

Perspectives  
in  
HISTORY

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*ALPHA BETA PHI*  
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JOURNAL OF THE ALPHA BETA PHI  
CHAPTER OF PHI ALPHA THETA

**Perspectives  
in  
HISTORY**

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**Perspectives in History** is a semi-annual publication of the Alpha Beta Phi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. Manuscripts are welcome from students and faculty.

**Send all articles, essays, and book reviews to:**

Northern Kentucky University  
History/Geography Department  
Highland Heights, KY 41076  
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**Panic on the Ohio:  
The Defense of Cincinnati, Covington, and Newport  
September 1862**

by  
**Roger C. Adams**

"The Siege of Cincinnati"

Who saved our city, when the foe  
Swore in his wrath to lay it low,  
And turned to joy our tears of woe?

Lew Wallace.

Who taught us how to cock the gun,  
And aim it straight, and never run,  
And made us heroes, every one?

Lew Wallace.

And told us how to face and wheel,  
Or charge ahead with pointed steel,  
While cannon thundered, peal on peal?

Lew Wallace.

Who, when all in bed did sleep,  
About us watch and ward did keep,  
Like watch-dog round a flock of sheep?

Lew Wallace.

Who made us all, at his commands,  
With fainting hearts and blistering hands,  
Dig in the trench with contrabands?

Lew Wallace.

Who would have led us, warriors plucky,  
To bloody fields far in Kentucky?  
But Wright said, No?—and that was lucky?

Lew Wallace.

Who sat his prancing steed astraddle,  
Upon a silver-mounted saddle,  
And saw the enemy skedaddle?

Lew Wallace.

And who, "wha hae wi' Wallace" fed,  
On pork and beans and army bread,  
Will e'er forget, when he is dead,

Lew Wallace?<sup>1</sup>

Marked by controversy, contempt, and confusion for Federal and Confederate forces alike, Edmund Kirby Smith and Braxton Bragg's 1862 Kentucky invasion

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Roger C. Adams is a senior history major, president of Alpha Beta Phi Chapter, and editor of *Perspectives in History*. He delivered this paper at the Regional Conference at Centre College on April 21, 1990 and was co-winner of the best paper award.

has been widely studied: from the disastrous Federal rout at Richmond, to Union General George Morgan's "evacuation" of the Cumberland Gap, to the fiasco at Perryville. A much smaller and now largely forgotten facet of this campaign is the defense of Cincinnati. As approaching Rebels threw the citizens of Cincinnati, Covington, and Newport into a frenzied panic, an overwhelming show of Federal and civilian force turned the invasion into little more than a large-scale raid.

On August 30th, 1862, the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* reported that Smith with 20,000 men had boldly bypassed General George Morgan in the Cumberland Gap and invaded Kentucky.<sup>2</sup> This really came as no surprise to anyone in and around the state. Confederate activity within the Commonwealth had steadily increased since Colonel John Hunt Morgan's raids began in July. Additionally, reports came into Cincinnati the day before from the East that John Pope's Army of the Potomac had fled the field at Bull Run almost exactly as it had done under Irvin McDowell the previous year. Ominously, the *Enquirer* continued, "[Smith's army] was at London, 60 miles from Lexington, on Wednesday, marching into the interior of the State with the evident intention of reaching the Ohio River. His troops are well drilled, and are said to be the pick of the South-west Confederate army." Optimistically it was added, "They will be met before reaching Lexington by General Nelson and his army of fresh troops, and their advance will certainly be checked.... Nelson will have to attend to him with what troops are now in that State, and we doubt not his ability to gain a decisive victory."<sup>3</sup> What readers did not know, though, was that as they read, William "Bull" Nelson's fresh and very green forces were being routed, captured, or destroyed by Smith's hardened veterans at Richmond. Word soon came that over 4,000 Federal soldiers were captured, 206 killed, and 372 wounded (including Nelson); whereas, the Rebels' losses only amounted to some 78 killed and 372 wounded.<sup>4</sup> Captain Elijah B. Treadway, who was commanding a small, veteran detachment of the 3rd Kentucky, wrote to his wife soon after the battle:

I thank God that I am yet alive and well. We was in the most desperate Fight on the day before yesterday that I ever witnessed[,] it was Fought all around Richmond[,] there is only seven of my men here with me that has yet come up,...[,] I cannot give you any description of the Fight at present. I fear we have lost several in Killed[,] wounded[,] and prisnors[.] We were all scattered by a Cavalery Charge two miles before Richmond on the Clays Ferry Pike[,] we lost several hundred men on our side besides all of our Cannon[.]<sup>5</sup>

The defeat was highly demoralizing to the Federal troops at Richmond. Men who had been captured and immediately paroled by the Confederates made their way back to Indiana and Ohio, while some drugged back to Louisville hoping to rejoin their broken regiments. Elated with their success, Smith's men snatched up 10,000 captured muskets, rested the night, and began marching on Lexington the next morning. Needless to say, this disastrous defeat fanned embers of fear into flames of panic throughout Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana.

