

2005

Marching masters: slavery, race, and the Confederate Army, 1861-1865

Colin Edward Woodward
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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MARCHING MASTERS:
SLAVERY, RACE, AND THE CONFEDERATE ARMY, 1861-1865

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

Colin Edward Woodward
B.A., Trinity College, Hartford, 1997
M.A., Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, 1999
May 2005

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since beginning this project, I have benefited from the advice, guidance, and support of the history department at Louisiana State University. I am in great debt to Charles Royster, who agreed to serve as my major professor back in 1998. Over the years, he has given me excellent advice about how to become a better writer and historian. He has set a high standard for research, writing, and thinking that I have tried to live up to.

Dr. Royster's hospitalization in February 2005 unfortunately did not allow him to attend my dissertation defense. I am grateful that William J. Cooper agreed to serve as my committee chairman in Dr. Royster's place. I have also benefited from the help of my other committee members. Gaines Foster has always been willing to read my work and offer reassurance and valuable feedback. Mark Thompson has given me much encouragement, advice, and provided welcome humor. David Culbert was gracious enough to serve on my committee at the last minute and offered useful recommendations about how to improve my dissertation.

Thanks also to other faculty and staff members at LSU for their patience, guidance, and the occasional free lunch. I am also indebted to the department of history for giving me financial support for the past seven years, especially the T. Harry Williams fellowship, which allowed me much needed time to finish my dissertation. Thanks also to the Virginia Historical Society and the Colonial Dames in New Orleans for additional funding.

Various people have made life in Baton Rouge tolerable at worst and very enjoyable at best. Keith Finley and David Gauthier are two good friends and budding scholars who always provided much needed humor, good conversation, and advice. They were almost always willing to sit in front of Middleton Library or head to the Chimes for a beer and an extended bull session, even if we knew our time was better spent on our dissertations.

Ana Cabezas, now living in Chicago, gave me much love and support over the last year and a half. She had faith in me (not to mention the World Champion Red Sox) when I did not. More than anyone, she made the last few semesters at LSU good ones.

And last, but not least of all, I am thankful that my parents—who have suffered my absence and repeatedly alleviated my financial woes—have always been proud and supportive of me.

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ABSTRACT

Many historians have examined the Civil War soldier, but few scholars have explored the racial attitudes and policies of the Confederate army. Although Southern men did not fight for slavery alone, the defense of the peculiar institution, and the racial control they believed it assured, united rebels in their support of the Confederacy and the war effort. Amid the destruction of the Civil War, slavery became more important than ever for men battling Yankee armies.

The war, nevertheless, tested Confederate soldiers' idealized view of human bondage. Federal armies wrecked havoc on masters' farms and plantations, seized hundreds of thousands of slaves, and eventually armed African Americans. Rebel troops were not blind to the war's negative effects on the peculiar institution. They noted black people's many disloyal actions, and some came to believe that slavery was not worth holding onto if it would undermine the Southern war effort.

But despite occasional worries about rebellious black people, Southern troops understood that slavery was vital to their cause. The Confederate military became the greatest of masters—an institution that rebels believed would assure the survival of human bondage and white supremacy. The army granted exemptions to slaveholders and overseers, invaded the Border States in order to acquire more slave territory, and impressed black workers to build fortifications and perform menial tasks. When rebels confronted black Federal troops—as at Fort Pillow and the Crater—they showed no quarter to men they believed were slaves in rebellion against their white masters.

Only with the Federal government's triumph did Southerners accept the end of slavery. After Lee's surrender at Appomattox, former Confederate soldiers lived in a new

world. They could not reinstate slavery, but they were still committed to white supremacy and looked with fondness on the Old South.

INTRODUCTION

In the past thirty years, historians have written many works—whether focusing on white or black Southerners—about slavery in the Old South.¹ Their studies usually conclude in 1860, the year before the Civil War broke out. Fewer scholars have devoted entire works to the subjects of slavery and race relations in the Confederate States of America,² and fewer still to the specific topic of their importance in the mind of the rebel

¹ Listing all the works from the past thirty years would prove a formidable task; some of the more important and influential include, William J. Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000 [1983]); Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Robert William Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989 [1974]); Lacy Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); John Hope Franklin, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976); Larry E. Hudson, *To Have and to Hold: Slave Work and Family Life in Antebellum South Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Ann Patton Malone, *Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeomen Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Steven M. Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Jeffrey Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); on the historiography of slavery, see Robert William Fogel, *The Slavery Debates, 1952-1990* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Peter Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).

² Examples of such works include, Stephen Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); James Brewer, *The Confederate Negro: Virginia's Craftsmen and Military Laborers, 1861-1865* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969); John Cimprich, *Slavery's End in Tennessee, 1861-1865* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1985); Robert F. Durden, *The Gray and the Black: The Confederate Debate on Emancipation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972); Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995); Winthrop D. Jordan, *Silence and Tumult at Second Creek: An Inquiry Into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom:*

soldier. The ideology of Civil War soldiers remains a popular subject. Yet, most historians of the period continue to focus on battles and leaders. Although this dissertation does not ignore the campaigns in which the rebel armies fought, it goes beyond the scope of conventional military histories by examining Southern ideology and racial thinking. It adds not just to the literature on slavery and the Civil War, but to works that have explored the racial views of nineteenth century Southerners.³ For rebel troops, the Confederacy was a great and bloody gamble to keep the South wedded to the economic prosperity and racial caste system that slavery made possible.⁴ Confederate soldiers' views provide much insight into the mind of the master class during the last years of human bondage in America.

Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); James L. Roark, *Masters without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977); Armstead L. Robinson, *Bitter Fruits of Bondage: The Demise of Slavery and the Collapse of the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2004); Brian Steel Wills, *The War Hits Home: The Civil War in Southeastern Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001). On a historiographical essay on slavery in the Confederacy, see Peter Kolchin, "Slavery and Freedom in the Civil War South," in James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, eds., *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 241-60.

³ See Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); see also, his comparative history, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Eugene Genovese, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); see also, his *Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage, 1965); *The Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992); *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969); Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); one should also consult *White Over Black's* condensed version, *The White Man's Burden: Origins of Historical Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

⁴ On histories of the Confederacy "as a whole," see E. Merton Coulter, *The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950); William C. Davis, *Look Away! A History of the Confederate States of America* (New York: Free Press, 2002); Clement Eaton, *A History of the Southern Confederacy* (New York: MacMillan, 1954); Charles P. Roland, *The Confederacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Emory Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991 [1971]); Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); Frank E. Vandiver, *Their Tattered Flags: The Epic of the Confederacy* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1970).

Amid the destruction of war, Confederate soldiers believed they must maintain their grip on slavery and white supremacy. Although many planters took up arms for the Confederacy, most rebel soldiers—as was the case with most Southerners—were not of the elite.⁵ They were, nevertheless, defenders of slavery as important, if not more so, than proslavery ideologues such as James Henry Hammond and George Fitzhugh. Rebel troops defended Southern “rights and institutions”—among them the right to keep black people in bondage—with their lives. After April 1862, Confederate men of military age had no choice but to serve. Even so, the vast majority of them were devoted to the cause. The army—and even more so, its leaders such as Robert E. Lee—came to symbolize Confederate resistance. Politicians and civilians were important in keeping the war effort alive, but Southern independence depended upon the Confederate army’s victories.

The racial views of rebel troops provide us with insight not only into the racial mind of white Southerners, but also white Americans of the nineteenth century. In many ways, Confederates soldiers’ racial attitudes were similar to those of Northerners. Men as diverse as Ohio Congressman and abolitionist Benjamin Wade and General William T. Sherman, for example, were known to utter racist language.⁶ And by today’s standards,

⁵ In the course of this dissertation, I use the terms “the South” and “the Confederacy” interchangeably, even though I am aware that they are not synonymous. The Confederacy failed to include three Southern Border States—Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland—and the Southern state of Delaware. Similarly, when I speak of Southerners, I am referring to Confederates, even though there were many Southern men, such as General George Thomas, who were defenders of the Union. And while it is perhaps offensive to some who believe in the righteousness of the Confederate cause, I also use the term “rebel” to apply to those who took up arms against the Union. To be fair, I often use the word “Yankee,” which for Southerners was a dirty word, as a variation on “Northern.” I will also use “Union” and “Northern” interchangeably, even though there were many Union supporters who were not from the North. A more accurate term for Union supporters would be “Unionist,” but the term has usually applied to those in the South who opposed Confederate authority.

⁶ On Wade, see Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 272; on Sherman, see Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 126-28; William Freehling, *The South vs. the South: How Anti-Confederates Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 151-53; on Northern racial attitudes in the antebellum period, see

one can label the vast majority of nineteenth century Northerners—even William Lloyd Garrison or Abraham Lincoln, who were more radical than their contemporaries, but did not profess a belief in black equality—as racist. For much of the war, most Northern white troops were hostile toward blacks and ambivalent about, or even opposed to, the abolition of slavery. But the views of Federal troops changed considerably over time. In April 1861, few Northerners sought to make emancipation a war aim. By late 1862, however, the Union, because of Lincoln’s Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation and changing attitudes toward the liberation of blacks, began defining victory in terms of the eradication of slavery as well as national reunion. And when it came to the enlistment of black troops, Northerners eventually, if reluctantly, accepted that black men could fight. By 1863 and 1864, Union soldiers realized that they could not restore the status quo antebellum. The defeat of the South would require the destruction of slavery.⁷

In contrast to the North, the Confederacy made the maintenance of slavery a war aim. Some Confederates, such as Jefferson Davis, always said that the war was about Southern independence, not the defense of human bondage. And independence certainly was what Confederates most wanted. But Davis did not have to say, even though Vice President Alexander Stephens did, that a sovereign Confederacy would have slavery as its cornerstone. The Confederate Constitution, for example, made slaveholding an explicit right. For Southern soldiers, even if they fought foremost for home or country, they believed in a man’s right to own slaves. They thought that the North, despite its

Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

⁷ On Northern racial attitudes in wartime, see Randall C. Jimerson, *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought during the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 27-49, 86-123.

racist and conservative elements, was trying to institute unprecedented changes in American society. Even though Confederate guns fired the first shots of the war at Fort Sumter, they were convinced that Republicans and their abolitionist allies—who they knew included prominent blacks—were the aggressors. Yankees, they believed, were bent on enacting radical policies that would destroy slavery and the Southern racial order. Confederate soldiers feared that black revolt, the corruption of white womanhood, and the end of “white man’s government” would come with a Federal victory. The North might have contained many people ambivalent about or even in favor of slavery, but it also had a good number of militant abolitionists. The South, however, contained no such anti-slavery elements.

Confederate soldiers were part of a culture of slavery that affected Southern economic, social, and political life. In contrast to the North, the South had a large minority black population. Of the nine million people who lived in the Confederacy, roughly 3.5 million were slaves. In 1861, the Confederacy had the largest black slave population of any country in the world. More slaves lived in Virginia, roughly 500,000, than there were black people in the North.⁸ In 1861, slavery was stronger than ever, which led rebel troops to believe they could successfully defeat the North. White Southerners’ strength and confidence were the fruits of slave labor. Confederate soldiers were unwilling to relinquish what they believed was their right to live in an agrarian, slaveholding republic. They believed black men and women were born to be slaves and that their economy and society were too interwoven with the peculiar institution to abolish it. In 1861, Confederate soldiers, who were wedded to conservative institutions

⁸ On the number of blacks and slaves in the South, see Maurice Davie, *Negroes in American Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949).

and ways of thought, feared what they saw as a Republican crusade to free all blacks and make the races equal.

Southern whites' familiarity with slaves and other black people made for a paradoxical racial environment. In many ways, conditions for blacks were better and worse in the South than they were in the North. Most Southern blacks were enslaved, but whites fed, sheltered, and cared for them to an extent that Northerners did not. Conditions for many slaves were deplorable, and Southern law mostly defined African Americans as property. Although slaves enjoyed some of the rights of white people, they could not legally marry one another, testify against white men in court, or own firearms. Masters bought and sold black people like cattle, destroying families for the sake of economic gain. Yet, white and black Southerners often lived on good or even intimate terms. They depended on and worked beside one another, worshipped in the same churches, lived in the same houses, and were often buried in the same cemeteries.

Rebel soldiers, however, were often not concerned with the welfare of black people. Slavery contained elements of paternalism, in which reciprocal obligations existed between master and slave. But although slaves certainly shaped the master-slave relationship, slavery existed on white people's terms. Confederate soldiers who owned servants continued to buy and sell them in wartime, often without regard to how it would affect their servants' well being. Others enacted the swift and brutal punishment of slaves who misbehaved in rebel camps or nearby communities. Confederate troops' hatred of black Union soldiers—nearly half of whom had never been in bondage—furthermore, suggests that paternalistic notions did not govern rebel soldiers' behavior toward their “Negro” enemy. They never recognized black troops as prisoners of war, and it was not

just at the infamous battle of Fort Pillow that rebel troops showed no quarter toward African Americans.

The racial attitudes of white Southerners had a direct effect on how the Confederate army conducted the war effort. In soldiers' eyes, the defeat of Union armies would make slavery secure, thus providing further economic growth and the assurance of the Southern racial order. But in the face of what they saw as abolitionist aggression, rebel troops did not take an exclusively defensive posture. The invasions of Union territory in the fall of 1862, for example, represented the "high" tide of the Confederacy, an attempt by the South to exploit the divisions in the North over recent military setbacks and the role of blacks in the Northern war effort. The Confederacy's invasions were an attempt to bring Maryland and Kentucky, two important slave states, into the secessionist camp. The South also sought to exploit Northern Democrats' increasing opposition to the Federal war effort and emancipation. The offensives of late 1862 revealed that rebels understood that they must unite the slaveholding states against Union authority and the freeing of the slaves.

As the conflict became more destructive, Confederates were not convinced that emancipation was inevitable. Our view of the war unfortunately is always predicated on our knowledge that the Confederacy lost its struggle for independence and slavery. As David Potter has written, for the historian, hindsight is one's greatest ally as well as one's greatest liability.⁹ It is a scholar's task, therefore, to demonstrate that emancipation was not inevitable. Lincoln's decision to issue the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862 did not make black freedom a *fait accompli*. The president knew that his

⁹ See David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 145.

edict would prove meaningless without military victory. Confederates, well aware of Lincoln's difficulties, were not necessarily worried in 1862 or 1863 about emancipation. Even late into the war, they did not know if or when human bondage would end. Confederate soldiers understood that the conflict might destroy human bondage, but they also knew that a Southern victory would keep it alive indefinitely. For the Confederate army, slavery became more vital as the war grew more destructive.

In 1865, the South decided to enlist blacks in order to continue the war effort. But it mostly was a token measure undertaken by a desperate nation. Confederates enrolled African Americans only when they realized that Southern whites had already lost the war. The enlistment debate, furthermore, only reinforced how important slavery was to the Confederacy. Some white Southerners dreamed of enlisting 300,000 black men, but most believed that "Negroes" were synonymous with slaves. The enlistment of blacks could not fundamentally change men's racial views, and most African Americans remained enslaved until Lee's surrender.

The army, the most important of rebel institutions, depended heavily on the peculiar institution. Black workers labored by the thousands to aid soldiers in camps and on fortifications. Soldiers were convinced that most slaves at home were toiling in the fields as they always had, and many took comfort that blacks were keeping women and children safe. Troops could not fight unless slaves remained loyal to the cause, and they were convinced—despite much evidence to the contrary—that blacks proved faithful.

Slavery was not always beneficial to the Confederacy. Hundreds of thousands of blacks fled their masters; others rebelled against their owners in small ways; the war caused high prices for slaves that ruined some slaveholders; and many people feared

slave revolt. Some troops decried the “Twenty Slave” law of October 1862 and resented the influence planters had in Southern politics. The Confederacy exempted some planters and overseers from duty, impressed blacks into service, and in 1865, it enlisted slaves into the army. Such measures led many civilians and soldiers to complain or even oppose rebel authority. The Confederacy often aroused the ire of one group of Southerners who were sensitive about human bondage.

Slavery, however, did not divide the rebel army. One can cite many examples of how Confederates fought among themselves or exhibited a loss of will. The rebellion suffered from many weaknesses, but for most of the war, soldiers had faith in slavery and the Southern war effort. One can find much dissension among rebels during the war, but the strength and skill of Federal armies—not internal squabbling and loss of will—led to the South’s defeat. Although Confederates often differed over how to utilize its enslaved population, men fought hard to keep blacks at work and the racial status quo intact.¹⁰

¹⁰ On the subject of internal weakness in the South, see Richard E. Beringer, *et al.*, *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); see also, Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); David Herbert Donald, ed., *Why the North Won the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960) contains essays by prominent historians that ironically focuses more on the Confederate war effort than the Union one; Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) argues that Jefferson Davis was unable to unify various elements of Southern society, from obstructionist governors to the common people, and slavery was one of many problems affecting Confederate unity; William Freehling’s *South vs. the South* emphasizes the role of African Americans in the Confederacy’s defeat; Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988) explores a paradoxical Confederacy that was based on the institution of slavery, but also tried to reform slavery in wartime; on reasons for Confederate defeat, see also, Mark Grimsley and Brooks D. Simpson, eds., *The Collapse of the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Marc Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983) argues that states rights impeded the Confederate war effort because of men’s fears of becoming slaves to a too powerful government; Ella Lonn, *Desertion during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998 [1928]); Bessie Martin, *A Rich Man’s War, a Poor Man’s Fight: Desertion of Alabama Troops from the Confederate Army* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003 [1932]); Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1982); Harry P. Owens and James J. Cooke, eds., *The Old South in the Crucible of War: Essays* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983); Frank Owsley, *States Rights in*

Since upwards of a million men served in the Confederate military, most writers on the subject can only boast of “sampling” a few hundred of its troops. I have attempted to look at as many of them, from as many regions, as possible. Mine is not a work about the “common soldier,” but all ranks of men, from privates and captains to generals. In examining the experiences of the Civil War soldier, historians have emphasized the role privates and non-commissioned and lower-echelon officers played in combat.¹¹ The words of officers and non-officers are important. It is erroneous to think that a private’s beliefs had more influence than those of Robert E. Lee. Yet, even if General Lee’s views of slavery and race influenced the war effort more than those of a private, such a fact does not render the latter’s perception of black people unimportant and certainly not uninteresting. Even so, as important as privates and non-commissioned officers were, a disproportionate number of those whose words survive were officers. For my purposes, officers also differed from non-officers in a crucial way: they were more likely to own blacks or come from slaveholding families. Officers and slaveholders, therefore, are overrepresented here.

the Confederacy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925); George Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Charles W. Ramsdell, *Behind the Lines in the Southern Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944); John Brawner Robbins, “Confederate Nationalism: Politics and Government in the Confederate South” (Ph.D., dissertation, Rice University, 1964); Daniel E. Sutherland, *Guerillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999); Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934); John L. Wakelyn, ed., *Confederates against the Confederacy: Essays on Leadership and Loyalty* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); Mark A. Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion amongst Georgia Troops during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Charles W. Wesley, *The Collapse of the Confederacy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001 [1956]); Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Road to Appomattox* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994 [1956]); David Williams, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man’s War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); David Williams, *Rich Man’s War: Class, Caste, and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

¹¹ See, for example, James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Penguin, 1990).

In these pages, I have included men from the eleven Confederate states as well as Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland—states that did not secede, but which sent thousands of soldiers to the rebellion’s aid. Yet, since the only archives I visited were in Louisiana and Virginia, my study is probably top-heavy with men from the Lower Mississippi Valley and the “Old Dominion.” In the course of my research, however, I did not find palpable regional differences in the way men thought about black people. The fact that a man from South Carolina more likely owned blacks than a man from Arkansas does not mean the former was more or less enlightened or less committed to slavery than the latter. Some soldiers came from heavily slave-populated areas, but that does not mean one will find him writing more often about African Americans. Proslavery ideologues, after all, came from Virginia as well as South Carolina and Louisiana.

As with geography, one cannot predict a soldier’s views by his age. Troops in their twenties made up the vast majority of the Confederate armies. Most of them had grown up in the 1840s and 1850s, a time in which sectionalism and the proslavery argument became central to Southern politics. They were men raised in an era in which Southerners viewed slavery as a “positive good,” an institution that they believed bettered white and black people. But even men born before the “positive good” argument became popular had views similar to their younger comrades. It is my belief, as the historian Jeffrey Young argues, that Southerners thought slavery was a “positive good” long before John C. Calhoun.¹² Regardless of age, men in the Confederate army were not likely to have misgivings about the righteousness of human bondage, even if they did not own black people.

¹² See Young, *Domesticating Slavery*.

Historians who employ quantitative methods will find these pages lacking in any statistical analysis. James McPherson, in contrast, has attempted to quantify soldier ideology. In his book *For Cause and Comrades*, for example, he asserts that 82 percent of Union officers expressed patriotic convictions, while only 52 percent of Confederate soldiers did so; 84 percent of South Carolinians he believes were strongly patriotic, whereas 46 percent of North Carolinians were.¹³ I have made no attempt to quantify Confederates' racial views. My aim is not to "keep score" of racist comments, but to determine the extent to which men were committed to slavery and how it affected the war effort. I am concerned with whether race played a prominent role in men's motivations for fighting and to what degree they believed blacks helped or hurt the Confederacy. Categorizing Confederates' statements as "not racist," "somewhat racist," or "exceedingly racist"—and quantifying them based on such criteria—would prove extremely difficult, if not absurd. Some men's views clearly were racist even by the slaveholding standards of their day. But defining their attitudes by how racist they were or were not proves of limited value. How, for example, would one categorize a man such as Robert E. Lee, who owned few slaves himself, but married a woman who owned scores of them? And if Lee claimed to dislike slavery but kept servants and fought for the Confederacy, does that make him more racist than other Southerners, hypocritical for defending something he did not agree with, or both? Although I am uncomfortable in determining how racist Lee was, I am interested in showing how he and his fellow Confederate soldiers worked to strengthen or weaken slavery in wartime.

Rather than use quantitative methods, I employ the admittedly vague terms "some," "many," "most," or "vast majority" to make analytical assumptions. It is my

¹³ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 101.

contention that the vast majority of Southern soldiers supported slavery and thought black people their natural inferior. Most men did not own slaves, though most admired the slaveholders and wanted to become masters themselves. Many were angry about the “Twenty Slave” law, though most did not hate the planters. When they confronted black troops, most Confederates sought to annihilate them. Most believed blacks were better body servants and menial laborers than soldiers. And in 1865, most probably did not support the enlistment of black troops, even though most probably agreed it was better to enlist them than do nothing.

Making generalizations about the racial views of Confederate soldiers proved difficult enough. I also had to determine whether or not the men cited here were “soldier enough” to warrant consideration. In other words, how long must a man serve before one could consider him a soldier who spoke for the Confederate experience? Some troops briefly served, but most did so for a good portion, if not most, of the war. Thus, I did not set a standard for how long one served before I could consider him being a “true” soldier. Confederates, after all, did not know when the war would end, and some were prevented—through death, crippling, or capture—from participating in many battles. Some men died at Manassas, others not until the skirmishing around Appomattox Court House. But all were Confederate soldiers. Mark Twain only served in the army for a couple weeks. His service—unlike that of fellow writers John Esten Cooke or George Washington Cable—did not prove extensive. Even so, if Twain quickly left the soldier’s life, he could always say he had served in the Confederate army. Had I come across letters of his that proved relevant here, I would have included them.

Just as I have tried to use the words of men from the entire South, from various age groups, and of those who served for various periods of time, I have cited sources from wartime and post-war accounts. In his work, *For Cause and Comrades*, James McPherson does not include post-war writings in his study. Although I agree that using wartime sources proves the best means of constructing the Confederate soldier's experience, one can also profit much from post-war writings. To look at wartime and post-war accounts certainly complicates matters. For most of the war, men were unwilling to see slavery go, and rarely did they express much guilt about human bondage. After the war, they were more likely to assert that slavery had been a burden to the South and that they were not sad to see the North abolish it. But after the war, they were also likely to portray slavery in a positive light. If they said that they had harbored misgivings about the peculiar institution, many certainly emphasized its sunnier side. After the war, some veterans even used proslavery rhetoric to justify the Southern past.

Even though one should approach post-war writings with some caution, they prove a valuable part of Confederate soldiers' perception of slavery and black Americans. Whether in the 1860s or the 1890s, Southern whites believed in the inherent inferiority of "Negroes," the evils of miscegenation, and the need to keep black people "in their place." General Lee's surrender ended the rebellion, but it did not put an end to Southerners' faith in white supremacy. After the war, many veterans claimed that the South was never dependent upon slavery. Yet they did not willingly accept emancipation nor did they acquiesce to the implementation of black civil rights in the South. Men would have preferred that slavery had survived the war, even as they found new ways to take advantage of and oppress blacks without it.

As a final point, some readers might find one aspect of Confederate soldiers' racial views missing: their attitude toward Native Americans. Although I address rebels' views of the Indians in passing, I have chosen to focus on the relationship between white and black Southerners. I portray the South as biracial, knowing that it was not merely made up of white and black people. Native American and Hispanic people also populated the Confederacy. But the two largest ethnic groups in the South consisted of those we would—and people of the time did—consider white and black. Native Americans, therefore, are only tangential to my story. The Civil War erupted because of disagreement about the future of black people in America. The conflict was not about the fate of Native Americans, though in many ways the United States' victory decided their destiny as well. Confederate troops' view of Native Americans warrants our attention, but most rebel soldiers did not live with or near Indians. Those who did usually were stationed on the frontier, where events had less bearing on the outcome of the war than those in the East. Although I accumulated enough material for a chapter on the rebel soldier's view of American Indians, it would not fit in a dissertation that mostly focuses on the relationship between white and black Southerners.

I
THE FIGHT FOR SLAVERY:
SOUTHERN SOLDIERS AND THE CONFEDERATE MISSION

“This is indeed a bad state of affairs,” said a South Carolina soldier in March 1861. “War seems to be the only way out of it, and after all, what are we fighting for? Why should I take up arms against the Union?” His doubts lay at the heart of Confederate soldiers’ reasons for enduring combat. His family’s ties to the Union were as strong as any. His father had served in the Indian wars of the 1830s and his grandfather in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. But in December 1860, his state voted unanimously for secession, and in March 1861, he found the nation on the brink of war. He came from a slave-owning family, but he was not enthusiastic about disunion. As with hundreds of thousands of Southerners, however, he decided to join the Confederate army.¹

The political issues at stake in 1861 called for Southerners to make hard choices about the kind of government and society they wanted. Would slavery survive in their new nation? In examining the founding of the Confederacy and the rebel soldier’s role in it, slavery and race must play a central role. Slaveholders had obvious reasons for supporting the Confederacy, but the importance of race in soldiers’ thinking goes beyond whether or not rebel troops owned black people. Confederate troops tried to maintain slavery, which they believed would prove the best means of assuring political harmony and the survival of the social order in the South. White supremacy proved essential to the workings of antebellum and wartime politics and served as a central component of Southern society after the war. That the culture of white supremacy persisted after Lee’s

¹ Entry for March 10, 1861, Samuel Elias Mays, “Sketches from the Journal of a Confederate Soldier,” *Tyler’s Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (July 1923), p. 41.

surrender underscores the impression that race and the proslavery argument had made on the Southern mind in the period before 1865.

Confederate soldiers were not proslavery men in the sense that George Fitzhugh and James Henry Hammond were. They rarely engaged in detailed arguments about the necessity of maintaining human bondage. The greatest of Confederate warriors, Robert E. Lee, never owned more than a few slaves, and he hesitated to make public his racial views.² And during the war, some soldiers became indifferent to slavery's survival or were even eager to let it go. Yet, few, if any, Southerners rejected black inferiority, and only under extreme conditions, if at all, did Confederate troops accept having to give up human bondage.

Most rebels did not own black people, but very few could claim ignorance of the everyday workings of the peculiar institution. They were part of a culture of slavery in the South, and they certainly did not fight for the eradication of human bondage. Some were indifferent to slavery's fate. For Confederates, however, indifference was dangerous. For soldiers, to allow slavery to die would allow the South they knew to expire with it. Instead, rebel troops wanted to win the war, keep slavery flourishing, and live as they had before 1861. Theirs was a battle for the Southern status quo. Since slavery was the bedrock of Southern institutions—as Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens said in 1861—it was not wrong for a man to defend it.³

In wartime, Confederates knew what was at stake. After the conflict, in evaluating why they fought, they tried to make the maintenance of human bondage at best a

² On Lee's view toward secession, see Emory Thomas, *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 186; on his views toward African Americans before the war and his status as a slaveholder, see *ibid.*, 173.

³ On Stephens' view, see Thomas Edwin Schott, *Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 334.

secondary consideration. But before Lee's surrender, they put the fight for slavery closer to the center of the Confederacy's purpose. And if men did not argue that they protected human bondage, they often articulated their cause—as their Revolutionary forebears had—in the language of liberty and slavery: white men must avoid subjugation by keeping black servitude intact. In Southern minds, slavery and republicanism were not antithetical. Confederates fought for republican ideals even as they rejected the Declaration of Independence's claim that all men were created equal. After all, they knew, the Founders had created a slaveholding republic, and during the "Age of the Common Man," slavery grew even stronger amid an expanding, increasingly democratic country. Since the United States kept most of its black people enslaved, Southerners lauded and defended human bondage as a true American institution, which they believed Lincoln's election severely threatened. In 1861, whether or not they were from the master class, soldiers did not want blacks freed. They would show that the Confederate States of America had created the best "white man's government" in the world.

Men's wartime views of slavery mostly differ from their post-war thoughts on the subject. After the war, veterans revised slavery's importance in secession and the creation of the Confederacy. They assured listeners that they had not fought to maintain human bondage.⁴ In their minds, more noble causes such as principles, freedom, and home

⁴ See, for example, Randolph McKim, *A Soldier's Recollections: Leaves from the Diary of a Young Confederate* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1911), 18; on a very similar opinion, see W. A. Smith, *The Anson Guards: Company C, Fourteenth Regiment North Carolina Volunteers, 1861-1865* (Charlotte: Stone Publishing, 1914), 2; William Watson, *Life in the Confederate Army: Being the Observations and Experiences of an Alien in the South during the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995 [1887]), 44; on his belief that Confederates fought for the tariff rather than slavery, see R. S. Bevier, *History of the First and Second Missouri Confederate Brigades, 1861-1865, and from Wakusa to Appomattox, a Military Anagraph* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company, 1879), 456; on his view that soldiers did not "go to war for slavery, though slavery was interwoven with the causes and intensified the bitterness of the war, and the fate of slavery was forever settled by the result," see "Extracts from Address by E. C. Walthall [formerly of the 30th Mississippi Regiment] at Dedication of Monument at

motivated men to fight. Soldiers had not enlisted and died, as one said, for “the negro, for bounty, for pay or pension.”⁵ To argue otherwise, another former rebel wrote, “does a grievous injustice to half a million patriot soldiers who were animated by as pure a love of liberty as ever throbbed in the bosom of man.”⁶ Veterans did not just make pithy assertions as to why they fought—they also used numbers to bolster their arguments. In order to take emphasis off the necessity of keeping slavery, some former Confederates cited how small a percentage of Southerners had owned black people. If most never owned slaves, they reasoned, why, then, would they have fought for such a right? One veteran quoted a man who said that only one in eighty-nine Southerners were of the master class; others put estimates of non-slaveholding soldiers at two-thirds or four-fifths.⁷ Veterans were correct that most Confederates were not slaveholders. In 1860, approximately 384,000—a mere five percent of the Southern population—owned blacks.⁸ Only about a quarter of all Southerners, furthermore, belonged to slaveholding families. For veterans, asserting that most Confederates did not own black people or come from non-slaveholding families suggested that they had not fought for slavery. Instead, they

Jackson, Mississippi, June 3, 1891,” quoted in Lizzie Cary Daniel, *Confederate Scrap-Book* (Richmond, VA: J. L. Hill, 1893), 27.

⁵ James W. Silver, ed., *The Confederate Soldier* by Legrand Wilson (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973), 165.

⁶ McKim, *Soldier's Recollections*, 18; see also, Smith, *Anson Guards*, 129.

⁷ William C. Oates in *The War between the Union and the Confederacy* (New York: Neale, 1905), 497, put the number of non-slaveholders at two-thirds; W. R. Houghton and M. B. Houghton in *Two Boys in the Civil War and After* (Montgomery, AL: Paragon Press, 1912), 191, put the number at four-fifths; Randolph McKim in his *Soldier's Recollections*, 22, put it at one in ten; a North Carolinian said that one in fifty men owned slaves, see J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *Three Years in Battle and Three in Federal Prisons: The Papers of Randolph Abbott Shotwell, Volume I* (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1929), 21; in his recent social sketch of General John Bell Hood's brigade, historian Charles E. Brooks has found that more than two-thirds of soldiers did not own a slave, see Brooks, “The Social and Cultural Dynamics of Soldiering in Hood's Texas Brigade,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 67, No. 3 (September 2001), pp. 535-72.

⁸ 1860 census information comes from Richard Hofstadter, “U. B. Phillips and the Plantation Legend,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (April 1944), p. 119.

hoped to show that armies full of non-slaveholding soldiers—not “aristocratic” masters—won the battles.

Veterans played down the role of slavery in the Confederacy, but not because—as Kenneth Stampp has argued—they thought it an immoral institution.⁹ Rather, in the 1880s and 1890s, after Reconstruction and the South’s establishment of Jim Crow laws, Southerners revised the role of slavery in the Old South. As the historian David Blight has shown, in an effort to facilitate national reconciliation after the Civil War, Southern whites played down the importance of slavery and emancipation in their memories of the conflict.¹⁰ Segregation and disfranchisement showed that they had other ways of maintaining white supremacy. Slavery had been desirable, efficient, and beneficial, former soldiers reasoned, but not necessary. Decades after the war, in their eyes, it made little sense to express devotion to an institution that no longer existed. Fighting for one’s constitutional rights became a loftier goal—the Constitution, after all, still existed, though slavery did not—even if such rights had once included the ability to buy and sell black people.

In opposition to the late-nineteenth century consensus among Southerners about slavery’s limited role in the conflict, however, some veterans admitted that it had a crucial place in the Confederate mission. Lost Cause boosters muted their voices, but that did not mean all Southerners dismissed slavery’s importance in bringing about the war.¹¹

⁹ Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 246-69.

¹⁰ See David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 140-70, 255-99.

¹¹ On the Lost Cause, see Thomas Connelly and Barbara Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Thomas Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and his Image in American Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978 [1977]); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003);

Richard Taylor said slavery was a sticky subject, one that worked by “ingeniously attaching itself to exciting questions of the day.” However sticky a subject, he asserted, it was not the most important one. In his view, slavery created tensions between North and South, but was not central to antebellum politics. What then, of Alexander Stephens, who declared in 1861 that slavery was the bedrock of the Confederacy? General Taylor thought Stephens was playing politics, seizing an opportunity early in the war to align himself with proslavery interests. Yet, even Taylor included “property” among the “principles and rights” that led men to defend the South.¹² It was a fine line between fighting for slaves and fighting for “rights” and “property,” and Confederates worked hard to stay on what they believed was the correct side of their rationale.

In their use of language, veterans often disguised discussions of slavery and white supremacy through the use of euphemisms. Confederate soldiers often avoided using the

William C. Davis: *The Cause Lost: Myth and Realities of the Confederacy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996); Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Gary Gallagher and Joseph T. Glatthaar, eds., *Leaders of the Lost Cause: New Perspectives on the Confederate High Command* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2004); Gary Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, eds., *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Paul Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970); Charles C. Osborne, *Jubal: The Life and Times of Jubal Early, CSA, Defender of the Lost Cause* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994 [1992]); Rollin G. Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1973); on the romanticizing of the South and the new Southern man that emerged after the Civil War, see Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); on the celebration and sentimentalizing of the Confederate soldier, see John A. Simpson, *Edith Pope and Her Nashville Friends: Guardians of the Lost Cause in the Confederate Veteran* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003); on the moonlight and magnolias image of the Old South, see George B. Tindall, “Southern Mythology,” in Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., ed., *The South and the Sectional Image: The Sectional Theme Since Reconstruction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 8-22; on race and the Lost Cause, see Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980), 100-118.

¹¹ See Patrick J. Kelly, “The Election of 1896 and the Restructuring of Civil War Memory,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (September 2003), pp. 254-80.

¹² Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955 [1879]), 4 (first quotation); *ibid*, 27 (second quotation).

word “slavery.” They instead used the term “institutions” or “property.”¹³ In his autobiography, Benjamin Humphreys, who had raised a company of Mississippians in 1861, said Lincoln eventually lived up to his 1858 pledge that the country would become all slave or all free. Humphreys fought in order to stop what he believed was the Federal government’s “perverted” attempt to destroy “property rights and local liberties of the South.” Such words sounded better than to say he fought to defend slavery.¹⁴ Nor were such claims made only after the war. Before the battle of Shiloh, Albert Sidney Johnston had called upon his men to defend “liberties, your property, and your honor.” “Property” included everything a man owned, but the most valued and controversial of Southerners’ possessions were their four million slaves.¹⁵

Some men, however, did not avoid addressing slavery explicitly, nor did they deny its centrality in the Confederate mission. In 1897, Judge John C. West spoke about the causes of the war, calling slavery a cancer that had ravaged the nation.¹⁶ Others also spoke of slavery’s important role in the conflict. George Washington Cable was one of the more liberal of former Confederate soldiers, so much so that he was driven out of New Orleans after the war for his racial views and eventually became an adopted Yankee. Yet, in his unpublished biographical sketch, *My Politics*, he said that when the

¹³ On defense of their “institutions,” see G. W. H., to F. L. W., May 30, 1861, Keith S. Hambrick, ed., “A Civil War Correspondence between Two Brothers: One North, One South,” *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall 1983), p. 151; D. P. Gibson to Mary B. Cotton, June 6, 1861, Debra Nance Laurence, ed., “Letters from a North Louisiana Tiger,” *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Fall 1979), p. 131.

¹⁴ Excerpt from Humphrey’s autobiography quoted in James W. Silver, ed., *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As Seen in Retrospect* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 26.

¹⁵ Address of Albert Sidney Johnston to soldiers before the battle of Shiloh, quoted in J. G. Duepree, “The Noxubee Squadron, Mississippi Cavalry,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series*, Vol. 2 (1918), p. 30.

¹⁶ John C. West, *A Texan in Search of a Fight: A Trip of a Private Soldier from Texas to Gettysburg and Chickamauga in 1863* (Waco: Press of J. S. Hill, 1901), 177-78; on a similar opinion, see Frederick Maurice, ed., *An Aide-De-Camp of Lee: Being the Papers of Colonel Charles Marshall* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1927), 39.

war broke out, he believed in “Union, Slavery, and a White Man’s Government.” He served in the Confederate army, but Cable concluded that the war had wasted hundreds of thousands of lives for slavery; and despite his best efforts, he found constitutional or Biblical arguments for it unconvincing. But in 1861, he had waged war to keep slavery intact, and he had no love for the “multitudinous, unclean, stupid, ugly, ignorant, and insolent” freedmen.¹⁷ Cable’s conservatism weakened over time, but he had not differed much from his rebel comrades concerning the “proper” role of black people in the South.

As with George W. Cable, some veterans sought to come to terms with the South’s slaveholding past. Even if they denied that slavery was the sole cause of the rebellion, they admitted it had a critical role in bringing about secession. After serving in the Army of Northern Virginia, General John B. Gordon became a member of the Ku Klux Klan. He later served in the Senate, where he advocated fiscal conservatism and white supremacy in the post-Reconstruction South. He did not, however, take the Lost Cause view of slavery’s limited role in Confederate history. “Slavery was undoubtedly the immediate fomenting cause of the woeful American conflict,” he wrote in his memoirs. “But slavery was far from being the sole cause.”¹⁸ Not all veterans dismissed the role of slavery in the Southern past or placed race in the margins of Confederate history. Some understood that one could not discuss the Confederacy for long without addressing the issue of slavery or race. Colonel William C. Oates, famous for his assault on “Little Round Top” at the battle of Gettysburg, said, “Disputation and contention about slavery in Congress and among the people was the provoking and immediate cause of secession and war!” Yet, Oates dismissed the idea that most men fought for slavery

¹⁷ Cable quoted in Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994 [1962]), 551-52.

¹⁸ John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 19.

alone. Although he asserted that the issue had led to war, he believed men's patriotism did not arise from the desire to own blacks.¹⁹ Men such as Oates, however, could not avoid the obvious question of why non-slaveholding soldiers would support a slaveholding republic. Perhaps John Singleton Mosby had an answer. "It was perfectly logical to fight for slavery," he wrote in his memoirs, "if it was right to own slaves."²⁰

The most palpable difference between the antebellum North and South was human bondage, and it was slavery that had put Americans on the road to war. Southern fears of abolition proved much more immediate than the tariff or any other political issue. Yet, long after the war, historians continue to examine slavery's importance in the Confederate mission.²¹ The most influential early monograph on the Confederate soldier,

¹⁹ Oates, *War between the Union and the Confederacy*, 495-96 (quoted), 498.

²⁰ Charles Wells Russell, ed., *Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), 20.

²¹ On the importance of slavery in the coming of the Civil War, see Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003); William Barney, *The Road to Secession: A New Perspective on the Old South* (New York: Praeger, 1972); William Blair, *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11-32; Gabor Boritt, ed., *Why the Civil War Came* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Anthony Gene Carey, *Parties, Slavery, and the Union in Antebellum Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); Bruce Collins, *The Origins of America's Civil War* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981); Avery Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966 [1957]); John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002); Charles Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Jean Alicia Elster, ed., *The Outbreak of the Civil War* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2003); William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996); James L. Huston, *Slavery, Property Rights, and the Economic Origins of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Michael Johnson, *Toward a Patriarchal Republic: The Secession of Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Robert Lewis Paquette and Louis A. Ferleger, eds., *Slavery, Secession, and Southern History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, completed and edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Roger Ransom, *Conflict and Compromise: The Political Economy of Slavery, Emancipation, and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Edwin Charles Rozwenc, *Slavery as a Cause of the Civil War* (Boston: Heath, 1963); Kenneth M. Stampp, ed., *Causes of the Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965); Hans Trefousse, ed., *The Causes of the Civil War: Institutional Failure or Human Blunder?* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1971).

Bell Wiley's *The Life of Johnny Reb*, did not explore race in much depth. More recently, William C. Davis has argued, as many Confederate veterans did, that the conflict was a politicians' war: slavery had led to secession, but did not motivate men to fight. James McPherson takes a different view. In his work, *For Cause and Comrades*, he makes slavery central to soldiers' understanding of the Civil War. But he argues that Confederate troops, in contrast to Northerners, did not discuss slavery in their letters and diaries very often. For most of the war, he believes, the issue was not controversial because Southerners agreed it was best that they kept blacks enslaved.²²

²² See Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995 [1943]), 15-27, *passim*; Davis, *Cause Lost*, 182-83; James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 53-54; James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 104-30; on works about Southern ideology, views on race, and the Confederate soldier in general, see Michael Barton, *Goodmen: The Character of Civil War Soldiers* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981); Joseph Allan Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 57-83; G. Ward Hubbs, *Guarding Greensboro: A Confederate Company in the Making of a Southern Community* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003); Elizabeth Laskin, "Good Old Rebels: Soldiering in the Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865," (Ph.D., dissertation, Harvard University, 2003); Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987); Larry M. Logue, "Who Joined the Confederate Army? Soldiers, Civilians, and Communities in Mississippi," in Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue, eds., *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002 [uncorrected proof]), 44-56; Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Penguin, 1997 [1988]); James B. Paxton, Jr., "Fighting for Independence and Slavery: Confederate Perceptions of their War Experiences" (M. A., thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1997); W. Chris Phelps, *Charlestonians in War: The Charleston Battalion* (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 2004), 64-66; J. Tracy Power, *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); James I. Robertson, Jr., *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 3-18; Jeffrey D. Wert, *A Brotherhood of Valor: The Common Soldiers of the Stonewall Brigade, CSA and the Iron Brigade, USA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999); Stephen E. Woodworth, ed., *The Loyal, True and Brave: America's Civil War Soldiers* (Wilmington, DE: S. R. Books, 2002); Stephen E. Woodworth, *While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 203-54; Ben Wynne, *A Hard Trip: A History of the 15th Mississippi Infantry* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 20-22; on the Confederate mind as men went to war, see Randall C. Jimerson, *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought during the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 8-26; on the importance of slavery in the Confederate mission, see Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 226-55; Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 59-60.

McPherson is correct in saying that Confederates believed in the necessity of maintaining human bondage. Rebel soldiers' racial views, however, deserve more comprehensive treatment than most military historians have accorded it. Confederate troops often wrote about slavery because they understood it was an essential, even central, element of a Southern culture under attack. The army's racial mindset, therefore, provides much insight into the last days of slavery in America as well as the conduct of the rebel war effort. The military contained many soldiers from the master class, the types of men who embodied the martial spirit of the South. But slaveholders and non-slaveholders alike resorted to force of arms in 1861 in order to assure that slavery and the "good relations" between white and black Southerners continued. They were convinced that they must defeat the "abolitionist" armies, achieve their independence, and maintain human bondage. To quote Lincoln's famous words—using the same phrase but with an inverted ideological meaning—the Confederate army represented the "last best hope" for an American slaveholding republic. The surrender of Robert E. Lee decided whether or not the peculiar institution would survive, but before then, rebel soldiers used violence and other forceful means to keep blacks enslaved.

In his work *The Confederate War*, Gary Gallagher has shown the great lengths to which people supported the Southern cause and how the rebel military—and Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in particular—embodied the Confederate mission and Southern nationalism. Gallagher urges historians to place greater emphasis on the military in shaping Southern attitudes. Furthermore, he is clear as to the role slavery played in the war. "It defies modern understanding that any people—especially one in which nonslaveholding yeomen formed a solid majority—would pour energy and resources into

a fight profoundly tainted by the institution of slavery. Yet the Confederate people did so. Until historians can explain more fully why they did, the story of the Civil War will remain woefully incomplete.”²³ Although slavery caused problems for the Confederacy, until very late in the war, rebel troops believed they could defeat Federals sent south to free the slaves and, in their view, subjugate white people.

Gary Gallagher advises against reading Confederate history back from Lee’s surrender, a practice that makes Southern defeat seem inevitable and has led too many historians to emphasize the weaknesses of the rebel war effort rather than its strengths.²⁴ One might similarly approach the subject of slavery in the wartime South. Despite the blows that the United States struck against slavery, as well as the internal problems masters faced in maintaining discipline over their chattels, rebel soldiers believed that human bondage would survive as long as their military existed. The Confederacy’s ability to defeat Yankee armies, therefore, became synonymous with its power to control the slave population. Although many men believed that slavery and Southern nationalism were independent of each other, most Confederate soldiers knew the end of the rebellion signified the demise of the peculiar institution.

Rebel troops’ attitudes toward slavery and black people were the product of generations of racial thinking, which shaped men’s political, religious, and social thought. In attempting to categorize Southerners’ complicated, often paradoxical views of slavery and race, historians have frequently put their attitudes into two categories: the “necessary evil” and the “positive good” view toward human bondage. The former argument, that Thomas Jefferson epitomized, cast slavery as a burden. As Jefferson

²³ Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 172.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

believed, slavery was like holding a wolf by the ears—you did not like it, but did not want to let it go. He thought that over time, however, it would die off, and Southerners should control the pace of emancipation.²⁵

As with Thomas Jefferson, some Confederate soldiers asserted that slavery would or should not last forever. After the war, for example, Robert E. Lee claimed he had always been in favor of emancipation.²⁶ His view, however, was not the result of moral reconsideration or a longstanding dislike of slavery—Lee and his family kept their slaves as long as they possibly could. Lee and other veterans, nevertheless, put forth a Jeffersonian view of human bondage. Southerners, they argued, had always been gradual emancipationists. In their eyes, the peculiar institution was as much a burden to the master as to the slave.

²⁵ On the Jeffersonian view, see Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001); Robert McColley, *Slavery and Jeffersonian Virginia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964); John Chester Miller, *Wolf By the Ears: Thomas Jefferson and Slavery* (New York: Free Press, 1977); Gary Wills, “*Negro President*”: *Jefferson and the Slave Power* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 2003); on the proslavery argument in the antebellum era, see David Donald, “The Proslavery Argument Reconsidered,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (February 1971), pp. 3-18; Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Paul Finkelman, *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South, A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003); William Sumner Jenkins, *Proslavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935); Eric L. McKittrick, ed., *Slavery Defended: The Views of the Old South* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965); Ronald Takaki, *A Proslavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the African Slave Trade* (New York: Free Press, 1971); on the slavery argument in American history, see Ralph Morrow, “The Proslavery Argument Revisited,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (June 1961), pp. 79-94; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “Modernizing Southern Slavery: The Proslavery Argument Reinterpreted,” in J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, eds., *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Larry E. Tise, in his work, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), rejects the categories offered by previous historians by claiming most proslavery thought came from the North in the period before the 1830s; Jeffrey Young, however, asserts that Southerners essentially were always making a “positive good” argument regarding slavery, see Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

²⁶ Robert E. Lee, Jr., *Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee* (Garden City, NY: Garden City, 1924), 231.

George Mercer served in the Confederate military for a brief time, resigning in 1861. Four years later, he took the loyalty oath, which included a pledge to support emancipation. “As I owned but one delicate Negro girl,” Mercer wrote, “a burden and not a benefit, I do not suffer in this respect.”²⁷ Some men might have declared slavery a burden, but those who welcomed its demise usually did so only after the Confederacy’s defeat. For the most part, as with Thomas Jefferson, soldiers qualified their laments about slavery in a way that made them almost meaningless. Jefferson himself did not believe black people the intellectual equal of whites, and he freed only a few of his two-hundred slaves upon his death.²⁸ If Jefferson disliked slavery, he made no effort to kill it in the South. As with Jefferson, soldiers who believed slavery a necessary evil had preferred not to enact emancipation any time soon. Richard Maury, son of Dabney Maury, a Virginian who served in the Western theater, wrote about his father, saying that in regards to slavery, “we of Virginia were in no way responsible.” General Maury considered the institution “the happiest and best for the negro,” though not necessarily for the master. Summarizing his father’s views toward extinguishing slavery, Richard Maury asserted, “I think [he] favoured gradual, very gradual emancipation.”²⁹ Gradual, indeed. For generations, Southerners had said that they wanted to control when and how they would destroy the peculiar institution. Northerners, however, had perhaps rightly seen their gradual view of emancipation as so slow as to mean “never.”

²⁷ Entry for June 24, 1865, George A. Mercer diary quoted in Mills Lane, ed., *The Times that Prove People’s Principles: Civil War in Georgia* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1993), 255.

