
“Dispute Every Inch of Ground”: Major General Lew Wallace Commands Cincinnati, September, 1862

Vernon L. Volpe*

Indiana native son Lew Wallace, famous as the author of *Ben-Hur*, is less remembered as one of the highest ranking Union generals during the Civil War. A romantic even as a soldier, Wallace hungered for military glory and always longed for a command assignment where he might experience the thrill of battle while promoting his military renown.¹ Fortunate political connections assured him a rapid rise in rank during the early days of the war. Promoted to major general of volunteers after contributing to the capture of Fort Donelson, Wallace saw his blossoming career trimmed at Shiloh where Ulysses S. Grant suspected him of incompetence for failing to bring his division promptly into line on the critical first day of battle. For the rest of the war, indeed for much of the rest of his life, Wallace desperately sought to regain the glory lost at Shiloh.² His first major opportunity came when several thousand Confederate troops under the command of Brigadier General Henry Heth threatened Cincinnati late in the summer of 1862.³ This time there were to be no more mistakes; Wallace meant to defend “every inch” of Union soil and thereby his own military reputation.⁴

* Vernon L. Volpe is assistant professor of history, Kearney State College, Kearney, Nebraska. He would like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Kearney State College Research Services Council in preparing this article.

¹ As the nation focused on the brewing sectional crisis in 1860, Wallace was eager for war against Mexico. Wallace to Governor [Ashbel P. Willard], March 20, 1860, Oliver P. Morton Collection (Archives Division, Indiana Commission on Public Records, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis); Wallace to Oliver P. Morton, September 24, November 1, 1861, *ibid.*

² Irving McKee, *“Ben-Hur” Wallace: The Life of General Lew Wallace* (Berkeley, Calif., 1947), 49-57. James Lee McDonough generally defends Wallace’s actions at Shiloh. *Shiloh—in Hell before Night* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1977), 96, 156-61.

³ For a discussion of the rebel threat to Cincinnati, see Vernon L. Volpe, “Squirrel Hunting for the Union: The Defense of Cincinnati in 1862,” *Civil War History*, XXXIII (September, 1987), 242-55.

⁴ Wallace to General [?], September 10, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Archives Division, Indiana Commission on Public Records). The author thanks John Selch of the Indiana State Library for bringing this source to his attention.

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On August 30, 1862, a crushing Union defeat at Richmond, Kentucky, had left the road to the Ohio River open. After invading the bluegrass state Kirby Smith's greycoats had advanced to Richmond and there destroyed nearly the entire federal force of over six thousand hastily prepared troops. Smith then directed Heth's legion to march toward the undefended city of Cincinnati.⁵ Just before the Richmond debacle Wallace had been removed from the Kentucky command (to be replaced by the hapless William "Bull" Nelson), and as a result he remained the highest ranking officer in the vicinity ready for duty. Major General Horatio G. Wright, commander of the Department of the Ohio, thus appointed Wallace to defend Cincinnati and its sister Ohio river cities of Covington and Newport, Kentucky.⁶

Despite his dubious military credentials and his well-developed sense of self-importance, Wallace proved to be the ideal choice for this critical assignment. The unusual situation called for an energetic commander with a flair for the dramatic. Wallace's troop placements certainly safeguarded the vital Union city but just as important were his efforts to arouse the populations of Ohio and Indiana to defend their firesides from rebel invaders. Wallace's failings as a field commander proved harmless in this case; indeed, his hyperactive approach to battle may have saved lives on both sides of the Cincinnati trenches.

Late on September 1, 1862, Wallace arrived in Cincinnati and promptly assumed command. Taking care to win the support of civic leaders (including the newspaper editors), Wallace immediately proclaimed martial law, suspended business in the cities, and ordered all able-bodied men to report for duty in the trenches he planned to dig on the hills beyond Covington and Newport.⁷ The response to Wallace's call was instantaneous and impressive; so many city residents and volunteers from rural Ohio and Indiana flocked to the colors that eventually Wallace commanded some seventy-two thousand men, one of the larger forces assembled during the entire war.

