Squirrel hunters entertained by the people of Cincinnati in the Fifth Street Market House, September 6, 1862.
"All men report to your voting precincts immediately; your city is in danger of being attacked; you must help defend it." Cincinnati under attack. Preposterous!

As the centennial year of the Civil War approaches, it is appropriate to recall the one episode in Cincinnati's own war history that affected the city and its citizens more than any other.

It was just under one hundred years ago in September 1862 that Cincinnati prepared for a Confederate raid; the city was actually under martial law; all able-bodied citizens were summoned to its defense.

During the summer of 1862 the Confederacy approached its high-water mark. Jefferson Davis' favorite, the Southern General Braxton Bragg, was at the top of his form. Starting in Mississippi, Bragg, in command of Confederate forces in the West, headed his army North and East, through Tennessee. Upsetting all Federal strategic plans, he by-passed Don Carlos Buell, the Union commander in Chattanooga, and headed straight for the Ohio River.

While this was going on — Buell back-tracking as fast as he could to catch up with Bragg — General Robert E. Lee in Virginia was devoting himself to suppressing the Union General John Pope, whom President Lincoln had appointed in July 1862 to succeed the popular but unsuccessful George McClellan as Commander of the Northern Army of the Potomac.
In a characteristic movement, Lee divided his army to confuse Pope, and then reunited his forces at Manassas Junction on the familiar ground overlooking the old Bull Run Battlefield. There, for two days at the end of August, Pope never quite knew what hit him. The Confederate, General Longstreet, struck him from one side, Stonewall Jackson from the other. A good part of Pope's army was broken and driven north toward Washington in a state of confusion.

Now Virginia was lost, also most of Tennessee, and neutral Kentucky was fast being occupied. A Confederate Army loose on United States soil, threatening the Capital, would place the Richmond government in an advantageous position to bid for European recognition and sue for an honorable peace.

Union fortunes were at a low ebb. Confidence in the ability of the Union generals and the Republican administration was openly lacking. There were considerable Cincinnatians of the rival Democratic political party who felt this way. Some even believed it unwise to prosecute the war further.

Local newspapers were outspoken in their varying attitudes. A couple weeks earlier, on August 9, the Enquirer, then a Democratic daily, critical toward the Administration, editorialized: "The war which has as yet made no progress does not exhibit the full measure of the crimes for which Mr. Lincoln stands indicted. If no progress has been made toward extinguishing the Rebellion, to say nothing of future loss, there is a vast sum already standing against him in the account of 200,000 men and two hundred millions of dollars. . . ."

The next day the Cincinnati Commercial, nominally a Republican paper, averred: "The question in the beginning was, shall rebellion be suppressed by force or shall it not? — Upon this power the Union was divided — the President is a doomed man. The fire is kindled and the poker is heating that is to drive him out of his seat. . . ."

On the other hand, the Cincinnati Gazette, a loyal Republican paper, accused the Enquirer of focusing undue attention on the Negro question. "By what mental process can anyone convince himself that a government that is exerting its power to put down rebellion is fighting for the Negro?" the Gazette queried.

While the "hot-stove" war among the Cincinnati newspapers was going on, Braxton Bragg, usually long on plans but short on
action, was in Kentucky thinking of the future. On the 9th of August he felt that a two-pronged movement, one into the heart of the Bluegrass, and one toward Louisville, should be attempted. He wished to give Kentuckians an opportunity to rally to the Confederate cause and was openly making plans to inaugurate a Confederate governor in Frankfort.

To spearhead the march into Central Kentucky, he sent General Edmund Kirby Smith with 12,000 troops, many of them veterans of Shiloh, forward to capture Lexington. Bragg himself started toward Louisville and Buell.

Smith moved from the barren, hostile war-torn country of Eastern Tennessee into the heart of Kentucky, the Bluegrass region, teeming with supplies. Little Federal opposition encountered him until August 29 at Richmond, Kentucky, when he met up with 7,000 Union troops, of the recently organized Department of the Ohio,\(^1\) field-commanded by Brigadier General Mohlon Manson.

These Federal troops were greenhorns mostly, newly recruited volunteers from Ohio and Indiana, with several brigades of loyal Kentuckians and Tennesseans. From his headquarters in Lexington, Manson’s superior, Major General William Nelson, advised Manson to retreat. He did not feel his troops were ready, since they were, for the most part, men of but ten to fifteen days service. Some of them had never had a battalion drill or even knew what a line of battle was. Somehow Manson did not receive Nelson’s advice until after Kirby Smith had attacked.

On Saturday, August 30, General Nelson, unaware that a battle was going on, rode out from Lexington to superintend the Union withdrawal from Richmond. Near Richmond, he found the Federal forces in a disorganized retreat. It was mid-afternoon. General Manson reported for instructions; Nelson was furious with him for disobeying orders. Poor Manson protested he had not received the orders in time. It was just another instance of the kind of loose Union chain of command that went on all through the war.

