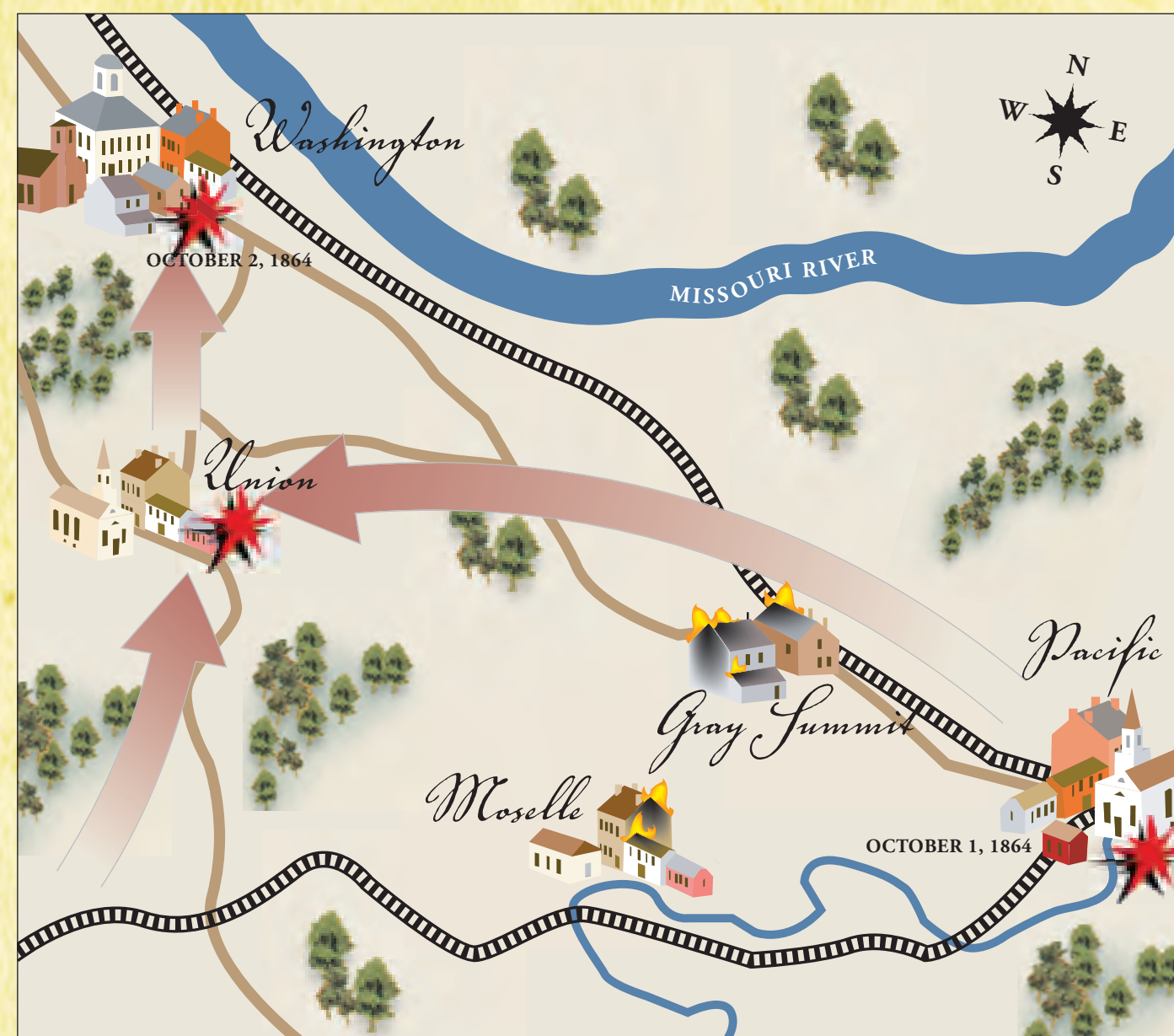


Detour To Hermann

Sterling Price's 1864 Army of Missouri was divided into three divisions, commanded respectively by Confederate Generals Joseph "JO" Shelby, James Fagan and John Sappington Marmaduke. After a disastrous confrontation with Union troops at Pilot Knob, Missouri, on September 27, 1864, Price's columns moved north by various routes, including present-day Missouri Highway 47. The entire force camped at and near Union from October 1-3, 1864.



Shelby and Fagan's Divisions moved west from here by way of the Old State Road, still existing and running the breadth of Franklin County to the north of, and parallel to, U.S. Highway 50. With Lawther's 10th Missouri regiment leading the way late on October 1, Marmaduke's Division moved out of Union, some say to punish the largely German-American population along the Missouri River from Washington to Hermann.

Moving north, Marmaduke's men attacked Washington on October 2, 1864. Marmaduke then turned west, tracking the route of today's Missouri Highway 100. His forces entered and sacked New Haven on October 3, 1864, finding there a train abandoned on the Pacific Railroad with a shipment of arms, ammunition and military supplies. Later that same day, Marmaduke confronted a small militia force at Hermann, which held off the Confederate troops for a time by skillful use of a small cannon. After capturing Hermann, Marmaduke moved west, rejoining the bulk of Price's forces at Linn, in Osage County.

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Vitt's Mill

Missouri's

CIVIL WAR

The City of Union was founded in 1825. It was the second county seat of Franklin County, replacing New Port, which served the county from the time it separated from St. Louis County in 1818. In 1859, John T. Vitt constructed the brick building that stands before you, and opened a roller mill and, later, a sawmill, on this spot.

