cap weapons at the armory for use by the State Guard troops.

When Jackson learned of the approaching Federal force, he was determined to make a stand. His field commander in Boonville, Col. John S. Marmaduke (Jackson's own twenty-eight-year-old nephew), advised against combat and suggested

a withdrawal south across the Osage River. Jackson would have none of that plan. Assuming his authority as commander in chief of the state militia, he ordered Colonel Marmaduke to advance his regiment for battle with the enemy. Marmaduke, a West Point-trained, former U.S. Army lieutenant, obeyed his uncle's orders as a good soldier should.

Lyon's force consisted of three companies of regular U.S. Army infantry, the First Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment, nine companies of the Second Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and a regular U.S. Army artillery battery under colorful Capt. James Totten, about 1,600 troops in all. On June 17, the Federal force disembarked from the steamboats at the river bottoms east of Camp Bacon and began marching west into the hills. The well-drilled Federal force easily brushed aside State Guard skirmishers. After another mile or so, the Federals encountered the main force of Marmaduke's regiment arrayed in defensive positions along a roadway. A brick house, a wheat field, a thicket of woods, and rail fences all bristled with the hunting rifles and shotguns of approximately 500 guardsmen.

General Lyon surveyed the State Guard positions through his field glasses and ordered his infantry columns into "line of battle." He positioned Captain Totten's artillery in the center and his infantry troops on both sides, then ordered his little army to advance. The stern, threatening beat of military drums and the brassy echo of bugle calls resounded east of Boonville as the well-drilled Union troops advanced in the tight, old-time line formations of nineteenth-century warfare. The untrained Missouri militiamen stood aghast at the impressive sight of Federal military might.

Captain Totten's artillery opened fire and the thundering salvos drove the guardsmen from their cover. They formed another defensive line, and as the Federals marched relentlessly forward across open fields, the militiamen let loose several ragged volleys of musketry that downed a few of their foes. However, Lyon's superior firepower and numbers prevailed and

the guardsmen broke and ran in a headlong flight. Meanwhile, a howitzer positioned on one of Lyon's steamboats opened fire from the river on Camp Bacon itself, and the unarmed recruits who had remained in camp also fled, abandoning all military stores and equipment. Lyon continued his advance to the fairgrounds on the east edge of town, where a detachment of Marmaduke's nervous, farm-boy recruits made a last stand. They were easily put to flight as the Federals charged their line. The temporary armory there fell into Lyon's hands, for what it was worth.

Governor Jackson had observed the action from high ground about a mile from the combat. He and his escort beat a hasty retreat from the Boonville area as General Lyon triumphantly entered the town to receive the formal surrender from a delegation of community leaders, including the acting mayor and a district judge. The dramatic skirmish had lasted only about twenty minutes. Union casualties numbered four killed, seven wounded, and one missing. State Guard casualties were reported as three killed, nine wounded, and sixty captured, although true losses may have been greater. The frantic retreat of the Missouri State Guard from the battlefield came to be jokingly referred to as the "Boonville Races."

After their embarrassing defeat, Governor Jackson and General Price decided to march their troops to the southwest corner of the state. In that region, their amateur army could be properly trained and perhaps link up with regular Confederate forces from across the Arkansas border. Thus the defeated, yet still defiant, guardsmen retreated south with their hunting rifles and shotguns slung over their tired shoulders. So it was that the governor lost his state capital and, generally speaking, the northern portion of the state, including the valuable agricultural region of the Missouri River valley with its rich black soil and numerous Southern sympathizers.

Jackson's force withdrew through Tipton and marched toward a little town called Cole Camp. The community had a sizeable

population of German immigrants fiercely loyal to the Federal government. They had organized a Union regiment, the Benton County Home Guard, consisting of about 400 men under Capt. Abel Cook. At 3:00 A.M. on June 19, about 350 troops of the State Guard led by Capt. Walter O'Kane approached the Home Guard camp. Most of the Germans were sleeping in two barns at "Camp Lyon" east of town. Bursting into one of the barns, the guardsmen opened fire point blank on their sleeping foes, yelling, "No mercy for the Dutch!" ("Dutch" was a slang term for Germans.) Chaotic gunfire in the early-morning darkness resulted in a small victory for the Missouri State Guard. About 35 Home Guards were killed and 60 wounded, while O'Kane's men rode off with 350 captured muskets. The Southerners lost 7 killed and 25 wounded. It was all a bit of revenge for German-American participation in the clashes in St. Louis and Boonville.

Governor Jackson with his retreating column of Boonville veterans and the guardsmen from Tipton joined General Price's column from Lexington at the town of Lamar in southwest Missouri. Price himself was on a trip to Arkansas to solicit the aid of regular Confederate forces, and in his absence, his column was commanded by Brig. Gen. James S. Rains. Jackson took overall control of the united forces. The governor's army now consisted of approximately 2,000 infantry, 7 artillery pieces with full gun crews, and 3,500 cavalry troopers, of whom 2,000 were as yet unarmed.

Before capturing Jefferson City, the farsighted General Lyon had ordered one brigade of his army southward to cut off Jackson's retreat. This 1,200-man force consisted of the Third and Fifth Missouri volunteer infantry regiments and an artillery battery of eight guns. These loyal volunteers, primarily German immigrants from the St. Louis area, were well trained and disciplined, although many had not yet mastered the English language. In command was colorful Col. Franz Sigel. A European-trained military tactician and veteran of the ill-fated

German Revolution of 1848, Sigel had recently resigned as director of public schools in St. Louis in order to serve the Union cause. Sigel began his “Southwest Expedition” by putting his men on trains of the Southwest Branch of the Pacific Railroad. Thus one of military history’s first recorded movements of troops by rail took place as his force chugged along the tracks from St. Louis to the railhead at Rolla. There, on June 14, they disembarked, dispersed a small band of local secessionists, and seized the courthouse. Forming up in a column with a lengthy wagon train of supplies, the little German army marched down the state road to Springfield, the strategic key to the southwest Missouri Ozarks. Upon reaching Springfield, Sigel probed deeper into the southwest corner of the state in search of Jackson’s army.

