

The Kingdom of Callaway

Introduction

In Callaway County the flag flying from homes and government institutions features a regal purple field with a gold crown at its center. These symbols reflect the county's residents' view of their home as not just another county, but as "The Kingdom of Callaway." This distinction developed out of a story of a ragtag militia unit that negotiated a truce with Union forces.

Background

In the decades preceding the Civil War, Callaway County, Missouri, was an agricultural center of the state, relying heavily on slave labor. In 1850, roughly 50 percent of the county's families owned slaves. Because slave ownership was so prevalent, most residents were overwhelmingly Confederate in their sympathies.

Event

With secessionist sentiment so high, Union troops considered the county an important location to control. They had troops under Col. John McNeil occupy Fulton early in the war. Then in October 1861, a regiment of men under Col T. J. C. Fagg, who was subject to the command of General John B. Henderson, made camp in Wellsville in Montgomery County, just outside Callaway. In reaction a rebel band organized under Col. Jeff Jones took camp to oppose any attempt at an invasion. A *Missouri Republican* report from October 26, 1861, stated, "Some anxiety was felt yesterday about Colonel Fagg's command. . . . It was said to be in danger of being captured by a band of Rebels under the command of Colonel Jeff Jones," an "Ultrasecessionist." This challenge to Fagg's command was clearly overstated. Jones's troops were smaller in number, poorly equipped, and poorly trained. Despite their disadvantage, Jones sent General Henderson a confident note stating his demands. Jones recalled his note saying that he had declared it their "purpose to suffer no invasion of our county" and that if Union troops remained outside its borders he would disperse his men.

Aftermath

While Henderson's response to this demand not to invade Callaway is debated, Jones maintained that his demands were met, and he and his men dispersed. So when troops did enter the county, arriving in Fulton on November 1, a correspondent from the *Missouri Republican* noted, "We are met at every turn by loud complaints that we are violating what is called here a treaty between Colonel J. F. Jones and General Henderson, under whose command we are." In the years that followed these events Callaway County continually sent pro-Southern representatives to Congress only to have them rejected. It was one of those representatives, John Sampson, who is credited with coining the phrase "Kingdom of Callaway." When he was found disloyal by the legislative committee he announced with a shout, "I am from the Kingdom of Callaway, six feet, four and one half inches tall, and all South, by God!"