Defending Cincinnati was no easy duty. Wallace faced the challenging task of having to make military preparations while ruling the thousands of civilians under his protection. Following the rout at Richmond, Wallace's first responsibility was to dispose

⁵ U.S., War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), ser. I, vol. XVI, part I, pp. 906-52, cited hereafter as *Official Records*.

⁶ Horatio G. Wright to Wallace, September 1, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XVI, part II, p. 470; *Lew Wallace: An Autobiography* (2 vols., New York, 1906), II, 603-609, contains Wallace's dramatic retelling of the Richmond defeat and his subsequent assumption of command.

⁷ The *Cincinnati Gazette*, *Enquirer*, and *Commercial* all published Wallace's proclamation on September 2, 1862. See also Wallace, *Autobiography*, 607.

his few available troops to prevent a rebel rush toward Cincinnati. He had not only to cover several roads to Covington and Newport but also to watch fords across the Ohio River (then at its lowest stage) for miles below and above the city. For the latter purpose Wallace assembled a makeshift fleet of sixteen river steamers to patrol the Ohio and to support the units along the river. Wallace later admitted that he was unable to post a proper guard the first night because men were simply not available.⁸

Although the people of Cincinnati cooperated with Wallace's command to a remarkable extent, his proclamation of martial law did provoke expected controversy. Several of the city's profit-minded businessmen especially resented the suspension of commerce in favor of military drills. Some complained of the lack of organization within the ranks and warned that it would be impossible to keep "the most intelligent buisiness [*sic*] men of the city" content in the trenches across the river.⁹ Even more hated was the prohibition against selling alcohol. Some residents of German origin protested by tearing up the tracks of the city's streetcars, which had been allowed to continue operation. Several thirsty Union soldiers responded to the dry order by entering an establishment run by a widow and "confiscating" fifteen gallons of Catawba wine and a keg of beer.¹⁰

Shortly after the proclamation of martial law some dissatisfied citizens held a meeting to protest the stringency of Wallace's command.¹¹ Voiced mainly by an aggrieved minority, the complaints against Wallace's martial law decree finally persuaded Horatio Wright to direct Wallace to rescind his order suppressing business. Wallace immediately complied but offered his resignation, claiming Wright doubted his judgment.¹² Besides considering his own

⁸ Wallace to Colonel [Sidney] Burbank, September 2, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); R. M. Corwine to Wallace, September 6, 1862, *ibid.* For Wallace's contemporary account of his role in the defense of the cities, see Wallace to John J. Henderson, June 22, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis). Henderson had written Wallace requesting the "secret account" of the siege suitable for publication. Henderson to Wallace, June 21, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis).

⁹ Theo Marsh and others to Wright, September 10, 1862, Wallace Collection (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library). Some nonetheless continued to conduct business behind closed doors. Cincinnati *Enquirer*, September 13, 1862; Cincinnati *Commercial*, September 22, 1862. Covington's mayor requested that business be resumed for just a few hours a day. C. A. Preston to [Colonel J. V.] Guthrie, September 13, 1862, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library).

¹⁰ Cincinnati *Enquirer*, September 5, 10, 1862; Cincinnati *Gazette*, September 5, 1862; Cincinnati *Commercial*, September 5, 1862; Citizens to General [A. J.] Smith, September 16, 1862, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library).