If everything went according to Lyon’s grand strategy, the Missouri State Guard would be caught in a deadly pincer movement. Jackson’s retreat south would be blocked and threatened by Sigel while Lyon approached from the north to destroy the governor’s army. However, heavy rains delayed Lyon’s advance, and large numbers of Union troops were unable to cross the swollen Osage and Marmaton rivers. Until the waters receded, Sigel’s small force was destined to oppose Jackson’s army entirely alone.

On July 5, Sigel’s “Yankee Dutch” collided with Jackson’s “Rebel militia” in the small town of Carthage, a prosperous community of 500 residents and the county seat of Jasper County, Missouri. Preceding the famous Battle of Bull Run or Manassas, Virginia, by more than two weeks, the Battle of Carthage made headlines in newspapers across divided America. The *New York Times* described it as “the first serious conflict between the United States Troops and the rebels.” The opposing forces encountered each other about nine miles north of town between Dry Fork and Opossum Creek at Gresham Farm. Most of Sigel’s men sported simple gray uniforms and wide-brimmed hats. At this early stage of the war, Union blue versus Confederate gray



Confederate governor Claiborne F. Jackson of Missouri, the only presiding state governor in the American Civil War to personally command an army in battle. (Photo courtesy Civil War Museum, Carthage, Missouri)



Clouds of sulphurous smoke blanketed the battlefield as Confederate and Federal battle lines marched to their destiny. (A reenactment photo)

was not yet an established color code. The Missouri State Guard troops could not be mistaken for Sigel's gray-clad "Hessians" because they had not been issued uniforms. Dressed in their everyday civilian clothing, most of the guardsmen were ill fed and poorly armed. In contrast, although Sigel's force was greatly outnumbered, it was well supplied and equipped with powerful .69-caliber military muskets. Furthermore, Sigel's force was far better trained than Jackson's army. The Union commander had little respect for the ragtag Missouri State Guard. With the steady nerve of a veteran soldier, he sternly surveyed Jackson's long battle line, which stretched across a rising slope of open farmland for nearly a mile. In the center of the line flew the State Guard's version of the Missouri flag: a blue field with a gold state seal in the middle. On the right and left flew the "Stars and Bars," the new national colors of the Confederacy. The great number of guardsmen seemed overwhelming, yet Sigel knew their poor battle record. Boldly he ordered his artillery to open fire.

At approximately 8:30 A.M., the thunderclap of a cannon salvo shattered the peace of the surrounding countryside. The Union guns blasted holes in the disrupted line of militia. Yet the Missouri State Guard was tired of running. The determined guardsmen reformed their lines and stood their ground. As in all major combat situations during the war, both sides formed battle lines with troops shoulder to shoulder. This seems ridiculous until one considers the weaponry of the day: muskets and cannon discharging great billows of white smoke. With thousands of men gathered together firing muzzleloaders as rapidly as possible, it did not take long for a battlefield to become shrouded in a thick blanket of gun smoke. Frequently, the enemy could not be seen through the swirling, sulfurous clouds. The best chance of hitting a target under such conditions was for men to stand in a line and fire at the same time (a volley), thereby sending a flying wall of lead in the general direction of their foes. Also, the line formation helped commanders maintain control of

their troops and reduced the chances of men getting separated from their unit, becoming lost and disoriented in the infernal smoke.

Soon after Sigel's artillery went into action, Capt. Hiram Bledsoe's three-gun State Guard battery returned fire with deadly accuracy. One of Bledsoe's artillery pieces was a fine cannon, which he himself had helped to capture in the Mexican War at the Battle of Sacramento in 1847. It is said to have been cast from Mexican church bells and even had a name, "Old Sacramento." Accounts claim that whenever "Ol' Sac" was fired, the big gun would produce a peculiar ringing sound that could be heard across the battlefield.

The noisy artillery duel lasted at least half an hour. Meanwhile the Missouri State Guard made good use of many unarmed horsemen by sending them on a flanking movement close enough to the enemy to be seen, yet far enough away not to reveal their lack of weapons. At the same time, Capt. Joseph O. "Jo" Shelby's Rangers and other armed cavalry units advanced on the Union flanks. At this point, Sigel felt compelled to retreat south before he was surrounded and cut off from his supply wagons. This flanking maneuver by the State Guard cavalry led to the Battle of Carthage sometimes being jokingly referred to as the battle won by 2,000 unarmed men. At any rate, Colonel Sigel began an orderly withdrawal, skillfully utilizing his artillery in repeated attempts to slow the Rebel advance.

A desperate delaying action was fought at the crossing of Dry Fork, which was just as wet as any other creek. Upon reaching the south bank of the stream, Sigel ordered a small but powerful rear guard to cover the withdrawal of his main force. Several companies of Union infantry supported by a section of artillery formed a line of battle and opened fire on the State Guard troops approaching on the opposite bank. Urging his men forward, Lt. Col. Edwin Price, son of Gen. Sterling Price, had his horse shot from under him. Meanwhile, battle-hardened Captain Bledsoe personally manned an artillery piece as many of his men were



Union general Franz Sigel. After leading troops in battle at Carthage, Wilson's Creek, and Pea Ridge, he was promoted to major general and sent far from the Ozarks to the Eastern Theater. His military career was essentially ruined in 1864 by the famous charge of the brave young cadets of the Virginia Military Institute at the Battle of New Market in the Shenandoah Valley. (Photo courtesy Civil War Museum, Carthage, Missouri)

cut down by heavy fire from across the creek. After two hours of blazing action, the stubborn Yanks withdrew to join their comrades in the retreat toward town. Many, if not most, of the day's casualties fell along the muddy banks of Dry Fork Creek. In fact, the Battle of Carthage is sometimes referred to as the Battle of Dry Fork. To protect his supply train, Sigel ordered his wagons into four columns of eight each and positioned his men around them in a European-style infantry square. This classic troop formation, so popular in Europe's nineteenth-century wars, was a rare occurrence on American Civil War battlefields. In fact, the Battle of Carthage was one of only a few actions in the war in which the hollow infantry square was actually utilized in combat.

