



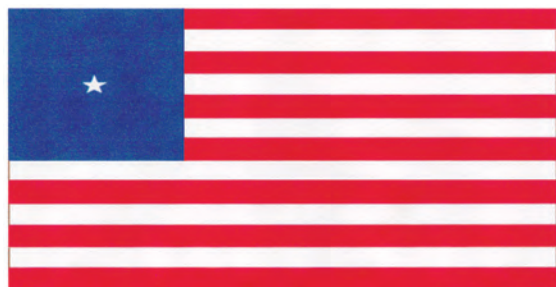
Secession Flags





Secession Flags of Missouri, 1860-61

Even before South Carolina's formal secession in December 1860, there was a strong states' rights movement in Missouri. In his work *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, Union sympathizer Henry Clay Warmoth lamented the loss of his legal career as a result of Lincoln's election. He writes that Democrats "took charge of everything. They began to organize militia companies all over Southwest Missouri, and barbecues and picnics held at which the most extreme views were expressed." In Lebanon, Missouri, "all of the girls were singing Dixie,



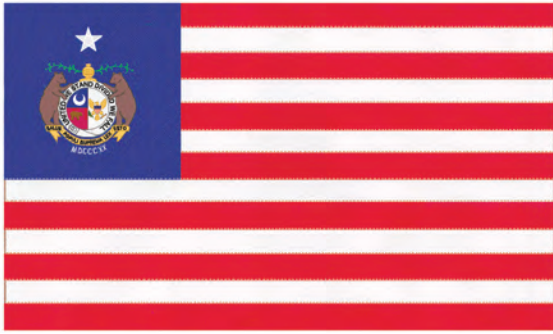
and cutting acquaintance of those of us who were suspected of being friendly to the Union. They [the Union men] did not begin to realize the situation until they saw the old starry flag hauled down from the village staff, all the stars torn from it except one, and then raised again as the flag of the Sovereign State of Missouri, and to hell with the Union!"¹

The events in Missouri were watched with anxious curiosity by their neighbors across the rivers. On March 20, 1861, the *Daily Times* of Leavenworth, Kansas, exclaimed that Platte City had "seceded" and expressed concern that the "secession movement has extended its operations to our very borders." The report, gleaned from a Missouri newspaper entitled the *Tenth Legion*, told of the raising of an emblem of Southern independence prepared by several "public spirited ladies," which was "thrown to the breeze amid appropriate ceremonies"; the article describes excited spectators, the playing of "Dixie's Land" by the Platte City Amateur Band, speeches (by Hugh Swaney, Colonel Pitt, and Mr. Scott Jones), cheering, and the raising of the flag on a "strong ash pole."²

In early 1861 a secession flag was raised in Shelbyville. "The flag was prepared by the secession ladies of Shelbyville and was identical with that of the Confederate states."³ As would the majority of secession flags to follow, the Confederate national flag was used as the pattern, which came to be known as the 1st National.



On March 4, 1861, the day of President Lincoln's inauguration, a group of Southern patriots demonstrating for states' rights ascended the dome of the St. Louis Court House and installed a state flag. James Quinlan, Rock Champion, and Arthur McCoy "fixed the colors about midnight" while Basil Duke and Colton Greene "stood guard below."⁴ This flag is also described as "an American ensign" with only one star and bearing the Missouri coat of arms.⁵



At the same time, over the Berthold mansion, a flag described as a “nondescript conceit—a red field, emblazoned with a white cross, star and crescent—made by Arthur McCoy’s wife” was unfurled. According to one source, however, this flag was reported by a newspaper as being an “ugly, doleful, uninspiring piece of cloth consistent of a yaller cross, crescent and a star arranged in an angle in a deep indigo-blue field,” while another newspaper

described it as “nearly black. A crescent was on one corner, a cross turned upside down occupied its center, and the other corner was occupied by a single star.”⁶ The *Daily Times* of Leavenworth also covered the raising of this thoroughly reported banner, describing it as having a “single stripe of blue through the middle of the flag.”⁷

Also in March 1861, following the first secession meeting of Pulaski County, a pole was erected on the southwest edge of the courthouse square and a “large Confederate flag” was hoisted. “[I]t is said that Theodore Taylor and others took the flag with them when they started off for the Southern army [7th Division, Missouri State Guard].”⁸



On March 16, 1861, a flag was raised at a secession meeting in Emerson, Marion County. This flag consisted of “three stripes and fifteen stars.” On one side was written, “Equality and Union,” and on the other side, “Equal Rights or Secession,”⁹ taking advantage of the large white space on the field of 1st National pattern flags. Other groups would similarly personalize this white space, which seemed to invite patriotic slogans.



