Introduction

David Donald, commenting on Confederate Civil War soldiers, stated accurately that the "Southerner made an admirable fighting man but a poor soldier." Wilbur Cash agreed and claimed that "by virtue of precisely these unsoldierly qualities, he was, as no one will care to deny, one of the world's very finest fighting men." The bravery and skill of the Confederate soldier has been glorified and embellished ever since he stacked his rifle at Appomattox. His devil-may-care attitude and fierce individualism has earned him a place in the hearts of buffs and historians who see something more familiar and likeable in the ragged rebel than they do in well disciplined regulars. Cash stated that "To the end of his service this soldier could not be disciplined," and proceeded to list a number of ways in which the Confederate soldier fell well short of West Point precision. But he concluded that one reason the Confederate has captured the popular imagination is that despite all his flaws as a soldier he won some stunning victories and occupied and vexed the North's superior resources for four years.[1]

Donald and Cash both located the unsoldierly quality of Confederates in the social, cultural, and political makeup of the South. Donald saw antebellum commitments to democracy, liberty, and equality as the chief determinants of Confederate behavior. Cash believed the South's low population density, isolation, commitment to white equality, and minimal government bred a ruggedly individualistic population ill-suited to be harnessed by army discipline.[2] Yet behind the true but romanticized image of the dogged and combative Confederate lay severe discipline problems and a resistance to all things military. At first, independence and self-reliance was considered a positive advantage, but when the war dragged on and intensified beyond the most pessimistic predictions of 1861, these traits became more pronounced and injurious to the Confederate army. In both civilian and military circles the combative enthusiasm that was effectively channelled in 1861 turned to truculence and extreme localism.

With some notable exceptions, Donald and Cash being two, only recently have historians placed the Confederate war experience within the context of antebellum southern culture and society.[3] Historians of the war have traditionally studied it under a microscope, isolating it from

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[1]David Donald, "The Confederate as a Fighting Man," *Journal of Southern History* 25 (1959): 193; Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1969), 45.

[2]Donald, "Confederate as Fighting Man," 178-93; Cash, *Mind of the South*, 32-35, 44.

[3]Some of the best of the recent works are Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge, 1983); J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands* (Middletown, Conn., 1985); Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry* (New York, 1983); Robert C. Kenzer, *Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1989). None of these authors, however, make the Confederate war experience the main theme of their book.

the events and developments of the antebellum era. They look for the source of Confederate defeat on the battlefield or in the South's failure to modernize. Although these factors are important and will continue to be a part of the discourse, one must look beyond the traditional explanations to adequately explain why the Confederacy lost.

Widespread southern demoralization, both at home and in the army, cannot be fully explained by reciting the long list of hardships Confederates endured or refused to endure. In light of American resistance during the Revolution, North Vietnamese determination two hundred years later, and other long wars for national self-determination, the southern people seem only half-heartedly committed to their own independence. If we look just at the war years we miss the important social and cultural developments that helped shape the participants' perceptions of the war. An examination of Confederate writings primarily, but not exclusively from nonslaveholders, shows that southern soldiers were products of their society. Southerners spent a lifetime steeping in the peculiarities of slave society and imbibed all its values, ideals, and prejudices--cultural baggage that had a profound affect on the way they made war.

In the past twenty-five years many historians have convincingly cast their interpretations within a republican framework.[4] Southern republicanism's preoccupation with ideas of liberty and slavery has been particularly attractive for scholars exploring the slave society. Much of this work attempts to explain two fundamental problems in southern history: secession and why nonslaveholders would join with planters in a war to perpetuate slavery. Surprisingly, however, few historians have interpreted the war years within a republican framework. The war provides a unique window into the nonslaveholders' world. For four brief years the normally silent nonslaveholders speak in letters to family and friends. Although the war proved to be an atypical environment for the letter writers, yeomen honestly expressed themselves on a wide range of topics. Their words flesh out the skeleton we have derived from dry census figures and the more voluminous writings of the planters.

The good fighter/poor soldier dichotomy had deep roots in American considerations of army-civilian relations, and how an institution such as the army, based as it is on hierarchies and inequality, could best serve a democratic country. The South's political culture, firmly grounded in a republican ideology, emphasized white male equality and varying degrees of dependence for everyone else. The requirements of an expansive wartime army conflicted with these basic underpinnings of Southern society. The war disrupted traditional race, class, and gender relationships and trampled on white men's civil liberties. Southerners jealously guarded their personal freedom and independence; surrendering it only grudgingly, but never completely, to the army. Recruits submitted only to enough discipline to maneuver and face the enemy on the battlefield. The military regimen seemed superfluous and excessive for men who desire was to emulate minutemen not Continentals. A raw Mississippi recruit demonstrated the southern

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[4]Some of the more prominent works that have been particularly influential to this study are Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975); J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, 1978); Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*; and for an excellent recent gendered analysis of political culture in the South see Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York, 1995).

prejudice against imposed order when he explained how "most men objected [to guard duty] because they said they did not enlist to do guard duty but to fight Yankies." Rebel soldiers broke every rule in the military manuals. Even desertion, the most serious of military crimes, became commonplace.[5]

The distaste for inequality might seem surprising in a society that contained many hierarchical levels that divided southerners along race, class, and gender lines. Nearly all white men, however, enjoyed life at the top of this pyramid. Southern government, laws, and custom confirmed and reinforced the fact that white men were the only true citizens of the republic. While the South's white male population celebrated democracy, equality, and liberty it was widely understood that these were rights conferred only on white men. Blacks, white women, and children were excluded from the benefits of society. Southern elites were highly conscious of potential class divisions but, until the war, managed to subordinate them to gender and race considerations. Living in a slave society gave all Southerners a clear sense of the stark contrasts between freedom and bondage, creating a social and political dichotomy that worked its way into every crevice of Southern life. Southerners expressed themselves in extremes with no consideration for shades of gray. White southern men held strong beliefs on nearly any topic. They seldom felt indifference, and almost always expressed their thoughts with great intensity. They talked in terms of love or hatred, undying loyalty or undiluted animosity, and absolute liberty or absolute slavery. Such extremism affected the way southerners thought about themselves and the way they dealt with others.[6]

These are significant considerations when projected forward onto the Confederate experience. The exigencies of war forced the government to pare back liberties that were considered natural rights in peace time. Persistent localism that perpetuated strong community loyalties followed volunteer companies to the front and interfered in the formation of a strong military identity. Soldiers enlisted with their neighbors and elected local elite to command them. Communities continued to exert an inordinate amount of influence on their boys which eventually exacerbated soldiers' discontent with the army. In a war to preserve white independence, southerners did not accept the significant, if temporary, loss of personal liberty.[7]

Southern soldiers compared their lot with that of the slaves and openly rebelled against the military structure just as slaves did against their bondage. They blamed the army, the Confederate government, and the wealthy planters for destroying the uneasy equality of antebellum days, and they refused to participate in a war that seemed inexorably to drive them toward a condition of slavery. The war tested many beliefs that white Southerners held in common and, in the process,

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[5]Donald, "Confederate as Fighting Man," 191-93; Cash, *Mind of the South*, 45; see also Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge, 1943), quote on 27, 217-43.

[6]Randall C. Jimerson, *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought During the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge, 1988), 17-18.

[7]Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers: Their Expectations and Their Experiences* (New York, 1988), 168. James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988), 614.

strained relations between slaveholders and nonslaveholders. The war exposed the inherent contradictions of a society that proclaimed equality and liberty and kept slaves.

Chapter One:
The South on the Eve of War

During the Civil War the Confederacy carefully crafted the image it projected of itself to its citizenry. To gain the widest possible acceptance Confederate propaganda highlighted and emphasized many of the basic values common to most white male southerners. ProConfederate speeches and articles drew from a few well defined aspects of antebellum culture and society to encourage enlistments and keep morale up. Again and again, recruiters, politicians, and officers called on men to enlist, fight, and die to protect *their* families, to preserve *their* honor, and to secure *their* independence. Their is italicized to emphasize the personal terms in which Confederate leaders couched their calls for popular participation in a war for southern independence. In the mainly rural and agricultural South, where the post office was the only visible presence of the federal government, and individuals relied on family and neighbors for the necessities of life, people had a strong local, rather than national, identity. Propaganda helped generate local and personal reasons for southern men to support the Confederacy. The Confederacy existed to preserve the personal independence, freedom, and equality of its citizens from northern encroachments. Southern men should fight to defend the country that protected their interests.

Officials never failed to tell southern men that fighting for the Confederacy was synonymous with defending their homes and families. An Alabamian copied down a flag presentation oration that was repeated in communities all across the South. "This splendid banner," he wrote, gave "incentive to high & noble deeds ... its sacred folds ... shall be our highest aspiration to learn those tactics that will fit & prepare us ... to defend with our lives, those lovely daughters of our affectionate mothers who honored us to day with their smiles and approval." When these men became veterans generals used similar words to inspire them to higher feats of courage. General James Longstreet congratulated his men on a hard won victory and warned that the enemy "has sent forth ... hirelings to the dishonor and violation of Southern women.... If ever men were called upon to defend the beloved daughters of their country now is our hour."[8]

Military setbacks elicited similar exhortations from southern leaders, who implored their soldiers to remain resolute. Lee, attempting to hold his shaken army together after the Gettysburg debacle, told his men that "once more the eyes of your countrymen are turned upon you, and again do wives and sisters, fathers, mothers and helpless children lean for defense upon your strong arms and brave hearts." Lee reminded his soldiers that the fate of helpless others depended on their actions. Toward the end of the war, President Jefferson Davis gave a similar reminder. He told the nation's soldiers that "their [Federals] malignant rage aims at nothing less than the extermination of yourselves, your wives, and children.... Fellow citizens, no alternative is left you

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[8]James B Mitchell to father, undated, James B. Mitchell Papers, LC; *O. R.*, Ser. 1, Vol. 2, Pt. 3, 605-07.

but victory or subjugation, slavery, and the utter ruin of yourselves, your families and your country."[9]

Officers and politicians called on soldiers and potential soldiers to fulfil their manly duty and protect their homes and communities. This was the only way to preserve personal and national independence. Soldiers were informed constantly that the hopes of the young nation rested on their shoulders. If they failed then destruction and enslavement was the future of the southern people. More specifically, some raised dire warnings that blacks would be made the equals of whites, and race mixing would be the result of a Union victory.

The rhetoric was so repetitive as to become trite. A jaded soldier who had heard too many such orations complained about standing for three hours to hear the captain make "the usual remarks."[10] Politicians and generals, however, deliberately crafted their speeches to reach the greatest possible audience. While appeals to honor, independence, and the protection of helpless women may sound prosaic and empty to the modern ear, many southerners of all classes readily responded to such urgings. Samuel Meetze, a nonslaveholder, vowed to his sister that he would rather "die then be com a Slave to the North. I leave my home and thee dear With Sorrow at my heart.... Tis for our honer and our names We rais the battle cry." On the first anniversary of his enlistment George Hall reminisced about his reasons for joining the army. "Abraham Lincoln," he wrote, "Sent Hordes of Goths and Vandals to over run our beloved South to Subjugate us and take freedom and our homes and property from us."[11] Common sentiments such as these drew men into the army and kept them there, at least until more powerful forces shook their faith in classic antebellum rhetoric.

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of southern rhetoric was its ability to tap into white men's feelings of independence and sense of worth. Most Confederate soldiers cited personal or national liberty and equality as reasons for fighting. Southern soldiers sounded not much differently than their grandfathers who enlisted to fight the British. A political culture that stressed personal independence as the only alternative to slavery motivated men during both wars. Southerners largely adhered to a country republicanism which had its roots in eighteenth century England. Other sections of the country subscribed to the same ideology, but interpretations of republicanism varied remarkably from region to region. Race slavery in the South gave that region's vision of republicanism a peculiar caste that made Southerners preoccupied, almost obsessed, with ideas of liberty and slavery.[12]

Republicanism emerged from the political writings of a group of eighteenth century radical whigs which included such men as Robert Molesworth, John Toland, Thomas Gordon, John

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[9]*O. R.,* Ser. 1, Vol. 2, 301; Ser. 4, Vol. 2, 687-88.

[10]John Barnwell (ed.), "Civil War Letters of Lieutenant John Elliot," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 65 (1981): 208.

[11]Samuel S. Meetze to M[arey] Meetze, March 13, 1864, Confederate Papers, SHC; George W. Hall Diary, April 1, 1862, LC.

[12]Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d Ser. 39 (1982): 334-356.

Trenchard, Richard Baron, and Thomas Hollis. This group, called the Commonwealthmen, drew on the political thought of the English Civil War. The works of Algernon Sydney and James Harrington, both of whom had been persecuted by Charles I for their endorsements of a republican government, inspired the latterday English republicans. The Commonwealthmen believed that the monarchy naturally drifted toward despotism. The landed yeomanry checked these tendencies. To better regulate the king, English republicans called for an enlarged landed class, extension of the franchise, and creation of a national militia, of which more will be said later. These men were no democrats as they advocated controls on, or even enslavement of, the nation's landless poor. Laborers, tenants, and vagrants threatened the liberty of all free men. Poverty drained the resources of the landed classes and created a large socially and politically unstable underclass. Corrupt individuals or governments could easily influence the poor with bread, money, or meager promises.[13]

Early republicanism claimed that widespread ownership of productive land produced a class of self-sufficient farmers. Men who earned a living from their own soil relied on no one for their livelihood. Farmers who shunned ostentation and lived a frugal, debt free life were championed as virtuous, independent, and incorruptible. Thomas Jefferson celebrated a nation composed of small farmers: "Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God ... whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue." Jefferson extolled the yeoman democracy because it ensured the government could never lord over the people. Farmers were the backbone of honest republican government.[14]

In the nineteenth century landownership continued to be the avenue by which most Southerners attained independence. Nearly all men dreamed of tilling the soil, or having a gang of slaves to do it for them. Land and slaves were the chief means by which men attained status and prestige. So great was the hold landownership had on southerners that very few of them entered into occupations other than farming. Professionals used their attainments as a means to a more desirable end. Doctors, merchants, and lawyers built businesses in order to enter the landowning classes. They then either sacrificed their lucrative professions or subordinated them to planting.[15] No other occupation offered as much autonomy as farming. Professionals were at the mercy of their clients for a living, and they controlled little in the way of land and labor.

A second pillar of independence was the control of dependents. These could be slaves, family members, or some combination of the two. Nearly all heads of households, whether rich or poor, controlled family labor in order to grow crops for subsistence or market. Wives were integral to repeating the cycle of independence. Women labored in the fields, made products for domestic

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[13]Robert E. Shalhope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d Series 29 (1972): 50-51; Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 369-70.

[14]Lacy K. Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York, 1988), 50-51; Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* ed. William Peden (Chapel Hill, 1954), 164-65; Morgan, *American Slavery*, 376-77.

[15]Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982), 177, 181.

consumption and sale, and, perhaps most importantly, reproduced the labor force. The more children a farmer had the better he could utilize his labor to generate independence. When a farmer controlled both productive land and the labor of a large family he was truly the master of his world. This dominance in the domestic sphere gave yeomen and planters, if not exact equality, a shared privileged position in society that looked to masters as the natural leaders.[16]

A second facet of English republicanism was an intense distrust of standing armies as tools of the state. Rulers who had little ability could fall back on the strength of arms. English history provided ample warnings for power wary individuals. Charles I and Parliament battled for control of the army, and Cromwell later ruled England with power largely derived from the military. The experience taught Englishmen that the army was a great source of power and a potential basis of tyrannical rule. Following the restoration of the monarchy the army was sharply reduced and a nationwide militia system established to decentralize the military. Englishmen, however, retained their misgivings about regular soldiers. Republicans placed their faith in a militia composed of armed landowners for defense against foreign invaders and corrupt governments.[17]

American colonists shared English fears of standing armies. These fears were heightened by the necessity of maintaining British regulars in the colonies after the French and Indian War. American militia performed creditably during the war and many felt the regulars were unnecessary. Nevertheless, Britain garrisoned troops in the colonies without the consent of the colonial legislatures. To some the forcible garrisoning of troops seemed like an ominous sign of tyranny. The Boston Massacre lent greater weight to this viewpoint. After the Revolution, Americans took stock of their colonial experiences and placed constitutional limitations on their own regular army. The Constitution divided warmaking powers between Congress and the president and required military expenditures to be ratified by Congress once every two years. For some time the United States regular army looked more like a provisional army.[18]

The seeds of English republicanism fell on fertile ground in eighteenth century America. The country was large and relatively uninhabited, providing plenty of cheap land for a seemingly endless number of small farmers. There were, by European standards, few landless free whites in the colonies, and this remained true for much of the antebellum era as well. While Jefferson warned Americans that large numbers of landless poor would breed political corruption like "a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution," there seemed, at the time, to be little worry of that in the South.[19] The South benefited from having a laboring class that consisted mostly of bound, readily identifiable, politically impotent, black slaves.

Ironically, southerners could and did proclaim the equality of man--white men--more loudly than any other section. Demonstrations of white male equality included voting, holding office, and moving freely in a society that raised many racial and gender barriers. Poor southerners

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[16]McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 56-91.

[17]Morgan, *American Slavery*, 369, 379; Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians, The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (Boston, 1968), 31-37.

[18]Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 37-43.

[19]Morgan, *American Slavery*, 369-70; Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, 165.

who lacked large tracts of land and slaves especially prized such displays as a means to reinforce at least the appearance of equality with wealthy neighbors. Fittingly, southerners believed that a good government defended property and liberty--the outward signs of independence--with a minimum of interference. They associated equality with protection from arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, onerous taxation, and the ability to express oneself freely and to own any form of property. They believed that a permanent menial underclass, excluded from the political process, created an environment for representative government to flourish. That southern slaves were easily recognized in the population was so much the better because antebellum whites, no matter how poor, chiefly identified themselves along race not class lines. The peculiar institution cast liberty and slavery in stark contrast: white and free; black and slave. Southerners knew what slavery was first hand and loved liberty all the more.[20]

Antebellum proslavery arguments emphasized the role slavery played in society by arguing that white equality was contingent on black slavery. Slaveholders impressed on nonslaveholding whites that without slavery land would become the only source of wealth. Planters, they warned, would have no compunctions about driving poorer neighbors off their land to increase their own holdings. Common whites would replace blacks as the laboring class. A slaveholding South made all whites social and political equals because blacks occupied the lowest position in society.[21]

Republicanism bestowed a powerful legacy upon the South. White men touted an ideology that glorified freedom and equality while at the same time condoned the maintenance of millions of slaves. More precisely, they claimed independence and equality precisely because there were black slaves. Race slavery created an environment of extremes, where there was only free and unfree, complete dependence or complete independence. Whites were super-sensitized about their own liberty because, in their experience, the only other option was slavery. The dichotomous nature of southern society generated extremist uncompromising thinking and rhetoric. Slaves owned no land, had no political rights, depended on others for a living, and had little control within their own families. The dependency of slaves repulsed and frightened common whites who often lived a precarious enough existence of their own.

In the decade before the Civil War, independence became an increasingly difficult goal to attain. As the states grew and matured the republican ideal strained under internal pressures. Population increases, the construction of roads, canals, and railroads, and the spread of commercial agriculture drove land prices beyond the reach of many aspiring young farmers. In some regions land prices more than doubled over the course of the decade. Southerners sought wage labor or tenant farming in hopes of earning enough to purchase a small tract of their own. Most never advanced into the ranks of the landowners. The 1850's witnessed the formation of a permanent class of laborers and tenants. Neither accorded with the republican ideal. By the standards of the day they were no longer independent.[22]

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[20]Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 243; Morgan, *American Slavery*, 380-85; Jimerson, *Private Civil War*, 17-18.