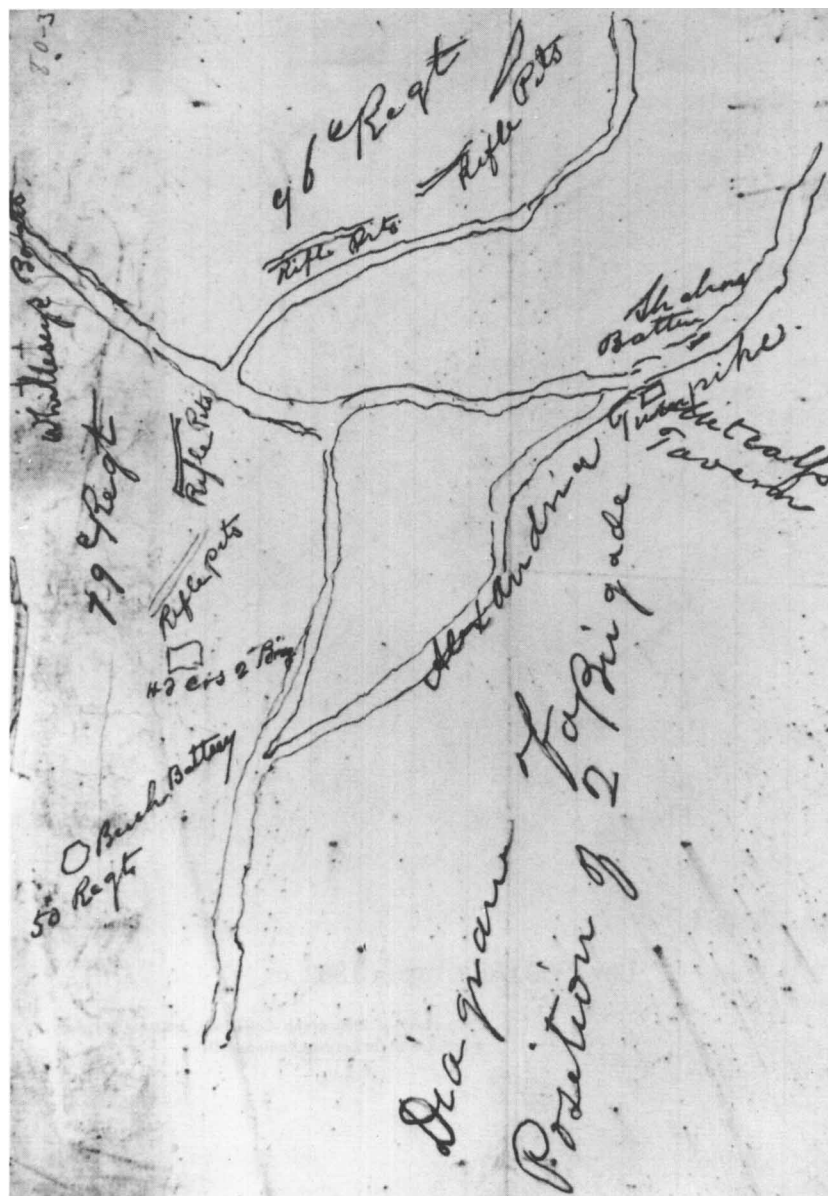
¹¹ G. M. Finch to Malcolm McDowell, September 4, 1862, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library).

¹² Wallace to N. H. McLean, September 5, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); McLean to Wallace, September 5, 6, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XVI, part II, pp. 487-88, 491-92; Wright General Order Number 11, September 6, 1862, Cincinnati *Commercial* and Cincinnati *Gazette*, September 8, 1862.



LEW WALLACE, CIRCA 1862

Courtesy of Photograph Collection, Indiana Division,
Indiana State Library, Indianapolis



LEW WALLACE'S DIAGRAM OF THE POSITION OF THE SECOND BRIGADE, SHOWING LOCATION OF VARIOUS REGIMENTS

Courtesy of Lew Wallace Collection, Manuscript Section, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis

approach the most fair, Wallace also believed that the drastic steps were necessary to ensure the labor needed to defend the cities. He agreed to Wright's request to retain the command but felt vindicated when Wright called for him a few days later and admitted that he had been correct. As Wallace had predicted, without compulsion the supply of willing workers fell dangerously. The order suspending business was restored the next morning. Wallace nevertheless relinquished command over Cincinnati and transferred his headquarters across the river to Covington.¹³

