

NORTHERN CONQUERORS AND SOUTHERN DELIVERERS: THE CIVIL WAR COMES TO THE JACKSON PURCHASE

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The Civil War was not long in coming to the Jackson Purchase region of southwestern Kentucky. On April 23, 1861 — eight days after the fall of Fort Sumter — Illinois troops seized strategically important Cairo, Illinois, a sleepy, mosquito infested town at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.¹ To counter this threat to the western part of the state, Tennessee authorities ordered the construction of fortifications on the Mississippi above Memphis and rushed a force of state troops to Union City, ten miles below the Kentucky state line. However, both sides believed that the real key to the control of the mid-Mississippi was Columbus, Kentucky.

Columbus squatted on the mud shores of the Mississippi below towering 150 foot bluffs known as the Iron Banks. South of the town, the somewhat lower Chalk Bluffs rose up from the river's edge. The military value of Columbus was twofold. First, from atop the almost vertical bluffs, an army could command the river and the surrounding area for miles and secondly, the town was the northern terminus of the Mobile and Ohio railroad, one of the most important rail arteries in the southwest.

The commander of the Tennessee soldiers at Union City was Major General Gideon J. Pillow, who almost immediately after setting up camp there, began to press for the occupation of Columbus.² And, despite the fact that in late May the Ken-

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¹ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D. C.: War Department, 1880-1902), Series I, Vol. 52, Part 2, pp. 66-67, hereafter cited as O. R.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 91-101; Gideon J. Pillow to Beriah Magoffin, May 13, 1861, in Tennessee State Library and Archives (Nashville).

tucky legislature had declared the state neutral, the citizens of Columbus and the surrounding area indicated that Pillow and his army would be welcome.³ Even before Cairo was occupied, a group of Columbus townfolk, including the mayor, sent letters to Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker, suggesting that Southern troops be sent to their city.⁴

In mid-June, after a party of Federal soldiers from Cairo made an incursion into neighboring Ballard county and a Federal steamer put in at Columbus and tore down a Confederate flag, the people again called on the Southern army to advance to Columbus.⁵ But even though Pillow desperately wanted to move his army to the Kentucky town, he remained in Tennessee.⁶ And despite the two forays, the Federals made no real move toward an invasion of the state either. In fact, both the Union and the Confederacy seemed content to play a waiting game with neutral Kentucky in hopes of eventually winning her over.

³ See O. R., Ser. I, Vol. 52, Part 2, pp. 78, 81, 89-90, 94-96; *The Daily Appeal* (Memphis), April 26, 1861, hereafter cited as *The Appeal*; *The Avalanche* (Memphis), May 8, 1861; *Louisville Daily Courier*, April 29, May 6, 1861, hereafter cited as *The Courier*.

The occupation of Cairo by Northern soldiers caused grave concern throughout the pro-Confederate Jackson Purchase region. A contingent of Kentucky State Guards (state militia) moved to Columbus, planted two large cannon on the bluffs and hoisted up a Confederate flag. Further, several communities from throughout the region offered volunteers to defend Paducah against a Federal advance up the Ohio river.

In addition, a number of Purchase citizens looked southward for military assistance. On April 24, a delegation from Columbus arrived in Memphis to consult with civil and military authorities. Four days later, Oscar Turner, a prominent citizen of Ballard county, showed up in Memphis trying to secure arms for the region. Mayor B. W. Sharp of Columbus went to Montgomery for a personal audience with Secretary Walker. He, too, sought arms. On May 11, Albert P. Thompson, a Paducah attorney, wrote Walker requesting weapons.

⁴ O. R., Ser. I, Vol. 52, Part 2, pp. 61-62; B. W. Sharp to L. P. Walker, April 28, 1861, in *Letters Received by the Confederate Secretary of War, February-June, 1861*, National Archives (Washington, D. C.).

⁵ *The Appeal*, June 13, 1861; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, June 7, 1861; *The Clarksville (Tenn.) Chronicle*, June 28, 1861; *The Louisville Courier*, June 15, 17, 1861; *The Louisville Daily Journal*, June 14, 1861, hereafter cited as *The Journal*.