On March 30, 1861, a flag was raised in Palmyra, Marion County. It had three stripes (red, white, red) and a blue field containing eight stars in a square. On the center white stripe was written, “Our Rights or Secession.”¹⁰

In April, in St. Joseph, Missouri, a “secession flag was unfurled . . . and carried through the streets by a mounted company.” In Independence, Missouri, it was reported that “prominent places were displaying secession flags.”¹¹



“Early in April [at Monroe City] notice went out that there would be a speaking on the political issues of the day by Col. Thomas L. Anderson of Palmyra, Mo., an ex-congressman, and a secessionist flag would be raised.” When the flag was hoisted aloft, “the crowd cheered, and, as its folds fluttered to the breeze,

Colonel Anderson was introduced and made one of his telling and captivating speeches.”¹²

At Cape Girardeau, a “secession flag,” described as a seven-star 1st National flag, was raised.¹³

Then, at Jackson, Missouri, “three Pelican flags were hoisted on the public square . . . and each one cut down successively. The ‘boys’ are about to erect three more in their stead *and see that they are not cut down.*”¹⁴

A Southern Rights meeting was held in Columbia on April 20, 1861. Three flags floated over this gathering, “the Stars and Stripes, the Border State flag, and the flag of the Confederate States.” As this meeting was winding down, a “number of gentlemen, bearing aloft the flag of the Confederate States, with fifteen stars emblazoned thereon, edged their way into the crowded courtroom and were greeted with three cheers for Jeff. Davis and the Southern Confederacy.”¹⁵

On that same day a secession meeting was also held in the towns of Carrollton and Boonville. In the latter location, the meeting was addressed by George G. Vest and a fifteen-star Confederate flag was raised. Secession flags were also raised in Kansas City and St. Joseph.¹⁶ Of the meeting in Boonville, Nancy Chapman Jones wrote, “The court house was crowded last Saturday. Mr. Vest made a secession speech, the palmetto flag was waving over Boonville and the secession feeling is gaining ground very rapidly.”¹⁷

In Warsaw, during the term of county court following the firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, “there was a great gathering of the people . . . and a rebel flag was raised on the courthouse lot, on the east side.”¹⁸



On April 22, 1861, “a large secession meeting was held in LaGrange. A secession flag was raised over the store of J.H. Talbot & Co.”¹⁹

On April 29, in Monticello, Lewis County, “a secession flag was raised over the court house. The banner, a nondescript affair, was composed of three stripes—red, white and blue. On one side was sketched the coat-of-arms of Missouri, and a single star; on the other an eagle and a lone star.”²⁰ According to a newspaper account,

the eagle on the flag was gray.²¹ Modern-day Missourians would hardly call this flag a “nondescript affair” since it quite closely duplicates Missouri’s present state flag.

“In May, a pole bearing a secession flag was raised in Breckenridge, under the supervision of the ‘Breckenridge Guards,’ a Secession company commanded by Capt. E. R. A. Stewart, G. W. Withers, and perhaps others, and Miss Sallie Napier, on behalf of the ladies, made a spirited address, calling on the men of the community to rally in defense of their homes against ‘the Lincoln invaders.’”²²

“With every day we come closer to the South,” a letter writer explained, describing the activities in Jefferson City on May 9, 1861. “Today a [rebel] flag was hoisted in front of the governor’s house. A significant amount of powder (26,000 [pounds]) has arrived here with approximately one hundred soldiers to guard it. A man made the remark that if Blair and Bornstein would come

from St. Louis with their regiments, they could easily capture the governor and both houses. That spread like wildfire. Suddenly everybody was armed.”²³

In Savannah, Andrew County, a Palmetto flag was unfurled from the courthouse cupola, and on May 10, the day of the secession meeting, another Southern flag was hoisted beside the first one, both of which were guarded by well-known Southern men.²⁴

On May 11, in Bloomington, Macon County, the citizens raised “a splendid Southern flag with 15 stars.”²⁵

Then, an encounter in St. Louis between Union soldiers led by Nathaniel Lyon and pro-Confederate citizens resulted in the deaths of nearly 30 people. News of what came to be called the “Camp Jackson massacre,” precipitated and followed by Lyon’s aggressive arrogance, led to a clear line of division. Many counties in Missouri came down clearly on the side of states’ rights and sovereignty. An anonymous author writing from Bloomfield, in Stoddard County, wrote, “No man in this county dare say he is for the Union, or to display the Stars and Stripes. The secession flag has been the only ensign afloat here for weeks past.”²⁶

Following the Camp Jackson massacre, the “women of Arcadia decided to show their loyalty to the South by making and floating the Stars and Bars of the Southern Confederacy. They did this, the leaders being Mrs. Lucinda Jane Hinchey and Mrs. Mary Ann Gregory, daughters of Allan W. Holloman, a slave owner, but at heart a Union man. They were assisted by Mrs. Jane Edwards, wife of the clerk of Iron County, and other women. They made a beautiful silk flag and it was displayed above the circuit court house in Ironton.” This flag was eventually burned by its makers to prevent its capture by Union invaders.²⁷