On the other hand, Kirby Smith, in complete control of the officers under his command, and with night coming on, ordered a final attack. He completely overwhelmed his enemy. Manson

\(^1\)The department of the Ohio was organized August 19, 1862, under General Horatio Wright, with headquarters at Louisville.
was wounded and captured. Nelson also was wounded and captured, but later escaped. It was a humiliating defeat for the Federals and a complete Confederate victory. The Union side suffered 206 killed, 844 wounded, and 4303 captured or missing. The Confederates lost but 78 and in addition to the almost four thousand prisoners, also captured 20,000 stands of arms.

The news of the debacle at Richmond distressed Cincinnati and the surrounding area of Southern Ohio and Indiana. At this stage of the war there was no regularly organized Medical Department following the troops into action. The Union troops at Richmond were raised mostly by the governments of Ohio and Indiana; after the battle each state tried to care for its own wounded. The Governor of Indiana, Oliver P. Morton, himself, left Indianapolis on Sunday, August 31, on a train bound for Richmond with surgeons, nurses, and hospital supplies to aid the Indiana wounded. In Cincinnati, the newly organized Sanitary Commission (the forerunner of the Medical Department) sent twenty boxes of supplies by Adams Express.

Now flushed with success, Kirby Smith moved confidently on toward Lexington. Scattered bands of Federals offered slight resistance. On September 2 he arrived at the city itself, where the mayor surrendered the town. The victorious General made a dramatic entrance into the city, accompanied by a local favorite son, Col. John H. Morgan, the same Morgan who was himself to throw quite a scare into Cincinnati a year later.

The Confederate star was rising; further opportunities were just around the corner. The Rebels believed they were among friends. The ladies of Lexington presented Smith with a flag and in accepting it he proclaimed: "The Army of the Confederate States has entered your territory under my command. Let no one make you believe we came as invaders — to coerce your will. Far from it. The principle we maintain is that government derives its just power from the consent of the governed. Kentuckians: we come not as invaders, but as liberators. We come in the spirit of your resolutions of 1798. We call upon you to take up arms and join with us in hurling back the Northern hordes who would deprive us of our liberty."

On the Northern side of the Ohio River, in Cincinnati, where the shocking news of the Battle of Richmond was reported in the daily press, many citizens, already uneasy about the recent
Confederate advances, became alarmed. Rumors began to fly. General Smith was reported on the march to raid and burn the city. The roads to the city were open; Federal opposition to Confederate advances was ineffective. In fact, a meeting was held on Sunday, September 1, at the Burnet House to discuss surrender versus pillage and destruction. Mayor Hatch, a Democrat, was even suspected of desiring to find a good pretext to surrender the city.

There was, indeed, cause for alarm. Kirby Smith was now thinking of moving on to Cincinnati. The city actually was endangered. Major General Horatio Wright, commander of the Department of the Ohio, and responsible for Cincinnati’s safety, acted fast. From his headquarters in Louisville he telegraphed Major General Lew Wallace (later of “Ben Hur” fame), on September 1, to fall back to Cincinnati and to assume command of Cincinnati, Covington and Newport. At the time, Wallace was in Paris, Kentucky, with Federal troops there, but he left immediately and was in Cincinnati in a matter of a few hours. He took up headquarters at the Burnet House.

Wallace was at that time out of favor with the Union high command, because of poor leadership at Shiloh, and was therefore most anxious to redeem himself. He informed Major Hatch of the precariousness of Cincinnati’s position, and that, in the best interests of all, the city should be placed under martial law. Hatch agreed — and so did City Council.

Next day, Monday, September 2, the following proclamation appeared in all the papers:

“"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 and self-preservation call them to the labor, and it must be performed equally by all classes.

I. All business must be suspended at nine o’clock today. Every business house must be closed.

II. Under direction of their Mayor, the citizens must, within an hour after the suspension of business (10 A.M.) assemble in their convenient public places ready for orders. As soon as possible, they will then be assigned their work. This labor ought to
be that of love, and the undersigned trusts and believes it will be — any how 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.

III. The ferry boats will cease plying the river after 4 A.M. until further notice. Martial law is hereby proclaimed in the three cities, but until they can be relieved by the Military, the injunction of this proclamation will be executed by the Police.”

Lew Wallace
Major General, Commanding.

He might not have been the most successful of military men, heretofore, but certainly Wallace took a back seat to no one in eloquently expressing himself — at a time when eloquent expressions were the order of the day.

The same morning, City Council met and passed a resolution of confidence in Generals Nelson and Wallace and also appointed a committee of three to confer with the military authority on the subject of proper means of defense.

And from the Mayor’s office came this order: “In accordance with a resolution passed by the City Council2 of the City of Cincinnati on the first instant, I hereby request that all business of every kind and character be suspended at 9 A.M. this day and that all persons, employers and employees assemble in their respective wards at the usual place of voting and then and there organize themselves in such a manner as may be thought best for the defense of the city. Every man, of every age, be he citizen or alien, who lives under the protection of our laws is expected to take part in the organization.”

George Hatch, Mayor.

