

CIVIL WAR REPORTS



Volume 1 No. 8

by Van Beydler

Courtesy of The Rolla New Era
September 12, 1891

Just as veterans today meet to have reunions the veterans of the Civil War met to renew old friendships. According to an article in the Rolla New Era published on September 12th, 1891, Mr. William Fayel, an old time newspaper man came up from St. Louis to attend the Reunion of Veterans. Mr. Fayel talked about Rolla in 1861 and expressed at the wonderful change and improvements that the city had undergone in the thirty years since he was in Rolla covering the Civil War. He thinks it must have experienced several so called booms as the only boom noted on his first visit here was the boom of cannon. Of this visit he gives a few reminiscences.



He reached Rolla on the 12th day of August, 1861. The train was nearly all day in coming from St. Louis, it being a mixed train, with freight cars attached and it stopped to unload and take on freight at all the small stations. Rolla was then the end of the track, but the road was graded to the Gasconade. On his arrival the battle of Wilson's Creek was not yet heard of here, but about 8 p.m., the stage from the west halted in front of the Lamb House, then facing on the old State road, when the passengers disembarked including among them an officer, Mr. R.P. Faulkner and Mr. Harvey Graves, merchants of Rolla who had left the day before for Springfield under the necessity of returning to Rolla, evidently for some good reason. The passengers jumped out and disappeared without giving any explanation. The driver said that a battle had been fought at Wyman's headquarters, it was learned that battle had been fought and Lyon killed.



Col. Wyman about midnight sent a locomotive to St. Louis informing Gen. Fremont of the disaster, as there was then no telegraph nearer than Franklin, now Pacific, on the main railroad line. It is certain as was subsequently learned, that the Southern sympathisers in St. Louis got the news of the battle several hours before Fremont did, per the "grapevine" telegraph, as fleet couriers could beat the stage between Springfield and a point eastward, equivalent to Rolla in less than half the time.

On the 10th of August there were the full regiments, the 13th Illinois volunteers, Col. Wyman's, and the 7th Missouri volunteers Col. Stevenson, encamped at Rolla on the high ground opposite the Block House and just across the railroad. These two regiments should have been dispatched to the aid of Lyon. Their arrival, or the knowledge that reinforcements were on the way would have avoided the necessity for immediate battle, or the alternative of a possible disastrous retreat to Rolla or Fort Scott. The failure of at least one of these regiments marching to Springfield produced much and some severe comments. It was claimed that there was a lack of transportation.

Gen. McKinstry, who was believed to be inimical to Lyon has since said that the Commander of the 7th Mo., "The Bloody Seventh" as it was called, had orders to proceed to the relief of Lyon at Springfield and that he ought to have been shot for disobeying orders.



Mr. Fayel, was glad to renew his acquaintance with some of the old citizens residing here in 1861, where he spent five months until the march of Curtis' army in February. Among these were Mr. E.W. Bishop, Mr. R.A. Love and Hon. Cyrus Frost, the latter gentleman who represented this Senatorial District in the Legislature, he was sorry to find totally blind though otherwise in tolerable good health and spirits. To Mr. Bishop he was indebted for a loan of his saddle bags for use in Curtis' Southwestern Campaign. When

the road from Franklin to Rolla was under construction, in these saddle bags were brought thirty thousand dollars at a time by Mr. Bishop from St. Louis to pay off the contractors. They were regular money-bags, Mr. Bishop was then a large owner of real estate and suffered much from the depredations of the military. They turned at one time 300 mules into a young orchard. He appealed to Capt. Phil. Sheridan (afterward a hero of the war) who was sent up to Rolla to straighten out the Quartermasters department, and Sheridan issued pre-emptory orders to have the mules taken out and placed in the corral. Another depredation on Bishop was the burning of his fence rails by the soldiers for their campfires. And here comes a little circumstance in this connection that Mr. Fayel says he had long desired to see mentioned in some reliable newspaper. When Curtis' army was marching along the southern border of Missouri, in Douglas County, he says he came up one evening with the 24th Missouri volunteer regiment, encamped for the night and saw the soldiers bringing in on their shoulders large dry trees to make their fires. When asked why they did not take the fence rails they gave as a reason, they knew too well the labor of mauling rails to burn them up, which they declared they would not do even in an enemy's country.