²⁸ On Jefferson’s belief in the inferiority of black people, see excerpts from his “Notes on the State of Virginia” (1782), quoted in Michael Johnson, ed., *Reading the American Past: Selected Historical Documents, Volume I: To 1877, Second Edition* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 117-120; on Jefferson’s freeing of only a few of his slaves in his will, see Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and his Time, Volume Six: The Sage of Monticello* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), 488-89.

²⁹ Richard Maury to Beverly Munford, June 1, 1907, Beverly Bland Munford Papers, 1907-08, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond [hereafter cited as VHS]; on another veteran who said he was in favor of gradual emancipation, see F. E. Daniel, *Recollections of a Rebel Surgeon* (Chicago: Clinck, 1901), 10.

Some veterans, nevertheless, argued that by 1860, slavery lay on a path to extinction. Had the war not happened, said one former soldier, the United States would have abolished slavery and then colonized blacks.³⁰ Another veteran wrote, “Few southern men regretted the freedom of the negro.” Slavery, he argued, would have died eventually, though it would have been a slow death. Four million slaves lived in the South in 1860. Had the Confederacy lived on, perhaps ten million, he estimated, would have lived in it by 1900. What would the South have done with these slaves? Only Texas, he claimed, could have absorbed slavery’s overflow, and most of the state was not suited to cotton production.³¹ Therefore, he suggested, with so many slaves, the South would have had no choice but to emancipate them—the growth of slavery would have led to its eventual eradication. Too many slaves and not enough land for them to work supposedly would have proven fatal to human bondage.

Such statements were counterfactual and even more so paradoxical. A hypothetical surplus of slave labor by 1900 begs the question: why would a flourishing institution, with a fast-growing black population, have suddenly died out? The more distant Confederate veterans set the imaginary date for slavery’s end, the less sense it made to suggest it would have proven an ultimate failure. Some Southerners seemed to forget that slavery was not a living organism but an economic and social institution designed to outlive all who participated in it at any given time. Their speculating as to when slavery would have reached its natural limits for growth was arbitrary. Slavery was

³⁰ L. R. Burrell, “Civilization of Negroes in the South,” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 19 (1911), p. 229.

³¹ Frank A. Montgomery, *Reminiscences of a Mississippian in Peace and War* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company Press, 1901), 264-65; the estimate of ten million slaves by 1900 is reasonable—roughly a million slaves lived in the South in 1800 and four million in 1860. The slave population, as with America as a whole, was doubling every twenty-five years. Had slavery continued until 1900, there may have been anywhere from eight to ten million slaves in the South.

doing well in 1860, and any suggestion as to when it would have reached its natural capacity for growth is impossible to prove or disprove.³²

Veterans, nevertheless, asserted that slavery would have died out had the North left it alone. One former Confederate recalled that before the war, his overseer father had predicted that the abuses of slavery would lead to its violent destruction.³³ Perhaps his father was a dour Southern abolitionist, or perhaps hindsight affected the accuracy of his recollection. David Blight, for example, has studied the subject of memory and how it affected Americans' historical understanding of the Civil War.³⁴ In the antebellum period, some Americans, indeed, had predicted war, from William H. Seward—who called it the “irrepressible conflict”—to the abolitionist John Brown who believed the crime of slavery would purge America with blood. In 1860, however, there was no evidence to suggest that the South was going to free its slaves in the near future.³⁵

In 1861, Confederate soldiers usually were unequivocal about the goodness of slavery. “There is but one question now before the American people,” said Jeff

³² Charles W. Ramsdell argued in 1929 that the debate over slavery's expansion was an unnecessary one, since slavery had reached its natural limit for growth, see Ramsdell, “The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (September 1929), pp. 151-71; on a similar view, see Clement Eaton, *The Civilization of the Old South: Writings of Clement Eaton* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 132. In contrast to Ramsdell's and Eaton's views, William J. Cooper has argued that masters had good reason to think the Southern cotton market would have thrived in the 1860s had the war not happened. He says, “Most antebellum Southern cotton men looked to the future eagerly, not with foreboding. And the facts of postwar cotton cultivation show they had good reason for their optimism. In 1860 antebellum cotton culture and the society based on it stood poised for a generation of growth and expansion within Southern boundaries”; see Cooper, “The Cotton Crisis: Another Look,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1975), pp. 381-91; on a counterfactual assessment of how slavery would have fared had the Confederacy defeated the North, see Roger L. Ransom, “Fact and Counterfact: The ‘Second American Revolution’ Revisited,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (March 1999), pp. 28-60.

³³ William Andrew Fletcher, *Rebel Private Front and Rear: Being the Journal of Benjamin Robert Fleet & Letters of his Family* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1954 [1908]), 5.

³⁴ See Blight, *Race and Reunion*; see also, Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, eds., *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

³⁵ On Seward's view, see speech he gave at Rochester, New York, October 25, 1858, quoted in John M. Taylor, *Seward: Lincoln's Right Hand Man* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 106-07; on John Brown's grim prognostication, see Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 351.

Thompson, the “Swamp Fox of the Confederacy,” soon after Lincoln’s election, and that was slavery. In an address to Missourians, he declared the people had a duty to keep blacks in bondage. In regards to slavery, Thompson took the “positive good” view that John C. Calhoun and others had put forth since the 1830s. What choice did whites have but to “provide for [slaves’] comfort and happiness,” he asked. As slaves, blacks could contribute to the “power, glory, comfort and wealth of not only our own nation, but of the world.” Thompson’s speech contained little of the Jeffersonian guilt that supposedly affected Southerners. He went on to ask, did white Southerners have a more important duty than to employ black people “at such labor as is especially adapted to their physical and mental organizations?”³⁶ His question was rhetorical. He was convinced that his audience knew exactly what slaves were best suited for: menial labor. For men such as Thompson, a South without slavery was a land not worth living in, and others agreed. In 1862, a German-born man who had recently arrived in Texas and enlisted in the Confederate army said the North was fighting not to save the Union, but to free the slaves, “so the blacks can subdue 6 million whites.” Black people had little to complain about, he felt, as they had “an easy life compared to a day laborer in Germany.” Nor did he have doubts about the goodness of the peculiar institution. “Without slaves,” he asserted, “the South would be a desert ... no white man could live there.”³⁷

Confederates had based much of their defense of slavery as a “positive good” on Biblical arguments, using both the Old and New Testament to make their case. In 1861, one North Carolina clergyman volunteered for the army, believing that “we must show

³⁶ “Address to the Citizens of the State of Missouri,” quoted in Jay Monaghan, “Swamp Fox of the Confederacy,” *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 2 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1956), 15.

³⁷ Ferdinand Boesel to [?], July 17, 1862, Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov, *et al.*, eds., and Irma Ohlendorf Schwarz, trans., “The Boesel Letters: Two Texas Germans in Sibley’s Brigade,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 102, No. 4 (April 1999), p. 465.

not only the fanatics of the north, but also our own people that we have not followed cunningly devised fables, [and] that [we] have taught our people certain principles and doctrines in relation to the institution of Slavery.” After years of preaching about the righteousness of human bondage, he said, “we are now prepared with our lives and fortunes to endorse the same.”³⁸ The North and South both claimed to have God’s blessing, but Confederates, acting on the idea that the Lord supported human bondage, believed they were “in the right.” Misguided Northern Congressmen, said a rebel chaplain, were in favor of an “anti-slavery Constitution, an anti-slavery Bible, and an anti-slavery God.” To remedy such a situation, he believed, Southerners must resort to “the God of Battles.”³⁹ If Confederates fought for slavery, in their minds, they merely did so for a way of life that the Lord sanctioned.⁴⁰

If the Southern clergy defended slavery and supported secession, Gary Gallagher has shown that perhaps the most ardent supporters of slavery and the Confederacy were young officers. They were men who had lived their whole lives under the banner of slavery as a “positive good,” and they had grown to maturity amid the rancorous sectional debates of the 1850s.⁴¹ But older rebel soldiers were also closely tied to slavery, economically if not ideologically. Confederate generals joined the army for many reasons, but many either owned slaves or thought abolition an extreme threat to the South. Some dismissed slavery’s importance in the conflict. The young Patrick

³⁸ James Sinclair to John W. Ellis, May 4, 1861, Noble J. Tolbert, ed., *The Papers of John Willis Ellis, Volume Two: 1860-1861* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1964), 716.

³⁹ Donald E. Everett, ed., *Chaplain Davis and Hood’s Brigade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999 [1962]), 55-56.

⁴⁰ On the “divine institution of slavery,” see entry for March 19, 1865, “Diary of Captain Robert E. Park, Twelfth Alabama Regiment,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 2 (1877), pp. 126-27; on a clergyman speaking of the “dominant race” and the “subject race” when speaking to troops, see Stephen Elliott, “Extract from a Sermon Preached by Bishop Elliott, on the 18th September [1862], containing a Tribute to the Privates of the Confederate Army” [microfilm].

⁴¹ Gallagher, *Confederate War*, 96.

Cleburne—the Arkansas general who in January 1864 advocated the enlistment of black troops—was an Irish-born non-slaveholder. “I never owned a negro and care nothing for them,” he said to his brother in 1861.⁴² Other generals in his theater of combat, however, were from the planter class. Leonidas Polk, a middle-aged division commander in the Army of Tennessee, owned hundreds of black workers. He was the largest slaveholder that Arthur Fremantle, a British observer of the war, met in his travels through the Confederacy. Polk was not the only high-ranking slaveholder in the Army of Tennessee. Braxton Bragg, who was Polk’s superior officer, owned a sugar plantation and over a hundred slaves in Louisiana.⁴³

Prominent commanders in the East were also from the master class. The greatest generals in the Army of Northern Virginia, Robert E. Lee and “Stonewall” Jackson, owned slaves. After the war, Lee might have said he always favored emancipation, but only until very late in the war did he urge any change in the racial status quo.

“Considering the relation of master and slave, controlled by humane laws and influenced by Christianity and an enlightened public sentiment, as the best that can exist between the white and black races,” he said in January 1865, “I would deprecate any sudden disturbance of that relation unless it be necessary to avert a greater calamity to both.”⁴⁴

Not until March 1865, with defeat weeks away, did the Confederacy move to emancipate

⁴² Cleburne to brother, May 7, 1861, Thomas Robson Hay, ed., *Cleburne and his Command* by Irving Buck (Jackson, TN: McCowatt-Mercer, 1959), 21.

⁴³ Entry for May 28, 1863, Walter Lord, ed., *The Fremantle Diary: Being the Journal of Lieutenant Colonel James Arthur Lyon Fremantle, Coldstream Guards, on his Three Months in the Southern States* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954), 111; on Polk as a planter, see Eaton, *Civilization of the Old South*, 90-92; on Bragg as a sugar planter, see Don E. Seitz, *Braxton Bragg: General of the Confederacy* (Columbia: State Company, 1924), 17.

⁴⁴ Lee to Andrew Hunter, January 11, 1865, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* [hereafter cited as *OR*] (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 4, Vol. 3, p. 1012; on Jackson’s position as a slaveholder see James I. Robertson, *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend* (New York: Macmillan, 1997), 191-92.

some of its slaves in order that they serve as soldiers. Lee had proven critical in getting the government to adopt the measure, but by then slavery was a moribund institution.

If Confederate troops did not necessarily take the “positive good” view of slavery, they were certainly anti-abolitionist. James Longstreet became a Republican after the war. Because of it, and the fact that he criticized Lee’s decisions at Gettysburg, he became a pariah in the South. As with his comrades, however, in 1861, he had feared the abolitionist threat. He remembered that when the war broke out, United States officers were in sympathy with the South. Northerners, Longstreet remembered, “generally believed that the people of the South had just cause for complaint against the encroachment in respect to their slave property, guaranteed by the supreme law of the land.” And just before the Seven Days battles in 1862, General Longstreet warned his men about abolitionism. He said that Lincoln wanted to “make the negro your equal by declaring his freedom.” Longstreet claimed that if his troops failed, it would result in servile insurrection and Yankee invaders raping Southern white women.⁴⁵

In the generation before the Civil War, Southerners had engaged in an aggressive campaign to purge elements of its society that were unfriendly toward slavery. In the 1830s, abolitionist societies disappeared in the South, legislators tightened slave laws, and for years, Southern Congressmen kept any debates over the peculiar institution from the halls of Washington, D. C. Such a campaign affected even the mails—Southern states made it a crime to distribute abolitionist literature. Southerners were not afraid to limit civil liberties if it would strengthen slavery, and all of this occurred during the tenure of

⁴⁵ Longstreet quoted in “How they Left the Old Army, Longstreet Tells of the Grief of Southern Officers,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1894, p. 21; Longstreet’s biographer, Donald Bridgman Sanger, cites this article, but omits the part dealing with the South’s belief in the right to slavery; see Sanger, *James Longstreet, I. Soldier* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 17; Longstreet’s Proclamation, June 17, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 3, pp. 605-06.

Andrew Jackson, the hero of the emerging democratic age in the United States. If Southerners were in many ways liberty loving, they agreed on the need to keep slavery.⁴⁶

By 1861, anti-slavery feeling, Confederate soldiers believed, had penetrated every aspect of Yankee culture, setting Southerners on the defensive. Whether they were winning or losing the war, rebels never abandoned their belief that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had caused the conflict. They thought Harriet Beecher Stowe and her kind misunderstood the South and had exaggerated the threat slaveholders posed to them. During the war, for example, one imprisoned soldier believed the Yankees were ignorant about slavery. His Northern captors asked him whether blacks were “driven up at night and corralled in pens like mules.” He concluded that what the Federals knew about slavery they had merely learned from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁴⁷

In Confederate eyes, Harriet Beecher Stowe was not the only prominent abolitionist, but she was the most influential in the Union's cast of characters. More than any other factor, said one veteran, her book had brought on the conflict.⁴⁸ Rebel troops might have thought better of the enemy, but Yankees, they were convinced, had maligned and lied about the South for too long. One soldier remembered that during the war, Northern Sunday School papers were sometimes distributed among the men. A Confederate reader was likely to see the front page covered in “Old Glory” and inside were pictures depicting cruel masters whipping their slaves—the kinds of “black

⁴⁶ On this conformist attitude, see Frank E. Vandiver, *Their Tattered Flags: The Epic of the Confederacy* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1970), 8; on the anti-abolitionist crusade in the South, see also, Russell Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1949).

⁴⁷ A. R. Gibbons, *The Recollections of an Old Confederate Soldier* (Shelbyville, MO: Herald Print, n. d., [1914?]), 19-20.

⁴⁸ William T. Alderson, ed., “The Civil War Reminiscences of John Johnston, 1861-1865 (Part I),” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (March 1954), p. 71; on Stowe's book having “deluged our country in blood,” see Douglas John Cater, *As it Was: Reminiscences of a Soldier of the Third Texas Cavalry and the Nineteenth Louisiana Infantry* (Austin: State House Press, 1990 [1981]), 172-73.

falsehoods” that Stowe had made popular. Her book, he concluded, was pure propaganda. What was more, she used religion to support her beliefs.⁴⁹

Abolitionists never comprised more than a tiny minority of Northerners. Confederate troops, nevertheless, believed anti-slavery clamoring had forced the South to fire on Fort Sumter. One soldier remembered that unlike his father, he was not a secessionist. Even so, he denounced the North’s “fanatical ideas.” “Under a false idea of Christianity,” he wrote, “and with envy, hatred, and malice, [Northerners] shook the red flag of war in the face of the Southerner.” As Southerners had argued for generations, he believed Northerners had no plan for what to do with slaves after they freed them.⁵⁰ He thought it best that the South controlled when and how emancipation occurred. As events developed, however, for most of the conflict, Confederates made few efforts to reform the peculiar institution.

Soldiers believed they had seen the abolitionist threat coming for some time, but they were still shocked when Northerners invaded the South in 1861. Before the war, the North and South had argued—and in the case of “Bleeding Kansas” even killed one another—over the slavery issue. Most Confederates had been born after Nat Turner’s rebellion, but all could remember John Brown’s raid. Brown, however, was only one of many Northern abolitionists. As one soldier recalled, as a boy he had heard of anti-slavery men sending agents throughout the South in order to incite black people. In the mind of soldiers, these meddling people called on slaves to kill their masters before seizing their freedom.⁵¹ A Northerner might have dismissed such charges as fictitious—

⁴⁹ James Huffman, *Ups and Downs of a Confederate Soldier* (New York: W. E. Rudge’s Sons, 1940), 105.

⁵⁰ Thomas Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard, eds., *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private Daniel Holt* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 62.

⁵¹ See L. W. Hopkins, *From Bull Run to Appomattox* (Baltimore: Press of Fleet-McGinley, 1908), 17-18.

Southern propaganda that made the abolitionist into a Boogie Man who haunted the countryside. In 1861, however, Confederate soldiers believed that recent events, from John Brown's raid to Lincoln's election, proved their fears very real. In their view, who could dissuade them from believing all Yankees were becoming, or already were, enemies of slavery? The Confederate mission, they were convinced, was inherently defensive. Southern soldiers had no choice but to fight. They would not have gone to such lengths in the "quieter" days of the antebellum period. By 1861, however, they saw that radical politics had taken hold of the North.

In April 1862, General Thomas Cobb, who in the 1850s had written a proslavery book, wrote of a Union attack. The colonel who led the assault was a professor who had "written so much in favor of slavery." A proslavery man ironically had joined the Federal army in order to conquer the South. "These people are incomprehensible to me," Cobb lamented.⁵² In Confederate minds, Southerners had argued their institutions were good, but the North had not listened. The Union wanted to upset slavery, white supremacy, and the social order in the South. In 1861, one officer penned a war song about the United States' intentions:

Northern Vandals tread our soil,
Forth they come for blood and spoil,
To the homes we've gained with toil,
Shouting, "Slavery."⁵³

Confederates' use of the term "Black Republicans" obviously had a negative connotation. They also used the word abolitionist as an insult—a way of deriding

⁵² Thomas R. R. Cobb to wife, April 28, 1862, "Extracts from Letters to his Wife, February 3, 1861—December 10, 1862," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 28 (1900), p. 291; on Cobb's proslavery views, see Cobb, *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: T. and J. W. Johnson, 1858).

⁵³ "Confederate Song," in W. L. Fagan, *Southern War Songs* (New York: M. T. Richardson, 1890), 94.

enemies of the rebellion. In 1862, General P. G. T. Beauregard urged that all Confederate documents refer to Northern forces as “abolitionists,” and he led the way by doing so in his own reports.⁵⁴ “Abolitionists” became a weapon, much as when soldiers shouted the names of battles at enemy troops.⁵⁵ And soldiers often equated one’s commitment to the Union with one’s dedication to freeing the slaves. They even accused areas of the Confederacy that were not strong in their support of secession, such as East Tennessee, of being “abolitionist.”⁵⁶

Soldiers never tired of equating abolitionists with Republicans, who had, in their eyes, the dreaded Abraham Lincoln as their leader.⁵⁷ In 1861, Lincoln, in fact, had no intention of freeing the slaves, but rebel troops depicted him as the embodiment of Northern fanaticism, becoming a symbol to the South in a manner that surpassed what Jefferson Davis represented to Northerners. Republicans spoke of a slave-power conspiracy that was mostly faceless—Jefferson Davis was a planter and the rebel president, but he did not capture the Northern imagination the way Lincoln did in the South. In soldiers’ minds, Lincoln was the antithesis of the most respected of Southerners, the slaveholding “aristocrat.” “Lincoln sprung from that very class of people

⁵⁴ T. Harry Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995 [1955]), 168-69.

⁵⁵ At some battles, defenders shouted the names of previous engagements at the attacking forces. At Gettysburg, Union troops shouted “Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!” at the rebels who took part in “Pickett’s Charge”; see Geoffrey C. Ward, *The Civil War: An Illustrated History* (New York: Borzoi, 1990), 232; at the battle of Chattanooga later that year, Confederates shouted “Chickamauga!” at the Northerners charging up Missionary Ridge, see *ibid.*, 261.

⁵⁶ On East Tennessee as abolitionist, see J. J. Wilson to John H. Wilson, August 6, 1861, Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 12; on a certain portion of Georgia being filled with “Black Republicans,” see James T. Thompson to father, January 6, 1862, Aurelia Austin, ed., “A Georgia Boy With ‘Stonewall Jackson’: The Letters of James Thomas Thompson,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 1962), p. 320.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Thomas Cobb to wife, May 4, 1861, “Extracts from Letters to his Wife, February 3, 1861—December 10, 1862,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 28, p. 287; see also, “Address of General John T. Morgan,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 5 (1878), p. 2.

that the negro hated so much before the war,” wrote one rebel. In other words, Lincoln was poor white trash.⁵⁸ Both Lincoln and Davis were Southern-born, but they thought very differently about the Union and its black population. Lincoln, with his “negro sympathizers,” as one Confederate soldier put it, spearheaded the Federal government’s attempt to subvert the Southern way of life.⁵⁹ Abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips had denounced the South for years, but Confederate troops knew they did not wield real power. For them, Lincoln represented a much greater threat. He controlled the army, and it was the United States military that would subjugate the South.

Only after the war did the sociologist and soldier Daniel Hundley apologize for his vitriol against Abraham Lincoln, whose assassination made some Confederates feel sorry for him.⁶⁰ Most, however, were unapologetic about their dislike of Lincoln. In wartime, they believed that the Union president and his armies deserved no mercy. One soldier wrote how his mother was from Boston and that his father had once been a Massachusetts Congressman. His parents instilled in him a love for the Union, but even with a Yankee pedigree, he could not bear the thought of Lincoln implementing the Republican platform.⁶¹ Lincoln’s election, rebel troops saw, represented a Northern mandate to crush slavery.⁶²

⁵⁸ U. R. Brooks, ed., *Stories of the Confederacy* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1912), 13.

⁵⁹ On Lincoln and his “negro sympathizers,” see Joseph D. Stapp to mother, March 6, 1864, Joseph D. Stapp Letters, VHS.

⁶⁰ Daniel Hundley, *Prison Echoes of the Great Rebellion* (New York: S. W. Green, 1874), 234-35; see also, Hundley’s book, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (New York: H. B. Price, 1860); on Lincoln, see J. D. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *Three Years in Battle and Three in Federal Prisons: The Papers of Randolph Abbott Shotwell, Volume II* (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1931), 196.

⁶¹ A. D. Kirwan, ed., *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade: The Journal of a Confederate Soldier* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1956), 7.

⁶² See Cater, *As it Was*, 58-60; on the importance of slavery in the 1860 election, see William Eustace Trahern, “William Eustace Trahern Memoir,” [typescript], pp. 15-16, VHS.

Confederate soldiers believed that the Republicans wanted to open the territories to white labor only, and the South would not share in the fruits gathered in these Western lands.⁶³ Once the Republicans controlled the West, they feared, the eradication of slavery would quickly follow. The South would then lie bankrupt and in ruin. Rebel troops reminded Yankees that their looms were fed by Southern cotton and that Northern merchants and industrialists effectively had made fortunes from slavery. But Northerners, they were convinced, wanted the West for themselves. In December 1861, one soldier placed the origins of the war in Yankee greed: the North merely hoped to undermine Southerners' profit margins.⁶⁴ Republicans, indeed, opposed the extension of slavery, but Confederates erred when they saw them bent on dismantling it in the South. Rebel soldiers, nevertheless, took Lincoln's platform to its logical, albeit extremist end. Just as Lincoln had thought that radical proslavery men such as George Fitzhugh desired that masters could one day enslave Northerners under the rule of a small slaveholding class, Southerners believed Republicans would soon abolish slavery everywhere.⁶⁵

Although Southerners feared and disliked the Republican Party, Lincoln's election led the Confederate states to secede piecemeal, not all at once. Not until the firing on Fort Sumter did Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Arkansas withdraw from the Union. A conflict that began with the Deep South states seceding later became a war that swept four Upper South states into the Confederacy. Even before the war broke

⁶³ See Howell Cobb, "Letter ... to the People of Georgia," Jon L. Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession: November 1860-April 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 92; on the importance of the territorial issue in the coming of the war, see Michael Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁶⁴ Entry for December 31, 1861, John G. Barrett, ed., *Yankee Rebel: The Civil War Journal of Edmund DeWitt Patterson* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 11.

⁶⁵ On Fitzhugh's views, see *Cannibals All!, or Slaves without Masters* (Richmond, VA: A. Morris, 1857); on the Republican platform, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

out, however, the Upper South shared the convictions of other Southern states. In February 1861, John Apperson, a Virginian who would later serve as a surgeon in the “Stonewall” Brigade, heard a speech about the South’s political situation. The man spoke of “Northern aggression” and the violation of Southern principles. The speaker, furthermore, denounced the practice of escaped slaves being “harboured by northern fools.” Of the address, Apperson concluded, “For my part I am for him and with him in sentiment.”⁶⁶ Southerners believed they must stop abolitionists before they wrecked slavery.

Virginians, well aware of their political and intellectual tradition, at times succumbed to regional arrogance. They could boast of old families, long-standing colleges, and having produced such men as Washington, Madison, and Jefferson. In 1863, a soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia believed troops from other states were not as patriotic as those from the “Old Dominion.” He said people in Tennessee were lukewarm, but those of the Deep South were interested only in fighting “to protect their property in slaves and when they are lost take no further interest in it.”⁶⁷ His was a curious indictment considering he came from the largest slaveholding state, which bred black people for sale further south and housed the Confederate capital. It had also produced such proslavery men as George Fitzhugh, Edmund Ruffin, and Thomas Dew. A soldier might have thought Virginians acted from purer motives, but those who believed they fought for principles different from other Confederates were misguided. Some states seceded more quickly than others, but tardiness to embrace the Confederacy did not

⁶⁶ Entry for February 2, 1861, John Herbert Roper, ed., *Repairing the “March of Mars”: The Civil War Diaries of John Samuel Apperson, Hospital Steward in the Stonewall Brigade* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001), 34.

⁶⁷ Charles Minor Blackford to wife, October 29, 1863, Charles Minor Blackford, III, ed., *Letters from Lee’s Army* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 226.

necessarily make one state less devoted to slavery and Southern “rights” than another. One finds similar motivations for going to war throughout the South.

In March 1861, a Virginia soldier wrote that a comrade’s parents were “very warm Secessionists,” who could not bear to live in Virginia if it did not secede. “They have no idea of living in this State with their negroes (of which they have some one hundred and odd),” he said. They would instead flee to the Deep South, which they believed was more devoted to slavery and secession.⁶⁸ Virginians did not have to own slaves, however, to pledge allegiance to the slave culture that the Confederacy embodied. As one historian has recently written, “defending Virginia in 1860 was defending slavery.”⁶⁹ In April 1861, a Georgia adjutant wrote to J. E. B. Stuart about the need for Virginia and the other slave states to join the Deep South. The Confederate constitution, he stated, was that of 1787 with “some improvements.” The new government would exclude the abolitionists, thereby removing “all political controversies that tend to sectionalism.” In his eyes, Southerners were defending their rights and property, whereas the North had forgotten about questions of “race, intelligence, cultivation, and Government.”⁷⁰ One Virginia soldier was more blunt in discussing what the conflict meant for Northerners, and by association, the South. When a man became a Republican, he said, he “forswears home, mother, father, and brothers and [is] willing to sacrifice all for the dear nigger.”⁷¹ Virginians that supported the rebel government were united in their opposition to Republicans and any change in the racial status quo. For them, Northerners

⁶⁸ Charles Trueheart to sister, March 1, 1861, Edward B. Williams, ed., *Rebel Brothers: The Civil War Letters of the Truehearts* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1995), 21.

⁶⁹ Aaron Sheehan-Dean, “Everyman’s War: Confederate Enlistment in Civil War Virginia,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (March 2004), p. 21.

⁷⁰ Henry Constantine Wayne to Stuart, April 12, 1861, Stuart Papers, VHS.

⁷¹ John Welsh to brother, May 23, 1861, W. G. Bean, “A House Divided: The Civil War Letters of a Virginia Family,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (October 1951), p. 400.

had turned their backs on fellow white Americans, and in response, Virginians should wage war against the Union.

With four Upper South states joining the rebellion in the spring of 1861, Confederates courted other Americans who might wish to live in their new slaveholding republic. In June 1861, General Ben McCulloch tried to win over the Cherokee Indians in the South's struggle against the Union. "We want them to join us in driving their enemy & ours from their soil," he said. The North wanted to take the Indians' lands and "free their negroes." The Confederacy, however, sought to keep the Cherokees "in full possession of both."⁷² Although Native Americans were not a significant factor in the war, they supported the Confederacy more than the United States. The South's Indian allies shared with white rebels a similar fear of Northern rule and black freedom. One Native American soldier, for example, decried the "negro fraternizing spirit of abolitionism."⁷³

The Confederacy's firm commitment to slavery rested not just on a response to what its people believed was abolitionist aggression, but generations-old fears of race mixing. For Southerners, slavery might have civilized black laborers to some extent, but they feared emancipation at Northern hands would unleash destructive forces upon them.

⁷² McCulloch to General Albert Pike, June 17, 1861, Edward M. Coffman, ed., "Notes and Documents," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (July 1956), p. 119.

⁷³ J. A. Scales to Colonel W. P. Adair, April 12, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Pt. 2, pp. 822 (quoted); on his desire to destroy "mongrel" forces, see General Stand Watie to S. S. Scott, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 8, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Pt. 2, p. 1104; on the role of Native Americans in the war effort, see Annie Abel, *The American Indian and the End of the Confederacy, 1863-1866* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993 [1925]); W. David Baird, ed., *A Creek Warrior for the Confederacy* by G. W. Grayson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Frank Cunningham, *General Stand Watie's Confederate Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998 [1959]); Kenny Arthur Franks, *Stand Watie and the Agony of the Cherokee Nation* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1979); W. Craig Gaines, *The Confederate Cherokees: John Drew's Regiment of Mounted Rifles* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Laurence M. Hauptman, *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Christine Schultz White and Benton R. White, *Now the Wolf Has Come: The Creek Nation in the Civil War* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1996).

In their minds, a culture of reformist “isms” had infected the Union. The foremost of these “isms” was abolitionism, but there were others as well. Captain E. J. Ellis claimed that in 1862, the Confederates fought to defeat the “authors of Mormonism, free-lovism, spiritualism, and all the isms of sin and iniquity that have desecrated our country for the past 30 years.”⁷⁴ Beyond abolitionism, perhaps the most frightening of these “isms” was “free lovism,” which, by definition, promoted “mingling” between the races. Rebel troops believed Northerners were too fond of the black race—Yankees wanted nothing more than to engage in interracial sex.

Confederate soldiers believed Northerners were hypocritical. They saw that Yankees wanted to turn the South into a brothel, yet they were less willing to offer up their own white women to black males. The subject of miscegenation, therefore, gave them much ammunition against the Yankees. In October 1862, a rebel soldier responded to a Union woman’s taunts by saying that “if my nigger could not whip a Union nigger I would marry him to a Union woman.”⁷⁵ Any Southerner could bait a Northerner by suggesting a *reductio ad absurdum*: free the slave and he will bed your wife, daughter, or sister. But if soldiers feared amalgamation, they at times lacked knowledge of who, or even what, was a mulatto. In the election of 1860, some had accused Lincoln’s Vice

⁷⁴ E. John Ellis to mother, April 29, 1862, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, Lower Louisiana and Mississippi Valley Collection, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge [hereafter cited as LLMVC]; for a description of a Northern reporter as a “Free-Lover, an Abolitionist, an Agrarian, a Spiritualist, a Spy!” see entry for May 3, 1861, Hundley, *Prison Echoes*, 12-13; on these “isms,” see also, Everett, ed., *Chaplain Davis and Hood’s Brigade*, 148; on Southerners’ fears of these “isms,” see Fred Hobson, *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 68.

⁷⁵ Entry for October 6, 1862, Charlotte Cleveland and Robert Daniel, eds., “The Diary of a Confederate Quartermaster,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 1952), p. 85; on a similar taunt, see journal entry for May 25, 1863, Douglas Lee Braudaway, ed., “A Texan Records the Civil War Siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi: The Journal of Maj. Maurice Kavanaugh Simons, 1863,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (July 2001), p. 110.

President, Hannibal Hamlin, of being of mixed race.⁷⁶ Such a false claim was political in nature: Southern Democrats wanted to slander Lincoln's running mate. At other times, talk of someone of mixed race suggested that soldiers had only a limited knowledge of human biology. "I met a woman of two complexions, white & black," said a Maryland Confederate in 1862. "Her hair is short & kinkey like the negro. Her face & feet are black. Her hands & body white. This slave is a wonderful freak of nature. Perhaps in a few years she will be black or white."⁷⁷ Southerners believed that the best society contained clear distinctions between black and white. For them, to mix the races caused only unnecessary confusion, and what was worse, a threat to the survival of the white race. In soldiers' eyes, black blood had a viral nature, infecting the white constitution and moral character. They wanted to live in a world where people could easily identify and categorize one's racial makeup. In reality, far more mulattoes lived in the South than in what Confederates believed was a "Negro-loving," abolitionist North. Such a fact, nevertheless, only made rebel troops work to prevent further race mixing. In their mind, mulattoes were a constant reminder that Southern society was not perfect. The presence of people of mixed race, then, induced white people to maintain what they felt was the "proper" relation between the races.⁷⁸

Although Southern troops saw the problems that slavery caused, some were more comfortable than others on the subject of race mixing. In 1865, Captain Edward Crenshaw wrote that he was reading Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago*, which he

⁷⁶ See Sam Watkins, *Company Aytch, or, a Sideshow of the Big Show* (New York: Plume, 1999 [1883]), 4; see also, Gallagher, *Confederate War*, 104.

⁷⁷ Thomas G. Clemens, ed., "The 'Diary' of John H. Stone, First Lieutenant, Company B, 2^d Maryland Infantry, CSA," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (Summer 1990), p. 117.

⁷⁸ On the issue of race mixing in American culture, see Elise Lemire, *"Miscegenation": Making Race in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Joel Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1984 [1980]).

summarized as an “abolition tale in which miscegenation with the black race is openly advocated.”⁷⁹ One wonders why Crenshaw had the book at all, given what he saw as its objectionable themes. Perhaps he wanted to understand race relations outside the South and have ammunition with which to criticize the North’s supposedly decadent ways. Crenshaw found *Two Years Ago*’s mixed-race heroine offensive, but race mixing often occurred in the Old South, and it was not always controversial. After all, masters and other concupiscent white men got away with it.⁸⁰ White males could perhaps never fully suppress their desire to seduce black women, and Confederates knew that not all slaves would be entirely black. “Is Caroline’s child half white or not?” General Henry Wise casually asked about a servant in 1862.⁸¹ Race mixing in itself did not always shock white Southerners. They would not ostracize a black woman for having a mulatto child, but they would shun a white woman who had done so. Black-white sex was a reality that existed on Southern white men’s terms. With the outbreak of war, however, Confederate troops worried that Yankees would break down the barriers between the races by freeing the slaves and promoting miscegenation. In soldiers’ minds, the first inevitably led to the second. They did not need to cite specifics about what emancipation and interracial sex meant for the social order. They saw free love in any form—any racial intermingling—as undesirable.

For critics of proslavery ideology, Confederate soldiers’ unease over black sexuality suggested that the South’s self-professed accomplishments in bringing slaves to

⁷⁹ Entry for February 10, 1865, “Diary of Captain Edward Crenshaw of the Confederate States Army,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Fall 1940), p. 377.

⁸⁰ See, for example, entry for December 20, 1864, Edwin C. Bearss, ed., *A Louisiana Confederate: Diary of Felix Pierre Poche* (Natchitoches, LA: Louisiana Studies Institute, Northwestern Louisiana, 1972).

⁸¹ Henry Wise to wife, November 3, 1862, Henry Wise Papers, VHS on the licentious reputation of African Americans, see Winthrop Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 69-86.

civilization apparently had not proven real. As an abolitionist might have argued, if black people were as licentious as some Southerners believed, either enslaved people had faked the moral improvement that Christian slave-owners had tried to instill in them, or perhaps white morality had not affected black people very deeply. But for those who did subscribe to proslavery beliefs, whether or not black Southerners behaved well only reinforced the proslavery argument. Masters who owned “good” slaves could take satisfaction that they had brought “heathen” blacks to God. Those who owned “bad” slaves could justify the need for slavery to discipline and control them. For some Confederate soldiers, the sexual behavior of black males only reinforced what they saw as the need to keep them in bondage. As they saw it, sex between Northerners and slaves was repugnant, but understandable; in their view, Yankees could not help themselves in their lust for the black race. More threatening to them was the thought of lascivious, formerly enslaved black men let loose upon defeated, white Southern womanhood. They believed that good Southern women—who they saw as chaste, pure, maternal, and deemed fit to perform only light physical tasks—would never fall willingly into the arms of a “buck Negro.” They were not raised to think or act that way.⁸² Any man honest with himself, however, must have realized that the races would not exclusively mix through

⁸² On the role of women in the antebellum South, see Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Janes Turner Censer, *North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984); Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: White and Black Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Jean Frideman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Martha Elizabeth Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Sally Gregory McMillen, *Motherhood in the Old South: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Infant-Rearing* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Giselle Roberts, *Confederate Belle* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003) Anne F. Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

coercion. Such had not been the case before the war; in the antebellum South, although rare, there were white women who had taken black lovers. Southern white men might fail in their ability to control their lusts, but they believed they had to save white women from black men, if only for the sake of females who could not control themselves. For rebel soldiers, if mulattoes must live in the South, it was best that black women gave birth to them.

Fears of amalgamation resulted in part from many Confederate soldiers' belief in their inherently superior, muscular, and homogenous Southern white population. For them, blacks were part of a shared culture, but they were convinced that they came from an inferior breed of humanity. Rebel troops believed they had created a strong, ethnically homogenous nation. They saw the North, in contrast, had filled its towns and cities with foreigners and "half-breeds"—worse slaves than those down South. As he marched through Maryland during the Antietam campaign, for example, one soldier noted the "poor devils" he saw along the way. They were "infernal foreigners, fit only for *slaves* and lives of vice and crime. Irish and *Dutch* by the thousand."⁸³ A soldier in Kentucky expressed equal revulsion at the Unionists he saw. Most were too poor to own slaves. In his eyes, they were almost as bad as New Englanders.⁸⁴ The more they saw of them, the more Confederate soldiers saw Federals as the same—uncouth, uncultured, and abolitionist.

⁸³ Horace Montgomery, "Howell Cobb's Confederate Career," *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 10 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1959), 70; on Southerners' dislike of foreigners, see also, Benjamin H. Trask, ed., *Two Months in the Confederate States: An Englishman's Travels through the South* by W. C. Corsan (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996 [1863]), 93.

⁸⁴ W. L. Gammage, *The Camp, The Bivouac, and the Battlefield: Being a History of the Fourth Arkansas Regiment, from Its First Organization Down to the Present Day* (Little Rock: Arkansas Southern Press, 1958), 55.

In fact, although the North had experienced a much greater influx of foreigners in the years before the war, the white South contained many people of Irish, Scottish, English, German, and French origin. Although Confederates ridiculed Northerners with Irish or German accents, one of their best generals, Patrick Cleburne, was an Irish immigrant. According to James McPherson, although far more foreign-born people lived in the North, immigrants were actually overrepresented in the Confederate army.⁸⁵ In reality, despite the cavalier myth that some of them believed in, Southern soldiers were not exclusively of Celtic or English stock. Southern Louisiana, for example, was a part of the Confederacy that exhibited ethnic diversity. The Secretary of State, Judah Benjamin, who came from New Orleans, was Jewish. And General Pierre Gustave Beauregard was a Creole.⁸⁶

Many rebels, nevertheless, adopted a Southern identity based on what they believed were fundamental differences between themselves and Northerners. The North, they saw, was a land of factory workers, clerks, and unintelligible foreigners. They did not think the Union's mix of Irish and "Dutch" immigrants—and later, blacks—could defeat Confederate armies. The South's strength and character, they were convinced, lay in its English and Scottish stock. Its men supposedly had military pedigrees that went back centuries—to the descendants of those who had "wrested the Magna Carta from King John."⁸⁷ Rebel troops thought the Union armies, in contrast, a poor mix. As one soldier—with what many Confederates would have seen as the good Celtic surname of

⁸⁵ James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire, Volume II: The Civil War, Second Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993 [1982]), 387-88.

⁸⁶ On immigration in the North and South before the war, see Jimerson, *Private Civil War*, 127-28; on Jewish Confederates, see Eli Evan, *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Robert Rosen, *Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000); on Beauregard, see Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard*.

⁸⁷ Houghton and Houghton, *Two Boys*, 191.

McCarthy—asserted, the Federals used hirelings to win their battles. Men of “white, black, olive, and brown” skin, who had “gathered from every quarter of the earth by steamer loads,” battled the South.⁸⁸ In the mind of such men, the Confederacy was wise to keep clear distinctions between white and black, American and foreign. They believed the North had the advantage in numbers, but its men lacked the cavalier and Celtic spirit of the Southern soldier. After the war, some Confederate veterans said that only Yankee resources had overwhelmed the South. In their eyes, they had nobly waged war for the same land their great-grandfathers had died for during the Revolution. Theirs was a “white-man’s country,” which the ancestors of those who fought on English and Scottish battlefields had bravely defended.⁸⁹

Southern men, acting on a chivalric tradition, were convinced that they would never sacrifice honor. One did not have to be Robert E. Lee to fight out of a sense of duty. “If this war was on our side a war of conquest,” wrote Charles Liebermann in February 1862, “I would under no circumstances harbor the thought of reenlisting.” The war, however, was “one of honor . . . waged against us by the north for the purpose of reducing us a free people to vassals of a blood thirsty despot.”⁹⁰ For many Confederate soldiers, the cause had a higher character than merely fighting to keep slaves subservient. A man must save honor, even if he could not save his country. In a Victorian society that valued its military tradition and held men to a communal ethos based on honorable

⁸⁸ Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia 1861-1865* (Richmond, VA: B. F. Johnson, 1899), 7.

⁸⁹ On what some historians have seen as the persistence of the Celtic mentality in the Southern soldier, see Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson, *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1982); Ritchie Devon Watson, Jr., *Yeoman Versus Cavalier: The Old Southwest’s Fictional Road to Rebellion* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); on Scottish-Americans role in the history of the United States, see Michael Fry, *How the Scots Made America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003).

⁹⁰ Charles Liebermann to “Dearest Lenora,” February 10, 1862, Liebermann Family Papers, VHS.

conduct, soldiering proved the true test of Southern valor.⁹¹ It held a special place, for it was the one occupation that men could not excel at in peacetime. One could make money, seduce women, build a home, and tame the frontier, but none of these prepared him for the ordeal of combat. For rebel soldiers, army service proved the greatest test of their courage, and it gave them the opportunity to defend the weak. Soldiers believed they had something to prove by remaining in the army: they must live up to a standard of manliness.

Men based their definition of honor and manliness, however, not just on a medieval chivalric ideal, but notions of racial superiority. Soldiering was not just about being a man, but a white man, and rebel troops believed they must defend honor, manhood, and Southern women in the battle against racial equality and unruly black people. Southerners might concede that slaves were men, too, in a biological sense, but they thought nature had made them inferior to whites. Confederate soldiers were convinced they did not have to be prominent slaveholders, or own slaves at all, to know they were better than any “Negro.” Alex Spence came from an Arkansas family that owned a few slaves. In the army, it was not enough that others treated him as a man—he expected the proper courtesy shown whites. As he sailed off to war in May 1861, he complained that the “officers of our Company do not seem to study the wants of their men.” They should, instead, treat soldiers “like *free and white men* ought to be.”⁹²

Friends, neighbors, officers, comrades—all should act toward each other in a way

⁹¹ On the importance of courage and honor in the Confederate mindset, see Linderman, *Embattled Courage*; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Wyatt-Brown, *Shaping of Southern Culture*, 203-54.

⁹² [Emphasis in original] Alex Spence to “Dear Tommy,” May 11, 1861, Mark K. Christ, ed., *Getting Used to Being Shot At: The Spence Family Civil War Letters* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 6; on a similar opinion, see also, Benjamin Tamplin to wife, undated letter, Tamplin Letters, LLMVC.

befitting their color. When one Confederate said some men with white skin should have had black, he meant it as an insult.⁹³ In his eyes, real men did their duty. They did not abandon their post or succumb to dishonorable impulses. Soldiers believed that the black man was a good worker, even perhaps a beloved “family member,” but generations of servitude had deprived him of honor and manliness. In Confederate minds, blacks represented what white men must not become. That “Negroes” were slaves suggested they had acted in ways that made them less than men. For rebel troops, a true man would never have fallen into a state of servitude, the most dishonorable of conditions. They thought servants could occasionally exhibit the virtues of the soldier—bravery, loyalty, and duty—but blacks were not men in the sense free whites were.

From the 1700s onward, the fear of white men becoming slaves had had a profound effect on Southern politics. As William J. Cooper shows in his book *Liberty and Slavery*, Southern politicians gauged the political events from the Revolution to the Civil War in the dichotomy of liberty and slavery, freedom and subjugation. By 1860, politicians worried about becoming slaves to the North. What gave their fears greater resonance was that they knew slavery first-hand. In their mind, to be to Northerners what blacks were to Southern whites was unacceptable. For them, secession provided the answer to the South’s eroding parity in the political system—better to secede than endure subjugation, better to die free men than live as slaves.⁹⁴

Confederate troops sought to prevent Yankees from doing what Southerners had done to blacks for generations. Years after Appomattox, one Confederate said that the

⁹³ Augustus Henry Mathers to wife, January 7, 1862, Franklin A. Doty, ed., “The Civil War Letters of Augustus Henry Mathers, Assistant Surgeon, Fourth Florida Regiment,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (October 1957), pp. 113-14.

⁹⁴ William J. Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000 [1983]).

Union mission “was not to free the slave but to enslave the free.”⁹⁵ For Confederates, Southern white men must prove their ability and worthiness to remain free. “Are we a generation of driveling, sniveling, degraded slaves?” asked Sterling Price of Missourians in November 1861. In his view, men must defend their rights—given from God—and volunteer for what was a noble and necessary cause. Only then could Southerners avoid bondage. Price, who served as governor of Missouri in the 1850s, said in 1861 that he would opt for death (though he died in 1867) rather than allow Southern people to endure enslavement.⁹⁶ For much of the war, many Confederates believed surrender or defeat were not options. They were convinced that free white men were obligated to fight. Liberty for the slave meant slavery for Southern whites.

Soldiers often put the Confederacy’s struggle in black and white language—of black and white men and black and white truths. Wrote one soldier, “the cause of liberty for which we are fighting [looks as] bright as does a bride before the Altar all dressed in purest white.”⁹⁷ The Southern desire for liberty, soldiers believed, was as pure as the intentions of the North were evil. “Black Republicans” and their “Negro” allies wanted to violate the Southern republic, turning it into a land of enslaved men, fallen women, and mongrel offspring. Confederate troops, therefore, believed they must free themselves

⁹⁵ Colonel Thomas Smith and Leigh Robinson, “Brilliant Eulogy on General W. H. Payne,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 36 (1908), p. 329; another rebel learned that a Federal had joined the army “because the South was fighting to make slaves of poor whites as well as negroes,” see E. John Ellis Memoir, [typescript], p. 36, Miscellaneous Collection, LLMVC.

⁹⁶ Proclamation to the People of Central and North Missouri, November 26, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 8, p. 697; a similar speech was made in southeastern Kentucky by Brigadier-General F. K. Zollicoffer, December 16, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 7, p. 787; see also, E. John Ellis to father, June 2, 1862, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC.

⁹⁷ Entry for June 22, 1863, Braudaway, ed., “A Texan Records the Civil War Siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 105, No. 1, p. 117; the Southern cause was often described in sacrosanct terms, on Yankees threatening the “holy temple of liberty,” see William Corson to Jennie, August 27, 1862, [typescript], William Clark Corson Papers, VHS.

from a government that was more despotic than the cruelest plantation owner.⁹⁸ In the antebellum period, Southerners were convinced that slavery had made them freer than Northerners, and in their eyes, blacks were not the worst sorts of people. They did not think, for example, that they suffered worse than Northern industrial workers. American slavery, in the eyes of Southerners, was hardly slavery at all. Black people were—as the proslavery argument went—well fed, well clothed, and provided for into old age.

Confederates believed subjugation at the hands of the North, however, would prove a far worse form of slavery because it was hypothetical. As General Lafayette McLaws put it in November 1862, if the North were to win, Southerners would become a “poor despised race,” their condition worse than that of the “meanest negro.”⁹⁹ In the eyes of rebel

⁹⁸ On the free/slave dichotomy, see James M. Brannock to wife, April 16, 1862, James M. Brannock Papers, VHS; on similar fears of bending to Yankee masters or Northern “slavery,” see Hubert Dent to “My Darling,” September 10, 1864, Ray Mathis, ed., *In the Land of the Living: Wartime Letters by Confederates from the Chattahoochee Valley of Alabama and Georgia* (Troy, AL: Troy State University Press), 110; Robert H. Miller to cousin, June 25, 1862, Forrest P. Connor, ed., “Letters of Lieutenant Robert H. Miller to his Family, 1861-1862,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January 1962), p. 84; on believing Lincoln’s government would fasten on the South “chains and slavery,” see Marion Coiner to sister, February 23, 1865, [typescript], Coiner Family Papers, VHS; on a similar fear of the chains of “remorseless tyranny,” see James Christian Hill, “James Christian Hill Recollection,” [typescript], p. 1, VHS; on a South Carolina brigade’s fears of “chains and slavery,” see “Resolutions Adopted by McGowan’s Brigade, South Carolina Volunteers,” quoted in Richard B. Harwell, ed., *The Confederate Reader* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1957), 345; also, “The Consequence of Desertion,” a Sermon Preached Before Brig.-Gen Hoke’s Brigade, at Kinston, N. C., on the 28th of February, 1864, by Rev. John Paris, Chaplain Fifty-Fourth Regiment, *ibid*, 271; on fear of being the “craven slave of Northern despotism,” see Peter W. Hairston to “darling Fanny,” June 9, 1861, Robert J. Trout, ed., *With Pen and Saber: The Letters and Diaries of J. E. B. Stuart’s Staff Officers* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1995), 9; on articulation of the cause as one in which Southerners must not be slaves to Northern masters, see Henry A. Wise, “The Career of Wise’s Brigade, 1861-5,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 25 (1897), p. 21; on their fear that slaves had been freed at the expense of white liberty, see entry for June 8, 1864, William C. Davis and Meredith Swentor, eds., *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 464; James C. Bates to sister, June 16, 1862, Richard Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer’s Civil War: The Diary and Letters of James C. Bates* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 133-34; that were Confederates to lose they would no longer be free, see Simon Bolivar Buckner’s General Orders No. 11, September 3, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 30, Pt. 4, p. 592; on similar rhetoric, see General Orders No. 5 to the Army of Northern Virginia, January 13, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 29, Pt. 2, 910; on fighting to avoid “disgrace, dishonor & slavery forever,” see William to Mr. Jason B. Hale, October 15, 1864, R. B. Rosenberg, ed., *“For the Sake of My Country”: The Diary of Col. W. W. Ward, 9th Tennessee Cavalry, Morgan’s Brigade, CSA* (Murfreesboro: Southern Heritage Press, 1992), 145.