After the Camp Jackson massacre, United States troops took an increasingly aggressive role in subduing states’ rights activities. On the evening of May 15, an expedition was planned and put under the command of Captain Cole, Company H, 5th Regiment U.S. Volunteers. They left the arsenal in St. Louis and arrived at Potosi at 3:00 A.M. A “chain of sentinels” was placed around the town. On their return to St. Louis, the train halted at De Soto, in Jefferson County, where there was to be a secession meeting and flag raising. “Here they found a company of secession cavalry drilling for the occasion, which took to their heels as soon as they got sight of the United States troops.” The Federals discovered the pole, one hundred feet high, and raised their own flag. Dr. Franklin and Sergeant Walker were directed to the house where the secession flag had been reported.

After searching the residence, the lady of the house was discovered sitting on and concealing with her hoops a “secession flag 30 feet long and 9 feet wide. The Doctor bore off his prize in triumph to the camp.”²⁸



In May 1861, a “red, white, and red” flag was hoisted in the town square at Warsaw, Missouri. Mrs. C. C. Rainwater remembered, “the women made the flag and aided in sending it aloft, and greeted it when its folds were unfurled. This, I believe, was the first Confederate flag raised in the county.”²⁹

The secession flags could be seen at “various points” in Livingstone County.

“The ladies of Chillicothe prepared a fine banner, but circumstances prevented it being given to the breeze.”³⁰

At Liberty, “A fine secession flag was raised amid the firing of the captured cannon [from the Liberty arsenal] and the cheers of the multitude, men and women.” In mid-1861, Federal troops entered the town and “after cutting down the secession flag which for some weeks had flown undisturbed . . . they returned to Kansas City unmolested.”³¹

“At Tuscumbia the first rebel flag was hoisted on the tree near Simpson’s store.”³²

There were a number of secession flags flying in Montgomery County. During the week of a secession meeting at High Hill, during which the crowd was addressed by Robert P. Terrill of Danville, a large secession flag flew as a symbol of states’ rights. Another “lone star” flag was raised at Wellsville and Granville. Mr. Nunnally displayed one at his hotel in Danville. “At Jonesburg the secessionists were noisy and demonstrative.”³³

As Federal troops began to occupy as yet defenseless towns in Missouri, their first efforts at crushing the resistance involved the ferreting out of its symbols. They often treated such discoveries as the battle won. They arrived at Renick, Missouri, on June 18, 1861. “Upon getting from the cars, a few of us proceeded to the ‘Yancey House,’ and in about two minutes, Capt Cummings had nosed out a big secession flag, and a second later a thousand men were hurrahing over it as if crazy. It was a very large one, had the Palmetto tree, and the coiled rattlesnake, with the deadly motto, ‘Noli me tangere’ [*Don’t touch me*].”³⁴

“Some of Col. Bayles[’] command [Lyons Guards Rifle Battalion, later part of 11th Missouri (U.S.) Volunteer Infantry Regiment] took possession of the Restaurant of Vanfleet and Hibbard [in Rolla] yesterday, and found a secession flag, with motto, ‘We will live and die with Dixie,’ in the stove, and a few guns and some powder under the floor. The property was confiscated for fear of spontaneous combustion.”³⁵

Though northern Missouri was coming under tighter control by the Federal forces, in southern Missouri, Confederate recruiting officers were able to move about and conduct their business in relative freedom. In the summer of 1861, West Plains, in Howell County and only twenty miles from the Arkansas border, provided such an environment. With great popular support for the Confederate cause, the area attracted Southern authorities who “at once commenced recruiting for the Confederate services . . . The Confederate recruiting officers published a public meeting in West Plains about the first or tenth of July . . . A few days before the meeting was to be held at West Plains the Confederates sent to the pinery and procured a long pine pole, hoisted it at the corner of Durham’s store at the northwest corner of the public square and swung to the breeze the stars and bars.”³⁶

During the summer of 1861, while Missouri towns were celebrating the choice of secession, other towns were being overwhelmed and occupied by invading forces. Throughout that fateful summer, even while in the throes of organization, the Missouri State Guard was fighting nobly and successfully in defense of homes at Boonville, Carthage, Oak Hills, Dry Wood, and Lexington. The legitimate government of Missouri, led by Gov. Claiborne Fox Jackson, displaced by the

arrogance of Union might, fled in search of a temporary safe haven.

Although this text has categorized these early Missouri flags as “Secession Flags” and “State Guard Flags,” it could be that many would fit both categories. Some secession flags were raised only to be brought down and given to departing troops. It might be assumed that a secession flag would be any flag that preceded secession. But Missouri’s formal secession was delayed by the chaotic events of the summer of 1861. Finally, after the defeat and death of Lyons, and upon Governor Jackson’s finding safe harbor in Neosho, the displaced but still legal government of Missouri wrote and signed into law the Secession Ordinances.