While doing his best to avoid the shoals of civilian politics, Wallace busied himself with the military defenses of the city. To command his vast irregular force he amassed a volunteer staff of about one hundred fifty (which he thought rivaled that of General John C. Frémont) and issued a total of thirty-five general orders and some one hundred forty special orders. He saw to it that a pontoon bridge was thrown across the Ohio in record time and that each of the headquarters units along the line were linked by telegraph. Amid the confusion, Wallace found able subordinates to organize the fatigue forces, the volunteer troops, and the river flotilla. But Wallace perhaps proved overzealous in briefly suppressing the *Cincinnati Times*, evidently because it printed sensitive military information.¹⁴

All the while Wallace supervised the building of the defense works and the disposition of the fighting units. He urgently issued orders to his subordinate commanders to watch the roads and by-roads, to keep their men alert, and to be prepared for rebel tricks.¹⁵ Wallace, of course, had no way of knowing that Kirby Smith had reversed his earlier orders and subsequently advised Heth only to feint an attack on the Yankee metropolis. Still, Heth was eager to attack Cincinnati and may have been dissuaded from stretching his orders by Wallace's vigorous efforts to defend the city.¹⁶

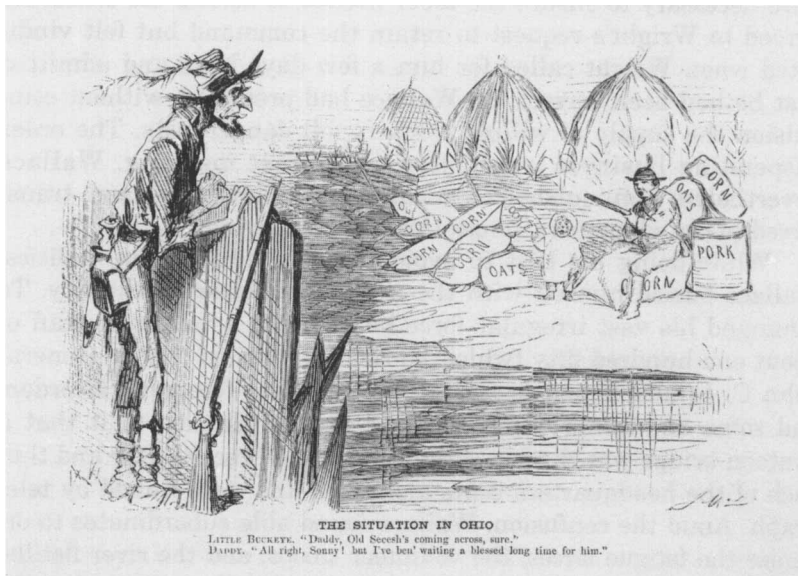
Although Wallace welcomed the "motley but heroic mob" of volunteers from the countryside, called "Squirrel Hunters" by their commander Major Malcolm McDowell, he remained suspicious of

¹³ *Cincinnati Gazette*, September 9, 10, 1862; *Cincinnati Commercial*, September 10, 1862; Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library).

¹⁴ *Cincinnati Commercial*, September 5, 1862; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 5, 6, 1862; *Cincinnati Gazette*, September 5, 6, 1862. The *Commercial* explained that the *Times* was not disloyal but "exceedingly reckless." The *Times* resumed publication the next day.

¹⁵ *Cincinnati Gazette*, September 9, 1862; Wallace to Generals [H. M.] Judah and [A. J.] Smith, September 4, 5, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); Guthrie to Wallace, September 5, 1862, *ibid.*; John A. Duble to Wallace, September 6, 1862, *ibid.*

¹⁶ A. J. Smith to Samuel Cooper, September 6, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XVI, part I, pp. 933-35; James L. Morrison, Jr., *The Memoirs of Henry Heth* (Westport, Conn., 1974), 165-66.