[21]Steven Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism*, 86-89; Thornton, *Politics and Power*, 206-09.

[22]Land price estimates from the central piedmont of North Carolina. Charles C. Bolton estimates that in 1860 30-50% of all southern whites were landless, in *Poor Whites of the*

For these reasons most white southerners perceived an attack on the slaveholders' property as an attack on the privileged status of all white men. The South's preoccupation, almost obsession, with slavery produced a sometimes hysterical response to the North. Already unnerved by their own precarious independence, white Southerners perceived the Republican party as an immediate and dangerous threat to slavery. Whites generally feared the social chaos that would follow emancipation, and poor whites in particular worried that they might find themselves on the bottom of the social, economic, and political heap. After the bombardment of Fort Sumter ruled out compromise, many common whites clearly identified themselves with the slaveholders' cause.

Jonas Bradshaw informed his wife that if the Yankee army came South "we will make them know that a white man is better than a nigger.... I cant think of letting the yanks whip us ... and then take our propperty from us." A poor nonslaveholder wrote: "We will eather [be] free and indipendante popel or Slaves to the North.... I reather die then be come a Slave to the North." A third heaped abuse on the North for "trying to force us to live as the colored race of our land.[23] Many soldiers believed the North made war to enslave white southerners. They saw no freedom without slavery. Slaves made whites equal, performed menial work, and created social stability. Soldiers talked about the war as battle between slavery and freedom because those were the terms they were most familiar with.

Another aspect that southern rhetoric never failed to include was either an explicit or implicit appeal to male honor and authority. As a motivational factor honor worked on two levels: personal and public honor. These are by no means easily distinguished. Bertram Wyatt-Brown argues that honor defined social relationships within the South, providing a context for both private and public actions. Honor was reputation. By his words, actions, and appearance a man projected an image of himself into the community. Public opinion judged a man's worth. Ideas of self-worth mattered little in a society where a man's physical, moral, and intellectual appearance determined his status. Whether at home, in church, or at the tavern, men played roles calculated to enhance their reputations. Men conducted themselves carefully to ensure no one could interpret weakness in their actions. Manly authority rested in the maintenance of various power relationships. No weakness could be shown in dealing with people of lower status such as slaves, free blacks, women, children, or poor whites. Public and private spheres were so indistinguishable that any external attack threatened both home and community.[24]

Nationally, the events leading up to secession challenged the collective honor of the South. Northern opposition to the annexation of Texas and extension of slavery into the territories

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Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi (Durham, N.C., 1994), 5, 12-14, 22-23; Ford, *Origins of Radicalism*, 352.

[23]Jonas Bradshaw to Nancy Bradshaw, April 29, 1862, Jonas A. Bradshaw Papers, DU; Samuel Meetz to M[arey]]] Meetze, March 13, 1864; Samuel Walsh to Miss R. L. Proffit, April 11, 1864, Proffit Family Letters, SHC.

[24]Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 14, 33-34, 45-47; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, The Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), 7.

promised to give citizens of the free states greater opportunities than those of the slaveholding states. If slavery was prohibited in the territories the free states would surround the slave states and the North would become the dominant partner in the Union. Northern predominance became a reality when the Compromise of 1850 tipped the senatorial balance of power in favor of the free states. Many southerners believed that northern control of the government was an abolitionist plot and emancipation of the slaves was sure to follow. The slave states worried that compromise had betrayed weakness. No southerner, whether he owned slaves or not, was willing to admit a New Englander was better than himself. Any southerner who allowed this to happen was no better than a slave.[25]

William Grimball of South Carolina gave voice to many of the South's concerns when he asked "is it nothing to *yell* about that we are prevented from carrying our property into the common territory of the United States. Is it nothing to yell for that the government is to be in the hands of men pledged to carry on the 'irrepressible conflict' against us. Is it nothing that they send incendiaries to stir up the slaves to poison and murder us? Is it nothing that our brothers at the North robb us of our property and beat us when we reclaim it?" Grimball echoed the growing sense of helplessness within the South and despaired at what appeared to be northern antagonism. The South looked for redress but found no opportunity until Lincoln's election.[26]

When Lincoln was elected at the head of a party devoted to the confinement of slavery the South believed that this demonstrated its minority position in the Union. "There are men in the party [Democratic party] (of which I am one)," wrote a young Virginia secessionist, "who seeing that without a vigorous effort we will be wrecked upon that shoal to which we have been slowly but surely drifting for years--I mean *slavish submission* to a mean numerical majority."[27] The South had to show the North it was willing to fight for equality.

Even Unionists like John Bills of Tennessee made their loyalty conditional upon the maintenance of the South's honor. Bills cheered a local Unionist victory but warned that Tennessee "will try to preserve it [the Union] with honor, if not, then go it alone." After Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to suppress the rebellion Bills wrote, "However wrong the leaders may have acted, no one will see the south Coerced into submission to such a Motley Abolition Crew as is headed by Lincoln." The next day Bills subscribed money to arm and equip a Confederate volunteer company. The Unionist Lynchburg *Daily Virginian* told the North "We have no sympathy with the Precipitators," but warned, that we "have still less with the blind, unyielding fanatics of the North who are blasting every hope of compromise and Union."[28]

At the local level, courage was the essence of southern honor. Southern society made white men masters and guardians of both white and black dependents, but it also obligated them to be providers and protectors. White men derived and demonstrated their superior status by

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[25]Thornton, *Politics and Power*, 209-228; Jimerson, *Private Civil War*, 15.

[26]Quoted in Jimerson, *Private Civil War*, 8-9.

[27]J. H. Cochran to his mother, Oct. 8, 1860, Cochran Family Letters, VPI.

[28]John Houston Bills Diary, Feb. 9, April 16, 17, 1861, SHC; Lynchburg *Daily Virginian*, April 5, 1861.

controlling dependents. All white men that were household heads, whether they owned slaves or not became habituated to command. They ordered and controlled the labors of their family members to create self-sufficiency. Wives, children, and slaves had no status in society outside of the patriarch. Because dependents looked to men for legal, moral, and physical protection they required and expected his protection. An attack against them also attacked the household head and required swift retribution. Anyone who failed in this respect was not worthy of honor.[29]

The Civil War provided men with a chance to demonstrate their bravery before the world. Northern armies posed a real and symbolic threat to southern communities and everything white men held dear. Families, homes, and property in the path of an invading army could all be destroyed, taken, or defiled. Many Southerners eagerly seized the opportunity to defend their homes. James Griffin enlisted and became a colonel of a South Carolina regiment. Although he understood the dangers of soldiering he hoped that when his son was old enough he too would enlist. "I would be proud of the thought that our youngest Boy--Yes Darling little Jimmie, will after a while be able and I trust willing to take his Father's place in the field, and fight until he dies, rather than be a Slave, *Yea* worse than a Slave to Yankee Masters."[30]

Adherence to an ideal of honor heightened southerners' highly personal experience of the war and the events leading up to it. The blurring of public and private spheres confused distinctions between fighting to defend one's country, state, or home. Southern men who lived far from the battlefield enlisted believing that they were engaged in the defense of their homes and families.[31] Men fought because their personal honor was joined to their region's.

When some men hesitated to enlist southern women used their not inconsiderable influence to shame them into performing their duty.[32] Indeed many seemed almost eager to send their men into the deadly shot and shell of the battlefield. Men, as representatives of the family, either added to or impugned family honor by their actions during the war. Not allowed to enlist themselves, women seemed anxious for their men to preserve and enhance their family reputations. Early on women displayed an unprecedented degree of organization to help raise volunteer companies. In one neighborhood young women formed companies and drilled to protect the "men that would not volunteer." In another, they publicly shamed men out of uniform by giving them white feathers as they passed. Almost universally women snubbed men who failed to enlist.[33] Public pressure to join the army could be unbearable.

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[29]Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 50-54; Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery*, 87; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds,* 56-91.

[30]Judith N. McArthur and Orville Vernon Burton (eds.), *A Gentleman and an Officer: A Military and Social History of James B. Griffin's Civil War* (New York, 1996), 103.

[31]James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For* (Baton Rouge, 1994), 18.

[32]Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 172-74.

[33]Haskell Monroe (ed.), "The Road to Gettysburg: The Diary and Letters of Leonidas Torrence of the Gaston Guards," *North Carolina Historical Review* 36 (1959): 481; Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades* (New York, 1966), 30.

"If I were to *dodge* this thing I would consider that I had forfeited every claim to your respect," wrote a young surgeon to his fiance. "My sense of honor," he continued, "would not allow me to stay at home, and I know you will applaud it."[34] Soldiers who went to war because they feared the scorn of young women wanted those same women to recognize their bravery. Others perceived that shirking only jeopardized their standing within the community. Men had to feel the equal of every other man. George Ingram told his wife that "if I were to go home and the other boys have a fight while I am home I never could look a man straight in the face again."

Communities continued to exert pressure after men were in the army. In the summer of 1863 Captain Wimberly resigned his commission to return to his home in Minden. He came to regret the controversy it generated. One of his men informed everyone at home of the captain's resignation. When Wimberly's soldiers told him that the women of Minden were against his coming home, he "grew pale," and probably, "wished just then that he had remained Capt." The anxious officer hoped to rescue his reputation by having his entire company sign a petition stating "that they were willing for him to go home." Thereafter soldiers referred to resigning as "Wimberlyizing."[35]

Men who enlisted received female recognition, even adoration. Wherever soldiers went women showered them with welcome attention. One soldier wrote that while on the train to Virginia "ladies crowded to every little depot to cheer us on [our] way.... The cars were literally covered with boquets from the beautiful ladies." Neighboring women visited camps each day. Some brought food to sell, others to visit, and all to see the spectacle of hundreds of armed and uniformed men. Soldiers delighted in these visits. They brushed their uniforms, burnished their weapons, and paraded in fine style in hopes of impressing the local beauties. One young soldier wrote fondly about his first days in camp. "The young ladies visit our happy domicile very near every evening I have formed the acquaintance of near every lady in town both young & old."[36] Such were the benefits of being a soldier, at least in the early months of the war.

In 1861 white Southerners enthusiastically enlisted to fight against the North. A decade of intense sectional conflict rubbed nerves raw. War seemed almost a welcome release for emotions on the breaking point. When southerners took up the North's imagined challenge they redirected their fear of weakness and social disorder toward a convenient and traditional enemy. They turned internal frustrations with retarded mobility outward against the abolitionists who threatened to make slaves of them all. Southerners fought to uphold honor on more than one level, preserve white liberty which was indistinguishable apart from black slavery, and to protect property rights in general and their right to own slaves in particular. One historian summed up southern reaction to

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[34]T. J. Gaughan (ed.), *Letters of a Confederate Surgeon, 1861-1865* (Camden, Ala., 1960), 88-89. Henry L. Ingram (ed.), *The Civil War Letters of George and Martha F. Ingram* (College Station, Tex., 1973), 17.

[35]Bell Irvin Wiley (ed.), *"This Infernal War": The Confederate Letters of Sgt. Edwin Fay* (Austin, Tex., 1958): 86, 144.

[36]Edmund Cody Burnett (ed.), "Letters of Three Lightfoot Brothers, 1861-1864," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 25 (1941): 389; W. P. Clarke to his father, May 22, 1861, Confederate Papers (Miscellaneous).

Lincoln's election "not only as a challenge to southern interests, but as an affront to southern honor and a threat to southern freedom.... Without consciousness of contradiction, southern masters cast their defense of slavery in libertarian terms, and demanded the freedom to enslave."[37]

The South went to war with unprecedented, if temporary, unity. Carried away by the initial heady excitement generated by grandiloquent speeches and parading militia companies, thousands of southerners rushed to sign their names to the rosters of forming volunteer companies. Parades, speeches, and parties added to the festive mood. The gaiety surrounding mobilization must have made war seem like a frolic. The reality of war, however, proved a rude shock for men whose only experience of war came from Walter Scott novels. The bombast and rhetoric of the first weeks gave way to grim determination as vicious battles and hard living stripped the romance from war, leaving Scott discredited.

[37]David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York, 1989), 859.

Chapter Two:
"You Want to Make a Damned Slave of Me": The Character of Southern Soldiers

Nearly twenty years after the Civil War came to a close, veteran Carlton McCarthy characterized the Confederate soldier as "peculiar in that he was ever ready to fight, but never ready to submit to the routine and discipline of the camp or the march."[38] Perhaps McCarthy exaggerated the veteran's eagerness to fight, but the essence of his statement remains true. Young Southerners boldly, if naively, promised to die rather than submit to the enemy, yet proved oddly reluctant to endure the rigors of military discipline. Their sincerity to die for their cause cannot be doubted as three quarters of the military aged population of the South served and nearly one fifth of them died in the war. Thousands of others were wounded and permanently crippled.[39]

Southerners, however, held narrow ideas about soldiering and army life. They were prepared to sacrifice much, but not everything for their cause. Southern society prepared its men for a different sort of war than was actually fought. Republican biases in favor of the militia helped determine how Confederate armies were organized and officered. Democratic institutions continued to survive, in a truncated form, in an environment that was highly undemocratic. Confederate recruitment reinforced localistic tendencies already in the system. Family and community continued to play the major role in shaping the soldiers' identity. Confederates, in many important ways, continued to be more civilian than soldier. At first army life reinforced southerners' highly individualistic and democratic notions. Over time the romantic sheen of army life faded, and soldiers came to the unpleasant realization that the army was their master. Southern soldiers exaggerated the degree of control the army placed on their lives but it made it no less onerous.

The Confederate army, unlike professional armies of the day, never asked their enlistees to make a complete transition from civilian to soldier. Professional armies attempted to remove the civilian from the soldier by taking recruits from their familiar environment. Recruits entering training camps passed into a foreign world where they were made to look different, submitted to discipline, and responded to entirely different stimuli. Punishment rewarded failure to conform to military standards. Recruits learned to obey orders, place collective concerns above individual wishes, and prepare to kill other people and, possibly, be killed themselves. Training and discipline instilled in them a sort a collective identity or unit solidarity. A process of adaption turned enlistees into soldiers and, transferred their primary loyalty from home to the military.[40]

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[38]Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia, 1861-1865* (Lincoln, Neb., 1993), 39.

[39]Maris A. Vinovskis, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War? Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations," in *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays,* Maris Vinovskis, ed. (Cambridge, 1990), 5; E. B. Long, *Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865* (New York, 1971), 704-11.

[40]Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York,

When training recruits even the most professional armies never completely destroyed the last vestiges of civilian identity. However much the army tried to separate soldier from civilian, the two continued to share their society's values, beliefs, and goals. Soldiers fought, after all, in order to preserve the way of life they enjoyed as civilians. An army would be dangerous indeed if it did not embody the basic values of society. Like soldiers of any era, and perhaps more than most, Confederates were products of their upbringing.

Southerners did not see the need to transform their fighters into soldiers. Republican distrust of standing armies and the glorification of the militia continued to exert an influence over nineteenth century thought. Nor were these strictly southern beliefs. All Americans distrusted the regular soldier. Experiences during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 perpetuated the belief that the "only good soldier was a semi-civilian." The popularity of the minuteman persisted long after the Revolution. And when Andrew Jackson's ill disciplined backwoodsmen defeated the British regulars at New Orleans the supremacy of the militia over the regular seemed certain. The myth of the militia grew despite a spotty performance in the second war with Britain.[41]

During the Civil War West Point teachings met resistance from volunteers who were determined to fight the war on their own terms. Civilian distrust of regular armies transferred itself to volunteer distrust of discipline and regimentation. The nature of military discipline and hierarchy conflicted with southern tenets of equality and individualism. One soldier complained that he was a volunteer but the army treated him "like a regular if not worse."[42]

Southerners put their faith in the natural courage of free men fighting for a just cause. These beliefs naturally emphasized creating morally upright soldiers and de-emphasized the need for drill and discipline.[43] A string of early successes at Bull Run, Leesburg, in the Shenandoah Valley, Seven Days, and Second Bull Run seemed to lend truth to the myth that one Confederate could whip seven Yankees. [44] Their Federals "discipline is immensely superior to ours," wrote a confident Virginia officer in 1862. "I never saw Cadets at drill march with greater precision and more regularity than did the Yankee skirmishers under our fire.... Southern pluck, however, was too much for them, and they had finally to give up." Early success merely papered over severe problems that returned to hamper Confederate generals months later.[45]

1993), 21-23; Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge, 1979), 1-38; Peter S. Bearman, "Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U. S. Civil War," *Social Forces* 70 (1991): 325.

[41]Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians*, 52-54, 282-86, quote on 286.

[42]Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge, 1978), 102-04; Charleen Plumly Pollard (ed.), "Civil War Letters of George W. Allen," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 88 (1979): 50.

[43]Donald, "Confederate as Fighting Man," 180.

[44]Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn., 1989), 30-31.

[45]Richard W. Oram (ed.), "Harpers Ferry to the Fall of Richmond: Letters of Colonel John De Hart Ross, C. S. A., 1861-1865," *West Virginia History* 45 (1984): 171.

Northerners also believed in the primacy of bravery until the disaster at Bull Run. The rude shock of defeat and subsequent rout caused northern authorities to reconsider their plans. It became obvious to northern observers that the war would not be short, and victory required preparation and organization. The Union had generals who were willing and able to implement an intensive reorganization and thorough training of its armies. Lincoln fired General Irvin McDowell for his performance at Bull Run and promoted General George McClellan. Opponents criticized McClellen for being too slow and unwilling to risk his army in a fight, but he was one of the best organizers in the service. He received support from General-in-Chief Henry Halleck who agreed that organization and discipline were necessary ingredients for victory.[46] They set out to remake the Union army a much more organized and disciplined machine. Although McClellen lasted less than a year in command, he left the northern army in excellent shape to fight a protracted war.

Under the influence of men like Lee and Jackson organization and discipline improved in the Confederate armies. Crimes such as straggling, insubordination, and sleeping on duty, however, remained distressingly common. It was never entirely possible to eradicate the belief that courage would overcome the better disciplined armies of the enemy. Southern beliefs about what armies were supposed to be were compounded by the way the Confederate companies were formed.

Confederate mobilization was not a single effort orchestrated from Richmond but thousands of individual efforts carried out by communities across the South. Richmond and Washington were only a hundred miles apart. Both sides hurried troops into the field to prevent a the other from making a quick rush on the capital. There was not the time and experience required to train enlistees thoroughly. The Confederacy lacked a nucleus around which to build an army of volunteers. The cadres of professional officers was small even when one includes graduates from southern military academies. Necessarily men who had no military experience were commissioned and instructed to train recruits.

Lacking instructions from a strong authority towns and counties took the lead and recruited men for local, geographically distinct companies. Planters, lawyers, and merchants used their personal influence, and promises of free uniforms, arms, and equipment, to induce young men to enlist. Recruits had little notion of joining a great national army. They enlisted to follow a local notable, to be in the same unit as their friends, and to avoid the stigma of cowardice. Local volunteer companies defined the character of Confederate armies and soldiers. The company was the community in microcosm. Although relations with home were sometimes strained, most companies never developed a distinct identity apart from the community. Such conditions made it virtually impossible to thoroughly indoctrinate recruits in the military mysteries.

Soldiers reaffirmed local attachments by electing their own officers. The election of officers had its roots in the militia system. Typically members elected men who held leadership roles in the community and had helped raise the company. The Confederate government had little choice in the matter since they played no part in organizing the companies. The election system undermined discipline by making officers in some way accountable to their men.[47]

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[46]Phillip Shaw Paludan, *The People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861-1865* (New York, 1988), 49-59.

