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The American Civil War was one of the most divided times in this country's history. The war not only divided the nation into two separate realms, but it also broke apart families, splitting apart fathers and sons and pitting brother against brother. Nowhere was this more evident than in the Border States, those states that held slaves but did not secede. While each of these states was important in its own right, Missouri was seen as a key factor in winning the war for the Union. President Lincoln's reaction to the secession movement in Missouri would show his political prowess, as well as the careful steps that he took to win the war and pull the country back together for once and for all. While the state was in turmoil, Lincoln made sure that his military leadership enforced strict martial regulations, all while ensuring the maximum amount of liberty for the normal citizens of Missouri, garnering Union support throughout a thoroughly divided state. Historian Dennis K. Boman highlights this when he writes:

Undoubtedly remembering the reaction of Marylanders when troops from Massachusetts marched through their state, Lincoln assured the Missourians that he would do all he could to avert a crisis, pledging... that he would not send 'troops through Missouri, as over a bridge, for the purpose of operating in any other place, & anticipates none.' Lincoln was willing to allow the state to remain neutral in the conflict and promised to do nothing to inflame the populace.¹

Despite the overwhelming odds, Lincoln and his Generals managed to turn secessionist Missouri into a favorable atmosphere for victory in the Civil War.

Following Lincoln's election to the Presidency, many Southern states claimed their independence from the Union that held the country together. Despite his platform's claims of having no intention of attempting to end slavery where it already existed, the political leaders of these states insisted that Lincoln was an Abolitionist, and would seek to destroy their way of life.

¹ Boman, Dennis K. *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri: Balancing Freedom and Security* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 24

Assemblies were organized in every slaveholding state to decide whether or not the respective states would stay in the Union under such an oppressive President. Almost every Secession Assembly voted in favor of leaving the Union, except those of Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. These states, while holding a strong number of vehement Secessionists, ultimately could not see a valid reason for them to leave the security that the government of the United States could offer.

In Missouri, this decision was not brought about without a strong struggle by those arguing in favor of secession. The state's Governor, Claiborne F. Jackson, was elected on a platform of preserving the Union, but was in truth a staunch secessionist, bent on releasing Missouri from the bonds of a tyrannical leader such as Lincoln. Jackson and his followers debated heavily for secession, but to no avail, as other prominent political figures were just as quick to point out the flaws in their arguments, and argue for staying in the Union as the most effective way to have a semblance of stability in the coming war. The clear leader among these men was Hannibal R. Gamble, of St. Louis, who was quick to point out that the Southern way of life could not sustain itself without the industry of the North, where the goods grown in the South, such as cotton, indigo and rice were shipped to be made into useful products. Without this trade of goods, the economy of the South could not survive.

After the vote to remain in the Union, Governor Jackson took it upon himself to save Missouri, so he assembled the Missouri State Guard, under the command of General Sterling Price to take the state and declare it a part of the Confederacy. This blatant move toward secession made by a supposedly pro-Union governor sparked outrage throughout the state in every pro-Union citizen. This was especially true in St. Louis, Missouri's largest city and one of the economic centers of the state. Not only was the city extremely pro-Union, but it also

contained one of the largest military arsenals in the country at the time, making it especially appealing to Jackson, who needed the munitions in order to successfully liberate Missouri from the Union. Jackson had appealed to Confederate President Jefferson Davis for weaponry with which he could take the arsenal before the Union forces could empty it, and was supplied with a good deal of heavy artillery with which to do so, which was smuggled through the city to their camp. Taking the arsenal would be a huge challenge, however, as the city of St. Louis was now well guarded under General Nathaniel Lyon, the commander of the Department of the West, who was brought to the city to keep the state from seceding. Lyon's first controversial move was to seize all of the munitions in the arsenal and remove them to Illinois for safekeeping.² This move by Lyon, made after the raid of Missouri's only other federal arsenal in Liberty, only caused more turmoil, as it was a relief to some, but an outrage to others. Seen as an action made out of distrust of the population of St. Louis, and Missouri in general, the removal of these weapons made many Missourians who were on the fence about who they were going to support come out as full supporters of the Confederate cause within the state. Shortly after this event, and a failed meeting with Governor Jackson and General Price, Lyon was replaced as Commander of the Department of the West by General John C. Fremont. General Lyon would die at the Battle of Wilson's Creek in April of 1861.³

