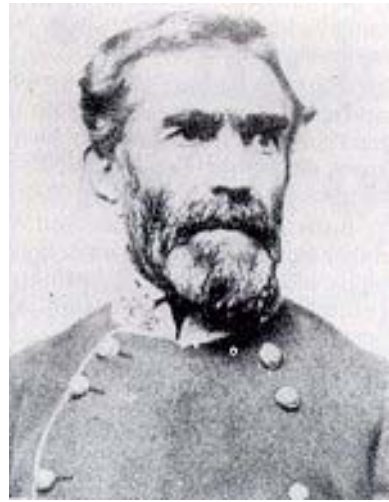


## I — Introduction

By Geoffrey R. Walden

In early September 1862, the bustling but heretofore complacent city of Cincinnati, Ohio, was shocked to its foundations by the very real threat of capture by Confederates. General Braxton Bragg had launched an invasion of Kentucky, hoping to establish the Ohio River as the northern boundary of the Confederacy, with a greater goal of gaining thousands of recruits for the Southern cause and destroying the Federal army under Major General Don Carlos Buell. Coupled with General Robert E. Lee's invasion of Maryland, this grand strategy just might bring the North to its knees by taking the war to the very gates of the Union, or at least bring about European recognition and increased aid for the Confederacy.



*Braxton Bragg, C.S.A.*

Even though Kentuckians did not flock to Bragg's banners quite as enthusiastically as he had hoped, Confederate forces under Major General Edmund Kirby Smith enjoyed an early success in capturing such strategically important Kentucky towns as Richmond, Paris, Lexington, and Frankfort, the state capital. The Federal forces in Kentucky were on the run, and Buell seemed to be lagging behind in Tennessee. Against this background, Confederate Brigadier General Henry Heth moved north toward the Ohio River town of Covington, Kentucky with about 6,000-8,000 men. The hills at Covington looked down upon Ohio's largest city and one of the country's major commercial/ industrial centers, Cincinnati.

This threat to Cincinnati, the nation's sixth largest city and the western gateway to the North, brought a state of near panic to the civil and military authorities. Nearly defenseless, the "Queen City" was guarded only by some local militia units, two companies of the 18th United States Infantry, and some 400 recruits training across the Ohio River in Newport, Kentucky.

Major General Horatio G. Wright, commanding the Department of the Ohio, ordered Major General Lew Wallace to hurry to Cincinnati and organize its defense. Lew Wallace was a veteran of Fort Donelson and Shiloh and a man of action. Arriving on September 1, he immediately assumed overall command and declared martial law in effect. He ordered all business suspended and all citizens to assemble for orders. His motto was "Citizens for Labor, Soldiers for Battle."

Major General Wallace was fortunate to have the partly patriotic and partly fear-induced cooperation of the local citizenry. The Cincinnati city council passed a resolution voting him their support, and the Cincinnati *Gazette's* editorial page cried, "To Arms! To Arms! The time for playing war has passed. Let us prepare to resist an army of 100,000 men bent on our destruction." The three city militia companies were each hastily enlarged to

regimental size, and several Ohio infantry regiments being formed at Camp Dennison, about fifteen miles northeast of the city, were hurried to the defense. The 45th and 99th Ohio infantry regiments, guarding the southern approach route along the Licking River in northern Kentucky, fell back slowly before Heth's advance and eventually joined the defense.

The most remarkable addition to Wallace's force resulted from the overwhelming support of the citizens of southern Ohio and Indiana. These volunteer farmers and backwoodsmen streamed into Cincinnati by the thousands, presenting a motley appearance to the experienced military men. The roughest of this lot, dressed in buckskins and armed with long rifles in the tradition of their ancestors, earned the sobriquet "Squirrel Hunters."

In just five days, Wallace found 12,000 troops and 60,000 irregulars under his command. These forces and the civilian laborers were rushed across the Ohio River on ferry boats as soon as they could be gathered and organized. But so large were their numbers that Wallace deemed the process of ferrying men and material across the river too slow, so he contracted Cincinnati architect Wesley Cameron to build a pontoon bridge leading to Covington; it was the first bridge to span the Ohio River at Cincinnati. A second pontoon bridge was erected across the Licking River, linking the defensive lines of Kenton and Campbell counties in Kentucky. To round out his command, Wallace had a "flotilla" of sixteen armed steamboats patrolling the Ohio River. (Troops involved in the "Siege of Cincinnati," as it has been called, are listed in Table 1.)