⁹⁹ McLaws to wife, November 16, 1862, John C. Oeffinger, ed., *A Soldier’s General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 159.

soldiers, with the escalation in the war's destructiveness, the worse became the supposed slavery that might follow defeat. They believed that the more they resisted, the stronger the North would forge the chains of subjugation and tyranny upon them. Independence, therefore, became more urgent as the possibility of enslavement became more real. Lincoln's election proved cause enough for secession, and once the war began, rebels saw that the Confederate army was the only thing between independence and defeat, liberty and slavery. Thus, it is no wonder that soldiers took up where antebellum politicians had left off. In 1861, Confederates were finished with the political work of defending slavery. Rebel troops would carry out politics by other means.

Confederates did not deem it contradictory—any more than Southerners had in 1776—that they feared enslavement yet maintained human bondage. “I am in the battlefield for my liberty,” one slaveholding soldier wrote to his wife in 1862. “I am fighting for you all and for our Negroes and country.”¹⁰⁰ Rebel troops believed that to resist bending to tyranny, even while holding onto slavery, would carry on the Revolutionary tradition, one in which men could fight for freedom but keep black people in chains. Lincoln's election, feared one soldier, signified the end of liberty. In contrast, he thought the Confederacy fought to sustain the principles of the Founding Fathers.¹⁰¹ The Revolution served as a model for creating the Southern nation and motivating men to fight. Slavery did not detract from rebels' political mission; rather, it provided continuity between the struggle of 1776 and that of 1861. One Confederate soldier, for example,

¹⁰⁰ Isaac Hall to wife and children, June 13, 1862, Garnie W. McGinty, ed., “The Human Side of War: Letters between a Bienville Parish Civil War Soldier and his Wife,” *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 13, Nos. 2-3 (Spring and Summer 1982), p. 76.

¹⁰¹ Richard W. Simpson to Caroline Virginia Taliaferro Miller, September 20, 1861, Guy R. Everson and Edward H. Simpson, Jr., eds., “*Far, Far From Home*”: *The Wartime Letters of Dick and Tally Simpson Third South Carolina Volunteers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 72.

recalled Washington's relationship with a trusted servant, who followed his master not only in war, but into retirement.¹⁰² Anything approaching a quiet existence would not materialize in the South for some time, but before Confederates lost the war, they imagined returning to a bucolic life—just as the heroes of the Revolution had—beneath the banner of a new, agrarian, slaveholding republic.

Soldiers often sounded as defiant as Patrick Henry, who once vowed, “give me liberty or give me death,” and by death, he meant suicide.¹⁰³ When they saw the war would end in defeat, most Confederates did not—as did Virginia Fire-eater Edmund Ruffin—commit suicide.¹⁰⁴ They obviously had not taken Henry's famous words (borrowed from Addison's *Cato*) literally; and unlike Ruffin, they did not want to die of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. But early in the war, as with Patrick Henry, soldiers saw little room for compromise. “*We can and we must succeed,*” said one rebel in February 1862. “‘Better to die free men, than to live [as] slaves.’ ”¹⁰⁵ Such words were not uniquely Southern, but American. New Hampshire, after all, has as its state motto, “Live free or die.” Confederates, however, believed the idea had more immediacy for them. If their troops died in battle, they would never have to endure slavery, and only victory would assure that other whites could truly live free. Even soldiers who were not the best

¹⁰² James Stubbs to brother, November 16, 1862, Jefferson Stubbs Papers, LLMVC.

¹⁰³ On the meaning of Henry's famous vow, see Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and the American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 33.

¹⁰⁴ In his last diary entry, Ruffin declared his hatred for the “Yankee race,” see entry for June 18, 1865, William K. Scarborough, ed., *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin, Volume III, A Dream Shattered: June 1863—June 1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 949.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Goree to Mary Frances Goree Kittrell, February 18, 1862, Thomas Cutrer, ed., *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 76; on a reference to Henry, “one of our greatest revolutionists,” see Trahern, “William Eustace Trahern Memoir,” p. 28, VHS.; on one soldier's hope that another regiment had the idea of liberty or death, see Silas White to father, March 23, 1862, [typescript], Silas T. White Letters, 1861-1862, LLMVC; on similar rhetoric, see Charles Liebermann to “Dearest Lenora,” January 6, 1862, Liebermann Family Papers, VHS; entry for June 12, 1862, Robert Gaines Haile Diary, [typescript], VHS; on preferring to “die free men to living slaves,” see entry for April 8, 1865, George Alexander Martin Diary, VHS.

spellers could catch the spirit of Patrick Henry's popular vow. In September 1861, in five sentences of a letter to his wife, one soldier mentioned liberty four times. But his was not liberty in the abstract; it involved a racial element. He said he loved his home, but if he had to be "the equal with a niger [sic] I had rather never come home, better me fall in the struggle for it."¹⁰⁶ Southern independence, Confederates believed, would free them from equality with black people, while at the same time assuring their freedom from Yankee rule.

If men tried to live up to Patrick Henry's Revolutionary rhetoric, they were more dubious of the Declaration of Independence's notion of equality among men. Some soldiers referred to race mixing as "equality," but they knew a Southerner would never let a black man prove his equal. Confederates believed they treated "Negroes" better than Northerners did, but wisely rejected egalitarian ways of thinking. In 1861, General Howell Cobb, for example, listed a series of Northern abuses, including the United States' supposed attempt to create equality between the races.¹⁰⁷ In the view of rebel troops, were equality to occur, Northerners would achieve it only through duress.

¹⁰⁶ Will to Elizabeth McKee, September [?] 1861, Hugh McKee, ed., *The McKee Letters 1859-1880: Correspondence of a Georgia Family during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Milledgeville, GA: Boyd, 2000), 32.

¹⁰⁷ Howell Cobb, "Letter ... to the People of Georgia," Wakelyn, ed., *Southern Pamphlets on Secession*, 89; on fear of black equality, see diary entry for December 15, 1862, Roper, ed., *Repairing the "March of Mars,"* 327; on a similar opinion, see entry for April 8, 1864, Rebecca W. Smith and Marion Mullins, eds., "The Diary of H. C. Medford Confederate Soldier, 1864," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (July-April, 1930-31), p. 220; journal entry for July 5, 1863, Braudaway, ed., "A Texan Records the Civil War Siege of Vicksburg," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 105, No. 1, p. 125; Reuben Allen Pierson to William H. Pierson, March 22, 1864, Thomas W. Cutrer and T. Michael Parrish, eds., *Brothers in Gray: The Civil War Letters of the Pierson Family* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 228. Since Jefferson wrote those words in the Declaration of Independence, the notion of all men being created equal caused problems for Americans, especially slaveholders. South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun, the foremost proponent of the argument of slavery being a "positive good," tried to argue around Jefferson's notion of equality. Says Richard Hofstadter, "Typical of Calhoun at his worst was his assault on the philosophy of the Declaration of Independence, which he read as 'all men are born free and equal': 'Taking the proposition literally ... there is not a word of truth in it.... Men are not born. Infants are born. They grow to be men.... They are not born free. While infants are incapable of freedom....' Anyone whose introduction to Calhoun came through such portions of his work would find it hard to believe that he

In 1861, the Confederate soldier fought for many things—honor, adventure, comrades, states rights, and white supremacy. After the war, most did not say slavery had been the primary cause of the conflict or that they defended it on the battlefield. But rebel troops believed that Lincoln’s election would put slavery in jeopardy, and from 1861-1865, they fought to preserve the racial status quo. They did not want abolition and certainly not any leveling of the races. The proslavery argument had made a deep imprint on the minds of Southern soldiers. In 1861 and 1862, articulating the cause in the language of liberty and slavery and playing on racial fears proved strong enough to motivate men to fight. In 1861, the rush of Southerners to recruiting stations underscored the overwhelming early support for the Confederacy and the institution of slavery.

As the war dragged on, however, and the army and Confederate government took an increased role in men’s lives, many rebels reconsidered their faith in the cause as well as how successful the military had proven in keeping white men above black Southerners. The hardships inherent in army life led soldiers to think more than ever about subjugation and the role of slavery in the Confederate war effort. Soldiers, nevertheless, persisted in believing that republicanism and the peculiar institution could coexist.

had sound and trenchant criticisms of the natural-rights philosophy, and yet he did, ” see Hofstadter, “John C. Calhoun: The Marx of the Master Class,” in *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Vintage, 1948), 75.

II PLANTERS AND YEOMEN, OFFICERS AND PRIVATES: RACE, CLASS, CONSCRIPTION, AND THE DEMANDS OF CONFEDERATE SERVICE

Proslavery thinking did not always assure harmony among Southern white people. As the Civil War progressed, and took increasingly more lives, the struggle for a white man's government led many Southerners to question whether slavery was helping or hurting the Confederacy and whether the planters had an unfair advantage in the making of government policy. For the most part, racial solidarity assured that class divisions did not seriously affect the bond between planters and yeomen. Although troops sometimes complained that they felt like "slaves" to the government or that it was a "rich man's war, poor man's fight," conscription and the rigors of army life did not undermine Southerners' commitment to the cause. As Stephen Ash has written, in the South, race "bound upper- and lower-class whites in a Procrustean unity."¹ Rebel soldiers' commitment to the war effort overcame the problems that slavery and conscription sometimes caused in the Confederacy. Although some troops harbored resentments toward the master class, they understood the important role that planters had in the army. Yeomen, planters, and lesser slaveholders ultimately worked together to assure that the Confederacy maintained slavery.

As Eric Foner has written, "the Confederate government molded its policies to protect the interests of the planter class."² If he is correct, why would soldiers, most of whom did not own slaves, support a war in which the planter classes had the most to

¹ Stephen Ash, "Poor Whites in the Occupied South," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (February 1991), p. 59.

² Foner quoted in Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 18.

gain? The previous chapter has partially addressed that question in its analysis of Confederate ideology. The answer also lay in the economic, political, and social nature of the Old South. Southerners lived in a world in which the planters had a disproportionate share of the wealth, which translated into great political influence. In wartime, non-slaveholding soldiers put up with concessions made to the planters because of the South's tradition of social and political deference. Its most celebrated politicians, from Washington and Jefferson to Jackson, were planters. So too were many of the heroes of the Confederacy. Privates respected their slaveholding officers in the same way that yeomen emulated their planter neighbors in the antebellum period.

The extent to which the South was a deferential or democratic society has been much debated among historians. Some scholars have emphasized the democratic nature of the Old South. By the late 1820s, they contend, most adult white males could vote, and they elected and then reelected the leader of the "common man," Andrew Jackson. Jackson was anything but a "common man," but during his presidency, Indian removal, the acquisition and settling of Western territories, and the "market revolution" gave Southerners new opportunities. With these opportunities came the expansion of slavery, which made white men feel more secure in their liberties, both economic and political. In 1861, by firing on Fort Sumter, the South attempted to protect the gains it had made in the previous generation. The Civil War, as J. Mills Thornton has argued, was the playing out of a "Jacksonian drama."³

³ J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), xxi (quoted); on the capitalistic ethos of Jacksonian America, see Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Vintage, 1948), 45-67; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Studies of the Jacksonian era abound, but some of the more influential include Marvin Myers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957); Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1969); Robert Remini, *The*

Although Thornton describes antebellum Alabama as a place “obsessed” with slavery,⁴ he argues that the yeomen, not the planters, were crucial in the political workings of the Old South. Lacy Ford similarly has shown small, independent farmers’ ability to shape antebellum political culture. In his examination of the South Carolina upcountry, Ford underscores that the yeomen were the most important factor in the state’s decision to secede. The yeomen, he argues, proved the driving force in South Carolina democracy. As Thornton and Ford demonstrate, even if race occupied the minds of antebellum Southerners, they did not necessarily defer to the men who owned black people.⁵

George Fredrickson—citing the sociologist Pierre L. van den Berghe—has described the Southern political order as one of *Herrenvolk* democracy, a system that assured white equality survived as long as its foundation rested on black servitude. Southerners found unity through the institution of black slavery, Fredrickson shows, thus assuring that no white men suffered at the bottom rungs of society. Black workers, as South Carolina Senator James Henry Hammond argued in the 1850s, made up a “mudsill” class that performed the most thankless duties and undertook the hardest, least rewarding tasks. Since their society depended on slavery, Southerners were convinced, as long as blacks were in bondage whites would remain on a somewhat equal footing. The

Legacy of Andrew Jackson: Essays on Democracy, Indian Removal, and Slavery (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Robert Remini, *The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Arthur D. Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945); John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson, Symbol for an Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Harry Watson, *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of a Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); Harry Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: The Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁴ Thornton, *Power and Politics*, xviii.

⁵ Lacy K. Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

South's collective desire to own slaves meant that planters and yeomen had much in common economically, politically, and culturally. Fredrickson shows that men of all classes agreed blacks were best kept enslaved, but that did not necessarily mean the planters shaped Southern politics and society. After all, had the Jacksonian era not taught men the power of the "common man" in politics?⁶

If historians such as Thornton, Ford, and Fredrickson have emphasized the democratic nature of the antebellum South, the egalitarian impulse of the Jacksonian era lay at odds with the inequalities that slavery created. As Edward Pessen has shown, despite what its most vocal advocates said, slavery did not make whites equal or provide them with the same economic opportunities.⁷ Some historians, therefore, have argued that in the antebellum era, if Southern politics was giving way to more democratic ways of thinking, planters still had considerable economic and political sway. The South was to some extent a democratic place, but was more so dominated by the planters. "Plantation-belt yeomen either aspired to become slaveholders," Eugene Genovese has written, "or to live as marginal farmers under the limited protection of their stronger neighbors." Nor was slaveholder influence confined only to plantation regions. In an article that explores North Carolina Appalachia, Martin Crawford asserts, "this was a slave society committed to maintaining the racial and hierarchical prescriptions of the southern region as a

⁶ George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 61; on *Herrenvolk* democracy in Mississippi, see Bradley Bond, *Political Culture in the Nineteenth Century South: Mississippi, 1830-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 89; on the democratic nature of the South, see also, James W. Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987); on the role of planters in the secession debate, see Steven Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970); John Barnwell, *Love of Order: South Carolina's First Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

⁷ Edward Pessen, "The Egalitarian Myth and the American Social Reality: Wealth, Mobility, and Equality in the 'Era of the Common Man,'" *American Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (October 1971), pp. 989-1034.

whole.” Southerners did not expect that they would ever bring about—nor did they desire—true equality among men. Thus, deferential politics maintained a strong hold on the political and social system.⁸

Although Southerners had opened up avenues to the “common man” in the Jacksonian period, by the outbreak of the Civil War, the planters remained the most powerful and influential class. Fewer than 50,000 people were planters (those who possessed twenty or more blacks), but they owned most of the South’s slaves.⁹ In light of the planter class’ enormous economic influence, the yeomen were willing to follow their political lead. Even in a democracy, the South needed leaders, and a disproportionate number came from the planting or slaveholding classes. Michael Wayne asserts that “within the South’s ‘Herrenvolk democracy’ the opportunity existed for planters to shape the view of slavery held by the plain folk.... in principle nonslaveholders could have actively intervened to define the terms of interaction between master and slave. In practice, however, they did not.”¹⁰ Stephanie McCurry takes a similar view, though she

⁸ Genovese quoted in Michael Wayne, “An Old South Morality Play: Reconsidering the Social Underpinnings of the Proslavery Ideology,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (December 1990), p. 842; Martin Crawford, “Political Society in a Southern Mountain Community: Ashe County, North Carolina, 1850-1861,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (August 1989), p. 375 (quoted); William G. Shade, in his study of antebellum Virginia says, “The yeomen, or freeholders ... had modest farms with few servants, but practically all such whites were wedded to the system. They accepted the proslavery ideology and aspired to the role of planter,” see Shade, “Society and Politics in Antebellum Virginia’s Southside,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (May 1987), p. 166; see also, Randolph B. Campbell, “Planters and Plain Folk: Harrison County, Texas, as a Test Case, 1850-1860,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (August 1974), pp. 369-98; on the planter elite in the antebellum South, see Shearer Davis Bowman, *Masters and Lords: Mid-Nineteenth Century U. S. Planters and Prussian Junkers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Michael Johnson, *Towards a Patriarchal Republic: The Secession of Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); on the effect deferential politics had on Confederate soldiers, see John D. Fowler, *Mountaineers in Gray: The Nineteenth Tennessee Volunteer Infantry Regiment, CSA* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 30.

⁹ For a classic article on the extent of slaveholding in the antebellum South, see Otto H. Olsen, “Historians and the Extent of Slave Ownership in the Southern United States,” reprinted in *Civil War History*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December 2004), pp. 401-17.

¹⁰ Wayne, “Old South Morality Play,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 3, p. 861.

places gender, rather than race, at the heart of her study of antebellum South Carolina politics. Her view of planter dominance, nevertheless, is worth quoting:

Yeomen farmers were committed to the defense of social hierarchy and political privilege, including slavery, in large measure because of the relations of personal domination on which their own independence rested.... Thus the very values in which yeomen and planters found agreement also drew yeomen into a political culture and ideology in which planter prerogatives were difficult to resist.... Empowered by a system that rewarded privilege, yeoman farmers found themselves overpowered by vastly more privileged planters.¹¹

The influence of the wealthiest slaveholders on antebellum politics is important, for it helps explain why non-slaveholding privates followed planter and slave-owning officers into battle. Most officers either owned slaves or came from slaveholding families.¹² For much of the war, Confederate soldiers elected lower echelon officers. The fact that they chose planters and other slaveholders to lead them was not accidental. Historian Allen Frank has described the “enduring influence of the landed gentry and especially the first families of Virginia” in the Confederate military, which Robert E. Lee and other prominent men exemplified. The Confederate army, Frank asserts, was more aristocratic than its Northern counterpart.¹³ Although such terms as “gentry” and “aristocracy” are not accurate in describing the actual makeup of Southern society, they suggest the power that planters and men of wealth possessed in the Old South as well as

¹¹ Stephanie McCurry, “The Two Faces of Republicanism: Gender and Proslavery Politics in Antebellum South Carolina,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (March 1992), p. 1263; she explores this theme more fully in her book, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeomen Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Lowcountry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); on the Old South as a deferential society, see also, Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 8-9; Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., “Mechanisms of Planter Power in Eastern Louisiana’s Piney Woods, 1810-1860,” *Louisiana History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Winter 1998), pp. 19-44; William Blair, *Virginia’s Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 21.

¹² See James McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 14-15.

¹³ Joseph Allan Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 3.

the Confederacy. The South was a deferential society, where landless and slave-less whites imitated the planter elite.

Although the planters asserted much political and economic power over the yeomen, class tensions did not plague the antebellum South. Divisions between rich and poor, planter and yeomen, did not disrupt Old South society. In his study of Harrison County, Texas, Randolph Campbell has asserted, “There is no evidence of class conflict ... or of an attempt to gain power for small farmers and nonslaveholders.”¹⁴ But did the antebellum harmony among planters and yeomen survive in wartime? Were Confederate soldiers—most of whom were non-slaveholding privates—part of a war effort that collapsed because of class tensions? Some historians have contended that internal divisions were critical in facilitating Southern defeat. Racial solidarity, they believe, did not prove strong enough to hold the Confederate class structure together. Inherent inequalities became a point of contention in wartime and eventually broke down the white consensus about slavery. The planter-yeomen alliance depended on the wealthier and more influential slaveholders defending the rights of the poorer classes of the South. But some historians have argued that since the Confederacy could or would not defend the individual liberties of the yeomen, popular support for the rebellion eroded long before Lee surrendered at Appomattox.¹⁵

¹⁴ See Bruce Collins, *White Society in the Antebellum South* (New York: Longman, 1985); William J. Cooper and Thomas Terrill, *The American South: A History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 277-78; Campbell, “Planters and Plain Folk,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 391 (quoted); see also, Ash, “Poor Whites in the Occupied South,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 57, No. 1, p. 42.

¹⁵ On the argument in Civil War historiography, see Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 246-69; for other works about internal divisions in the Confederacy, see footnote in introduction. On the breakdown in the planter-yeomen alliance in wartime, see Stephen E. Ambrose, “Yeomen Discontent in the Confederacy,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (June 1962), pp. 259-68; James Smallwood, “Disaffection in Confederate Texas: The Great Hanging at Gainesville,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 1976), pp. 349-60; Bond, *Political Culture in the Nineteenth Century South*, 118-50; Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis*

In determining why the Confederacy failed, however, class conflict proves a red herring. Southerners did not believe serious class divisions existed in their armies, or if they did, they tolerated them for the sake of winning the war effort. For Confederate soldiers, the most palpable inequalities in the South existed between black and white, not among whites themselves. Planters, yeomen, and poor whites were not of the same economic status, but slavery had created considerable leveling among them. “The very flower of the South are engaged in this war,” one soldier wrote in 1861. “Companies are not formed of the lower classes ... as in other wars.”¹⁶ He suggested that class identity was a crucial element in the rebel military. But race, rather than class, provided the most powerful force for constructing men’s identities as soldiers. As one historian asserts in his study of a Mississippi regiment, “Slavery defined the self-perception of every white Southerner.”¹⁷ When they faced difficult times, Confederate troops articulated their hardships and the unpleasantness of war in racial rather than class terms. Soldiers often criticized slaveholders and expressed fears of becoming “slaves” to the Confederate government, but slavery did not prove a source of disunity in the rebel military. Despite their complaints, troops believed they must sacrifice individual liberties and accept

and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 94-134; Steven Hahn, *Origins of Southern Populism: Yeomen Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 86-133; J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta’s Hinterlands* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998 [1985]); Mark W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 241-70; on class divisions between “poor whites”—those who did not own property—and other Southerners in wartime, see Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ [Appears as “lower calsses” in typed transcription] D. P. Gibson to Mary B. Cotton, June 6, 1861, Debra Nance Laurence, ed., “Letters from a North Louisiana Tiger,” *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Fall 1979), p. 131.

¹⁷ Ben Wynne, *A Hard Trip: A History of the 15th Mississippi Infantry* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 21; see also, Peter Wallenstein, “Rich Man’s War, Rich Man’s Fight: Civil War and the Transformation of Public Finance in Georgia,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (February 1984), pp. 22-23.

conditions to which most white men were unaccustomed in order to become accomplished soldiers and win the war. Although the army often made them feel like “slaves” or “Negroes,” soldiers accepted the demands that military service made upon them. Rebel troops were willing to fight as long as the Confederacy had a chance of victory and the ability to keep white men above the black race.

At times, for some soldiers, army life made them think the cause was not worthwhile. More common than cries of a “rich man’s war, poor man’s fight,” however, were complaints that the military made privates feel they were less than white men. Confederate troops often used blacks as the most ready point of comparison for the trials of soldiering. Likening oneself to a “Negro” was not always negative. In the fall of 1863, for example, one soldier said that on the march, he and his comrades sang as merrily as “niggers at a corn-shucking.”¹⁸ But soldiers complained more than they sang, and they often compared unpleasant experiences to slavery. Metaphors involving black people—which troops used to describe everything from a man’s appearance to the blackness of corpses on a battlefield—were usually negative.¹⁹ Even a prolonged illness led one

¹⁸ Entry for late September 1863, J. P. Cannon, *Inside of Rebellom: The Daily Life of a Private in the Confederate Army* (Washington: National Tribune, 1900), 142; on a similar opinion, see diary entry for September 22, 1861, G. Ward Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 51.

¹⁹ On description of black, swollen corpses at a battle field as comparable to the color of “Negroes,” see Horace Montgomery, “Howell Cobb’s Confederate Career,” *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 10 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1959), 69; on Confederates’ lack of money being akin to a black person’s shortage of it, see U. G. Owen to wife, July 16, 1864, Enoch L. Mitchell, ed., “Letters of a Confederate Surgeon in the Army of Tennessee to his Wife,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (June 1946), p. 171; on one soldier’s lament that a comrade would steal coins off “a dead nigger’s eyes,” see Grant Taylor to wife and children, January 10, 1864, Ann K. Blomquist and Robert A. Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War: The Civil War Letters of Grant and Malinda Taylor* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2000), 214; on a cold sore that made one man’s lip swell “as thick as a Negroes,” see E. P. Petty to wife, October 26, 1863, Norman D. Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Elijah P. Petty, Walker’s Texas Division, CSA* (San Antonio: University of Texas, Institute of Texan Cultures, 1982), 271; Edwin H. Fay to wife, June 10, 1862, Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., *This Infernal War’: The Confederate Letters of Sgt. Edwin H. Fay* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958); 73; on a soldier’s face being made as black as a “Negro’s,” see Abram Young to parents and sisters, March 13, 1864, Mary Wyche Burgess,

suffering Alabaman to compare himself to a black person. He yearned to be free, his poor health having become a kind of enslavement, making him feel “no more than a negro.”²⁰

Confederate soldiers’ use of such metaphors serves as a means of evaluating their morale. In their eyes, how long could one remain a “slave” and still fight for his “rights” and “liberties?”²¹ The analogy between privates and slaves, officers and masters, are instructive, but do not completely hold up. Rebel troops believed combat instilled virtues that were lacking in the work blacks performed; soldiers had a path to promotion that was impossible among slaves; men could take pleasure from battlefield victories or the good performance of their comrades, whereas no “unit pride” existed among servants; a slave was bound for life, a soldier only for the duration of the war; and officers had more respect for their white subordinates than masters did for slaves. Men’s use of black and “Negro” metaphors, nevertheless, provides insight into Confederate soldiers’ racial mindset as well as their faith in the war effort. The contented soldier enabled the machinery of war to function, just as Southern whites believed a “happy” slave made the farm or plantation run smoothly. If a master could not win his servant’s love, he could hope for respect or at least keep blacks in fear. An officer similarly wanted soldiers to obey and admire him, just as a slave-owner wanted black workers to appreciate him as more than a provider and disciplinarian. A sadistic master was as hated as a sadistic

ed., “Civil War Letters of Abram Hayne Young,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (January 1977), p. 63; see also, Jason A. Graham to mother, January 30, 1863, H. M. Wagstaff, ed., “The James A. Graham Papers, 1861-1884,” *James Sprunt Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1928), p. 137; entry for December 22, 1864, William C. Davis, ed., *Diary of a Confederate Soldier: John S. Jackman of the Orphan Brigade* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 152; entry for January 19, 1863, T. H. Pearce, ed., *Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers* (Wendell, NC: Broadfoot’s Bookmark, 1983), 86.

²⁰ Ira Yeldell Traweck to Minerva Direnda Traweck (Loomis), February 1, 1863, Minerva Loomis Papers, VHS.

²¹ A useful treatment of this subject can be found in James B. Paxton, Jr., “Fighting for Independence and Slavery: Confederate Perceptions of Their War Experiences,” (M.A., thesis, Virginia Polytechnic and State University, 1997). I would like to thank Rand Dotson for bringing Paxton’s thesis to my attention.

officer. He would arouse ire from those he offended as well as those around him, becoming a menace to the institution—whether the army or slavery.

In the first months of their service—and to some extent throughout the war—soldiers complained of harsh discipline and having to take orders, which tested the resolve of an army of individualistic-minded farmers. For many Confederate soldiers, obedience supposedly was for slaves, not white men. The war was only a few weeks old when one rebel complained to his wife that his plight was a hundred times worse than that of “any negro in his community,” and his condition would have improved were it only fifty times as bad. He took comfort, nevertheless, in fighting for country, liberty, and family.²² To say soldiering was worse than slavery by a factor of ten said less about the misery of human bondage or the army than it did the sensitivity of the Confederate soldier. For men to compare themselves with slaves was hyperbole similar to their belief that one rebel could whip ten Yankees or that Lincoln was a despot bent on subjugating the South and unleashing servile insurrection. Men complained, but that did not necessarily mean they had lost faith in the cause.

Provided there was no combat or marching, the average day in the army did not approach the miseries of enslaved people forced to cut Louisiana sugarcane or build dams in a Georgia rice paddy, even if a soldier might compare his condition to a black person on the Red or Chattahoochee Rivers.²³ Southern soldiers, nevertheless, found themselves more tasked than ever. As one wrote to his wife in 1861, “Do not stint yourself on

²² J. B. Pendleton to wife, May 22, 1861, Pendleton Family Papers, VHS.

²³ On the plight of a slave on the Red River, see Edwin H. Fay to wife, August 2, 1862, Wiley, ed., “*This Infernal War*,” 127; on the Chattahoochee River, see Thomas R. Lightfoot to Henrietta S. Cody, May 29, 1861, Edmund Cody Burnett, ed., “Letters of Three Lightfoot Brothers, 1861-1864. Part 1,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (December 1941), p. 389.

anything you want. I am willing to work like a Negro to make you happy.”²⁴ Confederate soldiers were white men and warriors. They often considered slaves “rascals,” who were prone to loafing or shirking their duties. But the fact that they equated hard labor with “Negro work” suggested that slavery was nothing less than tedious and demanding. If they understood how hard black people worked, Confederate soldiers believed menial or unpleasant tasks were fit only for slaves or animals. In May 1862, in discussing his recent labors, one rebel likened himself to a slave *and* a mule.²⁵ As a nation of farmers and common laborers, Confederates were not strangers to physical activity, but they could not compare themselves with themselves—slaves and blackness were crucial in sustaining the metaphor.

Not only did the army make them work hard, men saw they had to defer, as slaves did, to what they often saw as arbitrary authority. At times, it would have been best that a soldier simply hide himself away. “One fellow even wished that he was a dog,” wrote a Confederate in 1861, “so that he could get some sleep in the chimney corner at home.” As for himself, he said, “I have often wished I was a negro for a while.”²⁶ For some rebels, the only thing worse than being a black slave to a harsh master was being a white soldier. Men found themselves suffering as never before, falling ill or possibly dying for a cause they did not always support. Comparing themselves to slaves was not always

²⁴ General Clement Anselm Evans to wife, November 29, 1861, Robert Grier Stephens, Jr., ed., *Intrepid Warrior: Clement Anselm Evans, Confederate General from Georgia: Life, Letters, and Diaries of the War Years* (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1992), 93; on a similar opinion, see diary entry for December 30, 1863, Wirt Armistead Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers: The Campaign Diaries of Thomas J. Key, CSA, December 17, 1863-May 17, 1865 and Robert J. Campbell, USA, January 1, 1864-July 21, 1864* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), 18-19.

²⁵ See Edwin H. Fay to wife, May 5, 1862, Wiley, ed., “*This Infernal War*,” 45.

²⁶ Entry for November 17, 1861, “Diary of William T. Kinzer, Montgomery Mountain Boys, Company L, 4th Virginia Infantry,” [typescript], VHS.

accurate, but it was understandable for men who lived in a slave society. Who but black laborers, they thought, would have understood such misery?

Men quickly discovered that the Confederate army was not always a kind master. It reduced them to waiting for the quartermaster to issue their clothes, just as slaves waited for their masters to allot them.²⁷ The appearance of rebel troops, indeed, was often deplorable. Many fought in some battles as barefoot or tattered as a black field worker, and the army did not always make up for the deficiencies in clothing. In August 1861, an Alabama soldier obtained some shoes, only to find that they were of “low-quartered bad leather,” which were “made for negro women for Sunday shoes.” Two weeks later, he noted how camp life reminded him of similar times on the plantation. All the men had “clean clothes on, faces washed and hair combed just like the negroes. If we were only as well off as they I would be satisfied, for they have warm and dry houses to stay in, plenty to eat and good warm clothes.” Yet, he did not find his condition unbearable, admitting that he had enough to eat and wear, but “[did] not [have] the houses.”²⁸

In the first year of the war, however, men were often shocked to find themselves poorly clothed, shod, fed, and paid—too much, in fact, like slaves. Soldiers’ diets were as monotonous as that of servants, their fare mostly consisting of corn and pork. In many cases, it was worse than what black people ate. Slaves, for example, never had to eat the dreaded hardtack. Poor food led to analogies between miserable servants and the plight of the Confederate soldier. “The government furnishes us with nothing but a little flour and a little fat meat,” said one soldier in 1862, “that is so very strong that it will knock a man

²⁷ See, for example, entry for October 30, 1861, James W. Silver, ed., “Robert A. Moore: The Diary of a Confederate Soldier,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (July 1956), pp. 289-90.

²⁸ On shoes, see diary entry for August 1, 1861, Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D*, 30; on camp life resembling home life, see diary entry for August 18, 1861, *ibid*, 36.

down as far as fifty yards if he does not hold to a post like grim death to a dead negro.”²⁹ Soldiers, indeed, frequently wrote about food—the lack of it, as well as its poor quality once they had it. While a Northern prisoner, one soldier recalled that the Yankees issued the rebels fatty bacon, which men called “Cincinnati chicken,” as well as black molasses, which they referred to as “nigger foot.” In April 1862, another soldier grumbled that the Confederacy’s food was so bad that “even our negroes will not eat.”³⁰ One rebel, however, dismissed complaints that conditions in camp were unacceptable. He wrote of those who complained they had “nothing to eat for forty eight hours” and that the army treated them “worse than negroes.” In his view, his comrades had “contempt” for such men. “It is an old adage that some men would grumble to be hung,” he wrote. “The greatest disaffectants have always been men of no social standing, and whose fare here was better than they provided for themselves at home.”³¹

Southern troops looked to those at home for more food, money, and better clothing than the government provided. In their view, a nation that could not adequately care for its soldiers was a weak one, just as a negligent or penurious slaveholder could never hope to succeed in the world of the master class. For critics of the government, however, what was available at home was often little better than what authorities could organize. In August 1861, one soldier wrote home to his mother to ask for white lindsey,

²⁹ William T. Casey to mother, June 5, 1862, [typescript], “Thomas Casey and His Descendants,” compiled by Helen Kay Yates, June 1967, VHS.

³⁰ On fatty bacon, see W. A. Smith, *Anson Guards, Company C, Fourteenth Regiment, North Carolina Volunteers, 1861-1865* (Wendell, NC: Broadfoot’s Bookmark, 1978), 195; on soldier hunger, see William Meade Dame, *From the Rapidan to Richmond* (Baltimore: Green-Lucas, 1920), 74; on bad Confederate food, see Edwin H. Fay to wife, April 21, 1862, Wiley, ed., “*This Infernal War*,” 39; on having worse food than “Negroes,” see also, Isaac Hall to wife and children, May 26, 1862, Garnie W. McGinty, ed., “The Human Side of War: Letters between a Bienville Parish Civil War Soldier and His Wife,” *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 13, Nos. 2-3 (Spring and Summer 1982), p. 71; on food during the Civil War, see William C. Davis, *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and Gray* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003).

³¹ Randall Allen and Keith S. Bohannon, eds., *Campaigning with “Old Stonewall”: Confederate Captain Ujanirtus Allen’s Letters to His Wife* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 20.

a cheap fabric known as “Negro cloth.” The war had created shortages that made men settle for inferior, even slave-like material.³²

In 1861 and early 1862, many Confederates were ill prepared psychologically for the demands of war. They anticipated a quick conflict—with one decisive battle, they would destroy the Yankee army. Much to their disappointment, they found they must drill for hours, march for miles, and eat bad food before they could conquer the Federal forces. “Common men” were becoming professional soldiers, though they often did not like the difficulties involved in the transformation.³³ For them, it smacked too much of black servitude. In 1861 and 1862, Confederates fought with dreams of the chivalric charge, not the prolonged campaigns and ongoing sacrifices inherent in an increasingly destructive conflict. In 1861, Joseph Shields advised all his friends to stay home, “unless the[y] wish to live like negroes.” A few days before, he had complained that his captain was “very strict,” watching over the men as if they were “negroes instead of Gentlemen.” Another soldier, who did not want to reenlist in 1861, believed he had no chance to distinguish himself as a private. He said he had “no more command [over] my time than a slave [does].”³⁴ Men were frustrated with the army long before the Confederacy enacted conscription. What they disliked was not that rich men were not doing their share, but that they had to humble themselves before other white men in the manner of servants

³² On asking for lindsay, see Charles to Albert Batchelor, August 1861, Albert Batchelor Papers, LLMVC; on another soldier who asked for a “halter of negro boy Linsey,” see diary entry for October 24, 1864, R. B. Rosenburg, ed., “*For the Sake of My Country*”: *The Diary of Col. W. W. Ward, 9th Tennessee Cavalry, Morgan’s Brigade, CSA* (Murfreesboro: Southern Heritage Press, 1992), 108.

³³ See Mark A. Weitz, “Drill, Training, and the Combat Performance of the Civil War Soldier: Dispelling the Myth of the Poor Soldier, Great Fighter,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 1998), pp. 263-89.

³⁴ Joseph Shields to father, July 1, 1861 (first quotation); Joseph Shields to father, June 28, 1861 (second quotation), both are typescript copies in Joseph D. Shields Papers, LLMVC; on not wanting to reenlist, see John Foster to sister, June 29, 1861, James Foster Family Papers, LLMVC (quoted); on the belief that soldiers had fewer privileges than “Negroes” did, see J. J. Wilson to father, September 3, 1861 (p. 21) and Wilson to brother October 22, 1861 (p. 34), Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002).

before their masters. In 1861, an Alabaman complained of superiors who “have not the common sense of a regular corn field negro.”³⁵ Other officers were unpopular because they acted too much like a master would toward his slaves. One rebel disapprovingly wrote of those who “strut about, dress fine and enjoy themselves” and who had the best of living conditions.³⁶ Worse, some had a contemptuous attitude toward the men below them. What is interesting about this soldier’s complaint is that he was the son of a large planter. In soldiers’ minds, the war seemingly gave every Southerner the opportunity to experience what it was like to be a slave.

When a soldier did not obey his officers, the repercussions could prove extreme. Private Sam Watkins detailed the whipping of a rebel that could have doubled as a depiction of slave punishment:

And when some miserable wretch was to be whipped and branded for being absent ten days without leave, we had to see him kneel down and have his head shaved.... Then a strapping fellow with a big rawhide would make the blood flow and spurt at every lick, the wretch begging and howling like a hound, and then he was branded with a red hot iron with the letter D on both hips, when he was marched through the army with the music of the “Rogue’s March.”

The scene perhaps made men think of the whipping of a runaway or otherwise disobedient servant. In rebel eyes, rarely were white Southerners so treated as they were in the army. “No pack of hounds under the master’s lash, or body of penitentiary convicts,” Watkins concluded, “were ever under greater surveillance. We were tenfold worse than slaves.” Watkins, however, had a knack for exaggeration, describing Braxton

³⁵ See diary entry for July 23, 1861, Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D*, 24; he repeated this complaint on November 12, 1861, *ibid.*, 74.

³⁶ Frank L. Richardson, “War as I Saw it (Part I),” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (January 1923), p. 90 (quoted); see also, E. John Ellis Memoir, [typescript], p. 40, Miscellaneous Collection, LLMVC; on another officer described as tyrannical, see William Cocke to parents, May 20, 1862, [typescript], Cocke Family Papers, VHS; Thomas R. Lightfoot to Henrietta S. Cody, May 29, 1861, Burnett, ed., “Letters of Three Lightfoot Brothers,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4, p. 389.

Bragg's brand of discipline as a "holocaust." If he was shocked at such displays of power, he never deserted. He faithfully served at every major battle the Army of Tennessee fought.³⁷

Comparisons between soldiers and slaves were more common early in the war, when men were enduring the change from farm boys into soldiers. And even if army life at times seemed like slavery, some men realized that certain measures were necessary in order to maintain discipline. "I find from observation that white men require watching as much so as negroes," said an Alabaman. "I think there are many who ought have masters to watch over them at all times."³⁸ Another soldier wrote of the election of officers that occurred in his camp in early 1862. A candidate made the mistake of saying "white men ... must be treated like niggers." Such a claim was an inexcusable lapse in judgment for an aspiring officer. Confederates believed an officer should never compare his comrades to "niggers." Yet, since no one ran against this tactless soldier, he won election to the rank of lieutenant.³⁹ They should not put it in crude terms, but Confederates knew that officers must instill discipline in those lower in the ranks. Officers should not act as a slaveholder would toward his chattels, but privates understood that they must sacrifice many freedoms, and much of their pride, for the sake of the cause.

In the first months of the war, some men found army life and discipline not a source of demoralization, but greater unity and understanding among whites. Just as slaves could find solidarity in resisting their masters, rebels shared the hardships of soldiering. They enjoyed comradeship that surpassed any bonds they had experienced

³⁷ Sam R. Watkins, *Company Aytch, or, a Sideshow of the Big Show* (New York: Plume, 1999 [1883]), 33 (first quotation), 34 (second and third quotation).

³⁸ Entry for September 24, 1861, Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D*, 52.

³⁹ Diary entry for January 30, 1862, R. Thomas Campbell, ed., *Southern Service on Land and Sea: The Wartime Journal of Robert Watson* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 21.

before. For some Confederates, life in camp was comparable to being in the slave quarters. In August 1861, one Louisiana soldier referred to his fellow “Niggers” in camp. His officers were “masters” and “overseers.” His “overseer,” he was happy to report, did not drink, and he described his “drivers”—sergeants, most likely—as “good, bad & indifferent.”⁴⁰ Just as a slave wanted to live under the care of conscientious masters, soldiers wanted superiors who were just. Confederates initially elected their own officers, and they did not want their superiors to abuse their authority or think themselves better than privates. Soldiers did not reject authority on principle, but rather excessive authority. Even if officers were stern, as long as they were capable, rebel troops found that they could nobly serve under them without sacrificing their sense of independence and honor.

Good commanders were essential in making Confederate soldiers feel as they thought white men should, and privates had good reason to elect planters and lesser slaveholders as officers. In the antebellum period, Southerners deemed larger slaveholders the most martial of men. Rebel troops believed those familiar with the violence used on slaves were adept at using force and intimidation against white men as well. One Confederate veteran thought that simply living in the South had prepared men for the ordeal of combat. In his eyes, the more slaves a man owned, the better equipped he was to command white men. “Controlling an estate of slave labor gave firmness of character,” he said, “the Confederate private, accustomed to command, fought as bravely without officers as with them.”⁴¹ Most privates did not own slaves, and despite what many Southerners believed, the master class did not necessarily breed great fighters. One’s status as a slaveholder did not assure military success. Some generals, such as

⁴⁰ John S. Foster to sister, August 19, 1861, Foster Family Papers, LLMVC.

⁴¹ Alice Pierrepont, ed., *Reuben Vaughan Kidd, Soldier of the Confederacy* (Petersburg, VA: Privately Printed, 1947), 75.

Bragg, Beauregard, and Forrest, were planters, but there were others, such as Longstreet, Cleburne, and A. P. Hill, who were not. Southerners, nevertheless, thought slave-owners were best suited to becoming gentlemen and officers—the kind of men who rode well, hunted, fought in duels, and looked dapper at social events. They aspired to be all things to all Southerners. Planters were depicted as men of wealth, learning, and leisure who inevitably became politicians and professional soldiers.

The yeomen spirit was strong in the South. Small farmers staked their claim in what was an overwhelmingly rural region. Planters did, too, however, and Confederates deemed them the men best suited to manage troops. They had experience disciplining slaves and running plantations, and they were prominent members of the community. For all these reasons, rebel troops believed slaveholders would prove natural leaders in the Confederacy.⁴² James McPherson has shown that slaveholders were the most patriotic of Confederates because they had the most to lose—that is, slavery.⁴³ Even if soldiers denied they fought to maintain human bondage, most had no objection to the master class asserting an important place in the conflict. “The habit of control and the practice of masterdom made the Southern man reliant, positive, and forceful,” said General Bradley Johnson after the war. Confederates believed that the most admirable of Southerners did not fight to advance their careers or make money. They instead stood by their friends and defended rights gained by their forefathers.⁴⁴ No men embodied these virtues better than the planters. The greatest of American warriors, from Washington to Jackson to Zachary

⁴² On planter’s role in the war effort, see Frank E. Vandiver, *Their Tattered Flags: The Epic of the Confederacy* (New York: Harper’s Magazine Press, 1970), 4, 61, 74.

⁴³ See James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 100-03.

⁴⁴ Bradley Johnson, “Address to the Confederate Association of St. Mary’s County, Maryland,” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 2 (1894), p. 261.

Taylor, were of that class. In the Confederate army, the planters comprised an unofficial officer corps.⁴⁵ One soldier remembered the planters, farmhands, businessmen, and professionals who made up his company of Texans. From this mixture they elected as their captain a planter who had served as a lieutenant under Jefferson Davis in the Mexican War and who was well known among his fellow slaveholders.⁴⁶ Since officers were elected for much of the war, it seems that privates had much respect, or at least high expectations, for their planter comrades.

No one better embodied the ideal of the slaveholding-warrior than Robert E. Lee. If he had a reputation as a planter “aristocrat,” Lee, in fact, only ever owned a few slaves himself and had little personal property. It was not until the 1850s that he tried his hand at planting on his wife’s estate. Lee, nevertheless, as Bertram Wyatt-Brown has argued, personified the honorable motives of the martial master class.⁴⁷ Confederates did not lack praise for commanders who supposedly embodied the warrior spirit and gentlemanly virtues of the Southern “aristocracy”—however mythical it was. In praising Lee as the epitome of the cavalier, Confederate troops defined their relationship with him in racially deferential terms. To slaves, masters were “massa,” “mars” or “marse.” To admiring

⁴⁵ In his encyclopedia of Confederate generals, Ezra Warner lists only 42 of 425 men as farmers or planters; most described themselves as lawyers or professional soldiers. Warner admits, however, that such labels were arbitrary. A man could be a planter and a lawyer or soldier; see Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), xxi; see also, Bruce S. Allardice, *More Generals in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 13. Historians could certainly profit from a study that shows to what extent the Confederate high command owned slaves or came from slaveholding families.

⁴⁶ R. Henderson Shuffler, ed., *The Adventures of a Prisoner of War, 1863-1864* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 19.

⁴⁷ For most of his life, Lee was a professional soldier. But in the 1850s, he became a “novice planter” on his wife’s Arlington plantation, see Emory M. Thomas, *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 177-78; on Robert E. Lee being the archetype of Southern honor, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 55-60; see also, Ritchie Devon Watson, Jr., *Yeoman Versus Cavalier; The Old Southwest’s Fictional Road to Rebellion* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 133-34.

rebel soldiers, Lee became “Marse Robert.”⁴⁸ To describe him in such terms reflected affection and respect as well as deference. It was often a fine line between instilling deference and demanding subservience in the South, and for any officer to win respect, he must know the difference. Lee seemingly learned a lesson that Braxton Bragg, also a general who had lived on a plantation before the war, did not. The term “Marse Robert” for General Lee was appropriate. For Southerners, he was *the* gentleman warrior, the most noble, handsome, and personable of slaveholding soldiers. With such an air of authority and record of military success, it is no wonder that his soldiers referred to him as a servant would his master. With his silver hair and impressive bearing, Lee was a father figure—the paternalist writ large. Most Southern masters did not demand that slaves work themselves to death, but men would die for R. E. Lee.

General Lee was closely connected to the planter elite, which had made the South an economic and military power. In 1860, the South—which had a per capita income behind only the North, Great Britain, and Australia—was the fourth wealthiest “nation” in the world.⁴⁹ Southerners hoped to share in the prosperity that independence would bring. In order to win their freedom from Northern rule, Confederates needed the planter class, and in 1861, they knew the large slaveholders supported the cause. One soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia wrote that “planters about Greensboro [Alabama] say we shall never be in want of money, but ... we have only to let it be known. Hurrah!”⁵⁰ He

⁴⁸ On one soldier’s use of the term “Mars Bob Lee,” see Jason A. Graham to mother, October 6, 1864, Wagstaff, ed., “James A. Graham Papers,” *James Sprunt Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 195.

⁴⁹ On the per capita wealth of the antebellum South, see Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989 [1974]), 250.

⁵⁰ Diary entry for August 2, 1861, Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D*, 31.

wrote in the enthusiastic environment of the first months of war. Much would change, but Confederates mostly held onto their faith in the workings of the antebellum status quo.

Lt. Charles Liebermann epitomized the alliance—albeit sometimes a troubled one—that Confederate soldiers had with the planters. In December 1861, he questioned the patriotism of the large slaveholders as well as their decision to burn valuable stockpiles of cotton in order to keep it out of Northern hands. Planters probably were wise to destroy crops that Federals might seize, but his point was that burning cotton did not compare to putting one's life in danger. Liebermann, nevertheless, as with most Southerners, acknowledged the vital role “King Cotton” would play in the conflict. In Confederate eyes, the planters might prove wasteful at times, but their crop would save the South. Liebermann one day said the slaveholders did not do enough for their country, but on another, he wrote, “we have got the very staples which command the markets of all the civilized world.”⁵¹ Europe supposedly could not function without cotton, and in 1861, rebels believed it would side with the Confederacy. Much of the South's future rested on the shoulders of the planter class.

In April 1862, the nature of the war as well as the makeup of the Confederate army changed with the passage of the Conscription Act, which stated that all men not engaged in “essential” jobs and between the ages of 18 and 35 must serve in the military for three years or the end of the war. Those who could afford to hire a substitute did not have to enlist, but those already in the army must remain there. In concession to the troops, the Confederacy allowed them to elect officers at the company level, and men

⁵¹ Charles Liebermann to “Dearest Lenora,” December 11, 1861, Liebermann Family Papers, VHS; Charles Liebermann to “Dearest Lenora,” January 12, 1862, Liebermann Family Papers, VHS.

would receive a sixty-day furlough.⁵² Some soldiers were unhappy with the conscription bill. Disgruntled men found—as with slaves fated to a life of servitude—that the draft gave them no choice about remaining in the army. For independent-minded, liberty-loving Confederate troops, it smacked too much of tyranny. Charles Liebermann said that conscription “deserves the hearty condemnation of every freeman, as it is nothing but an act of military despotism in violation of every republican principle.”⁵³ Soldiers suddenly became suspicious of the government’s motives as well as the loyalty of the upper classes, who could hire substitutes to avoid service. Prominent politicians also voiced their opposition to conscription. In May 1862, Georgia Governor Joseph E. Brown complained to General Howell Cobb—who Jefferson Davis hoped would obtain Brown’s approval of conscription—saying that the draft violated state sovereignty. Brown might acquiesce to it in an emergency, but he felt none had arisen. The Confederacy’s problem, furthermore, was not just obtaining men, but arming them.⁵⁴

For many Southerners, the draft meant that the Confederacy had become not only too much like the oppressive North, but increasingly like an overbearing master. Soldiers had gone to war proud of their political culture, which, by making sure blacks remained enslaved, assured white liberty. Conscription, however, left many troops with lingering resentment against what they saw as a planter-dominated Confederacy. Complaints were not idle. As the works of John Inscoe and Wayne Durrill have argued, in some communities—but especially the hill country and mountainous regions, where there were

⁵² Thomas, *Confederate Nation*, 153.