Fremont's command of Missouri was one of conflicting orders. He was quick to declare martial law, and to establish police actions within the city of St. Louis in order to keep the Union stronghold from falling to secessionists, something that was necessary, if not slightly excessive.⁴ Yet, there were many points in which Lincoln, upon hearing of a decree of Fremont's, was

² "Removal of Arms from Missouri" *New York Times*, April 27, 1861.

³ Adamson, Hans Christian, *Rebellion in Missouri: 1861* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1961), 257.

⁴ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri*, 45-46.

forced to immediately give one of his own rescinding the former. This was especially the case when Fremont would give an order that would run the risk of enraging the people of Missouri and sparking even more support of secession in the state. One such instance came on August 30, 1861, when Fremont issued a proclamation stating that anyone caught taking up arms against the United States government would be shot, and all slaves of disloyal persons were to be emancipated.⁵ This order was entirely contradictory to Missouri's interim Governor, Hannibal R. Gamble's offer of a full pardon to anyone in Missouri's secessionist army under General Price who would lay down their arms, issued earlier that same month. This contradiction, as well as the emancipation of slaves within the state, angered President Lincoln, who refused to allow the release of slaves unless they were confiscated out of military necessity. These concerns were addressed in a well-worded letter to Fremont, who requested that Lincoln rescind the order if he was not pleased with it. This was done immediately.⁶

This unfortunate circumstance was not the only one of Fremont's career in Missouri. From the outset, it was clear that Fremont was hesitant to take direct action against Governor Jackson and his army, but preferred to bolster the state with Union troops and safeguard many areas from secessionist advances. This action is admirable in its essence, but the policies that were carried out in order to do so served no purpose but to increase the frustrations of Missourians, especially those loyal to the Union. One such policy was carried out by one of Fremont's subordinates, General John Pope. Pope was put in charge of Northern Missouri, where there was an overall lack of Confederate soldiers to cause problems for the Union troops. Pope's soldiers were fiercely independent, and would generally think about the orders they were given before they decided if they wanted to carry them out. As tensions increased between

⁵ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens Rights in Civil War Missouri*, 44.

⁶ *Ibid.* 45.

Missourians and Union troops, Lincoln and his administration became increasingly frustrated with the situation. One such frustration was Pope's General Orders No. 3, which allowed Union troops to search civilian homes if a reason presented itself. This power was greatly abused, prompting a letter from Governor Gamble to President Lincoln expressing concerns about the actions. Shortly after this letter was written General Orders No.3 was repealed.⁷

General Fremont was not without opportunity to capture Governor Jackson and his secessionist brigade and restore order to Missouri; he simply never took the chances that were presented to him. One such chance came to him as General Price made a slow advance toward the Missouri town of Lexington. Fremont did send a small garrison of troops to the town, but never made any other attempt to keep it, citing transportation issues. This excuse was without validity, as the town was located directly along the Missouri river, and the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad ran close by, both sources under complete Federal control. The town was captured by Price and his army.⁸ It was only after Lincoln sent subordinates from Washington D.C. to evaluate his ability to command the Missouri region that Fremont finally started an advance on Price's troops, and even that was unnecessarily slow endeavor. It was when this army reached Springfield that Fremont was relieved of his command by General David Hunter, acting on Lincoln's orders. The army was then pulled back and resupplied at Sedalia, and Lincoln went in search of a new Commander for the turmoil that was Missouri.⁹

The search for a new commander would end with the appointment of Henry Halleck. Halleck was a West Point graduate, and a firm believer in the structure of the army. It would be under Halleck that the army would become immensely more organized, and commands would be

⁷ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri*. 43-44

⁸ *Ibid.* 59.