On September 1, General Horatio Wright, commander of the Department of the Ohio, was quickly forming his plans. It was obvious to him that Smith would try to take Lexington, and if successful, would push on to Frankfort. Thereafter he was not certain what would happen; however, both Louisville and Cincinnati were likely targets. General Don Carlos Buell was still in Tennessee with the Army of the Ohio keeping watch on Bragg's force. But Wright realized that even if Smith's plans were successful the campaign could not be extended if Louisville and Cincinnati remained in Federal hands. Wright organized a small defensive force for Lexington and left for Louisville at five o'clock that afternoon. Before leaving, though, he telegraphed General Lew Wallace, "If you have not left Cincinnati please remain there and take command of the troops there and arriving there."<sup>6</sup> Lew Wallace began his preparations in Cincinnati almost immediately. The *Enquirer* reported the next day, "The most active movements are progressing to give Smith a warm reception when he approaches the border. Our citizens are fully awake to the exigencies surrounding them, and a determination is every-where manifest to give General Wallace all the assistance in their power."<sup>7</sup>

Although a political appointee, Wallace was a capable general. As colonel of the 11th Indiana he had performed ably and rose quickly to the rank of major general—one of the Federal army's youngest at the time. He has been vindicated in recent years for what his contemporaries deemed incompetence the first day at the battle of Shiloh, but such was not the case in 1862. As Confederate troops entered Kentucky, Wallace was at his retreat on the Kankakee River anxiously awaiting the opportunity to command troops in the field again. He received a telegram from Governor Oliver P. Morton requesting that he take command of a regiment which would be sent to Kentucky to thwart the rebel invasion. Wallace accepted and reported to Brigadier General Jeremiah T. Boyle in Louisville. Boyle, uncomfortable having a major general under his command, ordered Wallace to march his regiment to Lexington, assume command of the small Union force there, and relieve Morgan at Cumberland Gap. Assessing the reported condition of Morgan's men and the entire situation, he decided that for his small, green force a defensive position on the north bank of the Kentucky River would prove most advantageous. The site he chose was not far from Boonesboro, about 15 miles from Lexington. The locks on the river were closed to flood the fords, all boats within miles were confiscated, while the position itself was naturally flanked by sheer limestone cliffs. Unfortunately, Colonel Leonidas Metcalfe was attacked at Big Hill by Colonel John Scott's cavalry, which was the advance unit of Smith's army, and forced to retire toward Richmond. Being outflanked, Wallace wanted to detach one regiment to get behind Scott, thus enveloping him and delaying Scott's force long enough to enable the remainder of his command to fall back safely on Cincinnati. However, before any move was made, Nelson arrived on August 24 with orders from Wright relieving Wallace of his command. This was, undoubtedly, through some maneuvering from Halleck, who distrusted Wallace. Wallace, with his staff, returned to Lexington where he hoped to receive further orders. He returned to Cincinnati and received a telegram from Wright ordering him to return to Lexington to take

command of what was left of the Federal forces. It was at Paris that he received the aforementioned telegram from Wright ordering him to remain in Cincinnati. Wallace eagerly entered into this command with full determination to clear his name by saving the Queen City of the West. T. Bush Read reported an incident as Wallace returned to Cincinnati:

...Wallace was asked by one of his aids—

“Do you believe the enemy will come to Cincinnati?”

“Yes,” was the reply. “Kirby Smith will first go to Frankfort. He must have that place, if possible, for the political effect it will have. If he gets it, he will surely come to Cincinnati. He is an idiot if he does not. Here is the material of war,—goods, groceries, salt, supplies, machinery, etc.—enough to restock the whole bogus Confederacy.”

“What are you going to do? You have nothing to defend the city with.”

“I will show you,” was the reply.<sup>8</sup>

The resources at his hands were plentiful, but greatly disorganized. The only defensive positions were seven earthwork battery redoubts and one fort on the hilltops south of Covington and Newport; the eastern and western river approaches to Cincinnati were guarded by two small redoubts. However, all of these positions had been built in the fall of 1861. Many were in disrepair and in all, only 15 heavy guns, dismounted, without crews and ammunition, stood poised to offer any resistance. In the three cities Wallace had but the 96th Ohio Infantry, two companies from the 18th U.S. Infantry at the Newport Barracks, and about 800 militia.<sup>9</sup> These few men were not sufficient to cover seven miles of weak frontage. Wallace issued this proclamation:

The undersigned, by order of Major General Wright, assumes command of Cincinnati, Covington, and Newport.

It is but fair to inform the citizens that an active, daring, and powerful enemy threatens them with every consequence of war; yet the cities must be defended, and their inhabitants must assist in the preparation.

Patriotism, duty, honor, self-preservation call them to the labor, and it must be performed equally by all classes.

First. All business must be suspended at nine o'clock to-day. Every business house must be closed.

Second. Under the direction of the Mayor, the citizens must, within an hour after the suspension of business (ten o'clock, A.M.) assemble in convenient public places for orders. As soon as possible they will then be assigned to their work.

This labor ought to be that of love, and the undersigned trusts and believes it will be so. Anyhow, it must be done.

The willing shall be properly credited; the unwilling promptly visited. The principle adopted is, Citizens for the labor, Soldiers for the battle.

Third. The ferry-boats will cease plying the river after four o'clock, A.M., until further orders.

Martial law is hereby proclaimed in the three cities; but until they can be relieved by the military, the injunctions of this proclamation will be executed by the police.<sup>10</sup>

Only under martial law could the three cities be defended. At 9:45 that night from Louisville, Governor Morton telegraphed Secretary of War Stanton: "The operator at Lexington has just bid good-bye. He says the enemy were within 3 miles at 7 this evening. The loss of Lexington is the loss of the heart of Kentucky and leaves the road open to the Ohio River."<sup>11</sup> Governor James Robinson and the state papers were already en route from Frankfort to Louisville. Smith settled into Lexington that night without resistance. Margaret Breckinridge wrote: "On Tuesday, the 2d of September, Kirby Smith and his body-guard rode into Lexington, and took formal possession of the town without the firing of a gun. 'Lor, massa,' said one of his negro attendants, 'dis de easiest took town we got yet.'" She added, "[Smith] found the good people of Lexington crowding around a train of Union ambulances, that were taking the wounded from the battle at Richmond, Kentucky, on to Cincinnati,—bidding them good by, filling their haversacks and canteens, and whispering to them, 'Every one of you, bring a regiment with you when you come back.'<sup>12</sup> Scott's cavalry was sent ahead the next day to occupy Frankfort. The roads to Cincinnati and Louisville were wide open, but no one knew exactly which one the Rebels would take. Wallace sent the 99th Ohio from Cincinnati to help defend Lexington. A private in the 99th wrote to his brother:

We started in a southern direction for Lexington[,] Ky[—]Distance 100 miles[—]when within 18 miles of our destination we recd. a dispatch to stop at a town called Paris... Our forces had been defeated about 20 miles from there the day before and the Rebels were marching on to Paris.