Reproduced from Harper's Weekly, October 4, 1862

their value and accepted their use only under the emergency circumstances.¹⁷ In this case Wallace shared the view of regular army officers who often questioned the military abilities of civilians, although he always resented their opinion of "political generals" such as himself. (Union Chief of Staff Henry W. Halleck claimed that giving important commands to men like Wallace was akin to "murder.")¹⁸ Wallace informed Cincinnati's mayor that "there must be a distinction made between the working parties and those enrolled for duty in the field" in order to "promote harmony" and prevent clashes between military and civilian authorities. Thus Wallace's famous order proclaiming martial law specified that the guiding principle during the siege would be "citizens for the labor, soldiers for the battle."¹⁹ Forced to depend on the temporary services of citizen recruits, Wallace nonetheless took care to place his few veteran units at strategic spots along his defensive line.

¹⁷ Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library).

¹⁸ Henry W. Halleck to W. T. Sherman, April 29, 1864, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XXXIV, part III, pp. 332-33; James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1982), 172.

¹⁹ Wallace to Mayor George Hatch, September 3, 5, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); Wallace, *Autobiography*, 607.

Wallace's plans for the defense were sound. Although he had reason to believe the untrained militia would perform well behind fortifications, he recognized the limitations of his volunteer forces. Indeed, his commanders constantly complained about the disorderliness of the celebrated Squirrel Hunters.²⁰ Should Heth's veterans attack, Wallace feared a panic that would rival the "passage of the Beresina by the French retreating from Russia."²¹ Thus Wallace relied instead on the regular units for front line duty and used the burgeoning volunteer forces as a ploy to discourage the Confederates from attacking his well-manned trenches. Like Confederate commander John B. Magruder on the Peninsula, Wallace defended Cincinnati successfully by imaginatively bolstering his sometimes suspect military skills.

The defense of the Ohio river cities did have its shadowy side, including the use of spies and a degree of political repression. Wallace appointed an officer to arrange a system of secret service for the area and directed that local citizens be recruited to provide intelligence services. Once again the excitable commander was caught up in the drama of the affair, sending Wright a cryptic message: "Is Col. Simpson in the City. Time is precious, what he does should be done right away."²² At the same time persons suspected of secessionist loyalties were detained for the duration of the siege; those crossing the lines were questioned and forced to take an oath of loyalty. Later Union forces took possession of Freeman's Hall in Covington to confine political prisoners. Still, Wallace took care that the accused were confronted by their accusers and that they had an "impartial hearing."²³

The haphazard defense of the cities produced some unusually trying circumstances. The self-made officers proved especially troublesome; Wallace was not the only ambitious young man eager to use the siege to advance his career. Wallace was eventually forced to order merchants dealing in "military trappings" to sell only to commissioned officers. Later he complained that "one half the officers of this command on some pretence or other are in Cincinnati." As a result he decreed that officers be required to show their passes

²⁰ A. J. Smith to Wright, September 19, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); Judah to Smith, September 19, 1862, *ibid.*

²¹ Wallace, *Autobiography*, 623.

²² Special Order Number 48, September 6, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); A. E. Jones to Wallace, September, 1862, *ibid.*; Wallace to Wright, September 7, 1862, *ibid.* Evidently Wallace was counting on Colonel Simpson to provide intelligence essential for the defense of the cities. Wallace also refers to the use of spies on both sides in his *Autobiography*, 621-22, 627.

²³ Special Orders Numbers 34, 74, 75, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); Wallace to Colonel Sipes, September 15, 1862, *ibid.*; A. J. Smith to Sipes, September 24, 1862, *ibid.*; Cincinnati *Enquirer*, September 10, 1862. See also the material in the Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library).

and advised that "a good place to stop them could be at the ferry and bridge." Men in the ranks posed their own problems; the Tenth Kentucky Cavalry was reported "almost mutinous" because their pay was in arrears.²⁴

One of the more frustrating problems created by the siege was supplying the troops across the river. Although the influx of volunteers was inspiring, with it came a shortage of arms, ammunition, and other equipment needed to outfit the troops properly.²⁵ When ammunition was obtained (primarily from Indianapolis), distributing it to the hastily gathered troops with their motley array of firearms proved a monumental challenge.²⁶ In the end, however, adequate food and supplies were secured, largely through the cooperation of the civilian authorities.

