

DAILY ADVOCATE [BATON ROUGE, LA], February 17, 1861, p. 2, c. 5-6

A Woman in Arms.
Seizure of the Baton Rouge Barracks.

We find in the Oswego (N. Y.) *Times* the following letter from Mrs. Maj. Haskin to a relative in that city concerning the seizure of the Barracks in this city. The excitement attending the circumstance doubtless accounts for the several slight errors which Mrs. H. falls into in her narration. Mrs. H. is mistaken about the loyalty of "one German company" in our city to the State, also about Maj. Haskin telling the Governor "if he did not want blood shed he had better keep his men as far off as possible." We also think it more than probable that Maj. Haskin did not say "that the time has not *yet* come to shed blood." If he made such a remark he must have been *very* mad.

However the ladies will have their say, and we give Mrs. H. hers as a matter of curiosity: ["] The Baton Rouge barracks and arsenal, belonging to the United States government, were commanded by Major Haskin, a native of New York, and a brave and loyal officer. We are permitted to copy the following letter, written by Maj. Haskin's wife to relatives in this city. It is the only correct account of the surrender of the arsenal which has yet reached the Northern States:

Steamer Magenta, Mississippi River, Jan. 15.

I can imagine your surprise when you see the post-mark of my letter, and you will wonder what is coming now. Well, I must tell you how we fell into the hands of the Philistines. You know, I suppose, all about the Secessionists, but you cannot realize the terrible state of confusion into which the South is thrown by them, and the bitter feeling of hostility which

sprung up in the South against the North. We are in the midst of it, but hardly realized its full strength until we felt its effects. Two or three times the Major was threatened by a mob, or rather the barracks and arsenal were, but he told them to come, he would be prepared for them, and, of course, they did not come.

On the evening of the 9th, Col. Bragg, the once famous soldier, came to our house and spent the evening with us, and, on going away, told Major Haskin he would like to speak to him on the piazza a moment. (This Col. Bragg, by the way, is now a sugar planter, and aid to the Governor of Louisiana.) He told Haskin that within three or four days the Governor would demand the surrender of the barracks and arsenals, backed by a force of six hundred men. It was too late to telegraph to Washington that night, but Haskin prepared a message to be sent off early in the morning for instructions. The next morning, before we were out of our beds, we heard that the troops had arrived—and such a looking set, armed with revolvers, bowie-knives, and every other murderous looking thing you can imagine!

They continued to pour into the town all day—the steamers on which they came having some of them the pelican flag flying, and some the lone star of Texas. The four militia companies from Baton Rouge, too were under arms. Words cannot describe the terror and confusion of the place. The people were entirely ignorant of what was to be done, and most of the leading people are for the Union. As soon as these troops arrived, Haskin left only a guard at the barracks and took possession of the arsenal. There the little company of fifty men took their stand, well armed, and two little persuasive brass pieces in the shape of mountain howitzers quite handy and well loaded. There they remained all day, while I packed up and sent off, to the care of friends, all my valuables. About 5 o'clock the summons came to surrender to the State of Louisiana the barracks, the arsenal, and everything appertaining thereto. Haskin inquired the number of troops they had, and he said he considered his fifty men equal to five hundred of the State troops.

The Governor said he had six hundred in town and, in the time it would take to come from New Orleans, he could bring a thousand more. The Union people of the town said that they could do nothing against a demand backed by the Governor. So the only thing was to make terms as to the surrender. Some declared that the company should leave the arsenal unarmed, but Haskin told them plainly that he would never leave the place so, if he died for it. At last they acceded to everything. The troops marched out when they were ready—armed, with their flags flying and all the company baggage, and with the understanding that no other flag should be raised but the stars and stripes while we remained in town, and no troops take possession of the barracks while we remained there, which understanding was fully kept. In the meanwhile, we received every attention from the people of the town—their houses were thrown open to us, and they did everything they could for us. We have some very warm friends there, and we heard of one German company belonging to the town, that refused to go to the fort to fight against Major Haskin.

In the meanwhile, the telegraph was in the hands of the traitors, and we could hear nothing from Washington. I very much doubt whether our messages ever were sent—and they said very plainly, that if a telegraph arrived for the Major, which they did not like, he would not get it. Haskin says, that for the last month he has felt like a mouse in a trap.

The barracks and arsenal are separate places, but neither places of defense—just a cluster of buildings—and while our fifty men might defend themselves in one or two of them, there were half a dozen more the rebels could take, and even this would have been with terrible loss of life, so of course there was no choice. But wasn't [sic] he mad? The men were in such a state of

excitement it was almost more than Haskin could do to restrain them, and he was really afraid there would be some collision before he could get out of town. The Governor, wishing to show us every attention, wanted to escort us to the boat with three or four volunteer companies, but Haskin told him if he did not want blood shed he had better keep his men as far off as possible, as he would not answer for his men if he did not. I tell you we had a brave little band, and every one of them would have given all they had to fight, but Haskin says the time has not come yet to shed blood, and although he was convinced he could hold the place two or three days, he would have been no better off at the end of that time, but much worse, as there are no United States troops any where near, and the telegraph in the hands of the traitors.

After we broke up housekeeping, we staid at the house of a friend by the name of Caldwell, direct descendants of the revolutionary parson Caldwell. Our friend Mr. Caldwell said he was really afraid that Fanny (his wife) would come home with a black eye, she felt so bad and was so abusive to the other party. Our officers with us are Lieutenants Todd, Duryea, and Cooper.

Rebecca Haskin.