The troops rushed into the defenses from Camp Dennison and other training areas were so hurriedly gathered that many had not received uniforms or arms, or even been sworn into service, before they reached the lines in northern Kentucky. Many of these recruits spent the time during Heth's approach trying to test their obsolete Austrian and Belgian muskets, getting used to picket and fatigue duty, and being rudely rolled out of their blankets (few units had received their tents) at all hours of the night for seemingly endless, not to mention groundless, alarms. This introduction into military service was so trying to some that they "heartily wished every Johnny in the land would go home and mind his own business - we had enough of such warfare."

Some of the Cincinnati volunteers tried to break the tedium of life in the trenches by parading a "trained" elephant for the recruits - perhaps so each could be sure of "seeing



*Lew Wallace, U.S.A. Summoned to Cincinnati on September 1, 1862 by General Wright, department commander, then at Louisville, Wallace took charge of defending the 'Queen City' with his headquarters at Cincinnati's fashionable Burnet House. On the 6th, upon the arrival of Wright and the completion of the Ohio River pontoon bridge-which was completed in the miraculous time of only thirty hours using coal barges and planks-Wallace moved his base to a building at the Thompson Winery, near the center of the fortification line on the northern Kentucky hills. The winery building, although never fortified, came to be called Fort Henry.*

the elephant." This elephant was a different breed than the normal pachyderm, however; upon being ordered to stand on its head, a portion of the beast was heard to remark in a stage whisper that "when he got from under the cover, he would thrash that keeper."

When Heth's Confederates finally approached, the green Federals got the chance to test their mettle in front of the enemy. Most felt sure they would pass the test and manfully do their duty, though some confessed to a bad case of "what might be termed the 'Buck Ague' ". This shakiness affected officers as well as men: when the commander of one of the city reserve units taught his men to load by ramming the ball first, followed by the powder, one of his aids had to whisper a correction in his ear. Many of the recruits, most of whom would become thorough veterans, looked back in later years with amusement on their many trials as "fresh fish," including being thrown into line of battle to repel a drove of mules. But at the time, it was all serious business.

## ***TABLE 1: OPPOSING FORCES IN THE SIEGE OF CINCINNATI***

### FEDERALS

Maj. Gen. Lewis Wallace

Staff: Chief of Staff-Col. J.C. Elston, Jr.

Chief of Artillery-Maj. C.M. Willard

18 military and civilian aides

Regularly Enlisted Forces

First Division, Brig. Gen. A.J. Smith

Second Division, Brig. Gen. G. Clay Smith

Defense line west from Ft. Mitchel-Brig. Gen. John Love

Defense line east from Ft. Mitchel-Brig. Gen. H. M. Judah

Units:

18th U.S. Infantry (2 companies plus 400 recruits)

45th Ohio Infantry, Col. Ben P. Runkle

50th Ohio Infantry, Col. Jonah R. Taylor

79th Ohio Infantry, Col. Henry G. Kennett

83rd Ohio Infantry, Col. Fred W. Moore

89th Ohio Infantry, Col. John G. Marshall

96th Ohio Infantry, Col. Joseph W. Vance

97th Ohio Infantry, Col. John Q. Lane

99th Ohio Infantry, Col. Albert Langworthy, Col. P.T. Swaine

100th Ohio Infantry, Col. John C. Groom

101st Ohio Infantry, Col. Leander Stem

102nd Ohio Infantry, Col. William Given

103rd Ohio Infantry, Col. John S. Casement

104th Ohio Infantry, Col. James W. Reiley

106th Ohio Infantry, Col. George B. Wright

108th Ohio Infantry, Col. George T. Limberg

17th Ohio Independent Battery, Capt. Ambrose A. Blount

18th Michigan Infantry, Col. Charles E. Doolittle

22nd Michigan Infantry, Col. Moses Wisner

80th Indiana Infantry, Col. Charles Denby

84th Indiana Infantry, Col. Morris

85th Indiana Infantry, Col. John P. Baird

86th Indiana Infantry, Col. Orville S. Hamilton

101st Indiana Infantry, Col. William Gavin

10th Kentucky Cavalry, Col. Joshua Tevis

21st Indiana Indep. Batt'y., Capt. William W. Andrew

Local Militia Units and Volunteers

Pearl Street Rifles (later 1st Reserve Regiment Cincinnati Volunteers), Col. Thomas R. Roberts, Lt. Col. William H. Neff