⁵³ Charles Liebermann to “Dearest Lenora,” April 25, 1862, Liebermann Family Papers, VHS.

⁵⁴ Joseph E. Brown to Howell Cobb, May 8, 1862, William E. Gienapp, ed., *The Civil War and Reconstruction: A Documentary Collection* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 131.

few slaves—men violently opposed Confederate authority.⁵⁵ Many also deserted, leading historians to underscore how class divisions affected soldiers' decision to abandon their posts and return home. Without these men, the Confederacy suffered serious problems in trying to conduct its war effort. As David Williams and Mark A. Weitz have argued in their studies of Georgia, class resentments undermined poorer soldiers' commitment to the cause: latent tensions between yeomen and planters led to loss of will and mass desertion.⁵⁶ "Confederate unity died," Armstead Robinson has asserted, "amidst the combination of popular resentment over conscription and the assertion of local rights." With the April 1862 draft and subsequent "Twenty Slave" clause—which allowed men who owned twenty or more slaves to avoid military service—the Confederacy seemingly allowed class divisions to weaken the war effort.⁵⁷

When Congress first passed the Conscription Act, however, perhaps most Confederate soldiers did not reject it as an evil. In April 1862, one wrote that the draft was "talked of now more than anything else." He concluded, "Some are in favor & some

⁵⁵ See Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); John Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer, eds., *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); John Inscoe, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); John Inscoe, *Mountain Masters: Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

⁵⁶ See Bessie Martin, *A Rich Man's War, a Poor Man's Fight: Desertion of Alabama Troops from the Confederate Army* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003 [1932]); David Williams, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); David Williams, *Rich Man's War: Class, Caste and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); Mark A. Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion amongst Georgia Troops during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); on class dissent in North Carolina, see also, Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 203-18.

⁵⁷ Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1924); Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934); Armstead L. Robinson, "Day of Jubilo: Civil War and the Demise of Slavery in the Mississippi Valley, 1861-1865," (Ph.D., dissertation, University of Rochester, 1976), 63 (quoted); see also, the recently published version of his dissertation, *Bitter Fruits of Bondage: The Demise of Slavery and the Collapse of the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2005).

are a pose [sic] to it.”⁵⁸ His words hardly suggest loud cries against conscription. Other men were clearer in their support. In July 1862, one practical Confederate, writing from Tupelo, said, “The truth is that *we need every man for the approaching struggle* which in a few months will decide our fate.”⁵⁹ The South had never faced such difficulties. In soldiers’ eyes, the government rightly believed it must do whatever necessary to ward off Federal forces. Conservatives might have believed that in a war for “their rights,” the army should not keep men in the service against their will. Many rebel troops, however, believed that winning the war superseded all other concerns. Historians, furthermore, have shown how conscription added thousands of needed men to the ranks.⁶⁰

As usually was the case, soldiers’ racial thinking overshadowed class concerns. For supporters of the draft, those who avoided conscription looked like lowly “Negroes”—men, troops believed, who had no sense of pride or duty. Bertram Wyatt-

⁵⁸ Entry for April 19 1862, G. H. Tichenor Diary, LLMVC.

⁵⁹ [Emphasis in original underlined] E. John Ellis to sister, July 29, 1862, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC; on support for conscription because it would provide Confederates with a permanent army, see letter of April 21, 1862, Lloyd Halliburton, ed., *Saddle Soldiers: The Civil War Correspondence of General William Stokes of the 4th South Carolina Cavalry* (Orangeburg, SC: Sandlapper, 1993), 24; see also, W. R. Stilwell to Dear Molly, August 22, 1862, Ronald H. Moseley, ed., *The Stilwell Letters: A Georgian in Longstreet’s Corps, Army of Northern Virginia* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2002), 33; R. H. Brooks to wife, August 15, 1863, Katherine S. Holland, ed., *Keep All My Letters: The Civil War Letters of Richard Henry Brooks, 51st Georgia* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 99; one North Carolinian concluded in his memoirs, “I could well understand that the conscript law was an imperative necessity; it must be enforced, or the whole country delivered up to the enemy, and not even the most unappeasable growler was ready to consent to the alternative,” see J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *Three Years in Battle and Three in Federal Prisons: The Papers of Randolph Abbott Shotwell, Volume I* (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Association, 1929), 186.

⁶⁰ See James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire, Volume II: The Civil War, Second Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993 [1982]), 185; Emory M. Thomas reached a similar conclusion in his history of the Confederacy. He says the army managed to enroll 82,000 soldiers because of conscription. The issue “exposed latent conflict between state and national government. . . . Further, the exemption system stirred class conflict that the would-be Southern nation did not need. Yet, without conscription, the Confederacy could never have endured the campaigning season of 1862, much less the remaining years of the war; and with conscription, the Confederacy did manage to mobilize, however imperfectly, just about the entire Southern military population,” see Thomas, *Confederate Nation*, 154-55; on the ebb and flow of Confederate recruiting, see William C. Davis, *Look Away! A History of the Confederate States of America* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 225-53.

Brown has shown that for Southerners, fighting involved matters of honor.⁶¹ Anyone who took the first chance to leave the military obviously was not much of a soldier or a white man. One private saw men obtaining exemptions, but he did not envy them. “I will be asshaim to go and then cared of like a negro just to get out of service,” said Peter Dekle. He vowed to “stay till I cant stand it and then get a discharge honerably.” Dekle found that military service tested his resolve, for how could one act like a soldier while the army treated him as a slave? He said he was tired of the service, for “we are thought no more of here than dogs especially privates they are not treated half as well as a negro.”⁶² Yet, he was willing to remain in the army until he could leave by honorable means.

If honor kept men in the army, the Conscription Act caused other problems for the South. In addition to fighting back Yankee forces, the rebel military had to assure that blacks remained under control. With so many adult males in the service, some citizens feared that they were vulnerable to a slave rebellion. From North Carolina in February 1862, for example, General Richard Gatlin wanted to station two companies in local communities to give the people some protection against their slaves. For most citizens, however, promises of protection were not good enough—they wanted assurances.⁶³ They complained to their governors, who turned to military commanders and Jefferson Davis

⁶¹ On the importance of honor in the Southern psyche, see Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, also, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 203-54.

⁶² Peter Dekle to wife, May 16, 1862 (first and second quotation), Dekle to wife, July 16, 1862 (third quotation), John K. Mahon, ed., “Peter Dekle’s Letters,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1958), pp. 12-14; on honor keeping another man in the ranks, see W. E. Paxton to “My Rebecca,” April 30, 1862, Ken Durham, ed., “‘Dear Rebecca’: The Civil War Letters of William Edwards Paxton, 1861-1863,” *Louisiana History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring 1979), p. 187; see also, William E. Stoker to wife, February 4, 1863, Robert W. Glover, ed., “The War Letters of a Texas Conscript in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter 1961), p. 381.

⁶³ Richard C. Gatlin to General Lawrence Branch, February 18, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, pp. 474-75; on the need for Confederates to defend the Mississippi, see John J. Pettus to Beauregard, May 1, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, p. 309; on the fear that there were far too many slaves in a county in North Carolina because the draft had drained white males from the population, see John Pool to Zebulon Vance, September 18, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 18, pp. 745-47.

for help. In October 1862, the governor of Alabama, John G. Shorter, wrote to the president, reminding him that few white men were left to guard the plantations. In some areas of his state, only one white man remained for every thousand slaves. He wrote of “a spirit of insubordination” that had descended upon the countryside. He worried about the fall of Mobile and subsequent Federal control of the rivers. Concerning the effect on the slave population were the state overrun, Shorter concluded, “the probable result I need not depict.”⁶⁴ Confederates did not have to wait for the Emancipation Proclamation to know that slave revolt meant disaster.

The historian Mark Weitz dismisses fears of insurrection as an overreaction on the part of Southerners, even though he believes Confederates had much difficulty keeping order among blacks.⁶⁵ Some rebels, indeed, downplayed the possibility of slave revolt.⁶⁶ Worries might have been a manifestation of overactive white imaginations. Yet, many areas of the South—such as the rice regions of Georgia and South Carolina—had as many as ten or even twenty slaves to every white person. For many Confederates, the potential threat to white people was obvious. Even in areas where there were fewer slaves, whites feared that blacks might turn against them. “My two brothers, who compromise my entire white family are in the encampment here, and my negroes at home

⁶⁴ Shorter to Davis, October 22, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, p. 380; see also, Shorter to Seddon, January 14, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 15, p. 947; for a series of anxious letters written to Shorter, see Anne Kendrick Walker, ed., “Governor John Gill Shorter: Miscellaneous Papers, 1861-1863 (Part II),” *Alabama Review*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (October 1958), pp. 267-83; on the lack of protection from slaves, see the citizens of Lancaster and Richmond counties to Secretary of War Leroy Walker, September 7, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 280; one woman’s letter to Secretary of War George Randolph, June 22, 1862, Matthew J. Gallman, ed., *The Civil War Chronicle* (New York: Crown, 2000), 192-93; also, Thomas Moore to Jefferson Davis, June 2, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 15, p. 749; Committee of Citizens of the 15th District Liberty County, GA, to General Mercer, August 5, 1862, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 2, pp. 36-38.

⁶⁵ Weitz, *Higher Duty*, 159.

⁶⁶ See R. B. Todd to Major General Lewis, March 10, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 6, pp. 851-52.

require some attention,” one North Carolinian wrote in May 1861.⁶⁷ The absence of male masters increased white anxiety inside and outside the army. With most white men of military age in the service, blacks enjoyed greater freedom on the plantation and farm. Slaveholding soldiers were pleased when their wives showed they could keep order. In December 1861, concerning the running of his plantation, one rebel said his wife must attend to her business and not be “run over by a negro.”⁶⁸ Some men might have had confidence in their spouses, but Confederates believed that more men were needed to protect those at home.

The Conscription Act did not initially give exemptions to slaveholders, but in October 1862, the Confederacy passed a second draft bill that allowed for the exemption of one overseer or planter on farms that had twenty or more slaves. In the eyes of some of its critics, the measure crudely became known as the “Twenty Nigger” law. If the South had good reason for passing the bill, it aroused many complaints. After the war, what Charles Marshall, formerly an officer on Lee’s staff, had found disagreeable was not that slaveholding excused a man from service, but that it enabled him to hire a substitute. If

⁶⁷ William J. Houston to John W. Ellis, May 5, 1861, Noble J. Tolbert, ed., *The Papers of John W. Ellis, Volume Two: 1860-1861* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1964), 720.

⁶⁸ Tally Simpson to sister, December 13, 1861, Everson and Simpson, Jr., eds., “*Far, Far from Home*,” 99 (quoted); Winston to Octavia Stephens, January 2, 1862, Ellen E. Hodges and Stephen Kerber, eds., “Children of Honor: Letters of Winston and Octavia Stephens, 1861-1862,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (July 1977), p. 68; E. F. Paxton to wife, January 12, 1862, Elisha Franklin Paxton, *Memoir and Memorials: Elisha Franklin Paxton Brigadier General, CSA, Composed of His Letters from Camp and Field* (New York: Neale, 1907) 36; William to Eleanor Nugent, April 3, 1864, William M. Cash and Lucy Howorth Somerville, eds., *My Dear Nellie: The Civil War Letters of William Nugent to Eleanor Smith Nugent* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977); 167; Ruffin Barnes to wife, February 22, 1864, Hugh Buckner Johnston, Jr., ed., “The Confederate Letters of Ruffin Barnes of Wilson County,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 1954), pp. 91-92; Edgeworth to Sallie Bird, July 9, 1863, John Rozier, ed., *The Granite Farm Letters: The Civil War Correspondence of Edgeworth & Sallie Bird* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 124; Edgeworth to Sallie Bird, July 12, 1863, *ibid*, 121; Richard Simpson to aunt, October 28, 1861, Everson and Simpson, Jr., eds., “*Far, Far from Home*,” 86; James Griffin to wife, January 1, 1862, 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: Oxford University Press, 1996), 131; David McRaven to wife, December 22, 1864, Louis A. Brown, ed., “Correspondence of David Olando McRaven and Amanda Nantz McRaven, 1864-1865,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (January 1949), p. 73.

the Confederacy was concerned about plantations, he asserted, the men it deemed unfit for service could have guarded and worked on them. All slaveholders had an interest in keeping blacks subservient, he reasoned, and they could have policed other men's slaves for them.⁶⁹ Marshall's proposal might have sounded good in theory, but men had enough to worry about without having to run someone else's plantation. Communities policed local areas to assure blacks remained at work and under control—no Southerner wanted discipline to break down—but the government saw that masters were better off running their own plantations. Such was the rationale behind the “Twenty Slave” law.

The military could not take for granted the docility of blacks, but in allowing for able-bodied men to oversee plantations and monitor slaves back home, the Confederacy alienated many non-slaveholders. In making concessions to the master class, some soldiers believed the rebel government had disregarded the planter-yeomen alliance, thus depriving poor whites of their liberty at the expense of pleasing the large-slaveholders. Some men had little interest—which might have resulted from their belief that blacks were inherently docile or because they dismissed planters' concerns—in preventing disorder among black people. If the April draft had the backing of many soldiers, the October planter exemption proved less popular. One Georgia soldier voiced his disapproval to the *Atlanta Southern Confederacy*, which supported Congress' decision. As many soldiers did, he considered the struggle for Southern independence a rich man's war, but a poor man's fight. He mistakenly believed the exemption allowed a man who owned ten slaves to avoid service (the actual number was twenty and then lowered to fifteen and then abolished altogether). His anger, nevertheless, was clear, “what say you

⁶⁹ Frederick Maurice, ed., *An Aide-De-Camp of Lee: Being the Papers of Colonel Charles Marshall* (Boston: Little Brown, 1927), 39-43.

to the poor white man who has *ten children* all dependant [sic] upon him,” he asked. “Shall he be exempt? No, you answer, ‘go fight for the negroes of your neighbor, because it elevates you in society.’”⁷⁰ In 1862, for many Confederates, it seemed the planters were not doing enough for the cause, which led poorer whites to denounce them. In June, a provost marshal said he had in custody a Mississippi civilian who wished gunboats would shell “every God Dam plantation on the River.” He thought the planters were thieves, and were the slaves to rise, they could have defeated nearby whites.⁷¹ Later in the war, one soldier wrote of the poor whites around Decatur, Georgia, who hated rich masters. Local civilians could not stomach that abolition and proslavery forces were at war. The conflict had little to do with them, they asserted, and they were willing to liberate blacks to spite their owners.⁷²

Confederate soldiers’ attitudes were often just as irate. In October 1862, one said the planter exemption was “about to caus a rebellion in camps.”⁷³ After all, most Southerners did not own slaves, and fewer still owned twenty or more. Some men, therefore, were livid over the government passing laws that favored the upper classes. “It gave us the blues,” Sam Watkins wrote of the “Twenty Slave” law. For the rest of the war, he complained, Confederate soldiers merely were “a machine, a conscript.” With the planter exemption, he said, rebel troops’ “last hope had set. They hated war. To their

⁷⁰ Letter to the Atlanta *Southern Confederacy*, October 30, 1862, Gienapp, ed., *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 133-34; most Confederate newspapers were in support of the “Twenty Slave” law, see James W. Silver, “Propaganda in the Confederacy,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (November 1945), p. 502.

⁷¹ How[ard?] Hines to Governor John Pettus, June 5, 1862, John K. Bettersworth, ed., *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As They Saw It* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 295.

⁷² Cannon, *Inside of Rebellom*, 183.

⁷³ [Misspellings are in original] Heber Bennett to wife, October 23, 1862 [microfilm], Bennett Family Papers, LLMVC; on a similar view, see Private O. Goddin to Governor Zebulon Vance, February 27, 1863, Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson, *The North Carolina Experience: An Interpretive and Documentary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 274-75.

minds the South was a great tyrant, and the Confederacy a fraud. They were deserting by [the] thousands.”⁷⁴

In February 1863, one rebel wondered why the rich were considered better overseers than the poor.⁷⁵ After all, had antebellum politicians not said that slavery made white men equal? It seemed planter-friendly politics ruled the Confederacy. Southern politicians were again making concessions to the powerful slaveholders. Perhaps the Confederate government should have thought of one man’s “property” as being as valuable as another’s. One rebel war song decried the class element at work in the war:

At every large plantation,
Or negro holder’s yard,
Just to save their property,
The Generals place a guard,
The sentry is instructed,
To let no private pass,
The rich man’s house and table,
Are fixed to suit the brass.

Chorus:
I hate to quit this story,
So beautiful and true,
But the poor man and the widow,
Must have a line or two,
For these no guards are stationed,
Their fences often burnt,
Their property molested,
As long ago you’ve learned.⁷⁶

Since the Confederate draft was the first of its kind in America, poorer Southerners were the first to see the wealthy obtain preferential treatment, which led to

⁷⁴ Watkins, *Company Aytch*, 31 (first and second quotations), 33 (third quotation).

⁷⁵ John A. Harris to “Dear Becky and children,” February 14, 1863, [typescript], John A. Harris Papers, LLMVC; William C. Oates, *The War between the Union and the Confederacy* (New York: Neale, 1905), 158; see also, L. D. Clark, ed., *Civil War Recollections of James Lemuel Clark* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1984), 76; on one general’s frustration over opposition to the draft, see Gideon Pillow’s letter of July 28, 1863, Gienapp, ed., *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 207 on anger toward the “wealthy class,” see Joseph T. Griggs to father, December 19, 1862, Griggs Family Papers, VHS.

⁷⁶ Arthur W. Hyatt Papers, Vol. III, 1865-1895, LLMVC.

bitter responses. Planters' decision not to serve, some argued, was unpatriotic, or even worse, cowardly.⁷⁷ In August 1863, General Daniel Ruggles, then commander of Louisiana east of the Mississippi, complained of not enough men coming into the army. Lack of patriotism, as he saw it, had its roots in discontent among smaller property owners, who believed large landholders had not set a good example. He believed the planters should have made greater sacrifices. If not, they would alienate the non-slaveholders, who he thought did not share their political interests.⁷⁸ In December 1863, an embittered officer wrote of his hatred toward the planters, men who he believed felt no compunction to fight. They were nothing more than "Tories," and he would like to have seen them hanged.⁷⁹

As Emory Thomas has noted, the planter exemption created class tensions that the South could have done without.⁸⁰ By late 1862, the war increasingly tested whether the Confederacy had the non-slaveholders' interests in mind when passing legislation. For the most part, however, conscription and the planter exemption did not cause class conflict among Confederates. As James McPherson argues, the Conscription Act aroused some class tension, but not enough to warrant historians' attention to it.⁸¹ Tens of thousands of Confederates deserted during the war, but they did not do so because of divisions over slavery. It is difficult, for example, to make direct links between soldiers'

⁷⁷ See, for example, D. H. Hill's General Orders No. 8, Department of North Carolina, April 24, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Pt. 2, Vol. 51, p. 694.

⁷⁸ Ruggles to B. S. Ewell, August 10, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Pt. 3, Vol. 24, p. 1053.

⁷⁹ Lt. Col. Caleb Bond Hobson to Dr. Nathan B. Dozier, December 12, 1863, Allen Paul Speer, ed., *Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Asbury Speer* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1997), 182; on another man's negative view of people of the planter class, see A. E. McGarity to wife, April 21, 1864, Edmund Cody Burnett, ed., "Letters of a Confederate Surgeon: Dr. Abner Embury McGarity, 1862-1865," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (December 1945), pp. 233-34.

⁸⁰ Thomas, *Confederate Nation*, 155.

⁸¹ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 102.

discontent over the planter exemption and the later flight of men from the army. As a recent article has shown, in South Carolina regiments, rebel troops were most likely to desert because of Confederate reverses, not the government's supposed planter favoritism.⁸²

Deserters might have harbored class resentments that factored into their decision to leave the army, but for the most part, soldiers were willing to support the Confederacy as long as it could defend itself on the battlefield. Paul Escott has written, "class resentments sapped the loyalty of nonslaveholding soldiers and civilians."⁸³ But one cannot make generalizations about the economic makeup of deserters. "Some historians," one scholar has noted, "have assumed that deserters were generally nonslaveholders and therefore had little interest in supporting the slaveholding regime." Deserters were not a homogenous group, however, and not class warriors.⁸⁴ Even in areas where desertion proved considerable, slavery did not play a major role in Confederate disloyalty.⁸⁵ Over all, rebel troops found agreement in their views on slavery and maintaining the racial status quo, even if it gave advantages at times to the planter class. Men likely to desert were not going to do so only because of the passage of "Twenty Slave" law. Confederate defeats—not legislation that exempted some men from service—led to desertion.

In the fall of 1862, one soldier was not upset over the "Twenty Slave" law. "It is extremely liberal," he said, and "does tardy justice to planters." He was not irked at the master class gaining exemptions. But the fact that newspaper editors could obtain them

⁸² See Aaron W. Marrs, "Desertion and Loyalty in the South Carolina Infantry, 1861-1865," *Civil War History*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (March 2004), pp. 47-65; on the subject of desertion, see also, Gallagher, *Confederate War*, 32.

⁸³ Escott, *After Secession*, 134.

⁸⁴ Marrs, "Desertion and Loyalty," *Civil War History*, Vol. 50, No. 1, p. 53.

⁸⁵ Rand Dotson, "'The Grave and Scandalous Evil Infected to Your People': The Erosion of Confederate Loyalty in Floyd County, Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 108, No. 4 (2000), p. 393.

did anger him.⁸⁶ Thankfully for Confederates, the South's deferential nature softened the blow of the planter exemption. As Charles Marshall wrote after the war, "the whole community was interested in the preservation of order among the negroes and the maintenance of due subordination." Poor whites, therefore, "submitted to legislation which if attempted with respect to any other class would not have been tolerated."⁸⁷ If it aroused opposition, the "Twenty Slave" law did not allow many Confederates to win exemptions. In regards to overseers, the law affected only those states that did not already have statutes requiring their presence on plantations. Thus, even before the war, some men had already won a free pass—were they to choose to take it—from the army. And in 1863 and 1864, because of manpower shortages, the Confederacy granted fewer and fewer exemptions.

The number of men who took advantage of the twenty slave clause proved small. William Scarborough has shown that approximately 38,000 overseers lived in the South in 1860. In wartime, only 200 overseers in Virginia, 120 in North Carolina, and 201 in Georgia won exemptions. The Confederacy excused 300 South Carolina overseers; it was a high number considering South Carolina's population was well below Virginia's, but that was because South Carolina had a much higher concentration of plantations.⁸⁸ In any case, if some overseers gained exemptions, their numbers were a mere fraction of the men who remained in service.

⁸⁶ Pope Barrow to father, October 9, 1862, quoted in E. Merton Coulter, "Lost Generation: The Life and Death of James Barrow, CSA," *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 1 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1956), 78.

⁸⁷ Maurice, ed., *Aide-De-Camp of Lee*, 41.

⁸⁸ See William K. Scarborough, *The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984 [1966]), 10, 139-40.

In contrast to those who believed the conflict became a “rich man’s war, poor man’s fight,” some Confederates were not convinced the poorer classes contributed the most to the war effort. In his memoirs, one veteran wrote, “Instead of being, as Andy Johnson said, ‘the rich man’s war and the poor man’s fight,’ the better class of the South suffered and endured out of all proportion.”⁸⁹ Confederates understood the planters’ importance in antebellum politics and knew they would prominently figure in the war effort. Slavery was not a dividing factor in the South. Areas that were anti-Confederate—such as eastern Tennessee, western Virginia, and the hill country of the Deep South—were exceptional because of their Unionism, not their anti-slavery views. The Confederacy could not hope to convert such opponents to its war effort, no matter how it dealt with slavery. In any case, the Southern military was doing fairly well by October 1862, when Congress passed the planter exemption. Federal forces had turned back Lee in Maryland in September and Bragg in Kentucky in October, but the war was far from over.

The politics of slavery did not undermine morale in the Confederate army. Antebellum politicians had made their careers by keeping the yeomen happy, while protecting the master class from serious challenges. During the war, some politicians found they could win over yeomen who were angry with the planters, but they did not have to denounce the Confederacy in order to do it. In October 1863, General Lafayette McLaws, himself a slaveholder, heard Joseph E. Brown speak to soldiers in the Army of Tennessee. Brown said he knew most rebel troops were poor or non-slaveholders, and many had complained that it was a “rich man’s war.” Brown placated them. Despite the

⁸⁹ R. S. Bevier, *History of the First and Second Missouri Confederate Brigades, 1861-1865, and from Wakusa to Appomattox, a Military Anagraph* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company, 1879), 294.

inequalities the war created, he believed the yeomen should remain steadfast in their support of the cause. The Georgia governor, who was not a planter or from a slave-owning family, but who owned a few blacks, believed that poorer farmers had a greater interest in winning the war than did wealthy Confederates. The governor knew his audience. He was an opportunist—secessionist, later radical Republican, and then Democrat again—who understood that support for the Confederacy, if not always enthusiastic, must come from the non-slaveholding farmer, the class from which Brown had emerged.⁹⁰ By acknowledging the average Southerners' role in maintaining the rebellion, he urged them to look past the preferential treatment the planters seemingly enjoyed and fight on.

Most did. Soldiers' loyalties transcended the problems that slavery caused for the South. If the army sometimes made rebel troops feel like second-class citizens, in the Confederacy—as was the case in the antebellum South—race trumped class. It seems logical that soldiers, the vast majority of whom did not own slaves, would question the fairness of having to fight for a government that at times gave privileges to the planters. Few men, however, wanted a Confederacy without slavery. And that the struggle was a “rich man's war poor man's fight” was one of the myths that the Civil War created. The planter exemption angered some soldiers, but for the most part, rebel troops thought more in terms of black and white than rich and poor. One, therefore, can make too much of soldiers' discontent with planters and slaveholders. Most Americans are not from the wealthy classes, and Confederate soldiers were no exception. If their struggle was about

⁹⁰ McLaws to wife, October 1, 1863, John C. Oeffinger, ed., *A Soldier's General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 204; on Brown's career, see Louie Biles Hill, *Joseph E. Brown and the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939); Joseph Parks, *Joseph E. Brown of Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977).

protecting slavery—the so-called “rich man’s war”—they knew that going in. Had the Confederacy won more victories, the planter exemption would have aroused even less grumbling than it did. Yeomen troops might speak ill of wealthy planters, but they would have enjoyed owning slaves or more if they already did.

Confederates avoided class conflict. Poor whites emulated and admired the planters. The New Testament told the Southerner to love thy neighbor, but the Protestant work ethic taught him to outdo him. To join the master class, all Southerners knew, would make life easier. Slaveholding meant wealth. In September 1863, during a particularly hard march from Atlanta, one rebel claimed he would have given “a small negro” to get some rest.⁹¹ For soldiers, “Negroes” were as good as money, and slaveholders seemingly had both in abundance. In fact, even large planters had difficulty remaining solvent, but for all the paternalistic posturing by proslavery advocates, Southerners knew that slave-owning led to prosperity. Soldiers supported the Confederacy because of the security that slavery would provide them. “No doubt we shall be poor and Stricken people,” said one slaveholding rebel in June 1862, but he was not discouraged. “I have only Now My Boy Sam My Two Horses and My Government pay.” A man could be optimistic as long as he had a slave, a horse, and money to see him through.⁹²

The Confederacy was not deaf to the complaints of its citizens. But the government’s repeal of substitute and exemption clauses in the draft—in late 1863 and

⁹¹ Entry for September 19, 1863, George Montgomery, Jr., ed., *Georgia Sharpshooter: The Civil War Diary and Letters of William Rhadamanthus Montgomery 1839-1906* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 26; on one soldier’s admiration for the prosperous-looking Tennessee countryside, complete with its many “darkies,” see John Ellis to Tabitha Ellis, November 14, 1862, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC.

⁹² James Stubbs to sister, June 29, 1862, Jefferson Stubbs Papers, LLMVC.

early 1864, respectively—had more to do with the need for men than the complaints of the non-slaveholders. Late in 1863, the government struck down the substitute clause, which pleased one soldier. He saw that “the wealthy man who owned money and negroes enough to keep his precious carcass [sic] out of the reach of the Yankee,” was now “reduced to the level of the poor man.” The abolition of the substitute clause, he believed, would raise spirits in the army. Confederates were now put on a more equal basis.⁹³ In the winter of 1863-1864, the Confederacy also passed a new law that limited the number of exempt slaveholders and made further demands on the planters. William Blair writes, “exempted planters [became] government growers who had to supply crops not only to the army but also to the selected civilians in their neighborhoods at reduced prices.”⁹⁴ The war increasingly became a “rich man’s fight.”

In February 1864, the Confederacy also passed the last of its three Conscription Acts. The South by then needed as many soldiers as it could get. All white men between the age of 17 and 50 were now eligible for the draft. Congress also made 20,000 slaves subject to conscription for use in non-combat roles. The new bill did not allow for planters to gain an exemption, though overseers could under certain conditions.⁹⁵ Some Confederates continued to whine about the army’s demand for more men. Although

⁹³ Joseph T. Scott to the *Enquirer*, December 31, 1863, Allen W. Jones, ed., “A Georgia Confederate Soldier Visits Montgomery, Alabama,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 25, Nos. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 1963), p. 112.

⁹⁴ Blair, *Virginia’s Private War*, 104; see also, McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 101; on the wealthiest Southerners’ support for the war effort, see William K. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 316-72; also, Wallenstein, “Rich Man’s War, Rich Man’s Fight: Civil War and the Transformation of Public Finance in Georgia,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 15-42; Randolph B. Campbell, “Fighting for the Confederacy: The White Male Population of Harrison County in the Civil War,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 104, No. 1 (July 2000), pp. 23-39.

⁹⁵ On the new conscript law, see Thomas, *Confederate Nation*, 260-61; Davis, *Look Away!*, 238; Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy*, 308; Memory F. Mitchell, “Legal Aspects of Conscription and Exemption in North Carolina,” *James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science*, Vol. 47 (1965), pp. 63-64.

Joseph E. Brown often criticized and undermined Jefferson Davis, he was not always looking out for the interests of the yeomen. In late January 1864, Brown objected to another draft, saying it would cripple the “planting interests.” Yet, even the prickly Brown admitted that as of January 1864, his state had not suffered because of conscription. “Thus far,” Brown wrote, “Georgia has been able to meet the calls made upon her without paralyzing to a very great extent her agricultural interests except in that part of the State where there are but few slaves.” If Brown worried about the effect conscription might have, he would soon face a much bigger threat in the form of Sherman’s army.⁹⁶ Northern victories, not the complaints of Southern governors, proved fatal to the Confederacy.

In conclusion, early in the war, soldiers’ comparisons of their plight to that of slaves reveals that they thought foremost in racial terms. The war, nevertheless, put pressure on the political and social bond between whites and tested the limits of men’s willingness to sacrifice their liberty for the cause of a slaveholding republic. Conscription led some Southerners to complain of a “rich man’s war, poor man’s fight,” but it did not cause army discipline to collapse. Soldiers wanted to become planters, if not serve under them. In the Confederacy, there were unpatriotic planters and patriotic ones, non-slaveholder deserters and slave-less yeomen who fought until Lee’s surrender. Slavery served as a mark of prosperity and prestige, the most common path in the South to economic and political advancement. In the process, it often instilled martial values on those who owned, bought, and sold black people. The greatest of Confederate officers, from Lee and Jackson to Forrest to Beauregard, were from the master class, and they

⁹⁶ Joseph E. Brown to James E. Seddon, January 29, 1864, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 3, p. 62 (quoted); on need for planters to report to the army, see Circular No. 33, October 7, 1864, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 3, p. 713.

answered to a commander in chief who was a Mississippi planter. Those shocked by the wartime concessions to the planters were not only unaware of the sacrifices the large slaveholders made, but were ignorant of, or unwilling to acknowledge, the social and economic forces that had governed antebellum society.

The “Twenty Slave” law revealed how important slavery was for the Confederacy. Although many soldiers complained that planters enjoyed preferential treatment, rebel troops knew that slave labor benefited the army. In 1861 and 1862, as men went to war, they brought with them black servants, who performed many tasks for the Confederate military. Rebel camps became environments where whites and blacks lived together and shared army experiences. Southern whites, nevertheless, always considered black people workers foremost. Although many rebels considered them friends, family, or comrades, slaves’ financial value always overrode Confederates’ concern for maintaining paternalistic notions.

III PATERNALISM, PUNISHMENT, AND PROFIT: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SLAVES AND SOLDIERS

In 1861, the South had not yet felt the deep effects of war, and slavery remained relatively untouched. Confederates thought of the conflict as a great adventure. As with their masters, some black people expected the war to end soon and with a rebel triumph.¹ Fighting had broken out, but the antebellum world lived on in spirit. For Confederates, now that eleven states had formed a nation, slavery might endure. That July, a soldier wrote of the pretty ladies he saw sitting on a porch in Virginia. He called over a little black girl, asking that she take his and a comrade's name to the woman with long black curls, black eyes, and red cheeks. After running off, the girl returned with a bouquet of flowers. In the eyes of Confederates, in the first months of war, the South was a chivalric land of plenty, which contented slaves lived in and protected. Even late into the conflict, an antebellum-like environment survived in many places. "Savannah is a beautiful city," said William Nugent in December 1864. "I have amused myself a great deal with the negroes."² The Federal army took the city that same month, but slavery continued.

¹ On a slave, named Zion, and his enthusiasm for the cause, see Tally Simpson to sister, October 12, 1861, Guy R. Everson and Edward H. Simpson, Jr., eds., *"Far, Far from Home": The Wartime Letters of Dick and Tally Simpson Third South Carolina Volunteers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 76; see also, Tally Simpson to mother, November 4, 1861, *ibid.*, 86; Zion's enthusiasm continued into 1862, see Tally Simpson to sister, May 13, 1862 (p. 123) and Tally Simpson to sister, June 18, 1862 (pp. 129-30), *ibid.*; on the contentedness of slaves in camp, see also, Thomas J. Goree to mother, October 18, 1861, Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 50; on another slave liking camp life, see Harden Cochrane to brother, December 27, 1862, Harriet Fitts Ryan, ed., "The Letters of Harden Perkins Cochrane, 1862-1864 (Part III)," *Alabama Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (April 1955), p. 221.

² Theodore Fogle to mother, July 30, 1861, Mills Lane, ed., *"Dear Mother: Don't grieve about me. If I get killed, I'll only be dead": Letters from Georgia Soldiers in the Civil War* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1990), 41; William to Eleanor Nugent, December 26, 1864, William M. Cash and Lucy Somerville Howorth, eds., *My Dear Nellie: The Civil War Letters of William L. Nugent to Eleanor Smith Nugent* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 229 (quoted); see also, Charles Kaufman Rogers to sister, October 6, 1861, Martin Abbott and Elmer L. Puryear, eds., "Beleagured Charleston: Letters from the City, 1860-1864,"

Throughout the war, Confederates hoped that the conflict would not interrupt their mastery over the black race, and they were convinced that enslaved people preferred it that way.

In dealing with blacks, many rebel troops tried to maintain a paternalistic ideal. Most whites preferred to think of the master-slave relationship as one between father and children, which precluded the notion that slave-owners were “in it for the money.” Living up to a paternalistic ideal, however, was not always easy—nor had it ever been—as the war created problems for the master class at every level. The devastation that Federal armies wrought and the subsequent disruption of the slave market threatened to destroy human bondage. In response, Confederates worked to maintain the peculiar institution, both as a market venture and as a form of racial control. Although they failed, soldiers tried to act as they believed paternalists should. The historian Clarence Mohr has written of Confederate Georgia, “Across the entire spectrum of slave life the meager fruits of selectively bestowed paternalistic indulgence withered and died in the arid soil of economic self-interest and racial exploitation.” Mohr perhaps overstates the decline in paternalism among Confederates. The war undermined paternalistic attitudes, but did not destroy them. Planters, small-slaveholders, and non-slaveholders alike maintained as much of antebellum life as possible. Confederate soldiers were similar to the slaveholders who James Roark examines in his book, *Masters without Slaves*. They tried to keep the peculiar institution intact, even though the war was destroying slave society.³

South Carolina Historical Magazine, Vol. 61, No. 2 (April 1960), p. 68; Lowell H. Harrison, “A Confederate View of Southern Kentucky,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 1972), p. 172.

³ Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 212; James L. Roark, *Masters without Slaves: Southern Planters in the War and Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

For most soldiers, maintaining paternalism was as important as keeping their investments alive. But when the war made them choose, they revealed that making money was their primary concern. Military camps, where masters and body servants lived relatively peacefully, created an atmosphere that was very different from the battlefields upon which black and white troops fought. Nevertheless, such an environment was not necessarily benign. At its core, the relationship between master and slave rested on economic consideration and physical coercion, both of which undermined masters' supposed desire to treat slaves as they would their children. Soldiers at times acted like doting fathers toward their black servants, but for the most part, white Southerners knew there were limits, practical or otherwise, to treating slaves as their own flesh and blood. Soldiers preferred that blacks performed lowly tasks, and they obtained their services according to a market value for their labor.

U. B. Phillips was the first prominent historian to argue that masters chiefly acted from paternalistic motives. Phillips believed that slavery was on the decline in the antebellum period, thus, slaveholders did not own blacks because of economic considerations. Since the publication of Phillips' controversial work, *American Negro Slavery*, historians have debated slaveholders' motivations in owning black people. Eugene Genovese, unlike Phillips, looked at the Old South from a Marxian perspective. But he too argued that slave-owners were paternalistic in nature. He believed that paternalism did not merely involve masters showing a "fatherly" attitude toward slaves, but was a relationship that entailed reciprocal obligations between slaveholders and their black workers: slaves performed valuable labor in return for masters' good care and recognition of them as more than mere chattel. In Genovese's eyes, slaveholders were

feudal and aristocratic pre-capitalists. The notion that slaveholders were paternalists, however, has undergone much revision. In his book, *The Ruling Race*, James Oakes has contended that slaveholders acted foremost as capitalists, whose desire to make profits drove them in and out of the master class and imposed limits on the “fatherly” attitude and affectionate behaviors of the slaveholders.⁴

How does one reconcile the seemingly dualistic nature—profit-driven on the one hand, paternalistic on the other—of slavery and the master class? Perhaps historians have constructed a false dichotomy by which to view masters’ motivations. Some have posited that slaveholders were not necessarily one or the other—they were neither capitalists nor paternalists, but both. As Christopher Morris has written, “To say that *slave owners* were capitalists but that *slavery* was not is no mere semantic trick. It may be a powerful insight into the very heart of slavery and the formative years of capitalism.”⁵ Without “splitting

⁴ U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (New York: D. Appleton, 1918); Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Slavery of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage, 1965); also, Eugene Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Vintage, 1969); on paternalism, see also, Joseph P. Reidy, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South: Central Georgia, 1800-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). On the capitalist side of the master mentality, see Wilma A. Dunaway, *The African-American Family in Slavery and Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Wilma A. Dunaway, *Slavery in the American Mountain South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capitalism: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Oakes revised his thoughts on the capitalistic nature of the slaveholders somewhat in his work, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990); Lawrence Shore, *Southern Capitalists: The Ideological Leadership of an Elite, 1832-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Jeffrey Young has offered a revisionist look at the paternalistic ethos among Deep South planters. He uses a term he calls “corporate individualism.” He says “this system of relations distinguished itself from the classic patriarchy of antiquity by linking the welfare of the entire society to the well-being of very individual.... The value system’s subordination of individual freedom to the needs of the corporate social whole distinguished it from the radical egalitarianism of the emerging antislavery movement”; see Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 9.

⁵ Christopher Morris, “The Articulation of Two Worlds: The Master-Slave Relationship Reconsidered,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (December 1998), p. 999; William K. Scarborough has taken a similarly critical view of the paternalist-capitalist dichotomy in his work, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

the difference” regarding the extent to which Southerners were capitalists or paternalists, the evidence Confederate soldiers left behind reveals them to be, at heart, capitalist-minded masters driven more by the market and faith in physical coercion than paternalism. The pervasiveness of the paternalistic ideal led many masters to act as “father figures” toward their servants, but the pursuit of wealth in the South was synonymous with slave ownership. The profitability of slavery, after all, had allowed the institution to survive in America for two hundred years. The exploitation inherent in slavery was not in opposition to capitalist thinking, but a logical extension of it. If capitalism at its worst leads to exploitation, then chattel slavery was the ultimate example of it. Black slavery was a product of how much American capitalists could get away with.⁶

From the mid-1400s onward, the expansion of global markets and merchant capitalism had developed simultaneously with—and indeed, depended on—the spread of black slavery. In the American colonies, Africans, because of their skin color, became property, a commodity that white Southerners ultimately bought and sold like cattle or horses.⁷ Slavery might seem antithetical to capitalism, if one chooses to view it within a narrow definition of free wage labor.⁸ In the antebellum United States, however, capitalism comfortably coexisted with slavery. The South’s agrarian economy depended

⁶ On the slave trade in the antebellum South, see Robert Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

⁷ See David Brion Davis, *Challenging the Boundaries of Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 17-27; Philip Gould, *Barbaric Traffic: Commerce and Antislavery in the Eighteenth-Century World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 149; Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1944).

⁸ See James Oakes’ review of Joseph P. Reidy’s book, *From Slavery to Agrarian Capitalism in the Cotton Plantation South: Central Georgia, 1800-1880* in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 98, No. 5 (December 1993), p. 1689.

on domestic and foreign markets, and even amid the Civil War, the “wheeling and dealing” of the slave market continued. Confederate soldiers expected—though they were often reduced to hoping—that they could make a profit from their black workers. Even late into the conflict, they believed slavery might survive the war.

Whether or not Confederates believed slavery would outlast the rebellion, they were reliant on the labor of black people. Just as black workers were essential in the antebellum period, they were important to Confederate soldiers. Blacks who could make a decent cup of coffee or biscuit or appear with a dry blanket after a soldier had slept too long in the rain alleviated the unpleasantness of camp life.⁹ Soldiers asked for many things from home, and common were requests to send them a servant. “Tell Pa I have been disappointed in not getting some money & that negro from home,” one complained in March 1864. It was not the first time he had asked for a servant. He had done so the previous year and would continue to do so into the fall of 1864. “*Be certain* and send me the negro boy,” he added with emphasis in September 1864. “A negro I think is safer in the Army than anywhere else now.”¹⁰ Although many slaves fled Southern lines for the

⁹ On coffee, see Edward Burruss to sisters, December 29, 1862, John C. Burruss Family Papers, LLMVC; on biscuits, see S. F. Tenney to Miss Alice, January 18, 1862, E. B. Duffee, Jr., ed., “War Letters of S. F. Tenney: A Soldier of the 3rd GA Regiment,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Summer 1973), p. 279; on a dry blanket, see James Griffith to wife, April 13, 1862, Judith N. McArthur and Orville Vernon Burton, “*A Gentleman and an Officer*”: *A Military and Social History of James B. Griffin’s Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 196; on the need for slaves in camp, see, for example, Edgeworth to Sallie Bird, July 12, 1863, John Rozier, ed., *The Granite Farm Letters: The Civil War Correspondence of Edgeworth & Sallie Bird* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 121; entry for August 28, 1861, James W. Silver, ed., “Robert A. Moore: The Diary of a Confederate Soldier,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (July 1956), pp. 271-72; see also, John David Workman to Miss Belle Cheney, August 1, 1861, Wright-Boyd Family Papers, LLMVC; Tally Simpson to mother, August 31, 1861, Everson and Simpson, Jr., eds., “*Far, Far from Home*,” 68.

¹⁰ Alex Spence to sister, March 7, 1864 (p. 92, quoted); Alex Spence to parents, see also, October 14, 1863 (p. 72); Alex Spence to parents, September 25, 1864 (p. 104), Mark K. Christ, ed., *Getting Used to Being Shot At: The Spence Family Civil War Letters* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002); on requests for a servant, see also, Irving Buck to sister, January 13, 1863, Dr. William Pettus Black, ed., “*Dear Irvie, Dear Lucy*”: *Civil War Letters of Capt. Irving A. Buck, General Cleburne’s Assistant Adjutant General, and Family* (Birmingham: Buck Publishing, 2002), 124; John Leyburn to sister, September 20, 1861, John Leyburn Letter, VHS; R. Channing Price to sister, December 4, 1862, Robert J. Trout, ed., *With*

Federal army, most rebels believed Confederate camps offered a comfortable and safe place for black servants.

The slave environment followed Southern men—or perhaps more accurately they brought it with them—into the army. Thousands of blacks served in rebel camps.¹¹ Body servants were a luxury that gave troops the chance to play the role of paternalist. Camp servants would not make their soldier-masters money, but they could make life easier. Thus, some Confederate troops enjoyed the “good life” while servants performed the more unpleasant tasks required to keep the army functioning. As one soldier put it, slaves performed “incalculable services.”¹² Such “services” were often not essential—after all, it would not have killed soldiers to make their own meals and saddle their own horses—but rebels preferred that blacks serve as the army’s cooks, foragers, musicians, teamsters, and animal drivers. Blacks were always close to the battlefield, where they ate the same food and died from the same diseases as Confederate troops. Richard Taylor, himself from a well-known planter family, said his servant was cheerful—as Southerners thought a servant should be. As with children, who Victorians believed were best seen and not heard, his servant never spoke “unless spoken to.” Taylor believed his slave—who could light a fire in an instant, made good coffee, and was an excellent cook—proved invaluable. He apparently was the kind of slave who went further than others to assure his

Pen and Saber: The Letters and Diaries of J. E. B. Stuart's Staff Officers (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1995), 118.

¹¹ On the role of body servants in camp, see Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 185-200; Bell Irvin Wiley, *Southern Negroes, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965 [1938]), 134-145.

¹² George C. Osborn to sister, October 12, 1862, George C. Osborn, ed., “The Civil War Letters of Robert W. Banks,” *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (July 1943), p. 147 (quoted); on a similar opinion, see Theophilus to Harriet Perry, April 11, 1863, M. Jane Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousand: The Civil War Letters of Theophilus and Harriet Perry 1862-1864* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 123; see also, Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia 1861-1865* (Richmond: B. F. Johnson, 1899), 19.

master was comfortable.¹³ Men appreciated body servants, who gave them a sense of continuity between the prewar and wartime period and what was more, a taste of domestic life.

Not all camp servants worked for free, nor were all slaves. Blacks performed many tasks for soldiers, and very often troops paid them for their labor. Many of those serving alongside rebels were not slaves at all, but “free people of color.”¹⁴ It was not unusual, however, for even slaves to receive wages. In the antebellum period—especially in Virginia, where hiring out had become a large part of the slave economy—many servants enjoyed much freedom in performing their work.¹⁵ Nor did slaveholders deny capital and material accumulation to their enslaved workers. Many masters gave them cash bonuses and gifts, and many servants grew produce and livestock, which they often sold at market. Some obtained enough money to buy their freedom. In wartime, for a variety of jobs, blacks could earn money, which they often sent home to their families. One soldier, for example, paid five dollars—albeit in inflated Confederate currency—to a

¹³ Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955 [1879]), 69; on a weepy endorsement of “Uncle” Freeman, see James Dinkins, *Personal Recollections and Experiences in the Confederate Army* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company Press, 1897), 41; on other post-war praise for a servant, see W. W. Parker, “How I Kept House in Camp,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 23 (1895), p. 325; David Washington Pipes, “David Washington Pipes Memoirs” [typescript], p. 15, VHS; on the love that supposedly existed between master and slave, see James Dinkins, “The Negroes as Slaves,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 35 (1907), p. 60; George L. Christian, “Tribute to Aleck Kean in Virginia,” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 20 (1912), p. 293; Jared Sanders to mother, August 8, 1862, Mary Elizabeth Sanders, ed., *Diary in Gray: Civil War Letters and Diary of Jared Sanders II* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Genealogical and Historical Society, 1994), 6; on a soldier who thought a servant was “worth his weight in gold,” see Edward Burruss to sister, January 1, 1864, John C. Burruss Family Papers, LLMVC.

¹⁴ On the use of free blacks in camp, see also, Charles M. Watts to Dr. Morriss, October 19, 1864, Moore Family Papers, VHS; Charles Davidson to mother, November 28, 1861, Charles W. Turner, ed., “Major Charles A. Davidson: Letters of a Virginia Soldier,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 1976), p. 21; on a helpful free black named John Scott, see record of June 3, 1861, Charles Minor Blackford, III, ed., *Letters from Lee’s Army* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 8; on free blacks working with a Confederate surgeon, see entry for October 15, 1862, John Herbert Roper, ed., *Repairing the “March of Mars”: The Civil War Diaries of John Samuel Apperson, Hospital Steward in the Stonewall Brigade, 1861-1865* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001), 261-62; on Wesley, another free black man, see William G. Morton to sister, May 17, 1863, William G. Morton Papers, VHS.

¹⁵ See Charles B. Dew, *Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).

servant willing to take a letter to his mother and return with a reply.¹⁶ To make money, some black men ran barbershops. Others ran a bank, which, one soldier noted, quickly went broke.¹⁷ Another rebel wrote home to say that he had no money to send, having spent it all on horses, his mess-bill, and a servant's pay. According to one veteran, blacks in camp had little reason to steal because they had enough money of their own. His own servant, named Jim, supposedly had as much as \$1,000 in his possession at certain times.¹⁸

Some masters could afford to spoil, or at least treat, their servants. In May 1862, in a story unlikely later in the war, a Confederate soldier wrote of a shopping trip he took to Savannah with one of his slaves. He gave his servant money, which he used to buy something for his wife. His black companion also enjoyed looking in the toyshops, where he laughed at the wooden dolls.¹⁹ The soldier who recounted the trip could easily have been describing a similar occasion with one of his children. Thus did white Southerners try to survive the war without abandoning their paternalistic attitudes.

¹⁶ On paying a slave for sending off a letter, see Frank Adams to mother, undated letter, Israel Adams Family Papers, LLMVC; on a black man getting money by selling apples, see Edmund C. Paca, ed., "Tim's Black Book": The Civil War Diary of Edward Tilghman Paca, Jr., CSA," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 89 (Winter 1994), p. 457; on a slave getting money for giving a soldier a wake up call, see entry for May 12, 1863, Trout, ed., *With Pen and Saber*, 201-02.