The situation can best be described in the language of the times. In a lead editorial “TO ARMS,” on September 2, the Gazette declared: “The time for playing war has passed. The enemy is now rapidly approaching our doors. Kentucky has been successfully invaded, and Cincinnati is now, for the first time since the commencement of the rebellion, seriously threatened . . . .

The great duty of the people now is to unite and rise like one man,

2The Council: Hatch, George Pugh, Joshua Bates, T. J. Gallagher, Miles Greenwood, J. W. Hartwell, Peter Gibson, and J. B. Stallo.
and prepare to resist the approaching foe — Kirby Smith is this morning within one hundred miles of Cincinnati, with a force, if not formidable itself, is at least a nucleus around which a large army may be formed. He will find thousands of sympathizers in Kentucky. Let us prepare then to resist an army of 100,000 men — The first duty is for every man who has a gun to put it in order for service. In this way a very powerful auxiliary to the regular service may be rendered available in case of necessity. In this line we may rely upon much assistance from the country (surrounding area) . . . .

"There are in Hamilton County 50,000 men capable of bearing arms. Not one should be exempt — There is no time for business — while the city is threatened. All efforts in the direction of money-making must be suspended."

And from Governor Tod of Ohio on September 2 came this message. "To the loyal people of the River Counties: Our Southern border is threatened with invasion. I have therefore to recommend that all loyal men of your counties form themselves into companies and regiments to beat back the enemy . . . . Gather up all the arms in the country and furnish yourselves . . . The service will be of but a few days duration. The soil of Ohio must not be invaded by the enemies of our glorious government."

David Tod, Gov.

The response to the call to arms was remarkable. Public action was immediate. There was no thought anymore of dissatisfaction at the way the war was being conducted. Cincinnati and Ohio were being threatened; there was no assurance the Army could prevent Smith's advance; recently it had been notably unsuccessful. "Well, let's face it, we will defend ourselves," was the attitude. The ancient law of self-preservation quickly asserted itself.

As to manpower, there were only three companies of regulars in Cincinnati at the time. Most of the men in the numerous formal military organizations, in existence in the city before the war, were now a part of the regular army away at various fronts. But across the river at Newport Barracks there were 400 men of independent companies not yet enlisted into active Union service. In addition, there were still remaining in town three independent companies, one of these the well-known Guthrie Grays. These
Fortification of Cincinnati, from Mount Adams, September, 1862.
groups formed the nucleus of the defense force, and the meeting halls of the independent companies served usefully as rallying centers in the days to come.

The 99th Ohio Regiment and the 45th Ohio were both down on Lexington Pike, retreating to Covington to assist in the defense. Finally, there was the Cincinnati police force on hand to enforce the proclamation.

And now the civilian population rose up to defend itself. In the first two days over 14,000 volunteered. Wallace was amazed. Said he, in his autobiography, "I doubt if any people were ever taken off their feet like those of the three cities, especially Cincinnati.... The war had been a horror to them, read of as so distant it could not be brought to their doors. Now suddenly, here it was, and with demands that did not stop with a mere appropriation of their time and a blockade of their business — it actually ordered them to go to work in unaccustomed ways or take arms and be ready to fight... Let one try to imagine the consternation of the citizen about to open his shop and being tapped on the shoulder by a policeman and told all business was suspended. And what of consolation was there when, to his angry insistence why, he was informed the enemy was coming. What enemy? The Rebels. Dwelling in a land of peace and plenty he had been accustomed to cream for his coffee, and hot rolls for breakfast; now the milkman was shut out and the baker shut in. Nor was it contributive to good humor if he were a travelling man to hear at the station, 'No train out today. Everybody is held up.' 'Everybody?' 'Yes, even the bridegroom and the undertaker — all alike.'...

And this appeared in the Gazette on Tuesday, September 3: "The most commendable spirit was displayed by the citizens generally in their disposition to carry out faithfully the orders issued by General Wallace and Mayor Hatch for the defense of the city against the Rebel horde. Business of all kinds was totally suspended... thousands thronged to the wards and enrolled their names in different military organizations... A dogged determination to defend the city against attack was everywhere manifested. All felt that the "Queen City of the West" must not surrender... Our means of defense are great... with an infinitely less force General Jackson defended New Orleans against a powerful British regular army..."
On Wednesday, the 4th, General Wright came to Cincinnati and met with Wallace. They planned to defend the city from the hills back of Covington and Newport, while gunboats would patrol the Ohio above and below. The river half encircled Newport and Covington; rifle pits and breastworks were to be dug across the back of the huge bend. Out on the Lexington Pike (Dixie Highway) crowning the long hill beyond Covington, there stood a half finished fort, begun by Brig. General O. M. Mitchell in June 1862, and named after him. Wallace chose this spot as a starting point and instructed civil engineers to lay out defense lines.

In the event the invaders were able to break through the defense lines and actually penetrate to the river, cannons were placed on Price's Hill, below the city, and on Mt. Adams and Butcher's Hill above. Then there were the gunboats patrolling the river.

