Baton Rouge on the Eve of War

Baton Rouge in 1860 was a town “on the move.” A bustling center of commerce and industry, it was the capital of Louisiana with a growing population of over 5,400 people. It was a transport hub for commerce and industry, with trade routes from the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. The city was a focal point for the slave trade and a center for the southern agricultural economy. In the meantime, Confederate General John C. Breckinridge, a former vice president of the United States and presidential contender in 1860, had received orders to create a clear “field of fire” for their cannon in case the Confederates resumed their attack.

Secession and War

The issue of slavery dominated the national political discourse in the 1850s, and ultimately pushed the nation into civil war. The election to the presidency in November 1860 of Abraham Lincoln, well-known for his anti-slavery views, proved to be the final straw for the South. As a result, the state of Louisiana declared its secession from the Union. In response, the Confederates occupied the town of Baton Rouge, leaving a hulking wreck that would haunt the town for the next two decades. By the time the Union re-occupied the town after the Union withdrawal in late August, it was short-lived; the town was quickly recaptured by Confederate forces.

The Battle of Baton Rouge opened that morning in confusion, as sentries, scouts, and officers deployed into two divisions, struck westward along North St. through the part of town now known as Mid-City. The fighting raged from north to south, stretching towards the town before being turned back by massed artillery. Their attack through Magnolia Cemetery itself stalled out by about 7:30 a.m. To the south, beyond a dense wood, Colonel Henry Watkins Allen, a pre-war Louisiana planter and state legislator, led the Fencibles, Pelicans, and Creole Guards, and went off to the fight with bands playing, flags flying, and dreams of glory floating about their heads.

The Confederate Youth

The 3rd Louisiana Volunteers, a regiment of young men from Baton Rouge, under the leadership of Colonel Henry Watkins Allen, fought with great passion and bravery. They were known for their fighting spirit and were considered one of the finest units in the Confederate Army. Their attack on the Union forces was met with fierce resistance, and the fighting was intense. The Confederate forces retreated in disarray after a Union countercharge. The action then moved back to the north, where the Union forces huddled inside their defenses, preparing for further attacks.

The Union Re-occupation

The Union forces were determined to take control of the city and end the war. They were well-prepared, with a strong army and advanced artillery. The Confederate forces were outnumbered and outgunned, and their surrender in early May to the Union fleet was a significant blow to the Confederate cause. The battle of Baton Rouge was a significant victory for the Union, and it marked the beginning of the end of the Confederacy. The battle of Baton Rouge opened that morning in confusion, as sentries, scouts, and officers deployed into two divisions, struck westward along North St. through the part of town now known as Mid-City. The fighting raged from north to south, stretching towards the town before being turned back by massed artillery. Their attack through Magnolia Cemetery itself stalled out by about 7:30 a.m. To the south, beyond a dense wood, Colonel Henry Watkins Allen, a pre-war Louisiana planter and state legislator, led the Fencibles, Pelicans, and Creole Guards, and went off to the fight with bands playing, flags flying, and dreams of glory floating about their heads.

The Confederate Youth

The 3rd Louisiana Volunteers, a regiment of young men from Baton Rouge, under the leadership of Colonel Henry Watkins Allen, fought with great passion and bravery. They were known for their fighting spirit and were considered one of the finest units in the Confederate Army. Their attack on the Union forces was met with fierce resistance, and the fighting was intense. The Confederate forces retreated in disarray after a Union countercharge. The action then moved back to the north, where the Union forces huddled inside their defenses, preparing for further attacks.

The Union Re-occupation

The Union forces were determined to take control of the city and end the war. They were well-prepared, with a strong army and advanced artillery. The Confederate forces were outnumbered and outgunned, and their surrender in early May to the Union fleet was a significant blow to the Confederate cause.

The Battle of Baton Rouge opened that morning in confusion, as sentries, scouts, and officers deployed into two divisions, struck westward along North St. through the part of town now known as Mid-City. The fighting raged from north to south, stretching towards the town before being turned back by massed artillery. Their attack through Magnolia Cemetery itself stalled out by about 7:30 a.m. To the south, beyond a dense wood, Colonel Henry Watkins Allen, a pre-war Louisiana planter and state legislator, led the Fencibles, Pelicans, and Creole Guards, and went off to the fight with bands playing, flags flying, and dreams of glory floating about their heads.

The Confederate Youth

The 3rd Louisiana Volunteers, a regiment of young men from Baton Rouge, under the leadership of Colonel Henry Watkins Allen, fought with great passion and bravery. They were known for their fighting spirit and were considered one of the finest units in the Confederate Army. Their attack on the Union forces was met with fierce resistance, and the fighting was intense. The Confederate forces retreated in disarray after a Union countercharge. The action then moved back to the north, where the Union forces huddled inside their defenses, preparing for further attacks.

The Union Re-occupation

The Union forces were determined to take control of the city and end the war. They were well-prepared, with a strong army and advanced artillery. The Confederate forces were outnumbered and outgunned, and their surrender in early May to the Union fleet was a significant blow to the Confederate cause.
June 4, 1861

Emphatic order for his rear rank to close flag to the color-bearer, our banner...handed over the present to Capt. Herron and his company.

The town's total population. It was a bustling world, this Baton Rouge, but soon to...called the town home, almost triple the number from just 15 or 20 years earlier.

The newspapers began publication once more, and whites and blacks adjusted as...the nation into civil war.

That made up the Arsenal complex at Baton Rouge. Then, a special convention...so-called "fire-eaters," ruled the day.

By 10:00 that morning, both sides were exhausted. With many officers dead or wounded, the Union forces pulled back closer to town to gain the protection of canons fired from the gravestones of the cemetery, particularly the powerful U.S. Exer. Unfortunately for the Confederates, they had suffered an engine failure and, rather than be captured, the vessel was blown up the next day by its crew. There would be no help on the river for the Union forces.