Less easily solved was the lack of water for the men building the trenches in the September heat. Many units lacked canteens, tin cups, buckets, and carts to hold water. It became especially difficult to carry water from the river to the high embankments once the cisterns of Covington went empty. Citizens' horses were impressed to carry water; later a steam engine provided by the city of Cincinnati was used to force water into the Covington water system.²⁷

A rebel invasion of Union territory promised serious political consequences. Although Wallace was a Democrat, he advocated a vigorous prosecution of the war and recognized that the war would destroy slavery. In July the Democratic general had told a Cincinnati war meeting that only a "terrible, earnest war" could end the rebellion.²⁸ At the same time, Wallace quickly realized that political benefits might flow from the enemy threat to federal homes. In response to a resolution of thanks passed by the Ohio legislature, Wallace insisted the war was being fought neither for black freedom nor to support Republican President Abraham Lincoln, but to save free government.²⁹

²⁴ Wallace to McLean, September 16, 17, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); Special Order Number 15, September 4, 1862, *ibid.*

²⁵ The Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library) contains numerous complaints about the shortage of supplies. See, for example, Joseph Wolf to McDowell, September 3, 1862.

²⁶ Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, *ibid.*

²⁷ R. Stanhope to Wallace, September 10, 1862, *ibid.*; Guthrie to Wallace, September 5, 17, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records); General Order Number 31, September 17, 1862, *ibid.*

²⁸ Cincinnati *Commercial*, July 31, 1862; Cincinnati *Gazette*, August 1, 1862; Cincinnati *Enquirer*, August 21, 1862; Wallace to Douglas Democrats, August 16, 1861, Wallace Collection (Indiana Historical Society); Wallace to wife, December 22, 1861, *ibid.*

²⁹ Ironically, including Wallace, the men most responsible for the defense of Cincinnati, Mayor George Hatch and governors David Tod of Ohio and Oliver P. Morton of Indiana, either had been or were still Democrats. Ohio Legislature to Wallace, March 4, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana Historical Society); Wallace to Tod, March 10, 1863, *ibid.*

Despite this politically expedient position, Wallace did risk popular displeasure by advocating the use of blacks for the Union war effort. Indeed, in his brief campaign in Kentucky prior to the battle at Richmond he had already started to use black laborers.³⁰ The Cincinnati defense allowed him to put this proposal into operation under conditions that would mute criticism. Evidently familiar with Cincinnati's troubled past of racial violence, Wallace inquired as the siege began whether local citizens would permit blacks to work in the trenches. Told there was "considerable objection" to the idea, Wallace decided to wait and see if blacks would be needed. The rapid advance of the enemy soon dictated more drastic action, however, and Wallace ordered Mayor Hatch to gather all able-bodied black men as well as white.³¹

Despite the fact that they were to help defend the city, Cincinnati blacks were subjected to brutal humiliation as police and white citizens herded several hundred black men at bayonet point to a "pen" and then forced them to cross the river to work on Union trenches. Outraged by this treatment, Judge William M. Dickson, a sympathetic white citizen, volunteered to command the "Black Brigade." Wallace readily consented, figuring Dickson a "good man for the business."³²

As a valuable part of the fatigue forces, blacks nonetheless had to endure further hardships, including the disdain and hostility of white workers and engineers. Not surprisingly, tools and water for the black laborers were in short supply, but Judge Dickson admitted that the main difficulty was "getting work *at all* assigned for us to do." Even when work was assigned, blacks had to be protected from those who would seize them for use as regimental cooks or for other menial tasks. Blacks leaving the trenches to return to Cincinnati carried passes to protect them from arrest.³³

Although Wallace took credit for employing blacks in the war effort, he refused any responsibility for the harsh way they were treated. The Hoosier general denied directing Mayor Hatch to collect the blacks in pens and claimed he "neither knew it nor heard of it," insisting these had been the orders of Hatch and his police. But as commander of the city Wallace was at least in part respon-

³⁰ Cincinnati *Commercial*, July 31, 1862; Cincinnati *Gazette*, August 1, 27, 1862.