¹⁷ On the barbershop, see F. E. Daniel, *Recollections of a Rebel Surgeon* (Chicago: Clinic, 1901), 131; on the bank, see Spencer Glasgow Welch to wife, January 16, 1864, Spence Glasgow Welch, ed., *A Confederate Surgeon's Letters to his Wife* (Marietta, GA: Continental Book Company, 1954 [1911]), 87-88.

¹⁸ On not having money to spend, see Randolph to Bolling Barton, September 30, 1863, Margaretta Barton Colt, *Defend the Valley: A Shenandoah Family in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 279-80; on "Jim" having lots of money, see Dr. George Little and James R. Maxwell, *A History of Lumsden's Battery, CSA* (Tuskaloosa, AL: R. E. Rhodes Chapter United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1905), 60-61; on his slave having plenty of money, see also, William Dorsey Pender to wife, September 25, 1862, William W. Hassler, ed., *The General to his Lady: The Civil War Letters of William Dorsey Pender to Fanny Pender* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 178.

¹⁹ On a slave sending home money, see Edward Burruss to Dear Kate, August 17, 1862, John C. Burruss Family Papers, LLMVC; see also, Tally Simpson to sister, April 24, 1862, Everson and Simpson, Jr., "Far, Far from Home," 118; on slave shopping spree, see Milton Maxcy Leverett to mother, May 10, 1862, Francis Wallace Taylor, et al., eds., *The Leverett Letters: Correspondence of a South Carolina Family, 1851-1868* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 126.

Black men, however, were foremost workers. Once in camp, they were not idle. In rebel eyes, white men were supposed to fight, not clean dishes or make meals. Most soldiers did not have personal servants, and some even turned them away. But troops appreciated whatever blacks could do to alleviate their labors. They especially prized cooks, not all of whom were excellent.²⁰ One visitor to a rebel camp, for example, found that a slave had left a roast pig raw on one side and burnt on the other.²¹ Some servants might have “spoiled the broth” as a way of resisting their white masters; others might have been simply bad cooks.²² For the most part, Confederate troops believed slaves performed their duties well, which left rebels more time to concentrate on fighting or recreation.

With the aid of black servants, perhaps some men lived too well. The Louisianan James Stubbs, for example, had no shame about the pleasures of the army. He described

²⁰ On eventually letting go of a black cook, see George C. Binford to Cousin Bob, April 7 [?], 1864; George C. Binford Papers, VHS; on asking a slave to remain home, see Benjamin to Reticina Tamplin, May 3, 1862, William H. Tamplin Letters, 1862-1865, LLMVC; on being “lost without a cook,” see Joseph Shields to mother, February 15, 1863, Joseph Shields Papers, LLMVC; on appreciation for a black cook, see also, James O. Chisholm to sister, August 25, 1861, Chisholm Family Papers, VHS; entry for October 23, 1862, Roper, ed., *Repairing the “March of Mars,”* 270; William G. Morton to Tommie, September 9, 1861, William Goodridge Morton Papers, 1861-1907, VHS; on having “perished to death” without a black cook, see Theophilus to Harriet Perry, May 23, 1863, Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousand*, 134; on need for cooking advice, see Theodorick W. Montfort to wife, November 1, 1861, Spencer B. King, ed., *Rebel Lawyer: Letters of Theodorick Montfort, 1861-1862* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1965), 25; on appreciation for a black cook, see also, Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, ed., *The Civil War Memoir of Philip Daingerfield Stephenson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 54-55; on the need for black cooks, see also diary entry for July 2, 1861, G. Ward Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 10; Edward Ford Spears, to sister, August 23, 1861, Samuel R. Flora, ed., “‘I Consider the Regiment my home’: The Orphan Brigade Life and Letters of Capt. Edward Ford Spears, 1861-1865,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (Spring 1996), p. 139; on missing a servant cook who had “left,” see P. H. Powers to wife, December 25, 1862, Trout, ed., *With Pen and Saber*, 129-30.

²¹ On burning of a pig, see W. Stanley Hoole, “Vizetelly Covers the Confederacy,” *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 4 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1957), p. 56; on a poor cook, see Albert B. Fall to mother, January 6, 1862, “Civil War Letters of Albert B. Fall: Gunner for the Confederacy,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1961), p. 156.

²² See, for example, McArthur and Burton, “Gentleman and an Officer,” 29.

camp life that was about as idyllic and paternalistic as any soldier could hope for in the Army of Northern Virginia. In October 1862, he wrote of:

Keeping three horses at the expense of the government, and to carry along as many servants as I choose or can afford to have, well I have two who are attentive to all my wants. Dandy comes in soon in the morning, makes up a fire in my stove, and prepares water for me to wash[,] cleans my boots[,] brushes my clothes and seems to take pleasure in doing all for me, while Sam is out feeding and attending to my Horses, and presently Dandy says breakfast is ready Sir [.] I repair to my dining tent and there find, Biscuit and Butter, Coffee and nicely fried York River Spots and trout well pickled and cured, now what better can a soldier desire?²³

Perhaps some good cigars and whiskey. As Stubbs no doubt reasoned, how could he provide for his men if he could not provide for himself? Besides, what more could a man want than his breakfast made for him by servants who washed the horses and read Scripture while their master sauntered to the table? It was rare, but some men could reproduce in camp the life of a privileged master. They perhaps even had an easier life than they had enjoyed in the antebellum period.

Comradeship did not always ensure that rebel troops shared their servants with others. Masters, after all, had paid good money for their slaves. In the eyes of some troops, why should they share a cook or body servant with other men in uniform? One soldier, for example, wrote of his captain's unpopular decision to have cooks prepare food for the entire company. Some men opposed the idea and threatened to send their slaves home.²⁴ Soldiers might have sympathized with a master's desire to live as a *bon*

²³ James Stubbs to sister, October 28, 1862, Stubbs Family Papers, LLMVC; on a similar opinion, see Charles Blacknall to Jinnie, March 7, 1863, Mark Crawford, *Confederate Courage on other Fields: Four Lesser Known Accounts of the War Between the States* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000), 70; P. H. Powers to wife, May 15, 1862, Trout, ed., *With Pen and Saber*, 68; on spare time in camp, see Quince Stanford to Dear Eliza, August 24, 1862, Ray Mathis, ed., *In the Land of the Living: Wartime Letters by Confederates from the Chattahoochee Valley of Alabama and Georgia* (Troy, AL: Troy State University Press, 1981), 32.

²⁴ Entry for October 1, 1861, Silver, ed., "Robert A. Moore: The Diary of a Confederate Soldier," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 279.

vivant. Forced to live a relatively ascetic lifestyle, however, conscientious troops also might have disapproved of a slaveholder living well at the expense of others.

Paternalistic attitudes, therefore, could undermine the republican nature of the Confederacy. In 1861, some troops were shocked at their comrades' habit of taking their military duties too lightly. One rebel came from Italy to enlist. What he witnessed in camp shocked him. Men treated soldiering as a lark. They spent too much time around women, and there were too many servants preparing fine meals.²⁵ In his eyes, in a republic, one must avoid indulgence. In the South, the presence of slaves always suggested there were men given to idleness, and some soldiers grew angry with them. Southerners believed that owning blacks provided a path to becoming one of the "aristocracy," but some believed masters should not pursue the paternalist ideal at the expense of virtue. Being a planter or lesser slaveholder entailed various responsibilities. Too much acquaintance with, or reliance upon, blacks might corrupt one. Men's concern for maintaining moral behavior was not just an example of Victorian restraint, but a relic of republicanism, which told men not to corrupt themselves and thus lose the virtue that democratic revolutions depended on.²⁶ From drunkenness to owning too many slaves, soldiers warned that the South might fall prey to excess. Such complaints, however, were more common early in the war. Very soon, there was enough suffering, starvation, and sickness to go around.

²⁵ Ben L. Bassham, *Ten Months in the "Orphan Brigade": Conrad Wise Chapman's Civil War Memoir* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999), 25.

²⁶ On republicanism, see Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and the New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967); Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and the American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1979).

If there were blacks who belonged to selfish masters, servants mostly had a communal function. They were usually attached to a company or regiment as much as they were to their owners. Servants not only had to wash dishes and cook food, but also search the countryside for sustenance. Richard Taylor called them a “nuisance,” but Confederates were probably glad to have black foragers.²⁷ Rebels were ever hungry, and slaves’ resourcefulness in getting food supplemented their inadequate rations. In May 1862, for example, Edwin Fay said he had not seen meat for three days, except when camp servants had killed some hogs. Confederates were happy when servants could obtain some cornbread, chicken, apples, peaches, or watermelon from the local countryside. In February 1865, Fay was stationed in an area where ducks were so abundant that slaves brought them in by the “horseback loads.” After a raid on Union positions, one rebel wrote that blacks were as willing as whites to plunder Yankee camps.²⁸

Confederates, however, both black and white, were more likely to take from local homes and farms than Federal armies. Some servants stole from their own camps and local citizens.²⁹ During Lee’s 1864 spring campaign, one soldier recalled the difficulty in finding food near the North Anna. Slaves there scrounged some corn and potatoes, but they did so at the expense of local whites struggling to feed their families. Soldiers,

²⁷ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 68; on foragers, see also, Captain George Baylor, “The Army Negro,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 31 (1903), pp. 365-66.

²⁸ On not having meat, see Edwin H. Fay to wife, May 27, 1862, Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., “*This Infernal War*”: *The Confederate Letters of Sgt. Edwin H. Fay* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 63; on cornbread, see entry for May 31, 1862, “Diary of Reverend J. G. Law,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 12 (1884), p. 25; on other victuals, see Quince Staford to brother, August 19, 1862, Mathis, ed., *In the Land of the Living*, 31; on watermelon, see Spencer Glasgow Welch to wife, September 1, 1863, Welch, ed., *Confederate Surgeon’s Letters*, 76-77; on ducks, see Edwin H. Fay to wife, February 5, 1865, Wiley, ed., “*This Infernal War*,” 422; on plundered camps, see Frank L. Richardson, “War as I Saw It (Part II),” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (April 1923), p. 223.

²⁹ On stealing clothing, see Theodorick Montfort to wife, March 31, 1862, King, ed., *Rebel Lawyer*, 70.

indeed, often faced the ethical dilemma of taking from needy civilians. In 1862, one wrote of a servant who came across an unfenced cornfield. That the place was unprotected added gray area to the moral question of taking from it. After his slave returned with arms full of food, the soldier relented.³⁰ Survival often made blacks and whites act in ways that undermined the gentlemanly, paternalistic ideal.

Paternalism depended upon whites looking after and protecting black workers. If either white or black Southerners abused each other, they were in danger of disrupting the supposedly good relations that existed between the races. Rebels occasionally stole from slaves, and men did not necessarily enjoy immunity when they did.³¹ One veteran remembered a soldier swiping a melon from a slave, who caught him before he could jump onto a train. The soldier was lucky not to have been crushed underneath the locomotive, though the melon was not so fortunate. Servants apparently were willing to put up with only so much from their wartime masters.³² In Confederate eyes, blacks must not take advantage of the freedoms the war gave them, nor should whites act in ways that would put further stress on the paternalistic relationship.

Many soldiers made sure that black people at home were well cared for. They ran their plantations or farms as if they were still there. They were heads of households, and they continued to give advice as any father and husband should. Despite the destruction of war, soldiers did not want the conflict to threaten the regular workings of slavery. “I

³⁰ Frank M. Myers, *The Comanches: A History of White's Battalion, Virginia Cavalry* (Marietta, GA: Continental Book Company, 1956), 290; Tally Simpson to sister, September 24, 1862, Everson and Simpson, Jr., eds., “*Far, Far from Home*,” 146-47.

³¹ James W. Anderson to “Dear Thomas,” December [no day], 1864, George C. Osborn, ed., “Writings of a Confederate Prisoner of War,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 1951), p. 79; on the taking of a black person’s watch and punishment of a white soldier for it, see entry for January 15, 1862, Robert A. Means Diary, Ferneyhough Family Papers, VHS.

³² Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., ed., *The Civil War Reminiscences of Major Silas T. Grisamore, Confederate States Army* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 79.

am glad to hear that all is doing so well,” wrote I. G. Lea from Grenada, Mississippi, in the spring of 1862. Things elsewhere were not so rosy. “The gardens about this place are very much neglected,” he complained. “I have not seen a field of cotton planted since I left home.”³³ A master to the last, Lea even gave orders from his hospital bed. “Have the Negro house floor put down & fixed as well as you can get,” he said a few months later, “show the negroes how to arrange it.” His servants were to work on their houses when the weather was bad. When the sky was clear, they should devote themselves to picking cotton.³⁴ As good providers and slaveholders, rebel soldiers preferred to persuade and advise rather than lecture or express worry. They knew the war threatened their farms and plantations. A detachment of Yankee cavalry or infantry might seize their slaves. More intangible hardships—rising prices and vulnerable Southern markets—also could ruin them.

Confederates did not know when, if at all, slavery would end. They had to address the daily workings of the institution as if they were masters *in perpetua*. Their letters are full of talk about corn, cotton, wheat, weather, clothing, making shoes, butchering hogs, hiring overseers and slaves, servants’ health, and the Confederate economy. Much of their talk was mundane, including a good amount of gossip and soldiers’ warnings to those at home to keep slaves well disciplined. They wrote about such things as a slave taking care of a dog, keeping a runaway hog from the hands of a neighbor’s servants, giving marriage advice to a black female, or the selling of disobedient black workers.³⁵

³³ I. G. to Lemanda Lea, May 8, 1862, Lemanda Lea Papers, LLMVC.

³⁴ I. G. to Lemanda Lea, September 16, 1862, Lemanda Lea Papers, LLMVC.

³⁵ On the more mundane side of plantation and farm life, see Edgeworth to Sallie Bird, February 27, 1863, Rozier, ed., *Granite Farm Letters*, 111; Frederic Leverett to mother, July 11, 1863, Taylor, *et al.*, eds., *Leverett Letters*, 234; Grant Taylor to wife and children, March 17, 1863, Ann K. Blomquist and Robert A. Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War: The Civil War Letters of Grant and Malinda Taylor 1862-1865* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2000), 170; Col. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to father, November 10, 1862, Robert

“It will give them great encouragement,” said one soldier about his slaves in August 1861, “to know that I have not forgotten them.”³⁶ As many Southerners believed, if blacks were part of the family, soldiers should act toward them as they would their children.

Because of Southern whites’ paternalistic tendencies, they considered blacks more than simply “mules” or “gofers.” Camp servants were appreciated companions who shared experiences with their masters in life and death. Soldiers were often not just fatherly toward their slaves, but brotherly. The army created a fraternal bond between those serving at the front, black as well as white. Confederates often wrote of slaves in ways that precluded the notion that they thought of them only as property. Southern law said one could buy and sell black people, but whites also recognized their humanity. After all, no Confederate wrote of the love he had for a cow, chicken, or armchair in the way he recalled affection for his “mammy,” “uncle,” or favorite body servant. Soldiers believed the white-black relationship rested not merely on mechanical or obligatory gestures, but genuine love and affection. Men from slaveholding families often wrote home using paternalistic language, closing with friendly “howdies,” or other such warm

Manson Myers, ed., *The Children of Pride* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 313; on making shoes for slaves, see Benjamin to Fred Fleet, September 21, 1861, Betsy Fleet and John D. P. Fleet, eds., *Green Mount: A Virginia Plantation Family during the Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 77; on the fate of corn and cotton crop, see Ujanirtus Allen to wife, August 2, 1861 (p. 17) and Ujanirtus Allen to wife, December 1, 1861 (p. 65), Randall Allen and Keith S. Bohannon, eds., *Campaigning with “Old Stonewall”: Confederate Captain Ujanirtus Allen’s Letters to his Wife* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998); Col. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to Rev. C. C. Jones, January 29, 1863 (p. 338) and Col. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to Mrs. Mary Jones, May 28, 1863 (p. 375), Myers, ed., *Children of Pride*; on hiring a slave, see William R. Montgomery to sister, June 11, 1863, George Montgomery, Jr., ed., *Georgia Sharpshooter: The Civil War Diary and Letters of William Rhadamanthus Montgomery, 1839-1906* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 88-89, on the wheat crop, see John W. Cotton to wife, May 1, 1862, Lucille Griffith, ed., *Yours Till Death: Civil War Letters of John W. Cotton* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 2; on hiring a caretaker for wagons, cattle, and slaves, see Col. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to mother, January 23, 1863, Myers, ed., *Children of Pride*, 335; on the fixing of shoes and selling of slaves, see I. G. to Lemanda Lea, October 9, 1862, Lemanda Lea Papers, LLMVC.

³⁶ Ujanirtus Allen to wife, August 8, 1861, Allen and Bohannon, eds., *Campaigning with Old Stonewall*, 20.

greetings, to slaves.³⁷ Others went even further. One Virginian sent his love to the servants, especially the house slaves. Whites believed black domestic workers had an emotional bond with them. In their mind, house servants were higher in the slave hierarchy and therefore closer than other black people to being “part of the family.”³⁸

Soldiers preferred knowing whether slaves far behind the lines were doing well. They especially liked to know how “mammy” was. In wartime, men’s concern for “mammy” sometimes conflicted with the Southern notion of rugged individualism and manliness. Love for one’s black “mammy” could backfire on a soldier, wounding his pride. Those who pined for her might risk exposing their softer side. Comrades might label them a “momma’s boy” or more accurately a “mammy’s boy.” One soldier, for example, was told he was too young for the army—he should instead go home to his “mammy.”³⁹

For Confederates soldiers, nevertheless, “mammy” was the most highly prized of servants. Some rebel troops’ knowledge of, and dependence upon, black women, began at the breast, and those reared among slaves had fixed in their minds the image of

³⁷ On “howdies” to blacks, see, for example, Edwin A. Penick to wife, March 16, 1862, Edwin A. Penick Papers, VHS; Lt. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to mother, April 21, 1862, Myers, ed., *Children of Pride*, 233; Alfred J. Flournoy, Jr., to wife, May 22, 1861, Alfred Flournoy Papers, LLMVC; on sending “love,” see, for example, Thomas Goree to Mary Frances Goree Kittrell, December 8, 1861, Cutrer, ed., *Longstreet’s Aide*, 58; James Bryant to father, June 20, 1861, Edgar Jackson, *Three Rebels Write Home* (Franklin, VA: News Publishing Company, 1955), 39; James B. Griffin to wife, August 11, 1861, McArthur and Burton, *Gentleman and an Officer*, 119; W. J. Mims to wife, April 16, 1863, “Letters of Major W. J. Mims, CSA,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 1941), p. 211; William Cocke to parents, May 20, 1862 [typescript], Cocke Family Papers, VHS.

³⁸ Thomas Goree to sister, April 21, 1863, Cutrer, ed., *Longstreet’s Aide*, 108; on a slave sending love to those at home, see J. B. Pendleton to wife, July 7, 1861, Pendleton Family Papers, VHS; James Holloway to wife, November 6, 1861, James M. Holloway Papers, VHS; on a slave who wrote home with affectionate regards, see Jack Foster to Christopher Tompkins, June 24, 1862 and May 28, 1864, Tompkins Family Papers, VHS.

³⁹ On concern for “mammy,” see E. P. Petty to wife, March 19, 1863, Norman D. Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Captain Elijah P. Petty, Walker’s Texas Division, CSA* (San Antonio: University of Texas, Institute of Texan Cultures, 1982), 152; Gaillard Foster to sister, April 2, 1864 and June 18, 1864, Foster Family Papers, LLMVC; John S. Foster to sister, June 9, 1862, Foster Family Papers, LLMVC; on one soldier being told he should go home to “mammy,” see Hughes, ed., *Civil War Memoir of Philip Daingerfield Stephenson*, 356.

“mammy.” In their eyes, she was a bulwark of the plantation, the one woman who kept things running, ruling over white and black people alike in the Big House. Whites considered “mammy” the head of the household servants, who they deemed superior to field laborers and slave artisans. In the white household, she performed many functions—nurse, counselor, confidant, and authority figure. One soldier described her as an “autocrat.”⁴⁰ “Mammy” “walked supreme,” as one veteran put it.⁴¹ For rebel troops, she was a respected figure not only among whites, but blacks. Soldiers at times missed her as much as their white family members.

“Mammy” became a powerful part of the plantation myth that survived the war. Men’s feelings for her were genuine, yet they overstated the loyalty of such slaves to the white family. In reminiscing about their “mammies,” men mistakenly equated her care for the white household as care for her white family. Veterans certainly exaggerated when they said she loved her master’s children more than her own.⁴² What emerged in their memoirs, nevertheless, was a love for her that was unequivocal and requited. But what she gave at times was “tough love.” One soldier remembered the “ungovernable” temper that his “mammy” had toward her own children. On one occasion, his father had seized her children and declared, “That child has been whipped enough!”⁴³ In the eyes of Confederate soldiers, if “mammy’s” own charges were a problem, she did not need to discipline her white children nearly as much.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Hughes, ed., *Civil War Memoirs of Philip Daingerfield Stephenson*, 128-29 (quoted); on an encounter with a black “mammy” during the war who took pride in nursing white children, see Carlton McCarthy, “Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 7 (1879), p. 179.

⁴¹ J. P. Austin, *The Blue and Gray: Sketches of a Portion of the Unwritten History of the Great American Civil War* (Atlanta: Franklin, 1899), 207.

⁴² See Dinkins, *Personal Recollections*, 91; see also, Little and Maxwell, *History of Lumsden’s Battery*, 62.

⁴³ Marcus B. Toney, *The Privations of a Private* (Nashville: Privately Printed, 1905), 11.

⁴⁴ On the enduring figure of “mammy” in American culture, see Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisited: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), 191-213; M. M. Manring, *Slave in a*

For those who had them, “mammy” served as a second mother. She was not only a caretaker, but faithful—the kind of slave who would watch over the family valuables while men were at war.⁴⁵ The conflict led many slaves to desert their white masters, but “mammy” apparently knew where her true loyalty lay. Robert Stiles’ “mammy” remained with his family members even after emancipation, following them to the North. She “never recognized any change in her condition or her relations to us,” he wrote.⁴⁶ For this and many other reasons, soldiers had nothing but respect for “mammy.” The most emotional scenes of their reminiscences might involve a black matron. A chaplain wrote in 1864 of the emotional reunion between Joseph E. Johnston and an elderly black woman who had held him as a baby. “Massa Joe, you’s gittin old,” she quipped. The old woman supposedly made Johnston “weep like a child” and melted the hearts of the officers—forced to reach for their handkerchiefs—gathered with him.⁴⁷

Former soldiers did not forget their “mammy” after the war or after her death. One edition of *Confederate Veteran* featured a story about a late servant named “Aunt” Jemima. Her funeral served as a perfect meeting of the Old and New South: the white Hume family drove their automobiles to Murfreesboro, Tennessee—sight of one of the most vicious Civil War battles—to bury her. The article mentioned, almost as an afterthought, a “large assembly of colored people” gathered there. Her gravestone read:

Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998); Diane Roberts, *The Myth of Aunt Jemima: Representations of Race and Region* (New York: Routledge Press, 1994); Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁴⁵ On a “mammy” who took care of a soldier’s watch, see William Eustace Trahern, “William Eustace Trahern Memoir” [typescript], p. 2, VHS.

⁴⁶ On “mammy’s” loyalty to the white household, see John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1903), 4; Robert Stiles, *Four Years Under Marse Robert* (New York: Neale, 1904), 50 (quoted).

⁴⁷ Dinkins, *Personal Recollections*, 91; on Johnston’s reunion, see “Camp and Field: Papers from the Portfolio of an Army Chaplain,” [1864] by Rev. Jos. Cross, quoted in Richard B. Harwell, *The Confederate Reader* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1957), 235.

Erected to the memory of
Mrs. Jemima Rayburn;
Born Sept. 16, 1827; Died Oct. 30, 1908.
Beloved Black Mammy of—

Her epitaph ends with a dash, without giving her white family's surname. Everyone in her community, nevertheless, apparently knew who she was. The former slave of Major Hume, she had served his family for forty years. Decades after the war, Confederate soldiers still remembered loyal slaves.⁴⁸ When slavery disappeared from the South, the mythical "mammy" did not. For Southern whites, fond memories of her only underscored how few such women there were as the years passed.

Masters extended the hand of paternalism to their slaves, but they believed good feeling between the races went both ways. Whites thought black people loved them as much as they loved their servants. They were not always right in their assumption. Hundreds of thousands of slaves escaped or otherwise rebelled against their masters during the war. White and black Southerners, nevertheless, expressed affection and admiration for each other, and they prayed for each other's safety and good health.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ " 'Black Mammy,' of the Hume Home," *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 20 (1912), p. 293; on the remembering of Confederate soldiers through monuments in the post-war period, see Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); on memorials to Confederates black and white, see Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); on Southern heritage and faithful slave memorials, see Paul A. Shackel, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 77-112; on a mammy, who, while never a slave, was a faithful servant, see Mrs. Alan Pepper Speed, "Faithful Family Servant," *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 19 (1911), p. 522-23.

⁴⁹ On praying every night, see Alfred Flournoy, Jr., to wife, May 22, 1861, Alfred Flournoy Papers, LLMVC; on other examples of affection between black and white, see Winston to Octavia Stephens, November 10, 1861, Ellen E. Hodges and Stephen Kerber, eds., "Children of Honor: Letters of Winston and Octavia Stephens, 1861-1862," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (July 1977), p. 57; Henry W. Barrow to John W. Fries, August 28, 1861, Marian H. Blair, ed., "Civil War Letters of Henry W. Barrow," *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (January 1957), p. 74; on an overseer and slaves wishing her husband well, see Mary to Emanuel Gerst, September 12, 1861, Emanuel Gerst Papers, VHS; on blacks sending love, see Mary to Emanuel Gerst, October 3, 1861, Gerst Papers, VHS; Edgeworth to Sallie Bird, September 22, 1864, Rozier, ed., *Granite Farm Letters*, 205; on asking for prayers, see Dr. Blair Burwell to wife, April 8, 1865, Burwell Family Papers, VHS; William T. Casey to mother, June 2,

Were black people genuine in their concern? Since very few slaves could write, they could not leave behind much of their own testimony regarding their views of white Southerners.⁵⁰ And when blacks put pen to paper, they usually did so under the watchful eye of their owners. Although one might question their sincerity, slaves expressed emotional ties to white soldiers. “I need not tell you my dear young mistress how I felt,” said a servant about the loss of his master. “I loved him so much having been with him so long.” Now, he found himself “lonesome indeed.”⁵¹ The war tested the strength of paternalistic bonds, but in soldiers’ eyes, much good feeling existed between white and black, even when distance or death separated them.

Although Southerners knew the respectable limits of interaction between the races, the intimacy between white and black followed them from cradle to grave. “Mammies” had raised many Confederate soldiers, and a male slave might roam the battlefield to look for a missing soldier or procure a coffin after his master’s death. One rebel remembered he was “much touched” at the attention two slaves showed Major John Pelham, the young, promising artillery officer killed at Kelly’s Ford, Virginia, in March 1863. For Confederates, nothing better summed up the paternalistic relationship than black tears shed at a white man’s passing. In 1863, Colonel Charles Jones noted that his father had dressed on the morning of his death with his body servant at hand, and at his funeral was a large gathering of whites and blacks. In Old South terms, it was a fitting

1861 [typescript] and Casey to mother, April 3, 1864 [typescript], “Thomas Casey and His Descendants,” compiled by Helen Kay Yates, June 1967, VHS.

⁵⁰ Much of what we know about slaves’ perception of their masters’ comes from the WPA project of the 1930s that sent officials into the South to interview former slaves. While these interviews have proven invaluable in our understanding of slavery and the Civil War era, most slaves interviewed were very young in the antebellum or wartime period. Thus, one should use caution in evaluating long-held memories of events witnessed in childhood.

⁵¹ “Richard” to Mrs. Thomas G. Pollock, March 30, 1864, Charles Kelly Barrow, *et al.*, eds., *Forgotten Confederates: An Anthology about Black Southerners* (Atlanta: Southern Heritage Press, 1995), 33.

memorial, one similar to that of South Carolina Senator James Henry Hammond—vocal advocate of “King Cotton”—who died in 1864 with his hymn-singing slaves surrounding his bed. Confederate soldiers, however, were not men of the Old South in the sense Hammond was. Yet, Confederate soldiers expected that a servant, whether at the bedside of Senator Hammond or any other Southerner, would mourn over the death of a white man.⁵²

The war profoundly changed Southern life, but slave religion was one aspect of it that white people did not want altered. As in the antebellum period, Confederates believed it an invaluable form of social control. Blacks could worship as long as it was under the supervision of the master class, and Southern whites hoped that Jesus’ teachings instilled docility rather than rebelliousness in slaves. In May 1862, John Wightman, pastor of Trinity Church in Charleston, wrote to General John C. Pemberton, asking that the army not disturb black religion. Wightman took the proslavery view that had the Southern clergy under its wing. He saw that Christianity proved the best way of keeping slaves under control. “I am convinced that religion creates the strongest tie between servant and master,” he said, “and that the ministry thereby constitute the strongest police of municipal and of domestic order.” As long as Southerners maintained

⁵² See Major W. A. Smith, *The Anson Guards: Company C, Fourteenth Regiment North Carolina Volunteers, 1861-1865* (Charlotte: Stone Publishing, 1914), 255-56; on the death of Pelham, see Heros Von Borcke, *Memoirs of the Confederate War for Independence*, Vol. 2 (New York: P. Smith, 1938), 188 (quoted); Col. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to Rev. George Howe, March 19, 1863, Myers, ed., *Children of Pride*, 359; on the death of Senator Hammond, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South, A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 382; on remembering “John,” and a slave who wept at his passing, see U. R. Brooks, *Butler and His Cavalry in the War of Secession 1861-1865* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1909), 363; on a faithful slave who took care of his dead master, see Albert B. Fall to children, February 24, 1862, “Civil War Letters of Albert B. Fall: Gunner for the Confederacy,” *Register of Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1961), p. 167; William A. Love, “Reminiscences of the Closing Days of the War of Secession,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series*, Vol. 4 (1921), p. 38; on a slave being at a soldier’s funeral, see “Burial of Latane,” in Lizzie Cary Daniel, *Confederate Scrap-book* (Richmond: J. L. Hill, 1893), 40.

a proslavery faith, he could “expect to check insubordination” among blacks. Otherwise, events might stir slaves with “false hopes of liberation ... to congregate in idleness, or to seek employment in villainy.”⁵³ In Confederate eyes, Christianity was a path to spiritual freedom, but it should not prove so liberating as to make servants leave their kind, pious masters. After all, Southerners believed, they had slaves’ best interests at heart, and they wanted the Confederate military to make sure antebellum ways continued.

If religion was a cornerstone of black people’s lives, whites intruded in the Christian faith in a way that strengthened slavery. Southern law did not recognize slave marriages, but it was customary for masters to allow weddings to occur. Religious services, however, were not free of prejudice. In April 1865, a soldier found himself at nuptials with no parson in attendance. He therefore had to perform what he called a “nigger weddin’.” The bride and groom, he noted, were of “African des *scent*.” His emphasis on “scent” was no accident, and because of it, he said, “I did not as preachers sometimes do claim the privelege of *kissing the bride*.”⁵⁴

As with slave religion, Confederate soldiers’ attitudes toward black “entertainers” were often mocking and condescending. Some slaves were amusing to rebel troops. After the war, veterans often used them as a means of injecting comedy into otherwise dry memoirs or reminiscences. In these anecdotes, blacks were usually depicted as victims of fate or comical bystanders. Stories often involved slaves’ exposure to danger. Wartime letters and diaries also described slaves’ close brushes with death, but usually without the

⁵³ Wightman to Pemberton, May 2, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, pp. 489-90.

⁵⁴ On a slave wedding, see James C. Bates to Miss Mootie Johnson, April, 2, 1865, Richard Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer’s Civil War: The Diary and Letters of James C. Bates* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 330.

paternalistic overtones.⁵⁵ Decades after the war, however, in conformity to the paternalistic memory of the conflict that emerged during the Lost Cause, former soldiers portrayed blacks as amusing and hapless Sambos. Veterans resorted to slapstick involving slaves caught astride runaway horses or quickly departing after “seeing the elephant.” Former soldiers remembered having a good laugh at black men—who they usually depicted with large white eyes and mouths’ agape—running from whistling artillery or the snap of bullets. One common form of humor involved blacks—with dialect-heavy appeals to “De Lawd” to save them from harm—taking cover from artillery fire. Confederates indulged in the Sambo stereotype that portrayed blacks as blunderers and buffoons. One veteran, for example, remembered a slave who said that his brigade never ran from a fight, but he did. Soldiers laughing at scared servants one minute might find themselves hiding behind a tree the next. But for the most part, troops believed black men lacked the bravery that whites possessed. Exaggerations of slave behavior served an important purpose in the white world. They made soldiers look braver, more in control of the workings of the army and the South. Soldiers expected that slaves would flee from the heat of battle. It reinforced their belief that fighting was always best left to white men.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See, for example, journal entry for May 31, 1863, Douglas Lee Braudaway, ed., “A Texan Records the Civil War Siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi: The Journal of Maj. Maurice Kavanaugh Simons, 1863,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (July 2001), p. 113; see also, William Pitt Chambers, “My Journal: The Story of a Soldier’s Life Told by Himself,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series*, Vol. 5 (1925), p. 263; Private Carey Johnson Loe to sister, July 4, 1862, John D. Winters, ed., “Letter from a North Louisiana Soldier: The First Vicksburg Campaign, 1862,” *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring 1975), p. 100.

⁵⁶ On slaves fleeing from shells, see entry for July 23, 1861, Samuel Elias Mays, “Sketches from the Journal of a Confederate Soldier,” *Tyler’s Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (July 1923), p. 53; Bassham, ed., *Ten Months in the “Orphan Brigade,”* 65; on slaves running from hostile fire, see, for example, J. William Jones, “Reminiscences of the Army of Northern Virginia,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 10 (1882), p. 86; on slaves fleeing from a soldier who pointed a gun at them, see entry for October 31, 1861, Roger S. Durham, ed., *The Blues in Gray, The Civil War Journal of William Daniel Dixon and the Republican Blues Daybook* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 46; on blacks fleeing from shells, see diary entry for July 9, 1864, Norman Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne’s Command: The Civil War Reminiscences and Diary of Capt. Samuel T. Foster, Granbury’s*

In addition to comic relief, blacks also provided diversion through musical performances. Several times during the war, for example, Charles Quintard, a Confederate chaplain, saw recitals by “Blind Tom,” a teenage piano protégé who later toured the country. In 1864, Tom played for Quintard and others excerpts from an opera and a piece he had written called “The Battle of Manassas.” Quintard wrote that Tom had improved since he had last seen him. His playing, in any case, was “wonderful.” On another occasion, he found it “most agreeable.”⁵⁷ “Blind Tom” lived up to the paternalistic ideal that most Confederates had concerning black people. Although without sight and most likely suffering from autism, Tom could still entertain white audiences. Under any other conditions in the South, he would have only proven a burden to the white community. For such men as Quintard, Tom was the perfect black entertainer—exemplary in what he did, but also child-like, even helpless. He could not have served as a field worker or house servant. What he did was amusing, but impractical. For white people, Tom, nevertheless, was the ideal black pianist—gifted and unthreatening. He pleased those who cultivated bourgeois trappings in the same way that a house servant might make life better for the wealthier slaveholder. Thus, for his white audiences, Tom perfectly fit into the paternalistic environment. As with any dutiful black person, he reassured them that harmony existed in their biracial world. Unlike a charismatic black

Texas Brigade (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 103; Royal Figg, *Where Men Only Dare to Go* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1885), 254; William Meade Dame, *From the Rapidan to Richmond* (Baltimore: Green-Lucas Company, 1920), 192; Frederick M. Colston, “Last Months in the Army of the Northern Virginia,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 38-39 (January-December 1910), pp. 9-10; Dinkins, *Personal Recollections*, 55; Shephard Pryor to wife, October 6, 1861, Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 74-75; John Wood to father, June 26, 1862, *ibid.*, 141-42.

⁵⁷ Entry for October 20, 1864 (p. 163, “wonderful”) and November 2, 1864 (p. 170, “most agreeable”), Sam Davis Elliott, ed., *Doctor Quintard, Chaplain CSA and Second Bishop of Tennessee: The Memoir and Diary of Charles Todd Quintard* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

preacher, such as Nat Turner, who may tell blacks about “the Word” with emphasis on its anti-slavery passages, “Blind Tom” had talents that would never upset white sensibilities.

Most Confederate troops never heard piano recitals—Blind Tom’s or otherwise—during the war, but they enjoyed other types of black entertainment. In the eyes of Southern whites, black people were known for their singing and dancing. For them, “Negroes” seemed most content when performing a “break down” or shuffling to a tune plucked on another “darkie’s” banjo. One soldier in camp, for example, laughed at black dancers until he grew tired. He enjoyed the show, but thought them “a very suspicious set.” Whites always had to be on guard against “Negroes,” no matter how unthreatening they might seem. For Confederates, slave dancers emphasized the more primitive side of black people’s nature. One soldier recalled, innocently enough, the banjo playing and “break downs” that made up black music. But he took a more stereotypical view of one slave, who he described “as black as charcoal and as ugly as an ape, but a good hearted simple soul” who shuffled his feet until he nearly dropped.⁵⁸ For Confederate troops, the quietly singing or banjo-playing black man epitomized the smiling, happy, shuffling “darkie”—the opposite of Nat Turner, who represented betrayal and black-on-white violence. For Southerners in the Reconstruction period and beyond, it was obvious to them which enslaved person—Nat Turner or Sambo—would dominate Confederate literature. The quick-footed buffoon became the historical slave, while Southern whites forgot the “race rebel” or relegated him to obscurity. In their mind, the “coal black,”

⁵⁸ On “suspicious” dancers, see diary entry for August 30, 1861, Durham, ed., *Blues in Gray*, 28-29; on noisy blacks, see diary entry for November 29, 1862, William C. Davis and Meredith L. Swentor, eds., *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 153; on an “ugly,” shuffling slave, see Hughes, ed., *Civil War Memoir of Philip Daingerfield Stephenson*, 356-57.

dancing “darkie” was the model of contentment, the darling of the plantation and Southern lore.

During the war, minstrel shows, which had become popular in the 1830s, attracted wider audiences than ever. In the Jacksonian period, minstrels first emerged in the North, but they quickly became an American phenomenon. Putting on “blackface” went as far back as Shakespeare’s time—*Othello* featured “the Moor of Venice,” a role that actors in blackface sometimes performed. “Blacking up,” however, had more resonance in the United States, which by the mid 1800s had the largest black slave population in the world and white audiences that hungered for low- and middle-brow diversion.⁵⁹ The shows certainly were not Shakespeare. They were a democratic form of entertainment appropriate for Jacksonian audiences. Minstrels amused the “common man” as well as more “aristocratic” Southerners. All sorts of people could attend and appreciate the shows, where they gathered to see exaggerated and comical portrayals of black Americans.

In the Confederacy, officers, privates, even local women attended the minstrel shows. One soldier, for example, wrote of a beau who had been charming the local ladies for some time. He also played banjo for a group of minstrels who traveled on a showboat. General J. E. B. Stuart organized a band of musicians and singers that became popular. Among them was “Bob,” Stuart’s mulatto servant, who played bones. And during the war, Confederates saw such generals as Lee, Longstreet, and Hood as well as Beauregard

⁵⁹ On minstrel shows in antebellum culture, see Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); William T. Leonard, *Masquerade in Black* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Black Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmet and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962); Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

and William Whiting in the audience at minstrel performances.⁶⁰ The most famous of Civil War era minstrel tunes was “Dixie,” which was immensely popular among white and black Southerners, becoming the unofficial anthem of the Confederacy. In 1863 in camp in Virginia, John Esten Cooke wrote of slaves happily singing “Dixie.” They soon turned to the “Bonnie Blue Flag,” another often-played Confederate tune. Several versions of “Dixie” circulated through rebel camps, but all reflected romanticized and paternalistic views of the South—a place of sweltering cotton fields and steaming buckwheat cakes, sung about in the dialect-heavy manner of a plantation “darkie.”⁶¹

The minstrel shows provided not just tunes for rebels to whistle in camp. They hint at the deeper workings of the Southern white mind. They represented a suitable way in which white and black culture could coexist. The minstrel shows, although performed with paternalistic overtones, represented the first blurring of racial lines in Southern popular entertainment, which was a logical outcome of the South’s biracial

⁶⁰ Borcke, *Memoirs of the Confederate War for Independence*, Vol. 2, pp. 173-74; entry for May 18, 1865, George Alexander Martin Diary [typescript], VHS (quoted); on banjo player, see Junius N. Bragg to wife, July 6, 1862, T. J. Gaughan, ed., *Letters of a Confederate Surgeon, 1861-65* (Camden, AR: n. p., 1960), 78; on Stuart, see W. W. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993 [1945]), 50; on Army of Northern Virginia generals attending a show put on by Fredericksburg minstrels, see William H. Lewis to mother, Eddy R. Parker, ed., *Touched by Fire: Letters from Company D, 5th Texas Infantry, Hood’s Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 2000), 52; on Beauregard and Whiting at a Wilmington show, see John Johns, “Wilmington During the Blockade,” quoted in W. Buck Yearns and John G. Barrett, eds., *North Carolina Civil War Documentary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 75.

⁶¹ The tune “Dixie” was popular throughout the United States. Lincoln himself called it the finest tune he ever heard and cartoons lampooning him singing “Dixie”—while accompanying himself on banjo—were published during the war. In the South, Confederates quickly adopted “Dixie” as its unofficial national anthem; see “The Tune of Dixie,” *The Index*, London I (1862), quoted in Harwell, ed., *Confederate Reader*, 25-29; *Southern War Songs* contains several tunes centered around the “Dixie” theme—“Dixie’s Land” (p. 36), “De Cotton Down in Dixie” (p. 145), “Dixie” (p. 238), and “I Wish I was in Dixie’s Land” (p. 153). The latter is attributed to Daniel Emmett and is the version most well known today, though not necessary the one that soldiers most often sang. *War Songs* lists “Dixie’s Land” as the one sung by Confederate soldiers; see W. L. Fagan, *Southern War Songs* (New York: M. T. Richardson, 1890); on slaves singing “Dixie,” and “Bonnie Blue Flag,” see entry for February 14, 1863, Trout, ed., *With Pen and Saber*, 159; on the contested origins of “Dixie,” see Howard L. Sacks and Judith Rose Sacks, *Way up North in Dixie: A Black Family’s Claim to the Confederate Anthem* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1993).

environment.⁶² In reading men's accounts of the shows, one cannot always tell whether they were describing white or black entertainers.⁶³ Southerners, however, knew to what extent cultural blending could occur. The influence of black people on minstrel performances was obvious, but it was projected through the prism of white supremacy. White Confederates in black face imitating the mannerisms and musical idioms of black people apparently did not threaten white racial views. That Confederate troops would enjoy watching white men dressed in black makeup was one of the many odd, paradoxical aspects of their society, and it represented the beginnings of Southerners co-opting black culture for popular white audiences. The minstrel shows, furthermore, had a cultural meaning, not only in their reflection of the racial hierarchy, but the differing views among Northerners and Southerners. One soldier, for example, remembered a minstrel troupe that contained a man who was at one time a Kentucky officer. What he enjoyed most were the caricatures of the Yankees, especially when they parodied miscegenation.⁶⁴

The minstrel shows underscored the moonlight and magnolias legend of the Old South. Camp life, however, usually failed to live up to such an ideal. One particularly unromantic side involved disease and its effect on soldiers and blacks in camp. In November 1861, James Cantey, an Alabama planter and soldier serving in Virginia, lamented that his servants were unable to do any work because of sickness. Compared to Northern cities, Richmond might have had mild winters, but for Cantey and his slaves

⁶² The South of course did not only contain people of two races. Native Americans and people of Hispanic origin lived in the Confederacy as well.

⁶³ On a white soldier who performed in a minstrel show, see Lieutenant M. McNamara, "Lieutenant Charlie Pierce's Daring Attempts to Escape from Johnson's Island," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 8 (January to December 1880), p. 62; on the popularity of "Hood's Minstrels," see "Theatricals in the Army," *Southern Illustrated News*, May 7, 1864, quoted in Harwell, ed., *Confederate Reader*, 273.

⁶⁴ Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., *Four Years on the Firing Line* by James Cooper Nisbet (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1963), 229.

from the Deep South, they proved miserable.⁶⁵ In light of the deadly realities of camp life, men such as Cantey looked after the health of their slaves. Not all masters, however, were so conscientious. General William Dorsey Pender was shocked at his comrades' treatment of blacks. He was horrified "to see how *white men* calling themselves gentlemen neglect their poor helpless negroes in this camp." Two slaves had died in four days, he wrote, and he expected "one more will certainly die before many days."⁶⁶

Historians have offered different views of the care that masters gave their slaves. A recent study of the subject, Sharla Fett's *Working Cures*, shows the brutal treatment of masters toward black people. According to Fett, slaveholders often exhibited at best ignorance of, and at worst indifference toward, scientific medicine. Slaves, she argues, mostly were forced to provide their own health care, which became a form of resistance against their negligent or abusive masters. Other historians, however, have played down the cruelty of Southern slaveholders. William C. Davis has argued that mistreatment of slaves was not "systematic." And one of the most controversial books ever written on slavery, Robert Fogel's and Stanley Engerman's *Time on the Cross*, asserts that slaves mostly were well fed and cared for. Fogel and Engerman compiled much statistical data in order to show that the slave diet was often better than poor whites' and that life expectancy for slaves was only a few years lower than for white Americans.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ James Cantey to wife, November 5, 1861, Mathis, ed., *In the Land of the Living*, 15; James Cantey to wife, August 21, November 5, November 15, and November 19, 1861, *ibid*, 14-17.

⁶⁶ William Dorsey Pender to wife, September 5, 1861, Hassler, ed., *General to His Lady*, 54.

⁶⁷ Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on the Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); William C. Davis, *The Cause Lost: Myths and Realities of the Confederacy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 184; Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989 [1974]), 117-26; see also, William K. Scarborough, *Overseers: Plantation Management in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984 [1966]), 87.

In regards to health care, Confederate soldiers' own writings reveal that they were often conscientious masters who went to some lengths to keep their slaves healthy. Men admittedly were more likely to write of good treatment of blacks than they were of negligence and abuse, but they were writing to people who shared their proslavery convictions and would have understood were they not always conscientious of slaves' good treatment. Confederate troops, therefore, could speak freely about the treatment they gave enslaved people. They might have had a very different perception of how they acted toward their servants than black people did, but for the most part, soldiers tried to make slaves comfortable. They did not want others to see them as cruel owners.⁶⁸ Another reason was purely economic: soldiers did not want to suffer the financial loss of their valuable "property." They were also Christian men who did not want to mistreat blacks or see them needlessly suffer. The paternalistic ideal, furthermore, dictated that masters must not treat their slaves in ways that disrupted the supposed understanding, tacit or otherwise, that they thought existed between the races.

Confederate troops tried to keep their servants relatively well clothed and fed, which was not always easy in the strapped Confederacy. In June 1864, one soldier wrote to say that he would try, the next time they were distributed, to get shoes for his slaves, who were nearly barefoot. But considering that many rebels in the greatest of battles were shoeless meant slaves' needs were at best secondary. Blacks were also more likely than whites to go without adequate food. William A. Graham, Jr., wrote to his father, a Confederate senator, to say that officers were too important to care for their own horses

⁶⁸ On a soldier's lack of sympathy for irresponsible masters, see diary entry for March 16, 1864, Wirt Armistead Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers: The Campaign Diaries of Thomas J. Key, CSA, December 17, 1863-May 17, 1865 and Robert J. Campbell, USA, January 1, 1864-July 21, 1864* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), 61-62.

or share their rations. The North Carolina legislature had recently passed a law regarding how officers received and bought food. Graham complained that “it is not right to starve him by making him divide his ration with his negro.” White soldiers, he believed, should always remain the South’s first priority.⁶⁹ The war, however, did not necessarily make troops or their slaves lean. Although they thought slaves well provided for, most Southerners would have considered one of Edward Burruss’ slaves spoiled. His servant complained about not having proper shoes, and his coat no longer fit across his shoulders because he had “fattened up.” But for the most part, soldiers usually complained of grumbling stomachs, and their slaves were not likely to eat before they did. In 1863, writing from Charleston, a soldier noted how only potatoes and a peck of corn made up their weekly provisions. Given the South’s shortages, the Confederacy had to make sure it fed its fighting men before it did its slaves.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ On concern for slaves’ clothing, see R. H. Brooks to wife, September 12, 1862, Katherine S. Holland, ed., *Keep All My Letters: The Civil War Letters of Richard Henry Brooks, 51st Georgia Infantry* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 43; Robert H. Miller to father, July 23, 1862, Forrest P. Connor, ed., “Letters of Lieutenant Robert H. Miller to his Family, 1861-1862,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January 1962), p. 87; entry for October 4, 1862, Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D*, 113; Harden Cochrane to sister, October 10, 1862, Harriet Fitts Ryan, ed., “The Letters of Harden Perkins Cochrane, 1862-1864 (Part III),” *Alabama Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (April 1955), p. 144; on getting shoes for a servant, see Frank Adams to sister, June 22, 1864, Israel Adams Papers, LLMVC; on one soldier’s concern that his slave was well clothed and shod, see Robert C. Gilliam to Dear Frances, December 10, 1863, James J. Hudson, ed., “From Paraclifta to Marks’ Mill: The Civil War Correspondence of Lieutenant Robert C. Gilliam,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Autumn 1958), p. 283; on the difficulty keeping slaves fed, see Charles Davidson to mother, April 15, 1864, Turner, ed., “Major Charles A. Davidson: Letters of a Virginia Soldier,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 22, No. 1, p. 35; William A. Graham, Jr., to father, April 26, 1864, Max R. Williams, ed., *The Papers of William A. Graham*, Vol. 6 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1976), 77 (quoted).