[The 99th retreated to Cynthiana, joined the 45th Ohio there, then retreated to Butler.]

It was the greatest panic I ever saw. The officers acted like a set of Damned fools. I don't like to run till I see some thing to run from.

But for my part I feel a little bored over this retreating arrangement. It may be all for the best. But I would rather fight than be called a coward.<sup>13</sup>

Conditions in Louisville were much the same as they were in Cincinnati. Wright,

who kept his headquarters in Cincinnati, remained in Louisville until 3 p.m. on September 3rd to ensure that General Jeremiah Boyle could handle the task of organizing that city's defenses. Buell, who was still in Tennessee just watching Bragg, telegraphed Wright: "I need not tell you that the security of Louisville above all other points is of the most vital importance to our position in Tennessee. It is the point the enemy will aim for, and should be protected by every possible means."<sup>14</sup> Wright knew the situation more fully than his subordinate and simply ignored Buell's impetuosity. All the Union's defenders could do was sit and wait for the Rebels to move.

Smith, however, was not moving. He and Confederate sympathizers in Lexington began organizing a provisional state government. One of his divisional commanders, Henry Heth, approached him and asked to be sent to take either Cincinnati or Louisville. "About midnight," Heth wrote, "he came to my room and said I might take such and such brigades and make a *demonstration* on Cincinnati."<sup>15</sup> Heth took four infantry brigades and one cavalry brigade with a total strength of about 8,000 men and began his march to Cincinnati the morning of the 4th.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, Wallace was securing for Smith's entire force. By the 4th he had already organized a makeshift flotilla of sixteen converted steamboats to ply the Ohio River's waters above and below Cincinnati. The situation was so serious in Wallace's mind, that he seized the gunboat USS *Indianola*, which was partially unfinished, and had her launched on the 4th—much to the chagrin of the contractor—to help patrol the river.<sup>17</sup> He employed a local engineer to construct a pontoon bridge out of coal barges from Cincinnati to Covington.<sup>18</sup> With Ohio's governor, David Tod, in Cincinnati, Wallace was able to get newly organized regiments sent directly to Cincinnati. Indeed, Tod put out a call to all the men of Ohio to make their way to the city. "Our southern border is threatened with invasion....," he declared, "Gather up all the arms and furnish yourselves with ammunition for the same... The soil of Ohio must not be invaded by the enemies of our glorious government. Do not wait. *None but armed men will be received.*"<sup>19</sup> These "Squirrel Hunters," as they were called, poured into the city until their number exceeded 50,000.<sup>20</sup> Not everyone saw the Squirrel Hunters as heroic "minute men" defenders. A member of the 102nd Ohio contemptuously wrote:

While at...camp we heard of the "Squirrel Hunters" from all parts of Ohio. We heard that two hundred were in Cincinnati from Old Wayne County. We were expecting to see them in camp; but afterward were told that they were afraid to come over the river for fear they might have an opportunity of doing thirty days' duty for their country. Patriotic men of Old Wayne, we will ever remember you, the "Squirrel Hunters," for the great services you rendered your country. We were not afraid to come for three years, and go through all the hardships that a soldier is subject to.<sup>21</sup>

Newly mustered regiments arrived daily and at all hours from Ohio and Indiana. Local citizen relief groups fed the arriving troops at the Fifth Street Market House.

Sergeant Benjamin Strong of the 101st Ohio Infantry remembered, "Arriving at Cincinnati in the morning the Regiment marched to the market house where they were provided with a bountiful breakfast, and were marched across the river and up a long hill to Covington Heights, where the Union Forces were...."<sup>22</sup> Wallace sent regiments across the river to Covington and Newport as quickly as possible to man the defenses. However, not all martial formalities were dispensed with. Captain J. B. Foraker of the 89th Ohio reminisced in a speech after the war:

In front of [the Burnet House] we were unceremoniously hauled up, knapsacks and all, to be reviewed by some of the great men of the land, among whom were Major General Lew Wallace and Governor Tod. We were unanimously pronounced the best, and the bravest and the finest-looking body of men that had yet left the State, as was Dan McCook's Fifty-second regiment, that crossed the river the day before and as was a regiment of "Squirrel Hunters," with shot guns, that crossed over the day following.<sup>23</sup>

Nearly all of the regiments were ill-equipped and armed with obsolete Belgian or Austrian muskets. The regimental surgeon of the 96th Ohio admitted that "...our guns would, in action, have been practically valueless."<sup>24</sup> While a private in the 104th Ohio remembered, "...I was more concerned in what...the Austrian musket might do to me. I probably would have fired on the enemy and permitted the recoil of the musket to land me in a new position out of enemy reach."<sup>25</sup> The same soldier in the 102nd Ohio who thought little of the Squirrel Hunters thought even less of his rifle, "We did not bear anything but our 'very fine Austrian muskets'—some of Fremont's damaged or refused guns that he bought for the United States. But few of them will explode a cap without being snapped a half dozen times."<sup>26</sup> Likewise, many of the units were partially uniformed and without tents, canteens, and other necessary supplies. A private in the 45th Ohio wrote to his father, "you said that i should tell you how far our camp was from Covington[.] it is two miles from Covington[;] you said you was coming to see me[,] I hope you will come[.] well father if you come i would like you for you to bring me a good pare of boots along with you[.]"<sup>27</sup> And an artillery officer in the 21st Indiana Battery wrote to his sister:

