

# Skirmish at Vollrath Farm

Missouri's

# CIVIL WAR

## A Boonville Family

George and Rosina Fuchs Vollrath owned this property during the Civil War and the story of this family is very typical of the German experience in Missouri. George and Rosina were born in different regions of what is today Germany. George was a potter, miller and farmer. He and his



Boonville Pottery Works, Jim Higbie Collection

brother Nicholas bought an existing pottery business that was called the Boonville Pottery. By 1850 the pottery used 600 tons of clay and 1,400 cords of wood on an annual basis, costing \$580 per year. Sixteen people worked at the pottery and the annual wages totaled \$500.00. George invested \$6,000.00 in the operation and produced 200,000 gallons of stoneware valued at \$12,500 in 1850. By 1860 the pottery works had doubled the amount of its production.

George Vollrath died in 1865. At that time, approximately 70% of the utilitarian stoneware pottery used in Missouri was made by the Boonville Pottery. George's estate was valued at \$35,000.00, which was a princely sum for that time. The estate inventory reveals that the family that furnished their home in fine style, with mahogany furniture, carpets, clocks, mirrors, and even a sewing machine. Rosina died in 1906. She lived in the family's city home on the north side of



City Home, Jim Higbie Collection

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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 Enrolled Missouri Militia, which approached the town on an old road from the direction of Pisgah in southeast Cooper County. That road, now severed by Interstate 70 at the location of the rest 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 U.

Union Lieut. Col. John F. McMahan of the Sixth Cavalry described the action in his official report as follows:

"... bivouacked on the night of the 10th twelve miles south of Boonville. On the 11th we moved at 6 o'clock in the direction of Boonville. I was at once ordered to move with my command to the right until I struck the road leading from Pisgah to

Boonville; I then turned to the left, marching on the right flank of our main column immediately upon Boonville, driving in the enemy's pickets, killing one and capturing another. I was ordered to halt until Col. Gravely came up when my regiment was dismounted, deployed in line of skirmishers, and moved upon the enemy secreted in thick underwoods. We engaged them warmly for two hours, driving him until ordered by Colonel Gravely to fall back, which I did in perfect order, having 2 enlisted men killed, 1 commissioned officer and 4 enlisted men wounded."

This skirmish took place here on the Vollrath Farm. The farm was heavily wooded at the time of the Civil War. Rankin Mill Road intersects Highway B south of the stoplight or about a quarter mile south of this panel.

Approximately 300 feet down Rankin Mill Road is 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.



## Battle at the Tete Saline

On October 12, 1864, a furious cavalry battle occurred several miles south of this place on the Old Tipton Road. The action began at dawn on the 12th, at a bridge over the Petite Saline Creek (known locally as the Tete Saline). The Confederates occupying Boonville were pressed by the 5th Missouri Militia Cavalry (Union), commanded by Lt. Col. Joseph Eppstein of Boonville. The Confederates in this area were led by Howard County native Col. Sidney Jackman. They fended off Eppstein's charges for several hours and finally held their ground at a place on Route B just 3/4 mile south of Interstate 70.



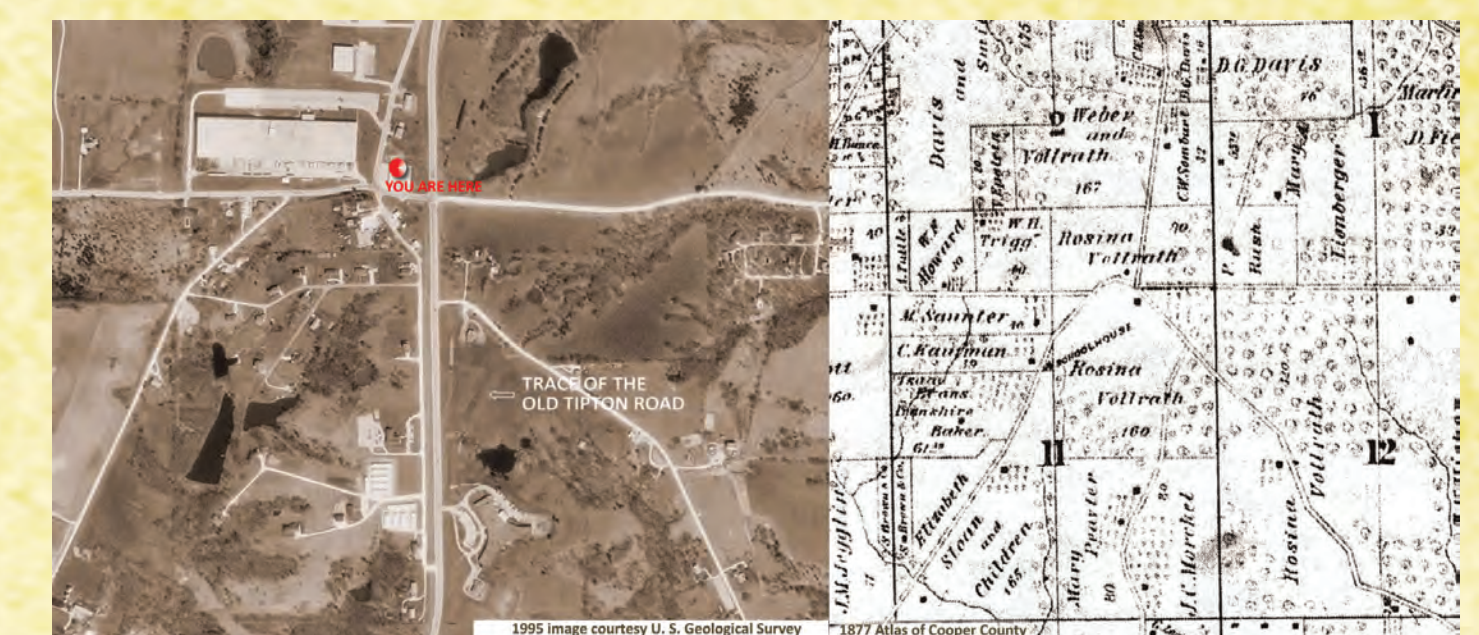
Sidney Jackman

## A Boonville Family

(continued)

Locust Street across from the pottery works. The Vollraths had always lived in town, but they had extensive property holdings around the Boonville area. They were leaders in founding the German Evangelical Church in Boonville in 1853, which exists today as the United Church of Christ. The family also ran a milling operation on Water Street on the Missouri river, now the location of the Boonville MFA. They had an extensive vineyard in their back yard and a large wine cellar dug into the side of the hill east of the house. The Vollraths owned slaves. According to contemporary slave schedules, one of the slaves was a skilled potter.

George and Rosina are buried in Walnut Grove Cemetery in Boonville.



Sources: Van Ravenswaay, Charles, The Arts and Architecture of German Settlements in Missouri: A Survey of a Vanishing Culture, (University of Missouri Press: Columbia, Missouri, 1977), page 104.; Official Records, Series 1 - Volume 41 (Part 1), p. 407, Rpt. No. 38; pp. 1001-1002.

Image credit: James Higbie Collection.