Farther south, the Union force made another serious stand at Buck Branch. It was there that a portion of the Missouri State Guard cavalry nearly succeeded in trapping the Germans by blocking their retreat. Finally surrounded, the desperate Union troops had to resort to drastic measures. Lt. Col. Francis Hassendeubel ordered his men to "fix bayonets" and reported to Colonel Sigel his intention of charging the enemy line. At first, Sigel expressed serious reservations about the plan, but a breakthrough had to be made quickly since the main force of the enemy was rapidly approaching. The bold Hassendeubel led three companies of the Third Missouri in an incredible bayonet charge across the shallow waters of Buck Branch, up the creek's south bank, and straight toward the line of hostile cavalry. The astounded horsemen and their terrified mounts (most of which were plow horses fresh off the farm) scattered, leaving a gap for the Union force to escape south.

The action continued with fighting at the crossing of Spring River and soon the storm of battle swirled through the streets of Carthage itself. House-to-house fighting left several buildings damaged by musketry and artillery fire. Stubbornly giving way to the advancing Rebels, the Yanks had to abandon two of their supply wagons within town. The battle finally fizzled out at



Union colonel Franz Sigel leads his German troops forward during the Battle of Carthage, Missouri. (A reenactment photo)

nightfall. Darkness allowed Sigel to break contact with Jackson's army and march his exhausted troops another 18 miles to safety at the town of Sarcoxie.

It had been a long, hot battle featuring countless artillery salvos and musket volleys. Yet despite the heavy gunfire and frantic troop maneuvers, the death toll was light. Some eyewitness accounts of the battle describe hundreds of casualties littering the line of march during the daylong struggle. But in fact, most of these casualties were simply men overcome with heat exhaustion on that sunny July day. They would later recover, and rise to fight another day. While accounts of the number of real casualties differ greatly, the most commonly accepted tally indicates 13 Union soldiers were killed and 31 wounded, 5 of whom were captured. Jackson's militia had 35 killed, 125 wounded, and 45 captured. So the total was almost 50 killed and over 150 wounded. Many of the State Guard's weapons were short-range shotguns, which made a lot of noise and smoke but accounted for few hits. For the better part of the day, neither side's main objective was destruction of the enemy. Sigel was simply trying to get away with his force intact and Jackson, with his untrained militia, could hope for little more than to scare his foes away through sheer weight of numbers.

The brick courthouse on the Carthage town square became a hospital for the suffering casualties. A number of townspeople helped with the gory task of treating the scores of wounded soldiers there. It is said that one of those who volunteered for nursing duty was a young teenage girl named Myra Maebelle Shirley, whose family owned and operated a hotel and livery stable on the square. Later in the war, after her brother Bud was killed by Union troops in a guerrilla skirmish, young Maebelle fled to Texas with the rest of her family. There she grew to womanhood, fell in with the wrong crowd, and later gained dubious fame as the female outlaw Belle Starr.

Another famous outlaw personality of Western history who was present at the action at Carthage was none other than



Myra Maebelle Shirley, the daughter of John Shirley, who operated the Shirley House Hotel and Tavern in Carthage, Missouri, was age thirteen when the Civil War in the Ozarks began in 1861. The Shirley Tavern was a popular place for heated political discussions and young Belle became an activist for the Confederate cause at an early age. Her brother John Allison "Bud" Shirley joined the Confederate Army. Learning of Union movements in the region, young Belle would often carry such information to Confederate camps. While dining at a Mrs. Stewart's home near Sarcoxie, Missouri, with several Confederate companions, Ed Shirley was killed when a Union party attacked the group. Young Belle and her mother went to Sarcoxie to claim the body a short time before the Shirley family decided to leave Missouri for Texas. No doubt the death of her beloved brother and the bitterness caused within her as a result of the Civil War greatly contributed to Belle Shirley eventually becoming the infamous Belle Starr, the Outlaw Queen. Following the war, many former Quantrill guerrillas often drifted into Texas to visit Shirley's Tavern there where Belle renewed her Missouri admiration for such men as Jesse and Frank James, the Youngers, and Jim Reed, who became her first husband. (Photo courtesy Robert Hutton family)



A dime-novel illustration of the Union attack on Mrs. Stewart's home near Sarcouxie, Missouri, in which John Allison "Bud" Shirley, Belle Starr's brother, was killed. (Photo courtesy Civil War Museum, Carthage, Missouri)

Cole Younger. In his autobiography, *The Story of Cole Younger by Himself*, Younger mentions that the first time he ever saw William C. Quantrill was at the Battle of Carthage, and he was wearing one of the red shirts that he was always so fond of. At the time, Younger was serving in the Missouri State Guard. A frontier region on what was considered the edge of civilization at the time, the Ozarks had numerous visitors and residents who would later gain notoriety in the colorful history of the Old West.

The Battle of Carthage lifted the morale of the Missouri State Guard and other Southern sympathizers in the region. Jackson's men had won a daylong pitched battle against well-trained Union troops and proved themselves to be a serious threat to the Federal government. With proper training, weaponry, and equipment, they would become a powerful fighting force. The entire nature of the war in Missouri changed after the violent hurly-burly at Carthage.

