

The following account of the "Charleston Riot" is from an extra edition of the *Charleston Plain Dealer* (March 31, 1864). The editor, and presumably the author of this source, is E.F.

Crittenden, who was among those who provided for the "common defense" of Charleston after the incident occurred. The original edition of this account, from which these excerpts are taken, is in the collections of the Coles County Historical Society.

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PLAIN DEALER--EXTRA

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E.F. Crittenden, Editor.

SHOCKING OCCURRENCE. A Dreadful Fight Between Copperheads and Soldiers

Seven Persons Killed--Eight Severely Wounded

Charleston, Monday, 9 P.M.

This afternoon a dreadful affair took place in our town, the most shocking in its details, that has ever occurred in our part of the State. Early in the morning, squads of Copperheads came in town, from various directions, and, as the sequel will show, *armed* and determined upon summary vengeance upon our soldiers. During the day premonitions of the coming trouble were too evident.--Some of the soldiers, about to return to their regiments, were somewhat excited by liquor, and consequently rather boisterous, but not belligerent--were more disposed for fun than fight. About four o'clock, a soldier, OLIVER SALLEE, stepped up to NELSON WELLS, who has been regarded as the leader of the Copperheads in this county, and placing his hand good-naturedly against him, playfully asked him if there were any Copperheads in town! WELLS replied, "Yes, God d--n you, I am one!" and drawing his revolver shot at SALLEE, but missed him. In an instant SALLEE was shot from another direction, and fell, but raising himself up, he fired at WELLS, the ball taking effect in his vitals.

[Fighting continued throughout the afternoon and arrests were made of civilians who had fired upon the soldiers]

Mr. JOHN COOPER, from Saulisbury, was captured, and brought in as a prisoner by Mr. W.A. NOE, and a soldier. When the Copperheads were halted near Mrs. Dickson's, he was heard to say that as they now had no leader, *he* was ready to lead them back and kill the d----d soldiers and burn the town, or die in the attempt; and at various places he was heard to threaten to cut out the hearts of the "d----d Abolitionists," and used kindred expression....

Tuesday Morning, 11:30 A.M.--[The search for Copperheads continues]

Col. Brooks' squad, going through the O'Hair settlement [J.H. O'HAIR, Sheriff of Coles County], re-captured Levi Freisner and also the guard of Butternuts place over him, six or eight in all. [Butternut was a term applied to Confederate soldiers and those in the North who were sympathetic to the Confederacy, i.e. another name for Copperheads It is said that the "enemy" are now gathered two or three hundred strong, under J.H. O'Hair, at Golliday's Mill, some them miles north-east from here. Whether this be so, or not, we are unable to say.... There are now some forty prisoners [sic], guerillas and citizens of "constitutional" or doubtful loyalty, under arrest, and more bring arrested.

Thursday, Noon, March 31.

The Copperheads are said to be gathering from several Counties, and moving to some place of concentration, probably in the north-east portion of this country.--Already several hundred are gathered at Donaker's Point, under command of "Colonel" J.H. O'Hair. Whether this concentration is for the purpose of offensive or deffensive [sic] movements, we cannot tell--probably the latter, however....

Last night several hundred soldiers, from Indianapolis, passed through here for Mattoon, where serious disturbance was threatened, and who, with others, will be ready for operations anywhere.

The people here are much excited; no business is being done, and all are preparing for safety and peace. The cooperation of citizens and soldiers will forever put an end to such Copperhead outrages here.... Men, who have apparently been unmoved in these Copperhead outrages, are now decided--many FOR US; some AGAINST US....

As we have been obliged to be a "minute-man" during the day, and do a full share of guard duty at night, ever since Monday, for the common defense....