The news from Kentucky continued ominous for Cincinnati. The Daily Times reported on September 3: "Kentucky is virtually in possession of the Rebels. It was known yesterday that the national forces at Cynthiana had fallen back. The response of our people has been noble . . . a day or two more and the Rebels may come if they desire it . . . The news from Washington looks bad again; Jackson in Pope's rear . . . a few thousand Squirrel hunters from the country will be acceptable at this time . . . the great desire of the Secesh army is to be led to Cincinnati as they imagine they will have a nice time among the jewellers."

On Thursday, the 5th, Wallace reviewed the troops in the 8th Street Park. After the oath of allegiance was taken, those men without their own rifles were issued old Springfields. At the 5th and 6th Street markets, canteens, staffed by women, were organized. There the men received food and blankets, if in need of same; but most of the volunteers brought along their own gear.

Ferry boats were requisitioned to carry the troops across the river. Some 5,000 men were thus transported on the 4th and 5th,
supplied with plows, picks, shovels and scrapers requisitioned from hardware stores.4

But there was no bridge across the Ohio at the time; the Suspension Bridge had been begun; however, only its piers were actually finished. Wallace asked the Mayor to appoint the three foremost builders in the city to meet him Thursday evening to discuss building a pontoon bridge. Cooperation between the civil and the military was notable, but none of the builders knew what a pontoon bridge was like.

It was a Cincinnati architect, Wesley Cameron, who came forward and told Wallace that if he were furnished a steamboat, he would build such a bridge in 48 hours. Wallace was astonished; where would Cameron procure boats? (A pontoon bridge at Paducah, Kentucky, under regular engineers took three months to build.) “Coal barges lying near the mouth of the Licking River will do,” coolly replied Cameron. Wallace agreed to the plan.

The project was begun the next morning, just above where the Suspension Bridge now stands. Thirty hours later the enormous structure was complete. It was a near miracle. The famous pontoon bridge was wide enough for two army wagons to pass each other. Cameron was the first hero in the defense of Cincinnati.

And now the volunteers began to come pouring in from outlying communities of Hamilton County and other neighboring Ohio counties. In addition, Gov. Morton in Indiana also answered the call. His policy previously was to defend Indiana in Kentucky;
Union volunteers crossing from Cincinnati to Covington on a pontoon bridge of coal barges, September 6, 1862.
Ohio was not his responsibility. But he clearly saw the emergency and rose to it. He had established an arsenal in Indianapolis; from it, he sent trainloads of ordnance to Cincinnati. Moreover, fellow Indianans along the Ohio border came over by the thousands.

Five days after the proclamation of martial law, the morning reports issued to General Wallace showed 72,000 men were present for the defense of Cincinnati and its neighboring cities. An astonishing number. Of these fully 60,000 were “irregulars.”

The irregulars were in the most part from Ohio. They came into the city armed with pistols, shot-guns, sporting rifles—all the arms the unwarlike citizen was used to. They were a backwoods lot, many in coonskin caps and homespun. Arriving by rail, singly and in small groups, with now and then a home-guard company, all at their own expense, they came into town just itching for a fight.

A Cincinnati army paymaster, Major Malcolm McDowell, called them the “Squirrel Hunters.” And the name stuck. Songs and fables were later written about them; their contribution to the actual defense of the city, because of their reluctance to knuckle down to military discipline, could be questioned; but they were nevertheless a colorful welcome addition to the Cincinnati scene that first week in September 1862, as the city prepared to dig in. They had come “to see the elephant.”

Before the war, Cincinnati, being close to the South physically, commercially and socially, was somewhat pro-slavery. Nowhere in the North was prejudice against colored people more cruelly manifested than in Cincinnati—even though the “Underground Railway” operated most successfully in the area. Groups of negroes organizing to defend the city, were told to disband—that this was a white man’s war. But Mayor Hatch had called for every man; the negroes thought they were included. Before they had a chance, many were arrested by the police as “pseudo-

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'The Squirrel Hunters were marched to the 5th Street Market where the Tyler-Davidson Fountain now stands, there to receive sandwiches and coffee, which in General Wallace’s words, “did not cease flowing day nor night.” And as they went across the river to dig and take their places in the rifle pits, they sang the famous campaign song, “John Brown’s Body.” “To See the Elephant” was an expression in common usage, by the private soldier, throughout the war. It meant to see action, or to see the enemy or to be affected by action. If a soldier was wounded, he “had seen the elephant,” or if a soldier made a charge, he “had seen the elephant.”
contrabands," and impressed into service to work on the forts. Some were even treated as felons and marched to pens on Plum Street opposite the Cathedral.

Yet the Negro saw a chance to do his duty and met the challenge. Judge W. M. Dickson organized a Negro Brigade; some 700 reported and 500 went across the river. This group attracted much attention. They were jeered by citizens of Covington, but when ordered to labor on the forts, worked loyally and cheerfully. They were often as far as a mile in front of the lines digging trenches.

Alone among the newspapers, the Gazette in the September 4th issue took this attitude: "Let our colored fellow soldiers be treated civilly and not exposed to the insults of poor whites. It would have been decent to have invited the colored inhabitants to turnout in the defense of the city ... There would have been an opportunity to compare their patriotism with that of those who recently were trying to drive them from the city . . . ."