On July 6, Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, returning from Arkansas with Confederate reinforcements, linked up with Governor Jackson three miles south of Carthage. Price was accompanied by Brig. Gen. Benjamin McCulloch in command of a force of Confederate regulars from Texas and Louisiana, and Brig. Gen. N. Bart Pearce in command of a force of Arkansas state troops. On their march north toward Carthage, the reinforcements had achieved another Southern victory on the fateful day of July 5, 1861. Two battalions of Confederate troops entered Neosho, Missouri, where Sigel had left nearly 100 of his men to secure the town. The surprised Germans offered no resistance and were easily captured along with 150 arms and 7 wagonloads of supplies.

Upon learning that the Missouri State Guard had whipped Sigel's main force, McCulloch and Pearce returned to Arkansas with their troops. Sterling Price, relying on his military experience as a general in the Mexican War, planned his strategy with Governor Jackson. The Guardsmen anxiously awaited the

next move by the fifty-one-year-old leader, fondly referred to as "Old Pap." Swinging his 250 pounds into the saddle, Price led his army to a spot known as Cowskin Prairie where he established a training camp for the State Guard.

Meanwhile General Lyon had entered Springfield with a force of nearly 6,000 Union troops. The tireless, red-bearded Yankee set about to gather information concerning the strength and location of the Rebel army. While planning his campaign against Price's troops, Lyon received various pieces of information and misinformation concerning other nearby pockets of armed resistance to Federal authority. The most exaggerated of these scouting reports involved the town of Forsyth, Missouri, the county seat of Taney County situated southeast of Springfield. Lyon responded to these reports by ordering a detachment of 1,200 troops to take the town from the Rebels. In command of the expedition was an Irish immigrant who had lost an arm in the Mexican War. Thomas Sweeny held a dual rank as a regular U.S. Army captain and a brigadier general of volunteers.

Sweeny's men left Springfield around noon on Saturday, July 20, and the next day arrived at the village of Ozark. It was there that the Union troops took whatever they wanted, which included an entire wagonload of whiskey, which they happily consumed after their long, rugged march. By July 22, they were on the outskirts of Forsyth. Sweeny ordered his cavalry, two companies of regulars and one loosely disciplined group of Kansans, to launch the assault. Captain David Stanley led a colorful charge through the streets and up a steep hill east of town, easily driving the meager force of about 150 local Southern defenders before them. During the attack, some of the Kansas cavalymen dismounted and began looting the courthouse. To the misfortune of the Kansans, the Union artillery commander misunderstood an order by Sweeny and began shelling the building. The terrified troopers scurried from the courthouse like rats from a burning barn.

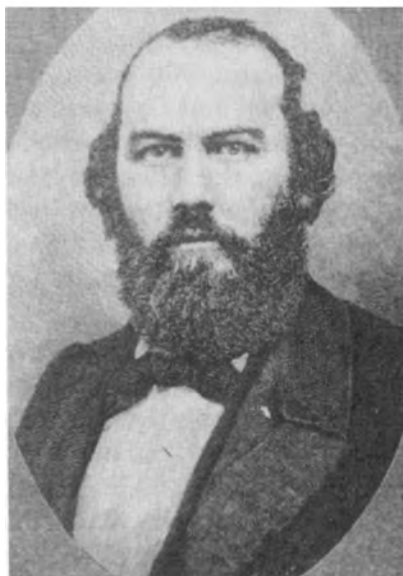
The raid on Forsyth cost no Union lives and only two were

wounded. Sweeny reported that eight or ten Rebels were killed and several times that many were wounded. Other than the capture of a good supply of clothing and footwear intended for Price's men, the Forsyth expedition accomplished very little. It was merely an adventurous little outing for Sweeny and his men, featuring free whiskey and the chance to shoot up a town.

In the meantime, General Price had decided it was time for his troops to leave Cowskin Prairie and undertake the task of making Missouri free from Federal rule. On July 25, he marched his army east across the Ozark countryside to Cassville. There, Brig. Gen. James H. McBride, with his command of 700 State Guard troops from the Ozark hills, joined Price. McBride's hillbilly soldiers knew basically nothing of military manners and drill, but they were tough as nails and crack shots with their hunting rifles. On July 29, Generals McCulloch and Pearce added 5,700 more men to the swelling Southern force. On August 1, over 13,000 troops marched out of the Cassville camp to do battle with the Federal army. At this point, the Southern army had no overall commander. Price and McCulloch retained their individual commands while attempting to cooperate with each other on strategic matters.

In Springfield, General Lyon had telegraphed St. Louis requesting reinforcements from his superior, Maj. Gen. John C. Frémont, commander of the Department of the West. Although no reinforcements had arrived, Lyon decided to attempt a foray against his foes without the extra troops. He did not yet know for sure that Price had linked up with McCulloch. The fearless Lyon marched from Springfield on August 1, the same day the Southern army marched out of Cassville. His vanguard consisted of about 900 men: four companies of infantry, an artillery battery, and Captain Stanley's cavalry. The next day this force encountered the Southern vanguard, 500 troopers of the Missouri State Guard cavalry under Brig. Gen. James Rains. A lively skirmish ensued near Dug Spring where Rains' cavalry was embarrassingly put to flight with just one killed and

Brig. Gen. Sterling Price, prior to 1861, had served three terms in the U.S. Congress and four years as governor of the state of Missouri. Like most Missourians, he favored remaining in the Union, but events forced him to take sides. Price chose the South and was appointed commander of the Missouri State Guard. "Old Pap," as the some 7,000 men in his force affectionately called him, along with Brig. Gen. Ben McCulloch, was determined to drive the Union Army out of Missouri. (Photo courtesy the Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas)



Brig. Gen. James McIntosh was awarded his rank by Gen. Ben McCulloch on the battlefield at Wilson's Creek. Praising McIntosh for his leadership, McCulloch commented, "he was everywhere the balls flew the thickest," and gave McIntosh command of the Confederate cavalry. At the Battle of Pea Ridge, McIntosh was killed on March 7, 1862, moments after McCulloch also went down. (Photo courtesy UALR Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas)

five wounded. The Federals, with four dead and six wounded, pressed on until the next day, August 3, when Lyon realized what a precarious situation he was in. Arriving back in Springfield on August 5, Lyon was well aware of McCulloch's presence and that his position in southwest Missouri was untenable without reinforcements from Frémont.