³¹ Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library).

³² Cincinnati *Enquirer*, September 5, 1862; Cincinnati *Commercial*, September 22, 1862; Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library). See also Peter H. Clark, *The Black Brigade of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1864); and Edgar A. Toppin, "Humbly They Served: The Black Brigade in the Defense of Cincinnati," *Journal of Negro History*, XLVIII (April, 1963), 75-97.

³³ W. M. Dickson to Colonel A. Perry, September 18, 1862, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library); Wallace to Hatch, September 5, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records).

sible for the brutal treatment blacks suffered under his orders. Wright finally directed the police to arrest blacks "only for crimes or disorderly conduct," and Wallace eventually detailed guards to protect blacks from further abuse.³⁴

Most of Cincinnati, including Wallace, expected a Confederate attack by the morning of September 11. The troops along the line were ordered to sleep on their arms and to be formed up for battle by three in the morning.³⁵ Despite his brave front and postwar boasts to Heth, Wallace feared a defeat and made plans for this contingency. If the rebels should breach his lines, he intended to "contest every street and house in Covington" while his troops crossed the pontoon bridge to Cincinnati. The river steamers were warned to be in position to support such a movement. Wallace ad-

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mitted this plan would have allowed the rebels to shell the city of Cincinnati, but he was "solemnly resolved to see it burnt, rather than sacked." Ready to wage total war if necessary, Wallace was as relieved as anyone when reports trickled in of a Confederate withdrawal. Still taking no chances, Wallace warned his commanders to stay alert "precisely as if the enemy were directly in our front."³⁶

Like McClellan after Antietam and Meade after Gettysburg, Wallace was criticized for not pursuing the rebels as they withdrew from Cincinnati. Once again forced to defend his actions, Wallace complained that his authority only included the defense of the Ohio river cities; by implication he claimed the failure was on Wright's head.³⁷ In fact, the reason the federals did not follow was more complex. After hurriedly gathering men and supplies for a static defense of the cities, Union forces lacked the essential equipment and transport needed to follow the rebels. Wallace refused to give up; he proposed seizing all the drays and express wagons in the city to pursue Heth with twenty thousand men. Wright still did not allow a pursuit and countermanded Wallace's order for a reconnaissance in force of the retreating enemy forces.³⁸ If not for

³⁴ Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library); McLean to Hatch, September 10, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XVI, part II, pp. 504-505.

³⁵ Wallace General Order Number 15, September 10, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records). See also Wallace's numerous orders dated September 10, 1862, *ibid.*; Cincinnati *Enquirer*, September 11, 12, 1862; Cincinnati *Gazette*, September 11, 1862.

³⁶ Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library); Wallace General Order 19, September 13, 1862; Wallace to A. J. Smith, September 12, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records).

³⁷ Wallace to Wright, September 12, 1862, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library); Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, *ibid.*

³⁸ Wallace to Wright, September 12, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XVI, part II, p. 511; Wallace to Henderson, June 22, 1863, Wallace Collection (Indiana State Library). Wallace checked on Wright's claim of lack of transport. Wallace to A. J. Smith, September 14, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records).

Wright's cautious hand during and after the siege, Wallace would have been much more aggressive and might have even left his trenches to attack the rebels.