Burnet Rifles (expanded to regiment), Col. Robert W. Burnet

Guthrie Grays (expanded to regiment), Col. J.V. Guthrie

Captain Bard's Independent Infantry Company, Capt. S.W. Bard

Wallace Guards Independent Cavalry Company, Capt. C. Worthington

Ohio River guard force (15,000 men), Mr. R.M. Corwine

Steamboat Flotilla (16 armed vessels), Capt. John Duble

#### Engineer Office

Maj. James H. Simpson, Chief of Topographic Engineers  
Lt. Miles D. McAlester, in charge of works west of Licking River  
Col. (ret.) C.H. Whittlesev, in charge of works east of Licking River  
7 civilian assistants

#### Fatigue and Labor Forces

Negro Brigade, Col. William M. Dickson  
Citizens Labor Corps, Col. J.V. Guthrie

Notes on Federal composition, strength, and casualties: The units listed were those actually in position prior to Heth's retreat on 11-12 September 1862. Various reinforcements not listed here continued to arrive throughout September. Strength of regular military forces on 11 September approximately 22,500; strength of Cincinnati militia units, about 2,300; yielding total military strength of approximately 25,000. The "Squirrel Hunters" and other armed civilian volunteers amounted to some 60,000, giving a grand total of 85,000 armed defenders on 11 September. Casualties from skirmishes near Fort Mitchel: 104th Ohio Infantry killed, 5 wounded.

#### CONFEDERATES Brig. Gen. Henry Heth

#### Fourth Brigade, Col. Alexander W. Reynolds

20th Alabama Infantry, Col. I.W. Garrott  
36th Georgia Infantry, Col. Jesse A. Glenn  
39th Georgia Infantry, Col. J.T. McConnell  
43rd Georgia Infantry, Col. Skidmore Harris  
3rd Maryland Battery, Capt. Henry B. Latrobe

#### Churchill's Division, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Churchill

1st Brigade, Col. T.H. McCray  
31st Arkansas Infantry, Maj. J.W. Clark  
10th Texas Dismounted Cavalry, Col. C.R. Earp  
11th Texas Dismounted Cavalry, Col. J.C. Burks  
14th Texas Dismounted Cavalry, Col. M.D. Ector  
15th/32nd Texas Dismounted Cavalry, Lt. Col. James Weaver

#### 2nd Brigade, Col. Evander McNair

4th Arkansas Infantry, Lt. Col. H.G. Bunn  
30th Arkansas Infantry, Col. C.J. Turnbull  
18th Arkansas Mounted Rifles, Col. R.W. Harper  
2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles, Col. J.A. Williamson  
4th Arkansas Battalion, Maj. J.A. Ross  
Arkansas Battery, Capt. J.T. Humphreys

#### 2nd Brigade, Cleburne's Division, Col. Benjamin J. Hill

13th Arkansas Infantry, Lt. Col. A.R. Brown  
15th Arkansas Infantry Col. Lucius E. Polk  
2nd (Bate's) Tennessee Infantry, Capt. Chas. P. Moore  
5th (35th) Tennessee Infantry, Lt. Col. Joseph A. Smith  
48th Tennessee Infantry, Lt. Col. T.R. Hughes  
Texas Battery, Capt. James P. Douglas

#### Cavalry Brigade, Col. Benjamin J. Allston

1st (Ashby's 2nd) Tennessee Cavalry, Col. Henry M. Ashby  
2nd (13th) Tennessee Cavalry Battalion, Lt. Col. G.W. McKenzie

Notes on Confederate composition, strength, and casualties: All of Kirby Smith's forces were in a constant state of flux during this period. Heth was assigned parts of four divisions for his move north, and many of the brigades operated independently of their own division headquarters. Accounts of Heth's strength vary, but reports generally put his entire division at 3,000 men, and Reynolds's Brigade at 3,000 men. Of Heth's own division, he took only two regiments of Allston's Brigade north of Paris. The units from Churchill's and Cleburne's divisions were somewhat depleted from the battle of Richmond, 30 August 1862, and as Col. Hill reported the strength of his brigade as 1,297 men on that morning (before the battle-his brigade lost 243 men on that day), we can assume that these units probably had a maximum strength of 1,300 each at Covington. This would give Heth a grand total of approximately 8,000 men. Most Confederate accounts, including Heth's own memoirs, credit Heth with 6,000-7,000 men. The estimate given herein of 8,000 men in the column that menaced Cincinnati is the best that can be drawn from existing records, and should be considered a maximum number. Confederate casualties in the skirmishes in front of Fort Mitchel, if any, were unreported. but one man of the 4th Arkansas Infantry died on 13 September 1862, and was buried just south of Covington.

Sources: O.R. 1, Vol. 16, Parts I and 2. Various unit histories and participant diaries, letters, and reminiscences.