Just as it was difficult to change the attitude toward Negroes overnight, so also was it difficult for newspapers to refrain from taking "pot-shots" at each other, the approaching Rebels notwithstanding. They always had before; it was an era of editorial verbosity.

On the fifth, the Times was suppressed from publication by General Wallace for an editorial it wrote on the second. The Gazette claimed the Times had described the defense of the city as unnecessary, that it was all a big scare. "How could (the Times) with positive information about the position of the Rebels write such a thing?" questioned the Gazette.

Also on the fifth, the Enquirer stated: "We do not remember from the beginning of the war down to the present time, in the Gazette, a single instance in which it has been entirely suited with the Administration. If the Gazette is correct, the visible conclusion is that the war should not continue a single day. It avers the government is imbecilic and the generals indifferent . . . ." The Enquirer, heretofore critical of the Administration, itself was jumping on the defense bandwagon, now that the city was actually in danger.

*When it resumed publication on the 7th, the Times stated that its editorial did not criticize the defense of the city; it was merely reviewing the mismanagement of the Army of the Potomac.*
By this time, Kirby Smith had dispatched General Henry Heth and Colonel Preston Smith toward Cincinnati. Smith now occupied Cynthiana, Kentucky, while Heth was on the Lexington Pike, 40 miles from Covington.

However, after four days of martial law, with all business at a standstill, and the enemy not yet in sight, General Wallace felt that his rules could be modified somewhat so that the essentials of daily life could be carried on. Accordingly, the following proclamation was issued on September 5:

"Bakers, butchers and provision grocers will be allowed to continue their activities.

Banks will be open from 1 to 2 P.M.

Physicians will be allowed to attend patients.

Employers of newspapers will be allowed to pursue their business.

Funerals will be permitted, but only mourners allowed to leave the city.

Coffee houses and places where intoxicating liquor is sold are to stay closed.

Hotels, eating houses and places of amusement are also closed, but drug stores and apothecaries will be open.

Public school teachers will be excused from military meetings and the schools are to re-open."

That same day Wallace moved his own headquarters to Covington, to be closer to the defense scene. The cheers and cooperation he received in Cincinnati often turned to jeers and resistance in Covington, where there were considerable Southern sympathizers. "Secesh" ladies insulted soldiers on their way to the rifle pits. In reprisal, many Rebel sympathizers were impressed into service and forced to work on the forts.

On September 6, the Gazette listed the wounded from the battle of Richmond, describing the nature of the wound. The list served as a grim reminder of the task ahead. Also on the 6th a Times reporter, enroute by train to Cynthiana, telegraphed his paper that the Rebels were near Falmouth. Rumors spread; apprehension mounted, yet the Gazette editorialized: "Never in her history did Cincinnati present so inspiring a sight as yesterday. From early morning to dewy eve the streets resounded to the tread of martial columns. From all quarters of the compass — on horseback and on foot, in companies, battalions and regiments —
with Squirrel rifles, shot guns and bayoneted muskets — in regulation uniform and plain homespun — they came and to the music of the ear-piercing fife and the spirit-stirring drums went pouring swiftly into the ranks of war . . . . It demonstrates one thing — our people will never surrender the Union . . . .”

Not only in Cincinnati, but all over the North there were praise and encouragement to the citizen volunteers for their immediate response to the call to arms. Exclaimed the Philadelphia Inquirer on September 7: “Our fellow countrymen of Cincinnati have had forced upon them the honor of being selected as the first object of attack by the Rebel hosts in their recently inaugurated Northern movement . . . the people of the Queen City (by volunteering) are setting a noble example . . . we refer our leaders to the prompt means of defense employed . . . .”

General Wallace was popular among Cincinnatians even though not with his own superiors. (All through the siege, Wallace felt he was going to be removed from command.) When his biography was published in the local press, no mention was made of his debacle at Shiloh. Instead he was praised for his actions at Donelson and Corinth.

In turn, Wallace liked Cincinnati. In his autobiography he described the “Siege” affectionately:

“72,000 men! What did I do with them? 55,000 of the best armed, including the Cincinnati regiments, I posted behind the breastworks and rifle pits.

“About 15,000 were stationed as guards at fordable places above and below Cincinnati, for the river was in its lowest stage. To keep in communication with these guards, to patrol the river night and day and to assist in holding the forts, I had impressed steamboats, and organizing them into a flotilla, put it in command of an old river captain, John Duble by name. With him sailed the residue of my force, about 2500 in number.

“Now it must not be thought I did all this work unassisted. In the few days there came to me from all parts of the country officers of every branch of the service — engineers, artillerists, cavalrmen, captains, and colonels of infantry, quartermasters, surgeons, among them many really able men. These, fast as they reported, were assigned to duty. Without them my army, calling it such, had sunk into an unmanageable mob.