For a short time Wallace basked in the national spotlight for his prominent role in defending Cincinnati. The eastern press lauded his "vigorous proclamations," given credit for saving the strategic western city.³⁹ Throughout the siege Wallace enjoyed the warm support of the Cincinnati press, which had urged the citizenry to cooperate in his efforts. The Democratic *Enquirer* was most enthusiastic, describing Wallace as a "gallant and go ahead young General." Promoting its Democratic hero, the *Enquirer* claimed Wallace had brought "order out of chaos" and was "exactly the man for the place." The Republican *Gazette* too praised Wallace for the "vigor which is characteristic of him," while the *Commercial* reported that the citizens were reassured by the general who was "ever alert, faithful and resolute."⁴⁰

Once the crisis passed, Wallace proudly marched at the head of several regiments across the pontoon bridge to Cincinnati to be greeted by "cheers of welcome and the bright smiles of fair ladies." Later the Sanitary Commission invited Wallace to speak at the Fifth Street Market where he boasted that the rebels spied his trenches and "stole away in the night." The ebullient major general claimed that with enough armed men he could push the rebels into the Gulf of Mexico. Wallace then bid thanks to the Squirrel Hunters, calling them the "second edition" of the men who fought at Bunker Hill or New Orleans.⁴¹

According to prominent journalist and Ohio historian Whitelaw Reid, a wartime supporter of Wallace, Wallace's proclamation of martial law was the "boldest and most vigorous" order of the war along the border.⁴² Although Wallace's inspired command "practically saved Cincinnati," it did not save the shelved major general. Despite his leading role in defending a strategic area from capture, Wallace saw his hopes for vindication go unfulfilled. In fact, his next assignment was to organize paroled prisoners for use against the Minnesota Sioux.⁴³ Later he hoped to win redemption

³⁹ New York *Times*, September 3, 1862; *Harper's Weekly*, September 20, October 4, 1862.

⁴⁰ Cincinnati *Enquirer*, September 2, 3, 6, 8, 14, 1862; Cincinnati *Gazette*, September 2, 1862; Cincinnati *Commercial*, September 15, 1862.

⁴¹ Cincinnati *Gazette*, September 15, 17, 1862.

⁴² Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War: Her Statesmen, Her Generals, and Soldiers*, Vol. I, *History of the State during the War* (Cincinnati, 1868), 90-91. After Wallace's martial law decree, thirteen citizens from Madison, Indiana, petitioned Governor Morton to place someone in command to declare martial law in their city, "that all our means of defence may be made available." D. C. Branham to Morton, September 3, 1862, Morton Collection.

⁴³ Cincinnati *Gazette*, September 18, 1862; Wright to G[reen] C[lay] Smith, September 19, 1862, Wallace Letter and Order Book (Indiana Commission on Public Records).

by his successful defense of Washington, D.C., at Monocacy in July, 1864. While his delaying action may have protected the capital from Jubal Early's rebel veterans, Wallace's final battlefield service went largely unrecognized. The stigma of Shiloh was not so easily erased.

Wallace's military achievements have remained mostly unappreciated. He had the distinct misfortune of displeasing the two men who ultimately rose to command all Union forces, Henry W. Halleck and Ulysses S. Grant, men who had suffered their own embarrassment over Shiloh. As the war progressed, "political generals" such as Wallace were less likely to be trusted with important commands. Ironically, Wallace's rapid advance in rank early in the war later hindered his chances of gaining reinstatement. Grant admitted he might have been able to accept Wallace if not for his high rank.⁴⁴

Wallace's Civil War career ended with service on the military tribunals investigating the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the "war crimes" charged against the Confederate commandant of Andersonville prison, Henry Wirz. Despite their importance, these assignments were not the sort of duty sought by Lew Wallace, soldier and romantic. Even the smashing success of *Ben-Hur*, published in 1880, could never quite compensate for the loss of military honor and recognition Wallace always thought was his by service and by right.

⁴⁴ Grant to H. W. Halleck, December 14, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. LII, part I, pp. 313-14; Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana, Ill., 1983), 309.