

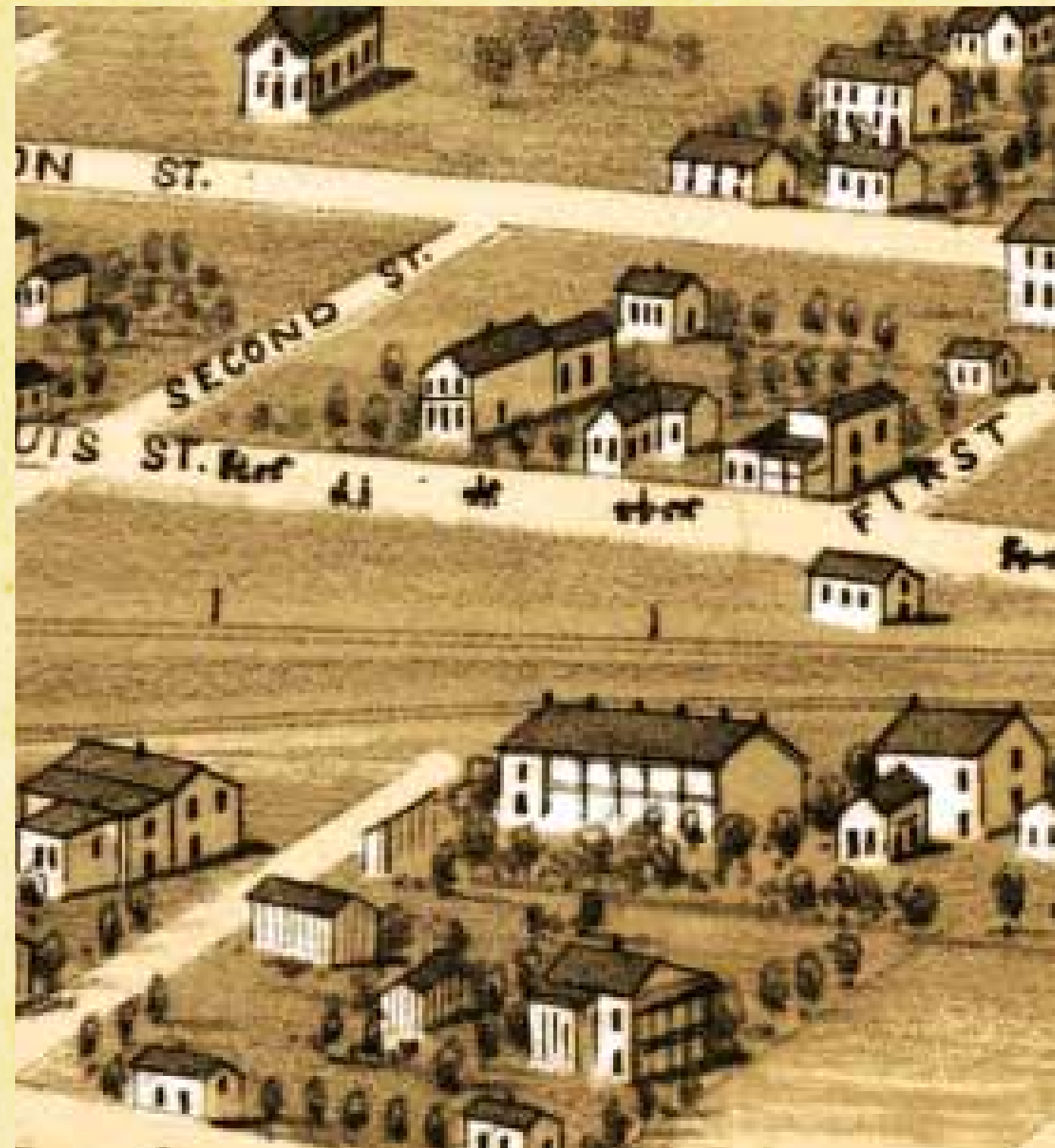
# The War on the Pacific Railroad

Missouri's

## CIVIL WAR

### Civil War Medicine

A military hospital was established near this point in 1861, and administered by the Western Sanitary Commission that was headquartered in St. Louis. St. Louis was a medical center during the



1869 view of Pacific

Civil War, and federal military authorities established a number of facilities to receive the sick and wounded who were not fit to travel to the St. Louis hospitals. Pacific's hospital was one of these.

The Catholic Sisters of the Holy Cross, from South Bend, Indiana, were nurses at the Pacific military hospital, one of 8 hospitals they served. At the military hospital in Mound City, Illinois, the Holy Cross sisters staffed the first hospital ship in American history, and as a result they are considered the forerunners of the U. S. Navy Nurse Corps. The Civil War was the first experience of the Holy Cross Order in the field of nursing; now, they are renowned for their contributions to the field.