“About the fourth day General Gordon Granger brought in a
brigade of veterans; but after dumping them down hap-hazard, retired across the river to private quarters and remained there without reporting to me. Gen. Granger, finding my rank intolerable, employed himself trying to have me deposed, and a regular — himself — I suppose, put in my place.

"Of the Cincinnati contingent, I should not fail to mention Col. Neff of the first Regiment, and Mr. Dickson in charge of the colored brigade, as he was pleased to demoninate it. Nor must I forget Mr. R. M. Corwine, a lawyer, whom I appointed to command the large body doing duty at the lonesome crossing places up and down the river. His headquarters steamer was never at anchor...

"Turning from the serious for a moment, probably no officer in command at any time during the war, not excepting General Fremont, had a volunteer staff comparable to mine, whether in personnel or numbers.

"Cincinnati in that day was the residence of many gentlemen of distinction in life — actors, poets, artists, writers, journalists, lawyers, preachers, doctors, jurists. Fast as these came to my knowledge, I appointed them aides-de-camp, requiring but two conditions: one that they provide themselves with horses equipped for riding; the other that each should report to me every morning ready for orders.

"Conglomeration is not a classic word, but I venture to apply it to this portion of my staff, swollen soon to about 150 members. ... they executed orders promptly and with knowing intelligence. Then at night, the day's work done, the camps on the other side of the Kentucky cities all still — I shall never forget the assemblages in the Burnet House in which each, as called on, did something in his line of duty. Now it was a story, now a song, now a recitation. It was in this way I made the acquaintance of James Murdoch, the actor, Randolph Rogers, the sculptor, Will P. Noble, the water colorist, and Thomas Buchanan Read, painter, poet, all in all, the most lovable of men."

Preparations for defense now reached their peak. News from Washington remained bad; however, so much so that the Gazette editorialized: "Never was a great ship nearer floundering than is our ship of State just now." Yet there was confidence on the home front. By September 8, the threat to the city itself was felt not to be so great, though peril to the area still existed. Martial law
was removed; limited business was resumed. But civilian home-

guard units continued to drill, and the City Police were even

effected to form military companies. Thousands continued
to roam the rifle pits centered at Fort Mitchell.

The Times, in the dramatic verbiage of the day, described the

scene on September 10: “In the creation of Fort Mitchell . . .

total absence of fences for several miles . . . earthworks in the
vicinity are all completed . . . trees have been felled . . . formed
into an abatis7 . . . long lines of rifle pits stretch over the sur-
rounding hills on every side — batteries of field artillery — tents
peer through the autumn foliage while strains of martial music,
ringing with the hoarse command of officers, gives a life-like and
enchanting air to the scene.

“Over the hills to the left lies the cavalry encampment from
which proceeds the shrill notes of the high and measured tramp
of the war horse — vehicles roll over the turnpike — ammunition
wagons, water carts, private vehicles of civilians, market wagons
of the farmer — a surgeon has improvised a hospital and has
all his knives laid out for immediate use — officers and aides dash
along at the peril of life and limb, while straggling soldiers and
perspiring citizens struggle through the clouds of dust raised by
their more fortunate fellows — taken all in all, a visit to the
fortifications gives a good idea of the ‘pomp and circumstance’ of
glorious war.”

While confidence in Cincinnati’s ability to defend itself was
apparent, tension over the actual hostilities to come mounted.
Reported the Commercial on September 11: “It is probable that
before this reaches our city, the roar of artillery may be heard
from the Kentucky hills. This would naturally create excitement
in the city — but it is important that our citizens should keep
cool — there should be no panic — we have an army of brave and
determined men (with) troops commanded by experienced
officers.”8

At the same time the Gazette reported the enemy two miles
from Fort Mitchell. “A fight is expected this evening,” it con-

7An abatis was a series of logs or trees pointed at the end, and with the
points outward, implanted in front of an earthworks.

8The Commercial also reported that Kirby Smith’s advance guard captured
a loyal homeguard company of Demossville, Pendleton County, Kentucky,
25 miles from Covington. It also reported that 1200 Rebel cavalry had taken
Maysville.
jectured. The Times stated: “A large cavalry force attacked pickets on the Licking River — several reported wounded — the enemy is all West of the river (Licking) — the opinion is that the fortifications will be attacked this afternoon — a messenger from Anderson’s Ferry has intelligence that the enemy is about four miles from the river (Ohio) — cavalry — probably a reconnoitering party . . .”

Now the crisis was upon the defenders of Cincinnati; the “moment of truth” had come. What was Confederate strategy and where exactly were the Rebels?

At Lexington, Kirby Smith had divided his army into two columns. One, he himself successfully led against Frankfort. The other, of almost 10,000 men, he gave to General Henry Heth, a former West Pointer. Heth, on the 10th, was in fact about a mile South of Fort Mitchell — there he set up his camp and awaited further orders.