We have not received our tents. I don't know how soon we will—perhaps this week—maybe not for weeks—in the meantime we quarter as best we may. Some take the canvas of the caissons and make coverings therewith. Some find quarters in the quartermaster's room and others do as I did last night—spread their blankets beneath a tree and there rest with the stars in clear view above... Should the weather change, however, we wouldn't get along so pleasantly.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the urgent need for men, many regiments were delayed. Private Garrett Larew of the 86th Indiana, which was still in Indianapolis on September 5, wrote in his diary, "[We] Have marching orders for Cincinnati but we wont march worth a cent untill we get our uniforms and bounty and arms." Three days later he wrote:

We left Indianapolis and went to Cincinnati and stayed there until Monday and went to Covington, Ky., and got marching orders to march on the enemy. We are still waiting in line ready to start, in five minutes... If we go into battle we go in raw for we have not drilled any yet.<sup>29</sup>

Other newly organized regiments were also very green. Private Fernando Pomeroy of the 18th Michigan wrote in his diary on September 6, "The regiment exercise some in bayonet charge up a hill and have three men wounded by accident...."<sup>30</sup> While a man in the 52nd Ohio wrote, "We spent the afternoon [of the 5th] in what we would now call very awkward squad drill. Still it was all a matter of great moment to us. The great trouble was that it was like the 'blind leading the blind' the drill officers not knowing any more than the men they were drilling."<sup>31</sup>

As Heth's column neared, Wallace's problems increased. Nearly all parts of Kentucky were parched by one of the worst droughts in memory. Water had to be constantly hauled to the men in the lines, which were four miles south of Covington and Newport. The terrible heat and anticipation of an unknown number of enemy troops could have had untold adverse effects with so many new units and irregular civilian volunteers. It is to the highest credit of the officers and local relief groups that order was maintained.

Wallace had many of the local citizens organized into fatigue parties. Their tasks included digging rifle pits and felling trees as a hasty defensive measure to bolster the weak line. The laborers were working too slowly or not at all and demanding high wages. Though Cincinnati was notoriously known for anti-black sentiments, Wallace wanted to use the freedmen of the city to assist in the preparations. The Cincinnati police, who were acting as provost guards, arrested any black men found on the streets. They were herded at bayonet point into a hog pen on Plum Street across from St. Peter in Chains Cathedral. The black men had gathered bricks and blocks of wood to sit on in a shaded portion of the pen. Wallace was notified of the brutal treatment by William Homer, who had been placed in charge of the conscripting gangs by Mayor George Hatch. One particular incident was recalled by Peter Clark, the historian of the reorganized Black Brigade: "Coming into the yard, ... [Homer] ordered them all to rise, marched them to another part, then issued the order, 'Damn you, squat.' Turning to the guard, he added, 'Shoot the first one who rises.'"<sup>32</sup> Wallace assigned Judge William Dickson, an abolitionist who advocated the enlistment of blacks as soldiers, to reorganize the Black Brigade. Dickson placed the men into three battalions, complete with companies, officers, and colors. They were not armed, but this was the first time blacks had been officially enrolled and paid for military service by the Federal government.

The second incident involving the Black Brigade almost became a disaster by accident. On September 6, Colonel J. R. Taylor of the 50th Ohio ordered a nearby battery to open fire on a small detachment of the Brigade. The incident was not recorded in the 50th's regimental history, but Major Thomas Thoburn recorded it in his diary:

In the afternoon the long roll was beat. That implied that the enemy

was near at hand. We were ordered to fall in at once and we stood in line of battle for over an hour. Some amusing things happened in this connection. Colonel Taylor of the 50th was terribly excited, and galloped along the line ordering sick and everybody else into line, saying "Get a gun or if you have not got a gun, take a club," evidently thinking that the entire issue of the war would be decided there and then.

While we were standing in line of battle, this same man Taylor, saw quite a large squad of men coming down the hill on the opposite side of the [Licking] river. There was a battery to our right and rear on a hill. He told one of his orderlies to go with a message to the battery, which was delivered to the orderly in these words: "Give them a shot anyway, they don't wear the same kind of clothes we do." The party proved to be citizens of Cincinnati, who had been at work on the line of fortifications... A shot was fired, but the gunners were careful not to shoot near enough to hurt anyone. Some man wearing our "kind of clothes" galloped into camp saying, "Don't shoot, those men have been over there at work on the fortifications."<sup>33</sup>

Of course, the men in that detail were not as amused as Major Thoburn. The Black Brigade's regimental historian wrote, "...if the officers serving under Colonel J. R. Taylor, of the 50th Ohio, had not possessed more courage and prudence than their commander, serious consequences would have ensued." He added somewhat scathingly, "If Col. Taylor did not obtain one of Gov. Tod's squirrel-hunting medals, he should apply for one, and wear it, as a perpetual reminder that his prowess is terrible to squirrels only."<sup>34</sup>

Though many Cincinnatians complained, "This is a white man's war, and you damned niggers must keep out of it," most were relieved that they did not have to wield picks and shovels in the September heat on the dusty Kentucky hills.<sup>35</sup>

By September 6, elements of Heth's detachment had reached Walton, just 20 miles south of Cincinnati, and encamped at a place known locally as Snow's Pond. Confederate movements throughout the Commonwealth were stagnating. Smith seems to have lost his nerve as he made no serious moves toward Louisville and actually went on the defensive in Lexington and Frankfort. Though subordinate to Bragg, Smith ignored dispatches to withdraw from the central part of the state. Bragg envisioned a linking of their two forces, the defeat of Buell's army, and then a general move on Louisville and Cincinnati.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, Heth kept moving toward Cincinnati, thinking he was creating a suitable diversion for the remainder of Smith's force to take Louisville.