⁶ O. R., Ser. IV, Vol. I, pp. 376-377; Isham G. Harris to Gideon J. Pillow, June 13, 1861 in *Harris Papers*.

On July 12, General Leonidas Polk assumed command of the Confederate Military Department Number Two, which embraced west Tennessee.⁷ In a short time, he, like Pillow, became extremely interested in taking Columbus.⁸ At Union City, Pillow had gleaned much information from the secessionist Jackson Purchase citizens about Federal activity at Cairo. And, soon after settling in his headquarters at Memphis, General Polk received a series of disquieting letters from the region.

On July 30, D. O. Dixon wrote Polk from Columbus that artillery and 7,000 Federal soldiers had moved across the river from Cairo to Bird's Point, Missouri, and that 2,000 more were expected to move there. Dixon also reported that General John C. Fremont, commander of the federal Department of the West, was at Cape Girardeau, Missouri, about fifty miles from Columbus, with 2,000 men.⁹ On August 3, J. P. Gray, also of Columbus, informed Polk that eight transports loaded with troops had landed at Cairo on August 2 and that Union pickets had been down opposite Columbus that night.¹⁰ Further, on August 5, Confederate Brigadier General Charles Clark wrote Polk from Union City that an invasion from Cairo after the election of members of the General Assembly in Kentucky was imminent.¹¹ The following day, Charles Wickliffe of Ballard county sent him similar information.¹²

As a result of this intelligence, Polk, on August 6, informed Secretary Walker that he had "reason to believe that the enemy is concentrating troops at Bird's Point and Cairo with the aim of making a movement down the river."¹³ However, the attack did not come and Polk decided for the present not to invade Kentucky.

⁷ Thomas L. Connally, *Army of the Heartland* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), pp. 46.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-55.

⁹ *O. R.*, Ser. I, Vol. 4, p. 376.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Ser. I, Vol. 52, Part 2, pp. 126-127.

¹² *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 381.

¹³ *Ibid.*

On August 6, the elections for the Kentucky legislature resulted in the expected victory for the Union party. In the house, the Unionists won seventy-six seats to twenty-four for the secessionists, and in the senate, including holdovers, they held twenty-seven to eleven.¹⁴ To the Confederates in Tennessee, this could only mean that a Southern invasion of Kentucky would be an unpopular and perhaps dangerous move. And they probably found little solace in the fact that the seven Purchase counties elected secessionist candidates to the legislature without opposition.¹⁵

Following the state elections in August, 1861, military activity at Cairo intensified. On August 16, the three wooden gunboats *Lexington*, *Tyler* and *Conestoga* arrived at the Federal base after a trip down the Ohio from Cincinnati.¹⁶ The appearance of the gunboats was timely because private citizens of Paducah and Columbus had already bagged two Union "prizes" on the Tennessee and Mississippi rivers. On August 10, the *W. B. Terry*, an armed steamer belonging to a group of Paducahans, chugged up the Tennessee to Pine Bluff in Callo-way county and captured the Louisville steamer *Pocahantas* with a cargo of tobacco and took her into Tennessee.¹⁷ Earlier, at Columbus, a group seized the United States mail packet *P. B. Cheney* and forced the crew to take her to Memphis to aid in transporting Confederate troops to Missouri.¹⁸

But the Union navy retaliated against the Kentucky pirates. On the morning of August 22, the *Lexington* steamed into the harbor at Paducah, captured the *Terry* with a cache of supplies bound for the Confederacy, and took her in tow to Cairo.¹⁹

¹⁴ E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1926), p. 97; N. S. Shaler, *Kentucky: A Pioneer Commonwealth* (4th ed.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1888), p. 247.

¹⁵ *The Courier*, August 16, 17, 1861; *The Journal*, August 10, September 2, 1861. It was the only region where secessionists were unopposed for both the house and senate.

¹⁶ *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), Series I, Vol. 22, p. 299.

¹⁷ *The Journal*, August 17, 20, 27, 1861.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, August 20, 27, 1861.

¹⁹ O. R., Ser. I, Vol. 4, pp. 176-177.