[47]The discussion of electing officers is based on Donald, "Confederate as Fighting Man," 182-86; and Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the*

Popularly elected officers who were once their soldiers' neighbors and peers were reluctant to become strict task-masters. Many had postwar political ambitions and feared alienating their future constituents by being too demanding. Good community leadership and good officership were two different skills. Civilian leadership required patience and care. Politicians carefully resolved divisive issues by building community consensus. On the battlefield officers made decisions quickly and expected prompt obeyance to avoid confusion that cost lives. Soldiers believed that officers should not be too authoritarian, officers complained that their men would not obey commands unless the necessity of the order was explained to them.

In the eyes of volunteer soldiers rank alone did not convey authority. Men expected their chosen leaders to earn their respect. Officers who did not meet their soldiers' approval found it virtually impossible to command obedience. Disgruntled soldiers resisted in a variety of ways that often resulted in the officer, not the men, backing down. When a captain disregarded his company's preference to fill a lieutenant's vacancy and then recommended his own half brother, fifty to sixty of his men applied for transfers out of the company. Although the transfers were denied, the captain understood that he could not simply impose his will on the company.[48] Those officers that persisted to rule in an authoritarian manner received petitions for their resignation, to which they often acquiesced.[49]

During reorganization in the spring of 1862 the government gave soldiers a second opportunity to select their officers. Veteran soldiers, who might be expected to have learned the value of discipline, frequently ousted officers who had been strict disciplinarians for those who seemed more congenial and lenient. Lieutenant-colonel James Griffin guessed "that a good many of the old officers will be turned out, and *worse* ones put in their stead. As a general rule--the officers who have discharged their duties propperly--are not popular with their men--and those who have allowed the most privleges, and have been least efficient, are the men who will be elected." The turnover rate was high in Griffin's battalion; six of fourteen officers were not reelected.[50] The officers who remained popular were those who commanded in a fatherly style. They ruled firmly but benevolently, explained the reasoning behind orders, and did not expect spit and polish soldiers.

Persistent localism hindered the formation of a strong military identity. Because modern armies take geographically diverse men to form companies there are few common ties between the soldiers. The military becomes that commonality. Civil War company structure reaffirmed the local origins of the unit. Everyone knew each other and bonds of loyalty preexisted the war. There was

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American Civil War (New York, 1988), 39-40.

[48]J. S. Anglin to his family, March 6, 1862, John S. Anglin Papers, LC.

[49]When soldiers' disaffection became too great companies began to disintegrate. See for example J. H. Stuart to Ann L. Hardeman, Aug. 4, 1861, John B. S. Dimitry Papers, DU and Albert Wymer Henley Diary, [spring 1861], FSNMP.

[50]McArthur and Burton, *Gentleman and an Officer*, 200.

no need to build an alternate identity, so the military unit and the discipline required by it took a back seat to the civilian community in arms.[51]

The lack of professionalism that pervaded volunteer armies appalled career military men and government officials. Camille Polignac, a French officer on General Beauregard's staff, complained that the volunteers' lack of professionalism made it difficult to enforce the discipline characteristic of European armies.[52] Regiments learned little of practical value in instructional camps. Many units went into battle knowing only the manual of arms and some basic drill. Some unlucky units entered combat less than a month after being formed. Other regiments that boasted veteran status had scarcely learned the rudiments of soldiering. Despite corrective efforts throughout the war, discipline remained lax.[53]

In September 1862 General Robert E. Lee reported to Jefferson Davis on the state of the army. "I find that the discipline of the army, which from the manner of its organization, the necessity of bringing it into immediate service, its constant occupation and hard duty, was naturally defective," he wrote, and "has not been improved by the forced marches and hard service it has lately undergone." Almost two-and-a-half years later Lee complained of the same defects. The men relied too much on their courage "to the neglect of those measures which would increase their efficiency and contribute to their safety. Many opportunities have been lost and hundreds of lives uselessly sacrificed for want of strict observance of discipline." Lee went on to instruct his officers to "attend to the smallest particulars of detail," so their men would men would become "habituated to obey."[54]

An inspector in the Trans-Mississippi department reported one division suffered from poor discipline and high desertion rates, and he characterized this unit "the best troops I have inspected." He condemned the officers for being too familiar with their men. He suggested "keeping them constantly employed with drill, the enforcement of strict discipline, and a requirement of minute attention to all military exercises and duties," as a remedy.[55] When Confederate soldiers' unmilitary behavior hampered operations, generals, especially West Point graduates, demanded that their subordinates strictly enforce discipline. Generally the efforts were too little too late and failed to correct deficiencies.

Straggling provides an excellent example of how the military failed to break the soldiers of bad habits. As long columns of men travelled across the countryside, soldiers illicitly slipped out of line. Straggling, as it was called, occurred for a number of reasons. Hungry men who had nothing in their haversacks, often stopped to find something to eat. On hot days cold well water and fresh

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[51]Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 34-37.

[52]Camille Polignac, "Polignac's Diary-Part I," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 19 (1980): 14-15, especially diary entries for April 23, 29, May 28, June 11, 1862.

[53]For the difficulties of being an officer to men from the same community see Mitchell, *Vacant Chair*, 23-25; James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1982), 170-71, and *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 330.

[54]*O. R.,* Ser. 1, Vol. 19, Pt. 2, 597; Ser. 1, Vol. 46, Pt. 2, 1247-48.

[55]*Ibid.*, Ser. 1, Vol. 22, Pt. 2, 1050.

buttermilk enticed thirsty soldiers to sneak out of line when their officers were not looking. Others tarried to rest, talk with the locals, or avoid the next battle. By the autumn of 1862 straggling became a problem that vexed and frustrated many army commanders, especially Lee, who attributed his defeat along Antietem Creek to the problem.

Straggling became chronic long before the move into Maryland. In June 1862 Lee took measures to halt the debilitating practice. The general ordered each regiment to supply an officer, a noncommissioned officer, and ten men to march at the rear of each division to ensure no one fell out of ranks without proper authorization. Two months later Lee bolstered the order by detailing another noncommissioned officer to the guard and assigning special men to assist the wounded from the battlefield. Lee wanted no one evading battle under the pretences of being wounded. Furthermore, officers were ordered to make daily roll calls and fill out morning reports to ensure that everyone was accounted for.[56]

These measures, however, failed to keep men in the ranks. Thousands malingered in the rear during the Maryland campaign and afterwards. Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis that the army's "present efficiency is greatly paralyzed by the loss to its ranks of the numerous stragglers. I have taken every means in my power from the beginning to correct this evil, which has increased instead of diminished." The problems created by straggling had become so severe that "a great many men ... never entered Maryland at all: many returned after getting there, while others who crossed the river kept aloof."[57]

More dutiful soldiers abhorred their straggling comrades who roamed over the countryside and stole from civilians. A Mississippian in Lee's army was disgusted by the stragglers who "will range through the country in the wake of the army and sometimes a head of it, living of the citizens, plundering and pillaging and when they come in to their commands are the lions of the day, while reciting their exploits." Harvey Black, a surgeon in the Stonewall brigade, thought "stragglers ... a disgrace to the Army and an intolerable pest to the citizens."[58]

The end of the war still saw Lee battling stragglers. In February 1865 he ordered file closers to march with loaded weapons behind each regiment. These file closers, composed of the best men in the regiment, were detailed for the purpose of "preserving order in the ranks, and enforcing obedience to commands." Although similar to previous attempts to curb the problem, the wording left no doubt as to how straggling, and desertion, were to be prevented. The final line read: "If any refuse to advance, disobey orders, or leave ranks to plunder or retreat, the file closers will promptly cut down or fire upon the delinquents."[59] High desertion and straggling rates forced Lee to devote more of his precious manpower to prevent the problem.

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[56]*O. R.*, Ser. 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 3, 576-77; Ser. 1, Vol. 12, Pt. 3, 928; Ser. 1, Vol. 19, Pt. 2, 618-19.

[57]*Ibid.*, Ser. 1, Vol. 19, Pt. 1, 143.

[58]James J. Kirkpatrick Diary, Nov. 2, 1862, FSNMP; Glenn L. McMullen (ed.), *A Surgeon with Stonewall Jackson: The Civil War Letters of Dr. Harvey Black* (Baltimore, 1995), 40.

[59]*O. R.,* Ser. 1, Vol. 46, Pt. 2, 1249-50.

If generals complained of ill-disciplined soldiers, soldiers complained that generals expected too much useless professionalism from volunteers. Soldiers vigorously rebelled against any attempt to make them more efficient. Southerners thought they had joined a truly republican army where distinctions of rank were few. Most imagined after one or two battles the war would be over and the military hierarchy would not become an onerous fixture of day to day life. The war was not nearly as short as most expected. The early pre Manassas excitement gave way to the drudgery of soldier life. Battles were relatively infrequent and drill, guard duty, and chores took up most of the soldiers' time. Every day the military hierarchy, enforced by discipline and punishment, weighed heavily on soldiers.

Regimentation was something new to most recruits. The soldier's life was unpleasantly foreign to men accustomed to the freedom of agricultural life. Farming was not an easy profession, but within boundaries set by nature, men controlled their own time and labor. In camp the drum and bugle regulated their time, officers ordered their day, and armed pickets limited their movement. Soldiers were told when to work, when to eat, and when to sleep. Army routine, while not particularly onerous or strenuous, was more regimented and restricted than what they had known. "It is rite hard times hear," J. J. Asbill complained to his sister, "we have to drill five times a day.... we have got a C[a]det from Charlston to drill o[u]r company and he runs us down." A Georgia private showed what he thought of drill when he called it "free negro drill."[60]

A disgruntled Confederate recruit thought his officers took particular delight in keeping him constantly busy. He wrote that "we commenced drilling again this morning; we have two drills a day & Dress Parade: isn't it a shame. we have to answer five roll calls a day, but if our High Officers had it to do there wouldn't be [illegible] so much unnecessary duty for the private to perform." Soldiers became irritated when ordered to perform tasks that served no apparent purpose. Practical Southerners saw no use in many of the military's ways. A Virginia soldier complained that the army guarded everything even "if it ain't worth ten cents." A Kentuckian told how "The old Colonel tried to get us to fall in and march in order; but such a dusty arrangement didn't suit us, so we divided off in squads to please ourselves."[61] Just as in civilian life, soldiers did not listen their superiors when practicality dictated a better course.

Soldiers despised dress parades and reviews. These showy affairs seemingly had no practical benefit except to feed the ego of generals. Peter Dekle wrote of his Sunday review "I were mad all the time I were on the field out there with my Knapsack haversack canteen Carterdridge Box and gun all this morning having to toe them all just for nothing." James Kirkpatrick put an extreme interpretation on inspections. "It was no doubt very *agreeable* to *them* [the spectators]," he wrote, " but the 'monkeys' don't feel much complimented by being turned out

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[60]J. J. Asbill to wife, Feb. 12, 1862, J. J. Asbill Papers, LC; Louis Merz, "Diary of Louis Merz, C. S. A. of the West Point Guards (Co. D, 4th Georgia Volunteer Infantry)," *Chattahoochie Valley Historical Society* 4 (1959): 20.

[61]John S. Anglin to his parents, July 14, 1862, John S. Anglin Papers; Charles W. Turner (ed.), *The Allen Family of Amherst County, Virginia: Civil War Letters* (Berryville, Va.: 1995), 8; William C. Davis (ed.), *Diary of A Confederate Soldier: John S. Jackman of the Orphan Brigade* (Columbia, S. C., 1990), 53.

for a simple exhibition of their muscle and proportions." Without being too explicit, Kirkpatrick compared the review to an auction day examination of slaves.[62]

Camps restricted soldiers' accustomed freedom of movement. Men discovered that they required a signed pass to leave camp. Pickets placed around the perimeter of camp kept Confederates in as well as they kept Yankees out. Usually passes were easily obtained but the fact that one was required at all put severe limitations on the soldier's freedom. Officers of the 17th Mississippi placed their men in a church so they would not wander off. The soldiers could not leave without the countersign. They "soon got tired of being confined," and, "jumped out of the windows." An Alabama sergeant wrote his family that "military laws are so binding one can't go when and where he pleases without permission, and you know I am not used to getting leaf every time I step off a few steps."[63]

Private William Wagner left camp without a pass, was arrested, kept in the guard house overnight, and forced to clean the streets of camp for a day. Although his punishment was lenient, he complained that "a man haint got half the chance of a Negro if they had they could ... go when they please ... I hope ... they time is a comeing when we all git free a gain."[64] The similarity between camp pass and the passes required by slaves when they went off the plantation disconcerted men like Wagner.

Officers not only kept their men in camp but regulated other aspects of their behavior as well. Many soldiers believed that they did so in draconian fashion, although the opposite was more often true. Privates thought shoulder straps and gold braid turned officers into tyrants. In many parts of the South, particularly the upcountry, there was often a sort of easy familiarity between the classes. Rich and poor mingled, talked and drank together. Pompous displays of wealth and status were ridiculed.[65] In the army some men were elevated above others. To most it seemed an artificial distinction with no basis in reality. Soldiers elected their officers in the same democratic manner that they chose their civilian leaders and expected to be treated as citizens, not servants. Many did not feel bound to respect rank when officers and men had recently been peers.

Soldiers were sometimes surprised to find themselves being ordered about by domineering officers. William Smith complained that his captain "wouldent let us get out of line if we did he would make us stand gard fore hours." The captain prescribed the same punishment for soldiers who wore dirty shirts or strayed from camp without a pass. James Zimmerman explained the fate of soldiers that did not obey orders: "We are punished severely and have to do wors than a negro

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[62] John K. Mahon (ed.), "Pete Dekle's Letters," *Civil War History* 4 (1958): 20; Kirkpatrick Diary, Sept. 11, 1863.

[63]James W. Silver (ed.), *A Life for the Confederacy: As Recorder in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A. Moore Co. G 17th Mississippi Regiment Confederate Guards Holly Springs, Mississippi* (Wilmington, N.C., 1987), 21; Vera Dockery Elkins (ed.), *Letters From a Civil War Soldier* (New York, 1969), 43.

[64]Joe M. Hately and Linda B. Huffman (eds.), *The Letters of William F. Wagner: Confederate Soldier* (Wendell, N. C., 1983), 44.

[65]Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 754-57.

under a mean master." Deter Jochum attributed the desertions from his company to the "tyranny of their officers."[66]

Officers' elitism sometimes followed them off the parade ground and into camp. A soldier lamented the fate of the lowly private when he was turned away from the officers' mess. He cursed upstart officers who felt themselves too good to fraternize with enlisted men. "We privates can only come in as servants you know. It would be a piece of *impudence* for a soldier to sit down & eat with an officer. What makes me feel bad about it is we have some officers who (before this war commenced) I thought myself too good to associate with."[67]

Enlisted men often felt that there was nothing wrong in disobeying an officer's orders when they seemed unnecessary. A group of Mississippians defied a standing order not to play ball on Sunday. When the guard came to put a stop to the game, the Mississippians resisted. The guard was not enough to restore order, and an additional company had to be called out. The reinforcements brought the Mississippians under control but not until after a good many weapons were drawn, and the ringleaders were placed in the guardhouse. The whole next day the Mississippians were "breathing out threatenings against the guard," and the situation remained tense.[68]

When such conflicts occurred Southerners naturally compared their officers to overseers and resented the implicit implication that they were slaves. Officers did have considerable control over their men's lives, and if the men failed to perform to satisfaction they could be punished. Soldiers believed that such strictness was often overly harsh and arbitrary. "There is no telling what may happen to a soldier," complained one upset soldier, "for he belongs to his officer more strictly than a negro does to his master." Another soldier exclaimed the soldier "is under the worse task-master than any negro. He is not treated with any respect whatever. His officer may insult him and he has no right to open his mouth and dare not do it." Frank Richardson blasted the army for making the soldier's "a great deal worse than that of a common field negro," he wrote but the worst part was that the "commissioned officers are just like the owner of slaves on plantations[.] they have nothing to do but to strut about dress fine and enjoy themselves."[69]

Enlisted men encountered lieutenants, captains, and colonels on a daily basis. Company officers enforced discipline, punished offenders, and dispensed orders from above. They, not generals, were the most immediate and obvious symbols of the military hierarchy. Therefore, when soldiers vented their frustrations they directed their discontent at company and regimental officers. Insubordination, absenteeism, and violence were just a few of the many ways soldiers rebelled against authority.

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[66]William Smith to Bettie Smith, Oct. 5, 1862, William D. Smith Letters and Papers, DU; James Zimmerman to Martha Zimmerman, Nov. 16, 1862, DU; Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 139.

[67]Cousin to Anne E. Boatwright, March 3, 1863, Thomas Frederick Boatwright Papers, SHC.

[68]Ezekial Pickens Miller Diary, April 13, 1863, FSNMP.

[69]Wiley, *Infernal War,* 157; Burnett, "Letters of Three Lightfoot Brothers," 389; Frank Richardson to his father, Sept. 4, 1861, Frank Liddell Richardson Papers, SHC.

When an officer ordered Harry St. John Dixon to the guardhouse for drunkenness, he shot back: "I will not do it. I was a gentleman before I joined your damned company and by God you want to make a damned slave of me." Another soldier, ordered to do guard duty after two days and nights of fighting and marching, "plainly and modestly told my officer that I could not and would not go." The man walked away and went unpunished. Robert Patrick complained to his commanding general about an officer who did not treat him with the respect he believed he deserved. "I'll be damned if I will be any man's servant," he plainly told the general, "and if either of you expect me to knock under to such a man as Daniels you will be disappointed, for I certainly shall not do it."[70] Even officers simply doing their jobs encountered resistance. When soldiers became too recalcitrant, however, the military gave officers the power to back up their claims to authority.

The army punished men in a variety of physical and psychological ways. Although rarely used, the death penalty could be invoked for serious breeches of discipline. Lesser punishments were many and varied. Confinement to the guardhouse was perhaps the most common form of punishment for many violations. Officers might order troublemakers to wear a ball and chain, perform hard labor, or be reduced to a bread and water diet. Frequently offenders forfeited their pay and were placed on extra fatigue duty. Some officers used peer pressure and publicly humiliated disobedient men. This could range from wearing a sign with the offence written across it to sitting on a specially designated punishment rail.[71]

While soldiers submitted to benign correctives, they despised physical punishments. Bucking and gagging raised indignant reactions from soldiers. This form of punishment consisted of tying a soldier's hands and wrists, slipping his hands over his knees and then placing a rifle or stick under the knees and over the elbows. Another stick or bayonet was placed in the soldier's mouth and fastened securely. This punishment was particularly brutal, especially when carried out for an entire day or over the course of several successive days. John Casler recalled that after thirty men of his brigade had been bucked and gagged for straggling about half of them deserted. Casler told his captain that he "did not intend to answer roll call that evening," and if he "was bucked again for straggling it would be the last time; that I would never shoulder my musket again for a cause that would treat soldiers in that manner."[72]

Benjamin Jackson witnessed the whipping of three men for deserting. Their "shirts were taken off" and "their hands stretched high [as] they could reach, were given thirty nine lashes on their naked backs with a leather strap tacked onto a stick." Their heads were shaved and the deserters were drummed out of the army to the strains of Yankee Doodle. Jackson concluded: "It was a bad looking sight. They had deserted and had gone home. So I will drop the subject." Later that same month the same man witnessed his first execution. He matter-of-factly stated, " This

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[70]Harry St. John Dixon Diary, Nov. 18, 1864, SHC; J. W. Reid, *History of the Fourth Regiment S. C. Volunteers, from the Commencement of the War until Lee's Surrender* (Dayton, Oh., 1975), 81-82; F. Jay Taylor (ed.), *Reluctant Rebel: The Secret Diary of Robert Patrick* (Baton Rouge, 1959), 186-87.