⁹ *Ibid.* 60.

followed without argument.¹⁰ It would be during Halleck's command that Lincoln would be able to step back from dealing with Missouri's turmoil more than he would ever be able to throughout the war.¹¹ As soon as Halleck arrived in Missouri, he was given orders to re-evaluate the design of Fremont's army, and to remove the excess, of which there was reported to be a great deal.¹²

Halleck was met with challenges in every facet of his attempts to gain control of the state. Not only were there troops ignorant of his commands, but Missourians themselves were challenging his authority in the court systems of St. Louis. With so many refugees coming into St. Louis from the rural areas of Missouri looking for shelter and protection, Halleck decreed that any civilian found to have supported rebel causes was to be levied a fine in proportion to their complicity, up to ten thousand dollars. Some St. Louisans, who were not willing to pay such a fine, filed claims with the court systems declaring that Halleck had no such authority. Halleck had long since declared martial law with the approval of Lincoln, and therefore could operate outside of the normal court system, and was spared from the task of reimbursing those who had been forced to pay his levies.¹³ This action was just one of many difficulties that General Halleck faced during his tenure in Missouri, but it would be one that he would overcome easily.

A key factor in Halleck's ability to overcome his difficulties in Missouri was his recognition that he would not be able to do the job alone. Following this realization, he appointed General John McAllister Schofield to command the Missouri State Militia. This appointment was met with favor by the Unionist provisional government of Missouri, as Governor Gamble held the general in high regard.¹⁴ Schofield's command of the State Militia

¹⁰ Ibid. 62.

¹¹ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri*, 63.

¹² Ibid. 63.

¹³ Ibid. 73-74

¹⁴ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri*, 66.

gave Halleck one less facet of the state's turmoil to concern himself with, and would secure Schofield's future in the command of the state as well.

Despite the consequences of doing so, many Union soldiers were still forcibly freeing slaves from their owners, regardless of the owner's alliances. To attempt to combat this, Lincoln in March of 1862 attempted to legalize a bill that would offer compensation to slaveholders who willingly freed their slaves. This plan passed in both houses of Congress, but would have a very hard time being implemented in Missouri, as most people still felt that slavery was still a very important part of the economy, and they would do what they could to preserve it.¹⁵ This plan, while one that would provide a positive alternative to the loss of slaves and money that would come with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment at the end of the war, was not one that would succeed in Missouri.

In the first half of 1862, Halleck was removed from Missouri to take command of armies in the Eastern Campaigns, and was replaced in Missouri by General Samuel R. Curtis.¹⁶ Once Curtis was comfortably in control of his position, Lincoln inquired as to whether or not Missouri was fit to return to civilian rule instead of martial law. While there was little to no chance of the state falling to Confederate control, the political situation in the state was still too volatile to deliver a clear answer, prompting Lincoln to make the decision to leave the martial law systems that were currently operating within the state intact.¹⁷

This political conflict was brought about by the fact that the two major leaders in the state had startlingly opposing views. Governor Gamble was a conservative man, much like Lincoln himself, while General Curtis was a staunch radical. Curtis would attempt to curtail this conflict

¹⁵ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri*, 112.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 138.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 148

not by denouncing his own views, but by making whatever attempts that he could to not come into conflict with the governor. One area that Curtis would make no attempts to conceal his intentions, however, was in his battle against “rebel priests.” Curtis was not the first commander of Missouri to take precautions against secessionist ministers, but his attempts would lead to a great deal of intervention by Lincoln on behalf of some of the accused. Many were exiled from the state after a lengthy prison stay in which their case was reviewed, only to have Lincoln come to their salvation after reviewing their sentences.¹⁸