However, the *Terry's* crew, which had witnessed her seizure from shore, was joined by a group of townsfolk and together they retaliated by capturing the Paducah to Evansville mail packet *Samuel Orr* and running her up the Tennessee river.²⁰ In addition, the *Eastport*, *Dunbar* and *Sam Kirkman* steamed up the Tennessee to avoid capture by the Federals.²¹

The capture of the *Terry* greatly alarmed the already apprehensive Paducah population. Two days earlier, a small force of Federal soldiers from Cairo crossed over and arrested three Ballard county men.²² This incident, coupled with the seizure of the *Terry*, convinced the Paducahans that the long dreaded invasion from Cairo was at hand.

Consequently, only hours after the *Lexington* had departed with the *Terry*, the people of Paducah assembled in a mass meeting. They passed resolutions condemning the action of the Federals and calling on Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin for military assistance. A resolution was also passed which declared that if the governor refused to send aid, the city would call on the Confederates in Tennessee for help.²³

Magoffin placated the Paducahans by sending their state senator, rabid secessionist John M. Johnson, to Cairo to protest the arrest of the Ballard countians and the capture of the *Terry*. When Johnson arrived, the men already had been released, but the Federals refused to return the steamer.²⁴

At his headquarters in St. Louis, General Fremont took note of the *Terry-Orr* affair and, on August 25, wrote Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas in Washington. In the letter, Fremont declared that "events have thus transpired clearly indicating the complicity of citizens of Kentucky with the Rebel forces,

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *The Courier*, August 28, 1861.

²² Lewis and Richard Collins, *History of Kentucky* (Covington: Collins and Co., 1882), Vol. I, p. 93.

²³ *The Appeal*, August 24, 1861; *The Journal*, August 27, 1861.

²⁴ *The Courier*, September 5, 1861; *Journal of the Senate of Kentucky*, Session of September 17, 1861 (Frankfort: John B. Major, State Printer, 1861), pp. 46-49; hereafter cited as *Senate Journal*; Collins, *History*, Vol. I, p. 93.

and showing the impracticability of carrying on operations in that direction without involving the Kentucky shore."²⁵

Also in late August, General Pillow, who, upon the appointment of General Polk, was assigned to the command of the Confederate river defenses at New Madrid, Missouri and Island Number Ten, renewed his call for the capture of Columbus. Pillow, believing that Columbus was about to be seized by the Federals, boasted to Polk that with three boats he could save the town. And General Polk appeared receptive to the idea.²⁶

On August 28, Fremont appointed an obscure, cigar smoking, most unmilitary appearing brigadier general of volunteers named Ulysses S. Grant to the command of the federal District of Southeastern Missouri. Fremont declared that "it is intended that, in connection with all these movements [Federal troops were] to occupy Columbus, Ky., [sic] as soon as possible."²⁷ Five days later, a Federal force was at Belmont, Missouri, preparing to cross the Mississippi to Columbus.²⁸ The moment of truth for the Kentucky river town was at hand.

But almost simultaneously, the Confederates were finally making ready for the advance to Columbus. On September 1, as a preliminary, General Polk wrote Governor Magoffin that he thought it was "of the greatest consequence to the Southern cause in Kentucky or elsewhere that I should be ahead of the enemy in occupying Columbus and Paducah."²⁹

It is interesting that Polk included Paducah in his invasion plans. But strategically, it was hardly less important than Columbus. The Tennessee river, rushing over 800 miles from the southeast, discharged its muddy waters into the Ohio at Paducah and, like Columbus, the town was the northern railhead of another important southwestern line, the New Orleans and Ohio.

²⁵ O. R., Ser. I, Vol. 4, pp. 176-177.

²⁶ Connally, *Heartland*, pp. 51-55; Joseph H. Parks, *General Leonidas Polk, C.S.A. The Fighting Bishop* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), p. 179.

²⁷ O. R., Ser. I, Vol. 3, pp. 141-142.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Ser. I, Vol. 4, p. 179.

On September 2, Polk, without waiting for a reply from Governor Magoffin, ordered Pillow to move on Kentucky. He cautiously felt his way upriver from New Madrid to Hickman and landed perhaps to counter the Federal force at Belmont.³⁰ However, the Federals withdrew and the next day Pillow marched overland to Columbus.³¹ The grand military prize was soon hanging in control of the Confederates.

