Notes: Fremont in the St. Louis Newspapers

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Fremont in the St. Louis Newspapers.

The files of the St. Louis newspapers for 1861 contain comparatively little that throws light on Fremont's conduct, the principal reason being, no doubt, that their editors feared personal arrest and the suppression of their papers. The "Missouri Democrat" (Rep.) and the "Missouri Democratic Republican" (Dem.) were both loyal to Fremont throughout his administration. Their editors, however, were not in close touch with Fremont. The editor of the "Democrat," which supported the erratic General in opposition to him, one of its owners (Frank P. Blair, Jr.), had one meeting with Fremont, and was then received so indifferently that he did not venture back again. (See his statement of Geo. W. Fishback.) "We have no acquaintance with Gen. Fremont," confessed the editor of the "Republican", Sept. 24, 1861, in the course of a long editorial in defence of Fremont. On the day martial law was declared in St. Louis (Aug. 14), the offices of the "Bulletin", the "Missourian", and the "Herald" were taken possession of by soldiers and the papers suppressed. Later the proprietor (Charles C. Ramsey) and the editor (Daniel M. Grissom) of the "Evening News" were arrested, but were detained only a short time and the publication of the paper was not interrupted. The editor of a religious paper sent an anxious inquiry to the Provost Marshal concerning the action contemplated with reference to his publication. He escaped with an admonition not to discuss political matters in a religious journal.

There were daily publications of Fremontxxx the orders of fremontxxx
and proclamations of Fremont and his Provost Marshal, Maj. Justus McKinstry. The terrible McKinstry seems to have filled with quaking fear everybody except the petty thieves of the town. "Stolen, from the residence of Maj. McKinstry", read a published notice, "at noon, four table spoons, six teaspoons, two salt spoons and two forks."

The emancipation proclamation issued by Fremont was favorably commented on by both the "Democrat" and the "Republican". Then, from day to day, there were accounts of the doings of the "Military Commission".

The Cairo Expedition.

(See statement of Geo. W. Fishback.)

The Cairo expedition was announced in the "Missouri Republican" of July 30, 1861. "The city was full of excitement yesterday and the streets full of soldiers. The most interesting occurrence was the chartering of several steamers by the government. .. The fleet of vessels, carrying all the Illinois regiments lately arrived and as many Missouri volunteers as can be spared, will, it is thought, take their departure today for Bird's Point. It is understood that Maj. Gen. Fremont and staff will accompany the expedition on the steamer "City of Alton."

The fleet moved out from the wharf at 10 o'clock on the night of July 31, but went only as far as the arsenal and remained there over night. The fleet consisted of eight vessels, each, according to the published announcement, carrying five hundred soldiers. The maneuvers of the vessels were mystifying. "The famous war-fleet of
steam-boats", announced the "Republican" of August 2, "... made a forward movement down the river yesterday at 2 1/2 o'clock p.m. We are unable to inform the public to what particular point or port they were bound, but it is quite certain that they went down the river and had New Orleans pilots, mostly imported from Cincinnati. Our own pilots were either out of town, or did not want to work during the hot weather. There was much firing of cannon and pomposity preparatory to the boats named leaving port. They were filled with soldiers, camp equipments and artillery, with the exception of the City of Alton, which was devoted to Gen. Fremont and his staff, who were conveyed to the craft by one of the ferry-boats. The air played by the band during this ceremony was 'Hail to the Chief!' The troops went down the river with music, cheering themselves lustily. The land was well-filled with silent spectators, and the last we saw of the fleet was a large cloud of black smoke, which the wind was too lazy to drive off the river." Another account in the same paper says that as Fremont, on the ferry, approached the *Kings* flag vessel, "the artillery on board fired a salute of six guns and during the remainder of the time, before departure, guns were occasionally fired. ... As they (the soldiers aboard) passed along the crowded levee they cheered lustily, waving their hats, but the people on shore failed, except in a few instances, to respond."

The fleet arrived at Cairo at 5 o'clock the next afternoon (Aug. 2). Gen. Fremont and staff remained there until the following evening (Aug. 3) and then returned to St. Louis on the City of Alton, arriving there at 4 o'clock p.m. Aug. 4.
Comment on Lincoln’s Order Modifying Proclamation.

From the "Missouri Republican", Sept.16, 1861:

"The order of the President to Maj.Gen. Fremont in reference to the initial modification of the latter's recent proclamation will attract universal attention. The order reads rather bunglingly at the beginning, which we might attribute to the telegraph were it not for Mr. Lincoln's well known carelessness in literary matters!

A letter to the "Missouri Republican" from Jefferson City (Sept.18,1861) says:

"The effect of the amendment of Fremont's proclamation, it is believed, will be good in this vicinity; though most of the loyal slave-holders with whom I have talked say they liked the proclamation as it was at first; but they think the present form will deprive the rebel leaders and sympathizers of all excuse for denouncing the government as abolition in its tendencies."

J. McCaH Davis.
Springfield, Ill.,
Nov. 19, 1861.