

Two Union Army Appointments

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During the week of August 14-20, 1861, as both sides continued to reflect on the lessons and repercussions of the fighting in Manassas several weeks earlier, a number of interesting events were occurring around the country. First, there were two interesting appointments within the Union army. Major Robert Anderson, the officer in command of Union forces at Fort Sumter, had been promoted to Brigadier General in May. Though Anderson had not done much more at Sumter than survive the siege and bombardment, he was now appointed to head the newly created Department of the Cumberland. This command encompassed Tennessee and Anderson's home state of Kentucky. In ill health, perhaps exacerbated by his days in Sumter, Anderson would relinquish the command in October.

A more significant appointment was that of Henry Halleck as Major General by overall Union commander Winfield Scott. Halleck was an 1839 West Point graduate and a well known intellectual and military theorist. Allowed to lecture to classes as a cadet, Halleck wrote several well known military reports, including *Elements of Military Art and Science* which was read by many future Civil War officers. Halleck retired from the U.S. military in 1854 and became a wealthy lawyer and businessman in California. He kept some connection to military affairs by becoming part of the California militia where he was a major general.

Due to his prominence as a military theorist, Halleck was well respected by Winfield Scott and on August 19, 1861 Scott appointed him as Major General in the

regular army. This appointment made him instantly the fourth highest ranking officer in the army after Scott, George McClellan and John Fremont. Halleck would become especially prominent the next year in several disasters for the Army of the Potomac in Virginia. His military acumen did not translate into effective leadership and his subordinates referred to him in a derogatory manner as “Old Brains”.

One of Halleck’s superiors, Fremont, also had an eventful week. As commander of the Department of the West, declared martial law in Missouri in the wake of the Battle of Wilson’s Creek several days earlier. In addition to ordering secessionist’s property confiscated, Fremont also order all slaves emancipated. This latter order would land Fremont in hot water with Abraham Lincoln very shortly.

Lincoln himself issued a somewhat strange proclamation on August 16, 1861. His proclamation declared the eleven Confederate states in insurrection and prohibited an future commercial trade between U.S. states and Confederate states. This seemingly obvious declaration was geared toward stopping some thriving business happening in the border states, especially the lucrative trade in cotton. Lincoln’s Confederate counterpart, Jefferson Davis, also issued a proclamation during the week, this one ordering all foreign nationals whose home countries did not recognize the Confederate to immediately leave the Confederacy.

Finally, in Washington Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox was notified that the so-called “stone fleet” was ready. These aging wooden whaling ships were soon to be loaded with stones and sunk at Charleston and various other Confederate ports in order to act as part of the blockade of the Confederacy.

