

Operations in Virginia and Missouri **<http://civilwar150.longwood.edu>**

In the second week of June, 1861, military operations in Virginia and Missouri dominated the news. In the former state, Federal forces moved to gain control over the Lower Shenandoah Valley and its vicinity, a vital avenue of invasion and an important food-producing region for the Confederacy. Union troops under future general Lew Wallace briefly occupied Romney in mid-June, before evacuating the town, the possession of which would again be contested in late 1861 and early 1862.

Another strategic location was Harpers Ferry, located at the junction of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and home to a Federal armory and arsenal. Following Virginia's secession in April, 1861, the small Union garrison had partially destroyed the facility in order to prevent it from falling into Confederate hands. Local secessionists had put out the fires before the entire facility was destroyed. The surviving machinery and weapons were transferred to Richmond and the town occupied by Confederate forces under General Joseph E. Johnston. Believing, however, that the town was vulnerable to Union attack, in mid-June Johnson ordered the burning of the Baltimore and Ohio rail bridge and the evacuation of the town, with the southern garrison withdrawing to Winchester. Harpers Ferry was destined to be occupied and reoccupied by both sides numerous times in the war, most prominently in the period immediately preceding the Battle of Antietam in September 1862.

In addition to the operations in Virginia, Missouri remained a state being contested by both Union and Confederate forces during the early Summer of 1861. By June, Unionists had solidified their control over St. Louis, while the pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard,

commanded by General Sterling Price, established a camp at Boonville on the Missouri River some fifty miles from Jefferson City.

Union Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon, who was largely responsible for securing St. Louis for the Union and who now commanded the U.S. Army's Department of the West, had met with Price and with secessionist Governor Claiborne Jackson on June 11 in an unsuccessful effort to ease tensions between the different factions. At the conclusion of the failed meeting, Lyon had proclaimed: "This means war!" The Union general moved swiftly and within several days had occupied the capital at Jefferson City. On June 17, with a force of about 2,000, he moved upriver and attacked the Confederate position at Camp Bacon near Boonville. The Federals, aided by two pieces of artillery, quickly launched a two-pronged attack on the Confederates, who were led by Governor Jackson. After a brief resistance the rebels fled, leaving behind most of their provisions. Casualties numbered about twenty-five killed or wounded, and about sixty Missouri Guardsmen captured.

Though small in size and light in casualties, the fight at Boonville helped secure the region along the Missouri River for the Federal cause. Secessionist forces, including Sterling Price who had missed the engagement at Boonville, moved southward to link up with other Confederate troops. Lyon pursued the retreating Confederates, leading to the August 10 battle of Wilson's Creek which, though a Union defeat, solidified northern control over the state. Missouri would never officially become a member of the Confederacy.

A final event during the week was Confederate President Jefferson Davis' designation of June 13, 1861 as "a day of fasting and prayer, in the hope that the Almighty may aid them in the

present hour of 'difficulty and peril.'" It would be first of ten such days that he so designated over the next four years.