Among the stirring active Union men was C.P. Walker of the Rolla Express. He issued a small daily paper and had the assistance of young printers from the camps, who gave their labor without pay for variety in the routine of camp life, and to keep their hands in at the case. One morning Mr. Fayel met with a rather curious coincidence. The carrier came into the office and calling out the addresses on the letters to the typos., named one for a Mr. Taylor. A response came "that's for me." Hearing the name Mr. Fayel says, that without the remotest idea that the young hoodlum looking lad was the son of Benjamin F. Taylor, the sweet prose poet, and quite famous essayist for the Chicago Journal, inquired if he was the son of the afore said Taylor, the boy said he was and an acquaintance then sprung up

that was appreciated by Mr. Fayel, as he had shortly before attempted while in Chicago to meet the great writer who was then absent from the city.

The arrival of the army from Wilson's Creek brought a large accession of soldiers to Rolla, and in a few days regiment after regiment were sent up from St. Louis to secure this outpost from any threatened attack.



The 36th Iowa, with two Cavalry Companies attached under Col. Grewsel, the 4th Iowa, under Col. Vandever, now or recently a Representative in Congress from California, the 14th Illinois under Col. Palmer, now U.S. Senator, the 15th Illinois under Col. Turner, and the Kansas Rangers under Col.

Sam N. Wood, lately assassinated in Kansas, were among those that came in and camped mostly west of town.

Distinguished strangers came up from St. Louis and newspaper correspondents to take a view of the situation. Messrs. Clinton B. Fiske and A.P. Richardson of the N.Y. Tribune, and many others were among arrivals. The great English novelist, Anthony Trollope, also paid a visit here and was received by Col. Asboth and Gen. Sigel and stayed at the Lamb House. He came to see a battle but got tired of waiting, went back and put some accounts of Rolla in his book on North America.

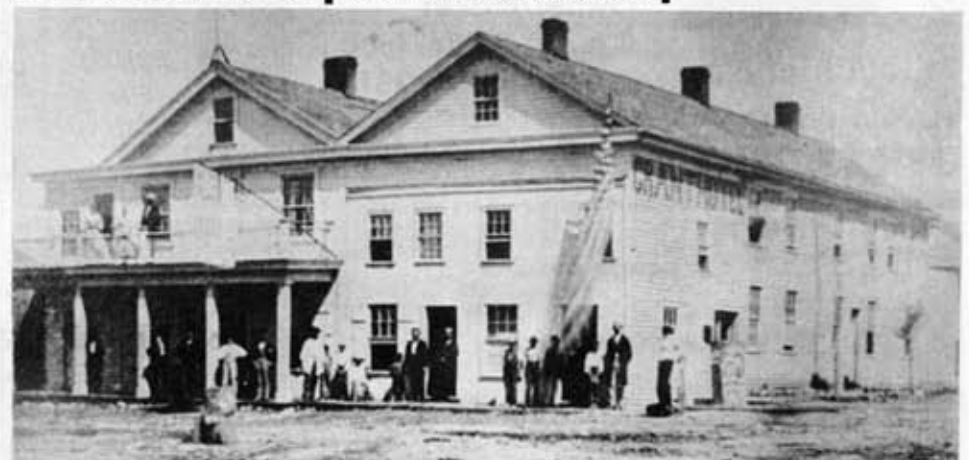
When Fremont moved to Springfield from Sedalia and Tipton, two or three regiments from Rolla, including the 13th Illinois, marched out to join him. As the regiment passed out beyond the Ing hill, the weather being warm, the men cast away their blankets as too burdensome, and the road was strewn with rolls of sleeping

covering. It soon after turned very cold and the men suffered severely in consequence.

After Fremont was relieved at Springfield and Hunder put in command, a portion of that army including Asboth and Sigel's divisions returned to Rolla for winter quarters. The southwest was abandoned by them to the confederates. Many of the Illinois officers like the fox crying out "sour grapes" loudly depreciated the route which they had marched over, saying that it was made up of cheat hills, and covered with black jacks and that "the country was not worth saving!"

Since that time we have noticed a change of tune and that beautiful portion of the southwest is now greatly bepraised, and coveted by these very people.

Rolla would be a marvel for their eyes to look upon and see the splendid structures and beautiful avenue which have replaced the old bridle paths.



The original Grant Hotel was converted from Union Army two-story log buildings which had been used to store and issue uniforms and supplies. These buildings, on the northwest corner of 8th and Pine, were demolished in 1876 and a new brick hotel was erected called the Grant House. (Photo courtesy of the Phelps County Museum)

GRANT HOUSE,

Cor. Eighth & Pine Sts.,

ROLLA - - - MISSOURI.

RATES, \$2.00 PER DAY.



Nov. 22, 1890.

THE ABOVE HOTEL is still run under the same management as for the past twenty years. Located one square west of the depot, in the business centre. Rooms clean and well furnished. Table first-class. Sample rooms large and light.

SHAW'S OPERA HOUSE

Under same management as Hotel.

M. A. SHAW, - PROP.