Col. Ben Spooner of Lawrenceburg, Indiana, an aide of Wallace’s, selected two men from his home town to “reconnoiter” for the General. Passing behind Heth’s lines, they came up from the rear as if from Lexington. Riding boldly into the Rebel camp, they represented themselves in search of a couple of runaway negroes. The pretence worked; to find the fugitives they were given all privileges within the Rebel lines. They failed of course, but later brought Wallace an accurate statement of the size of the Rebel force — by regiments and batteries, cavalry included.

And from his side, General Heth “requisitioned” friendly farmers bringing hay in from the country to pass through the Union lines and ascertain the size of the Federal forces. Wallace was suspicious of these men, but concluded their report as spies could do no harm. In addition, on the night of the 10th, there were signals from lamps in windows across the river in Cincinnati, flashing information to Rebel outposts in the hills. Wallace knew of these, too.

From the roof of Vicker’s farmhouse, Heth took a survey of the fortifications at Fort Mitchell. His soldier’s eye took into account the long line of freshly made yellow breastworks and the massed troops behind them. From a parapet at Fort Mitchell, Wallace saw Heth through his glasses. He had a telegraph line set up the whole length of the works, with stations at every regimental and brigade headquarters. He wired everyone to be
careful against surprise, to double the pickets, and to place them far enough foreward.

In executing this order, there was a skirmish in the early morning hours of the 11th. Three men were slightly wounded. That night it was reported that Col. Scott, Heth's cavalry chief, had seized a grist mill at Florence and was operating it for food supply. Wallace dispatched Capt. Worthington to Scott's rear. Without loss of a man, Worthington drove the Rebels off, capturing twenty-eight "butternuts" (Rebels).

Back in Cincinnati, the Gazette reported to an anxious populace on the 12th: "From early dawn skirmishing parties of the enemy were thrown forward on the Banklick road, spreading until they extended in a semi-circle from the Licking to within a short distance of the Ohio River. In the early forenoon Latonia Springs was occupied by a heavy force of Scott's cavalry. They are digging intrenchments, their nearest point being one and one-half miles from our position at Tunnel Fort — Sisters of Charity and forty ambulances were allowed to pass through Rebel lines to look after Union wounded at Richmond. Generals Wright and Wallace were throughout the greater portion of the day in the saddle. (There was) an order excluding all women and children from the Federal lines — Rebels are five miles from Covington — (It is) reported that 10,000 of Bragg's troops are coming to aid Smith."

Wallace, in his autobiography, described the night of the 11th: "The hours were of sharp anxiety — for ever since the completion of the bridge, I had been subject to a dread. If Heth rushed the works with all his might, and my citizen soldiery fell into a panic, each of them would betake himself to the bridge and then what wholesale drowning there might be . . ."10

Though Wallace did not know it at the time, the crisis, which had developed suddenly, passed just as suddenly. On the night of the 11th Kirby Smith ordered Heth to break camp and pull out.

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9Up to that time civilians visited the lines constantly. Wives and mothers even brought food to their husbands and sons. The siege was a genuine "family affair."

10Wallace had some reason for apprehension. Every citizen was not heroic. Thousands of them, by different ways, obtained exemption papers on account of disability or employment. On the 11th, the Ward Chairman reported to Mayor Hatch that "thousands of our poor working men have enlisted whose families commence to suffer for want of food — we suggest the exempted citizens provide for the families of the former."
It was "all over but the shouting" — not a man was killed in actual fighting on either side.

To understand the Confederate decision, let us retrace our steps a few days. On the 7th Bragg was finally in Kentucky; Buell was retreating. Bragg was squarely across Buell's line of communication to Louisville. He had the advantage of good supplies and the support of Generals Smith and Marshall. He did not, however, consider Cincinnati as the proper object of attack.

On the 11th, Bragg ordered Smith to be ready for a joint movement on Louisville; Smith felt it his duty to cooperate with Bragg and pulled Heth out from in front of Fort Mitchell.

Had Bragg not ordered Smith to be ready for an attack on Louisville, Smith might have threatened Covington and Cincinnati. However, even assuming Smith was free to make his own decision, it is questionable whether he would have had a try at it. After becoming aware of the mass arrayed against him, as reported by Heth, Smith was dubious about his own forces' ability to attack the city successfully.\(^{11}\)

Bragg decided neither to fight Buell nor to attack Louisville. Indecision, as it did all through the war, plagued the man. He allowed Buell to move to Louisville unmolested, and went to Bardstown instead. On September 16 Bragg and Smith overcame the Federal garrison at Munfordville, but four days after that retreated further into Kentucky.\(^{12}\)

Back at Fort Mitchell, the stout defenders of Cincinnati,

\(^{11}\)Heth felt differently. Two years after the war, Wallace met Heth at the Burnet House and asked him if he believed he could have taken Cincinnati. Heth replied that he thought he could have but that Smith had ordered him to rejoin him in haste, as Bragg was retreating from Kentucky. Heth claimed he would have gotten in behind Wallace at a place which he felt was left unguarded in Wallace's West — a narrow neck between the river and the first of the large hills on the South and right of Covington. Wallace told him it was well he did not try because that neck was the second best defended section of the whole line. Across the river, at the foot of Race Street, he had four guns covered by a tarpaulin. Below the Pontoon Bridge there were six gunboats each with two six pound guns; 16 guns in all. Besides, Wallace continued, the hills on Heth's right could have been covered with 50,000 sharpshooters within an hour.