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Learn more at [www.mocivilwar.org](http://www.mocivilwar.org)



Lt. Robert Denny  
26th Mo. Inf.

The City of Pacific, once known as Franklin, takes its name from the railroad that bustles through town. Up to the time of the Civil War only the Pacific Railroad ran from St. Louis to this point.

The main line of the Pacific Railroad was constructed in the 1850s. It reached Jefferson City in 1855, and by 1861 reached Sedalia. When the first division of the line was opened in July, 1852, the town of Pacific was the westernmost point reached by any steam railroad in the United States.

The promoters of the Pacific Railroad built a branch line called the Southwest Branch, Pacific Railroad. Construction began here in 1855. The Southwest Branch was completed as far as Rolla, Missouri in December, 1860. The junction of the two lines was 300 yards northeast of the place you are standing. Now the Burlington line runs from St. Louis and follows the route of the old Southwest Branch.

When the Civil War began in Missouri in May, 1861, there were six railroads in the state (counting the Southwest Branch), and four of these emanated from St. Louis. Pacific was one of only two junction points on these roads outside of St. Louis, and it was a critical military resource.

The first Union unit to occupy Pacific in force was the 9th Iowa Volunteer Infantry, which established a camp known as Camp Herron. The 9th Iowa arrived in Pacific on October 11, 1861. The Iowans remained here on guard duty until January, 1862, when they joined the federal

campaign that ended in the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas. The 26th Missouri was another unit with roots in Pacific. Several companies of the 26th Missouri, made up largely of Franklin County recruits, enrolled here and received basic training. The 26th Missouri went south, and would distinguish itself at places like Vicksburg, Missionary Ridge, and on Sherman's March to Savannah.

The troops in Pacific were devastated by disease during the Fall and Winter of 1861. The 9th Iowa lost over 20 men to measles, typhoid fever, chronic diarrhea and other such causes. Some Franklin County boys of the 26th Missouri died in hospital the week of Christmas, 1861, even before being mustered in.

The War revisited Pacific in 1864, when a Confederate force attacked both branches of the Pacific Railroad. Known as Price's Expedition, this campaign featured a force of 12,000 cavalry and mounted infantry under the command of former Missouri governor Maj. Gen. Sterling Price. The Confederates entered southeast Missouri on September 16, 1864. Moving north in three columns, after the Battle of Pilot Knob the Confederates reached the Southwest Branch at Leasburg on September 29 and at St. Clair on September 30. There is a marker at the top of the bluff to your north, at Blackburn Park, which provides more information about the Battle of Pacific.

To reach Blackburn Park, drive west from here one block to Second Street. Turn left on Second, then left on Walnut to the top of the hill.



### Pathfinder

The life of the celebrated "Pathfinder of the West," John Charles Frémont, is bound to the history of the Pacific Railroad. The first military governor of California and first Republican candidate for President of the United States (in 1856), Frémont owed much to wife Jessie, the daughter of Missouri Sen. Thomas Hart Benton. Two of his famous explorations of the West, those of 1848 and 1853, were undertaken to aid Senator Benton's search of a rail route that would put Missouri at the center of commerce with California.

Frémont's connections secured for him an appointment as Major General of the Union Army in July, 1861, and he took command of the army's Western Department. His tenure in Missouri was brief and scandal-ridden. Before he was relieved in November, 1861, he mounted a campaign directed at Springfield. In October, while his army prepared to move south from a base on the Pacific Railroad near Tipton, the 9th Iowa Infantry was moved forward to Pacific to protect Frémont's supply line.

Ironically, the impact of the war on Missouri's railroads doomed Benton's dream of a railroad to the Pacific, and cleared the way for the northern route that became the Union Pacific. In 1866 a group of investors headed by Frémont acquired the Southwest Branch with designs to continue its construction west. Only a few miles of road were built west of Rolla before Frémont defaulted on his obligations, and the failed venture is thought to have cost Frémont the fortune he had earned in the early days of California. The line was acquired by another company and became the foundation for the great St. Louis-San Francisco Railway.

### Civil War Medicine

(continued)

The establishment of the Pacific military hospital coincided with another innovation in military medicine. By most accounts, the world's first railroad hospital cars were outfitted in September, 1861 by order of Maj. Gen. John Frémont, and placed in service on the Pacific Railroad between Jefferson City and St. Louis.



Sources: Hope, Arthur J., CSC, "The Story of Notre Dame," 1942 <<http://archives.nd.edu/hope/hope09.htm>>; "History of the Frisco," <<http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/loclist/frisco/history/1962history.cfm>>; Forman, Jacob Gilbert, The Western Sanitary Commission; a sketch of its origin, history, etc. (St. Louis: R.P. Studley & Co. 1864).

Image Credit: Library of Congress