On September 4, General Grant moved his headquarters from Cape Girardeau to Cairo. The next day, a Union scout reported the news of the occupation of Columbus to him and warned that Paducah was about to be taken. Losing no time, Grant telegraphed the news to Fremont and the Kentucky legislature, adding that he was moving on Paducah. In the early morning of September 6, Grant's force debarked from transports at the Paducah waterfront.³² Though the Jackson Purchase had been occupied by the Confederate and Federal armies, it was soon apparant that only the latter was unwelcome.

Columbus was overjoyed with the arrival of the Confederates. George C. Taylor, a leading Columbus secessionist, addressed the greyclad liberators, welcoming them "with the liveliest delight." On September 5, Taylor and a group of thankful citizens delivered a letter to General Polk asking him to "permit a few of the citizens of this city and its vicinity, so recently oppressed and suffering from the tyrannical rule of the Northern government, to express to you our profound gratification at the advent of the army under your command."³³

We want to kill a Yankee . . . must kill a Yankee . . . never can sleep sound again until we do kill a Yankee, get his overcoat and scalp. Indian-like we want a scalp, and must have it. We'd think no more of scalping a dead Yank than cutting the throat of

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² O. R., Ser. I, Vol. 3, p. 166; Vol. 4, pp. 196-197; Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (New York: The Century Co., 1903), Vol. I, pp. 214-217.

³³ O. R., Ser. 1, Vol. 4, pp. 181-184.

a midnight assassin . . . not a shade's difference between the murderer and the deceptious Yank.³⁴

A later and perhaps more graphic illustration of Columbus sentiment appeared in the city's *Daily Confederate News*, formerly the *Columbus Crescent*, on January 9, 1862:

The Confederates were as happy with Columbus as its citizens were at their timely arrival. Private John Milton Hubbard of the Seventh Tennessee Cavalry wrote that "the Kentuckians seemed to be pleased with our coming and recruiting went forward accordingly." He also declared that the Jackson Purchase was "'hog and hominy' country and the soldiering was of the holiday kind."³⁵ Another Tennessean wrote the *Memphis Appeal* about southwestern Kentucky:

I have concluded to give you an inkling of our doings in this part of Old Abe's vineyard. I use the term in no offensive sense to the good people of this part of Kentucky; for a more generous, kind and hospitable set of people than occupy this [Hickman county] and Fulton county below here, it has never been our good fortune to meet. They are a unit in favor of Kentucky taking her natural position with her sister Southern states, thoroughly imbued with true Southern sentiments and ready, at any moment, to take up arms in defense of the position they have no hesitancy in declaring. Lincoln's bulls and Fremont's proclamations have no terror for them. Prompted by a patriotism which knows no sacrifice — too great for the cause in which they are wholly enlisted — they are ready to meet the issue, be what it may. They bend no knee to the Baal of Lincolnism — know no altar save their country's honor, to which they are ready to bring their most costly offerings. In a word, a more generous, brave and noble people do not live than the Southern Kentuckians. Their many acts of kind hospitality will long be remembered by our whole army, and when

³⁴ Excerpt from the *Daily Confederate News*, January 2, 1862, in *The Hickman County Gazette, 100th Anniversary Edition*, April 30, 1953. Earlier, editor Edward Bullock, an extreme secessionist, had characterized the Federal soldiers at Cairo as "bow-legged, wooden-shoed, sour craut stinking, bologna sausage eating, hen roost robbing Dutch sons of . . ." Also, he described their commander, Brigadier General William Prentiss, as "a miserable hound, a sociable fellow, a treacherous villain, a notorious thief, a lying blackguard, who has served his regular five years in the penitentiary and keeps his hide full of Cincinnati whiskey." See William Howard Russell, *My Dairy North and South* (Toronto: C. W. Rollo and Adam, 1863), 335-336.