[71]Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 231.

[72]John O. Casler, *Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade* (Dayton, Oh., 1971), 101.

morning I saw many men [shot] at one time ... If old General Bragg keeps on having them shot like he has been he will certainly thin out the ranks."[73] The whipping apparently left a deeper impression on Jackson.

In the South, whites could be and were executed for heinous crimes, but they rarely received physical punishment. Southerners believed whites whipped slaves, they did not whip other whites. The lash left permanent scars as marks of dishonor. When white men fought, they tried to mutilate their opponent. To gouge out an eye or bite of an ear marked an opponent for life. The disfigurement showed the individual had been dishonored. Soldiers with stripes on their backs carried the same dishonor, but, unlike a fight, they had no opportunity to fight back and redeem themselves.[74] The army's reliance on physical punishments likened the soldier to the slave being whipped by the overseer.

Zealous soldiers believed that physical punishment, with its allusions to slavery, was exactly what deserters deserved. The cowardice of desertion belied the individual's pretensions to manhood, and public flogging was a demonstration of their weakness. A surgeon in Arkansas described deserters as "not but *one removed* from the human Jackall who cares nothing for his bleeding country." He believed such men ought to be "*whipped well*." A soldier in Louis Merz's company was branded on the hip and had his shaved for deserting. Like whip marks, a shaved head and brand singled the man out as an honorless coward. Merz approved of the sentence and hoped the deserter felt "the shame and disgrace of such a punishment."[75]

In a few instances soldiers flatly refused to be punished. The men of one brigade, yelling and firing their rifles, tore down pillories erected by the general for the purpose of punishing his men. An observer noted that the men of his brigade would never even have allowed the construction of such devices.[76] Most soldiers, however, did not have the power to resist, which reenforced their degraded status.

Southern soldiers levelled some serious accusations against the military system. The army was a drastic break from the past. Southerners somehow expected that they would be able to serve their country without surrendering the liberties that distinguished them as free men. For all southerners, but common whites especially, being placed under officers and ordered about as if they were slaves was galling. White men who were heads of their household were used to positions of command and control. They dominated their families in order to run the household and give evidence to their claims to power. The army turned this order around by placing some men in charge but forcing the rest to obey orders. The army stripped men of their authority and sense of

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[73]Alto Loftin Jackson (ed.), *So Mourns the Dove: Letters of a Confederate Infantryman and His Family* (New York, 1965), 29-32; Bolton, *Poor Whites*, 60-1, 110-11.

[74]Elliot J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 43.

[75]Gaughan, *Letters of a Confederate Surgeon*, 95, 107; Merz, "Diary of Louis Merz," 10-11.

[76] Davis, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, 116.

equality. Poor men desired displays of equality to foster feelings of self-worth, but the hierarchical system did not allow for equality. The army served neither liberty nor equality.

Despite soldiers' grumblings, demoralization was offset somewhat by other factors. Southerners enjoyed the comradeship of the company. Community bonds were strengthened by shared hardships, and soldiers developed powerful ties to their company. Although many desertions occurred in the first year of the war most men could not abandon their messmates. Additionally, men willingly accepted a certain amount of deprivation. They were volunteers and proud of their sacrifices. As the war progressed, and rookies became veterans, disturbing changes occurred in their mental and moral states. These changes affected the men deeply and could not be so easily overlooked.

Chapter Three:
"My Mind Is Always So Torn Up"

Soldiers' discomforts extended beyond the physical; they experienced changes in their mental and moral states as well. All combat soldiers must undergo certain psychological adjustments, otherwise they could not survive with their psyche intact. Soldiers feared these changes for two interrelated reasons. Firstly, the experience of war created an uncomfortable distance between a man's antebellum identity and the identity he assumed as a combat soldier. Veterans discovered that they were no longer the same person who had enlisted. Secondly, soldiers believed that the forces that altered their personalities also had degenerative effects on their behavior. Southerner men found they and their comrades often slipped into a morally corrupt and slavish lifestyle. Civilian values and sensibilities were useless when trying to survive on the front lines. War forced soldiers to adopt new strategies to survive. When exposed repeatedly to the horrific brutality of the battlefield, combat soldiers, who were at first repulsed and disturbed, became numb to the carnage around them. Although the hardening process was necessary, that made it no less disturbing.[77]

Combat veterans came to inhabit two vastly different and conflicting worlds. They fought to preserve a certain definition of home and hoped to return to that world. Both the soldiers and the people who sent them to war expected them to return as they had left, but it was difficult to retain a peacetime identity. Men learned skills, performed acts, and lived lives that effectively separated them from civilian morality. They worried the longer they stayed in the army the more tenuous became the ties to home.[78]

Some recruits realized even before they saw their first corpse or fired the first angry shot that soldiering represented a dramatic break with the past. Edmund DeWitt Patterson, a native of Ohio serving in the 9th Alabama regiment, perhaps understood the dark side of war earlier than his comrades because he had lived among the people he was supposed to kill. When issued the first rounds of ammunition Patterson wondered: "Is it possible that we are actually to *kill men? Human Beings?* That these cartridges were made purposely for one mortal to shoot at another?" Patterson accepted killing as part of war but wondered "how hardened men must become," before the end.[79]

The heat of battle produced some disturbing changes in men's personalities. Even the most modest and unassuming of people could be temporarily turned into a heartless killer. Before John Johnston fell unconscious he saw one of his friends being repeatedly stabbed by enemy cavalrymen. When Johnston regained consciousness he saw his wounded friend beating a Union

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[77]For the psychological changes soldiers undergo see Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 56-89.

[78]Leed, *No Man's Land*, 2-3, 21-22.

[79]John G. Barrett (ed.), *Yankee Rebel: The Civil War Journal of Edmund DeWitt Patterson* (Chapel Hill, 1966), 6.

soldier with a rock. The Northerner begged for mercy but the Confederate replied "you wouldent stop when I was begging and I wont stop for you."[80] It disturbed soldiers greatly when they stopped treating the enemy like human beings, even temporarily.

Some men, when first exposed to the savagery of battle, wrote as if they experienced waking nightmares. For a week after Fredericksburg, J. B. Mitchell imagined that his sleeping comrades were corpses. The fighting in the Wilderness made one Virginia veteran "so nervous I can't write and I can't compose my mind."An Alabamian, obviously disturbed by the unnerving sights of the battlefield, told his wife that "my mind is always so torn up.... I can hear some [wounded soldiers] a groaning almost dying, some cursing, some screaming, until it distracts my mind."[81] Some men did not give in to the hardening process as easily as others, and the death and destruction of the battlefield disturbed them greatly.

Over time soldiers became insensitive to the sufferings around them. "I once viewed a dead body with dread," wrote Oscar Stuart, "I now look upon heaps of my fellow human beings with indifference." A soldier in Johnston's army noted how they learned to casually "cook and eat, talk and laugh with the enemys dead lying about us as though they were so many hogs." A surgeon left behind at Antietam to tend the wounded sadly wrote, "I have supped so 'full of horrors'--have seen death, crime, shame and despair so busy at their work that my head has whitened and my very soul turned into stone."[82]

Robert Stiles recalled that a painfully wounded northern soldier pleaded with "bystanders to put him out of his misery." After a few minutes two Louisianans pushed their way through the crowd. One clubbed the man to death with his rifle butt and, "looking around upon the other wounded men added glibly, 'Any other gentleman here'd like to be accommodated?'"[83]

Seldom did Confederates become so callous of human life that they would be able to dispatch a wounded soldier so coldly, even one of the enemy. Yet the story illustrates to what level men feared they might sink if they remained in the army too long. Southerners worried that they might become accustomed to the killing and brutality of war. Men so accustomed to war were callous of human life and, they feared, unable to reintegrate into civilian society with its drastically different moral code.

Outward changes mirrored and reinforced inward transformations. Soldiers were conscious of their appearances. In the South appearances helped determine one's status in society. After some active campaigning soldiers, who had erstwhile been considered honorable gentlemen, could

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[80]Fred Arthur Bailey, *Class and Tennessee's Confederate Generation* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 87.

[81] James B. Mitchell to his father, Jan. 13, 1863; Turner, *Allen Family*, 69; Jackson, *So Mourns the Dove,* 39.

[82]Oscar Stuart to sister, February 2, 1862, DU; Norman D. Brown (ed.), *One of Cleburne's Command: The Civil War Reminiscences and Diary of Capt. Samuel T. Foster, Granbury's Texas Brigade, C. S. A.* (Austin, Tex., 1980), 115; J. M. Greene to Annie Shoemaker, Sept. 21, 1862, Shoemaker Papers, DU.

[83]Robert Stiles, *Four Years Under Marse Robert* (Dayton, Oh., 1977), 80-81.

easily be mistaken for "poor white trash" or "crackers." The Confederacy's notoriously poor supply system often left troops without changes of clothing for months on end. Soldiers became their own quartermasters. Some purchased uniforms, most had clothes sent from home, and all learned to sew. This mismatching of styles, cuts, and colors made for a motley appearance on parade. Uniforms, if they can be called that, were patched and tattered, and not infrequently a dirty elbow or knee poked through ragged openings in the material. After the first few months soap became scarce, and men, with little opportunity to bath, became filthy. Not long after crowding into dirty camps fleas infested everyone's clothes without regard to rank or station. Hair grew long and greasy, while full, long beards gave the soldiers a wild and animalistic look. Confederates did indeed begin to look wild and uncivilized. "I did not recognize many of the boys on account of their hairy jaws," wrote a soldier returning from the hospital, "nearly all seem to regard the razor as a 'barberous' instrument--unfit for civilized men." "Some of the men were so poor that they did not look like human beings," wrote a soldier upon seeing some survivors from Vicksburg.[84] A pro-Confederate planter viewing captured Confederate troops noted that "they are a rough looking set of men. no uniform & badly clad."[85] When the respectable antebellum gentleman and honest thrifty farmer gave way to the ragged rebel, soldiers worried that their deteriorating physical appearance signified a deeper transformation--that they had become more savage than civilized.

In an effort to clothe themselves, many rebels restocked from the spoils of the battlefield. Confederates roamed the battlefield stripping corpses. One officer who was disgusted by scavenging allowed his men to replace only essential equipment. He wrote: "There was a great deal of pilfering performed on the dead bodies of the Yankees by our men. Some of them were left as naked as they were born, everything in the world they had being taken from them. I ordered my men to take their fine guns & canteens if they wished, but nothing else."[86] Taking from the dead provided soldiers with a gruesome reminder of how far they had fallen since they joined the army.

Soldiers' anxieties took a reasonably consistent form. They feared that their loved ones would no longer recognize them. Soldiers thought of home, community, and family as integral to their reasons for fighting. Anonymity meant the final and complete destruction of the civilian identity. Without family and community there was no reason to fight. A South Carolinian soldier's fears played out in his dreams. He dreamed that he went home, and his wife did not recognize him. His son, who was just a baby when he left, had grown so much he "scarcely knew him." Nothing could frighten soldiers more than becoming a stranger to their family. Oscar Stuart mused: "I expect I would be almost a stranger in Jackson, so that I nearly wish never to see it again." For many it would be better never to return than to go back and be an unknown, with neither a reputation nor honor.

Fathers had especially forceful reminders that changes occurred at home whether they were there or not. Children grew and changed a great deal over the course of four years. Fathers feared

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[84]Ruffin Thomson to his father, Nov. 28, [1861], Ruffin Thomson Papers, SHC; William M. Cash and Lucy Somerville Howorth (eds.), *My Dear Nellie: The Civil War Letters of William L. Nugent to Eleanor Smith Nugent* (Jackson, Miss., 1977), 167.

[85]John Houston Bills Diary, Oct. 7, 1862, SHC.

[86]James Mitchell to his father, Jan. 13, 1863, LC.

they would no longer recognize their children, and their children would not know them. Lieutenant-colonel James Griffin wondered why his children quit writing him. "Is it possible, that I have been so long away from home that the affections of those dear at home, to a certain extent, weaned themselves from me," he speculated. He hoped the answer was no but feared otherwise.[87]

The transformation southerners underwent was even more disturbing because their behavior began to resemble that of another group of southerners--the slaves.[88] Before the war Southern whites associated black slaves with a number of negative characteristics. The negative stereotypes included, but was not limited to, a lack of intelligence, morals, and discipline. Many whites believed these traits expressed themselves in chronic theft, careless work habits, laziness, and licentiousness. People who displayed such barbarity seemed wholly unfit to participate in civilized society. Whites attributed slave behavior to the genetic disposition of Africans rather than a response to bondage. Slavery, therefore, afforded a benevolent institution where blacks could learn civility under the tutelage of their masters. [89]

Southern whites negatively interpreted all forms of slave behavior in an attempt to minimize any similarity between bondsperson and master. It is easier to enslave someone when one emphasized the differences rather than the similarities. When slaves resisted imposed work regimes, whites interpreted it as laziness. Slaves produced only what they required for subsistence but had to be driven to do more. They lied and feigned illness to escape a day in the fields. Masters had to be watchful to catch shirking slaves. Planters with many bondsmen hired overseers, if for no other reason, than to keep their hands working. Furthermore, whites insisted blacks were poor workers, unable to complete complex tasks, and they often damaged tools and plants.[90]

Plantation slaves stole a great deal from the plantation. They took livestock, crops, liquor, tools, and other items from their master and his neighbors. Slaves either used the stolen items for themselves or sold them to poor whites. Planters used chronic theft to support their paternalistic arguments that African Americans required firm but benevolent guidance. Common whites, however, could ill afford to lose any portion of their crops. Nonslaveholding whites living near subsistence viewed widespread theft not as reinforcement of their superiority but as a threat to their livelihood.[91]

African Americans indulged in life's' physical pleasures and showed none of the moral restraint that whites regarded as a sign of purity. Despite the fact that mulatto children on many plantations gave living testimony to planters' indiscretions, whites believed slaves were sexually

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[87]Reid, *History of the Fourth Regiment*, 46-7; Oscar Stuart to Ann Hardeman, Feb. 3, 1863, DU; McArthur and Burton, *Gentleman and an Officer*, 189.

[88]Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 174-75.

[89]Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York, 1956), 11-12.

[90]*Ibid.*, 97-109; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1976), 295-303, 620-21.

[91]Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*, 125-27; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 599-609; Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism*, 109-10.

promiscuous. White misconceptions considered blacks unclean. They would not wash themselves without prompting.[92] All the negative traits associated with slaves helped marginalize them in the white mind. When soldiers enlisted, the army simultaneously liberated and constrained them. Southern soldiers found that they too went to extremes to avoid work and did no more than they were told. Soldiers also became notorious thieves, who stole from civilians and each other. Their response, at least superficially, resembled the African's response to bondage.

Upon entering the liberating, all male domain of the army men stepped beyond the traditional bonds of morality. Social restraints disappeared overnight, and many soldiers took advantage of their new found independence to overindulge in life's physical pleasures. Young soldiers took up cursing, drinking, smoking, and whoring. For some participating in such vices acted as a badge of manhood. Knowing that the folks at home would disapprove made such forbidden pleasure even more desirable to young men eager to gain acceptance from their peers. Relative moral freedom also emphasized just how different a soldier was from a civilian.

Morally upright soldiers despised army life and all its temptations. They believed the army corrupted good men. A soldier sadly recalled how the profane drunk in the guardhouse had once been "a respectable man." Now "He is scarcely tolerated among the boys." "The longer I remain in service the more unpleasant it becomes," wrote one despondent Confederate, "for I have no taste for the dissipation and immorality of camp life. The profanity & blasphemy is awful." A Mississippian informed his mother that the "preachers were holding forth about thirty steps off, and between them and me were two games of poker, where each one was trying to fill his pockets at the expense of his neighbor."[93]

Young men found that army life offered unparalleled access to women. Prostitutes crowded around the edges of camp, and every good sized town had at least one brothel. Tilmon Baggarly complained that his friends "git drunk and run after negroes and mien white women." He assured his wife that he took no part in it. J. W. Reid noticed that whenever prostitutes were near the camp "there was not a married man in the regiment but me. A great many of them are married, but they are not obliged to say so."[94]

The loose conduct of his comrades caused Pete Dekle to prophesy that "if this war lasts two years longer the Soldiers will no more care for there soles." William Nugent feared the war's "demoralizing influences and destructive effects both upon the nation and individuals." A Virginia woman echoed their thoughts: "It [the war] ruins our young men and has an immoral effect upon

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[92]Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll*, 461-62, 553-54.

[93]Taylor, *Reluctant Rebel*, 51; Duncan Campbell to wife, April 30, 1862, Campbell Family Papers, SHC; Ruffin Thomson to father, Dec. 1, 1862, SHC.

[94]Tilmon Baggarly to Margaret Baggarly, Dec. 23, 1862, Tilmon F. Baggarly Papers, DU; Reid, *Fourth Regiment*, 15.

every one."[95] Southerners worried that military life was creating a generation of immoral men who allowed their passions to guide them.

Soldiering troubled men who were raised on an ethic of self-sufficiency and independence. Army life was unproductive. Soldiers neither grew nor built anything, except breastworks. Many men disliked being idle consumers. Harry Lewis grumbled that "the life of the soldier is in my estimation one of the meanest and laziest imaginable." Another compared the life of the soldier to slaves who "doze away the hours of noon under the shade of the broad oaks around us on a blanket, utterly oblivious of the morrow." A third struck at the heart of many soldiers' discontent when he said: "If I only had to make and eat I could be satisfied but fighting yankees is not making bread," and then added wryly, "it might make meat if it was salted."[96] Underemployed soldiers became indolent and injured the army's morale.

Camp was not always so languid. Officers frequently found chores for soldiers. Experienced soldiers, for whom camp duties had lost appeal, lied in order to escape work. Veterans became expert at dodging work and routine drills. Most pretended that they were sick. After morning roll call they visited the regimental physician who took them off duty. Jasper James recorded that few of his company drilled. The absent were either sick or amused themselves by going into town. "The Captain can't do much with the boys," he concluded. Soldiers avoided much duty by straggling. As we have seen the extent of straggling was alarming and kept many soldiers from camp duty and battle. Cavalrymen who wanted a furlough starved or shot their horses so they could go home and remount.[97] Probably many of these dismounted horse soldiers never returned.

When recruits learned that soldier life consisted mainly of fatigue duty and comparatively little fighting, many began searching for a way out of the army. Previously robust specimens presented themselves to the surgeon with mysteriously debilitating illnesses. If they convinced the doctor that they were unfit for duty they received a discharge. When soldiers could not get medical discharges they wrote home asking for their community to petition for their release.

Petitions were supposed to originate in the soldier's home community. Prompted by necessity, neighbors enlisted a number of people to testify that the community required a soldier's particular skill. Private Daniel Murph decided not to wait for his neighbors to plead on his behalf. He instructed his wife "to have a petition draw stateing the necesity of me at home and the helpliness of my family." At the end he added, "get all the signers you can."[98] People sent

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[95]Mahon, "Pete Dekle's Letters," 15; Cash and Howorth, *Dear Nellie*, 68; Mary D. Robertson (ed.), "The Dusky Wings of War: The Journal of Lucy G. Breckinridge, 1862-1864," *Civil War History* 23 (1977): 35.

[96]Harry Lewis to mother, August 9, 1862, Harry Lewis Papers, SHC; Cash and Howorth, *My Dear Nellie*, 117-18; James C. Zimmerman to Martha Zimmerman, June 1, 1863, DU.