\(^{12}\)Bragg excused himself for retreating with these remarks (quoted by Kirby Smith): "With my effective force present, reduced by sickness, exhaustion and the recent affair before the intrenchments at Munfordville, to half that of the enemy, I could not prudently attack him there in his selected position — (I was) reduced at the end of four days to three days rations and in a hostile country. Utterly destitute of supplies, a serious engagement brought on anywhere — could not fail whatever in its results to materially cripple me — we were therefore compelled to give up the object and seek for subsistence."
peered over the breastworks on the morning of the 12th, and, noticing the absence of the Rebel campfires, were at first apprehensive of an enemy trick. This feeling was dispelled soon after Wallace’s scouts definitely reported that the “Rebels have skedaddled.” Wallace inquired of Wright if he should pursue Heth, but Wright thought it unwise.

A feeling of relief spread through the Federal lines; soon there was jubilation all over the Kentucky hills. In the forenoon a march to return to the city was organized, led by the four city regiments. As the troops, with General Wallace at their head, crossed back over the pontoon bridge, cheers broke out on the crowded levee. A U. S. Barracks band preceded the marchers; a twelve pound cannon from the steamer *Emma Duncan* saluted.

The procession marched up Walnut to Front Street, then East to Broadway, North to Fourth, West to Vine, North to Seventh, and West to Mound. The streets were jammed; national emblems appeared everywhere. Wallace reviewed the troops at 12th and Elm; they cheered him as they passed in review. Families welcomed back their patriotic citizen soldiers; the city was justifiably proud of itself.

On the 13th the *Times* exclaimed expansively: “The agony is over. Cincinnati is no longer in danger. The threatened invasion is at an end. The enemy forces are in full retreat. The climate proved uncongenial and they are hastening back to the sunny regions where treason luxuriates and negroes grow fat. Thursday they were audacious; Friday they turned their backs — we breathe easier; the vaults of our banks are safe.

“The sudden retreat of the enemy without even a glimpse of the Ohio River has been caused by divers movements. The first was the sudden and overwhelming array of armed men in their front. Yesterday not less than 70,000 armed men were in the fortifications of Cincinnati. We say armed men, for very few of them are soldiers; but inexperienced as they were in military evolutions, there was a spirit among them that would have made them invincible . . . .”

After the splendid triumphal march of the 12th, the citizen soldiers were formally thanked by the military and released from duty. The “Squirrel Hunters” were ordered to return to their homes, but most of them were now in a holiday mood and wanted a night or two “on the town.”
In an open message “TO THE PEOPLE OF CINCINNATI, NEWPORT and COVINGTON,” Wallace expostulated grandiloquently:

“For the present at least the enemy has fallen back and your cities are safe. When I assumed command there was nothing to defend you — the energies of a great city are boundless; they have only to be aroused, united and directed. Paris may have seen something like it in her revolutionary days; but these cities of America never did.

“Be proud that you have given them an example so splendid. The most commercial of people, you submitted to total suspension of business and without a murmur adopted 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 can answer, ‘we built them and helped guard them by the thousands.’ If they inquire the result your answer will be ‘the enemy came and looked at them and stole away in the night.’”

In the midst of widespread relief, rejoicing, and accolades, the Gazette summed it all up on September 14: “Thanks to the promptitude of Generals Wright and Wallace and the patriotism, courage and valor of the people, the Rebel movement toward Cincinnati has been frustrated and rolled back. In a remarkably brief space of time our city which was almost wholly defenseless, was in a state that would have enabled it to defy the whole Rebel force in Kentucky with complete success . . . . our whole male population rose ‘en masse.’ The patience which they endured, the severe labor of trenches and the tented fields, for many days in succession, was a remarkable instance of how quickly the citizen can be converted into a soldier. Assisted by friends from other parts of the state, we had an army in less than a week that was a proud example of what the West can do to meet invasion — Cincinnati is a large and wealthy city, attractive as a prize to the enemy — in near proximity to him — hereafter it must not be undefended as hitherto; we must have troops for home defense.”

For Wallace, “it was one of the gladdest days of my life. There can be no question that my services were fully appreciated except in Washington.” On October 18, City Council passed a resolution formally thanking Wallace, and in March 1863, by a joint resolution of the Ohio House and Senate his services were further recognized. He was officially commended by General Wright for his action at Cincinnati, but the War Department still did not think he was an able field commander and sent him off to fight Indians in Minnesota.
The Bulletin

The Siege of Cincinnati was over; coincidentally the high-water mark of the Confederacy had also been reached. The following week on September 17, a most decisive battle of the war was fought at Antietam Creek, where Lee was forced to retreat. Though Confederate victories at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville followed, and though Southern Pennsylvania was invaded in 1863, the South never again threatened seriously to take the initiative as it did in the march into Kentucky. The people of Cincinnati had certainly played their part.

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