³⁵ John Milton Hubbard, *Notes of A Private* (Memphis: E. H. Clarke and Brother, 1909), 11-12.

the bloody strife shall come, if come it must, to save these people from the fanatical rule of an abolition despot, there is no man here who would not lay down his life in their defense.³⁶

But unlike the Columbus populace, the Kentucky legislature quickly registered disapproval of Polk's action. On September 9, Senator Walter Whittaker, a Unionist, introduced a resolution demanding that the Confederates withdraw and Senator Johnson, as chairman of the Committee on Federal relations, dutifully telegraphed Polk to that effect.³⁷

Meanwhile, on September 8, Polk had written Governor Magoffin defending his action and offering to withdraw if the Federals did likewise.³⁸ On September 9, Polk replied to the secessionist Johnson with a telegram explaining that he invaded Kentucky because of the *Terry* incident, because some Kentucky congressmen had voted money and supplies to carry on the war against the South, because Kentucky had allowed the Federal government to cut timber for Union warships and because the state permitted the United States to establish Camp Dick Robinson, a recruiting point for Federal volunteers in Garrard county. Again, he concluded with an offer to remove his forces if the Federals did the same.³⁹

Polk's proposition of a mutual withdrawal was unsatisfactory to the legislature. On September 11, the senate approved Whittaker's resolution by a vote of twenty-five to eight and on the same day, the house passed a similar resolution seventy-one to twenty-six. A measure demanding the removal of both armies was rejected by a vote of sixty-eight to twenty-nine. The six Jackson Purchase representatives and three senators all voted against expelling only the Confederates.⁴⁰

³⁶ *The Appeal*, September 12, 1861. A joint "Proclamation of Gen. Polk and Corporate Authorities of Columbus, Ky." [sic] declared that the occupation of the town by Confederate troops was "acceptable to the people of Columbus" and that, in turn, the Confederates would take every precaution "to insure their quiet, the protection of their property, with their personal and corporate rights." *Senate Journal*, 80.

³⁷ *Senate Journal*, 80-81, 88; *O. R.*, Ser. I, IV, pp. 185-186.

³⁸ *O. R.*, Ser. I, IV, p. 185.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

⁴⁰ *Senate Journal*, 85-87; *Journal of the House of Representatives of Kentucky*, Session of September 17, 1861 (Frankfort: John B. Major, State Printer, 1861), 83-84, hereafter cited as *House Journal*.

On September 13, Governor Magoffin vetoed the house and senate resolutions, but he was overridden easily. Five days later, the legislature passed a bill calling for the raising of volunteers to help defend the state against the Confederates and Brigadier-Général Robert Anderson, the Union hero of Fort Sumter and a Kentuckian, was placed in command of the operation.⁴¹ With this, the last vestige of the state's neutrality vanished — Kentucky was safely in the Union fold.

General Polk's occupation of Columbus met opposition from the South as well as from the Kentucky legislature. On September 4, Tennessee Governor Isham G. Harris wrote him: "this is unfortunate, as the President and myself are pledged to respect the neutrality of Kentucky." And Harris added: "I hope they [the Confederate troops] will be withdrawn instantly, unless their presence there is an absolute necessity."⁴² Polk sternly replied to Harris his regrets "that a movement so entirely acceptable to the people of Kentucky, or at least to this portion of Kentucky, and so essential to the security of Western Tennessee does not permit me . . . to concur with your views." Further, he declared that he "had never received official information that the President and yourself had determined upon any particular course in reference to the State of Kentucky."⁴³

⁴¹ *House Journal*, 101-104, 153-154, 178, 197; *Senate Journal*, 99-100, 131, 144, 146; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 114; Robert McNutt McElroy, *Kentucky in the Nation's History* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1909), 542-546.

Toward the end of 1861, a movement for the expulsion of certain secessionist senators and representatives began in the legislature. Among those singled out were Senator Johnson and the six Jackson Purchase representatives who had left the legislature and, in November, participated in the Russellville sovereignty convention which had established a rump Confederate government in Kentucky.

Because they had attended the convention, Senator Johnson and Representatives A. R. Boon of Graves county, Jesse C. Gilbert of Marshall county, John Q. A. King of McCracken county, George Silvertooth of Fulton and Hickman counties and Daniel Matthewson of Calloway county were expelled on December 21. The other Purchase representative, William Coffee of Ballard county resigned on December 6 rather than be expelled for his part in the convention.