[97]Elkins, *Letters from a Civil War Soldier*, 40; William Smith to Bettie Smith, Aug. 22, 1863, DU.

[98]Daniel Murph to Margaret Murph, May 24, 1863, Daniel W. Murph Papers, DU. See also John A. Ratliff to Adline Ratliff, Aug. 15, 186[?], John A. Ratliff Papers, in possession of John M. Ratliff, Salem, Va.

thousands of such petitions to the War Department and state governors. One wonders how many were legitimate.

A few soldiers had suspicious accidents with firearms or axes and received discharges. One of these, Lewis Peters, went so far as to shoot his hand off to get out of the army.One loyal soldier complained of his fellows soldiers' frantic efforts to get home: "I never saw as many men have as much excuses in all my life.... I will be asshaim", to carry on like "a negro just to get out of service."[99]

The Richmond *Dispatch* caustically reported on the changes that overcame southern men. "Things which were once regarded as evils have now become objects of esteem. The Various 'ills of the flesh is heir to' are no longer considered ills. Rheumatism which was once dreaded as a torturing fiend, has become as popular as a beautiful coquet, tormenting and yet enchanting her spellbound victims." The paper continued: "They who so long dreaded the downhill of life would now cheerfully barter their vigorous prime for a grey beard, a weak back, and pipe-stem legs.... there are so many ingenious youths who prefer ... crutches to the warrior's sword, and who would rather drink gruel than lap up human blood or be smothered in a bed of laurels."[100]

Southern soldiers compounded the problems of the Confederate supply system by treating their equipment carelessly. Just as slaves frequently damaged their masters' tools soldiers sold and threw away equipment issued by the government. Early in the war before shortages took effect, free government clothing seemed easily replaceable and was, therefore, treated carelessly. Overcoats tossed along the roadside in August were sorely missed in January. Men who gave up their issued clothes frequently pestered their families to send more. Ruffin Thomson told his father how "on the March up I threw away all my clothes save what I had on." He then requested his family to send him more clothing. North Carolina governor Zebulon Vance purchased a blockade runner in an attempt to keep his troops well supplied. In December 1863 he wrote Robert E. Lee to see if the general could stop his troops from selling their clothes. Apparently the governor was outraged to see white civilians and blacks wearing expensive clothes and shoes imported for the soldiers.[101]

Soldiers even disposed of necessary items. One Mississippian sent his cartridge box, ammunition, and other accoutrements home as souvenirs. South Carolinian, J. W. Reid, told his wife how he and his comrades disposed of excess ammunition. Whenever they received ammunition the soldiers threw it away and told their officers that the cartridges became wet. Reid presumed "there have been ten thousand rounds of cartriges thrown away since we left Centreville because we did not like to carry them."[102] The Confederacy had enough problems supplying its armies without soldiers throwing away whatever they did not want to carry.

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[99]Mahon, "Pete Dekle's Letters," 12; Wiley, *Infernal War*, 32.

[100]Quoted in Charles W. Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines in the Southern Confederacy* (Baton Rouge, 1944), 91-2.

[101]Ruffin Thomson to father, May 24, 1862, SHC; Gordon B. McKinney and Richard M. McMurry (eds.), *The Papers of Zebulon Vance* (Frederick, Md., 1987 microfilm edition), reel 13.

[102]Hartman McIntosh (ed.), "The Whole World was Full of Smoke: The Civil War

Confederate soldiers became notorious for their depredations and theft. As hungry Confederates passed by farms they stripped the fruit from trees, took corn from cribs, and plucked chickens from the yards. When all the food was taken from the angry farmer's yard, they stole his fences for firewood. Sometimes soldiers stole not because they had to but simply to make their diet more varied and interesting. Many convinced themselves that civilians owed them their keep. Soldiers defended the populace; the least civilians could do was donate a chicken now and then.

In many instances stealing was "only thought wrong when found out," and not always then. Officers did little to prevent their soldiers from raiding the countryside of all its edibles. A women caught several soldiers in the process of stealing her hogs. She reported them to a captain who had the men arrested. After the woman left "the culprits were turned loose, and went on with their cooking." The captain was rewarded with some of the meat. An officer in the western army noted that his soldiers stole hogs that were under guard. "I got some meat and asked no questions."[103] Robert E. Lee admitted that there was little he could do to protect private property. He issued orders but "they are either imperfectly executed or wholly disregarded." While brigade and divisional officers frequently tried to prevent theft, company grade officers knew firsthand their men's privations. They sympathized and, as long as the soldiers were not blatant, often turned a blind eye to petty thievery.[104]

A North Carolinian, James Zimmerman, travelled into the country looking for something more palatable than his usual fare of musty cornbread and blue beef. He came across a chicken coop. Apparently its owner had some previous experience with soldiers and placed a sturdy lock on the door. Further down the road, however, was an unguarded potato patch. Patiently Zimmerman waited for night. When he felt safely concealed he "pitched in and made tops fly." After he took and ate as many as he wanted, Zimmerman warned his wife about her "stable and things out[side] such steeling as is going on here would cleen you out of everything in one night."[105]

As Zimmerman's story illustrates, Confederates of humble origins understood the consequences of their actions. Those who lived closest to subsistence knew just how damaging petty theft could be. It struck at yeoman independence both in reality and symbolically.[106] Ruffin Thomson, whose father had lost much of his livestock to the Federal army, wrote: "I have never at any time lived as badly as I do now.... The men are killing all the hogs they can find. I have not

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Letters of Private John Alemeth Byers, 17th Mississippi Infantry," *Military Image*s 9 (1988): 9, Reid, *Fourth Regiment*, 74.

[103] Davis, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, 136; Oscar Stuart to Ann L. Hardeman, May 11, 1862, DU; Brown, *One of Cleburne's Command*, 144.

[104]*O. R.*, Ser. 1, XIX. Pt. 2, 617-18.

[105]James Zimmerman to Martha Zimmerman, Aug. 5, 1863, DU.

[106]Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism,* 110.

done so yet, but will be compelled to before long."[107] Some, like Thomson, imagined their own impoverished families, and felt guilty about their actions.

In some instances soldiers might have recaptured a sense of self-sufficiency by stealing. Theft allowed some men to be independent of the army for all the necessities of life. A few soldiers looked down upon army issued clothes and food as little more than charity. Frank Richardson worried that he would run out of money and no longer be able support himself. "You know then when this comes to be the case we fall back upon the support of the government, as she is always obliged to keep us in food and clothing," but he preferred the government to keep its food and clothes "for her children more needy."[108] While most men did not sniff at what the army offered, they did feel unpleasantly dependent upon the army for their care.

Many soldiers found army life demoralizing. In many ways the army seemed to deny whites the humanity that they tried to deny blacks. Soldiers felt they were treated like slaves, and there was much in their behavior to suggest that they were slipping into an uncivilized condition often associated with blacks. In some instances soldiers acted out their frustrations in malicious, even violent, ways. Brawling amongst themselves was common. A few directed their rage at free blacks. J. W. Reid instructed his wife to ensure that Bear, his dog, behaved well "and did not bite any person but Yankees and free niggers. He can tell a free nigger by his walk and a Yankee by his talk." Reid also described how his messmates told a black man that they were northerners and enlisted him to poison the nearby Confederate regiment. The man agreed to put poison in pies and cakes and sell them to the soldiers. The man was arrested, tried, and given a "most powerful whipping."[109] While Reid did not condone his fellows' actions the perpetrators apparently got some enjoyment out of the affair.

A North Carolina soldier in Virginia explained that "the soldiers ar getin very mischevious." A "negrow cursed one of our boys the other day an that night they got a crowd an went to his [house] an tore the door down an went in an beit him all most to death."[110]

Violent actions against blacks were not indiscriminate. Soldiers specifically targeted free blacks. Confederate diaries, letters, and reminiscences praised slaves, especially personal servants, for their loyalty. Devoted slaves set the example whites expected all blacks to follow. In the two cases above the victims both appear to have been free blacks. Neither of the soldiers made any reference to the victims belonging to anyone, and it is difficult to imagine a slaveowner allowing his servants to be abused in such a manner.

Soldiers who acted out their frustrations in violently racist ways did not represent the mass of Confederate soldiers. Nonslaveholding and poor southerners, however, reasserted their sense of superiority by striking out at the one class that held the most ambiguous position in southern society. Proslavery arguments told Southerners that blacks, by nature, were only fit for servitude. Even the poorest whites were better than the best slaves. The presence of blacks who were not slaves, although they did not share the same rights as white males, weakened the underpinnings of

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[107] Ruffin Thomson to his father, Dec. 20, 1863, SHC.

[108] Frank L. Richardson to his mother, Oct. 8, 1862, SHC.

[109] Reid, *Fourth Regiment*, 16-17, 50.

[110] Tilmon Baggarly to Margaret Baggarly, Dec. 5, 1862, DU.

southern society. It was no coincidence therefore, that when soldiers felt marginalized they struck out at those who occupied an unpleasantly similar position in society. Reid's comments about his dog indicates a special dislike for free blacks. Confederates showed both race hatred and fear for their own status in their treatment of black Union troops. Southerners did not consider African Americans as legitimate soldiers. To do so would jeopardize the racist arguments that bolstered the southern social structure. Confederates offered black troops none of the familiar friendliness that they gave white Union soldiers. In fact they treated them with utter contempt. Black soldiers who fell into the hands of Confederates were frequently killed outright. The largest massacres of black soldiers at Fort Pillow and the Crater were only the most famous of many such incidents.[111] At a lesser known battle around Suffolk, Virginia, a Confederate regiment charged a black cavalry camp. One Confederate participant wrote how the Southerners screamed and "pressed to engage the inhuman wretches and annihilate, if possible, the dastard foe." The advancing Confederate lines drove the cavalrymen back through their camps. In the camps the slaughter began. "We do not take *any* prisoners," boasted one Southerner, "Officers and men were perfectly enthusiastic in *killing* the 'd--d rascals."[112]

Southern enlisted men charged the army with treating them like slaves, but seldom admitted that they exhibited slave-like behavior. Soldiers wondered whether their civilian identities were lost to them. A bath, haircut, and shave easily put the physical self aright, but what about the moral self? Could veterans simply unlearn years of brutality and scrape away the years of accumulated moral callouses? Soldiers wondered if at the end of the war society would accept young men who killed, stole, drank, swore, and whored. The immorality of camp life opposed republican ideals that celebrated the virtuousness and incorruptibility in its yeomen. Southern whites commonly believed blacks were unfit to enter civilized society. Were soldiers?

Military life eroded their individualism and generated some disturbing emotional changes. Soldiers chafed at their restraints but were not entirely stripped of their dignity. Despite degrading treatment, soldiers retained a certain elan that came with being a volunteer. Soldiers that freely gave themselves to the army could not be completely degraded. Their initial terms of service generally did not run more than three years and could be as little as twelve months. After their tour of duty was over veterans could return home free men. In the waning months of 1861 and the beginning of 1862, however, Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Congress worked on a new bill that would alter the volunteers' status. If Confederate soldiers thought the army endangered their republican liberty, then the government threatened to make it a permanent condition.

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[111]Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 174-75.

[112]Bruce Suderow (ed.), "The Suffolk Slaughter: 'We Did Not Take Any Prisoners,'" *Civil War Times Illustrated* 23 (1984): 38.

Chapter Four:
The Confederate Government Opens Class Divisions

One spring evening in 1862 Catherine Hildebrand, a Mennonite woman living in the Shenandoah Valley, awoke from a disturbing dream. She told her husband Jacob that she dreamed of a barn on fire. Most of the shingles burned, but all the rafters remained undamaged. The barn was useless because it had no roof. Jacob interpreted the dream for his wife. He claimed the barn was "the Southern confederacy, the Rafters the States composing the confederacy, the shingles the People of the States."[113] The common people were mostly destroyed, and the Confederacy left useless; yet the states and, presumably, the wealthy and powerful elite, remained unscathed. In the months to come many poor whites might very well agree with Jacob's interpretation.

Throughout Confederacy's short life politicians helped gain acceptance for their cause by placing secession and the war firmly within the context of the American Revolution. The Revolution was an event in American history that made nearly all southerners proud. Lingering sentimentality toward the North and shared hardships during the revolutionary crisis caused many southerners to question the rationality of secession. By coopting revolutionary rhetoric and symbols secessionists clothed their cause in sacred garments. They repeatedly told their audience that the South preserved and upheld the republican values handed to them by their revolutionary forefathers. Southerners understood this to mean a unobtrusive government that preserved personal liberty by guaranteeing property rights. Secessionists claimed that the United States had abandoned revolutionary principles. It had grown too large and became a threat to its citizens' liberty. Fighting the war, however, unleashed forces that pushed the Confederacy toward a modern, centralized, bureaucratic, and invasive government. The Davis administration marshalled and utilized immense powers in order to fight the war. Measures designed to raise, equip, and maintain huge armies trampled on civil liberties and involved the government in the everyday lives of its citizens to an unprecedented extent. With breathtaking rapidity the Confederacy subordinated the principles it promised to protect in order to prosecute the war more effectively. In the process it altered the relationship between citizen and state.[114]

One of the most obvious and controversial incursions into personal liberty was the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus. Many areas of the South were openly hostile to the Confederacy from the beginning. In order to limit dissent and keep it from spreading the government found it expedient to impose martial law. The same measures were also taken in large urban centers and places threatened by enemy attack. When Jefferson Davis asked Congress for the power to declare martial and law and suspend the writ, the request generated a storm of

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[113] John R. Hildebrand, *A Mennonite Journal, 1862-1865* (Shippensburg, Pa., 1996), 5-6.

[114] For a thorough evaluation on the extent of the centralization of the Confederate government see Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines*; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971), especially 1, 58-70; Escott, *After Secession*, 40-69; Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 243.

protest. The Confederate Constitution, like the Federal, forbade the suspension "unless ... the public safety may require it." Questions about legality and necessity divided Confederate leaders and generated an acrimonious debate until the end of the war. In February 1862, however, Congress assented and gave Davis the power to impose martial law. Congress indicated their reservations by placing a time limit on the president's power. Later, Congress extended the time Davis could invoke the suspension.[115]

When the writ was suspended, military courts replaced civil courts except in a few specific cases. Military commanders found their powers greatly expanded and acted vigorously under martial law to suppress dissent and outspoken critics of the government and military. Overzealous generals, who declared martial law without presidential approval, raised the ire of local and state politicians. Local authorities warned that the military interfered in civil administration. Newspaper editors singled out Generals Braxton Bragg and Earl Van Dorn for lively attack. Both generals threatened to expel newspaper reporters from their armies because they had either been critical of Confederate military leadership or had written about Confederate troop movements.

Surprisingly, political and popular opposition to martial law did not focus on state rights issues. Although some argued along these lines, the majority believed that the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus gave the military far too much power. Opponents predicted that given enough leeway the military would establish a dictatorship within the Confederacy. The Charleston *Mercury* loudly denounced generals who used martial law to silence their critics. "Unquestioning obedience is undoubtedly the governing principal of armies, and is due from inferior to his superior. That is military government--it is not republican government." The *Mercury* carefully noted, however, that the president was entitled to decree martial law.[116]

Opposition came mostly from state and local politicians who felt their own authority was undermined by expansive military powers. Governor Thomas Moore of Louisiana argued that "No free people can or ought to submit to the arbitrary and illegal usurpation of authority." Tennessee Senator, Landon Haynes stated that "Martial law was now proclaimed by first one brass buttoned officer and then another.... 'martial law' rears its horrid front everywhere with bristling bayonets, and citizens are seized by it, tried and punished."[117] People such as Moore and Haynes understood the need to suppress disloyalty for the good of the war effort, but they refused to believe that allocating more power to the army was the way to do it. Common soldiers and civilians said relatively little about the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus. Their attention focused on issues that affected them more directly. Taxation, conscription, and exemption all had a greater impact on common whites.

By late 1861 volunteering dried up as a source of new troops. With many units' enlistments about to expire in the spring and summer of 1862, the Davis administration scrambled to hold the armies together. On April 16, 1862, Congress passed the first conscription act in American history

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[115]My discussion of the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus is based on John B. Robbins, "The Confederacy and the Writ of Habeas Corpus," *Georgia Historical Review* 55 (1971): 83-101.

[116]Charleston *Mercury*, Aug. 26, 1862.

[117]Quotations from Robbins, "Writ of Habeas Corpus," 86-7.

by a surprising two-to-one margin. The North followed suit a few months later. The act enabled the government to replenish the ranks by drafting all able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Those already mustered into Confederate service had their terms extended an additional three years. The act granted established regiments the privilege of reorganizing and reelecting their officers. A thirty-day grace period before the draft took effect allowed men to volunteer and avoid the stigma of being conscripted.[118]

Veterans generally applauded the part of the conscription act which forced hesitant men into service. Oscar Stuart hoped that "Missi[ssippi] will *compel* her *stay at home* sons to march to the front." Volunteers believed they had carried the burden of war far too long. Poor men, especially, felt that they had endured a disproportionate amount of the suffering and deserved to return home. James Thompson believed that "every man Will Have to come," before the could win.[119]

Although conscription put rifles in the hands of reluctant southerners, veterans railed against the provisions that kept them in the army beyond their original terms of service. Many people angrily condemned the government for breaking a contract with its soldiers. J. W. Reid spoke for many when he stated: "I guess the bill will pass, for Jeff Davis recommended it, and it seems that he is a dictator.... If [C]ongress can constitutionally ... force the balance to remain three years they may just as easily keep them ten years. What is the difference?" If this "infernal bill.... passes all patriotism is dead, and the Confederacy will be dead sooner or later," predicted Reid. Another soldier believed "the bill will prove very unpopular with the army. When we hear men comparing the despotism of the *Confederacy* with that of the Lincoln government--*something must be wrong*."[120]

Conscription destroyed the volunteer spirit. When all were forced to serve none could look upon their service as a freely given sacrifice. William Zuber recalled that when he first heard of the Conscription Act he "began to fear that instead of performing my duty as a faithful volunteer soldier I was being used as a permanent slave and would never again be permitted to enjoy the society of my family or to provide for them."[121] Enlisted men reasoned that if they could be held three years longer then they could be kept indefinitely. They were correct. In 1864 their enlistments were extended for the duration of the war. Soldiering began to look like involuntary servitude to the state.

The soldiers bitterly resented their loss of status. A Mississippian observed that a "number of the boys are bitter against Jeff Davis.... and some of those who did reenlist in our company now regret having done so." Individuals and sometimes entire companies rebelled but to little effect.

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[118]Albert Burton More, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (Columbia, S.C., 1996), 13-15.

[119]Oscar Stuart to sister, February 6, 1862, DU; Aurelia Austin (ed.), *Georgia Boys with Stonewall Jackson: James Thomas Thompson and the Walton Infantry* (Athens, Ga., 1967), 25.

[120]Reid, *Fourth Regiment*, 73-74; Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Road to Appomattox* (Memphis, Tenn., 1956), 57.

[121]Janis Boyle Mayfield (ed.), *My Eighty Years in the Texas* (Austin, Tex., 1971), 196.

"The Cresent Regiment is taking the conscript law very much to heart," Frank Richardson told his father. "You know their term of ninety-days is out, and now they want to go home come what will." The rebellious regiment stacked arms and refused to perform any more duty. The colonel convinced his men to reconsider.[122]

Substitution and exemption, the corollaries of conscription, generated their own controversies. Substitution allowed men to hire a military replacement, as long as the stand-in was not eligible to be drafted. The bill intended to keep skilled workers in home industries where they were most needed, but southerners used it to avoid service altogether. Despite laws to the contrary, many substitutes were foreigners, diseased, or unfit for service. Some unscrupulous men made substitution a lucrative profession. They enlisted, collected their money, and deserted to do it over again somewhere else. Since the price for substitutes typically ranged from $1,500-3,000, it provided an escape hatch only for the wealthy.[123] Poor people resented substitution, and corruption made it a much hated bill.