Early in 1861, citizens of Franklin County were taking sides in the secession crisis that held the country's attention. Militias supporting each side sprung up and began drilling for an anticipated fight. On February 22, 1861, after a heated debate at the old courthouse at Main and Church Streets, the county elected a pro-union delegate to a state-wide convention to consider the question of Missouri's secession. Delegates to the state convention voted overwhelmingly against succession on March 19, 1861, and the crisis in Missouri seemed to subside. Nevertheless, pressure was building in St. Louis. A huge arsenal of military supplies, arms and ammunition was located there. Troops were drilling and assembling in St. Louis to defend the city. On April 20, 1861, just eight days after secessionists fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, a Union school teacher by the name of David Murphy assembled at least 50 Union men. They enrolled in the federal service at Vitt's Mill, and soon moved out to join the forces in St. Louis. This group, which was to be the nucleus of Rifle Battalion Company A, First Missouri Infantry,

was the first raised in out-state Missouri to join in the defense of St. Louis.

On October 1, 1864, Confederate forces under Major General Sterling Price arrived in Union to confront a small force of Franklin County Militia that had fortified Vitt's Mill and a bridge over the Bourbeuse River, just to the south. Price, with an estimated 12,000 troops, entered Missouri from his base in Arkansas in mid-September, intent on capturing St. Louis. The Battle at Vitt's Mill began when elements of Price's Army arrived on the road from St. Clair on the afternoon of October 1. Colonel Robert Lawther's 10th Missouri Cavalry (CSA) forded the Bourbeuse a short distance to the east, and quickly cut the St. Louis Road,

north and east of here. Confederate cannoneers rained shot on the position from heights south of town. Many of the Mill's defenders escaped after their commander, Capt. Henry Detmer, gave the order "Everybody for himself." The number of Union casualties (killed, wounded or captured) at Vitt's Mill has been the subject of dispute, but Confederate reports claimed as many as 100 in all. After the fight, the Confederates used Vitt's Mill to grind flour.

Confederates occupied Union for several days, and Price's forces consolidated here from St. Clair and from Pacific, where a brigade of cavalry destroyed railroad facilities on October 1. They moved west in two wings towards Jefferson City, which they attacked on October 7.

Col. David Murphy

Born in Ireland in 1835, David Murphy immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of seven. Murphy came to St. Louis in 1858, then soon relocated to Franklin County. There, he taught school. In 1861, he raised a company, was elected its Lieutenant, and participated in early engagements at Camp Jackson (St. Louis), Boonville and Wilson's Creek. After transferring to the Artillery service, he served with distinction in command of a battery at Prairie Grove, Arkansas, and was at Vicksburg when that city fell on July 4, 1863. Murphy was promoted to Major as a result of his actions at Prairie Grove.

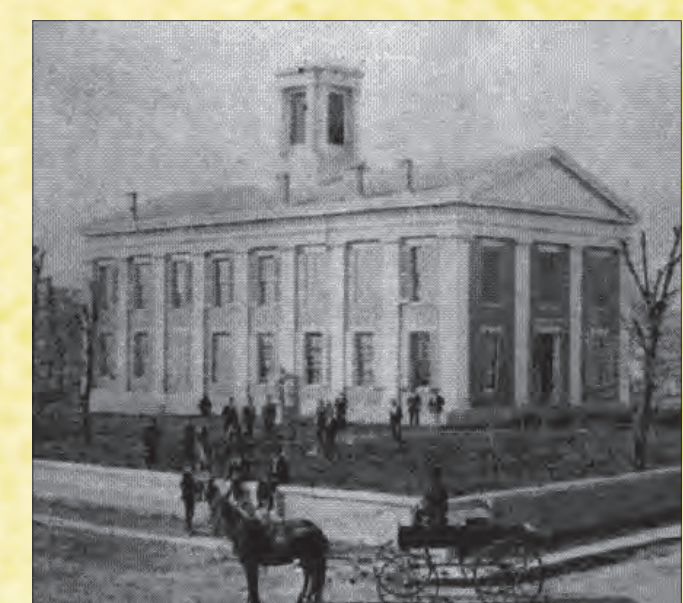


After Vicksburg, Murphy resigned his commission and returned to St. Louis. Soon after, he was arrested with other Franklin County men, charged with murder of a local Southern sympathizer. He was later released and never tried for the offense. In August, 1864, Murphy volunteered for service in the 47th Missouri Infantry, and re-entered the service with the rank of Lieutenant. During Price's Expedition, Murphy was with the Union garrison at Pilot Knob as it fought off repeated assaults by Price's men. Murphy took charge of the Union guns, and his expertise as an artillerist was one element that contributed to the garrison's successful defense of its position. At war's end, Murphy was a Colonel commanding the 50th Missouri Infantry (Union).

After the Civil War, Murphy became a lawyer and judge in St. Louis, and served for a time as the Circuit Attorney of St. Louis. Murphy died in 1916. He is buried in Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis.



Vitt's Mill, circa 1900



Franklin County Courthouse, 1847-1922

Sources: Goodspeed's History of Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Crawford, & Gasconade Counties, Missouri (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1888), pp.243-247; St. Louis, Walter Stevens, The History of the Fourth City 1763-1909, Vol. 2 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co. 1909); Robert Sidney Douglass, History of Southeast Missouri, Vol 1 (The Lewis Pub. Co., 1912), p. 632.