By September 10, tensions were mounting high in the Federal lines. Soldiers complained in their letters and diaries that the long roll was beat numerous times throughout the day and night, all ending as false alarms. One such event was humorously recalled in a speech after the war by a member of the 89th Ohio:

And who is here who has forgotten the gallant and daring manner in which our Colonel, in fullest uniform, seemed literally to court danger by recklessly exposing himself upon every dangerous occasion? And especially when, as we were expecting every moment to have Kirby

Smith, with his entire force, come down upon us "like a wolf on the fold," he rode proudly forth, even in front of the line, and finally, becoming over impatient by reason of the continued delay of the enemy's appearance, and being anxious to give them a warm reception when they did come, ordered us, in addition to the load already in our guns, to "Ram down another?"<sup>37</sup>

The next day, though, many men would get their first brief glimpse of the elephant.

At conservative estimates, the morning of September 11 found approximately 22,000 enlisted men, 2,000 militia, and 50,000 Squirrel Hunters, some 74,000 defenders all totaled, manning the strengthened defensive works with 15 heavy guns and an unknown number of field pieces.<sup>38</sup> A private in the 50th Ohio wrote to his brother, "All the hills are covered with troops and rifle pits. I cannot look in any direction without seeing soldiers and there is some guns planted on the points of the hills. I expect there are 50,000 troops on this side of the river."<sup>39</sup> Heth sent out skirmishers from various units toward Fort Mitchel in back of Covington, which was the key Union position. The 101st Ohio was the advance Federal regiment on the picket line in front of the fort. "Our line was fired on by their skirmishers, who were three to our one," wrote Private Lewis Day, "We returned the fire and rapidly fell back. It was our first sensation of being fired at, also of firing at any human being. None of us were struck, and I doubt if any of them were."<sup>40</sup> A sergeant in the 101st wrote to his parents:

After we had been here about two hours yesterday, we saw troops coming in double quick. It was Capt. Parson's Company [Co. E]. They had been out on picket. They had been fired upon and chased by rebels but no one [was] hurt. Lt. Col. Franz tried to get them to go back with him but they were too fatigued and he went back alone to reconnoitre and he got between two scouting rebel parties and they fired upon him, hitting his horse, [balls] passing through his coat sleeve and several other narrow escapes but he came back unhurt and perfectly cool, I think.<sup>41</sup>

The 102nd and 104th Ohio were the nearest regiments to the 101st Ohio. The 104th continued skirmishing with the Rebels throughout the day and part of the morning of September 12. Incidentally, the "battle" never amounted to anything more than picket firing. Private Nathaniel Gorgas of the 104th Ohio wrote to his father after the skirmishes on the 11th and 12th:

Pickets were stationed and were firing at intervals all day. There was one of Company A shot in the breast and was killed. The next day we were taken out and placed in a very dangerous position, they were in the woods and we were about 3 or 4 hundred yards from them sitting behind the fence where they had a fair chance at us. Shots were exchanged pretty freely for a while. Taylor shot twice and was preparing to shoot the third time when a [shot] took him through the left lung. He was taken to the hospital and the Surgeon thinks there is some chance for him to recover.

There was also two men shot in Company G, one in the knee and the other in the arm. We were taken away about ten O'clock for the purposes of shelling the woods, but the order was countermanded and we were taken back again....there was a train of about 40 ambulances to bring the crippled from Richmond, Kentucky, where we were pretty badly whipped when all firing ceased. ...our men went into the woods and searched it and found 4 dead and 2 wounded rebels and took sixteen prisoners.<sup>42</sup>

Heth began his withdrawal in the early morning hours of the 12th. The surgeon of the 4th Arkansas noted, "After menacing them for two days, we, in imitation of the Arabs of old, 'Folded our tents. And, silently, stole away.'"<sup>43</sup> Captain John W. Lavender, also of the 4th Arkansas, remembered the move on Cincinnati with more humor:

We marched from Place to Place over the middle Part of Ky. until we arrived near Covington oposite Cincinnati where we drove in their Pickets around Covington, gave them a good scare, stayed there two or three days, got the Cincinnati papers Every day, captured two or three large milk Daries. The owners give us all the milk to keep us from doing any Damage. So they Sustained no loss only what milk the cows gave while we were there. It was certainly a treat.<sup>44</sup>

Smith had summoned Heth to return to Lexington to wait for Bragg, who finally began to march into Kentucky before Buell got between their two armies. Unbeknown to many in the South, it seemed that Cincinnati would be taken. Sarah Morgan wrote in her diary on September 10: "Cincinnati (at last accounts) lay at our mercy. From Covington, Smith had sent over a demand for its surrender in two hours. Would it not be glorious to avenge New Orleans by such a blow?"<sup>45</sup> For New Orleans to be avenged, however, it would have to be somewhere other than Cincinnati.

For several days after the threat, fears still ran high in and among the city's defenses. Regiments and irregulars continued to pour into the city, while work on the fortifications continued for weeks. Wallace sent a detachment of the 10th Kentucky cavalry cautiously toward Walton to follow the Rebels' withdrawal as he awaited a reply from Wright authorizing his request to actively pursue Heth. The Federal cavalry, numbering 53 men, skirmished with 101 enemy pickets near Florence on September 17. The Federals lost one man killed, one wounded; while the Confederates lost five killed and wounded, and, "a rebel citizen was killed."<sup>46</sup> Recognizing that Louisville would most likely be the next target, Wright began to send units there. Bragg entered Glasgow on the 14th and issued a proclamation to the citizens of Kentucky asking them to welcome his men as restorers of liberty. Buell followed Bragg on a parallel course and entered Bowling Green the same day. To Bragg's discredit he ultimately allowed Buell to reach Louisville. By September 22, Louisville was just as secure from Rebel forces as Cincinnati. Bragg's situation was very serious. Smith, still believing himself to be an independent commander, disregarded Bragg's order to evacuate Lexington and meet him with supplies in

Bardstown.