AN ACT declaring the political ties heretofore existing between the State of Missouri and the United States of America dissolved.

WHEREAS, the Government of the United States, in the possession and under the control of a sectional party, has wantonly violated the compact originally made between said government and the State of Missouri, by invading with hostile armies the soil of the State, attacking and making prisoners the militia whilst legally assembled under the State laws, forcibly occupying the State capital, and attempting, through the instrumentality of domestic traitors, to usurp the State government, seizing and destroying private property, and murdering with fiendish malignity peaceable citizens, men, women, and children, together with other acts of atrocity, indicating a deep settled hostility toward the people of Missouri and their institutions; and

WHEREAS, the present administration of the government of the United States has utterly ignored the Constitution, subverted the government as constructed and intended by its makers, and established a despotic and arbitrary power instead thereof; Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the general assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:

That all political ties of every character now existing between the government of the United States of America and the people and government of the State of Missouri, resuming the sovereignty granted by compact to the said United States upon admission of said State into the Federal Union, does again take its place as a free and independent republic amongst the nations of the earth.

Under most extraordinary and stressful circumstances, this act was passed by the Senate on October 28, 1861, by the House on October 30, and signed into law by Gov. Claiborne Fox Jackson on October 31, 1861, bringing to an end the lengthy but exciting period of Missouri’s secession flags.

1. Henry Clay Warmoth, *War, Politics and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), 12-13.
2. *Leavenworth (Kans.) Daily Times*, March 20, 1861, p. 2.

3. *History of Monroe and Shelby Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1884), 702.
4. Colton Greene, "The Plot to Seize St. Louis," ed. by Bruce Allardice, *Civil War Times Illustrated* 35 (May 1998): 17.
5. William C. Winter, *The Civil War in St. Louis: A Guided Tour* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1994), 31-32.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Leavenworth (Kans.) Daily Times*, March 7, 1861, p. 2.
8. R. I. Holcombe, *History of Marion County, Missouri* (1884; reprint, Hannibal, Mo.: Walsworth Pub. Co., 1979), 366.
9. *History of Laclede, Camden, Dallar, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps and Dent Counties, Missouri* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889), 132.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Baton Rouge (La.) Daily Advocate*, April 3, 1861.
12. Walter Williams, ed., *A History of Northeast Missouri*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1913), 480.
13. *Charleston (Mo.) Courier*, April 12, 1861.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *History of Boone County, Missouri* (St. Louis: Western Historical Co., 1882), 402.
16. *History of Carroll County, Missouri* (St. Louis: Western Historical Co., 1881), 291.
17. Nancy Chapman Jones to "My Dear Mary," April 22, 1861, in the possession of Nan O'Meara Strang, but available at www.rootsweb.com/~mocooper/Military/Jones_Letters.htm.
18. *History of Cole, Moniteau, Benton, Miller, Maries and Osage Counties, Missouri* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing, 1889), 493.
19. *History of Lewis, Clark, Knox and Scotland Counties, Missouri* (1887; reprint, Marceline, Mo.: Walsworth Publishing Co., 1981), 70.
20. *Ibid.*, 71.
21. *LaGrange (Mo.) National American*, April 27, 1861.
22. *History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1886), 173.
23. Adolf E. Schroeder and Carla Schulz-Geisberg, eds., *Hold Dear, as Always: Jette, A German Immigrant Life in Letters* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988), 177-78.
24. *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties, Missouri* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1888), 221.
25. *History of Randolph and Macon Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1884), 852.
26. *St. Louis Democrat*, June 25, 1861.
27. Allan Hinchey, *Cape Girardeau (Mo.) Community*, Sept. ____, 1926.
28. *St. Louis Democrat*, May 17, 1861.
29. C. C. Rainwater, "Reminiscences from 1861 to 1865," in *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, comp. by United Daughters of the Confederacy, Missouri Division (1913; reprint, Dayton: Morningside House Inc., 1988), 18.
30. *History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1886), 758.
31. *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1885), 200, 204.
32. *History of Cole, Moniteau, Benton, Miller, Maries and Osage Counties, Missouri* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889), 553.
33. *History of St. Charles, Montgomery, and Warren Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis: National Historical Co., 1885), 606.
34. Michael E. Banasik, ed., *Missouri in 1861: The Civil War Letters of Franc B. Wilkie, Newspaper Correspondent* (Iowa City: Camp Pope Bookshop, 2001), 8.
35. *Rolla (Mo.) Express*, June 24, 1861.
36. William Monks, *A History of Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas: Being an Account of the Early Settlements, the Civil War, the Ku-Klux, and Times of Peace*, ed. by John F. Bradbury, Jr., and Lou Wehmer (reprint, Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 33.