Confederates Re-occupy the Town

"When I got to Baton Rouge, I found everything in a wrecked state. The greater part of the town was in ruins and several fine buildings, besides those burned by the Federals as a "military necessity," had been burned....Nearly all the substantial, former residents had left the place. Many of them having been driven from their homes were living in log cabins in the surrounding country. The business of any kind was being done, and hunger and privation reigned supreme."

-William Wilson, Delta Louisiana, September 1862

The Union re-occupation got off to a bad start, at least from the local citizens' perspective. Right after Christmas 1862, the capital building went up in flames, leaving a city in ruins.

During the occupation, public buildings and private homes became makeshift officers' quarters, enlisted men barracks, or hospitals. From the countryside, several thousand African Americans, making a bid for freedom, poured in seeking the protection of the United States flag. These officers organized the men into labor gangs, paying them wages for their work, or enlisted them into the army's all-black regiments to fight against their former masters. It was a revolutionary experience. But, with the end of the war in 1865 and the return of some, but not all, of the town's former residents, civilian life resumed. New and old businesses re-opened, the newspapers began publication once more, and whites and blacks adapted as best they could to the changed social and political order that confronted them.
The Battle of Baton Rouge and Related Historic Civil War Sites

**Confederate Advance**

North St. at N. 16th St.

This was the easternmost Confederate position. The Confederate position was on the north side of the Battle of Baton Rouge north of the Mississippi River and the protection of the navy gunboats.

**Stewart-Doughtery House**

747 North St.

The house itself was destroyed by fire in 1927.

**Site of the 4th Wisconsin and 6th Michigan**

North St. at N. 16th St.

These regiments near this spot, leading to an exchange of "friendly fire" for the 4th Wisconsin and 6th Michigan. The original wood-frame building is gone, now part of the Dufrocq Elementary School.

**St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery**

North St. at N. 16th St.

This is the site of the 21st Indiana and 6th Michigan. The Union troops from the 21st Indiana and 6th Michigan, supported by Captain Charles S. Stansfield's 4th Wisconsin, pushed the Confederates across River Road into the wilderness. The 21st Indiana turned in its left to flank the 6th Michigan. The sudden assault on their right flank caused confusion among the Confederates, who turned their momentum and routed.

**Pine House**

721 North St.

This small cottage dates from the 1820s and was the site of a small party thrown by Union General William T. Sherman on the morning of August 5th, General Williams placed the 4th Wisconsin and 6th Michigan at this point to train their heavy cannon on the Confederate forces that were on the north side of the Mississippi River and the protection of the navy gunboats.

**The Orphanage**

North St. at N. 16th St.

This building was constructed about 1850 and destroyed the city of New Orleans. The building was razed in the early 1900s. The building was on the site of the old Orphanage hospital.

**Old Arsenal Museum**

Capitol Park

One of two surviving structures of the U.S. Arsenal at Baton Rouge, Ga., 1938. The building was constructed of brick and was the site of the old Orphanage hospital.

**Site of Fort Monroe Saloon**

Broad St. at N. 22nd St.

German-born Charles opened the saloon in 1856 as a store, but it later became a saloon. The saloon was located at the intersection of Broad St. and N. 22nd St.

**Site of the Asylum for the Deaf and Blind**

North St. at N. 16th St.

The asylum was located on the site of the Union occupation of Baton Rouge, its spacious interior housed a general hospital while troops camped on its open grounds. After the war, it was used as an orphanage.

**Site of the Capitol**

Louisiana State Capitol

The site of the Capitol was a symbol of the state's resistance to the Confederacy.

**Site of the Old Capitol**

U.S.S. Kidd

The site of the Old Capitol was the location of the old capitol building.

**Site of the 14th Maine**

North St. at N. 16th St.

Kineo Bryce

The 14th Maine was camped just northwest of the Old Capitol.

**Site of Fort Sumter Saloon**

Broad St. at N. 22nd St.

German-born Charles opened the saloon in 1856 as a store, but it later became a saloon. The saloon was located at the intersection of Broad St. and N. 22nd St.

**Site of the Old Arsenal Museum**

Capitol Park

One of two surviving structures of the U.S. Arsenal at Baton Rouge, Ga., 1938. The building was constructed of brick and was the site of the old Orphanage hospital.

**Site of the 14th Maine**

North St. at N. 16th St.

Kineo Bryce

The 14th Maine was camped just northwest of the Old Capitol.

**Site of Fort Monroe Saloon**

Broad St. at N. 22nd St.

German-born Charles opened the saloon in 1856 as a store, but it later became a saloon. The saloon was located at the intersection of Broad St. and N. 22nd St.

**Site of the Asylum for the Deaf and Blind**

North St. at N. 16th St.

The asylum was located on the site of the Union occupation of Baton Rouge, its spacious interior housed a general hospital while troops camped on its open grounds. After the war, it was used as an orphanage.

**Site of the 14th Maine**

North St. at N. 16th St.

Kineo Bryce

The 14th Maine was camped just northwest of the Old Capitol.

**Site of Fort Monroe Saloon**

Broad St. at N. 22nd St.

German-born Charles opened the saloon in 1856 as a store, but it later became a saloon. The saloon was located at the intersection of Broad St. and N. 22nd St.

**Site of the Asylum for the Deaf and Blind**

North St. at N. 16th St.

The asylum was located on the site of the Union occupation of Baton Rouge, its spacious interior housed a general hospital while troops camped on its open grounds. After the war, it was used as an orphanage.

**Site of the 14th Maine**

North St. at N. 16th St.

Kineo Bryce

The 14th Maine was camped just northwest of the Old Capitol.