Since joining in Cassville, it had been obvious to Price, McCulloch, and Pearce that someone needed to be in overall command. Two days after the skirmish at Dug Spring, McCulloch assumed the position through a consensus of the leaders. This was thought best since his general's commission was granted by the central government of the Confederacy—even though it was a brigadier rank—while Price and Pearce were only state militia officers—even though Price was a major general. Price gave in to this arrangement grudgingly, knowing he must if he wanted McCulloch to continue the campaign against Lyon. In his time, McCulloch was well known for his frontier exploits. First gaining a reputation as a top-notch bear hunter and Indian fighter, he later journeyed to Texas as part of Davy Crockett's company of volunteers. He was fortunate enough to miss the siege of the Alamo due to illness and lived to later fight with distinction under Sam Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto. When the United States declared war on Mexico, McCulloch led a unit of Texas Rangers in the conflict. He headed for California during the Gold Rush of 1849 and there wound up as sheriff of Sacramento. At the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, McCulloch organized a regiment of Texas cavalry and, as its colonel, rode into San Antonio to accept the surrender of Maj. Gen. David Twiggs, commander of all U.S. troops and posts in Texas. After this achievement, Confederate president Jefferson Davis granted him a commission as brigadier general. Now, at fifty years of age, he was in command of an army of over 13,000 men and had reached the pinnacle of his career as an adventurer.

Taking a route up Telegraph Road, McCulloch's army slowly

neared Springfield. A telegraph line was raised from St. Louis to Fort Smith in 1858 along the Butterfield Trail, which subsequently became known as Telegraph Road or Wire Road. It would play a significant role in the war in the Ozarks as a vital route for armies and supplies. According to McCulloch's official report, his total effective force (not counting about 2,000 unarmed Missouri State Guardsmen) was 5,300 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 15 pieces of artillery with full gun crews. This force included troops from Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, and even a company of Cherokee tribesmen from Indian Territory. The Federal troops in Springfield numbered only about 6,400 men of all arms and 18 pieces of artillery. This force included Unionist Missourians (many of whom were German immigrants), Kansans, Iowa volunteers, and U.S. Army regulars.

By August 6, McCulloch's army was encamped ten miles southwest of Springfield along Wilson's Creek. After a prolonged delay, the Southerners prepared for action. They were to march on the town the night of August 9, but it rained. Many of McCulloch's troops had only raw canvas bags or merely their trouser pockets in which to keep their paper cartridges. Since wet gunpowder makes for poor firepower, the march was canceled.

Meanwhile, in Springfield, Lyon could not bear the thought of an inglorious retreat north. He too planned to march against his foe, on that same rainy night. With regulation leather cartridge boxes to keep their powder dry, the Federals set out from Springfield, leaving 1,000 troops behind to guard the supplies and hold the town. By 5:00 A.M., the soggy Yanks had reached their destination and were deployed according to an audacious battle plan designed by Col. Franz Sigel and approved by General Lyon. Lyon, with the main body of troops, prepared to strike the Rebels from the north while Sigel, with 1,200 troops, swung wide to the south to attack the opposite end of the sprawling camp. The Union force of approximately 5,400 was split in two, in the presence of an enemy force more

than twice as strong. Yet the element of surprise initially gave the Yanks success. Union artillery shells exploded mercilessly within the Southern camps, throwing debris high into the air. Men scrambled desperately for their weapons as charred tent flaps and twisted cooking gear rained down upon them. Fireballs soon erupted among the numerous Confederate supply wagons. Terrified mule teams, some still hitched to blazing wagons, raced frantically across the field. At approximately 6:00 A.M., both Lyon and Sigel were fully engaged with their foes and advancing steadily.

However, the surprise was soon over. From high ground to the east, Capt. William E. Woodruff's artillery battery from Pulaski County, Arkansas, opened fire on Lyon's advancing troops. Woodruff's four bronze guns halted the Union general's line of battle on a rise of land to be known henceforth as Bloody Hill. Gen. Price rallied his men and launched a furious counterattack. Soon the familiar ringing echo of Captain Bledsoe's "Old Sacramento" joined the growing storm of artillery thunder.

To the south, General McCulloch brought a halt to Sigel's advance and sent the gray-clad Third Louisiana Infantry forward. Sigel and his men mistook them for the First Iowa Volunteers, a Union regiment that also sported gray uniforms. The Louisiana troops were too close before the mistake was realized, and Sigel's force was badly mauled. Unable to recover from the onslaught, his men were completely routed by McCulloch's continued assault upon their line. Sigel's troops fled, abandoning five artillery pieces. Their colonel had little choice but to flee or face capture. What followed was a harrowing escape back to Springfield for Sigel's troops, pursued for miles by State Guard cavalry. Unlike Carthage, annihilation of the enemy became a primary objective. Finally, at a ford of the James River, about 400 of the luckless German American infantry, including Sigel himself, were overtaken by a strong force of State Guard troopers and completely overwhelmed again, with more than half becoming either casualties or prisoners. After desperate, close-quarter



Confederates advance at Wilson's Creek. (A reenactment photo)

combat, it was soon “every man for himself,” and Sigel was seen galloping off toward Springfield accompanied by an aide. They were pursued for about six miles before escaping. The German troops, totaling 147 men, were taken prisoner along with several supply wagons, a remaining artillery piece, and the colors of the Third Missouri Infantry. Tragically, 64 Federal dead were counted on the field of action at the James River crossing.