Likewise the Federals had their problems. In Washington, Lincoln became disenchanted with Buell and ordered Halleck to replace him with General George Thomas. On the other hand, Buell was mistakenly seen by many as the savior of Louisville and Cincinnati. Halleck sent an aide with Lincoln's order, but then changed his mind and attempted to intercept it. Buell received the order, but Thomas refused the command and prevented an embarrassing situation.

No one in Cincinnati considered Buell a hero. Lew Wallace was hailed by all as the city's savior. Unceremoniously, Wallace was relieved of command once again by Wright on September 18, and ordered to Columbus, Ohio, to organize paroled Federal soldiers at Camp Chase for putting down the Sioux uprising in Minnesota.<sup>47</sup> Eventually he received the official thanks of the city council and the Ohio Legislature. Before leaving he issued this proclamation:

For the present, at least, the enemy has fallen back, and your cities are safe. It is time for acknowledgments. I beg leave to make you mine. When I assumed command there was nothing to defend you with, except a few half-finished works and some dismounted guns; yet I was confident. The energies of a great city are boundless; they have only to be aroused, united, and directed. You were appealed to. The answer will never be forgotten. Paris may have seen something like it in her revolutionary days, but the cities of America never did. Be proud that you have given them an example so splendid. The most commercial of people, you submitted to a total suspension of business, and without a murmur adopted as my principle, "Citizens for labor, soldiers for battle." In coming times, strangers, viewing the works on the hills of Newport and Covington, will ask, "Who built these entrenchments?" You will answer, "We built them." If they ask, "Who guarded them?" you can reply, "We helped in thousands." If they inquire the result, your answer will be, "The enemy came and looked at them, and stole away in the night." You have won much honor; keep you organizations ready to win more. Hereafter be always prepared to defend yourselves.<sup>46</sup>

After the overwhelmingly successful defense of Cincinnati, the entire Kentucky campaign was doomed to fail. Just under a month after Heth retreated, Buell and Bragg's forces clashed at Perryville on October 8. Although Bragg won the day, he was forced to leave the field and consequently the entire state. Kentuckians, if they did have Southern leanings, certainly did not rise up as he had expected. Buell was subsequently relieved of command, replaced by Thomas, summarily court-martialled for his conduct during the Kentucky campaign, and acquitted. Ironically, Wallace would serve on the military board hearing his case. For a few hours, Kentucky had a token Rebel governor, while the only thing that was firmly established for the glorious Southern cause was several hundred graves.

## Endnotes

1. Author unknown. Quoted in, Alf Burnett, *Humorous, Pathetic, and Descriptive Incidents of the War* (Cincinnati, 1864), 185-186.
2. *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, August 30, 1862, 2.
3. *Ibid.*, 2.
4. Surprisingly, modern accounts of the battle differ only slightly in the actual casualties. These figures were taken from Henry Stone, "The Operations of General Buell in Kentucky and Tennessee in 1862," *Campaigns in Kentucky and Tennessee*, Vol. VII, Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts (Boston, 1908), 267; and James R. Street, Jr., *The Struggle for Tennessee: Tupelo to Stones River* (Alexandria, Virginia, 1985), 48. Interestingly, Henry Heth thought of the battle, "I have always considered the battle of Richmond, Ky., the most complete victory of the war.", James L. Robertson, editor, *The Memoirs of Henry Heth*, (Westport, Connecticut, n.d.), 165.
5. Elisha B. Treadway, Co. A, 3rd (later 7th) Kentucky Volunteers, U. S., unpublished letter dated, "Lexington, September 1st, 1862," in the Treadway family collection. Courtesy of the transcriber, James Currens, Lexington and the Kentucky Military History Museum, Frankfort, Kentucky.
6. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. XVI, Part II (Washington, 1886), 470. Hereafter cited only as *O.R.*
7. *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, September 2, 1862, 2.
8. The whole situation is still rather sketchy and very confusing. See Robert E. and Katharine M. Morsberger, *Lew Wallace: Militant Romantic*, (New York, 1980), 115-117; Irving McKee, "*Ben-Hur*" *Wallace: The Life of General Lew Wallace*, (Berkeley, 1947), 58-59; Lew Wallace, *An Autobiography*, (New York, 1906), 603-606; T. Bush Read, "The Siege of Cincinnati," *Atlantic Monthly* 11:64(February 1863): 229-234. I cannot determine when Wallace left for Cincinnati, but Read claims that he was in Lexington as the battle of Richmond was being fought.
9. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XVI, Part II, 473. For the condition of the defensive works see the reports of Colonel Charles Whittlesey and Major James Simpson in the same, 664-675. Located in the National Archives Cartographic and Architectural Branch are the complete engineer's drawings of each battery and fort, plus topographical maps showing the entire defensive line. See also Endnote 48.

10. Wallace's proclamation appears in many period accounts including the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, September 2, 1862, 2. However, the motto "Citizens for the labor; Soldiers for the Battle" is often seen in contemporary and secondary sources as "Citizens for labor; Soldiers for Battle." I am quoting Wallace's copy of his proclamation in the Lew Wallace Collection, W. H. Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, as I believe the former is as he originally intended. See also, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. LII, Part 1, 277-279.
11. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XVI, Part II, 475-476.
12. Quoted in Frank Moore, *Women of the War; Their Heroism and Self-Sacrifice*, (Hartford, Connecticut, 1867), 80-81.
13. Thomas C. Honnell, Co. C, 99th O.V.I., unpublished letter dated, "Camp Butler Ky Sept. 4th 1862," in the collection of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.
14. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XVI, Part II, 476-477.
15. Morrison, 166.
16. Figures for Confederate strength in Heth's detachment vary. His own memoirs place the figure at 6,000 (*Ibid.*, 166). Most sources now agree that his total strength was somewhere between 7-8,000. See Geoffrey R. Walden, "Panic on the Ohio! Confederates March on Cincinnati, September 1862" *Blue & Gray Magazine* (May 1986), 9.
17. The sixteen steamers and their armaments included, *Gun-boat No. 1*, three 12-pounders; *New Era*, one 12-pounder; *Belfast*, one 12-pounder; *R. B. Hamilton*, one 12-pounder; *Allen Collyer*, one 12-pounder; *Emma Duncan*, one 12-pounder; *New York*, one 12-pounder; *Izetta*, one 32-pounder; *Argyle*, one 32-pounder; *J. A. Gurley*, two 12-pounders; *Cottage*, two 6-pounders; *W. A. Healey*, one 12-pounder; *Ida May*, one 12-pounder; *Florence*, one 6-pounder; *Glide*, one 12-pounder; and *Sunnyside*, flagship. The last four boats were Federal mail packets. See *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 52, Part I, 281-282. On the *Indianola*, see *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Volume 23 (Washington, 1910), 336-337, 345, 348 and Series II, Parts 1-4, 107; *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. III (Washington, 1968), 436-437; and Paul H. Silverstone, *Warships of the Civil War Navies* (Annapolis, 1989), 155.
18. Copy of Special Orders No. 47 dated September 4, 1862. Not in the *O.R.*, but in the Lew Wallace Collection, W. H. Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. The pontoon bridge across the Ohio River

