

CHAPTER 26

THE 88 DAYS BETWEEN BOONVILLE'S BATTLES

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(Transcribed by Dorothy Harlan)

Secessionists Sentiment Subsides, Smoldering, After June 17, 1861--Lyon's Pardons, Purse and Power Create a Calm--135 Germans Are Organized as Home Guards--They Fortify the Old Fair Ground, Then Are Hurried Hither and Yon--They Guard the Capital and Pacify Otterville--They Arrest Prominent Citizens and Seize Property by Authority of Colonel U. S. Grant at Jefferson City--Ordered to Lexington, They Turn Back at Tipton and Hurriedly Occupy Boonville Breastworks as Southern Sympathies Seethe.

UNIONIST activity was as feverish in Boonville during the weeks immediately after the battle of June 17, 1861, as secessionist sentiment was preceding that decisive conflict.

Three days after the state troops were scattered, General Lyon organized and mustered into service 135 Boonville Germans as home guards. He issued to them muskets, ammunition, food stores and blue uniforms.

The home guards threw up fortifications at the old state fair grounds, now the site of St. Joseph Hospital.

The guards elected the following company officers: Captain, *Joseph Alexander Eppstein*; first lieutenant, *Emil Haas*; second lieutenant, *Ernst Roeschel*; orderly sergeant, *John A. Hayn*. Only one member of the company was American born. Many had had training in Germany. Their drills had considerable military snap.

THIS show of force, backed by federal wealth and power, had a salutary effect, over a wide area.

General Lyon's offer of pardon to those who no longer would bear arms against the Union and "music from gold" calmed hostility against the United States government. Lyon bought high orders of war supplies locally, paying fair prices. *The Yankee business was profitable*, and many of Southern leanings shared in it.

When Lyon moved his army, July 3, he left Major Cully in command of Boonville fortifications and to advise with home-guard officers. Later he was succeeded by Colonel John D. Stevenson.

Tranquility prevailed during a month of lively training. Then the guards were ordered on August 4 to Jefferson City to help protect the capital.

SOON, with Colonel Brown's 7th Missouri, they went to Otterville, riding to the end of the Missouri Pacific, at Syracuse, and then marching. Southern men at Otterville, commanded by Captain Alexander, Jame B. Harris and others, soon made overtures for continued peace.

Colonel Brown agreed to withdraw if the Confederates disbanded. They did, and the 7th Missouri and the Boonville Guards returned to Jefferson City.

The Boonville company was ordered home. The men debarked from a steamboat that put in quietly at the Haas brewery above Boonville in fog and darkness before dawn.

They moved into the town. The boat slipped down to the Main street landing and their comrades on the passage, men of Colonel Worthington's command, landed and marched into the business district.

SOUTHERN ACTIVITY had increased. Worthington arrested prominent citizens, charged with selling to Confederates. He confiscated stocks of two tin stores and of one shoe store. He seized printing equipment of THE BOONVILLE PATRIOT, owned by F. M. Caldwell and L. H. Stahl.

Phil Stahl, a present resident of Boonville, and his father were printing dodgers on a hand job press when a Federal captain and a squad marched up. Inflammatory editorials had appeared in THE PATRIOT,

written by its editor, F. M. Caldwell, brother-in-law of the elder Stahl. In the meantime, Mr. Caldwell had gone to Texas.

The soldiers helped disassemble the machinery and to crate and load it on a steamboat. It was taken to Jefferson City *by order of Colonel U. S. Grant*, later president of the United States, but then stationed at Jefferson City.

The arrested citizens also were taken to the capital city but soon were released. Later, Mr. Stahl obtained release of his equipment and publication was resumed. War bitterness increased, but Mr. Caldwell, who had returned, wrote temperately and there was no further interference.

Stocks from the stores were forever lost to the owners.

DURING the 85 days from formation of the Boonville Home Guards to the Second Battle

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of Boonville, Missouri slipped farther from the Confederacy.