Volunteers viewed exemption as ludicrous and as shameful as substitution. The government intended that exemptions would protect government employees and people with certain indispensable skills from the draft without the need to purchase a substitute. Soon protected businesses such as salt works, apothecaries, and schoolhouses of dubious quality sprang up all across the South. Office seekers vied with each other for the most insignificant public position. Governor Joseph Brown of Georgia exploited a loophole that exempted militia officers from Confederate service and commissioned 10,000 second lieutenants.[124]

General D. H. Hill wrote caustically that "I have much sympathy for the poor deserter. He is an infinitely better man than the dog of an exempt. Universal criticism caused Congress to modify the unpopular law. The new exemption act caused an even greater controversy. While it ended many abuses, the bill exempted overseers on plantations with twenty or more slaves. Soldiers and their families perceived the bill as class legislation and derisively dubbed it the "twenty-nigger" law. Exemption, more than anything else, elicited cries of a "rich man's war but a poor man's fight."[125]

James Phelan, a Senator from Mississippi told Jefferson Davis that nothing met "with more universal condemnation than the exemption of slave-owners. Its gross injustice is denounced even by the men whose position enables them able to take advantage of its privileges. Its influence upon the poor is most calamitous, and has awakened a spirit and elicited a discussion of which we may safely predict the most unfortunate results.... it has aroused a spirit of rebellion in some places ...

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[122]Ruffin Thomson to his father, April 3, [1862], SHC; Frank Richardson to his father, June 13, 1862, SHC. For other examples of companies stacking arms see Davis, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, 57; Polignac, "Polignac's Diary, Part I," 17; *O. R.,* Ser. 1, Vol. 34, Pt. 2, 856.

[123]Moore, *Conscription*, 27, 29-32.

[124]*Ibid.*, 53-57, 62-63; Thomas, *Revolutionary Experience*, 75.

[125]D. H. Hill to Zebulon Vance, McKinney and McMurry, *Zebulon Vance*, reel 4; Moore, *Conscription*, 70.

whilst in the army it is said it only needs some daring man to raise the standard to develop a revolt."[126] Conscription brought latent class tensions to the surface where they threatened to destroy the Confederacy from within.

James McPherson contends that the war might not have been as much of a "poor man's fight" as generally believed. His statistics indicate that a larger proportion of professional and white collar workers entered the army than unskilled laborers. Additionally, a study of Georgia's wartime finances found that state taxation became more progressive as the war continued. The wealthy paid an ever larger share of the taxes to help support the poor. In Georgia, at least, the poor paid proportionally less of the tax burden than before the war. Much of the state budget and almost all county taxes went to welfare programs. While there was some relief, nonslaveholders believed that they were doing a disproportionate amount of the suffering, and in many instances they were right. Taxation, impressment, tax-in-kind weighed more heavily on self-sufficient farmers than on plantation owners.[127]

The costs of waging war on a massive scale were staggering. The South had few gold reserves, and the greatest source of wealth, its cotton, was withheld from the market for diplomatic reasons. While the Confederacy received one large cotton-backed loan, it raised most of its capital at home.[128] The Treasury Departments responded to its fiscal dilemma by printing money without specie backing. Confederate currency read "legal tender for all debts private." The government did not even accept its own money. A lack of solid backing eroded confidence and created chronic inflation. Confederate currency was worth only sixty-five cents on the dollar in April 1862 and plummeted to less than half of that a year later. The weak Confederate dollar and high costs of the war forced the government to raise both monetary and in kind taxes.[129]

In the spring of 1863, the Davis administration passed a number of controversial laws designed to raise useable revenue during a period of high inflation. In March the government authorized impressment which allowed the army to purchase materials directly from civilians. A month later the government implemented a graduated income tax and a tax-in-kind. The tax-in-kind taxed agricultural surpluses at a rate of ten percent. Soon government agents spread throughout the South to collect the various taxes. These men were none too scrupulous when it came to collection the government's share. Considerable privation occurred because there was no strict accounting to ensure that families were left enough food.

Impressment became synonymous with theft to many southern farmers. Government agents paid whatever price they thought was fair, which was invariably below the market price.

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[126]*O. R.*, Ser. 1, XVII, part 2, 790.

[127]McPherson's data does not break down the agricultural classes, so there is no way of knowing what the ratio of planters to dirt farmers or the class composition of the Confederate army, in *Battle Cry*, 614; Peter Wallenstein, "Rich Man's War, Rich Man's Fight: Civil War and the Transformation of Public Finance in Georgia," *Journal of Southern History* 50 (1984): 28-30.

[128]For a discussion of the failure of cotton diplomacy see Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America* (Chicago, 1959).

[129]Thomas, *Revolutionary Experience*, 82; Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines*, 23, 42.

They paid in virtually worthless promissory notes. If the farmer refused to sell, the agent was authorized to impress the goods. C. J. Cowles wrote to Zebulon Vance complaining about federal impressment officers. They "didn't try to buy of[f] me but took without asking. My case is the case of many." Furthermore, lawless bands of soldiers, calling themselves impressment agents, stole food and horses. Some soldiers took food, turned around, and sold it back to the farmers at inflated prices.[130]

People hid crops from government officers but to no avail. Impressment officers became skilful at finding all but the most well hidden items. Even a wealthy planter could complain that "All, it seems will go up & poverty stares us now full in the face." If planters faced poverty then nonslaveholders contemplated starvation. A North Carolina dirt farmer's wife wrote him all her worries. "Tha sa tha are a goint to press all our things and if tha dooe I dont no how wee will live[.] I am So frade tha will take the moole from us and if tha [do] ... i dont no what wee will doo." Another distraught woman informed her husband that the tax collectors and impressment agents "are ataking all the meet and corne that is in the county[.] pore peeple must starve."[131]

The graduated income tax exempted the poorest people and was somewhat progressive, but it still placed considerable economic stress on people who were barely coping with shortages and inflation. The tax was a watered down version of the proposal which would have had the rich paying a much larger share of the war's expenses. Additionally, it failed to tax the most visible form of wealth--slaves. Many nonslaveholding whites bucked at paying a ten percent in kind tax when planters did not have to pay any tax on their most valuable property. Common southerners complained loudly enough for Congress to reconsider its tax policy. In 1864, the government placed a 5 percent tax on land and slaves. Corrective measures came too little too late to mollify irate
nonslaveholders[132]

James Phelan wrote candidly to Jefferson Davis about many divisive issues that threatened to alienate common whites from the Confederate government. At the end of 1862 the Senator acknowledged the validity of charges that sons of wealthy citizens received easy government and military postings far from the guns. "It seems as if nine tenths of the youngsters of the land whose relatives are conspicuous in society, wealthy, or influential obtain some safe perch where they can doze their heads under their wings."[133]

Two years later Phelan again wrote Davis complaining about how wealth received preference in the Confederacy. He related a story about deserter trials. Deserters from wealthy families hired able lawyers and "in a few days they were parading the streets with their friends."

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[130]Escott, *After Secession*, 153-54; C. J. Cowles to Zebulon Vance, McKinney and McMurray, *Zebulon Vance*, reel 3; See N. J. Wright to B., E., M., & N. Wright, April 3, 1865, Wright Family Papers, DU.

[131]John Houston Bills Diary, Feb. 4, 1864, SHC; Susan Setzer to Daniel Setzer, Dec. 26, 1863, Daniel Setzer Papers, DU; Margaret Murph to Daniel W. Murph, May 25, 1863, DU.

[132]Escott, *After Secession*, 151-54; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 615-17.

[133]*O. R.,* Ser. 1, Vol. 17, Pt. 2, 791.

Poor soldiers who could not afford representation were convicted and punished. The Mississippi Senator concluded that "It is a shame in the eyes of justice and fairly engenders the most hostile and unhappy spirit among poor men of the Army."[134]

Richmond seemed to court planter interests at the expense of the nonslaveholders. State governments, on the other hand, protected their citizens by establishing welfare relief, curtailing distilling, and attempting to prohibit speculation. Obstructionist governors like Zebulon Vance and Joseph Brown were heroes of the common people because they opposed heavy handed federal policies. Politicians who contrasted northern tyranny with southern liberty came to be seen as hypocrites to many southerners. The states championed the common people while the Confederacy made impossible demands.[135]

Nonslaveholders, if they had not already, began to see the war in class terms. Common whites believed they fought, bled, and died to protect the interests and property of the planter class. It appeared to poor Southerners that rich men received easy bureaucratic posts safely in the rear while they risked their lives on the front line. Rich men escaped the war through special exemptions and substitutes while poor men had difficulty obtaining a two week furlough. Confederate policy making contradicted its own propaganda. Elitist legislation sent a message to nonslaveholders that whites were not equal in the Confederacy. Common soldiers who experienced inequality in the army distrusted the government when it legitimated inequality in its laws. Had the government heeded its own rhetoric it might have avoided alienating its citizens. When southern elites spoke of liberty and equality, their message fell on the deaf ears of people who realized that it was a slaveholders war after all.[136]

Fred Bailey's statistics on Tennessee soldiers must be treated carefully but do provide some insight on the extent class divisions near the end of the war. Wealthy slaveholders and their sons tended to fight to the bitter end presumably because they had an immediate stake in Confederate victory and the preservation of slavery. By 1865 many nonslaveholders had concluded that their interests and the planters no longer lay along the same road and abandoned the slaveholders to fight the war alone. When prisoner exchanges resumed in early 1865, two-thirds of wealthy Confederates took up arms again. Only a fifth of the nonslaveholders and small slaveholders rejoined their commands. At war's end only half of Tennessee's nonslaveholders and small slaveholders surrendered with an army in the field, while 70 percent of large slaveholders were with an active command.[137]

James Zimmerman, a hardened veteran in the Army of Northern Virginia and a nonslaveholder, exclaimed, "If you show me a man that is trying to compell soldiers to stay in the army he is a speculator or a slave holder or has an interest in slaves." W. H. Horton lumped his officers in with slaveholders and speculators when he complained that "i hope and trust to god they

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[134]*Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol. 3, 709.

[135]Wallenstein, "Rich Man's War," 34-5; Escott, *After Secession*, 156-59.

[136]Bradley G. Bond, *Political Culture in the Nineteenth Century South: Mississippi, 1830-1900* (Baton Rouge, 1995), 118-19, 122.

[137]Bailey, *Tennessee's Confederate Generation*, 103-04.

is a day a Coming when poor privats will be as free as big ritch officers[.] He then repeated the common refrain, "This Cruel war is a rich mans war and a poor mans fight but I hope that it wont always bee Sow."[138]

Jaded soldiers mocked the rhetoric that had been so persuasive two or three years earlier. "There is not a day passes now that many victims are not offered up at the sacred shrine of Southern Liberty," wrote veteran Robert Patrick during the Atlanta campaign, "and every breeze brings the roar of the artillery." In the summer of 1863 Edwin Fay commented on how the Confederacy had diverted from its initial course. "This is just as much a Military Despotism as yankeedom save in the manner of arresting citizens. No matter then that our soldiers are daily deserting by the hundreds for they find themselves deprived of the rights granted them by Congress.[139]

After these bills took effect in 1863 desertion rates rose alarmingly but were still low compared to a year later. Physical and mental suffering made worse by an insensitive government were not enough to cause mass desertions. Intense community pressures that encouraged men to enlist also held them to their posts. In some areas support for the war wavered, but in most the stigma of desertion remained strong and helped keep men in the ranks. A North Carolinian wrote shortly after six of his company deserted that "I cannot leave sutch a Stain uppon my family as to be caled a tory or deserter."[140]

A North Carolinian expressed the power a father's opinion held over his sons. He wrote Zebulon Vance and told him that he had "no fears of his [son] deserting although he might possibly deceive me. But he knows I would not approve of such a thing therefore I apprehend there is no danger of his deserting." A soldier believed that the reason his colonel treated him kindly was out of deference for his father's reputation. He understood that he was the family representative in the army and pledged "always to endeavor to sustain the credit and respect which my Father gives me, and will come out of this war with the honor of my for Fathers." In some cases when soldiers returned unannounced, family displeasure drove them back to the army.[141]

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[138]James Zimmerman to Martha Zimmerman, Oct. 21, 1863, DU; W. H. Horton to Mary Councill, Nov. 30, 1864, Mary A. Councill Papers, DU.

[139]Taylor, *Reluctant Rebel*, 182; Wiley, *'Infernal War,'* 300.

[140]E. D. Fennell to his wife, Oct. 23, 1863, E. D. Fennell Papers, DU.

[141] L. S. Gash to Zebulon Vance, June 1, 1863, McKinney and McMurry, *Zebulon Vance*, reel 3; Richard Bardolph, "Confederate Dilemma: North Carolina Troops and the Deserter Problem, Part I," *North Carolina Historical Review* 66 (1989), 78; Frank Richardson to his father, Dec. 10, 1861, SHC.

Chapter Five:
"O! If I Were Only a Man": Gender and the War

While soldiers railed against their servile status, the basis of male independence came under assault at home. White men achieved independence because they controlled productive land and labor. Heads of households, whether they owned slaves or not, exercised the prerogatives of mastery over family members. Planters and slaveless yeoman alike exploited family labor in a variety of ways, women and children worked in the fields and produced home manufactures for domestic consumption and sale. Wives reproduced the labor force and made men's independence more readily attainable.[142] War challenged the hierarchical domestic relations that ordered southern life in two ways. Firstly, the war seemed to invert the social order, turning women into capable, independent producers while making men highly dependent on the army. Secondly, the war ravaged the southern economy so that many families were unable to meet subsistence, jeopardizing yeoman independence. The foundation on which white males constructed their mastery and, therefore, their republican independence, cracked and heaved under the strains of war. Patriarchal authority diminished with distance and time.

Southern men and women understood that the conflict in terms of defending their homes. Men went away to fight to protect their families. When the army failed to repel the invader, men failed in their primary duty to protect their families. Women held men accountable for the military failures that created privations at home. When Federal soldiers entered their communities, it shook southern women's confidence in their men and destroyed male self esteem.[143] A Virginia woman contemptuously wrote her soldier husband about the capture of some nearby towns. She accused southern soldiers of standing allowing "Lincoln's men to walk quietly in and take possession of all our towns."[144] The poor man probably felt his wife had questioned his own personal bravery.[145]

Some women, who believed that southern men were incapable of protecting them, engaged in a sort of role reversal. The refrain common to many of these women was "O! if I were only a man! Then I would don the breeches, and slay them with a will." The woman who uttered this comment prepared to defend herself with a revolver and a large carving knife, which she concealed in the folds of her skirt. When they Yankee armies approached a Virginia woman's home she

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[142]McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds,*Ch. 2.

[143]George Rable, "Missing in Action: Women and the Confederacy," *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War,* Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds. (New York, 1992), 138-40.

[144]Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 31, 1861, Caperton Family Papers, VPI.

[145]See Drew Gilpin Faust on how paternalism worked to undermine Confederate women's morale, in "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," *Journal of American History* 76 (1990): 1200-28; and for a discussion of how soldiers felt about competing demands from home and country see Mitchell, *Vacant Chair*, 29-30.

declared, "I almost feel as if I could start off my-self and offer my feeble aid to repel the invaders." This woman's female neighbor took target practice "with a revolver for several months," in expectation of meeting the Yankees.[146] The sight of armed and determined women mocked male powerlessness to stop the invader.

The implications of women taking up the distinctly masculine paraphernalia of war made a distinct impression on southern men. Men had not done their jobs properly, and women stepped outside of their traditional gender roles to make up for this shortcoming. Many men felt acutely embarrassed by the situation. Soldier husbands tried to shore up their eroding domestic authority and continued to issue orders to their wives. Absent soldiers included long lists of instructions in their letters home. Men asked for detailed descriptions of the stock and crops and offered advice on a wide range of topics. Soldiers told their wives how to farm, how to raise children, and how to manage money. Men's obsession over minute household details betrayed their insecurities.

Southern men often commented at length about child rearing. E. D. Fennell threatened his wife for hitting their son. "If you whip my darling boy or abuse him in any way," he warned, "I will Ha[u]nt you after I am dead. Remember when you abuse him its me you abuse." Upon receiving news of his son's death Edwin Fay cried: "Oh Mother he ran out of doors too much and ate too much fruit. If I could have been with him I could have kept him from doing so.... woe to the Yankee that ever falls into my power ... their accursed villainy took me away from my family who was their natural protector." Fay absolved his wife of any wrongdoing, but his letter was not calculated to soothe her grief. Fay naturally assumed that had he been home he could have prevented his son's death. He insinuated that his wife did her best but was not up to the task of being the household head. [147] Fennell's admonition and Fay's anguish illustrate the southern social ethic that made the family an extension of the man. Anyone who came between a southern patriarch and his dependents threatened male authority. Men retaliated swiftly and severely to any challenge of their manhood even by their wives.

With some trepidation Daniel Blain, a young suitor in the trenches of Petersburg, flexed his patriarchal muscle when wrote his girlfriend, Loulie, about the prospects of her getting a job. He did not forbid her from taking the job, but he made it clear that he did not think it appropriate for a young woman to seek employment outside of the home. Blain wrote: "Darling, I have for a long time seen what was coming, and I have dreaded the time when you would begin to talk about working for yourself." He told Loulie that working would depress her spirits and enfeeble her body and hoped that it was not a "wish simply to be independent, but an actual necessity," that drove her to seek a job. Blain's greatest sorrow came not from Loulie's employment but from his own sense of worthlessness at not being able to provide for her. "How could I be cheerful when every month of the last twelve has but made it clearer to me, that with all I could do, I could not give you a comfortable house until after the war."[148]

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[146]Charles East (ed.), *Sarah Morgan: The Civil War Diary of A Southern Woman* (Athens, Ga., 1991), 20, 24; Mary Caperton to George Caperton, May 12, 31, 1861, VPI.

[147]Wiley, *This Infernal War*, 131; E. D. Fennell to his wife, Jan. 29, 1864, DU.

[148]Daniel Blain to Loulie, Sept. 18, 1864, Daniel Blain Papers, VPI.

Mary Bell carved out a reasonably autonomous sphere for herself on her husband's farm. She became an exceptionally successful farmer, so good in fact that in 1864 she was able to purchase the family's first slaves. At first her letters to her husband were full of questions and she deferred to him on all questions regarding the farm's operation. Early success encouraged her to expand her activities. Bell confidently traded livestock and diversified her crops. It was not long before her husband, Albert, was asking her for news of the farm. Mary indicated the extent her growing self-confidence when she referred to *her* farm, *her* crops, and *her* horse. Alfred resigned himself to Mary's independence, but it must have stung his pride to have a wife who did not need a man to be successful.[149]

Sergeant John Hagan became dismayed at his wife's growing independence. She sold their house while he was in the army despite his instructions to the contrary. "You Know I requested you not to do what you have done," he chastised her, "but I see you can act as you please as I am far away."[150] The issue went beyond the selling of the house. Hagan, and soldiers like him, feared that their wives were becoming independent of their control. The social order as they knew it was being turned upside down. Wartime separation necessitated that women make important decisions without consulting their husbands' wishes. Frequently men were simply too far removed to make informed decisions.

