



**Confederate
Governor George W.
Johnson
(1811-1862)**

Kentucky's first
Confederate governor,
Scott County native
George W. Johnson,

actively worked to create a provisional Confederate government for Kentucky when the Civil War erupted. Johnson's political career was cut short, however, when he was killed in action after joining the rebel ranks at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Johnson, an attorney, farmer, and former state legislator, worked for Kentucky's neutrality. When that policy failed and the state government became pro-Union, Johnson fled Kentucky to avoid arrest. He eventually reached Russellville, Kentucky, where a convention was held to establish a provisional pro-Confederate state government. Claiming that "our Government is founded on the eternal principles of right," Johnson was elected governor.

Johnson had power only within Confederate lines, so he eventually followed the Southern army into Tennessee. When the Battle of Shiloh was fought there on April 6, 1862, Johnson served as a volunteer aide to General John C. Breckinridge and Colonel Robert Trabue, who led the Fourth Kentucky Confederate Infantry. When Johnson's horse was killed, he joined the ranks of the Fourth Kentucky as a private. He was almost fifty years old and suffered from a withered arm. One nineteenth-century writer remarked that Johnson hoped "to share with the troops of his State the result of the contest."

When fighting resumed the next day, Johnson charged the Union lines with his regiment. He was shot twice, once in the right thigh and once through the stomach. The Confederates were forced off of the battlefield, and Johnson lay wounded on the field for more than twenty-four hours. Dying while under Union care, friends in the Federal army had his body shipped home to Scott County, where he was buried.

"War in Kentucky . . . portions of the town burnt by the rebels," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, March 15, 1862

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