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Fire Eater! Guest Writer

U.S. Army Opens Fire On Civilians

25 October 2005

Many folks do not believe the event that started on 10 May 1861 in St. Louis was a massacre. Even more, many do not believe it was politically motivated by the US government and the new US President at the time. We need to understand some of the feelings that led up to the St. Louis massacre. Let's look at some facts.

Missourians have been at war for their states rights from the mid-1850's till the surrender of General Lee. They are still fighting for them.

As far back as February of 1861, US Army Captain Nathanial Lyon was transferred to Missouri and stationed at the St. Louis Arsenal. St. Louis had the largest cache of military supplies in the West. Both the Union and the South wanted these supplies, but the North also understood the importance of having Missouri in Union hands, something overlooked by the newly formed Confederate Government.

Captain Lyon was also a "Radical Republican", a fact to keep in mind. Among other things, a Radical Republican felt the need to make the government into a centralized government, and during the Reconstruction days they felt the Southern states should be punished.

Plots were made by both Union men and Secessionist men to take the arsenal. These groups of men were paramilitary. The Secessionists were known as "St. Louis Minute Men." The Union already had paramilitary men from the Radical Republicans, but these troops called themselves "The Wide Awakes." The Wide Awakes group was formed sometime in the early 1850s. They were aligned with the "Know Nothing" movement and participated in the Republican Police force in the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln. The Wide Awakes also contributed to the Free Soil movement in Kansas.

Frank P. Blair, Jr., a member of the St. Louis Chapter of the Wide Awakes, along with member Captain Nathanial Lyon, moved Wide Awake members into the city and trained them inside a warehouse. The purpose of this training was for Blair and Lyon to take the arsenal by force.

Through Blair's political connections with President Lincoln, Lyon was promoted. He promptly led his Wide Awakes into the arsenal under cover of night. The Wide Awakes were quickly mustered into the Federal Army under Lyons and later that day (10 May

1861) they arrested the Missouri State Militia. The Missouri State Militia was the legal state military force under the command of the Governor, Claiborne Fox Jackson.

The Federal government used their thugs from the 1860 election to come into Missouri and take over the state by force. President Lincoln, in other words, sent troops, and enlisted known thugs, to overthrow the Missouri state government and its people.

This event sparked the St. Louis Massacre later that day.

A military force clashed with civilians on 10 May 1861, killing at least 28 people and injuring at least 100 others. Some of the killed were women and at least one child, in the arms of her mother. These acts were committed by U. S. Army Captain Nathanial Lyon, a Radical Republican, and his new troop of 3,000 "Wide Awakes" and German immigrants.

After Lyon and his men arrested the lawful Missouri Militia, he could not stop. He decided to march those men down the streets of St. Louis, where armed civilians lined the streets. This was no doubt to incite a riot of sorts so he could show his strength as a leader and to carry out the orders of Lincoln. This act did just that. While no one knows who really fired first, Lyon and his Union Army formed a line and fired into the crowd. This violence went on for several more days, with at least seven more civilians killed by Union troops patrolling the streets.

This atrocity woke up the citizens of Missouri and their elected officials, and started them on the path of secession. Through Lyons actions on behalf of Lincoln, the elected legislature's gave authorization for Governor Jackson to reorganize the Militia into the Missouri State Guard.

Remember the Free-Soil movement? That was a large group made up of German 48ers, northern citizens and politicians, who advocated going to Kansas and taking the land. This was done in other places, but Kansas was the prime target. With Kansas next to Missouri, the US Government knew it needed allies to surround Missouri. The government found it in the Germans, northerners, and those who submitted to a centralized government.

All of this started in the 1850s. The western border of the State of Missouri and the eastern border of the Kansas Territory were in bitter battle long before it finally reached the deep South.

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"Wide Awakes" Mission Statement

1st. To act as a political police.
2nd. To do escort duty to all prominent Republican speakers who visit our place to address

our citizens.

3rd. To attend all public meetings in a body and see that order is kept and that the speaker and meeting is not disturbed.

4th. To attend the polls and see that justice is done to every legal voter.

5th. To conduct themselves in such a manner as to induce all Republicans to join them.

6th. To be a body joined together in large numbers to work for the good of the Republican Ticket.

A few famous Radical Republicans

Charles Sumner: Senator who was beaten on the floor of the Senate by South Carolina Congressman Preston Brooks.

John Bingham: Congressman from Ohio, principal framer of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

James H. Lane: Senator from Kansas.

Benjamin Wade: Extremely radical presiding officer of the Senate.

Thaddeus Stevens: Outspoken, radical Congressman.

Benjamin Butler: Infamous general (and later Senator) who allowed the pillaging of Southern cities, sometimes called the "Damnedest Yankee"

Henry Wilson

Salmon P. Chase: Appointed Supreme Court Justice by Lincoln

Elihu Washburne: Senator who persuaded future President Grant to enter military service.

James A. Garfield: Future President who was less radical than others; disliked Benjamin Wade.

Hannibal Hamlin: First Vice President of Abraham Lincoln.

Henry Winter Davis

Zachariah Chandler: U.S. Senator from Michigan and Secretary of the Interior under Ulysses S. Grant.

Edwin M. Stanton

James Speed

(From Wikipedia.com)