⁷⁰ On a slave getting enough food, see Tally Simpson to sister, June 28, 1862, Everson and Simpson, Jr., eds., “*Far, Far from Home*,” 132; on slave provisions, see William Casey to mother, October 4, 1863 [typescript], “Thomas Casey and his Descendants,” VHS; William to Elizabeth Neblett, October 5, 1863, Erika L. Murr, ed., *A Rebel Wife in Texas: The Diary and Letters of Elizabeth Scott Neblett, 1852-1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 163; Edward Burruss to “Dear Kate,” November 10, 1862, John C. Burruss Papers, LLMVC (quoted); on a general who said slaves ate better than soldiers did, see Clement Evans to wife, May 30, 1863, Robert Grier Stephens, Jr., ed., *Intrepid Warrior: Clement Anselm Evans, Confederate General from Georgia: Life, Letters and Diaries of the War Years* (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1992), 173; on slaves in camp having potatoes and vegetables, see Harden Cochrane to brother, November 30, 1862, Ryan, ed., “Letters of Harden Perkins Cochrane (Part III),” *Alabama Review*,

Soldiers' letters, nevertheless, show concern for unhealthy slaves, inquiries about those at home, and sadness over black people's deaths. Medical care, albeit crude by today's standards, ranged from soldiers providing inoculations to giving slaves whiskey in order to ward off disease. Soldiers often gave servants as much care as nineteenth century medicine would allow, and they had good reason for never sending them to a doctor or hospital. The best physicians of their day had no knowledge of germ theory, and they relied on such dubious cures as blue mass, a mercury-based medicine used to combat constipation.⁷¹ Captain E. John Ellis seemed to do well by giving his slave, who suffered from pneumonia, traditional brews of pepper tea and whiskey, the only medicine he had. His servant recovered. Another rebel wrote of a slave, named "Caesar," who was not so lucky, but he did not die from want of care. Caesar suffered from a chill, and his master wanted to find a house in which the slave could regain his health. Caesar succumbed to his illness, but soldiers remembered him as one of the best "boys" in camp.⁷²

Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 150; on Braxton Bragg not issuing extra rations to African Americans, see Sam Watkins, *Company Aytch, or, a Sideshow of the Big Show* (New York: Plume, 1999 [1883]), 33.

⁷¹ Frank R. Freemon, *Gangrene and Glory: Medical Care during the Civil War* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1998), 230.

⁷² On care and concern for slaves' health, see Isaac Affleck to parents, April 22, 1862, Ralph A. Wooster, "With the Confederate Cavalry in the West: The Civil War Experiences of Isaac Dunbar Affleck," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (July 1979), p. 4; entry for November 5, 1861, Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D*, 71-72; John Holt to wife, September 5, 1861, James Mumper, ed., *I Wrote You Word: The Poignant Letters of Private Holt* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, 1993), 13; General Clement Evans to wife, December 23, 1864, Stephens, Jr., ed., *Intrepid Warrior*, 529; on concern for slaves having measles, see James Griffin to wife, January 29, 1865, McArthur and Burton, eds., *Gentleman and an Officer*, 286-87; Tally Simpson to sister, September 4, 1863, Everson and Simpson, Jr., eds., "Far, Far from Home," 282; on a slave not being sick a day, see William to Eleanor Nugent, March 28, 1862, Cash and Howorth, eds., *My Dear Nellie*, 56; on inoculation of slaves, see entry for February 20, 1862, Fleet and Fuller, eds., *Green Mount*, 107; on giving pepper tea and whiskey, see E. John Ellis Memoir [typescript], p. 38, Miscellaneous Collection, LLMVC; on "Caesar," see Robert W. Banks to mother, September 18, 1862, Osborn, ed., "The Civil War Letters of Robert W. Banks," *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 145 (quoted); on a soldier's wife being a "very good Dr.," see Docie to Alfred Flournoy, Jr., July 31, 1864, Alfred Flournoy Papers, LLMVC; on a wife writing to her husband about a slave's cancerous womb, see Mary to Emanuel Gerst, January 20, 1862, Gerst Papers, VHS; on administering pepper, tea, and pills to his servant, Clairborne, see H. P. Cochrane to mother, [December 1,

Confederates sometimes recorded slave deaths with more detachment than the sentimental eulogies veterans penned later. But laconic condolences were not necessarily a result of white indifference to the death of black people. In the mid-nineteenth century, after all, the average American lived only about forty years. In the army, men saw thousands die on the battlefield and from disease. To an extent, they became immune to suffering in a way unknown to them before the war. Nor were blacks as dear to them as whites. They were often beloved “members of the family,” but they were also property and people of a different race. In 1861, a rebel wrote of the death of a comrade’s “boy,” who was “a severe loss to the pocket, but worse than that, he was much attached to his master and valued accordingly.” A slaveholder could measure the loss of a slave in mourning as well as money.⁷³

If enslaved people were property, it did not mean masters always treated them inhumanely or were indifferent toward their suffering. Soldiers worried about countless afflictions, from measles and typhoid fever to smallpox. In May 1864, a Louisianan passed a macabre scene. On the ground were dead horses and Yankees, casualties from a recent battle. Among the dead were slaves with smallpox who had been burned to prevent further infection. Death was everywhere during the Civil War.⁷⁴ E. John Ellis had nothing but praise for a dead slave. “He was a good boy,” he remembered, “a faithful servant and

1863?], Harriet Fitts Ryan, ed., “The Letters of Harden Perkins Cochrane, 1862-1864 (Part V),” *Alabama Review*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (October 1955), pp. 281-82; on the sending home of a sick slave, see Sandie Pendleton to Nancy, April 12, 1862, W. G. Bean, ed., “The Valley Campaign of 1862 as Revealed in Letters of Sandie Pendleton,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (July 1970), p. 347.

⁷³ On a matter-of-fact mentioning of a slave funeral, see entry for June 30, 1863, T. H. Pearce, ed., *Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers* (Wendell, NC: Broadfoot’s Bookmark, 1983), 122; on a “severe loss,” see Edgeworth to Sallie Bird, September 2, 1861, Rozier, ed., *Granite Farm Letters*, 19-20.

⁷⁴ On concern for slaves’ health, see John Foster to sister, August 9, 1862, Foster Family Papers, LLMVC; on burned slaves, see entry for May 26, 1864, Edwin Bearss, ed., *A Louisiana Confederate: Diary of Felix Pierre Poche* (Natchitoches: Louisiana Studies Institute, Northwestern State University, 1972), 125-26.

we regretted his death.” His was about as good a eulogy as a slave could hope for. The dirt was then piled on his grave. Ellis was pleased that the deceased was given a decent burial, one that a Christian and Southerner could appreciate. In a poetic flourish, he wrote that the slave was prepared to “sleep the long unbroken slumber.”⁷⁵ No one better understood how fleeting was life, how quickly he might succumb to the “unbroken slumber,” than a man who served in combat. It might have made him fatalistic, but did not necessarily make him cruel.

Post-war descriptions of the peculiar institution emphasized its paternalistic, sentimental, lighter side. They did not dwell on the miseries of the slave trade, the limitations of slave health care, or the punishment whites believed was necessary to keep black people in line. Perhaps no image of slavery is more powerful than that of a white man whipping a slave. Nineteenth century literature, from the novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave*, featured harrowing scenes of slave punishment. The lash had a prominent place in the Old South, and Confederate soldiers knew that camp servants often had to face a whipping or physical punishment when they misbehaved. Because it came naturally to them or because of wartime strains, troops were not hesitant to discipline slaves.⁷⁶

When blacks disobeyed or displeased their owners, some masters chose not to resort to the lash, thinking it would get better labor out of servants. Among their many worries, slaveholders had to worry about overseers taking discipline too far. If his wife

⁷⁵ E. John Ellis Memoir [typescript], p. 38, Miscellaneous Collection, LLMVC; on lamenting the loss of a good camp servant, see DeWitt Boyd Stone, Jr., *Wandering to Glory: Confederate Veterans Remember Evans’ Brigade* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 12; John Welsh to “Dear Becky,” June 1, 1863, W. G. Bean, “A House Divided: The Civil War Letters of a Virginia Family,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (October 1951), p. 415.

⁷⁶ See, for example, James M. Brannock to Sarah Caroline Brannock, undated letter, James M. Brannock Papers, VHS; James M. Holloway to wife, December 18, 1861, James M. Holloway Papers, VHS; R. H. Brooks to wife, February 8, 1863, Holland, ed., *Keep All My Letters*, 65.

did not protect slaves from their overseer, one soldier wrote home, their servants would “cease to hope for any protection.”⁷⁷ A slave, therefore, might receive no whipping when he “broke the rules.” A rebel in Virginia, for example, wrote of General Henry Wise forcing a disloyal servant to assist him in his garden as punishment.⁷⁸ As with their children, some Confederate troops believed reasoning with servants might prove better than physical punishment. “I would whip them when they needed it,” said one soldier about slaves back home, though he admitted, “I do not know if talking would not do as much good.”⁷⁹

For many Confederates, however, persuasion alone would not keep slaves under control, and those who had lost patience might resort to the lash. Anger could grip even the supposedly kindest of masters.⁸⁰ General William Pender, a religious man who criticized slavery, agreed with most of the claims of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. But in September 1862, even he wrote about whipping one of his servants.⁸¹ And if one is to believe Robert E. Lee’s slaves, their master was not as kind as his reputation deserved. During the war, one Federal had a talk with former Arlington slaves, who called Lee a “hard taskmaster.” And in 1866, in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, an ex-slave by the name of Wesley Norris spoke about Lee’s treatment of him. Norris had tried to escape

⁷⁷ William to Elizabeth Neblett, March 27, 1864, Murr, ed., *Rebel Wife in Texas*, 359 (quoted); Ujanirtus Allen to wife, July 5, 1862, Allen and Bohannon, eds., *Campaigning with “Old Stonewall,”* 119; Robert A. Smith to “My Dear Eliza,” December 23, 1863, William Robert Stevenson, ed., “Robert Alexander Smith: A Southern Son,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, p. 57; Edgeworth to Sallie Bird, November 21, 1861, Rozier, ed., *Granite Farm Letters*, 46; Alfred Flournoy, Jr., to wife, June 17, 1861, Alfred Flournoy Papers, LLMVC.

⁷⁸ Fred Fleet to father, February 20, 1863, Fleet and Fuller, eds., *Green Mount*, 207.

⁷⁹ See Jerome B. Yates to Mrs. Obedience Yates and Marie Yates Swanson, August 14, 1863, Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 194.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Lafayette McLaws to wife, December 30, 1861 (p. 124); McLaws to wife, June 28, 1862 (p. 149), McLaws to wife, July 9, 1864 (p. 238, quoted), John C. Oeffinger, ed., *A Soldier’s General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁸¹ William Dorsey Pender to wife, September 25, 1862, Hassler, ed., *General to his Lady*, 178.

in 1859, but he and his fellow servants were captured and returned to Arlington. When they told Lee they considered themselves free, their master said he would teach them a lesson they would never forget. He moved them to a barn, where they were stripped to the waist and lashed. Lee's overseer supposedly declined whipping them. Lee, however, got a constable to administer fifty lashes on Norris, asking that he "lay it on well." But he apparently was not content with a mere whipping. He ordered his overseer to wash the slaves' backs with brine as an added way of inflicting pain. During the war, Norris escaped. If Lee had ever beat him—though Douglas Southall Freeman believed he never did—Norris had the last laugh. He worked with the Federal government on the Arlington Heights cemetery.⁸²

Confederate soldiers undoubtedly thought themselves fair men, but they were not strangers to the physical punishment of black people. In December 1863, Grant Taylor, for one, wrote of a beating that resulted in the death of a servant. He was not sure whether the incident alone had contributed to the man's death. What was the slave's offense? He

⁸² On Arlington slaves' opinion of their former owner, see Charles F. Bryan, Jr., ed., *Eye of the Storm: A Civil War Odyssey*, written and illustrated by Private Robert Knox Sneden (New York: Free Press, 2000); on Norris' whipping, see John W. Blasingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 467-68; Emory Thomas discusses the problems Lee had with several slaves in 1858 and 1859, a time when Lee was a "novice planter," see Thomas, *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 177-78. Douglas Southall Freeman also discusses the problems Lee had with slaves in 1859. Freeman concludes, "There is no evidence, direct or indirect, that Lee ever had the Arlington slaves or any other Negroes flogged. The usage at Arlington and elsewhere in Virginia among people of Lee's station forbade such a thing." Given the large number of slaves on Lee's estate, and Lee's inexperience handling them, it is unlikely that none of them ever received a whipping. Even the kindest of masters had to enforce rules and maintain discipline. Freeman's assertion that whipping was not used among men of "Lee's station" in Virginia is ridiculous. Furthermore, one questions whether anonymous letters to the editor of the *New York Tribune* in June 1859 complaining of Lee's treatment of slaves and the post-war testimony of Norris, falls outside the domain of "direct or indirect" evidence; see Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography, Volume I* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), 390-91. In regards to Lee's possible punishing of slaves, Roy Blount, Jr., in his brief biography says, "it is impossible to picture Lee beating a slave (as far as we know he never lifted a hand in violence to anybody)," see Blount, Jr., *Robert E. Lee* (New York: Viking, 2003), 198. If post-war testimony about Lee's cruelty was exaggerated, or even fictitious, there is no doubt that he had problems with his slaves; see Robert E. Lee to wife, December 7, 1862, Clifford Dowdey and Louis Manarin, eds., *The Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), 354.

had stolen liquor, gotten drunk, and “cursed and sauced” his master. A few months later, Taylor wrote how his regiment had recently hanged two black men. He was not sure of their crime, but said it was “enough to cause them to be hung.”⁸³ His point was obvious, but the implication went deeper: a soldier did not need to know why another white man wanted to kill a disobedient servant. Few questions were asked when whites punished blacks.

In the antebellum period, as a gesture of their generosity, masters might free slaves, give them gifts, a day off, or a pass to visit another plantation or farm. In Southern eyes, however, one man’s kindness was another man’s weakness. Most soldiers believed that the best means of getting blacks to obey and respect them—as the case might have been with young children—was through physical force. Soldiers were not hesitant to reward good slaves, but punishment often proved necessary for “bad niggers.” In some ways, punishment was done in a paternalistic way, with white “fathers” correcting their “children.” But the fact that slaves were chattel led many soldiers to beat them harder than they would have their own children. In 1863, Arthur Fremantle, a British observer of the war, witnessed two rebel troops pound with ramrods a slave who had tried to steal his master’s horses.⁸⁴ For Southerners, good care for slaves usually was secondary to the demands of enforcing racial control, which depended on physical force. If paternalism affected men’s thinking, slaves’ status as property made them vulnerable to men who might punish them with harshness and impunity.

⁸³ Grant Taylor to wife and children, December 11, 1862, Blomquist and Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War*, 133 (first quotation); Grant Taylor to wife and children, April 22, 1863, Blomquist and Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War*, 177 (second quotation).

⁸⁴ Entry for May 13, 1863, Walter Lord, ed., *The Fremantle Diary: Being the Journal of Lieutenant Colonel James Arthur Lyon Fremantle, Coldstream Guards on his Three Months in the Southern States* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954), 74.

Masters usually would not kill a slave except under extreme circumstances, but they might threaten them for any misbehavior.⁸⁵ Late in the war, for example, a soldier and several of his comrades encountered several black women at a Richmond bakery. When one of the women reached for a piece of bread that a soldier wanted, he told them that if they did not move, he would bayonet them.⁸⁶ These soldiers' attitudes might have reflected a desperation born of the Confederacy's suffering military fortunes, but they probably would not have acted the same way toward white women. Such behavior suggests that whites believed they had to control all blacks, whether or not they belonged to them.⁸⁷ Another soldier remembered a wartime exchange between a comrade and black people onboard a ship. The slaves were singing so loudly that they were keeping other passengers awake. A man on the bunk next to him ran angrily up to the deck, and after a "volley of—secular language," he gave them a choice between "dead silence and dead niggers." Silence prevailed.⁸⁸

Some threats to punish slaves were perhaps more literal than others.⁸⁹ Black people probably knew when their masters were truly threatening them and when they were merely blowing off steam. Some warnings, however, were stark. A white man need not tell anyone the consequences of a black man raping a white woman, but masters set other guidelines for slaves' sex lives. One soldier, for example, wanted a servant to have

⁸⁵ See, for example, William C. Oates, *The War between the Union and the Confederacy* (New York: Neale, 1905), 284-85.

⁸⁶ William C. Jordan, *Some Events and Incidents during the Civil War* (Montgomery, AL: Paragon Press, 1909), 101.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Spencer Glasgow Welch to wife, January 16, 1864, Welch, ed., *Confederate Surgeon's Letters*, 88.

⁸⁸ Edward A. Moore, *The Story of a Cannoneer under Stonewall Jackson* (New York: Neale, 1907), 261; on one soldier's promise to shoot any slaves who made noise around a campfire, see John H. Alexander, *Mosby's Men* (New York: Neale, 1907), 112.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Michael E. Banasik, ed., *Unwritten Chapters of the Civil War West of the River, Volume I, Missouri Brothers in Gray: The Reminiscences and Letters of William J. Bull and John P. Bull* (Iowa City, IA: Camp Pope Bookshop, 1998), 80-81; see also, General Clement Evans to wife, December 11, 1863, Stephens, Jr., *Intrepid Warrior*, 291-92; Evans to wife, December 23, 1864, *ibid.*, 528.

babies and therefore bring another valuable worker into the world. If she did not, he no doubt meant it when he threatened to whip her “most to death or sell her to the meanest man I can find on [the] Red River.” He had bought her for breeding purposes, yet she had not produced children. He had little patience with a slave who was not “virtuous,” but whom would not get pregnant.⁹⁰

Although white Southerners often brutally whipped or beat their slaves, the selling of black people proved the most horrible aspect of the peculiar institution. It usually was far worse psychologically and emotionally for enslaved people than the lash. In the nineteenth century, after all, most parents and teachers physically punished children. Nor were Northern factory workers immune to a beating at the hands of their boss or foreman. But neither white children nor industrial laborers were bought and sold. Many paternalist-minded Confederates were reluctant to separate black couples, though if necessary, the need for money overrode their concern for maintaining slave families. As a father would toward his children, a conscientious master wanted whites and blacks to see him as kind and generous. But masters usually did not share with their chattels any ties of blood. The selling of slaves—which according to the historian Walter Johnson numbered approximately two million in the antebellum period—destroyed marriages and tore children from their parents.⁹¹ Most Southerners, nevertheless, accepted it as a matter of doing business. Concerning the selling of slaves in 1863, one Georgia soldier was blunt, “Let the hiest bidder take them,” he concluded, “but I do not care I am willing any way.”⁹²

⁹⁰ Edwin H. Fay to wife, January 24, 1863, Wiley, ed., *This Infernal War*, 217.

⁹¹ On the number of slaves sold and the slave trade in general, see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁹² R. H. Brooks to wife, April 7, 1863, Holland, ed., *Keep All My Letters*, 77.

After the war, Confederates played down the necessity and desirability of selling slaves. A master's loyalty to his chattels—so the paternalistic ideal went—outweighed the realities of the marketplace.⁹³ But the Southern economy depended on the frequent buying and selling of human beings. Slave-owners were not paternalistic absentees, but men very dependent upon the market. The vast majority did not have enough slaves to enable them to avoid hard work and close supervision of their slaves, and even if they did, they usually did not possess enough to free them from economic concern. One private remembered his non-typical status in 1860: he owned a home in Tennessee and Virginia, both of which had black workers. The historian James Oakes has shown that more typical of the master class were small farmers who owned one makeshift dwelling, five or fewer workers, and who worried about their family getting enough food. Men frequently entered and exited the master class, just as they headed west for new lands and then moved on. Typical of one living in the fluid master class was John Cotton, a soldier who owned no slaves, but hired one out. He wrote home often about Manuel, his hired hand, and how he was assisting in cultivating the crops and maintaining the general welfare of the farm.⁹⁴

No matter how many slaves they owned, masters aspired to greater things. General Albert Sidney Johnston articulated the Southern man's pursuit of riches. "I was a

⁹³ See, for example, C. H. Brannon, "A True Story of the Old South: Notes from a Confederate Diary," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 37 (January 1939), 45.

⁹⁴ Toney, *Privations of a Private*, 12; Oakes, *Ruling Race*, *passim*; see Cotton to wife, December 9, 1862 (pp. 219-20) and Cotton to wife, April 1, 1863 (p. 225), Lucille Griffith, ed., "The Civil War Letters of John W. Cotton," *Alabama Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (October 1950); Cotton to wife, September 16, 1863, Lucille Griffith, ed., "The Civil War Letters of John W. Cotton," *Alabama Review*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (October 1950), p. 292; on hiring out a slave, see also, Chiswell Dabney to mother, May 18, 1862, Trout, ed., *With Pen and Saber*, 69; J. T. Thompson to [?], February 17, 1862, Aurelia Austin, ed., "A Georgia Boy with 'Stonewall Jackson': The Letters of James Thomas Thompson," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (July 1962), p. 322; William Edwards Paxton to "Dear Rebecca," May 6, 1862, Ken Durham, ed., "'Dear Rebecca,': The Civil War Letters of William Edwards Paxton, 1861-1863," *Louisiana History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring 1979), p. 188.

planter in a small way with ideas of expansion,” he wrote in 1860. Had his plans been realized, they would have provided “the means of an ‘accumulation of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.’ ”⁹⁵ The cotton boom of the 1850s had led many Southerners to believe that economic good times would continue into the 1860s. As William J. Cooper has shown, on the eve of secession, cotton growers approached the coming years with optimism, not fear.⁹⁶ Masters obtained wealth even as Yankees invaded the South and blacks left for the Federals. Slave-trading and speculation did not halt. In fact, such activities became even more frantic. Some men found themselves ruined; others found the war kept the market vibrant and attractive, if increasingly risky. The conflict made the Southern economy highly unstable, but also presented opportunities for shrewd masters and would-be slaveholders.

Historians have written little about the slave trade during the Civil War. “Not surprisingly,” says Michael Tadman, the sectional conflict “had a markedly depressing effect on the trade in slaves.” But Tadman’s emphasis is on the antebellum rather than wartime years. He concedes that for his study, “The Civil War period is not of great importance ... but it is worth noting that the war did not altogether halt the trade.” Indeed, it did not. The conflict had a complex, but not necessarily negative effect, on the slave trade. Despite fluctuating prices and shortages, throughout the war, the slave market showed resilience.⁹⁷ As one historian has written of Missouri, “it is surprising how slaves

⁹⁵ Albert Sidney Johnston to daughter, January 4, 1860, Arthur Marvin Shaw, ed., “Albert Sidney Johnston in Texas Letters to Relatives in Kentucky, 1847-1860,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (July 1942), p. 317.

⁹⁶ William J. Cooper, “The Cotton Crisis: Another Look,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (April 1975), pp. 381-391; on the profitability of slavery in Texas in the antebellum period, see also, Randolph B. Campbell and Richard G. Lowe, “Some Economic Aspects of Antebellum Texas Agriculture,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (April 1979), pp. 353-78.

⁹⁷ See Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); 105 (first quotation), 44 (second quotation). Of the slave trade

persisted as property in the State during the War.”⁹⁸ Missouri was not a Confederate state and thus one the Emancipation Proclamation did not affect. But it was a place ravaged by war. Even if Missouri remained in the Union, slavery did not last any longer there than it did elsewhere. The continued high prices of Missouri slaves are suggestive of similar trends in the Confederacy. In 1860, the average slave had brought \$1,500 in Virginia and \$1,800 in New Orleans. In 1863, Arthur Fremantle wrote of Texans who constantly spoke of slave prices. An able-bodied male went for the impressive sum of \$2,500 and a seamstress for \$3,500. Most Southerners could not afford such costly workers. Since the army paid them only \$11 a month (an amount not increased until 1864), it would take Confederate soldiers a long time before they could save enough money to buy a servant.⁹⁹

For rebel troops that did own black people, slaves could provide a ready form of cash. Masters might not have to relinquish theirs, but if the worst came, they could sell them. One soldier preferred not to unload some of his slaves, but believed he had already suffered enough because of “tenderness.”¹⁰⁰ Slave-owners, indeed, had to face the possibility that they might separate black families. In the view of most of them, only a softhearted master never considered it. In December 1863, one Confederate wrote testily to his father about not keeping a slave couple together. “I thought that you would leave the purchase of the negro woman to my discretion,” he complained, “she is sold ... so it is

during the war, Bell Wiley has written, “While the slave trade ... was marked by many fluctuations ... the general tendency from the beginning to the end of the conflict was toward an increase in the current prices of Negroes, a decrease in their real value, and a shrinkage in the volume of the trade,” see *Southern Negroes*, 97.

⁹⁸ Harrison A. Trexler, “Values of Slaves in Missouri,” *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (January 1914), pp. 74.

⁹⁹ On the price of a slave in 1860 Virginia, see Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees*, 5; on prices in Texas, see entry for April 29, 1863, Lord, ed., *Fremantle Diary*, 48; on the price of slaves in Virginia and New Orleans, see Clement Eaton, *The Civilization of the Old South: Writings of Clement Eaton* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 107.

¹⁰⁰ William Alexander Thom to brother, April 26, 1863, Catherine Thom Bartlett, ed., “My Dear Brother”: *A Confederate Chronicle* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1952), 93.

too late.” Riley, the groom-to-be in this interrupted slave marriage, was a servant who enjoyed a good reputation in his Florida community. Despite his closeness to whites, however, the market, not paternalism, dictated his future.¹⁰¹

By the end of 1861, about the government’s ability to keep the economy stable, one soldier was skeptical. He reasoned that no government “has ever yet paid at par its revolutionary liabilities.” He wanted his father-in-law to sell land for slaves, and he noted that Missourians put slave prices low, but land prices high. In April 1862, another rebel wrote of a comrade who asked his factor for money. The Federals had left him with only two slaves he could mortgage. Keeping one’s eye on slavery served as a gauge for Confederate fortunes as well as one’s financial standing. As the Yankees penetrated the South further, Confederate troops worried about the war upsetting the usual pattern of buying and selling slaves. By late 1862, the market in some states had suffered much disruption, but elsewhere it had not. That October, one lieutenant had enough confidence in the economy to buy a plantation in middle Georgia—a 1,400 acre spread at ten dollars per acre. He saw the need for four additional slave dwellings, but was pleased with the overseer’s house, gin house, corncribs, and slave houses.¹⁰² Even after the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, many Confederates were thriving as slaveholders.

Masters liked to think of themselves in a paternalistic light, but they could not ignore the demands of the market. In November 1862, James Stubbs said he did not want

¹⁰¹ Colonel James Barrow to father, December 23, 1863, quoted in E. Merton Coulter, “Lost Generation: The Life and Death of James Barrow, CSA,” *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 1 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1956), 88-89.

¹⁰² Milton Leverett to mother, April 8, 1862, Taylor, *et al.*, eds., *Leverett Letters*, 115-16; Malinda to Grant Taylor, May 8, 1862, Blomquist and Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War*, 15; G. W. Bolton to father, December 18, 1862, Sue Lyles Eakin and Morgan Peoples, eds., “*In Defense of My Country*”: *The Letters of a Shiloh Confederate Soldier, Sergeant George Washington Bolton* (Bernice, LA: Published for the Corney Creek Festival, 1983), 21; G. M. McDowell to father, November 27, 1862, George M. McDowell Letter, VHS. Col. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to father, October 16, 1862, Myers, ed., *Children of Pride*, 303-06.

to separate some of his slaves. He had an emotional attachment to them, but what was important was the safety of his investment. As with any supervisor, he was careful about maintaining good morale. He feared his male slave, named John, had heard rumors about his master's debts, which might make him fear sale—and he might decide to flee with his “Molly” before that happened. For the anxious master, a slave's fears could infect others. Stubbs, therefore, vowed to keep the couple together and resolved to buy John even at “an extravagant price.” Besides, he believed, John was good and faithful, a better servant than Molly. Stubbs thought his slaves had reason to trust him. “I never deceive my negroes,” he wrote, “as I have never done children either my ... own or others.”¹⁰³ Stubbs' views were paternalistic and financially driven. What is more important than determining which was stronger in his mind is seeing how he tried to remain a master despite the war's negative effects on slavery.

Amid a war on their own soil, many in the master class still enjoyed good times. “It is a great relief for me to hear,” said one soldier amid the relative high times of January 1863, “that my negroes ... are a pecuniary advantage & a comfort too.”¹⁰⁴ He found it a matter of pride and justice that he had recently made a remittance to a man to whom he owed money. Emancipation had not yet come to his doorstep. Until then, he continued to act as Southerners believed any master should. In January 1863, another soldier was optimistic that slaves were going to be worth “2 & 3000 a piece when this war is over.”¹⁰⁵ When he wrote these words, Lee's surrender was a long way off.

In February 1863, one woman wrote to her husband, saying there was an effective freeze on the market. “I have heard of no one buying or selling,” she told him. Rather

¹⁰³ Stubbs to brother, November 16, 1862, Stubbs Papers, LLMVC.

¹⁰⁴ Archibald Bolling to Mr. Armistead, January 3, 1863, Armistead and Blanton Family Papers, VHS.

¹⁰⁵ Edwin H. Fay to wife, January 24, 1863, Wiley, ed., “*This Infernal War*,” 217.

than giving up on the slave trade, white people were engaged in a watching and waiting status regarding their chattels. A high demand for black workers still existed, but buyers must express, as always, caution. In many areas, Yankee armies might seize slaves, or blacks might escape to Union lines. Even so, Confederates were eager to hire or buy slaves for work in camp and at home. In the spring of 1863, one soldier wrote, “Pay almost any price rather than not get [a slave].”¹⁰⁶ A servant might prove costly in the short run, but beneficial later on. In wartime, many whites believed they could avoid the perils of speculating in the market in human flesh.

In wartime, markets fluctuated and Northerners threatened to undo the whole slaveholding enterprise in a blow. For most masters, the contingencies of war added to the problems that farmers and planters faced in an agrarian economy. Given that they might die in the army, soldiers wanted to get their finances in order, making as much money for their families before they were killed or succumbed to disease. Even better-off slaveholders understood the gravity of their financial situation. In March 1863, Theophilus Perry told his wife, Harriet, that he did not want government money for his slaves. “Negro” property was far more reliable legal tender. “For Gods sake,” he told her, “buy our freedom from our creditors.”¹⁰⁷ He was happy to get whatever he could on the market. Yet, Perry would not see the end of the war. He was killed in the 1864 Red River campaign. In November 1863, he had written a last will and testament in which he left the care of his slaves to his wife.¹⁰⁸ It was a timely decision, and it shows that unless

¹⁰⁶ Harriet to Theophilus Perry, February 8, 1863, Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousand*, 94 (first quotation); letter of April 20, 1863, Elisha Franklin Paxton, *Memoir and Memorials: Elisha Franklin Paxton, Brigadier General, CSA: Composed of his Letters from Camp and Field* (New York: Neale, 1907), 81 (second quotation).

¹⁰⁷ Theophilus to Harriet Perry, March 8, 1863, Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousand*, 110.

¹⁰⁸ Will dated November 13, 1863, Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousand*, 167.

Yankees took their slaves, Confederates, even in death, wanted to keep blacks tied to the soil.

After the North issued the Emancipation Proclamation and the serious Confederate losses of 1863, rebel troops still sold enslaved people at a profit. Even in the most ravaged of states, such as Virginia, men continued to get high prices for them.¹⁰⁹ Blacks who left masters for the Federal lines were a loss to the pocketbook, but they increased the value of another man's slave. Slaves were a different commodity from other, more essential items, but at times, they were no less scarce or in demand. In wartime, many soldiers complained of having no money to buy badly needed servants. Even in the wake of Southern reverses, some Confederates seemed concerned only with making money. In June 1863, one slaveholding soldier was angered that there were citizens who were "getting rich & buying negroes" while men in the army were barefoot, poorly shod, and wearing clothes they had not changed in weeks. "I have an insufferable hatred for many men at home," he said. "They are such base demagogue & hypocrits [sic]."¹¹⁰ But there were also soldiers who benefited from the disruption that emancipation caused. In October 1863, in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, rebels stole and ran off slaves and then sold them for thousands of dollars. "Such rascality deserves exposure and the severest condemnation of all honest men," said a disapproving observer.¹¹¹ A year later, writing from Arkansas, a commander wrote of citizens in far-off Virginia who had taken a loyalty oath to the United States and then hired out their slaves, who had supposedly been liberated. And in his theater of combat, cotton speculation, he

¹⁰⁹ On getting between 3,500 and 4,000 dollars for one slave, see John S. Lewis to Mrs. Nancy Lewis, July 31, 1863, Evans, ed., *16th Mississippi*, 187; on getting "very good prices up here [Virginia]" for servants, see Jerome B. Yates to Mrs. Obedience Yates, August 21, 1863, *ibid.*, 197.

¹¹⁰ Theophilus to Harriet Perry, June 20, 1863, Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousand*, 143.

¹¹¹ E. P. Petty to wife, October 3, 1863, Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill*, 262.

believed, went hand-in-hand with “market fraud.” Were such activities to continue, he said, “it will be better to abandon this country altogether.”¹¹² In the eyes of such soldiers, although a war raged, men should act ethically. They should not make a profit from slavery at the expense of supporting the cause.

Later in the war, some soldiers grew dubious of slavery’s and the Confederacy’s fortunes. In October 1863, one Alabaman said that money would have little value within six months. He thought it better to sell slaves before their price fell any further. He considered giving his farm and slaves to someone until the war ended. In the meantime, he and his wife needed to keep the home from “going to wreck.” He knew they could not feed his slaves well at present, but hoped their servants understood. After all, he asserted, no one would feed them better than they would.¹¹³ Paternalistic gestures, however, were not enough to keep men financially afloat.

For those with investments in slaves, prices did fall in some areas, but the cost of purchasing them—along with most Confederate goods—remained prohibitive. In February 1864, one soldier wrote of a slave auction where a “white woman” [likely a light-skinned mulatto], an infant, her mother, and husband brought \$13,000. Most Confederates did not have nearly that much to spend. Inflation contributed to rising slave prices, and persistent demand for servants kept those prices even higher. As long as slaves lived in the South, people would buy them. Many areas of the Confederacy suffered great losses long before Lee’s surrender. Slaveholders, however, did not necessarily expect disaster. In February 1864, one soldier hoped that the country would soon find itself in a state of “peace and safety,” even if he did not know when that would

¹¹² J. O. Shelby to Colonel J. F. Belton, June 13, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Pt. 4, p. 670.

¹¹³ Mims to wife, October 17, 1863, “Letters of Maj. W. J. Mims,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 215.

happen. In the meantime, he asked rhetorically, “what had better be done?” What could be done was attend to everyday activities concerning the farm and its slaves, which he entrusted to his mother.¹¹⁴ If the slave market increasingly was risky, the war did not lead men to abandon the peculiar institution, but rather attend to it as they usually did—that is, until the Confederate army decided the conflict. Late in the war, the slave market continued to find buyers and sellers. In mid 1864, one rebel had trouble finding a servant he could purchase. Months later, even as the Confederacy crumbled, he wanted a nurse for his wife—no matter what the price. In March 1865, he wrote that he had tried to buy a slave girl, but sellers wanted specie, “and at very high prices at that.”¹¹⁵

As the South’s fortunes worsened, many masters scrambled to move, sell, or hire out their chattels. In August 1864, in the trenches at Petersburg, a soldier was upset to hear about a servant named Ellen “cutting up with the Parks family.” Although he would have preferred to go home to whip her himself, he decided he would instead sell her. He said he might “trade [her] for real estate,” but made it clear that “I don’t want money now unless it is gold or silver.”¹¹⁶ In October, General Clement Evans wanted his slaves sold

¹¹⁴ On arranging finances, see Leander Huckaby to father and family, May 9, 1862 (p. 61); Leander Huckaby to father, July 31, 1862 (p. 62), Donald E. Reynolds, ed., “A Mississippian in Lee’s Army: The Letters of Leander Huckaby, Part I,” *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (February 1974); E. P. Petty to wife, March 13, 1863, Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill*, 153; on falling slave prices, see Frederic to Milton Leverett, March 8, 1864, Taylor, *et al.*, eds., *Leverett Letters*, 288; on a slave auction, see Robert C. Gilliam to wife, February 20, 1864, Hudson, ed., “From Parclifta to Marks’ Mill: The Civil War Correspondence of Lieutenant Robert C. Gilliam,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3, p. 289 (quoted); on division of an estate, see L. R. Mills to John Mills, January 12, 1864, George T. Harmon, ed., “Letters of Lt. Luther Rice Mills,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 4, Nos. 1-4 (January-October 1927), pp. 295-96; prices were also seen as high in W. H. Winn’s letter to family, April 4, 1862, Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 223-24; David to Amanda McRaven, July 4, 1864, Louis A. Brown, ed., “Correspondence of David Olando McRaven and Amanda Nantz McRaven,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (January 1949), p. 45; on a description of suffering in the Tennessee Valley, see diary entry for March 17, 1864, Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Holding the Line, The Third Tennessee Infantry, 1861-1864* by Flavel Barber (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), 167.

¹¹⁵ See Edwin Fay to wife, June 17, 1864 (p. 400); Fay to wife, January 1, 1865 (p. 409); Fay to wife, March 2, 1865 (p. 424); and Fay to wife, March 13, 1865 (p. 435, quoted); Wiley, ed., “*This Infernal War.*”

¹¹⁶ Thomas Jackson Strayhorn to sister, August 7, 1864, Henry McGilbert Wagstaff, ed., “Letters of Thomas Jackson Trayhorn,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (October 1936), p. 327.

and was happy to get real estate for them.¹¹⁷ By the fall of 1864, land proved a much safer bet than other kinds of “property.” When it came to losing a slave’s love or the cash value of a servant, Confederates chose to unload their slaves on a willing buyer. White loyalties to their workers usually were only skin deep.

As defeat became more real, slaveholders calculated how emancipation would affect their finances. “We have not grown rich before the war began,” said Samuel Wiley to his wife in November 1864, “and are rapidly going down hill now.” He placed the blame for his economic woes on “the presence and expense of an idle, lazy, sickly, deceitful, discontented family of negroes.” His assessment of his slaves contrasted with Southerners who dwelled on the contented, happy, helpful servants depicted in Lost Cause and post-war literature. Wiley’s slaves instead acted like a sponge, soaking up all his profits. A few had served him well, but they were not numerous enough to brighten his spirits.¹¹⁸ Combined with Wiley’s troubles were Confederate taxation and the high prices that crippled the economy. War was hell in more ways than one. Even those that did not have their homes burned by Yankees faced ruin.

But soldiers found that if slaves were not always the most valuable commodity, they were worth more than rebel money. As defeat loomed, Confederates squeezed every dollar out of the peculiar institution that they could. As Hugh Montgomery hoped in January 1865, “We may be able to get some work out of the negroes & make some

¹¹⁷ General Clement Evans to wife, October 3, 1864, Stephens, Jr., ed., *Intrepid Warrior*, 463.

¹¹⁸ Samuel Wiley to Eliza DeWitt Wiley, November 26, 1864, Rozier, ed., *Granite Farm Letters*, 215; on a similar view, see John Bratton to wife, January 2, 1865 (p. 250); Bratton to wife, January 27, 1865 (p. 250-51), J. Luke Austin, ed., *General John Bratton: Appomattox to Sumter in Letters to His Wife* (Sewanee, TN: Proctor’s Hall Press, 2003); on hiring out a slave and the need to collect money while he was busy in the army, see George W. Wick to Penelope Ann Majette, February 2, 1865, Majette Family Papers, VHS.

money.”¹¹⁹ And even into the last days of the war, some were not convinced that slavery was doomed. On April 1, 1865, one hopeful Confederate wrote of General Johnston’s good chances against the Federals, even if Richmond fell. Were Lee’s army to move to North Carolina, he would try to move his father’s slaves further south, even though he did not imagine he could get to it.¹²⁰ As long as there were large Confederate armies, Southerners believed slavery could survive.

Before the Confederacy’s surrender, soldiers tried to find areas of the South that were free of threats to human bondage. In early 1864, writing from a Maryland prison, one Confederate said, “I am grateful that there is yet territory accessible to us where the ‘peculiar institution’ still exists, and I hope you may *all* be able to move to it in case this state be forever lost to the Confederacy.”¹²¹ Much of the South never saw Northern troops, but masters could never get too far away from them. For the most desperate rebels, Texas proved an attractive option. Later in the conflict, it became a refuge for those who wanted to live in a region that the war had mostly left untouched. Since Texas lay far west, it proved less likely than other states to feel the effects of emancipation. In December 1862, one soldier described Arkansas as “awful,” “forlorn,” and “God forsaken.” Everyone, it seemed, was leaving for Texas and taking their slaves with them. Destruction fell upon Arkansas’ southern neighbor as well. In Louisiana, the war had ruined the sugar market and the Yankees had plundered the countryside and run off

¹¹⁹ Hugh W. Montgomery to A. W. Hyatt, January 24, 1865, Arthur W. Hyatt Papers, Vol. 2, LLMVC; on hiring out a slave and the need to collect money while he was busy in the army, see George W. Wick to Penelope Ann Majette, February 2, 1865, Majette Family Papers, VHS.

¹²⁰ U. G. Owen to wife, April 1, 1865, Enoch L. Mitchell, ed., “Letters of a Confederate Surgeon in the Army of Tennessee to his Wife,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (June 1946), p. 180.

¹²¹ James Anderson to “Dear Mary,” [February or early March 1864], George M. Anderson, S. J., ed., “A Captured Confederate Officer: Nine Letters from Captain James Anderson to his Family,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (March 1981), p. 65.

slaves.¹²² In April 1863, however, a Texas wife wrote home to say how the servants were looking forward to making a good crop. On the basis of such reassurances, many soldiers thought they could keep their slaves longer if they sent them west of the Sabine River. Others who fled to Texas simply wanted to make a fresh start. In September 1863, a soldier wrote that his wife might want to flee to Texas. He wanted her to do anything rather than live, as she presently was, near a camp of black Federal troops.¹²³

For those in the eastern Confederacy, the move to Texas proved a trying and dangerous one, and it was not always far enough for masters to escape danger. Even those close to Texas hesitated to move there. In August 1863, an Arkansas soldier wrote home, saying “running negroes to Texas is played out.” He instead wanted his wife to purchase a servant. “A negro is as certain as Confederate money,” he said, and he wanted to keep buying them. He would have done so himself, but could not obtain a leave of absence to do it. Texas was not always free from Northern armies. In September 1863, John Magruder wrote that the Federals were planning an invasion of the state. In response, he believed planters should move their chattels inland. In 1864, the Red River campaign would bring the war to the “Lone Star State.”¹²⁴

¹²² On the sad state of Arkansas, see E. P. Petty to wife, December 3, 1862 (p. 104) and E. P. Petty to wife, May 1863 (p. 213), Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill*; on the ruin of Arkansas and its subsequent effect on Texas, see diary entry for November 24 [1862?], Arthur Marvin Shaw, ed., “A Texas Ranger Company at the Battle of Arkansas Post,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter 1950), p. 275; on the flight of planters to Texas in 1863, see entry for May 2 (p. 56), May 7 (p. 63, 65) and May 10 (p. 68), Lord, ed., *Fremantle Diary*; on the importance of Texas as a new frontier for slavery, see Randolph B. Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

¹²³ Elizabeth to William Neblett, April 26, 1863, Murr, ed., *Rebel Wife in Texas*, 97; John Foster to father, May 21, 1863, Foster Family Papers, LLMVC; on “demoralized” black troops, see William to Eleanor Nugent, September 25, 1863, Cash and Howorth, eds., *My Dear Nellie*, 136.

¹²⁴ Lt. William Wakefield Garner to wife, August 18, 1863, D. D. McBrien, ed., “Letters of an Arkansas Confederate Soldier,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 2, Nos. 1-4 (March-December 1943), p. 182; Magruder to Brigadier-General Lockett, September 10, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, p. 220.

Texas, nevertheless, survived the war relatively untouched. When Lee surrendered, it had more hard money than the rest of the Confederacy combined.¹²⁵ The state's isolation meant slavery and Confederate authority survived longer than anywhere else. In January 1865, one soldier heard of Congress' plan to free the slaves in return for European recognition. In response, men were moving their slaves to western Texas in order to sell them for gold, and he wished he could have done the same.¹²⁶ More so than other places, Texas was where whites could remain masters over the black race.

In conclusion, to a large degree, soldiers and slaves in Confederate camps experienced the same relationship that had governed the South for generations. Whites and blacks tried to coexist as "family" members under the supposed security of masters' paternalism. Such a benevolent relationship undoubtedly was stronger in the white than the black mind, yet one cannot discount that true affection existed between white and black people. The war, nevertheless, tested the strength of, and often broke, such an interracial alliance. Despite the good feeling that often existed between the races, the black man was foremost a worker who white Southerners used for whatever purposes they desired. If servants did not please their masters, Confederate soldiers sold or punished them at will. Regardless of how they perceived or treated their slaves, rebel troops worked to maintain slavery and obtain profit from it. Even a war, most believed, could not destroy an institution that had survived for so long and dominated Southern economic and social life.

¹²⁵ Charles Roland, *The Confederacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 126.

¹²⁶ David Pierson to William H. Pierson, January 11, 1865, Thomas W. Cutrer and T. Michael Parrish, eds., *Brothers in Gray: The Civil War Letters of the Pierson Family* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 222.

IV
“WE CRUSHED THEIR FREEDOM”:
EMANCIPATION, BLACK LOYALTY, AND THE ARMY’S STRUGGLE FOR
RACIAL CONTROL

Despite the white consensus on the goodness of the peculiar institution, slavery posed problems for the South. Soldiers supported human bondage and white supremacy, but the 1862 “Twenty Slave” law caused tensions between the planter and yeoman classes. These tensions did not fatally undermine the Confederate war effort, but in 1862, the South faced another problem regarding slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation.¹ The Proclamation hoped to destroy slavery and Southern unity, but in the eyes of Confederate soldiers, it did not. Lincoln’s edict spurred rebel troops to make even more concerted efforts against the Federal government and led to a closer embrace of slavery. As John Cimprich shows in his analysis of wartime Tennessee, most white people “struggled desperately” to maintain human bondage. “The institution did not die quietly,” Cimprich concludes, “but screaming and clawing for survival.”² In the Confederate army, soldiers similarly held onto the peculiar institution for as long as possible. Through the use of force as well as the help of loyal black people, rebel troops were confident that they could assure the survival of human bondage in the South.

¹ The classic study on Lincoln’s edict is John Hope Franklin’s *The Emancipation Proclamation* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1963); see also, Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy Toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); Alan Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004); Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); an assessment of the Proclamation’s effect on slaves can be found in Ira Berlin, *et al.*, *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), which argues that slaves, more so than Lincoln’s policies, freed themselves. A defense of Abraham Lincoln as the Great Emancipator can be found in Lawanda Cox, *Lincoln and Black Freedom: A Study in Presidential Leadership* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981).

² Cimprich quoted in Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 47; see also, Stephen Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

Emancipation was not an inevitable outcome of the Civil War. Confederate soldiers believed they could prevent the freeing of the slaves, not only because of the Union's cautious policy regarding abolition—they also had faith in the South's long-standing resourcefulness in controlling the slave population. Historians have often showed how slaves resisted their masters and opposed white Southerners' authority. Without ignoring the importance of resistance and agency in the world of plantation blacks and other enslaved people, slaves faced practical and psychological boundaries that impeded the throwing off of their chains.³ Through laws that constricted black mobility, statutes that prevented slave literacy, and the use of mounted patrols and individual acts of punishment, white Southerners had worked hard—though not always successfully—to assure that black people remained enslaved. The difficulties inherent in slaves gaining their freedom were evident in the lack of successful slave revolts and the limited number of runaways ever making it to Northern soil.⁴

During the Civil War, many slaves fled to the Yankees, but many more decided to remain where they lived and worked. Most enslaved people realized that the Federal government had only a limited ability to change the racial power relationship in the South. Where the Federal army was, slaves might gain their freedom, but where it was not, black people had to find other ways to challenge the Confederacy, if they challenged it at all. And despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of slaves fled Confederate lines, most white Southerners either believed their own servants would prove loyal or that

³ For recent books on the subject of slave resistance, see Stephanie H. M. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Daniel E. Walker, *No More, No More: Slavery and Cultural Resistance in Havana and New Orleans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

⁴ On rebellions, see Eugene Genovese, *Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); on the flight of slaves from the plantation, see John Hope Franklin, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

emancipation meant nothing unless the Union triumphed. As a result of vigorous policing of the black population as well as the security that Confederate victories ensured, rebel troops believed they could stop the spread of emancipation. As Stephen Ash shows in his study of occupied areas of the Confederacy, for whites, “the lesson was plain: the more violence they were able to inflict on blacks, the more thorough was their racial mastery. It was a lesson they ... would see confirmed again and again in the years to come.”⁵ No segment of Southern society used more violence to prevent emancipation than the Confederate military.

Lincoln’s issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, nevertheless, underscored the mixed loyalties of black people. It was owing to the limitations of whites’ racial mindset that they saw slaves as either Sambo or Nat Turner—as inherently subservient or potentially homicidal. Confederates ultimately believed Sambo would prove the more common of the two.⁶ Yet, in wartime, they often worried that blacks might flee or otherwise rebel. One reason lay in white Southerners’ belief that enslaved people were predisposed to abandoning their masters. In the antebellum period, Dr. Samuel

⁵ Ash quoted in Gallagher, *Confederate War*, 48.

⁶ The Sambo image persisted well into the twentieth century. The first major work dealing with plantation slavery, U. B. Phillips’ *American Negro Slavery* (New York: D. Appleton, 1918), portrayed slaves in the Sambo image of Old South lore: slaves were happy, contented, and rarely rebelled against paternalistic masters. Carter Woodson, in his work, *The Negro in Our History* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1926), was the first influential historian to criticize Phillips’ methodology. Richard Hofstadter was another early critic of Phillips’ work. He asserted that it was not representative of Southern slaveholders, as Phillips’ sample comprised only the planter elite; see Hofstadter, “U. B. Phillips and the Plantation Legend” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (April 1944), pp. 109-24; Woodson’s and Hofstadter’s strictures of the Phillip’s thesis led the way to Kenneth M. Stampp’s *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), which portrayed slavery as a horrible condition for blacks, but also explored the ways that slaves challenged their masters. In 1959, in his work *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), Stanley Elkins, whose politics were much different from Phillips’, showed how brutal slavery was, so much so that the institution had deprived African Americans of what later historians would label “agency.” In trying to show how dehumanizing slavery was, Elkins ignored the strength of the black community as well as the individual slave’s power to make involuntary servitude a bearable condition. Elkins, then, made slaves into something much like Phillips’ “Sambo.” Historians since then have tried to maintain a balance between black agency and the brutalities of slavery.