Due to this and other blunders, Governor Gamble and other influential Missourians began to petition Lincoln to remove Curtis from his position as Commander of the Department of the Missouri, a request that Lincoln granted. Curtis was replaced by General Schofield, who had been placed in charge of the Missouri State Militia under General Halleck. Schofield was warned, however, upon resuming his tenure in the office, to remain independent in thought and action from both sides of the political quagmire that was Unionist Missouri. Lincoln was growing tired of the distrust and fighting that was occurring between the conservative and radical parties within the state, and wanted his military commander to remain free from either side.¹⁹

It was during Schofield’s command that the Missouri State Convention, the same one that had met to determine whether or not the state would secede, decided upon a method of emancipation for slaves within the state. Schofield realized that the system of gradual emancipation starting in 1870 would not allow for freed slaves to join the militias, and he desperately needed the men. He petitioned the President, and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, to allow for the recruitment of black men, both freed and enslaved, in Missouri, to which Lincoln

¹⁸ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens’ Rights in Civil War Missouri*. 158-166.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 194

agreed.²⁰ This agreement allowed Schofield to gather enough troops to send them down to aid General Grant at Vicksburg, a request that had been refused by General Curtis before him.²¹

One of Schofield's greatest advantages was also one of his greatest disadvantages. The General was very well allied with Governor Gamble, which while helpful to him made him a prime target for the same Radical groups that were calling for Gamble's removal. It was during a particularly nasty conflict between the parties during a Congressional election that Schofield was called to Washington to meet with the President. During this meeting, Lincoln promoted Schofield to Major General, so he could move him to another department. In order to make this promotion pass, however, Lincoln had to agree to appoint General William Rosecrans to command the Department of the Missouri, something that Missouri Radicals had been pushing for.²²

General Rosecrans would face the task of trying to return Missouri to civilian rule, as opposed to the martial law under which the state had been governed since the outset of the war. The major challenge to doing this was the rumors of an impending raid on the state by General Price, who had still not been caught. These rumors turned out to be true, as Price planned a strategic uprising of guerilla forces to prepare the way for his army to raid the state from beyond the borders. Unfortunately for Price, however, the conservative and radical parties, as reported to Lincoln by his personal secretary John G. Nicolay, had only petty differences to squabble about, and his goal of disrupting the national election that fall backfired, and Rosecrans was able

²⁰ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri*. 199-200.

²¹ *Ibid.* 201.

²² *Ibid.* 227-228.

to successfully drive the rebel forces out of the state.²³ After the raid, Rosecrans successfully took precautions to ensure that the fall election would happen without disruption.

After the election of 1864, Lincoln was finally able to see an end to martial law in Missouri, as well as the threat of secession. The government that was now in place was one that had been elected by the people, and had the authority to command their own armies. Furthermore, the rebel armies had been successfully driven out of the state. The era of martial law was not yet over, although the tenure of General Rosecrans was. After a disastrous error at the Battle of Chickamauga, Rosecrans was replaced as the Commander of the Department of the Missouri by General Grenville M. Dodge. Fortunately for Dodge, his job was not as strenuous as it had been for his predecessors, as there was no longer the threat of a large rebel army moving around within the state's borders, and he only had to deal with smaller guerilla forces.²⁴ However, Dodge would not be in full power long, as Grant would merge several departments, including Missouri, into one larger department, making Dodge answer to General John Pope. It would be General Pope who would truly push for the state to make a gradual return to civil authority, proposing to the newly elected Governor Thomas Fletcher that areas of the state that were able to govern themselves be allowed to do so.²⁵

President Lincoln remained heavily invested in the state of Missouri throughout the war in hopes that he could keep them from seceding, which he was able to do through being forceful, yet allowing the Missourians their independence. While he would not live to see the state fully released from martial law, he was able to keep the state under control and impose his authority through his selection of commanding officers. Through these officers, Lincoln was able to

²³ Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri*. 259-261.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 264-265.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 271-274.

ensure the safety of Missouri's residents, pursue the rebel forces that were laying waste to the state, and aid the efforts of other Union troops in the surrounding areas, all while ensuring Missourians as much freedom as could be afforded under a martial law declaration. As a whole, Lincoln's policies were extremely successful in keeping Missouri in the Union, an admirable feat.