Skirmish at Vollrath Farm

By October 1864, the horrors of the Civil War had reached most Boonville families. It was then that Boonville citizens learned that a large force of Confederates was approaching from the southeast. These were the men of Maj. Gen. Sterling Price’s divisions that were striking across the state in Price’s 1864 Expedition.

Price had entered Missouri from Arkansas on September 19, 1864, and moved from southeast Missouri into the Missouri River valley. He was moving west after a bitter defeat at Pilot Knob, Iron County, on September 27, and a skirmish at Jefferson City on October 7. His forces entered Boonville on October 11, 1864 and there was a brief skirmish in downtown Boonville as the Union home guard rapidly departed the scene. The Union cavalry was following Price after the action at Jefferson City, and were close on his heels. Part of this cavalry was the Sixth Cavalry, Provisional Enlisted Missouri Militia, which approached the town on an old road from the direction of Piggas in southeast Cooper County. That road, now severed by Interstate 70 at the location of the old stop east of Boonville’s Route B exit, is called Rankin Mill Road north of the Interstate. South of I-70 the road is Route B. The Civil War era Tipton Road intersection. (See map). Grass now covers the historic roadway.

Confederate losses were reported to be 15 killed and 28 so severely wounded that they could not be moved. Nightfall came with exhausted men on both sides sleeping on their weapons. General Price moved west out of Boonville on October 12, 1864. As he left, his troops stole horses and supplies and then the Union forces that pursued him did the same thing. Cooper County was left destitute, especially of horses. It was said that “hardly a good one” was left. This was the last fight the citizens of Boonville would see during the Civil War, but another fight was about to begin for Boonville. The fight for economic prosperity again once the Civil War ended.


Image credit: James Higbie Collection.