Cartwright had put forth his theories on the link between rebelliousness and the biology of black people. Black blood, Cartwright believed, made “Negroes” unruly, especially in their desire to escape, which he called *Drapetomania*.⁷ A second reason lay more in the logic of the proslavery argument: if slaves gave their allegiance to those who best cared for them, the Federal army might lure them away with promises of good treatment. In either case, Southerners used force as the best means of keeping blacks in bondage.

What is important in discussing Confederate soldiers and emancipation is not the fact that many slaves resisted their masters and that their actions weakened the rebellion, rather, it is the effect of black disloyalty and resistance on troops’ morale and their conduct of the war. Even if many slaves fled Confederate lines, rebel soldiers continued to believe in black loyalty. The “restrained” kinds of black resistance that Armstead Robinson has examined gave troops reason to think such actions were insignificant or that they could stop them from becoming worse.⁸ And given the formidable strength of the Southern military into late 1864 and early 1865, Confederates were confident that they could contain rebelliousness among the slave population. Despite the opportunities the war gave them to resist their owners, millions of enslaved people did not flee their masters, and thousands gave their active support to the Confederacy. Black people were not always reliable, but rebel soldiers believed they could trust them and maintain slavery indefinitely.

⁷ On Cartwright and his racial theories, see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 130, 136, 142, 146, 198; see also, James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 215; Stamp, *Peculiar Institution*, 102, 109, 309.

⁸ On “restrained” resistance, see Armstead L. Robinson, “Day of Jubilo: Civil War and the Demise of Slavery in the Mississippi Valley, 1861-1865,” (Ph.D., dissertation, University of Rochester, 1976), 571.

After the war, most veterans forgot or played down the difficulty the Confederacy experienced in trying to control its black population. Depictions of slaves' wartime behavior contained little room for nuance. In veterans' eyes, most of them were loyal Sambos who never challenged their masters' authority. If black people resisted anyone, they believed, it was the Yankees. For them, slaves were not passive actors in the drama of war, but people who embraced the Confederacy. In the words of one article in *Confederate Veteran*, the devotion of black people had "no equal in all history." Only carpetbagger rule supposedly ruined the relationship between Southern blacks and whites. The *Veteran* believed whites should dedicate statues to slaves, since they had proven as valuable as any other Confederate.⁹ Such monuments, however, already existed in the South. One former soldier noted that South Carolinians had erected one in Fort Mill to blacks who had served in the war. "It is a beautiful shaft," he noted, "and stands near the Confederate Monument."¹⁰ In conformity to the segregated racial environment of the New South, both whites and blacks could claim themselves Confederates, though their historical markers were separated from one another. White Southerners, nevertheless, wanted to acknowledge black people's role in the Civil War, as long as it was on the terms of Confederate veterans.

The faithful slave, therefore, became an integral part of the Lost Cause and post-war memory of the war. Veterans believed blacks deserved recognition for the sacrifices they had made during the war. Long after the conflict, some veterans liked to have

⁹ John W. Paulett, "Honor for the Old Time Negro," *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 20 (1912), p. 410; on the subject of slaves in Civil War monuments, see Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ James Dinkins, "The Negroes as Slaves," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 35 (1907), p. 67.

pictures taken of themselves beside their former servants.¹¹ Other black men of loyal credentials could claim themselves Confederates and attend reunion meetings.¹² For veterans, blacks were comrades who went everywhere with their white masters. “They shared with us our hardships, and at times even our dangers,” said one. They “entered into our sports and jests, and never were more joyous than when taking part with us in our horse races.”¹³ Former Confederates liked to remember the “old time darkie,” just as they preferred to remember the battles of Chickamauga and Chancellorsville rather than those at Franklin and Five Forks.¹⁴

In soldiers’ post-war writings, slave loyalty occasionally took dramatic forms. One type involved black men who followed rebel troops into prison.¹⁵ One veteran

¹¹ Two pictures in the same edition of *Confederate Veteran* illustrate how “faithful” slaves were portrayed in very different ways. One, accompanying a piece entitled “Typical of the Old South,” features John M’Kinney, an old soldier, sitting in a rocking chair on the right side of the picture, his hands in his lap. Clad in a suit and hat, his right leg crossed over his left, he glowers to the right of the camera. His former servant “Ham” stands to his right, wearing a frilly white apron. “Ham” looks uncomfortable; his long white apron makes him look ridiculous in contrast to his stern looking former master. In contrast is another photograph in the same edition. James Avirett, a former army chaplain, sits beside his “old colored camp servant,” named “Black Hawk.” The picture is almost a mirror image of M’Kinney’s. Avirett sits on the left hand side of the picture; his left leg is crossed over his right. He looks, not as menacingly as M’Kinney, to the left of the camera. To his left is “Black Hawk,” who stands in a suit and tie, his hands clasped near his middle with a confident, dignified look at the camera; see “Typical of the Old South,” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 20 (1912), p. 202; “Rev. James Battle Avirett,” *ibid*, p. 336.

¹² On the presence of African Americans at reunion meetings, see, for example, John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 383; on a black, former slave legislator who voted in favor of a Confederate Soldier’s Home, see “With the Old Vets of Georgia: Representative Styles, the Colored Law-Maker, Gets a Cane,” from the *Atlanta Constitution*, quoted in Lizzie Cary Daniel, *Confederate Scrap-book* (Richmond, VA: J. L. Hill, 1893), 109-10.

¹³ Captain George Baylor, “The Army Negro,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 31 (1903), p. 365.

¹⁴ On the remembrance of black Confederates, see J. P. Austin, *The Blue and the Gray: Sketches of a Portion of the Unwritten History of the Great American Civil War* (Atlanta: Franklin Printing and Publishing, 1899), 208.

¹⁵ See, for example, Dinkins, “The Negroes as Slaves,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 35, pp. 62-63; A. M. Keiley, *In Vinculus; or, the Prisoner of War* (New York: Blelock and Company, 1866), 82-83; see also, Michael E. Banasik, ed., *Unwritten Chapters of the Civil War West of the River, Volume I: Missouri Brothers in Gray: The Reminiscences and Letters of William J. Bull and John P. Bull* (Iowa City, IA: Camp Pope Bookshop, 1998), 81; on other slaves who would not take the loyalty oath, see entry for September 1864, William Whatley Pierson and Bell Irvin Wiley, eds., *Whipt ’em Everytime: The Diary of Bartlett Yancey Malone* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1960), 111; Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Holding the Line: The Third Tennessee Infantry, 1861-1864* by Flavel C. Barber (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), 49; Howell Carter, *A Cavalryman’s Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New Orleans: American Printing Company, 1900), 70-71.

recalled an imprisoned black man who was, as he put it, a “hardened dyed-in-the-wool rebel.”¹⁶ In soldiers’ eyes, blacks who suffered in captivity were doubly bound and thus twice as loyal. They were slave to master and Yankee. In the view of soldiers, the latter was the worst type of slave, for he endured a form of servitude under the heel of Northern masters—a condition that Southerners most feared. No rebel wished to suffer in a United States prison, where one endured horrible conditions. For soldiers, blacks who served alongside white prisoners proved that they were more than just loyal slaves, they were loyal Confederates.

Amid the chaos of war, some black people apparently made extraordinary efforts to return to their masters. One soldier remembered a slave named “Box” who swam a river in order to return to rebel lines. Some slaves showed their support for the war effort in other ways. Blacks might cheer as rebel troops marched toward the front; they hid food, jewelry, silver, and other valuables from marauding Yankees; and they tended wounded soldiers and carried others from the battlefield to safety. Slaves also could help the rebel military by giving Confederates information about the enemy. Black people were the eyes and ears of the countryside. They might serve as “Paul Reveres,” as did one girl who yelled the “Yankees is cummin’ ” with the approach of Northern troops.¹⁷ White

¹⁶ John F. Glenn, “Defence of Petersburg,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 35 (1907), p. 20.

¹⁷ On “Box,” see George Dallas Mosgrove, “General Morgan’s Last Raid,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 35 (1907), p. 120; on a slave who swam a river to return to Confederate lines, see Louis R. Smith, Jr., and Andrew Quist, eds., *Cush: A Civil War Memoir* by Samuel H. Sprott (Livingston, AL: Livingston Press, 1999), 92; on slaves cheering as rebels charged across a bridge, see Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War in the United States* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955 [1879]), 269; on hiding food, see Edward A. Moore, *The Story of A Cannoneer under Stonewall Jackson* (New York: Neale, 1907), 225; on hiding jewelry, see Colonel Thomas Smith and Leigh Robinson, “Brilliant Eulogy on General W. H. Payne,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 36 (1908), p. 332; on hiding silver, see L. M. Blackford, “Fidelity of Negro War Servants,” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 5 (1897), p. 384; on hiding a regiment’s pay, see “Faithful Albert Peete (Bate),” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 20 (1912), p. 293; on two slaves carrying a soldier shot through the thigh to the safety of indoors, see St. George Tucker Brooke, “Autobiography of St. George Tucker Brooke Written for His Children,” [typescript], p. 51, VHS; on a slave carrying a soldier, see James Dinkins, *Personal*

Southerners believed the loyalty of black people was not based on coercion. Most slaves, they were convinced, willingly chose the Confederacy over the Union.

Despite the fact that slaves had great opportunities to desert their owners, veterans asserted that most blacks had remained true to rebel soldiers and their white “family.” The “old-time darkie” was a loyal figure who defended the plantation and kept order in the South. “All my father’s negroes were still at home,” wrote a former soldier about his family’s servants, and he never felt any anxiety about their fidelity. At one point in the war, Yankee marauders threatened his family. In order to defend them, one slave wielded an axe at the Union men, promising to kill the first soldier who put his head around the door.¹⁸ Soldiers believed blacks guarded whites as if they were their own flesh and blood. Rebel troops were convinced that in wartime peace had reigned at home, thus proving good relations existed between black and white people. After all, they reasoned, no Nat Turners emerged during the course of the conflict. “The conduct of the slaves ... was extraordinary,” said Colonel William C. Oates. “Not a single case of murder, rape, or outrage occurred during the entire war.” Oates overstated his case. In wartime, Confederates were quick to suspect slaves of plotting against them or raping and murdering whites. Whether black men were always guilty of such crimes is another matter. Oates, nevertheless, in contrast to the antebellum theories of Dr. Cartwright,

Recollections and Experiences in the Confederate Army (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company Press, 1897), 53-54; see also, W. H. Morgan, *Personal Reminiscences of the War of 1861-1865* (Lynchburg, VA: J. P. Bell, 1911), 167-68; on a black girl informant, see Alice D. Pierrepont, ed., *Reuben Vaughan Kidd: Soldier of the Confederacy* (Petersburg, VA: Privately Printed, 1947), 371 (quoted); Wayland Fuller Dunaway, *Reminiscences of a Rebel* (New York: Neale, 1913), 78; Carter, *Cavalryman’s Reminiscences*, 36.

¹⁸ On the slave with an axe, see Mason Graham Ellzey, “The Cause We Lost and the Land We Love,” [typescript], pp. 49-50, VHS.

thought that disloyal slaves were rare.¹⁹ In soldiers' accounts of the war, the slave was by nature and experience averse to revolting against his master.²⁰

One could counter former-soldiers' sentimental musings about loyal black people by citing repeated examples of those who rebelled against their owners in small ways, violently opposed white authority, or escaped. As John Blassingame shows in his classic study of the slave community, slaves in the United States never revolted as they did in Haiti, but they challenged masters in other ways.²¹ During the war, slaves engaged in the kinds of rebellious acts that characterized the master-slave relationship. On farms and plantations, they broke equipment, feigned illness, or stole from whites. Some instances of resistance were potentially deadly, as in the case of slave arsonists or murderers. Running away, however, proved the most prevalent form of serious rebellion. Hundreds of thousands of black people ran to Union lines—some because they wanted to reunite with loved ones, others because they wanted to live under the United States' care, and still others simply to free themselves of their master's control.

Exact figures concerning the number of runaways are impossible to assess with accuracy. President Lincoln and Secretary Seward agreed that the Union armies had

¹⁹ On the lack of wartime rebellions, see Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., *Four Years on the Firing Line* by James Cooper Nisbet (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1963), 170; on guarding whites, see Marcus B. Toney, *The Privations of a Private* (Nashville: Privately Printed, 1905), 67-68; Thomas D. Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas D. Dunkin: A Confederate Soldier* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing, 1922), 173; Frank A. Montgomery, *Reminiscences of a Mississippian in Peace and War* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company Press, 1901), 113; on slaves' loyalty to the family while a soldier was at war, see W. T. Lafferty, ed., "Civil War Reminiscences of John Aker Lafferty," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (January 1961), pp. 20, 27; C. H. Brannon, "A True Story of the Old South: Notes from a Confederate Diary," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (January 1939), p. 49; William C. Oates, *The War between the Union and the Confederacy* (New York: Neale, 1905), 155 (quoted); on blacks accused of serious crimes, see, for example, William S. Phillips to Joseph E. Brown, June 21, 1861, Mills Lane, ed., *The Times that Prove People's Principles: Civil War in Georgia* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1993), 27.

²⁰ On Confederates' belief in black loyalty, see W. W. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993 [1945]), 12.

²¹ John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

seized only about 200,000. Historians have offered higher estimates that range from James McPherson's figure of 500,000 to Louis Gerteis' belief that approximately one million slaves fled to Federal lines.²² To put such numbers in perspective, one should note that in 1861, the Confederacy contained approximately 3.5 million slaves. Even if one accepts that a million blacks fled to Yankee camps (and remained there), about 2.5 million slaves (60%) remained in bondage when Lee surrendered. Granted, there is more to evaluating black loyalty than the number who fled to Federal lines. But the fact that most slaves never escaped indicates that there were severe limits on black people's ability to challenge their masters, and it suggests why Confederate soldiers believed they could defeat emancipation.

Historians have provided students of the war with differing assessments of the loyalty of black people to the Confederacy.²³ As William Scarborough has recently written, "A few Negroes did remain loyal to their owners. But they were very much the exceptions." Scarborough compiles many examples of blacks fleeing their masters, even though, according to his own statistics, most slaves on some plantations remained. In contrast, Bell Wiley, Leon Litwack, and William J. Cooper have asserted that the

²² On the number of slaves the United States captured, see Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 309-10; Joseph T. Glatthaar, "Black Glory: The African-American Role in Union Victory," in Gabor Boritt, ed., *Why the Confederacy Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 142, puts the number of black escapees between 500,00 and 700,000.

²³ On the discrepancy between the faithful servant in memory and the slave of questionable loyalty during the war, see Lawrence J. Friedman, *The White Savage: Racial Fantasies in the Postbellum South* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 3-17; Leon Litwack, "Many Thousands Gone: Black Southerners and the Confederacy," in Harry P. Owens and James J. Cooke, eds., *The Old South in the Crucible of War* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1983), 47-63; on the test of black loyalty, see Randall C. Jimerson, *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought during the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 50-85; Harvey Wish, "Slave Disloyalty under the Confederacy," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (October 1938), pp. 435-50; on the influence of anti-Confederate blacks during the war, see William W. Freehling, *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 85-114; David Williams, "'The 'Faithful Slave' is About Played Out'": Civil War Slave Resistance in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley," *Alabama Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 83-104.

resistance of black people was limited to areas where Federal troops were present.

Cooper believes that “most slaves remained faithful to their masters through most of the war.” He concedes that “new circumstances strained the old relationship and eventually broke it down,” but over all, slaves remained loyal as long as the Union armies were not in reach.²⁴ William C. Davis has gone even further, saying that “the Confederacy could not have survived as long as it did if the black population behind the lines had refused to aid the war effort.”²⁵

Perhaps historians’ differing views on whether the term “black Confederates” has validity stems from the fact that slaves expressed loyalty and disloyalty in active and passive forms. Passive methods of loyalty involved the usual duties that servants performed, from fieldwork and waiting tables to remaining alongside masters when needed. Disloyalty similarly proved subtle in nature, whereupon many blacks did as little as possible to aid the Southern cause—just as many antebellum slaves neglected their duties when their master was not looking. Many acts of disloyalty, however, were far more overt. Black people fled to Union lines and many of them eventually wore Federal uniforms. Active forms of loyalty to the Confederacy involved black people acting as informants, protectors, and even arms bearers. Ervin Jordan, for example, has shown the considerable extent to which black Virginians supported the Confederate war effort.²⁶

²⁴ William K. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 355; Bell Irvin Wiley, *Southern Negroes, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 63-84; William J. Cooper and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 380; Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

²⁵ William C. Davis, *The Cause Lost: Myths and Realities of the Confederacy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 185.

²⁶ Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

If slaves desired a Union victory, they were careful to disguise their hopes from their masters. Such caution, many Confederates believed, indicated black devotion to the South. In some cases this was true, but slaves mostly adopted a watching and waiting policy regarding emancipation. Some took the first opportunity to flee, but most were more cautious. As Clarence Mohr has shown, there was much ambiguity in how blacks approached whites, whether from the North or South. He writes, “even the most dedicated abolitionists admitted that black attitudes toward former masters were ambivalent and complex.”²⁷ A slave’s hatred of human bondage did not necessarily translate into love for the Union. Because of black people’s divided allegiances, Confederate soldiers witnessed enough loyal behavior to think slaves would remain true to their owners and the South. If they were not always right in their assumption, they were correct in asserting that many, if not most, blacks were not ungovernable in wartime.

Even so, the Civil War began with Confederates fearing slave revolt. In the years before the conflict, many whites anticipated that a full-scale race war would one day devastate the South. In October 1859, John Brown’s failed attempt to inspire a slave insurrection in Virginia had led to heightened anxieties of another such rebellion emerging. 1863 was the year emancipation officially took effect, but Southerners had always feared that their communities harbored enemies of slavery.²⁸ As had proven the case for generations, whites hoped force would prove the best means of asserting racial control. Refractory blacks would face summary execution or other kinds of serious

²⁷ Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 77.

²⁸ On the subject of slave insurrection early in the war, see Armstead L. Robinson, “In the Shadow of Old John Brown: Insurrection Anxiety and Confederate Mobilization, 1861-1863,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Autumn 1980), pp. 279-97.

discipline. In March 1861, one Marylander, who would soon join the Confederate army, wrote in Virginia of a rumored slave insurrection. Armed with a six-shooter, he said he was ready to “kill every *Nigger* I meet.”²⁹ Confederates believed slaves often acted like savages—when they were not quietly tilling the soil, of course—and as such, they must control them through force, not persuasion. Otherwise, chaos would result.

As soldiers saw it, contented blacks had lived in the South for generations, but along came the abolitionists, from William Lloyd Garrison and John Brown to Abraham Lincoln, who wanted to let the “children” of the South run wild. White Southerners, who knew what would happen were an adult male slave to corner a defenseless white woman, feared that blacks, unlike children, might commit unspeakable acts. With racial imaginations more active than ever after Lincoln’s election and the firing on Fort Sumter, Confederates’ worst fears emerged. They believed they would see the realization of seemingly ancient prophesies. For them, what worse a nightmare was there than slaves burning homes, murdering civilians, and raping white women? Confederate soldiers were convinced that emancipation would lead to black insurrection and wholesale destruction. By invading the South and corrupting the slaves, the Federal government had sanctioned race war. Northerners would incite blacks, turning the home front into a bloody carnival. Warfare involved violence, but soldiers did not want slaves to take part in the destruction. Only Northerners’ use of force could bring about black freedom, and rebel soldiers saw that they must respond in kind.

Rebel troops feared not only revolts among the slaves, but a repeat of the John Brown revolt, where white abolitionists spurred slaves to throw off their chains. Much to

²⁹ Frank Voss to mother, March 3, 1861, Robert W. Schoeberlein and Andrew Brethauer, eds., “Letters of a Maryland Confederate,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (Fall 2003), p. 350.

their dismay, Confederate soldiers saw that white instigators would not necessarily come from the North. In 1861, one described a shady character who tried to talk slaves into rebelling. “Death will be his doom if he is one of [these] negro stealers,” he concluded.³⁰ Soldiers hoped justice would come to blacks who left their owners, and they promised severe punishment for white people who dared interfere with the peculiar institution. In June 1861, David Workman—who was at seminary but would soon join the Confederate army—anticipated revolt in a “great many places” in Louisiana. Workman wrote of an aborted insurrection in St. Martin’s Parish in which authorities had arrested forty slaves. The fact that two white men had led it troubled him even more. Confederates hanged one of the men, but the other escaped.³¹ In rebel eyes, not only the ghost of Nat Turner, but that of John Brown, was again making war on the South. In this instance, however, as was the case throughout the war, Confederates quickly suppressed anything approaching an armed slave revolt.

White Southerners might aid slaves in efforts to seize their freedom, but Confederate soldiers believed that blacks deserved the closest supervision and harshest forms of discipline. Black people that ran away might only endure re-enslavement, but those that committed worse crimes might face immediate execution. The hanging of

³⁰ Charles Liebermann to “Dearest Lenora,” August 23, 1861, Liebermann Family Papers, VHS; on slaves being driven away by whites, see H. W. Foote to “Dear Mr. Ferris,” August 18, 1861, J. G. Deupree, “The Noxubee Squadron, Mississippi Cavalry,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series*, Vol. 2 (1918), p. 21; on slaves lured away by Confederate deserters later in the war, see entry for December 1863, Samuel Elias Mays, “Sketches from the Journal of a Confederate Soldier,” *Tyler’s Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (October 1923), p. 111.

³¹ David Workman to Mary C. Wright, June 2, 1861, Wright-Boyd Family Papers, LLMVC; on Daniel Hundley’s experiences on a Louisiana slave patrol, see entries for May 18, May 20, May 23-4, 1861, Daniel Hundley Diary, [photocopy and typescript copy], LLMVC; on cooperation between whites and slaves in revolts, see also, Thomas Goode Tucker to John W. Ellis, May 7, 1861, Noble J. Tolbert, ed., *The Papers of John Willis Ellis, Volume Two: 1860-1861* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1964), p. 728; on slave revolts early in the war, see also, Dinkins, *Personal Recollections*, 21-22; on whites helping blacks throughout the war, see also, Douglas John Cater, *As it Was: Reminiscences of a Soldier of the Third Texas Cavalry and the Nineteenth Louisiana Infantry* (Austin: State House Press, 1990 [1981]), 60-61; S. W. Ferguson to Major J. J. Reeve, March 18, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 24, Pt. 3, p. 674.

blacks would reach a peak in the late-nineteenth century, which probably led one veteran to read back into history that the noose and black people were always associated with each other.³² However exaggerated, he underscored the racial violence that characterized the South. In wartime, Confederate soldiers had to guard against the threat they believed black people posed.

Winthrop Jordan has examined a slave conspiracy that whites unearthed in the summer of 1861 in Adams County, Mississippi, near Natchez. The insurrection might have been on the scale of the Turner revolt or the earlier Denmark Vesey conspiracy. Whether there was such a wide-scale uprising in the planning, whites were able to suppress it, though they left little record of what occurred.³³ Months after the plot's discovery, masters were still handing out justice to guilty slaves. "I sincerely hope that insurrection has been effectively put down," wrote John Ker to his sister in the fall of 1861. The failed rebellion, he believed, should serve as a lesson to people in Natchez, whose servants had too much freedom. In his eyes, the Ker family slaves were much better behaved. Still, he doubted whether they were entirely faithful. "Thank God that none of *ours* have been implicated in this sad affair," he said. Writing from camp in Virginia, Ker was happy to hear that whites had swiftly punished the guilty, or as he put it, "the last of the wretches have been hung."³⁴

Confederate soldiers often worried about the loss of racial control and the social order—that blacks would rape white women and kill innocent people in their beds. In September 1861, a rebel wrote of a slave, who had served in the officer's mess, executed

³² Keiley, *In Vincilus*, 212.

³³ Winthrop D. Jordan, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

³⁴ William H. Ker to sister, October 27, 1861, John Ker Family Papers, LLMVC (first quotation); William H. Ker to sister, November 7, 1861, John Ker Family Papers, LLMVC (second quotation).

for violating a white woman. He apparently had committed the crime while away from camp one day. A jury of local citizens, which he described as “impartial,” had tried him, and the convicted man confessed under the gallows.³⁵ With rebellious slaves and Yankee “abolitionists” roaming the South, Confederate soldiers worried about white females as well as the murder of whole households. The rape of a white woman was bad enough, but for a slave to kill families while they slept signified the worst violation—a bloody act in the most sacred of places, where people slept, rested, recovered from illness, and made love. Slaves had access to the recesses of white homes and knew the countryside. Soldiers believed that if they could not sleep in safety, the Confederacy could not survive.³⁶

In the antebellum period, uprisings, however large, had had a deep psychological effect on Southerners. Rumors of slave insurrection would persist for much of the war, but no slave insurrections occurred on the level of Nat Turner’s revolt, a fact that left room for veterans to say that blacks had always proven loyal. In the eyes of Confederate soldiers, if servants turned out not to be bloodthirsty Haitians, it was because whites had taught them well and earned their love, thus rendering them docile and submissive. For them, a servant who was not Nat Turner must naturally be Sambo. Such was the advantage of hindsight. The lack of large-scale slave revolts did not mean Southerners did not fear them. And the fact that no Nat Turners or Denmark Veseys emerged owed

³⁵ John J. Good to wife, September 1, 1861, Lester Newton Fitzhugh, ed., *Cannon Smoke: The Letters of Captain John J. Good, Good-Douglas Texas Battery, CSA* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1971), 63-64; on a slave hanged for threatening to rape white women, see Samuel W. Ferguson to Major J. J. Reeve, April 8, 1863, *OR*, Vol. 24, Pt. 1, p. 509.

³⁶ See Lt. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to Rev. C. C. Jones, July 19, 1862 (pp. 281-82) and Jones to father, July 25, 1862 (pp. 285-86), Robert Manson Myers, ed., *The Children of Pride* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

more to Confederates' success in suppressing black revolts and slaves' own fear of punishment and reprisal than it was a testament to servants' devotion to the South.

Although Southerners knew whites had put down slave revolts in the past, it did not mean they would always defeat them in future. Soldiers, nevertheless, were confident in the army's ability to protect civilians. No insurrection among slaves in the United States had ever proven successful. In wartime, many slaves were close to Federal troops, but Confederate soldiers were usually closer. Even early in the conflict, Southerners understood the long odds rebellious blacks faced. In May 1861, one woman perhaps put it best when writing to her soldier son about slaves who "know how well armed the whites are at this time—I cannot believe them so deluded as to suppose they could ever have a successful insurrection." With her son in the army and her husband on a slave patrol, she had little worry about revolt.³⁷ Freedom, as always, would prove an elusive goal for Southern blacks. The Confederate army was a slave patrol writ large. Slaves were closer to Yankees than ever before, but they also lived every day among well-armed white infantry and well-equipped cavalry, which were usually not engaged in a campaign. If a slave ran, he risked being shot or captured. Never before had black people been surrounded by so many armed whites. If one Confederate might not punish a slave, there was always another soldier who would. Disciplining black people had a democratic quality in the South. White men believed they knew how to deal with "Negroes," and the army gave the average Southerner the power to decide who would live, who would die, who he would free or re-enslave. That hundreds of thousands of slaves fled despite the

³⁷ Maria to Fred Fleet, May 20, 1861, Betsy Fleet and John D. P. Fuller, eds., *Green Mount: A Virginia Plantation Family during the Civil War: Being the Journal of Benjamin Robert Fleet and Letters of his Family* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 55-56.

risk reveals how much they sought freedom from self-professed loving, affectionate, and humane masters.

Since the war did not affect slavery much in 1861, Confederate soldiers did not make pessimistic claims about its future. They were more likely to write of good health, abundant crops, and well-behaved servants than they were slave revolts. Black and white Southerners alike seemed jubilant about the new Confederate nation. In June 1861, one rebel wrote of his long journey from Texas to Virginia. On passing the Tennessee-Virginia border, he described beaming crowds of men, women, and children. Black field workers waived to the men and seemed “as enthusiastic as the whites.” In the early months of the war, some Mississippi soldiers trusted a slave enough to give him a double-barreled shotgun, with which he said he was ready to kill a few Yankees.³⁸

If Confederate soldiers believed blacks supported the rebellion, Union soldiers threatened to destroy the supposed harmony among Southerners. In 1861, long before Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Northerners took a hard line toward Southern non-combatants. Often, they would not make distinctions between loyal and disloyal masters, but take slaves from both.³⁹ No slave-owner seemed safe from the Union army. “They are doing a regular Negro stealing business on the coast,” said one soldier writing from Savannah in November 1861. A local planter had tried to get his

³⁸ On well-behaved slaves, see Edgeworth to Sally Bird, September 2, 1861, John Rozier, ed., *The Granite Farm Letters: The Civil War Correspondence of Edgeworth & Sallie Bird* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 20-21; on waving black field hands, see Thomas J. Goree to mother, June 23, 1861, Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 18 (quoted); on shotgun, see Jerome Yates to mother, August 20, 1861, Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 17.

³⁹ On the stealing of slaves early in the war, see, for example, General Daniel Ruggles to Colonel R. S. Garnett, May 8, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 2, p. 820; on the taking of Unionists' and Confederates' slaves, see Ben McCulloch to General S. Cooper, November 19, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 3, pp. 742-43; John J. Good to wife, November 21, 1861, Fitzhugh, ed., *Cannon Smoke*, 128-29.

three hundred slaves to follow him into the interior, but they would not go. “Some troops were sent from here to force them off but I have not heard the result,” he noted. It was best, therefore, for citizens to ask for the help of the rebel military in getting back their slaves.⁴⁰

Despite the Federal army’s practice of seizing slaves, there was nothing inevitable about the United States sanctioning emancipation, nor were Northerners convinced it would work once they had.⁴¹ In 1861, the Federal government did not tolerate commanders who went faster than the president on the subject of taking slaves. Many Yankees were not concerned about black freedom or the welfare of the former slaves. Early in the war, Federal officers, among them Democrats such as George McClellan and Don Carlos Buell, returned runaways to disloyal owners. As the war continued, however, the United States made greater efforts to strike at the peculiar institution. Furthermore, black Southerners proved less willing to support of the Confederacy.

Most of the enslaved people the Federals took in the early months of the war lived on the coastal regions, which were particularly susceptible to invasion. The Union’s capture of the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia in November 1861, for example, allowed the North to invade other areas of the Southeast and to threaten Charleston. With Federal victory came the liberation of slaves. One soldier said that Beaufort, South Carolina, was “completely gutted by the Negroes, the houses pillaged,

⁴⁰ Clement Anselm Evans to “Dear Allie,” November 13, 1861, Robert Grier Stephens, Jr., ed., *Intrepid Warrior, Clement Anselm Evans, Confederate General from Georgia: Life, Letters, and Diaries of the War Years* (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1992), 78; on slave stealing in Virginia in 1861, see William Corson to “Dear Jennie,” July 29, 1861, [typescript], William Clark Corson Papers, VHS; on the loss of slaves in South Carolina, see December 11, 1861, Lloyd Halliburton, ed., *Saddle Soldiers: The Civil War Correspondence of General William Stokes of the 4th South Carolina Cavalry* (Orangeburg, SC: Sandlapper, 2003), 9; on the capture of plantation slaves, see also, Major C. W. Phifer to T. C. Hindman, October 28, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 4, p. 482

⁴¹ On the Union’s difficulty in enforcing emancipation, see Robinson, “Day of Jubilo,” 437-509.

ornaments destroyed, the women wearing their mistress' best apparel, the men rioting over their masters' wine." He was not sure whether such transgressions were the work of "town Negroes" or "thieves from the country."⁴² In any case, Southerners on the home front were feeling the effects of war.

The Sea Islands, however, were only a small portion of the Confederacy. The Union had much more territory to conquer before the rebellion ended. 1862 would bring increased destruction on the South, but early in the year, soldiers had faith in their cause and the army's ability to defend slavery. If the rebellion were to fail, one wrote, "negroes will be no property at all." But, he said, "this will never be." He was confident in Confederates' ultimate triumph, thinking the Yankees could never "subjugate such white people." In early 1862, the Union conquered some parts of the Confederacy, but it would prove much more difficult for Northerners to free slaves and destroy plantations in the interior. Even in Union-controlled areas, Federals would not necessarily prove effective. In February 1862, one rebel soldier expressed dire predictions about slaves under Northern masters, thinking the freedmen at Beaufort were going to have a "tough time of it." The Yankees, he believed, would make no cotton.⁴³ Black freedom, Confederates reasoned, would mean little if the Federal government could not improve the lot of the average slave or use the land as capably as masters had. And the North's efforts would prove fruitless were the South to emerge victorious. Confederates hoped they could use

⁴² Entry for November 13, 1861, diary of George Mercer quoted in Lane, ed., *Times that Prove People's Principles*, 42.

⁴³ Samuel Burney to wife, January 7, 1862, Nat Turner, ed., *A Southern Soldier's Letters Home: The Civil War Letters of Samuel Burney, Army of Northern Virginia* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 98 (first quotation); Milton Leverett to mother, February 7, 1862, Francis Wallace Taylor, et al., eds., *The Leverett Letters: Correspondence of a South Carolina Family, 1851-1868* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 112 (second quotation); on the Sea Islands and the Federal government's Port Royal experiment, see Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964).

the army to make sure that most black people did not flee. When rebel soldiers were not shooting at Yankees, they often did so at slaves trying to escape their owners. “The pickets get a shot at a negro occasionally,” wrote one cavalry commander in February 1862. “One was shot at ... the other night.... He dropped all of his baggage and run for his life. I think he must have either been killed or hit from the way the shot cut.”⁴⁴ In the first year of the war, rebels were confident that they could turn back the Federal armies as well as the tide of emancipation.

In 1862, when it became obvious that the Confederacy would not surrender slavery without a long, bitter fight, the Federal government’s war against Southern civilians became harsher and complaints about Yankee depredations—including the taking of slaves and seizing of other property—proved more common. The chivalric adventure of 1861 was becoming a contest that affected all aspects of Confederate society. The events of 1862 showed that the Yankees were not going to let up on the South and slavery. Added to increasing casualty lists, therefore, was the Union’s emerging “hard war” policy toward non-combatants, which created disruption on Southern farms and plantations as well as where soldiers were stationed.⁴⁵ Slaves, in

⁴⁴ Letter of February 18, 1862, Halliburton, ed., *Saddle Soldiers*, 15 (quoted).

⁴⁵ On the flight and capture of slaves in 1862, see, for example, entry for January 15, 1862, “Diary of William T. Kinzer, Montgomery Mountain Boys, Company L, 4th Virginia Infantry,” [typescript], VHS; entry for March 7, 1862, James W. Silver, ed., “Robert A. Moore: The Diary of a Confederate Soldier,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (July 1956), p. 321; P. H. Powers to wife, April 2, 1862, Robert J. Trout, ed., *With Pen and Saber: The Letters and Diaries of J. E. B. Stuart’s Staff Officers* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1995), 55; Sandie Pendleton to mother, March 16, 1862, W. G. Bean, ed., “The Valley Campaign of 1862 as Revealed in Letters of Sandie Pendleton,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (July 1970), p. 339; Theodorick W. Montfort to wife, April 24, 1862, Spencer B. King, ed., *Rebel Lawyer: Letters of Theodorick W. Montfort* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1965), 78; Montfort to wife, October 27, 1861 and Montfort to wife, November 1, 1861, *ibid.*, 23-25; on the impossibility of preventing slaves from running away, see James DeWitt Hankins to parents, May 3, 1862, Hankins Family Papers, VHS; on things in camp being in disarray, with one slave gone and another stricken with measles, see James Griffin to wife, May 21, 1862, Judith N. McArthur and Orville Vernon Burton, “A Gentleman and an Officer”: *A Military and Social History of James B. Griffin’s Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 221; R. H. Brooks to wife, July 17, 1862, Katherine

addition to other types of property, became part of the spoils of war for invading Federals. The more Yankees that came south, the worse it proved for the master class. Many Confederates made distinctions between slaves who fled on their own and blacks who were reluctant to flee, but Federals in either case were taking Southerners' valuable property.⁴⁶

By the spring and summer of 1862, it was clear that the North officially was moving toward emancipation. Federals would now steal slaves, just as they had seized pigs, chickens, and vegetables. In May, General David Hunter attempted to free the slaves in the Southeastern Confederacy. Lincoln overruled him, since Hunter had acted without orders. "It is the best thing that could have happened for the South," one rebel soldier wrote of Hunter's efforts to strike at slavery, "as it will make the determination more strong for resistance and will have a tendency to make a division at the North and in a measure demoralize the Federal Army." Yet, if Hunter's measure was not adopted, the North's desire to emancipate the slaves in some form was gaining strength. In June 1862, one well-informed Confederate soldier saw that the United States Congress—with the proposed passage of the Second Confiscation Act—had moved another step toward emancipation.⁴⁷ The bill allowed for the seizure of property from any rebel and enabled blacks to enlist in the Union army. The Federal government was not slow in

S. Holland, ed., *Keep All My Letters: The Civil War Letters of Richard Henry Brooks, 51st Georgia Infantry* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003), 34; on this hard war policy slowly taking shape in the South, see Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ See James Bates to William Bramlette, May [?], 1862, Richard Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War: The Diary and Letters of James C. Bates* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 123; Frederic Leverett to father, August 25, 1862, Taylor, *et al.*, eds., *Leverett Letters*, 169; on slaves not wanting to leave their masters, see June 4, 1862, Halliburton, ed., *Saddle Soldiers*, 89.

⁴⁷ Entry for May 1862, Roger S. Durham, ed., *A Confederate Yankee: The Journal of Edward William Drummond, a Confederate Soldier from Maine* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 54; James C. Bates to sister, June 16, 1862, Lowe, ed., *Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War*, 134.

implementing the law, but even before the Second Confiscation Act, Confederate troops had seen blacks in Federal uniform.⁴⁸

By July 1862, Lincoln had made up his mind about whether to emancipate the slaves, even though he did not immediately go public with his decision.⁴⁹ Many Northerners already had decided to crush the status quo antebellum, and Confederate soldiers noted the change in their attitudes. In August, for example, a chaplain wrote of Federals breaking a farmer's fence and not letting his servants fix it until he had paid them regular wages.⁵⁰ Before the Emancipation Proclamation took effect, Confederate soldiers who believed slavery vulnerable perhaps had Whiggish dreams about getting something for their chattels. "The Yankees should pay for every negro they have stolen during the War," wrote one sergeant.⁵¹ His belief in getting something for his slaves was not unrealistic. For much of the war, even Lincoln considered compensating owners. But in the summer of 1862, the Union president decided that rebellious masters would receive nothing for their emancipated chattels.

Confederates, in response, were determined to keep blacks subservient and the peculiar institution intact. Soldiers believed the army needed to take more aggressive measures in order to keep slaves under control. In July 1862, General Gideon J. Pillow wrote to Jefferson Davis, saying that the Federals had swept almost all the slaves out of

⁴⁸ See Albert Davidson to father, September 8, 1861, Charles W. Turner, ed., "Lieutenant Albert Davidson—Letters of a Virginia Soldier," *West Virginia History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (October 1977), p. 59; D. P. Gibson to Mary B. Cotton, June 6, 1861, Debra Nance Laurence, ed., "Letters of a North Louisiana Tiger," *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Fall 1979), p. 131; on hearing about a black barracks being in the vicinity, see entry for September 17, 1862, J. V. Frederick, ed., "War Diary of W. C. Porter," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter 1952), p. 302.

⁴⁹ See David Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 362-63.

⁵⁰ Entry for August 8, 1862, Rev. Joseph T. Durkin, ed., *Confederate Chaplain: A War Journal of Rev. James B. Sheeran, CSSR, 14th Louisiana* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960), 2-3.

⁵¹ Edwin H. Fay to wife, August 2, 1862, Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., "*This Infernal War*": *The Confederate Letters of Sgt. Edwin H. Fay* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 129.

Arkansas; they had also plundered houses and stole stock, meat, and corn. “They shoot the negroes attempting to escape,” he wrote, “and handcuff and chain those refusing to go.” Since many slaves were unwilling to follow Union soldiers to freedom, rather than remain passive in the face of the Federal government’s aggressive tactics, Pillow believed the Confederacy should retaliate.⁵²

Southerners reasoned that the best means of protecting slavery lay in taking the offensive. At various points in 1862, they made efforts to conquer Missouri, Maryland, and Kentucky—slaveholding Border States that had not allied with the Confederacy. The March battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, lost Missouri to the rebellion. But in late 1862, the Confederate army believed it could acquire Maryland and Kentucky, which would create a buffer zone between the Deep South and the Northern States as well as provide the rebellion with more food and supplies, not to mention slaves. Approximately 500,000 enslaved people lived in the Border States, and Confederates thought that slavery naturally united Southerners against the North. In their eyes, all it would take was a push from the Confederacy’s gallant armies to throw the Border States into the secessionist camp.⁵³ After all, the firing on Sumter had brought four states into the Confederacy. Perhaps another impressive show of strength, rebels reasoned, might bring in more.

In September 1862, after Confederate victories in the Eastern Theater at the Seven Days battles and Second Manassas, and amid the controversy in the North surrounding black liberation, Robert E. Lee’s army invaded Maryland. As they marched through Union territory, Lee’s men found attitudes there much different from what they had expected: Marylanders were not secessionists. One soldier encountered a man who said

⁵² Pillow to Davis, July 28, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, p. 332.

⁵³ See, for example, Dr. M. F. T. Evans to sister, April 30, 1861, “Dr. Evans and the War (1861-1865),” *Tyler’s Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 3 (1967 [1922]), p. 159.

he would never raise his hand against the rebels and planned to go south, purchase slaves, and settle.⁵⁴ Most people, however, did not share such sentiments. Upon passing through Middletown, a soldier found it “the bitterest abolition hole in the state.” He thought he might as well have been marching through Massachusetts or Vermont.⁵⁵ In fact, although most Marylanders were not abolitionists, they did not want to ally themselves with the Confederacy.

General Lee’s offensive into Maryland went down to defeat. After its bloody repulse at the battle of Antietam, the Army of Northern Virginia retreated. Rebels, in response, accentuated the positive. “The invasion of Maryland has saved our property for the present,” said one officer.⁵⁶ Lee’s invasion, indeed, had taken some pressure off northern Virginia, which had suffered much in its loss of crops, livestock, and slaves. If Lee’s march north had saved Confederate property “for the present,” however, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation five days after the Union victory at Antietam, thus allowing his armies to strike at rebels’ most valued property of all, their slaves.

Lincoln’s edict infuriated many Confederates. “Curse the Lincoln proclamation!” exclaimed the Virginia slaveholder General Henry Wise in October 1862.⁵⁷ The

⁵⁴ Entry for September 15, 1862, Draughton Stith Haynes, *Field Diary of a Confederate Soldier, while Serving in the Army of Northern Virginia* (Darien, GA: Ashantilly Press, 1963), 19-20; earlier in the year, another soldier had been optimistic about the secessionist feeling among Marylanders, but he said that the army best remain on the defensive for the time being, see James M. Holloway to wife, March 3, 1862, James M. Holloway Papers, VHS.

⁵⁵ Account of September 17, 1862, Charles W. Turner, ed., “Captain Greenlee Davidson: Letters of a Virginia Soldier,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (September 1971), p. 206.

⁵⁶ Alexander to Pembroke Thom, no date given, Catherine Thom Bartlett, ed., “My Dear Brother”: *A Confederate Chronicle* (Richmond, VA: Dietz Press, 1952), 60.

⁵⁷ Henry Wise to wife, October 6, 1862, Henry Wise Papers, VHS; on another soldier’s horror at the proclamation, see Lt. Charles C. Jones, Jr., to father, September 27, 1862, Myers, ed., *Children of Pride*, 296; on Confederates’ “excitement and indignation” at the Proclamation, see William Watson, *Life in the Confederate Army: Being the Observations and Experiences of an Alien in the South during the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995 [1887]), 427; see also, Davis’ message to the Senate and House of Representatives, January 12, 1863, Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Jefferson Davis Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers and Speeches*, Volume V (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History,

Emancipation Proclamation signified an attack on the Southern racial order. In soldiers' eyes, the loss of other kinds of property was bad enough: one might easily replace silverware or livestock or grow more feed to restock the family barn. But dinner knives, animals, and corn would not rise and rebel against Southern whites.⁵⁸ Even long after the war, some veterans had not cooled in their attitude toward what they saw as the Union's attempt to incite insurrection among blacks.⁵⁹

In the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation, slaves did not go through the countryside, as many Confederates had worried, slitting white people's throats or shooting them down like dogs. Even Northerners wanted to make sure no insurrections occurred.⁶⁰ Rebel troops' fears, however, were intense—and, in the context of the time, understandable. Never before had the United States government given black people such license. Most soldiers had not been alive when Nat Turner and his followers killed sixty white people and none had when Haitian slaves revolted, but such rebellions had taken on the character of ghost stories, scaring white Southerners into strengthening slavery with each year.⁶¹ General Moxley Sorrel, who served on Lee's staff, was not old enough to

1923), p. 409; on horror over the proclamation by another non-soldier, see "Camp and Field Papers from the Portfolio of an Army Chaplain," [1864] by Rev. Jos. Cross, quoted in Richard B. Harwell, *The Confederate Reader* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1957), 220-21.

⁵⁸ See E. John Ellis to sister, December 12, 1862, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC; on a possible slave revolt at Christmas, see Grant Taylor to wife and children, December 15, 1862, Ann K. Blomquist and Robert A. Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War: The Civil War Letters of Grant and Malinda Taylor 1862-1865* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2000), 136; on a possible slave revolt in Arkansas in 1864, see entry for August 24, 1864, Wirt Armistead Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers: The Campaign Diaries of Thomas J. Key, CSA, December 17, 1863-May 17, 1865 and Robert J. Campbell, USA, January 1, 1864-July 21, 1864* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), 120; on the effects of emancipation on slaves in the Natchez district, see Anthony E. Kaye, "Slaves, Emancipation, and the Powers of War: Views from the Natchez District of Mississippi," Joan E. Cashin, ed., *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 60-84.

⁵⁹ See, for example, W. L. Gammage, *The Camp, The Bivouac and the Battle Field: Being a History of the Fourth Arkansas Regiment from its First Organization Down to the Present Day* (Little Rock: Arkansas Southern Press, 1958), 102.

⁶⁰ See Robinson, "Day of Jubilo," 354, *passim*.

⁶¹ On the pervasive fear of insurrections such Turner's happening again, see John S. Wise, *The End of an Era* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1900), 74.

remember the St. Domingue revolt, but his grandfather, a French soldier serving on the island, was.⁶² White Southerners had inherited their parents' and grandparents' fears of black people using violence to win their freedom. In the fall of 1862, Lincoln seemed to have opened the door to racial Armageddon.

Historians have often seen the Emancipation Proclamation as one of the key turning points in the Civil War. Emancipation, they argue, assured the downfall of slavery, destroyed the Confederacy's chances for diplomatic recognition, and led to the withering of the rebellion's military power.⁶³ In late 1862, however, Confederate soldiers were not necessarily concerned about it. Despite some men's shock at the Emancipation Proclamation, soldiers saw that slaves were not intent on revolting. Black people, they saw, were at worst divided among themselves over whether to flee their masters. "I see from the papers that a good many negroes have gone to the Yankees," wrote E. John Ellis in October 1862. Three had left his regiment, but his own servant, Stewart, had not. Ellis believed that nothing could lure his slave away. One of his comrades asked Stewart about whether or not he would leave. Stewart not surprisingly and wisely said he had no intention of fleeing. Had he claimed otherwise, he would have incurred much closer supervision of his actions or perhaps have suffered a whipping. His master, however, believed he understood why Stewart chose the South over the North. Stewart had seen "many free niggers" in Louisville and Cincinnati, and none of them had as good clothes or as much money as he did. Some slaves apparently believed life in the South was better than in the North. Stewart's master, for example, had taken care of him the previous

⁶² Gilbert Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992 [1905]), 1.

⁶³ On Antietam and emancipation as a turning point in the war, see James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); James A. Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 99-143.

Christmas when he had been sick. “Im not fool enough to want to leave my master dats certin,” Stewart said, and presumably he was not foolish enough to say so even had he wanted to.⁶⁴ Confederates expected that most slaves would remain loyal to their owners. For them, it always seemed it was another man’s slaves who were escaping or rebelling.

The Federals were bringing the war home to as many Confederates as possible, but rebel troops were making concerted attempts to win the struggle for Southern independence and black slavery. In late 1862, soldiers did not expect the war to end soon—there would be much hard fighting before either side surrendered.⁶⁵ Lincoln, indeed, issued the Emancipation Proclamation amid the Confederacy’s most concerted effort to sway public opinion in the North. Among rebel objectives in the fall of 1862 was the conquest of Kentucky. Lincoln supposedly said he wished to have God on his side, but he must have Kentucky.⁶⁶ Whether or not he was accurately quoted, his statement reflected the importance of that Border State for the Union.

In the fall of 1862, Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee tried to seize the “Bluegrass State,” which had the largest slave population—over 200,000—of any non-Confederate state. As they had in Maryland, rebels hoped they could win further converts to the Southern cause. Simon Bolivar Buckner, who was born in Kentucky and joined the rebellion after the Union’s occupation of his home state in 1861, took part in the Army of Tennessee’s invasion. In September 1862, he appealed to his people in language common to Confederates. He listed Yankee abuses that paralleled those of the English in the

⁶⁴ E. John Ellis to sister, October 29, 1862, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC; on other slaves who rejected their emancipation after the proclamation was issued, see Watson, *Life in the Confederate Army*, 430.

⁶⁵ See, for example, James C. Bates to William Bramlette, November [?] 1862, Lowe, ed., *Texas Cavalry Officer’s Civil War*, 207; John Welsh to mother and wife, January 26, 1863, W. G. Bean, “A House Divided: The Civil War Letters of a Virginia Family,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (October 1951), p. 410.

⁶⁶ Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, 11.

Revolutionary War. In his view, the Federal army had subjected Kentuckians to unlawful searches, had overrun houses, and made women perform “menial services.” In Buckner’s eyes, the North sought to free the slaves at the expense of enslaving white people. In the process, the United States had turned Kentucky into a prison. In the face of such oppression, Kentuckians must throw off the Yankee yoke. Under the “spirit of freedom,” which had won independence for Americans once before, he believed his people could prove worthy of the Revolution.⁶⁷

Buckner and other commanders expected Kentuckians to welcome the Confederate invaders. Federal forces, however, turned back the Army of Tennessee at the October 8 battle of Perryville. In the next few weeks, Braxton Bragg slowly retreated into Confederate territory. Southerners, however, remained optimistic. General Humphrey Marshall wrote to the Secretary of War in November 1862, thinking people would defect to the rebel army, and he hoped they would bring slaves and other property with them. He believed Confederate supporters would not come, however, unless the rebel army could keep a foothold in the state.⁶⁸ The South’s invasion, however, had failed. The Army of Tennessee did not win Kentucky in 1862, but it would not be the last time the Confederacy tried to conquer it. In the meantime, Kentucky slaves remained Union slaves.