These few examples illustrate some of the various ways in which women's roles expanded during the war. Women who controlled their lives without a male intermediary undermined patriarchal authority. Antebellum women had no legal or social identity apart from their husbands or fathers. Women that tried to live independent of male control faced social ostracism and legal harassment. As one historian stated, "Such women had no place or function in southern society."[151] Many men displayed deep anxieties about the increased latitude taken by women, but they were forced to accept the unusual situation as a necessity grown from extraordinary times. Southern men suspected that female independence and assertiveness had an obscured dark side. Soldiers feared that women expressed their burgeoning independence in wicked and sinful ways. The immorality of camp provided ample evidence of what happened when people discarded self-restraint. Men away from the virtuous influence of women acted wickedly. Soldiers experiences of women in wartime verified some their suspicions. Prostitutes flourished on the desires of men away from home for the first time. Was it not possible that women free from male domination might do the same?

Pete Dekle did not want his wife to visit him in camp. The only women in camp "go on like the men[,] [They] sleepe in tents like another boy [and] croud in where [there] are thre or four and sleepe[.] sum of the Boys [are] naked sum one way and sum on other." A month later Dekle expressed worries about the behavior of the people at home. "It are reported up here that the men

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[149]The story of Mary Bell is interpreted in John C. Inscoe, "Coping in Confederate Appalachia: Portrait of a Mountain Woman and Her Community at War," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (1992): 401-06.

[150]Bell Irvin Wiley (ed.), *Confederate Letters of John W. Hagan* (Athens, Ga., 1954), 34.

[151]Victoria Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1992), 60-71, 89-90, quotation on 89.

at there homes are taken the pore men wifes away from them and will be more babies there next year than they ever were Known before." William Nugent told his wife that in East Tennessee "there are numerous cases of illegitimacy among the wives too soldiers who have been gallantly fighting in Virginia for two years." A Louisiana soldier received a shock when he visited a house where a woman lived with her daughters. The unmarried daughters had at least one child each. The mother remarked that "The country was being ruined, that the war was ruining every one and that her girls were not the only that acted so and that all the girls she knew in this settlement had done just as bad as they had."[152]

Edwin Fay revealed the deepest concerns for all southern men. He was shocked and disgusted to learn about a white woman who gave birth to a black child. "It is said another woman will have one before long ... Illegitimacy I fear will not be the least curse of this War."[153] Race conscious white southerners considered miscegenation the most detestable act a white woman could commit. Miscegenation subverted southern tenets on race and gender relations. Race mixing gave clear evidence that neither white women nor male slaves were under full control of the patriarch. If enough women broke taboos and engaged in cross color affairs they could destabilize the entire social order.

Women who operated their husbands' businesses and prepared to defend themselves not only emphasized that they performed men's work, but that men failed to do their duty. Some soldiers accepted the enlarged female sphere with relative equanimity. Many others had an unsettling feeling that women's forcefulness was not just a temporary phenomena. Antebellum southern men feared the implicit feminism of the abolitionist movement. Antebellum proslavery arguments tried to legitimize slavery by finding parallels in the family. Just as women were dependent on men, blacks were subservient to whites. God did not create the sexes and races equally. Abolitionist ideology disrupted this natural order and, therefore, implicitly threatened the domestic institutions of the South. Yet as southern men went away to root out such socially disruptive ideas, the seeds of gender equality seemed to take hold at home.[154]

Male domesticity further emphasized female independence. All male army camps forced men to do "woman's work". Cooking, cleaning, and sewing became part of everyday life. Although soldiers knew that such work did not seriously threaten their manhood, it underscored that, for white men, something was going drastically wrong in society. The war distorted traditional gender roles. While the lives of men in the army became narrower and more circumscribed, women experienced a broadening of their responsibilities. Men knew their domesticity was temporary, they were less certain that women would surrender their new found independence.

Male fears that the war would subvert the South's social order were groundless as the southern economy collapsed, making it difficult for anyone to be independent. Shortages, inflation, and speculation impoverished households that had lost labor when men went into the army. Many families that were in a precarious economic position before the war could not support themselves

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[152]Mahon, "Pete Dekle's Letters," 14, 16-17; Cash and Howorth, *My Dear Nellie*, 164; Taylor, *Reluctant Rebel*, 175.

[153]Wiley, *This Infernal War*, 249.

[154]McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 209-25.

during the conflict. As the economy worsened women could not compensate for their husbands' absence. For men, the roles of provider and protector and master had always been closely associated, but the war made it impossible for many to play all three. Tensions arose when men wrestled over which one they should assume. Soldiers' families helped make the decision for them.

Between the third and fourth years of the war, when civilians began experiencing severe war related hardships, public opinion turned dramatically against the war. Active support for the Confederacy gave way to apathy and, in some places, open hostility. The transformation of homefront opinion did not represent a reconsideration of basic southern values. In fact, when the civilian experience of war clashed with the basic tenets that undergirded southern life, it was the war they rejected. By themselves, wartime hardships and shortages were bad enough, but yeoman families believed that their vaunted independence was threatened.

The economic position of nonslaveholders made it more difficult for them to be both protector and provider. When a slaveowner left for the war he felt relatively confident that his slave's would continue to work and produce the crops that supported his family. If he was particularly wealthy he hired an overseer to spare his wife the unpalatable job of slave management. Poor soldiers had none of these assurances. Furthermore, the rapidity of mobilization swept recruits away before they could make suitable arrangements for the care of their farms and businesses. Some left in such a rush that they did not even put a crop in the ground.[155] Departing soldiers worried that their families would be unable to reproduce self-sufficiency without their presence and guidance. Before the war yeoman farmers maintained self-sufficiency by manipulating family labor. Trade with kin and neighbors supplemented household production. One family's shortfall was made good by another's' surplus.

William Zuber, a poor Texas farmer, faced the dilemma of enlisting or staying at home to care for his wife and children. Zuber enlisted but years later sadly recalled that his duty to his "family was greater than that to my country and I ought to have stayed and suffered with them."[156] To men like Zuber, however, nothing indicated that traditional networks of mutual aid would prove inadequate in the coming months. Tilmon Baggerly, like many men, enlisted trusting that family and community ties would care for his family until his return. He told his wife not to worry about "pervisions i dont think the neighbors will let you suffer."[157] Soldiers hoped the war would end quickly so they could return to support their families.

Traditional methods of dealing with want broke down almost immediately. No matter how helpful and generous neighbors and families could be, they were completely unprepared to cope with the scale of deprivation. Nearly every family who had a representative in the army experienced a decline in their household economy. Those who provided aid soon found themselves wanting. Margaret Baggarly's letters indicate how difficult meeting subsistence could be even with family assistance. "I have not got enough [corn] to fatten my hogs yet I got a little from Mr. Stimpson[.] he said his crop was light this year and they all have to pay the 10th [tax-in-kind] to

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155 Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines*, 6-7.

156 Mayfield, *Eighty Years*, 134.

157 Tilmon Baggarly to Margaret Baggarly, Oct. 20, 1862, DU.

the government," she told her husband Tilmon, but hoped "old uncle Robin ... would let me have some," if he had any to spare.[158]

Soldiers, who may have felt responsible for their family's privations, sometimes blamed their neighbors for allowing their families to suffer shortages. "I dont like you being deprived of flour," a concerned army physician wrote his wife, "I had hoped that during my absence those who had supplies would furnish my family with what they could eat at the market price." Pete Dekle regretted not leaving his "bussineess in mr Wyches hands[.] if I had he would see to you and not let you lack for any thing," but as it was "ever[y] person in the settlemen will stand and see every thing I have distroyed."[159]

As early as 1862 individuals and bands of soldiers acted boldly to prevent their families' impoverishment. Mississippi was plagued with deserters who went home to support their families. One group of absentees outlined their major grievances for Governor John Pettus. Most of their families were out of provisions, and army pay was wholly inadequate to make up deficiencies. These deserters told Pettus that they were motivated solely by concern for their families. They patriotically served their country, but their chief loyalty lay with their families. At the end they added that there was "no use to depend on the charity of neighbours for they are all in our condition."[160]

The reasons for widespread hardships were many and varied. Crop yields suffered because few strong backs remained to tend the fields. Volunteer companies and the draft drained most communities of their able bodied men. Counties with few slaves suffered more than the plantation belt from manpower shortages. Only conscript evaders, deserters, and those unfit for military service remained. The army also took skilled craftsmen leaving many communities with no one to repair or replace worn out tools. People either improvised or went without. Communities eviscerated of essential talent and manpower lost their vaunted self-sufficiency. People could no longer help neighbors make up shortfalls. Soldiers families were forced to rely on themselves for everything from food to clothes to medicines.[161]

Those that remained at home did not always lead harmonious lives. Neighbors sometimes clashed with neighbors. In the hill counties of Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and other places Unionist and secessionist animosities occasionally broke into open and violent conflict. Secessionists and Unionists refused to aid one another and retaliatory theft and vandalism became commonplace. Political unity did not always guarantee social unity. The citizens of Cherokee Country, North Carolina, factionalized because rival Confederate officers publicized their personal grievances at home. The town's loyalties divided between the two men, and the contentious issue polarized the community for the duration of the war.[162] Vicious internal fighting divided towns

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[158]Margaret Baggarly to Tilmon Baggarly, Nov. 23, 1863, DU.

[159]McMullen, *Surgeon with Stonewall*, 69-70; Mahon, "Pete Dekle's Letters," 13-14.

[160]M. M. Fortinberry to John Pettus quoted in Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines*, 27-8.

[161]Gordon B. McKinney, "Women's Role in Civil War Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (1992): 48.

[162]*Ibid*., 49; Inscoe, "Confederate Appalachia," 399-401; for an excellent account of

and undermined communal self-sufficiency just when it was most important for communities to rally to overcome common obstacles.

Compounding these problems were an array of other challenges. Shortages of salt prevented women from preserving enough meat to last the winter. Until the war most salt had been imported as ballast on ships, but the Union blockade severely restricted this vital commodity. Domestic salt works developed, but the collapse of the Confederate rail networks prevented sufficient distribution to meet everyone's needs. Between May 1861 and October 1862 the price of salt skyrocketed over 1200 percent. The price of other basic commodities rose less quickly but still climbed beyond the reach of many Southerners. Chronic inflation ensured that available goods became unobtainable at a price most people could afford. A Georgia woman blamed her reduced circumstances on the weak Confederate dollar. "The depreciation of our currency," she reasoned, "rendered it an unreliable purchasing commodity, and we had nothing to exchange for food."[163]

Disease, drought, and early frosts diminished yields in many parts of the Confederacy. The deep South's corn crop fell short of expectations, and Virginia's 1862 wheat crop was only a third of normal. The result was famine in some areas and hunger in most. Planters, who's displays of largesse included feeding the poor in times of want, proved incapable of supplying the needs of all their indigent neighbors. After a particularly bad season in which the corn crop was decimated by worms, one usually prosperous planter managed to salvage less than half of his crop. He found after feeding his slaves that he could give poor neighbors only five bushels each "which would soon be gone."[164]

In the face growing demand for scarce resources some planters locked their doors and weathered out the storm. Those that isolated themselves from the community were few and frequently became the targets for lower class antagonism. More common were speculators who horded their surpluses and sold at grossly inflated prices. When shortages became acute speculators sold their goods at prices only the wealthy could afford. Speculation fed already high inflation rates making it virtually impossible for common people to buy anything. Soldiers and their families resented those men who got rich by driving people deeper into poverty. People demanded the government put a stop to extortion, but no measures ever proved effective.

In a letter to his father James Jasper exploded: "How is it expected men with families will remain in the field and their families probably suffer[.] extortion will ruin our country, end the war to our ruin." A North Carolinian warned that "so many speculaters grasping and grabing after what the poor women have to spair to get cotton and other things they are helping more to whip us than the yankes." Another compared speculators to "low down Jackalls" whose business was "stealing

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homefront divisiveness see Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York, 1990).

[163]McKinney, "Women's Role," 47-8; Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines*, 19; Mary A. H. Gay, *Life in Dixie During the War, '61, '62, '63, '64, & '65* (Atlanta, 1897), 260.

[164]McKinney, "Women's Role," 45-6; Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines*, 26-7, 43-4; for an example of manpower shortages diminishing yields see William Love to Zebulon Vance, McKinney and McMurray, *Zebulon Vance,* reel 3.

and swindling the wives and children" of soldiers. "Let them go to the Devil with their notes and accts."[165]

Junius Bragg suggested that unscrupulous speculators "should be denied the elective franchise, or indeed any privileges above those of a 'free Negro.'"[166] Bragg's suggestion struck at the heart of southern value system and, in particular, southern manhood. White men asserted their independence through public displays such as voting. Speculators showed by their actions that they were not men. True men would not benefit from the misery of poor women. If the state took away speculators' right to vote and hold office it effectively denied their manhood. No white man would consider them his equal and, therefore, of no more consequence than free blacks.

The army did not give men the means to support their families. A private's pay of eleven dollars a month was soon devoured by rampant inflation. It did not cover his own expenses, not to mention those of his family. In their letters home soldiers asked for money, food, and clothing. Southern men used to self-sufficiency and independence were embarrassed that they had to make such requests. J. J. Asbill told his wife that she would have to look after herself because the soldiers "Cant cloth our selves and send money home." Thomas Boatwright, a Virginia officer, told his wife that "the soldiers has become disheartened when they think of their families many of them has said to me that their families must suffer that their wages will not be more than they will want themselves." To offset his meager wages a resourceful Louisianan dipped candles and extracted salt from brine which he sent to his mother. Another soldier made and sold baskets in his spare time. As inventive and resourceful as these men were, they could not compensate for the deprivations caused by their absence.[167]

Scant resources were further divided when Union invaders and Confederate soldiers competed with southern farmers for diminished yields. Farmers generally lost the contest with armed men, leaving them with little or nothing to eat. A Georgian expressed dismay at the behavior of Confederate troops in their own country. "I believe our troops are doing as much harm ... as the yankees," he wrote, "our men steal all the fruit Kill all the Hogs & burn all the fences." Travelling through Georgia in 1864, Eliza Andrews passed an old campground where the "poor people of the neighbourhood," were, "picking up grains of corn that were scattered around where the Yankees had fed their horses." An anguished planter wailed, that "between the men with bayonets all will finally be lost & opulent families will be brought to want."[168]

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[165]Elkins, *Letters from a Civil War Soldier*, 56-57; James C. Zimmerman to Martha Zimmerman, Aug. 2, 1863, DU; Ingram, *The Civil War Letters of George and Martha F. Ingram*, 38.

[166]Gaughan, *Letters of a Confederate Surgeon*, 135-36.

[167]J. J. Asbill to his wife, undated, LC; Thomas Boatwright to Anne Boatwright, March 13, 1863, SHC; Taylor, *Reluctant Rebel*, 53; Theophilis Frank to Elizabeth Frank, April 29, 1864, Frank Family Letters, SHC.

[168]Wiley, *Confederate Letters of John W. Hagan*, 28; Spencer Bidwell King, Jr. (ed.), *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865* (New York, 1908), 38; John Houston Bills Diary, Oct. 19, 1863, SHC.

Thousands of newly impoverished families swelled the public relief rolls. By the spring of 1862 nearly all the Confederate states established some system of public welfare for soldiers' families. In 1864 welfare became Georgia's largest expenditure. Despite massive state spending most relief work was done at the county level. The poorest counties required the most resources but were the least able to raise tax money from their citizens. Unprecedented welfare budgets did not prevent hunger and want from becoming the norm for many people in the poorest sections of the Confederacy. The strain that thousands of indigent people placed on the fledgling welfare system was overwhelming. Randolph County, Alabama, listed 8,000 people on its welfare rolls, and still hungry children scavenged bran from mills, desperate women rioted for food, and deaths from starvation occurred.[169] Civilians, pinched by hunger, became heartily disillusioned by their wartime experiences.

A North Carolinian summed up the most worrisome concerns of most soldiers and civilians. "He [the soldier] cheerfully made the sacrifices thinking that the Govt. would protect his family, and keep them from starvation ... he has been disappointed.... By taking too many men from their farms they have not left enough to cultivate the land thus making a scarcity of provisions.... tell me how we poor soldiers who are fighting for the 'rich mans negro' can support families at $11 per month? How can the poor live? I dread to see the summer as I am fearful there will be much suffering and probably many deaths from starvation. They are suffering now.... There is great dissatisfaction in the army and as mans first duty is to provide for his own household the soldiers wont be imposed on much longer."[170]

The army's policy of giving few furloughs exacerbated the situation. As conditions worsened, requests for leaves multiplied. Desertion had so sapped the army's strength that officers were hesitant to deplete the ranks any further by granting furloughs. Officers also feared that men on leave would not return. When the army granted leaves of absence most men felt favoritism played a part in who got them. In February 1863 Jonas Bradshaw was dismayed when single men were sent home on leave while the married men who had longer service records were passed over. Six months later Bradshaw deserted. A friend told Bradshaw's wife to expect him home soon because "one Eavning he [Bradshaw] handed his gun to Lewis Morrisn & stepped to the side of the road & thats the last that any of us has herd from him." Captain William Nugent railed against the furlough system. "The policy of giving furloughs should have been kept up," as it "would have saved a great many of our men," from "running off to see their families and make the necessary provisions for them."[171]

Women responded to wartime privations by writing their husbands heart rending letters. Mary Chesnut wrote about one poor wife who went directly to Varina Davis, the wife of President Davis, to beg a pardon for her husband. Her son had just died, and her only other child was ailing.

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[169]Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines*, 25-6; Wallenstein, "Rich Man's War," 25, 31; *O. R.*, Ser. 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, 667.

[170]W. Buck Yearns and John G. Barrett (eds.), *North Carolina Civil War Documents* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 98.

[171]Jonas A. Bradshaw to Nancy Bradshaw, Feb. 27, 1863, DU; J. W. Adams to Nancy Bradshaw, Aug. 22, 1863, DU; Cash and Howorth, *Dear Nellie*, 132.

She wrote her soldier husband begging him to come home and see his daughter one last time. He deserted and came with the intention of staying just one day, but the farm was in such a poor condition that he prolonged his visit. The army apprehended him and sentenced him to death. The distraught woman convinced Varina Davis to intervene on her behalf. Shortly thereafter Jefferson Davis pardoned the man.[172]

During court martial proceedings against Private Edward Cooper, charged with desertion, he produced a letter from his wife Mary. She wrote: "My dear Edward:--I have always been proud of you, and since your connection with the Confederate army, I have been prouder of you than ever before. I would not have you do anything wrong for the world, but before God, Edward unless you come home, we must die. Last night I was aroused by little Eddie's crying. I called and said 'What is the matter, Eddie?' and he said, 'O mamma! I am so hungry.' And Lucy, Edward, your darling Lucy; she never complains, but she is growing thinner and thinner every day. And before God, Edward, unless you come home, we must die." Although reduced to tears the court sentenced Edward Cooper to death. He was pardoned before the sentence was carried out.[173] Many soldiers received similarly distressing letters from their loved ones. Such cries forcefully reinforced that the army and the Confederacy threatened traditional ideals of independence. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust stated that "countless women of all classes had in effect deserted the ranks."[174] Marginalized men did not hesitate to follow their wives' lead.

The young soldiers of 1861 despised desertion as weakness, but many veterans attached little dishonor to the act. The knowledge of conditions at home and the inability of the government to ameliorate civilian suffering blunted criticism of those who left. Attitudes toward desertion and deserters clearly changed over the course of the war. Lieutenant Luther Rice Mills complained, that "men seem to think desertion no crime & hence never shoot when he goes over--they always shoot but never hit." Benjamin Jackson wrote his wife about a number of men who left in the middle of the night. "Some call it deserting. Those that leave call it going to protect their families, which I think is a man's duty." Officers often knew that family obligations caused their men to sneak away. Near the end of the war a few officers went so far as to advise their men to go home. They believed that the war was unwinnable, and it was better for their men to desert than die for a lost cause.[175]

Soldier husbands were powerless to help their families. "Oh How it greaves me," cried one soldier, "to think about my poor little children at Home and I heare not able to provide Bread for them." Public relief brought unwanted if necessary outside public institutions within the household. The government effectively interpositioned itself between the patriarch and his dependents. The

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[172]Ben Ames Williams (ed.), *A Diary from Dixie* (New York, 1949), 413.