At Bloody Hill, General Lyon fought on. Never having received word of Sigel’s defeat, the stubborn Connecticut Yankee was now taking on the entire Rebel army alone with his small force. Around 9:00 A.M., he had to bring up his reserves to repel the steady assaults. Years of blistering animosity between Missourians and Kansans exploded in a blazing fury on Bloody Hill. Having been wounded twice, once on the side of his head and once in the leg, and with one horse shot from under him, Lyon continued to remain in the midst of the heavy action. He rode his second horse to the crest of Bloody Hill. Through the swirling smoke, he noticed a small group of horsemen as they pushed through the formation and paused to survey the battlefield. Lyon immediately recognized them as General Price and his staff. The scrappy Yank saw an opportunity to engage one of the enemy commanders one-on-one, in dramatic hand-to-hand combat. The fiery little general, with a bloody bandage wrapped around his head, moved forward and ordered his own escort of about ten men or less to “draw pistols and follow.” But cooler heads prevailed. One of the general’s aides, Lt. William Wherry, immediately pointed out to Lyon the folly of exposing himself point blank to an entire firing line of enemy infantry. Instead, he suggested that Lyon bring up more troops. The general regained his wits and accepted Wherry’s suggestion, ordering up the Second Kansas Volunteer Infantry, intending to lead them in a charge.

At approximately 9:30 A.M., General Lyon was preparing to lead the charge, waving his hat and shouting words of encouragement, when a musket ball tore into his chest. Slipping

from his saddle into the arms of his personal aide, Pvt. Albert Lehmann, he hoarsely whispered his last words, "Lehmann, I am going." It is not known which individual soldier actually shot Lyon that fateful day, but at least one eyewitness account claims that the deadly gunfire came from the Cherokee Company that had concealed itself within a thicket of brush close to the Union battle line. If this is true, the irony of it all cannot be lost: the cold-hearted victor of the massacre on Bloody Island of a village of Pomo Indians was killed on Bloody Hill by a group of Cherokee Indians eleven years later.

So many high-ranking officers had become casualties by the time of Lyon's death that the command of the Federal force fell upon the shoulders of a major. Samuel Sturgis, who had led a force of U.S. Army regulars from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to join Lyon's command, continued the fight until 11:30 A.M. when he finally ordered a withdrawal as his men ran low on ammunition. The Southerners had won. Major Sturgis retreated to Springfield. There the column was reunited with Colonel Sigel and his surviving men. The defeated Federal army began an orderly withdrawal to Rolla the next morning.

Thus, the Federal government's first campaign to drive the Secessionist forces from Missouri ended abruptly. Lyon was in his grave, the first Union general in the American Civil War to be killed in action. The Battle of Wilson's Creek, known as Oak Hills by the Confederates, subdued for a brief time the strength of the Federal military effort in Missouri. The casualties were horrific for only a six-hour battle of small armies: 1,317 Federals and 1,222 Southerners were killed, wounded, or missing. An incredible twenty-five percent of the men who fought on Bloody Hill that day were casualties.

Among the many Missouri State Guardsmen who had fought in the battle was a farmer named Frank James. Later in the conflict, he and his younger brother Jesse would serve in guerrilla bands and learn a lifestyle that would become their trade for many years to come. Another notable Western



Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon was the first Union general killed in action during the Civil War. During a hasty retreat from the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Lyon's body was mistakenly left behind on the battlefield. (Photo courtesy Civil War Museum, Carthage, Missouri)

personality that was present at Wilson's Creek, serving on the other side, was a young man who had signed up as a teamster for the Federal army early in the war, James Butler Hickok. The young adventurer experienced his first battle at the creek and would continue in the service of the Union Cause, making a name for himself as a daring scout and spy and earning his famous nickname, "Wild Bill."

Following their victory, Price advanced north while McCulloch and Pearce merely returned to Arkansas. Price had received a flesh wound in his side at Wilson's Creek but was recovering well. It is said that when he was hit, he jokingly remarked that if only he was as slim as Lyon, the bullet would have missed him entirely. In an attempt to take the entire state, "Old Pap" reached the Missouri River in late August with a force swollen by new recruits. With approximately 10,000 men, he advanced on the strategic Union stronghold at Lexington on the Missouri River, where 3,000 Union troops under Col. James Mulligan were dug in on high ground. After a dramatic siege in which the Missouri State Guard used wet bales of hemp as rolling breastworks to approach the Federal defenses, the Yankees surrendered on September 20 and gave Price his most glorious victory of the war.

Notably absent during the Battle of Lexington was one Missouri State Guard officer who, along with other members of his company, had disbanded his unit before it had even linked up with Price's forces before the famous siege. The young riverboat pilot had answered Governor Jackson's call for volunteers on a whim in the summer of 1861 after an unpleasant confrontation with a Federal officer who attempted to coerce him into transporting Union troops up the Missouri River. Armed with a squirrel rifle and mounted on a cantankerous yellow mule named Paint Brush, Samuel L. Clemens joined the "Ralls County Rangers" south of his hometown of Hannibal. He was appointed second lieutenant of a tiny company of militia volunteers. After a brief period of camping and marching

misadventures, featuring one bloodless volley of gunfire at imaginary foes in the darkness, young Sam decided soldiering was not for him and simply rode away from the war on Paint Brush. He later described the confusing state of affairs in the minds of Missouri men at the time: "A good deal of unsettledness, of leaning this way, then that, then the other way. It was hard for us to get our bearings." He soon joined his brother on a stagecoach bound for Carson City, Nevada Territory. Thus, the brief military career of the man who would be better known as Mark Twain came to an abrupt end.