General Price humbled himself to obtain aid from Ben McCulloch against Lyon. The latter surprised them in the cornfields and woods along Wilson Creek, near Springfield, early on August 10, 1861.

THOMAS L. SNEAD, who fought there under Price, wrote in his history, "*The Fight for Missouri*:"

"Never before, considering numbers, was there so bloody a battle on American soil. ... The lines approached again and again within fifty yards of each other, delivered deadly fire and fell back a few paces to reform and reload, to again renew this strange battle in the woods. Now and then, *deep silence fell upon the smoking field*, while the two armies, unseen of each other, lay but a short space apart, gathering strength in the death grapple for Missouri."

GENERAL LYON and so many of his officers were killed that *his army finally was commanded by a major*. Of the 800 in his First Missouri, 295 were killed and wounded. the First Kansas lost 275, while 61 went down in Steele's battalion of 275 regulars.

Of the Confederates, General Price, himself wounded, lost 988 killed and wounded of his 4,200 men on Bloody Hill.

Lyon's force was 7,000, nearly all Missourians. Price and McCulloch had 15,000, but many of Price's men had not even enlisted. Thousands had not been organized into regiments. None were uniformed and many had no firearms. Others had shotguns and squirrel rifles. They had no muster rolls and no morning reports. They had no commissary, but lived on the green corn, while their horses foraged on prairie grass.

FROM FEDERAL SURVIVORS at Wilson Creek came seven major generals and 13 brigadier-generals, while Price's force was to give to the Confederacy seven general officers. Truly, Missouri was the training ground for Civil War leadership.

Lyon's army held McCulloch and Price at bay, and, from Snead's point of view, that ended the South's hope of Missouri. Union men now had time, opportunity and courage to convene again their state convention, depose Governor Jackson and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds, to vacate the seats of members of the general assembly and to establish a state government loyal to the Union.

"The whole organized resources of the state--its treasury, credit, and militia--now were to sustain the Union and to help crush the South", Snead observed.

Colonel Stevenson's Home Guards at Boonville were ordered on August 4 to reinforce General Lyon, but it was too late to join Lyon for action at Wilson Creek August 10.

Four Confederate generals in Southeast Missouri lost heart for a thrust aimed at St. Louis. Wilson Creek was a wet blanket on Southern hopes.

The day Lyon marched out of Springfield to meet the Rebels, U. S. Grant, under an oak tree at Ironton, received his commission as brigadier-general. Forthwith, he struck rapidly and eventually attained the Federal high command. Soon President Lincoln yearned to send some of Grant's "*fighting whisky*" to other commanders.

AFTER the Battle of Wilson Creek, General Sterling Price better organized his army in Springfield, and soon marched north toward Lexington. On August 28 the Boonville Guards were ordered to re-enforce Colonel Mulligan there.

At Tipton, Major Eppstein learned that part of the 12th Illinois, also enroute to Lexington, had stayed in Boonville. *Eppstein returned his force to Boonville*, reporting to headquarters to send any orders for him there.

Thinly veiled hostility in the community had not been lost on Eppstein, a veteran of the Mexican War and an astute strategist.

General Jeff C. Davis, then at Jefferson City, authorized Eppstein to occupy the Boonville fortifications and approved a reorganization of the Boonville company into Companies A and B, Infantry, and a half company of cavalry, but with only the original 135 officers and men, now seasoned campaigners but not tested by fire.

CALVARY gave greater mobility, and smaller infantry companies promoted efficiency.

The following officers were chosen: *Major Joseph A. Eppstein*; surgeon, *Emil Haas*, adjutant, *John A Hayn*. Company A--Captain, *John B. Kaiser*; first lieutenant, *John Roterd*; and second lieutenant, *Charles Biehle*; first lieutenant, *Joseph Weber*; and second lieutenant, *John Fesler*. Cavalry--Captain, *Pete Ostermeyer*.

This reorganization was put into effect September 1. The new units did intensive maneuvers. The Illinois contingent departed, Southern sentiment waxed. Eppstein and his 134 were on a smoldering volcano.

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