Purchase Senators Samuel H. Jenkins and John L. Irvan, who had been elected in 1859, stayed on in the legislature. Both were secessionists and Irvan later narrowly missed being expelled for his views. Collins, *History of Kentucky*, II; *Senate Journal* (1861), 378, 528.

⁴² O. R., Ser. I, IV, 180.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

On the same day, Secretary Walker telegraphed Polk ordering his withdrawal from Columbus. Becoming more confused, Polk telegraphed President Davis, declaring "I thought proper, under the plenary powers delegated to me, to direct a sufficient portion of my command . . . to concentrate at Columbus . . . [in order] to afford its citizens that protection they unite to a man in accepting, and also prevent in time the occupation by the enemy of a point so necessary to the security of Western Tennessee."⁴⁴ Within hours, Davis replied with the laconic message: "the necessity justifies the action."⁴⁵ Thus assured by the support of his commander in chief, Polk held his ground.

A number of pro-Confederate Kentuckians also expressed regret over Polk's occupation of Columbus. On September 13, secessionists John L. Helm and E. M. Covington wrote Polk asking him to withdraw. They pointed out to the General that his action would "check the run of public opinion and be the cause of inflaming the public mind against the Confederate states."⁴⁶ Also on September 13, General Simon Bolivar Buckner, commander of the Kentucky State Guard, wrote Confederate Inspector General Samuel Cooper, urging him to order Polk out of Kentucky. Buckner, who later became a Confederate general, argued that upon Polk's withdrawal, "he could rally thousands of neutrality Union men to expel the Federals."⁴⁷

While Kentucky Unionists fumed in outrage and Confederate sympathizers saw the end of their hopes for secession, the grateful people of Columbus dictated an "Open Letter to the Citizens of the Commonwealth of Kentucky." The letter, published in the *Memphis Appeal*, condemned Federal actions in the Jackson Purchase and concluded:

You may ask fellow citizens, why we citizens of Kentucky desire that no censure should attach to the Confederate army. We promptly answer, that if we must have an armed soldiery quartered in our midst, our experience and observation, as well as our

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 191-192; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 110.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 189-190; quoted in Coulter, *op. cit.*, 110.

sympathy and judgement, induce us to prefer the Southern to the Northern soldier.⁴⁸

On the other hand, General Grant's arrival in Paducah stood in stark contrast to the Confederates' hosannaed entrance into Columbus. Paducah citizens knew of the town's occupation and, believing the greycoats were marching on Paducah, had displayed Confederate flags of welcome.⁴⁹ And as the Federal troops moved into Paducah, the otherwise gentle women of the town taunted them with cries of "hurrah for Jeff Davis" and cursed them as "abolition invaders."⁵⁰ But despite such feminine bravado, most of the populace, as Grant later recalled in his *Memoirs*, appeared to be terrified:

When the national troops entered the town the citizens were taken by surprise. I never after saw such consternation depicted on the faces of the people. Men, women and children came out of their doors looking pale and frightened at the presence of the invader. They were expecting rebel troops that day.⁵¹

After deploying his men, Grant read an official occupation proclamation:

Citizens: I have not come among you as an enemy, but as your fellow citizen; not to maltreat or annoy you, but to enforce the

⁴⁸ *The Appeal*, September 18, 1861.

⁴⁹ O. R., Ser. I, IV, 197; The late Hall Allen, who for years as a writer for the *Paducah Sun Democrat* delighted readers with always colorful stories of the Jackson Purchase, recounted the dramatic "rescue" of one of these flags:

There was one big Confederate banner — it was the Stars and Bars and not the more familiar battle flag which had not yet been adopted — nailed to a tall pole on lower Broadway.

Aunt Em Jarrett, an ardent Southerner, who lived in the outskirts of the town, heard that the Yankees were coming.

She ordered her mare hitched to the buggy, called upon one of her little Negro boys to accompany her, and galloped all the way to lower Broadway. There she sent the little slave boy shinnying up the tall pole. Carefully he took down the Confederate flag and dropped it to Aunt Em.

The Yankees would not capture the Flag of Paducah.

