

PATRIOTIC PALS TAILS OF THE CIVIL WAR

By Chris Stuckenschneider

CHAPTER 2: Sergeant Dick, Militia Dog of the Grays

Yeah, you're back! And I didn't even have to sit up and beg. I've got to practice some serious wag because I'm going to introduce you to a stoic canine Walt and I came across in St. Louis.

A 21-gun salute to Sergeant Dick, an American Staffordshire Terrier, mascot of the St. Louis Grays, a militia involved in the Camp Jackson incident.

An impressive portrait of Sarge hangs in the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis, a city where he's got roots as deep as the Mississippi. That river flows through St. Louis from the site of the first Civil War skirmish west of the Mississippi at Camp Jackson.

At the start of the Civil War, Missouri was as mixed up as a pup without a pedigree. Was the state Union or Confederate? Missouri was a slave state and it was a Border State, one of five whose borders touched both a Confederate and a "free" state. (Free states were those that didn't hanker to slavery.)

Militias, like the one Sergeant Dick was in, were like today's National Guard—keeping citizens safe and providing defense. The groups were proud of the way they looked in uniform, strutting their stuff during formations. The St. Louis Grays marched in parades with Sergeant Dick doing double-time. The regimental pooch loved his role, until the Camp Jackson incident, May 10, 1861.

Back then Missouri's top leader was Gov. Claiborne F. Jackson. He claimed he wanted Missouri to remain in the Union, but actually he wanted the state to go Confederate. The governor mustered (which means gathered) militia from across Missouri. The St. Louis Grays answered his call.

Crafty Jackson wanted to take over an arsenal in St. Louis where guns and munitions were thought to be stored. Some claimed control of the arsenal meant control of St. Louis, and control of St. Louis meant control of Missouri.



Editorial illustration depicting the rioting in St. Louis after the Camp Jackson incident.

The Union had a lion at their helm—Capt. Nathaniel Lyon, the Union's commanding officer at the arsenal. He got wind of Jackson's plan and raised a pro-Union militia,

the Home Guard, primarily composed of U.S. citizens recently arrived from Germany. As slick as you please, Lyon and his men moved the munitions and guns to Illinois.

Then, as legend has it, Lyon dressed like a woman and snuck into Camp Jackson to spy on the St. Louis Grays. The next day he and his Home Guard and regular army troops took over Camp Jackson without so much as a fight. The Grays didn't want to surrender, but they knew they were hopelessly outnumbered.

Word of the incident spread like gossip at an ice cream social. The hearsay inflamed tempers in a crowd gathered to watch Lyon escort the militia he'd cap-

tured at Camp Jackson through the St. Louis streets on their long march back to the arsenal. It's believed Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman, who soon joined the Union, were among those watching the procession.

They didn't witness a pretty scene. Imagine if your team lost in soccer and the winners marched you in front of a bunch of hecklers making fun of you for losing, or in the case of the Southern sympathizers, because of what they believed in.

Tempers flared as the crowd grew in size. A mob scene developed. No one knows who fired the first shot—does blame matter when it comes to sacrificing lives?

All Sergeant Dick reported was a deafening shot followed by repeated staccatos. He saw people drop to the ground, others scatter like chipmunks seeking cover. More than 24 people were killed, most of them civilians, with triple that number injured.

How had Missouri come to this, violence in the streets—peace-loving folks drawing guns on one another? The city's fate was sealed. St. Louis would be Union; in the coming year all of Missouri followed suit.



Sergeant Dick of the St. Louis Grays by J. Lockhart Smith, 1863. Missouri History Museum

PAPER TRAINING



Sergeant Dick was a militia mascot. What is your school's mascot? What purpose does it serve? Can you find examples of mascots in the newspaper?