[173]Quoted in Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War* (Gloucester, Mass., 1966), 12-13.

[174]Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," 1228.

[175]George D. Harmon, (ed.), "The Letters of Luther Rice Mills," *North Carolina Historical Review* 4 (1927): 307; Jackson, *So Mourns the Dove*, 80; Bailey, *Confederate Generation*, 102.

enlarged role of government threatened traditional domestic relations, and for the first time forced families to looking beyond traditional community networks for support. What was supposed to be a conservative revolution to preserve an older order ushered in change at an unprecedented rate. Disoriented males reeled under the belief that their domestic dominance and, therefore, their position in larger society was in jeopardy.[176]

[176]E. D. Fennell to his wife, Jan. 14, 1864, DU; Escott, *After Secession*, 135.

Conclusion:
Desertion and the Vanishing Confederacy

Widespread demoralization amongst the South's common nonslaveholding whites resulted in high desertion rates.[177] In early 1865 Confederate army returns reported over 198,000 soldiers absent from their commands, a startling 38,000 more than were present, and desertion was becoming more of a problem each day.[178] Sickness and wounds accounted for some, but Confederate authorities admitted that the majority had deserted.[179] The Civil War experience did not alienate all soldiers from the cause. Many thousands of soldiers staunchly supported the Confederacy until the end, but there were not enough of these men left in 1865 to carry on the war. Had the war not ended when it did and desertion rates persisted, the main armies would have been reduced to a mere corporal's guard.

The problem of desertion was not uniquely southern, but certain factors gave it an urgency that it did not have in the North. In raw numbers, almost twice as many Union soldiers deserted as Confederate. Proportionally, however, 16 percent of southern soldiers deserted as compared with 12 percent of northerners.[180] Although the numbers are not remarkably different, the higher Confederate desertion rates crippled the smaller southern armies. The North had more men in uniform and an ample reserve at home, while Confederate armies reached their peak in 1863 and declined steadily thereafter. Quite simply, nearly every southern man capable of shouldering a rifle had done so, and every one lost by desertion was irreplaceable. The South ran out of men.

Ella Lonn, the chief authority on desertion, characterized deserters as ignorant mountain people, poor whites, northerners, unionists, substitutes, and conscripts.[181] These stereotypes might describe some deserters, but by and large most deserters had been brave soldiers. During the war, tens of thousands of Confederate soldiers, many with years of good service, ran away and went home. A much smaller fraction went over to the enemy.[182] These men were not simply cowards looking for the first opportunity to escape. Richard Reid estimates that deserters from

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[177]Both Fred Bailey and Bell Wiley believed that soldiers from the lower classes became demoralized earlier and more completely than slaveowning soldiers and that nonslaveholders were more likely to desert. See Bailey, *Confederate Generation*, 99, 103-04; Wiley, *Johnny Reb*, 145-46.

[178]*O. R.,* Ser. 4, Vol. 3, 989.

[179]Asst. Sec. of War John A. Campbell expressing his and Gen. William Preston's opinions on the matter, John A. Campbell to John Breckenridge, Mar. 5, 1865, SHC.

[180]Vinovskis, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War?," 10.

[181]Lonn, *Desertion*, 3-7.

[182]McPherson, *Battle Cry,* 821.

North Carolina's earliest volunteer infantry regiments averaged 20.6 months in the army while stayers served only 1.7 months longer. A more recent study calculates the difference between stayers and deserters at 6 months, with the deserters serving on average more than a year-and-a-half.[183] Long service records of many deserters indicate that not just substitutes and conscripts absented themselves illegally.

That the Confederacy lost some of its best men to desertion is substantiated by soldiers' letters and diaries. Harry Lewis commented on recent desertions from his company. Of two men in question, one "was a very good soldier, but Litmyn was the best in the Regts and was invaluable to the company." Even though he was a good soldier no one was surprised by the first man's desertion, but Litmyn's defection came as a shock. Charles Rothrock informed his sister that twenty-three from his company deserted in one night. He was sorry because "it ruined our company ... all our best and ablest men are gone [and] those that are left are most of them weakly men."[184]

The military knew it lost more than just the dregs to desertion. But the army, as a general rule, had little stomach for punishing deserters. For every Bragg or Jackson who had "a man shot at the drop of a hat, and dropped it himself," there were dozens of others who could not bring themselves to order executions.[185] When one soldier was executed dozens of others successfully escaped or received light sentences. Many found it difficult to shoot volunteers who were obviously needed at home. Many company officers proved squeamish about sending their men outside the regiment for trial when punishment might send them before a firing squad. Additionally, the laws defining desertion were ambiguous, and the crime was often confused for the lesser one of absent without leave. Listing deserters as absent without leave became a convenient fiction for officers who were uncomfortable about interpreting the Articles of War too strictly.[186]

Captured deserters were often treated informally and leniently within the company or regiment. So seldom were deserters executed that many soldiers did not worry about the consequences of their crime. When John Ratliff was returned as a deserter "they did not Do any thing with me only give me a gun & Carterage Box." A more typical case was that of Daniel Setzer, a deserter who was captured at home. His officers kept him in the guardhouse with

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[183]Richard Reid, "A Test Case of the 'Crying Evil': Desertion among North Carolina Troops during the Civil War," *North Carolina Historical Review* 58 (1981): 246-48; Bearman, "Desertion as Localism," 334.

[184]Harry Lewis to mother, April 6, 1864, SHC; Charles Rothrock to Louesia Delap, Feb. 27, 1864, Charles Rothrock Papers, DU; see also Frances Mitchell Ross (ed.), "Civil War Letters From James Mitchell to His Wife, Sarah Elizabeth Latta Mitchell," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 37 (1978): 314.

[185]Sam R. Watkins, *'Co. Aytch': Maury Grays First Tennessee Regiment or a Side Show of the Big Show* (Wilmington, N. C., 1987), 60.

[186]Richard Bardolph, "Confederate Dilemma: North Carolina Troops and the Deserter Problem, Part II," *North Carolina Historical Review* 66 (1989): 180, 191-92.

fourteen other deserters for four-and-a-half months. During that time Daniel was forced to carry a rail four hours a day, which he dismissed as "nothing for me to doo[.] I can carrey it as easey as a gun." Shortly after his release, Setzer requested a furlough. Surprisingly his captain promised to help get Setzer the furlough. If the captain proved unable to help him, the soldier threatened to "take my ould road and try and git home one more time."[187]

Ambiguity at the highest levels did more to promote than prevent desertions. No single policy ever coordinated the Confederate response to desertion. One month generals executed deserters, the next they offered pardons. General Boggs made the embarrassing discovery that while he was executing deserters in his Louisiana department, the officer in charge of the adjacent county was issuing pardons. Little wonder that soldiers rarely heeded the general amnesties and pardons designed to lure them back to the armies.[188]

The government understood the close correlation between disaffection at home and high desertion rates. In July 1862 then Secretary of War George Randolph warned that "unless public opinion comes to our aid we shall fail to fill our ranks in time to avail ourselves of the weakness and disorganization of the enemy." His conclusions were substantiated two years later by General John S. Preston, the frustrated head of the Bureau of Conscription. In March 1864 he informed Secretary of War, John Breckinridge, that desertion was "one of the greatest and most pressing necessities now upon the country." He estimated that over 100,000 men fled the ranks and "that so common is the crime it has, in popular estimation, lost the stigma which justly pertains to it, and therefore the criminals are everywhere shielded by their families and by the sympathies of many communities."[189]

In most areas deserter hunters from the army and enrollment officers, backed by the home guard, put deserters on the defensive. Patrolling home guard units and the activities of the enrolling officers made family support vital for deserters who wished to avoid capture. Many families and communities devised elaborate communications networks to warn deserters of patrols. Some women blew horns to warn deserters that patrols lurked nearby. Neighbors heard the signal and relayed it further into the countryside. Within a short time deserters from miles around knew the army was about. Others hung quilts outside of their houses either to warn deserters to stay away or tell them that it was safe to return. Families and community also supplied them with food, blankets, and other supplies required while in hiding.[190] Officers charged with rounding up absentees found their orders nearly impossible to execute. David Urquhart, who was ordered to round up deserters and conscripts, blamed his lack of success on the fact that "All the deserters are harbored by the natives, especially by the women."[191] The problems faced by enrolling officers increased

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[187]John Ratliff to Adline Ratliff, Aug. 5, 1864, in private possession; Daniel Setzer to Susan Setzer, Sept. 21, 1863 to Feb. 23, 1864, SHC.

[188]*O. R.,* Ser. 1, Vol. 34, Pt. 2, 901.

[189]*Ibid.,* Ser. 4, Vol. 2, 7; Ser. 4, Vol. 3, 1119-20.

[190]For examples see Davis, *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, 155; John S. Wise, *The End of an Era* (Boston, 1901), 385-90; Bardolph, "Confederate Dilemma," 184-86.

[191]*Ibid.*, Ser. 1, Vol. 53, 380.

wherever the number of deserters was large. Whenever possible they banded together for protection. In these regions deserter hunters found their jobs not only difficult but dangerous.

In regions where deserters were strong they attacked the most obvious source of their discontent. In the summer and fall of 1864 deserters and their families in southwestern Virginia and southeastern Mississippi broke into holding yards and released cattle that had been collected by impressment agents for army use. To many people impressment agents were visible symbols of government oppression.[192] An officer in North Carolina detailed men to capture a group of "low women" and deserters who "have been attempting to plunder Govt [illegible] trains lately on that road." Some frustrated enrollment officers arrested citizens for aiding and abetting deserters. Major J. G. Harris arrested two women for helping deserters rob houses. A father wrote his soldier son that deserter hunters arrested a neighbor "for writing to his sons to come home. also [illegible] Hill was taken I am told for writing to Gust Crouch to leave."[193]

The sympathy and support given deserters in some counties undermined the state government's efforts to maintain order. Governors ordered the home guard to aid in the capture of absentees and conscripts only to find that local units often sympathized more with the community and deserters than with state officials. Officers ignored orders and enlisted men refused to hunt deserters. Governor Vance faced the greatest number of deserters. He wrote to John Sharpe, the colonel of the home guard in Raleigh, concerning the loyalty of the home guard and militia. Vance asked Sharpe to investigate charges that local officers were disloyal, neglected their duty, and fraternized with deserters. Sharpe replied that "some of [the militia officers] have been encouraging deserters & have gone under with the disloyal sentiment of at least one half of the people of the County." He believed part of the cause could be located with the elite of the county who "Cause ... a great extent of dissatisfaction among the common people." The problem did not get any better as Captain Templeton, the man sent to arrest the disloyal militia officers, proved to be disloyal as well. Sharpe was then forced to arrest Templeton.[194]

After the Gettysburg and Vicksburg debacles the Confederacy's manpower problems became serious. No volunteers were forthcoming, and casualties, sickness, and desertion drained the armies of precious men. The government stepped up its efforts to return absentees and enforce conscription more strictly. In some areas the battle to return deserters degenerated into vicious little wars. Overzealous deserter hunters went to extreme lengths to bring in men, even killing those they were supposed to return to the army. Hunters sometimes showed deserters and their supporters less mercy than Federal soldiers along the front lines. The actions of officers charged with bringing

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[192] *Ibid*., Ser. 1, Vol. 39, Pt. 2, 735; Ser. 1, Vol. 43, Pt. 2, 889-90.

[193] C. G. Elliot to Col. Westham, March 23, 1864, Confederate Papers, SHC; J. G. Harris to Alexander McAlister, March 27, 1865, Alexander Carey McAlister papers, SHC; Solomon Hege to I. A. Hege, May 23, 1863, Confederate Papers, SHC.

[194] John Sharpe correspondence, March 25, 1864, Sept. 7, 11, 25, 1864, John McKee Sharpe Papers, SHC; the same was true in Mississippi as well, see John K. Bettersworth, *Confederate Mississippi: The People and Politics of a Cotton State in Wartime* (Philadelphia, 1978), 261.

soldiers back to the army often made those same men and their communities even more determined to resist the Confederate government.

Lieutenant-colonel McAlister received orders that ominously read: "Should you come in contact with deserters who resist your authority ... you will shoot them taking no prisoners." In Madison County, North Carolina, deserter hunting became a savage affair. Thirteen deserters were taken by soldiers and shot "without trial or any hearing whatever and in the most cruel manner." At the same time several disloyal "women were severely whipped and ropes were tied around their necks."[195] Such actions only turned individuals and communities against the Confederacy. Deserters and their supporters fought back when they could. Orange Connor, who was detailed to catch absentees, reported that two of his company were killed by deserters. Another group of deserters broke into a magazine, shot the enrolling officer and took all the weapons they could carry. The previous day about fifty women broke into a government storehouse and carried of food impressed by the army.[196]

For Confederate authorities desertion became frustratingly commonplace, but it alone did not defeat the South. Desertion was only the most serious symptom of a more general disillusionment that pervaded the home and battle front, pushing the South toward the brink of internal collapse. Historians have often told how country republicanism accounted for sectionalism and how it united many slaveholders and nonslaveholders in support of the war, but few have used the same criteria to measure the southern response to the events of the Civil War. Southern yeomen felt their independence increasingly came under attack throughout the antebellum. They joined with planters in secession and war to preserve their traditional white male mastery. The southern people, who were raised on the conservative doctrine of republicanism, were unprepared to to face the changes forced on them by the war.

Despite the Confederacy's claims to be fighting a second American Revolution, the South was caught unprepared by the revolutionary forces unleashed by the Civil War. Revolutions usher in change, but the South fought to ward off interference in its institutions. The Confederacy was, in part, a reaction to an emergent capitalist order based on a free labor ideology. As befitted a nation founded to preserve the past, the Confederacy fought the war along conventional lines, hoping to limit and contain any disruptions to the social fabric. Instability threatened slavery as much as the abolitionists. By 1863 Union leaders committed themselves to the twin goals of winning the war and destroying slavery. In an effort to affect these radical changes they introduced Americans to unprecedented levels of economic and military mobilization, strong centralized government, and war against civilians.[197] The South was unable to limit the war and found itself taking more radical steps to keep pace with the North. The climax was reached near the end of 1864 when the Confederate Congress seriously debated arming slaves.

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[195]Head Quarters of Third Army Corps to Alexander McAlister, Feb. 27, 1865, SHC; *O. R.*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 893.

[196]Seymour V. Connor (ed.), *Dear America: Some Letters of Orange Cicero and Mary America (Aikin) Connor* (Austin, Tex., 1971), 87; *O. R.*, Ser. 1, Vol. 53, 326-27.

[197]For a discussion of how the North revolutionized the war see Paludan, *A People's Contest*.

Southern leaders mobilized much of the population, both black and white, in an effort to keep apace of the inexorable northern build-up. Over two-thirds of all military aged white men enlisted. Many of the others farmed and built the industries that supported the armies. Women and slaves went to work producing what the armies consumed. Furthermore, the government impressed slaves to work on military installations. Within four years total participation exhausted the South physically and psychologically. Under the circumstances there were not enough people and resources to outproduce and outfight the North. The discipline required of the people to engage in total war ran counter to the political culture of the South. The Confederacy might have reduced class resentment by specifically shaping policy to be more palatable to common whites, but then it risked alienating the large slaveowners. The South required a larger commitment of its people than they were willing to give. The Confederacy kept common white loyalty only as long as it acted in their own narrow interests. Once the war forced the Confederacy to become an active and disruptive agent in its citizens' lives many nonslaveholders withdrew their support. At best it seems the Confederacy could have postponed but not prevented Appomattox.

The North's abundant resources and large population mitigated the strains war placed on its society. Union armies vastly outnumbered the Confederacy's, yet the North armed only 35 percent of its men. The North drew on resources that were unavailable to the South. Federal armies enlisted freedmen and large influxes of immigrants to ease the demands on its native population.[198] The South never attracted large numbers of immigrants, and despite a controversial attempt to raise black regiments at the end of the conflict, none ever saw active service. To keep abreast of the northern military machine, the South stripped its farms and towns of its most productive young men. During the Gettysburg campaign Confederates became discouraged when they learned first hand just how prosperous and populous the North was. A disheartened North Carolinian recounted the agricultural wealth of Pennsylvania and then said, "Jest to go to Pensilviana and see the men that is thare that never bin out in serveis[.] it looks like thare was no use in fiteing any longer."[199] When volunteering failed, the Confederacy resorted to a conscription law that was considered tyrannical and unjust. The Lincoln administration also embarked upon conscription, but it did not extend to volunteers already in service, which was a major source of complaint against the Confederate conscription law. The North rewarded its volunteers by allowing them to return home after their enlistments expired.

Union soldiers' went to war without many of the concerns that plagued Confederates. Few northern civilians ever saw the enemy, and still fewer had their property destroyed or taken first by one army and then the other. Because a smaller percentage of northerners joined the army, most communities retained the skilled and manual labor essential to maintaining systems of mutual aid. Although Union soldiers' wages were low, the wartime economy boomed and currency did not depreciate. Most husbands went away confident that their families were capable of caring for themselves or, failing that, neighbors would provide aid. Had the North's population been as rigorously tested as the South's perhaps northerners would have abandoned the war to preserve the Union as fast as southerners abandoned the Confederate cause.

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[198] Vinovskis, "Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War?," 9.

[199] Hately and Huffman, *William Wagner*, 56-7.

When common whites opted to follow the slaveholders into war, they wanted the war to be an empowering experience that reaffirmed their own sense of power and mastery. In this they were disappointed. The rude shock of warfare buffeted soldiers' faith that the Confederacy was the best protector of white male equality. When Thomas Lightfoot angrily exclaimed that "a soldier is worse off than any negro on the Chattahoochie River," he was not being literal, but neither was he purely rhetorical.[200] Lightfoot condemned the military for blurring the lines between free and unfree. Before the war freedom and slavery had been as starkly and easily distinguished as black and white. The army and government denied whites the privileges that denoted they were free men. It established rigid hierarchical structures and highlighted inequalities that most white men preferred to ignore. Those who fought for the Confederacy experienced a drastic narrowing of their options. Considering the environment most southerners were raised in, it is not surprising that soldiers compared military life to slavery. Certainly they understood that they were not literally slaves, nor were they becoming slaves. They felt, however, that the Confederacy did not live up to its promise. The relative equality and independence enjoyed by white males during the antebellum fell to class division, social, and economic dislocation. Common whites felt their privileged but fragile position in society was threatened. The war strained social relations in the South and raised questions about the inherent contradictions between liberty and slavery. When the Confederacy, which claimed to be the defender of liberty, denied southerners many basic rights the irony was not lost on its soldiers. Soldiers became unable to control their own lives and protect their loved ones. Many soldiers who felt emasculated by their experiences did the only thing they could to regain their independence. They ran away from the army like a slave from the plantation.

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[200]Burnett, "The Letters of Thomas R. Lightfoot," 7.

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Vita

James Paxton was born and raised in Beamsville, Ontario. After completing horticulture college he opened a landscaping company. Following this he went to university. In 1995 James received a B.A. in history from the University of Toronto. Afterwards, he attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University where he will receive his MA in history. James is happily married to Irene and looks forward to continuing his study of history.