To complete the episode, Allen added: "when Aunt Em passed to her reward some years later, someone brought out the old Stars and Bars which she had rescued and treasured, and placed it beside her in the coffin." Hall Allen, *Center of Conflict, a factual story of the War Between the States in Western Kentucky and Tennessee* (Paducah: *Paducah Sun Democrat*, 1961), 23.

⁵⁰ *The Courier*, September 12, 1861, excerpt from the *St. Louis Republican*.

⁵¹ Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 215.

rights of all loyal citizens. An enemy, in rebellion against our common government, has taken possession of and planted its guns on the soil of Kentucky and has fired upon you. Columbus and Hickman are in his hands. He is moving upon your city. I am here to defend you against that enemy, to assist the authority and sovereignty of your government. I have nothing to do with opinions and deal only with armed rebellion and its aiders and abettors. You can pursue your usual avocations without fear. The strong arm of the government is here to protect its friends and punish its enemies. Whenever it is manifest that you are able to defend yourself and maintain the authority of the government, and protect the rights of citizens, I shall withdraw my command.⁵²

But Grant's words hardly were reassuring to the citizens of the secessionist city. In commenting on the presence of the Federal troops, a reporter for the *St. Louis Republican* noted candidly that "the citizens did not appear to appreciate the favor."⁵³

After placing Brigadier General Eleazer Arthur Paine in command of Paducah, Grant returned to Cairo. Paine quickly assumed a harsh attitude toward the pro-Confederate population. In addition, the troops under his command turned to stealing and plundering; vandalism was widespread. Further, Paine ordered the arrest of a number of citizens.⁵⁴ A reporter described a beleaguered Paducah under Paine:

Here in Paducah considerable terror has arisen among the inhabitants, and thousands would leave if they could. Household furniture is being removed in skiffs, and what other conveyances can be got, to safer points. If affairs in Kentucky continue in their present state three weeks longer, the town will be almost depopulated. Although numberless residences are deserted and stand monuments of blighting secession, society seems to have fled, and gloom and horror taken possession. Not a carriage is seen upon the streets, or lady upon the beautiful walks.

The stores are many of them closing, and wagons with the boxed up goods standing instead of customers before the doors. In no place yet have I seen so bitterly hostile a feeling existing against the Union as here. Scowling, angry glances watch with what

⁵² Reproduction of broadside of proclamation in Murray State University Library, Murray, Ky.

⁵³ *The Courier*, September 12, 1861, excerpt from the *St. Louis Republican*.

⁵⁴ *O. R.*, Ser. I, IV, 198; *The Appeal*, September 14, 18, October 18, 24, 26, 29, 30, 1861.

seems to be an intense hatred, every movement of a passing soldier. Some of the wells have been poisoned where the camps get their water, and many similar acts perpetrated. Secession is the rule, and Union the rare exception. Whether Uncle Sam has any medicine as strong as the complaint, is still an open question. On the streets people wear secession caps, and boast that before the week closes every Federal will be driven out. The telegraph wires have been cut through the town and lie across the sidewalks, or are twined around trees.⁵⁵

Although objects of public scorn, some of the blueclad soldiers were impressed greatly with Paducah. One Illinois sergeant wrote home: "I fell in love with Paducah while I was there, and I think I will settle there when the war is over. I never saw so many pretty women in my life. . . . They hollered 'Hurrah for Jeff' at us . . . but that's all right. I could write until tomorrow about Paducah."⁵⁶

Thus, in September 1861, the Jackson Purchase was invaded by the Federal and Confederate armies. The secessionist people cursed the Northerners as conquerors and hailed the Southerners as deliverers. But the Southern deliverers were not destined to remain long in the region.

In early 1862, the Confederates, after defeats at Mill Springs in eastern Kentucky and Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in Tennessee, were forced to abandon Columbus and their other positions in the state. With this turn of events, all of the Purchase fell under Federal occupation. Nevertheless, the citizens of the region remained staunchly secessionist to the end of the war.

⁵⁵ *The Appeal*, September 18, 1861, excerpt from the *St. Louis Republican*.

⁵⁶ Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs, Merrill Co., 1952), 106-107.