was amazingly completed in thirty hours. A smaller pontoon bridge was also constructed over the Licking River connecting the defensive line between Kenton and Campbell Counties. It is uncertain when and by whom this bridge was built.

19. Quoted in N. E. Jones, *The Squirrel Hunters of Ohio or Glimpses of Pioneer Life* (Cincinnati, 1898), 337.
20. It will never be known exactly how many Squirrel Hunters responded to Governor Tod's call. Many years after the war, the Ohio Legislature voted to pay each man that could be found \$13 (one month's pay for enlisted men) from the Squirrel Hunter's muster rolls. Additionally, those that were found received a lithographed discharge notice (of which nine are in the collection of the Cincinnati Historical Society and one in the collection of the author) and an official discharge with the proper Ohio state seal (one is in the Cincinnati Historical Society). Many men could not be found and it is almost certain that many never signed the official muster rolls. Most agree that their numbers were anywhere from 50-60,000. Some sources, however, place their number at 75,000. This figure, in my opinion, is grossly exaggerated. Their services were indeed appreciated by most when needed, but after the threat Brigadier General A. J. Smith wrote to Wallace on September 17, "Cannot I get rid of the Squirrel Hunters? They are under no control." *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. XVI, Part II, 524.
21. Schmutz, George S., *History of the 102nd Regiment, O.V.I.* (Wooster, Ohio, 1907), 134. Although Schmutz never saw the men from Wayne County, his commentary is a valuable record of the animosities held by some volunteers against men who opted to remain civilians.
22. Benjamin Thomas Strong, *Three Years or During the War* (Olathe, Kansas, 1913), 9.
23. Joseph Benson Foraker, *Speech of Captain J. B. Foraker at the First Reunion of the Eighty-Ninth Regiment, O.V.I., Fair Grounds, Hillsboro, Ohio, September 20th, 1869* (Cincinnati, 1910), 3-4.
24. J. T. Woods, *Services of the Ninety-Sixth Ohio Volunteers* (Toledo, 1874), 17.
25. J. W. Gaskill, *Footprints Through Dixie: Everyday Life of the Man Under a Musket on the Firing Line and in the Trenches, 1862-1865* (Alliance, Ohio, 1919), 28. The inexperience of the men is readily apparent and one can only wonder what may have happened if Heth had made a concerted push on the defenses. William H. Ballentine, a private in Co. G, 96th Ohio, wrote in his diary well after the threat on October 6, 1862, "I have drawn 43 ball cartridges in all and have shot 3. 1 at random and 2 at target[,] also drew 10 blanks[,] shot

- 3 by co.[.] div.[.] bat. fired my gun not going I gave the rest away[.]”, unpublished diary in the collection of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.
26. Schmutz, 132.
  27. Francis M. Field, Co. H, 45th Ohio O.V.I, unpublished letter dated, “September the 27 1862,” in the collection of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.
  28. A. Piatt Andrew, III, *Some Civil War Letters of A. Piatt Andrew*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1925), 21.
  29. Civil War Diary of Garrett Larew, Co. K, 86th Indiana Regiment, August 24, 1862–July 3, 1865, 2. Copy of a typed ms loaned by Dr. Karl G. Larew of Towson State University, Towson, Maryland, October 1976, in the collection of the W. H. Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. This quote is as it appears in the diary without correction.
  30. Randolph C. Downes, editor, “The Civil War Diary of Fernando E. Pomeroy,” *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 19(1947): 133.
  31. Lyle Thoburn, editor, *My Experiences During the Civil War By Major Thomas C. Thoburn* (Cleveland, 1963), 3.
  32. Peter H. Clark, *The Black Brigade of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1864), 8. This particular volume was reprinted by the Arno Press (New York, 1969).
  33. Thoburn, 3-4..
  34. Clark, 10.
  35. *Ibid.*, 5. It is true that General Benjamin Butler in orders dated August 24, 1862, called for the employment of black workers known as “Contrabands” to work at Fortress Monroe, but they were not organized into any military units. Some historians, though, consider this the first time that blacks were officially employed by the Federal government.
  36. See Grady McWhiney, “Controversy in Kentucky: Braxton Bragg’s Campaign of 1862” *Civil War History* (March 1960). This is still an excellent account of the tensions between Bragg and Smith.
  37. Foraker, 4.
  38. Again, it is very difficult to count the actual number of men present in the defenses. I am slightly more conservative than most. See Walden, 13, who

places the total strength at an incredible 85,000.