During the war, hundreds of confused young men would be listed on the rolls as deserters from their units. If caught, they were frequently dealt with harshly, many even executed. Countless others were court-martialed and disgraced. However, many of the Union deserters were offered pardons by Lincoln later in the war if they simply returned to their units. Countless numbers on both sides, like Clemens, were not cowards or scoundrels; they were just confused and unsure of what they were doing. Many were homesick, or lovesick, or simply worried about getting the crops in at the farms that were their families' only source of income and food. There were still others who had come to doubt that the cause for which they were fighting was really as noble and glorious as to be worth risking their lives, or worth taking the life of another.

During Price's advance north toward Lexington, a small force of Union troops had followed a safe distance behind the State Guard. This force was no ordinary group of Yanks. A United States senator from Kansas had returned to his home state in the summer of 1861 with a burning desire to revive his prewar activity of leading Kansans against Missourians. James H. Lane was to retain his senate seat while occasionally rampaging through Missouri as a commander of Kansas troops. Known as the "Grim Chieftain," he organized and led "Lane's Brigade" during Price's Lexington campaign. Composed of Kansas infantry and cavalry, this force was in fact a ruthless band of

Jayhawkers wearing Union uniforms. Lane's route of pillage and plunder that September brought him to the town of Osceola. This community of 2,000 Missourians was the county seat of St. Clair County and had strong Southern sympathies. It was here on September 22 that Lane and his men firmly established their criminal reputation.

When the Kansans found a cache of Rebel military supplies in the town, their "Chieftain" decided to wipe Osceola from the map. But first Osceola was stripped of all its valuable goods, which were loaded into wagons hastily commandeered from the townspeople. Then nine citizens were given a farcical trial and shot. There was also an apparent attempt by Lane's men to consume all the liquor in town, of which there was a very good supply. Finally, the raiders ended their frenzy of pillage, murder, and drunkenness by setting the town afire. When the smoke cleared, only three buildings remained standing and Lane's Brigade was long gone, homeward bound to Lawrence, Kansas. Later in the war, the heavy hand of vengeance would fall upon Lawrence for this and other atrocities.

Meanwhile action heated up in the southeast Missouri Ozarks in the fall. Brig. Gen. M. Jeff Thompson of the Missouri State Guard led his "Swamp Brigade" in the marshy regions of southeast Missouri and ranged northward toward St. Louis. On October 15, Thompson raided the Iron Mountain Railroad south of St. Louis with 500 cavalry troopers. He captured a company of Union infantry guarding the Big River bridge only forty miles south of the city, driving off Federal reinforcements and burning the bridge. Thompson triumphantly rejoined the rest of his command at Fredericktown, which totaled approximately 1,200 troops. His bold actions caught the attention of the region's Federal army commander stationed in Ironton. It was none other than Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, who had yet to make a name for himself.

General Grant ordered Federal troops from Ironton and Cape Girardeau to march on Fredericktown. Approximately

4,500 blue-coated soldiers with eight artillery pieces under the overall command of Col. Joseph Plummer, a veteran of Wilson's Creek, reached their objective and found that General Thompson and his Swamp Brigade had withdrawn from the town. The "Swamp Fox" was heading toward Greenville with wagons full of captured plunder from the Big River bridge raid and 16,000 pounds of lead from the mines in the region. However, he couldn't bear the thought of retreating without a fight, so the brash Thompson sent his wagons on and turned his force about for a march back to Fredericktown. Incredibly, he told his men that they were going to lose this fight because of their enemies' superior numbers, but he thought they might get a good punch in first before they had to retreat.

On October 21, Thompson concealed his infantry in a cornfield on the edge of town and coaxed the Federals out by driving in their guards from their picket posts and engaging his foes in an artillery duel. As the Union infantry emerged from the town and marched toward the cornfield, Thompson's men let them come within forty yards before they rose and delivered a blazing volley of gunfire from their squirrel rifles and shotguns. The astounded Federals fled in confusion. But more troops in blue marched up to take their place, and Union cavalry also galloped onto the field. The battle grew in size and ferocity until the expected outcome became obvious. Colonel Plummer's 4,500 were about to overwhelm Thompson's 1,000. One last Union cavalry charge was repulsed before the Southerners began their withdrawal. A six-mile running skirmish ensued as the Swamp Brigade conducted a successful fighting retreat toward Greenville. The fact that they were able to escape at all is a testament to their fighting ability. In revenge, the Federals looted and burned a portion of Fredericktown due to its strong Southern sympathies. Colonel Plummer claimed to have buried over 150 guardsmen and captured 80 along with their artillery. General Thompson outdid Plummer's boast by claiming to have killed 400 Yanks. In fact a more accurate tally

is something like 25 killed, 40 wounded, and 80 captured on the Southern side, along with the loss of one old, iron 12-pounder cannon (one capable of firing a 12-pound ball). Union losses were approximately 7 killed and 60 wounded. After the Battle of Fredericktown, southeast Missouri was basically left under Federal control.

One of the young Union soldiers who suddenly found himself in the middle of the blazing action that day received a serious, crippling wound that would affect the rest of his life. James Earp, a private in the Seventeenth Illinois Infantry, was shot through the left shoulder by a Missouri guardsman. Wyatt's oldest brother was discharged from the army after subsequently losing most of the use of his arm. His disability failed to keep him from briefly attempting a career in law enforcement like his brothers, but he found he was better suited at gambling and the saloon business. He later owned and operated a saloon in Tombstone while his famous brothers resided there.

