

back that served as a sort of fort for him and his family. His wife had drilled holes through the wall and armed the place. Thus, when Bland and his men charged the location, shots rang out, the guerrilla leader fell to the ground mortally wounded, and the others ran off. The Union soldier went to see Bland on his deathbed, where the two spoke and forgave each other for what had transpired. These bands of Confederates, who took advantage of their isolation, often plagued Unionists outside of Owensboro. A few miles outside of Owensboro, guerrillas invaded a Mr. Cosby's house at a time when only Cosby's wife and children were there and stole their guns.²²

The middle of September also witnessed the only serious fight in Daviess County. After Geiger's Lake, Johnson had quickly reassembled quite a number of his men at Panther Creek, a few miles south of Owensboro, while Colonel Netter and 400 men of the newly formed Fifteenth Kentucky Cavalry were encamped at the fairgrounds to the west of town. On September 19, 1862, while Johnson was away, having ridden off to the south, Bob Martin led his men into Owensboro to reconnoiter. They dashed into the town at sunrise, surprised everyone, and soon had the place completely under their control. They took the powder and weapons stored in the jail and stores. Some of the guerrillas apparently started to loot but were stopped by Martin, who ordered them to return what they had taken. The only stores that were cleaned out belonged to Littell and Scott, who stocked badly needed bridles and saddles. Several known Unionists in town were arrested by Martin, including George Yeaman. The men were ordered to take an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy, but they refused and were eventually released. After this, Martin moved his men to the fairgrounds to confront Netter. Martin, hoping to get an easy surrender, demanded that the Union forces lay down their arms. Netter

refused, and knowing that his men were more numerous than Martin's, began positioning them for an attack. In the midst of his preparations, the Union colonel led a company of men out to see just where Martin and his men were positioned and to place his pickets. This led to a small skirmish in which Netter fell dead, shot through the heart by Ben Johnson. The colonel's orderly quickly fired, killing Johnson with a shot to the head. With Netter's death, the men of the Fifteenth Kentucky, disheartened by the loss of their leader, returned to their camps and sent word to Evansville and nearby Rockport to send reinforcements. Martin, understanding that the Union forces were in a well defended position and armed with a cannon, withdrew his troops about seven miles south of Owensboro to Southerland's farm.

Overnight, troops from the Indiana Legion arrived, being ferried across by the steamboat *McCombs*. Reinforcing the 350 men of the Indiana Legion and the shaken Fifteenth Kentucky was the Twelfth Kentucky Cavalry, yet another regiment being organized in western Daviess County at the time, and the First Indiana Cavalry, led by Colonel William F. Wood. On the morning of September 20, the Union force, commanded by Wood, determined to attack Martin's forces, set out.

By roughly eight in the morning the Union troops began arriving at Southerland's farm; however, since most of the cavalry were newly organized with little training, they had rashly advanced too far ahead of the Indian Legion's troops who were afoot and lagging behind. Martin's Confederates, numbering somewhere around 250 men, were well positioned on top of a hill, known as Southerland's Hill, and dominating the surrounding fields, and the Owensboro Road, along which the Union forces advanced. Wood's cavalry, lacking any sort of support from the infantry, foolishly charged into a

hail of fire from Martin's troops. The Union troopers quickly broke and fled back across the field. For some reason, Martin ordered his men to advance from their strong position on the crest of Southerland's Hill and take up a new and much weaker position at its base. The federal troops, hoping to soften up the guerrillas, wheeled up their cannon and began firing. However, after only three shots, the cannon was disabled. Colonel Wood, with his cavalry still disordered and scattered and with a broken cannon, had only one option left, an attack with infantry.

The men of the Indiana Legion advanced in line of battle. As they neared the Confederate line, the Union infantry stumbled across a shallow ditch, which they quickly hopped into and, from that sheltered position, unleashed a deadly fire upon Martin's quickly disorganized men. Seeing their opportunity, the federal infantry charged the outnumbered guerrillas, who fled from the battlefield. With the Union cavalry still disordered, Martin and his men were able to escape toward the Green River and into an abandoned fort at Ashby's Ferry, a few miles north of Spottsville. Colonel Foster, who was encamped at Madisonville, marched out for the fort intent on destroying Martin and his men. Foster marched his infantry to Henderson, where they boarded steamboats and started up the Green River. At the same time, Foster sent his cavalry and two cannon overland. The two elements were to meet at Ashby's Ferry and attack Martin's force. However, the steamboat ran aground, and the cavalry force, unaided made a brave but foolhardy attack upon Martin's entrenched men that failed. After that, the guerrillas fled into the countryside and returned to their homes.²³

The months of July, August, and September were crucial for both the Confederate and Union cause in the lower Green River valley. For Johnson, success at Newburg