39. Joseph Orville Jackson, ed., *"Some of the Boys...": The Civil War Letters of Isaac Jackson, 1862-1865* (Carbondale, Illinois, 1960), 8. Letter dated, "Camp, Sept. 10, 1862."
40. Lewis W. Day, *Story of the One Hundred and First Ohio Infantry* (Cleveland, 1894), 32.
41. Watson Butler, ed., *Letters Home [by] Jay Caldwell Butler, Captain, 101st Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (privately printed, 1930), 3-4. Butler was later Captain of Co. B in the 101st Ohio and mentions in the same letter dated, "Camp Mitchell, September 10th, 1862," that he saw several Rebel casualties and prisoners, "They poisoned one and wounded two of ours. One of the wounded would not be carried off until he had loaded up and fired again. He will have to have his leg taken off. When he saw his Capt. he said 'Captain, I have done my duty.'"
42. Nathaniel Gorgas, Co. B., 104th O.V.I., unpublished letter dated, "Friday September the 12th 1862," in the collection of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus. Various other regimental histories from units which were at Fort Mitchel during the skirmishes acknowledge that the 104th lost one man killed, but the number of wounded varies from one to five. The local papers tell of Confederate casualties and go so far as to list the names of four men who were captured from the 15th Arkansas. This is unconfirmed as the 15th Arkansas has no known regimental history and the unit's records are sparse. One man from the 4th Arkansas died on September 13, and was buried somewhere south of Covington. Today, Linden Grove Cemetery, in Covington, has nine Confederate graves, eight of which were transferred after the war. Among them are W. A. Parker, 10th Texas Dismounted Cavalry [Churchill's Division, 1st Brigade], who died while on the march in Boone County, September 20, 1862; Timothy Booth, of New Orleans [no date]; Thomas W. Leaman of the 1st Arkansas Regiment [Churchill's Division, 2nd Brigade], died May 28, 1892; E. M. Mitchell, of the 1st Arkansas Regiment, died May 19, 1862. The gravestones are virtually illegible and the source for the dates and regiments was derived from "Confederate Graves in Kentucky, Contributed by Miss A. N. Hall, Covington, Ky." *Confederate Veteran*, XXXVII (1929), 349.
43. Washington Lafayette Gammage, *The Camp, the Bivouac, and the Battlefield: Being a History of the Fourth Arkansas Regiment...* (Selma, Alabama, 1864), 47.
44. James I. Robertson, editor, *A Confederate Girl's Diary* (Bloomington, 1960), 221.

45. Ted R. Worley, ed., *The War Memoirs of Captain John W. Lavender, C. S. A.* (Pine Bluff, Arkansas, 1956), 29. This volume is sometimes seen as *They Never Came Back: The Story of Co. F. Fourth Arks. Infantry, C. S. A., (Originally Known As The Montgomery Hunters), As Told By Their Commanding Officer, Capt. John W. Lavender, C. S. A.*
46. *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. LII, Part 1, 282-283.
47. *Ibid.*, 283.
48. Quoted in T. Bush Read, "The Siege of Cincinnati." Also, Robert E. Morsberger, "The Savior of Cincinnati" *Civil War Times Illustrated* (November 1972), 38. Wallace's farewell proclamation also appears in the Cincinnati and Covington newspapers.

A letter was found in Wallace's copy of Charles Whittlesey's *War Memoranda*, when it was deposited in the W. H. Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. Wallace was thanking Whittlesey for the book and correcting him on a few points about the threat. He wrote:

The true history is as follows.

Bragg's invasion of Kentucky found me on the shelf, where I had been sent in punishment for the misunderstanding of my movements the morning after the battle of Shiloh. I had begged everybody, Grant, Stanton and others to be sent to duty, but without avail.

The problem was how to defend Cincinnati. Buell had all the troops with him. There was not a company left at Covington or Newport—not even a post guard. You had constructed fortifications covering the bend in which those two cities lay, but there was an insufficiency of guns, and the few there were were dismounted. Had they been mounted, there was no ammunition with which to serve them. I counselled with my staff. They advised me not to attempt to save the city; they argued there was nothing to save it with, and that I was not bound by Gen. Wright's request. The puzzle did not look so bad to me. Cincinnati was a great city—why not make it save itself? There were 40,000, possibly 50,000 able bodied men in it... Mr. Hatch was then Mayor. I requested him to call and see me at the Burnet House. He was reported as of southern proclivities. However that may have been, he complied with my request.

Two days after [the proclamation] 15,000 men crossed the river and reported to civil engineers appointed to man lines, repair the forts, and construct rifle pits and breastworks. This ensued for four days conservatively. Meantime Gov. Todd sheeted his proclamation through the State. With such arms as they had, shot-guns, squirrel rifles, and obsolete muskets, the people poured into the city, and were organized as rapidly as possible. It became a serious question what to do with them. The morning report of the sixth day showed 72,000 men at disposition. Some companies were sent to the different crossings of the river; some were put on the flotilla of sixteen steamboats which I took into service; the

great body, however, were under arms as regiments or at work with spades and picks. The city fed them; from her store houses the city furnished everything for labor; one great foundryman turned over to me a lot of brass twelve-pounders; amongst the citizens I found not many ready hands for everything, but brains equally ready.

This letter is dated April 6, 1884, and apparently was never sent. I have included it for several reasons. First, the opening paragraph shows just how bitter Wallace was for the criticism he received after Shiloh. This letter also dispels the myth that the Squirrel Hunters were all manning the defenses. Apparently Wallace recognized that because of their "irregular" status, they could not be relied on as efficient and effective soldiers had Heth pressed an attack. An undated, anonymous letter in the Wallace Collection in the Indiana Historical Society confirms my supposition that the majority of the Squirrel Hunters were above and below Cincinnati guarding various crossing points on the river. The letter was written as an appeal from the "commander" of a detachment of Squirrel Hunters to get his men paid for their service. Several of their camps are mentioned and a short muster roll that does not match the official Squirrel Hunter's muster role is included, thus supporting another supposition that not all of the Squirrel Hunters were officially enrolled.

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