One other fact about the wild little Battle of Fredericktown warrants mention. It was the debut of one of the Civil War's most colorful legends. "Old Abe the War Eagle" made his first appearance on a battlefield. The big, tame bald eagle was the mascot of the Eighth Wisconsin Infantry. A detachment of that regiment fought at Fredericktown and their color guard carried Old Abe's tall, wooden perch with them. Believe it or not, Old Abe would sit tethered atop his perch as the troops marched forward. One can imagine him shrieking and flapping his wings defiantly as the battle commenced. Three of the six bearers he had during the war were shot from under him. The Eighth Wisconsin carried Old Abe through battles in Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana from 1861 through 1864, when the regiment was mustered out. Old Abe then retired to a special cage at the state capitol building in Madison where the public admired him until the end of his days in 1881.

Concurrently, following Price's sensational victory at Lexington, Major General Frémont finally left his lavish St.

Louis headquarters and took to the field under a hail of sharp criticism for his inactivity. Frémont was even more of a legend in his own time than McCulloch. As a young army officer, he had led government exploring expeditions west. With Kit Carson as his chief scout, Frémont discovered routes to be used by wagon trains carrying settlers beyond the Rocky Mountains. Dubbed “Pathfinder” for his achievements, the famous Western explorer also played a dramatic role in wresting California from Mexican rule. In the 1850s, Frémont embraced the abolitionist cause and became the first Republican candidate for president of the United States in 1856. At the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, the North expected great things from this Western hero. Unfortunately, Frémont’s days of glory were behind him. The Union defeats at both Wilson’s Creek and Lexington were blamed on him, due to his failure to reinforce Lyon and Mulligan in their hours of need. He had in fact ordered reinforcements in both cases, but failures by a number of his field officers prevented their arrival. Attempting to save his reputation, Frémont personally led an army of over 25,000 troops in pursuit of Price’s State Guards, trailing the elusive Rebels back to southwest Missouri.

In the vanguard of Frémont’s army as it neared Springfield on October 24 were two companies of scouts and a large detachment of the general’s “Body Guard,” a dandified unit consisting of three companies of well-equipped and colorfully uniformed cavalrymen. Preparing to ambush the approaching 300 Yanks was a rough-cut band of approximately 1,000 Missouri State Guardsmen under the command of Col. Julian Frazier.

Colonel Frazier concealed a strong force in the woods along both sides of a road that led to his camp on the western outskirts of town. Silently they waited, hoping the approaching Federals would gallop down the lane in an assault on the camp. Soon the fancy horsemen arrived on the scene, and their Hungarian commander, Maj. Charles Zagonyi, ordered his troopers forward to charge the enemy camp by way of the road. The



John C. Frémont, the famous Western scout and explorer, served the Union as a major general, commanding the Department of the West. (Photo courtesy Civil War Museum, Carthage, Missouri)

cocky cavalymen were soon greeted with a deadly storm of Rebel lead that sent men and horses crashing to the ground in terrible tangled masses. Amazingly, the Yankee troopers regrouped behind the cover of a hill, proving themselves to be true soldiers. Zagonyi led a second charge, this time directly into the Southern positions, and totally routed Frazier's troops. The scattered Rebels were pursued through the streets of Springfield and the surrounding countryside. Zagonyi later estimated the defeated militiamen's casualties at over 100.

At the cost of 16 killed and 24 wounded among the Body Guards and an undetermined number among the scouts (perhaps as many as 33 killed and wounded), the bold Zagonyi had achieved a meaningless victory in the only action to be fought in Frémont's expedition to southwest Missouri. Entering Springfield a few days later, Frémont established his headquarters there, only to be notified soon afterward of his relief from command. Under instructions from his superiors, the new commander, Maj. Gen. David Hunter, pulled all his troops back north for the winter. One column, under Brig. Gen. John Pope, was ordered to Sedalia while another column, under Brig. Gen. Franz Sigel, was ordered to Rolla. The troops that had marched out of Kansas under Brig. Gen. Samuel Sturgis (the war was bringing rapid promotions) and Senator Lane were ordered back to their own state.

Meanwhile on October 28, 1861, in the town of Neosho, Secessionist state legislators under Governor Jackson voted for Missouri to leave the Union and join the Confederacy. A great celebration in the Southern camps took place with Price's artillerymen firing their guns to salute the event; to these men, it was Independence Day. The Confederate Congress in Richmond, Virginia, ignoring the fact that Jackson and his legislature were nearly in exile, officially accepted Missouri as the twelfth state of the Confederacy on November 28 and measures were taken to begin to transfer members of the Missouri State Guard into the regular Confederate States Army. The year 1861

was drawing to a close, and the majority of the Ozarks remained under Southern control. However, the fight had just begun.

One last tragic bit of bloodshed took place in the Ozarks before the year was over. On December 2, General Sigel's force garrisoned at Rolla received word of a scouting party of Rebels in the vicinity of Salem, a town less than thirty miles south. Maj. William D. Bowen, with four companies of Missouri cavalry, was dispatched to the area. Bowen's 120 troopers set up camp that evening near the town. At 4:00 A.M. the next morning, an estimated 300 Southerners under Col. Thomas Freeman surprised the Yank encampment. Bowen's men rallied well and after twenty minutes of blazing action in the early morning darkness, the Rebels broke off their attack. Major Bowen ordered one company of his cavalry to charge his retreating foes, which they did, and successfully routed a large portion of them. In this last noteworthy military action of 1861 in the Ozarks, the Federals suffered four killed and eight wounded. Bowen estimated the Confederate loss to be 16 killed and 20 wounded.