Despite the Confederacy’s military reverses in September and October, rebel soldiers were convinced that emancipation would cause a backlash within the North.⁶⁹ Robert E. Lee thought his invasion of Maryland would lead to the Democrats gaining

⁶⁷ Buckner to the “Freemen of Kentucky,” September 24, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, pp. 359-61.

⁶⁸ Marshall to George Randolph, November 5, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 20, Pt. 2, p. 390.

⁶⁹ In addition to Lee’s defeat in September at Antietam and Bragg’s retreat after the October battle of Perryville, Confederates under Sterling Price and Earl Van Dorn suffered a defeat at Corinth in early October.

more seats in the United States Congress and add strength to the growing Northern anti-war movement.⁷⁰ The Democrats did well in the fall elections, but nothing approaching a coup occurred in Washington. Confederate soldiers, nevertheless, believed that in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln and the Republicans had fatally miscalculated. Federal forces, they were convinced, would prove as anti-abolitionist as rebel troops were and oppose black freedom *en masse*. “There is general dissatisfaction in the North and more especially in the West, against Lincoln’s Emancipation proclamation [sic],” said one Louisianan.⁷¹ In the fall of 1862 and early 1863, rebels heard reports of Union soldiers openly denouncing emancipation, deserting over it, or even changing their allegiance to the South. Many Federals, indeed, opposed the United States’ decision to free blacks and put them into uniform, and Confederates could not help but notice.⁷² They

⁷⁰ Lee to Davis, October 2, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 19, Pt. 2, p. 644.

⁷¹ D. P. Gibson to Mary B. Cotton, February 1, 1863, Laurence, ed., “Letters from a North Louisiana Tiger,” *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 4, p. 144.

⁷² On Yankees’ opposition to emancipation and the arming of blacks, and Northern disunity on the whole, see letter of August 9, 1862, Halliburton, ed., *Saddle Soldiers*, 45; R. H. Brooks to wife, October 23, 1862, Holland, ed., *Keep All My Letters*, 51; Lavender Ray to mother, May 26, 1862, Mills Lane, ed., “*Dear Mother: Don’t grieve about me. If I get killed, I’ll only be dead*”: *Letters from Georgia Soldiers in the Civil War* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1990), 126; on the proclamation not being popular in the North, see Edwin H. Fay to wife, February 12, 1863, Wiley, “*This Infernal War*,” 223; on Yankees deserting over it, see Henry Orr to sister, November 4, 1862, John Q. Anderson, ed., *Campaigning with Parson’s Texas Cavalry Brigade, CSA: The War Journals and Letters of the Four Orr Brothers* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1967), 79; John S. Prather to Colonel James Hagan, March 10, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 23, Pt. 2, p. 677; on Yankee demoralization in the face of the proclamation, see G. W. Smith to James Seddon, January 21, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 18, p. 854; on Federals cursing African Americans after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, see “The Rebel Troop,” in U. R. Brooks, ed., *Stories of the Confederacy* (Columbia: State Company, 1912), 243; on a Kentuckian who threatened to switch sides because of emancipation, see Winston to Octavia Stephens, January 27, 1863, Ellen E. Hodges and Stephen Kerber, eds., “‘Rogues and Black Hearted Scamps’: Civil War Letters of Winston and Octavia Stephens, 1862-1863,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (July 1978), p. 78; on other expressions of Northerners’ hostility toward emancipation, see entry for January 22, 1863, William C. Davis and Meredith L. Swentor, eds., *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 206-07, entry for March 23, 1864, Ferrell, ed., *Holding the Line*, 169; on a Confederate reporting on discontent toward the United States and Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, as expressed in the *Kentucky Examiner*, see James M. Holloway to wife, February 19, 1863, James M. Holloway Papers, VHS. If some Union soldiers initially opposed emancipation, by the fall of 1864 they were behind the president on the issue. 78% of Union soldiers (and 71% in the Army of the Potomac) voted for Abraham Lincoln in the presidential election of 1864, see James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire, Volume II: The Civil War, Second Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993 [1982]), 457.

believed opposition to emancipation would unite the South while causing divisions within the North.

If they thought the Emancipation Proclamation might eventually backfire on the North, many Confederates had already lost slaves to the Yankees. Some rebel soldiers saw emancipation coming and freed their own servants. As would prove true for most of the war, however, even when it seemed unavoidable, Confederates believed they could control the course and the pace of emancipation. Wartime manumissions, nevertheless, were rare. Robert E. Lee's is perhaps the most well known instance of a Confederate who freed most but not all his family's slaves during the war. Lee's decision came after Lincoln had already issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The enslaved people he freed, furthermore, were not his own, but his wife's, and besides, the Federal army had already liberated them. With the Union's seizure of Arlington Heights in 1861, the Lee family lost the use of most of its two hundred slaves. General Lee's decision to free slaves at Arlington, therefore, proved little more than a gesture.⁷³

Despite occasional manumissions, the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation led not to a loosening of Confederates' allegiance to slavery and white supremacy, but an even more immediate and deadly embracing of them. In December 1862, Captain E. John Ellis believed rebels were fighting for the white men of the South and the North. If the Confederacy were to lose, "Lincoln & the negroes alone would be free."⁷⁴ By trying to free the slaves, Confederate soldiers believed, the North was only enslaving itself. "Will her people," asked Ellis, "stand while the bolts are fastened and the chains riveted which

⁷³ On Lee's decision to free his slaves, see Robert E. Lee to George Washington Custis Lee, November 28, 1862, Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin, eds., *The Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), 350; see also, Lee to his wife, December 7, 1862, *ibid*, 353-54.

⁷⁴ E. John Ellis to Tabitha Ellis, December 12, 1862, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC.

must bind them to slavery?”⁷⁵ Lincoln, he asserted, was a tyrant, a Czar, a sultan, an emperor. By increasing his power, the Union president thought he could crush the South, but Confederate troops were convinced that he would have to do more than weakly declare that slaves in rebel-held territory were now free.

One soldier thought emancipation’s effect on international opinion would benefit the South. “I believe England is at heart inimical to us and desires the overthrow of our institutions,” said John Foster to his brother in August 1862. France, he thought, did not want to interfere, nor would Russia, which was busy with its own recent emancipation—the freeing of its serfs in 1861—and did not care much about the American war. By February 1863, however, Foster had changed his mind. Slavery would not hurt the Confederacy in the eyes of those abroad. The Emancipation Proclamation, he thought, had worked against the North. “Europe does not entertain any friendly views toward our institution of slavery,” he said to his father, “but [will support us] in spite of their hatred to the Negro question.”⁷⁶ His hopes were realistic. One historian of England’s reaction to the Civil War has shown that many English people believed the best hope for emancipation lay in a Confederate victory. Once the Southern states successfully were out of the Union, they would one day free the slaves on their own. As dubious as such reasoning was, England expressed much sympathy toward the Confederacy, even if it stopped short of outright recognition of the rebel government. The English were skeptical of the efficacy of, and moral intentions behind, emancipation, and they were further

⁷⁵ E. John Ellis to parents, March 18, 1863, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC.

⁷⁶ John S. Foster to brother, August 9, 1862, and John S. Foster to father, February 20, 1863, Foster Family Papers, LLMVC.

repulsed by the levels of racism in the North.⁷⁷ By early 1863, therefore, it seemed Confederates had good reason to think emancipation at the North's hands was not inevitable.

Emancipation officially took effect on January 1, 1863, and the year that followed saw thousands of slaves fleeing or otherwise falling into Union hands.⁷⁸ 1863 was a turning point in the war for many reasons, but Confederate soldiers did not necessarily see it that way. Even after the war, some former rebels dismissed the negative effect the Emancipation Proclamation had on the slave population.⁷⁹ Many slaves fled, they saw, but many more remained where they were. In January 1863, one Virginian wrote that Lincoln's proclamation "excites no attention" and "hardly affords a subject for conversation in the army."⁸⁰ Upon returning home in June 1863, another soldier noted that his family's plantation had not changed much. He took joy in seeing the same servants, grove of oaks, fields, and fences. Even the sight of the outhouses reassured him, and he found that not a single slave had died.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Douglas A. Lorimer, "The Role of Anti-Slavery Sentiment in English Reactions to the American Civil War," *Historical Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (June 1976), pp. 405-20.

⁷⁸ See, for example, entry for January 4, 1863, G. Ward Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 133; John S. Lewis to Mrs. Nancy Lewis, January 12, 1863, Evans, ed., *16th Mississippi*, 135; William to Elizabeth Neblett, April 9, 1863, Erika L. Murr, ed., *A Rebel Wife in Texas: The Diary and Letters of Elizabeth Scott Neblett, 1852-1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 83; William Alex Thom to sister, April 26, 1863, Bartlett, ed., "My Dear Brother," 93; Grant Taylor to wife and children, April 7, 1863, Blomquist and Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War*, 173; on keeping slaves at home to avoid capture, see S. S. Lee to Arnold Elzey, July 18, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 27, Pt. 3, p. 1024; on blacks fleeing to the enemy, see S. W. Ferguson to General C. L. Stevenson, April 18, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 24, Pt. 3, p. 762; on Yankees seizing slaves, see August 6, 1863, Ferrell, ed., *Holding the Line*, 142-43; Jerome B. Yates to mother, June 10, 1863, Evans, ed., *16th Mississippi*, 167.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Cater, *As it Was*, 219-20; Watson, *Life in the Confederate Army*, 431; J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *Three Years in Battle and Three in Federal Prisons: The Papers of Randolph Abbott Shotwell, Volume I* (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1929), 365.

⁸⁰ Entry for January 7, 1863, Archie P. McDonald, ed., *Make Me a Map of the Valley: The Civil War Journal of Stonewall Jackson's Topographer* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1973), 107.

⁸¹ Entry for June 29, 1863, T. H. Pearce, ed., *Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers* (Wendell, NC: Broadfoot's Bookmark, 1983), 122; on a similar opinion of eastern South Carolina, see June 21, 1863, Halliburton, ed., *Saddle Soldiers*, 93.

Confederates believed that if black people fled, they often did so only because Federals gave them false assurances. In their eyes, freedom would prove an empty promise. Lincoln and his cohorts, they were convinced, had worked a spell over blacks, and now they drifted, entranced, from their caring white masters. One veteran recalled that an older black man was disappointed to hear that a slave girl did not welcome the “year of jubilee.” He told her, “You’s a fool, gal, not to go where there’s a plenty to eat and nothing to do.”⁸² Confederate troops, however, understood such a slave’s reluctance. Northerners might promise much to slaves, but would fail to provide for them. Those that fled might find themselves in a much worse situation than before. Many rebels thought that in time, blacks would see how badly Yankees treated them and would return to their masters. Confederate soldiers, therefore, did not always have to use force to keep slaves at home. They believed that the best remedy for blacks’ desire for freedom lay in freedom itself—emancipation would prove sour for those who fled to Yankee lines. One veteran, for example, recalled an instance when troops captured a corral of two thousand slaves. “They were a dirty and ragged lot,” he said, “who were content to grasp at the mere shadow of freedom.”⁸³ Many Northerners, indeed, were guilty of abuse and neglect of black people; as many as a quarter of the freedmen in some Federal camps died from disease and lack of medical care. Circumstances became so bad that Federal authorities decided to return many freedmen to the care of local planters.⁸⁴ Former slaves were the victims of things ranging from mild mistreatment to rape and other brutal acts.

⁸² Dunaway, *Reminiscences of a Rebel*, 78-79.

⁸³ John Milton Hubbard, *Notes of a Private, Company E, 7th Tennessee Regiment Forrest’s Cavalry Corps, C. S. A.* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1911), 166; on the Yankees letting go of some slaves because they could not feed them, see James A. Graham to mother, November 1, 1863, H. M. Wagstaff, ed., “The James A. Graham Papers, 1861-1884,” *James Sprunt Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1928), p. 166.

⁸⁴ See Gaines Foster, “The Limitations of Federal Healthcare for Freedmen, 1862-1868,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (August 1982), pp. 356-57.

Confederate soldiers, therefore, believed that those who left their masters were gambling with their very lives, or at least their well being. In the white Southern mind, masters had cared for their slaves, but Yankees were indifferent to the plight of black people. One soldier recalled a female slave who became a prostitute after winning her freedom. Her clients apparently were mostly Northern men.⁸⁵

Even if some slaves who fled to Northern lines might have regretted their decision, in the spring and summer of 1863, Confederate soldiers saw that the South must act more aggressively in order to contain its black population. “If you catch the scoundrels who run away,” advised a Louisianan in April 1863, “swing them up to the first tree as they will give too much trouble amongst the rest.”⁸⁶ Soldiers had to make sure they kept order at home, and the Confederate military was the most powerful means of turning back emancipation. Along the Mississippi River, for example, in order to retrieve slaves and destroy Unionists’ property, the army planned raids on plantations. In August 1863, General William Hicks Jackson, a cavalry commander in Mississippi, was ordered to send men as close as possible to Natchez, where they were to burn cotton and “awe unruly negroes.” They were also instructed, after burning and terrorizing, to “give

⁸⁵ On Federal mistreatment of the freedmen, see Robinson, “Day of Jubilo,” 497, *passim*; on blacks left to die, see Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., ed., *The Civil War Reminiscences of Major Silas T. Grisamore, CSA* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 123; on a slave woman being reduced to prostitution, see Wiley, ed., *Four Years on the Firing Line*, 148 on fears of slaves being shot by the Yankees, see Milton Maxcy Leverett to brother, February 20, 1863, Taylor, *et al.*, eds., *Leverett Letters*, 200-01.

⁸⁶ John to Gaillard Foster, April 18, 1863, Foster Family Papers, LLMVC; on the hanging of a black spy late in the war, see diary entry for October 30, 1864, Homer L. Kerr, ed., *Fighting with Ross’ Texas Cavalry Brigade, CSA: The Diary of George L. Griscom, Adjutant, 9th Texas Cavalry Regiment* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1976), 187.

confidence to inhabitants.” By intimidating blacks and through other demonstrations of force, Confederates might placate whites and subdue rebellious “Negroes.”⁸⁷

A great test of a slave’s loyalty—and the validity of the proslavery argument—came when black people were the shortest distance from Union lines. Some even trod on Northern soil during the war. In June 1863, Robert E. Lee’s second march into Union territory during the Gettysburg campaign became a test case for servants’ support for the Confederacy. How would those traveling with the Army of Northern Virginia act while in the North? Black people had the opportunity to flee, but Confederate soldiers saw they did not. During Lee’s invasion, some slaves were loyal to the rebel army in ways that went beyond quietly performing their duties. One, for example, forced a deserter back into the ranks at gunpoint. Confederate troops also wrote of blacks in Pennsylvania refusing to flee to the Yankees, even though it was, on the surface, the best chance they ever had. Slaves, after all, as Confederates believed, were Southerners. They saw that black people did not like nearby Pennsylvanians, even if they promised them freedom. They were convinced that the North had no charms for servants accustomed to Southern ways. One slave told his master that he did not like Pennsylvania because he saw “no black folks.” And while up north, servants seemed to enjoy plundering Union territory as much as combatants did.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ T. B. Lamar to Jackson, August 8, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 24, Pt. 3, p. 1049; see also, letter of October 9, 1863, Halliburton, ed., *Saddle Soldiers*, 114.

⁸⁸ W. W. Parker, “How I Kept House in Camp,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 23 (1895), pp. 324-25; Tally to Mary Simpson, August 7, 1863, Guy R. Everson, and Edward H. Simpson, Jr., eds., “*Far from Home*”: *The Wartime Letters of Dick and Tally Simpson Third South Carolina Volunteers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 263-64; on a slave who returned a deserter back to the lines at gunpoint, see James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1896), 427; although Longstreet’s memoir was ghost written, the story is also told in entry for July 6, 1863, Walter Lord, ed., *The Fremantle Diary: Being the Journal of Lieutenant Colonel James Arthur Fremantle, Coldstream Guards, on his Three Months in the Southern States* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954), 225; Dunaway, *Reminiscences of a Rebel*, 61-62; on a slave who refused

Many black people, however, did not have a choice in staying with the rebel army. While on the march, Confederates seized many of them, including newly escaped Virginia slaves who had gone to Pennsylvania.⁸⁹ For the first time, soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia had a chance to vent their wrath upon Northern civilians, black as well as white. One Mississippian had been angered over slaves' flight back home. Before he got to Union territory, he had promised to repay black people "with interest."⁹⁰ That blacks were not always willing Confederates is not surprising.⁹¹ What is more important is that rebel soldiers were not passive in the face of emancipation. In the war's third year, Confederate troops did not accept it as a *fait accompli*.

Soldiers, however, were not always successful in re-enslaving runaways—people who knew the local woods, fields, and swamps. Slaves proved elusive, especially if they were near Federal lines. Regardless of how many blacks escaped, soldiers found themselves witness to the greatest defection of slaves in Southern history. In September

freedom, despite offers from a Pennsylvania woman of \$100 and a new set of clothes, see David Pipes, "David Washington Pipes Memoirs," [typescript], p. 24, VHS; on servants behavior during the Maryland campaign, see Joseph T. Durkin, ed., *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1945); 32; on slave loyalty during Confederate marches on Union soil, see Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart*, 48; Keiley, *In Vincilus*, 82-83; Spencer Glasgow Welch to wife, June 28, 1863, Spence Glasgow Welch, ed., *A Confederate Surgeon's Letters to his Wife* (Marietta, Georgia: Continental Book Company, 1954 [1911]), 58 (quoted); on black men's conduct while in Pennsylvania, see William Miller Owen, *In Camp and Battle with The Washington Artillery of New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999 [1885]), 242; Captain W. C. Ward, "Incidents and Personal Experiences on the Battlefield at Gettysburg," quoted in Jeffrey D. Stocker, ed., *From Huntsville to Appomattox: R. T. Coles' History of 4th Regiment, Alabama Volunteer Infantry, CSA, Army of Northern Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 205; William Dorsey Pender to wife, June 28, 1863, William W. Hassler, ed., *The General to his Lady: The Civil War Letters of William Dorsey Pender to Fanny Pender* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 254-55; on the effect of the Army of Northern Virginia on black civilians, see Margaret S. Creighton, "Living on the Fault Line: African American Civilians and the Gettysburg Campaign," Cashin, ed., *War Was You and Me*, 209-36.

⁸⁹ On the seizure of African Americans from the mountains of Maryland and Pennsylvania, see dispatch for June 27, 1863, William B. Styple, ed., *Writing and Fighting the Confederate War: The Letters of Peter Wellington Alexander, Confederate War Correspondent* (Kearny, NJ: Belle Grove, 2002), 156; on taking of Virginia slaves, see Wiley, ed., *Four Years on the Firing Line*, 121.

⁹⁰ Jerome Yates to sister, May 19, 1863, Evans, ed., *16th Mississippi*, 164.

⁹¹ George W. Beale to mother, July 13, 1863, "A Soldier's Account of the Gettysburg Campaign: Letter from George W. Beale," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 11 (1883), p. 322.

1863, one officer wrote of the difficulty in seizing black people who had disappeared into the wilderness around the Combahee River. He had set dogs on the trail of missing slaves, but had no luck.⁹² Nor were troops always enthusiastic about disciplining servants or chasing runaways. Appointed the task of hunting down blacks that had escaped with some animals, a soldier remembered, “I knew the thing was a humbug, but orders had to be obeyed.”⁹³ The job was no doubt as annoying for soldiers as it was for the masters. One recalled an instance in which he was required to seize several escapees. He felt “much ashamed” at having to apprehend the “poor creatures.” He did his duty, nevertheless, and returned them to camp.⁹⁴

Most soldiers, however, had no qualms about making sure that blacks remained enslaved. During Lee’s invasion of Pennsylvania as well as Jackson’s Shenandoah Valley campaign, Confederates rounded up as many blacks as possible.⁹⁵ In September 1862, the Secretary of War, George Randolph, had reported that his department was unaware of the army’s capture of any slaves.⁹⁶ Randolph apparently was ill informed about how many

⁹² Report of William Stokes, September 16, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 28, Pt. 1, p. 730.

⁹³ E. W. Williams, ed., *With the Border Ruffians: Memoirs of the Far West: 1852-1868* by Robert Hamilton Williams (Toronto: Musson Books, 1919), 232-33.

⁹⁴ Montgomery, *Reminiscences of a Mississippian*, 71; on another soldier given the task of returning slaves, see entry for July 26, 1861, Samuel H. Hawes Diary, [typescript], Katharine Heath Hawes Papers, VHS.

⁹⁵ On recapturing slaves, see Robert Johnson to G. B. Cosby, July 27, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 2, pp. 1003-04; E. P. Petty to wife, April 29, 1863, Norman D. Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Captain Elijah P. Petty, Walker’s Texas Division CSA* (San Antonio: University of Texas, Institute of Texas Cultures, 1982), 205; report of John C. Magruder, August 2, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 4, p. 570; Reuben Allen Pierson to James F. Pierson, September 7, 1862, Thomas Cutrer and T. Michael Parrish, eds., *Brothers in Gray Civil War: Letters of the Pierson Family* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 120; Maud Morrow Brown, *The University Greys: Company A, Eleventh Mississippi Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia, 1861-1865* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1940), 27; on recapturing slaves during Sheridan’s 1864 campaign, see Leiper Moore Robinson *Reminiscences*, [typescript], VHS; on the capture of slaves during Jackson’s Valley Campaign, see entry for May 25, 1862, Festus P. Summers, ed., *A Borderland Confederate* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), 17; Sandie Pendleton to father, June 1, 1862, Bean, ed., “The Valley Campaign of 1862,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 78, No. 3, p. 362; on the seizure of hundreds of slaves at Harper’s Ferry in 1862, see R. Channing Price to mother, September 18, 1862, Trout, ed., *With Pen and Saber*, 99.

⁹⁶ Randolph to Davis, September 22, 1862, *OR*, Series 2, Vol. 4, pp. 893-94.

blacks the military had seized. With death and destruction all around them, Confederate soldiers saw no point in treating rebellious slaves with leniency. Soldiers were fighting for their lives, politically, if not literally, and they were not intent on seeing slavery die an unnatural death at Northern hands.

The Confederacy's loss of control of the Mississippi River after its July 1863 defeats at Vicksburg and Port Hudson set the tone for the Western theater: increasing military setbacks meant more fleeing or captured slaves. Yankees sometimes seized hundreds of them at a time from plantations and towns, and as much as Confederates hated to admit it, many slaves willingly left.⁹⁷ Some soldiers became pessimistic about slavery's fate. Federal armies seemed more likely than ever to succeed in crushing the rebellion and freeing the slaves. One of the war's most unlikely emancipationists was Nathan Bedford Forrest, who had over forty of his own slaves serving with him as teamsters. Roughly a year and a half before the war ended, he freed them. Forrest's decision, however, came not with issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, but his belief that the Confederacy would lose the war. Forrest spoke of his decision in 1872. He remembered saying to his slaves:

I was going into the army; and that if they would go with me, if we got whipped they would be free anyhow, and that if we succeeded and slavery was perpetuated, if they would act faithfully with me to the end of the war, I would set them free. Eighteen months before the war closed I was satisfied that we were going to be defeated, and I gave those forty-five men, or forty-four of them, their free papers, for fear I might get killed.

Although Forrest's slaves had no say in the matter, he did free his black teamsters. His motivation, however, had less to do with humane motives than it did his belief that

⁹⁷ See, for example, Lawrence Keitt to Thomas Jordan [?], June 3, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 963.

Confederate defeat meant emancipation in any case.⁹⁸ Federal victories, not moral reconsiderations among Southerners, proved the method by which slaves would achieve their freedom. If Forrest had been convinced in 1863 that the Confederacy was doomed to lose the war, he would not surrender his command, or his belief that the South could keep slavery, until the spring of 1865.

Even after the devastating Southern defeats of the summer of 1863, Confederates still believed that the North might let up in its attacks on the peculiar institution. In August, William Nugent, serving in the West, wanted the Union to return slaves to their plantations. That the rebels believed such things was why the Federal government had issued emancipation in the first place: it wanted to overturn the status quo antebellum, making masters pay for waging war against the United States. This soldier, nevertheless, thought that if the United States turned back the clock to 1860, it would accomplish more “than by five years hard fighting.”⁹⁹ Confederate soldiers’ antebellum ways of thinking died hard. As the war continued and became much bloodier, maintaining slavery still proved a central concern.

In hindsight, Confederate losses in 1863 were devastating, but late into the year and into 1864, morale remained high among rebel soldiers. Emancipation might lead to the disappearance of slaves, but it did not necessarily undermine men’s faith in the war effort. “The Yankees can take our Negroes,” said a Mississippian in August 1863, “but they cannot steal our honor and love of our own nation.”¹⁰⁰ Confederate troops still had

⁹⁸ Robert Selph Henry, *“First with the Most”*: *Forrest* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1944), 14 (quoted); Jack Hurst, *Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 9.

⁹⁹ William to Eleanor Nugent, August 27, 1863, William M. Cash and Lucy Somerville Howorth, eds., *My Dear Nellie: The Civil War Letters of William L. Nugent to Eleanor Smith Nugent* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 129.

¹⁰⁰ Harry Lewis to mother, August 10, 1863, Evans, ed., *16th Mississippi*, 192; another Mississippian heard of the loss of slaves back home, but said “we will have to make the best of it. As I have embarked in

much trust in the cause and the power of the military to achieve a slaveholding republic. In late 1863, Captain E. John Ellis, who was from a slaveholding family, said one's duty in the army should include keeping "the negroes in proper subjugation."¹⁰¹ Even men who did not own blacks knew the South's fortunes rested on slavery. "I own no slaves," William Nugent wrote to his wife in September 1863. She obviously knew he did not. His point was made for emphasis—to make the Southern cause more ideological than economic or racial in its outlook. He wanted his wife to understand that he could speak without "any motive of self interest." But he was not willing to let the peculiar institution go—a South without slavery served no purpose. "We can only live & exist by this species of labor," he said, "and hence I am willing to continue the fight to the last."¹⁰²

Amid men's heightened fears of losing their slaves, they saw in 1864 the publication of *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro*.¹⁰³ The pamphlet only reinforced soldiers' belief that emancipation would lead to race mixing. They knew the conflict was no longer a white man's fight, but that did not mean they wanted a mulatto future. In April, one Confederate soldier was shocked to read articles written by a New York correspondent of the *London Times*, which confirmed his belief that amalgamation had taken hold on "Yankeedom." In his view, the North clearly was undergoing a kind of revolution. In a

the affair, I am going to see it through," see Jerome Yates to mother, November 17, 1863, *ibid*, 218.

¹⁰¹ E. John Ellis to sister, November 15, 1863, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC.

¹⁰² William Nugent to wife, September 7, 1863, John K. Bettersworth, ed., *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As They Saw It* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 354.

¹⁰³ On soldiers discussing race mixing in 1864, see, for example, Harvey Black to wife, April 1, 1864, Glenn L. McMullen, ed., *A Surgeon with Stonewall Jackson: The Civil War Letters of Dr. Harvey Black* (Baltimore: Butternut and Blue, 1995), 92; diary entry for October 22, 1864, Daniel Hundley, *Prison Echoes of the Rebellion* (New York: S. W. Green, 1874), 167-68; on the prominence of the miscegenation debate in the 1864 election, see David E. Long, *The Jewel of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln's Re-Election and the End of Slavery* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997 [1994]), 153-77; information on *Miscegenation* comes from Jordan, *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees*, 122.

contradictory statement, he vented his hatred of the “base and amorous race of Puritans” who were trying to degrade Southern ladies. As a reminder of the threat posed to the South, he kept with him some clippings from *Miscegenation*. Were the “Southron” to fail in his defense of his wife, daughters, and mother, it would fall prey to “ ‘dusky male servitors.’ ”¹⁰⁴

In 1864, Confederate troops saw that the North’s most concerted effort to subdue the rebellion would occur before its people went to the polls in the fall. With the presidential election in November, Lincoln wanted to win the war as quickly as possible. Increased pressure on Confederate armies entailed greater stress on the master class. A soldier remembered one raid undertaken into Alabama in 1864. “It was impossible to keep from the negroes their owners’ dismay and dread,” he wrote. Such a fact did not mean the Confederacy would lose, but the edifice of slavery was cracking. Money was becoming increasingly worthless and the peculiar institution more precarious. Incidences unusual if not unheard of before the war had become common. In March 1864, a Tennessee soldier wrote of a slave at home who had choked and whipped the man who had hired him out. Another master had one of his slaves run off, and one female servant even struck her mistress in the mouth, knocking out two front teeth. Some soldiers became more fatalistic about the future of slavery, realizing it was more vulnerable than ever. In the first months of 1864, after nearly three years of bloody war, some Confederates saw that slavery was proving untenable.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Entry for April 10, 1864, Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers*, 70.

¹⁰⁵ On the election, see, for example, entry for April 14, 1864, Ferrell, ed., *Holding the Line*, 177; on hiding slaves in the face of Union raids, see entry for February 25, 1864, Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers*, 49; on black troops looking to take slaves, see Henrietta Owen to Dr. U. G. Owen, January 13, 1864, Enoch L. Mitchell, ed., “Letters of a Confederate Surgeon in the Army of Tennessee to his Wife,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (June 1946), pp. 151-52; on the dread of Alabamans, see Pierrepont, ed., *Rueben Vaughan Kidd*, 343 (quoted); see also, H. C. Monell to Taylor, February 13, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 34,

Before the 1864 campaigns started, nevertheless, one South Carolinian found morale still high in the Army of Northern Virginia. “How long are they going to stand it?” he wondered. “They have but little direct interest in this contest as few are slave holders, and they are fighting for the pure love of country.”¹⁰⁶ Even if most Southerners did not own slaves, every Confederate victory brought them closer to the slaveholding republic they wanted, and the battles of 1864 would likely decide the conflict. Were rebel troops to hold back the Yankees, they would crush what they saw as the perverse plans of Lincoln and the abolitionists to free the slaves and promote race mixing.

Confederate soldiers had to struggle harder than ever to prevent what they saw as the evils of emancipation. They knew they must re-enslave blacks one servant or one group of servants at a time. In March 1864, a Mississippian wrote of the flight of enslaved people across a river to Federal lines. “They were all ready,” he said, but “we crushed their freedom in the bud by marching them across the river.”¹⁰⁷ The Southern army would determine the course emancipation took. As long as morale remained high,

Pt. 2, p. 966; Stephen D. Lee to Colonel T. M. Jack, March 13, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Pt. 3, Vol. 32, p. 620; on rebellious slaves in Tennessee, see William to Eleanor Nugent, March 13, 1864, Cash and Howorth, eds., *My Dear Nellie*, 160-61; for a similar description of Georgia, see entry for July 31, 1864, Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days in the Confederate Army: A Journal Kept by W. W. Heartsill* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1953), 211; William T. Alderson, ed., “The Civil War Reminiscences of John Johnston, 1861-1865 (Part III),” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (September 1954), p. 265; Theophilus to Harriet Perry, January 18, 1864, M. Jane Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousand: The Civil War Letters of Theophilus and Harriet Perry* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 198; on fatalism about the future of slavery, see diary entries for May 19 (p. 210) and May 22 (p. 211), 1864, Cannon, *Inside of Rebeldom*; Nathaniel Cheairs to sister, May 17, 1864, Robert M. McBride, ed., “The ‘Confederate Sins’ of Major Nathaniel Cheairs,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (June 1964), pp. 132-33; on a soldier’s desire to see slavery end, see, for example, William Speer to father, February 18, 1864, Allen Paul Speer, ed., *Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Asbury Speer* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1997), 122.

¹⁰⁶ Entry for winter 1863-64, Samuel Elias Mays, “Sketches from the Journal of a Confederate Soldier,” *Tyler’s Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (July 1923), p. 115.

¹⁰⁷ Jerome Yates to Tom O. Davis, January 18, 1864, Evans, ed., *16th Mississippi*, 233-34.

troops could defeat the “abolitionist” Yankees and prevent the flight of slaves to Northern forces.

Many Confederates viewed the flight of blacks with nonchalance, but that did not mean they were ready to give up on human bondage. In July 1864, one rebel understood that a slave sent to him might run away—therefore, he asked for two from home.¹⁰⁸ In 1864, Confederate soldiers sought to adjust to the conditions under which slavery now functioned. The peculiar institution had always faced challenges. For generations, Southerners had altered it to meet new conditions, not to mention new challenges, to assure its survival. During the Revolution, they had endured the English army’s capturing of slaves. Fifty years later, they saw the rise of aggressive abolitionists. In the midst of the Civil War, slavery faced greater stresses than ever, but Confederate soldiers believed that were they to prove victorious in 1864, the South would no longer lay vulnerable to abolitionists or Republicans.

Rebel troops knew the great odds they faced. “A negro can’t be trusted a tall [sic],” said a soldier near Petersburg in June 1864.¹⁰⁹ The loss of slaves had proven a great hardship for many. “It seems hard to realize,” said another rebel writing in September 1864 from the Petersburg trenches, “that all of the servants are away and you are so dependent on others for labor in order to have food.” He had written letters in 1862 about his uncle’s slaves running away. Being from a large-slaveholding Virginia family, he always had reason for nervousness.¹¹⁰ But as long as there were armies in the field, Confederates believed the peculiar institution could survive. As late as October 1864, one

¹⁰⁸ Frank Adams to sister, July 2, 1864, Israel Adams Papers, LLMVC.

¹⁰⁹ William T. Casey to mother, June 28, 1864, [typescript], “Thomas Casey and his Descendants,” compiled by Helen Kay Yates, June 1967, VHS.

¹¹⁰ Diary entry for May 16, 1862 (p. 126); Fred Fleet to father, May 21, 1862 (p. 127); diary entry for September 13, 1864 (p. 167, quoted), Fleet and Fuller, eds., *Green Mount*.

wrote, “for the negroes—it seems to me a bad move to take them from Virginia, they are safest here—specially as they would be unwilling to go.”¹¹¹ The history of the war in the East up to that point suggests otherwise. At the time, northern Virginia had suffered the most devastation of any Confederate area. Such words, nevertheless, showed that soldiers still believed the army could protect slavery.

Since there were blacks who had returned to rebel lines, some slaves made it easy for the Confederates to remain masters. Such instances, soldiers believed, served as black people’s endorsement of slave society. In September 1864, one rebel wrote of the meals that servants brought to him and his comrades. He claimed that because none of the “seductive promises” of the Yankees could induce them to leave their “life-long friends and homes,” they would not escape.¹¹² Soldiers were not convinced of the inevitability of emancipation, even if in 1864 the Confederacy remained outgunned and outmanned.

In 1864, while Grant kept Lee pinned down in Virginia, William Tecumseh Sherman’s advance through Georgia created disruption that allowed slaves to rebel against their masters. The Yankees seized many black people, and other slaves left or neglected their usual duties. Confederate troops quickly felt their loss. “Negroes all been run off from hospital,” said a soldier recovering from wounds received in the Atlanta campaign. He lamented that there was “no cook & nothing to eat.”¹¹³ Not all slaves,

¹¹¹ John Hampden Chamberlayne to Sally Grattan, October 29, 1864, C. G. Chamberlayne, ed., *Ham Chamberlayne—Virginian, Letters and Papers of an Artillery Officer in the War for Southern Independence* (Richmond, VA: Press of the Dietz, 1932), 285.

¹¹² Robert E. Park, “The Twelfth Alabama Infantry, Confederate States Army,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 33 (1905), p. 286 (quoted); see also, James Coleman to Kate Adams, December 22, 1863, Israel Adams Family Papers, LLMVC, which talks about slaves at home who ran from a local master and returned; on servants who chose not to leave their masters, see Albert Davidson to mother, May 17, 1864, Turner, ed., “Lieutenant Albert Davidson—Letters of a Virginia Soldier,” *West Virginia History*, Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 66.

¹¹³ James Bates to sister, entry for July 20, 1864 in letter dated July 16, 1864, Lowe, ed., *Texas Cavalry Officer’s Civil War*, 310.

however, were so bold as to abandon their masters. Sherman, who had no love for blacks, did not want slaves following his army, which might explain why many servants chose not to seek out the Federals. Amid Sherman's invasion of the Deep South, as was the case throughout the war, soldiers remembered blacks who hid family valuables or were loyal in other ways.¹¹⁴ Confederates, in any case, tried as much as possible to hold onto slavery. One soldier recalled how his father panicked at Sherman's approach, taking all the trunks he could find before he fled. His father hoped he could remain a master elsewhere. He left several of his black workers in charge of the abandoned plantation. They eventually were taken, but they returned home after the war.¹¹⁵

Even after serious reverses in Georgia, Confederates continued to resist rather than submit to Northern armies. John Bell Hood had lost Atlanta by September 2, 1864, but Sherman's order to evict citizens from the city was more than he could bear. In several letters to Sherman, Hood bitterly objected. He promised the Union commander that the South would fight on. "Better [to] die a thousand deaths than submit to live under you or your Government and your negro allies." Although Hood was not the man to defeat the Federal forces, Sherman's actions, as historian Jacqueline Campbell has shown, made many Confederates even stiffer in their resolve.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ On slaves remaining loyal, see, for example, entry for November 21, 1864, Kirwan, ed., *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade*, 174; on slaves keeping track of watches, see also, Parker, "How I Kept House in Camp," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 23, p. 325; on slaves who hid silver, see Dinkins, "The Negroes as Slaves," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 35, pp. 66-67.

¹¹⁵ On not trusting slaves in the wake of Sherman's advance, see Austin, *Blue and the Gray*, 155-56; on slaves gathering spoils, see diary entry of "Miss Abby," July 22, 1864 quoted in Lane, ed., *Times that Prove People's Principles*, 198, on his father gathering up slaves and other possessions, see Cannon, *Inside of Rebellom*, 42-43.

¹¹⁶ Hood to Sherman, September 12, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 39, Pt. 2, pp. 419-21; on Confederates' stiffening of their resolve, see Jacqueline Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Amid the destruction of 1864, Confederate troops directed their hatred toward the supposedly arch-abolitionist Abraham Lincoln, who was up for reelection. By the fall, it seemed that the last hope for the South perhaps lay in the North electing George B. McClellan as president. Rebels hoped, as they had in the fall of 1862, that Union Democrats would put a stop to the war. As Daniel Hundley wrote in his diary, the Republican government, as Confederates had warned since 1861, was subverting the liberty of its very defenders. A McClellan victory, however, might restore the status quo antebellum—a united nation with slavery intact. But even a Republican victory, one soldier believed, would embolden the rebellion. Without being ironic, he supported Lincoln, thinking his policy of confiscation and emancipation would unite the South, thus assuring its independence.¹¹⁷

For Confederates, Lincoln's reelection unfortunately meant the continuation of the war, one that was going badly for rebels by the last days of 1864. Lee remained stymied at Petersburg, Sherman had won Atlanta and marched to the sea, and Phil Sheridan's army had wrecked the Shenandoah Valley. After Lincoln's reelection, soldiers' letters take on a more desperate and depressed tone. A soldier in Virginia wrote of how those at home "may be stripped of everything—negroes stolen away—stocks and provisions all taken—all your clothing destroyed—your house burned."¹¹⁸ By late 1864, emancipation had not necessarily stripped soldiers of their slaves, but it had destroyed the kind of mastery Southerners had once enjoyed.

¹¹⁷ Entry for June 26, 1864, Hundley, *Prison Echoes*, 81-82; James C. Bates to William Bramlette, October 13, 1864, Lowe, ed., *Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War*, 325-26 (quoted); William to Eleanor Nugent, September 10, 1864, Cash and Howorth, eds., *My Dear Nellie*, 203; some historians have seen the election as one of the greatest turning points of the war, if not the most important, see Long, *Jewel of Liberty*; McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, Vol. II, 437-58; Rawley, *Turning Points*, 169-204; William C. Davis, however, has described the 1864 election as the "turning point that wasn't," see Davis, *Cause Lost*, 127-47.

¹¹⁸ Samuel Wiley to Eliza DeWitt Wiley, November 26, 1864, Rozier, ed., *Granite Farm Letters*, 214.

After McClellan's defeat, for some Confederate soldiers, the idea that they were fighting for slavery proved absurd. As George Stedman, suffering in a Yankee prison, put it:

Would you like to know ... what is really the sentiment of the soldiers ... what idea is uppermost in their minds in this "bloody conflict of ideas"? Is it for the institution of slavery? No, they wish there was not a negro in the south. The negro is the soldier's enemy. He cannot visit his home within the federal lines because of the spies in his household.... Negro slavery is the least element in the strife.... The question of property has comparatively little weight in those springs of action whereby the southern soldier is sustained and encouraged.¹¹⁹

Yet, soldiers were perhaps not so willing to let slavery go. The most liberal of Southerners only advocated gradual or partial emancipation, but most did not go even that far. In the trenches at Petersburg in December 1864, Fred Fleet believed Southerners fought foremost for independence and "our very lives." But he also took the "positive good" view of slavery. He did not consider human bondage a "moral or political evil." On the contrary, he believed it a "divine institution," which had brought blacks out of savagery. Fleet even thought the South should reopen the African slave trade. Since the Confederate constitution had banned it in 1861, such a measure proved impossible. Fleet's words, nevertheless, show Southerners' continued reliance on slavery and their belief in its inherent righteousness. The Union had seized blacks by the thousand, and many more enslaved people had fled to Northern lines. Fred Fleet, however, was still convinced that human bondage could and should survive.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ George Stedman to Professor William T. Harris, November 9, 1864, Kurt F. Leidecker, "Beyond the Strife," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April 1949), 197.

¹²⁰ Fred Fleet to father, December 9, 1864, Fleet and Fuller, eds., *Green Mount*, 349. The desire to reopen the African slave trade did not die in 1808, when the Federal government ended it. On antebellum South Carolinians who wanted to reopen the Atlantic slave trade, see Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 125-52.

Even after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment on January 31, 1865, Abraham Lincoln considered schemes of compensated or gradual emancipation if it would end the war and restore the Union. As one historian has written, in early 1865, Lincoln “took the position of his December 1864 message: those slaves already freed by wartime acts and proclamations would remain free, while the status of all other slaves would be resolved by future law.”¹²¹ Had they laid down their arms earlier in the conflict, Confederates might have kept slavery in some form. But they were determined to keep the institution on Southern terms as long as they believed they had a chance of victory. In February 1865, after the Hampton Roads conference—in which Union and Confederate diplomats were unable to achieve a negotiated ceasefire—one soldier was upset that Lincoln had “exploded the peace bubble.” But Confederates, he noted, seemed invigorated by the news to the point of indignation. They could again rally around their hatred of the Union president. They were ready to accept “protracted, never ending war, with all its evils and distress,” before they became “slaves to Yankeedom.”¹²²

In early 1865, the war was soon to end, but even amid the collapse of the Confederate military, many slaves apparently still proved loyal. During the war, most slaves remained under their masters’ control—however tenuous it was at times—and many black Southerners went beyond their normal duties in their support of the rebellion. “Attended the funeral of poor Dick Hewett,” wrote one former officer in March 1865. Hewett had just returned from a Yankee prison. His “negro boy” had followed him into captivity and cried over his master’s coffin. The servant apparently had never been so

¹²¹ Michael Vorenberg, “‘The Deformed Child’: Slavery and the Election of 1864,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 2001), p. 256.

¹²² William Poague to mother, February 11, 1865, Monroe F. Cockrell, ed., *Gunner with Stonewall: Reminiscences of William Thomas Poague* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1957 [1903]), 148.

distraught. He had lost “more than his father and mother—his dear young master was dead.”¹²³ 250,000 Confederate soldiers had already joined him. They were men who fought hard for four years in the defense of slavery, and many blacks had aided them in their efforts to defeat the Yankee armies. This slave might have shed fake tears at Hewett’s funeral, but if he did, he convinced those soldiers around him that he cared for his master and was loyal to the South.

In conclusion, emancipation, whether by Lincoln’s order or as a natural outcome of the war, led many slaves to flee their masters. Confederates found that blacks were often dubious allies of the Southern war effort. But despite the disruption that emancipation caused, even late into the war, rebel troops believed that most slaves were loyal and that they could maintain control over the peculiar institution. Slavery might even survive the Confederacy. After all, the Southern states did not ban it until late in 1865 with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. “Slavery is gone up,” said one soldier in May 1865.¹²⁴ His conclusion seems obvious, but it reflects how slow some Southerners were to accept slavery’s demise, even after the Confederacy itself was dead.

When Northerners made the conflict a “harder war” in 1862 and 1863, Confederates did not throw down their arms, but accepted their challenge. Rebel soldiers, however, soon faced the problem not only of slaves fleeing their masters, but the invasion of black troops into the South. In order to stop what they saw as “mongrel,” “abolitionist” forces from conquering the Confederacy, they steeled themselves for greater efforts and bloodier violence. They saw black soldiers as nothing more than slaves and believed they must put them in their “proper” place. On many battlefields, Confederate soldiers showed

¹²³ Entry for March 17, 1865, Richard L. Maury Diary, VHS.

¹²⁴ Willie Milling to brother, May 20, 1865, D. Y. Milling Correspondence, LLMVC.

no mercy toward former slaves who fought against them. White and black troops heard chilling shouts of “no quarter” whenever they battled one another.

V
NO QUARTER:
THE CONFEDERATE ARMY'S OFFICIAL
AND UNOFFICIAL POLICY TOWARD BLACK UNION TROOPS

With the Emancipation Proclamation came the use of black troops to put down the rebellion. By the spring of 1863, the United States had organized some black regiments and had thousands of volunteers ready to fill others. Over the course of the war, 180,000 black troops, most of whom were former slaves, served in the Northern army.¹ In 1863, what had been a white soldiers' struggle became a conflict in which black soldiers took part. Confederates found, much to their dismay, that former servants were now invading the South with Yankee armies. Rebels who had joined the ranks with dreams of Walter Scott-like glory found their chivalry tested when they confronted black men in battle. From the first, Confederates treated them with little of the respect they often showed Northern whites. By 1863, they promised no quarter when they fought black Federals.²

From the war's beginning, rebels had vowed to treat Northerners without restraint. Such grim assurances were not always racial in tone. Confederates spoke of flying the black flag or showing no quarter toward any Northerner. In their eyes, Yankees

¹ On the fact that most black Federal troops had been slaves, see Charles P. Roland, *The Confederacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 35.

² See, for example, Isaac Affleck to Mr. and Mrs. Affleck, March 25, 1863, Ralph A. Wooster, "With the Confederate Cavalry in the West: The Civil War Experiences of Isaac Dunbar Affleck," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (July 1979), p. 10; Harden Perkins Cochrane to sister, July 18, 1863, Harriet Fitts Ryan, ed., "The Letters of Harden Perkins Cochrane, 1862-1864 (Part V)," *Alabama Review*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (October 1955), p. 278; shortly after the battle of Chickamauga, a British observer had a long talk with a Louisianan who promised that were he to meet black men in battle, "I shan't give them any quarter." He contrasted this talk with a black cook who wished the war were fought with more chivalry. By 1863, the war had become more like the one the Louisiana soldier wished to wage; see "In Camp Near Chickamauga," by Captain Fitzgerald Ross, quoted in Richard B. Harwell, *The Confederate Reader* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1957), 228.

were abolitionists, and they must pay for waging war against the South.³ Once black men took up arms, however, Confederates' violent fantasies shifted from the imagined killing of white "abolitionists" to black troops, who would bear the heaviest brunt of Confederate hatred.⁴ In rebel eyes, they epitomized the Northern crusade against slavery. They were the seed of abolitionist fanaticism—the Southerner's worst nightmare made flesh. For Confederate troops, thoughts of black Federals killing, burning, and raping their way through the South magnified Nat Turner's revolt ten-fold. Soldiers, therefore, felt they had good reason for ruthlessness. In wartime, in addition to having lived in a racial caste system, more Southerners than ever had training in how to kill. Thus, preexisting racial tensions exploded on many battlefields. It proved a disturbing rehearsal for the racial violence of Reconstruction, and as would happen after the war, there was only so much Northerners could do to prevent white retribution. They certainly could do little once the Federal government withdrew their military presence from the South.

Battles between white Confederates and black Federals were not the beginning of racial violence in the South. Slavery had always rested on coerced labor, mounted patrols, and corporal punishment. Whatever their disposition, masters had control over their servant's bodies, rewarding or punishing slaves according to their whims. Confederate soldiers, however, thought they did not have the benefit of choice. A master might only

³ On raising the black flag, see, for example, E. P. Petty to wife, May [?] 1863, Norman D. Brown, ed., *Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Captain Elijah P. Petty, Walker's Texas Division, CSA* (San Antonio: University of Texas, Institute of Texan Cultures, 1982), 213; see also, Wade Hampton to sister, November 17, 1861, Charles E. Cauthen, *Family Letters of the Wade Hamptons, 1782-1901* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), 78; on such vows made throughout the war, see Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Vintage, 1991); on the massacres of black troops during the Civil War, see Gregory Urwin, ed., *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Reprisals and Atrocities in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

⁴ See, for example, Brigadier General L. S. Ross to Brigadier General W. H. Jackson, March 5, 1864, Ira Berlin, et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-1867, Series II, The Black Military Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 538.

have to discipline a slave for a minor act of rebelliousness, but rebel troops knew they had to defend themselves against black men sent to kill them. Their brand of justice, therefore, was not always as well considered as the master's. Slave-owners sometimes killed or maimed a slave for some infraction, but in wartime, Confederate troops believed they had much more to lose were they not to stop black soldiers. Thus, the killing of black troops often turned into massacres. Defeating "Negroes" was often not enough to satisfy rebel soldiers—they had to "execute" them.

Many historians have examined the role black troops played in the war.⁵ They have mostly explored the interracial nature of the Civil War from a Union prospective, with limited attention to Confederates' perception of black troops. To some extent, rebel soldiers' views were predictable: the sight of black combatants aroused much anger among them. As the historian Robin Kelley might put it, black soldiers were "race

⁵ See Ira Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Peter Burchard, *One Gallant Rush: Robert Gould Shaw and his Brave Black Regiment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989 [1965]); Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987 [1956]); Joseph T. Glatthaar, "Black Glory: The African-American Role in Union Victory," in Gabor Boritt, ed., *Why the Confederacy Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 135-62; Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Martin H. Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh, eds., *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and the Civil War*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2000); Hondon B. Hargrove, *Black Union Soldiers in the Civil War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 1988); James G. Hollandsworth, *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience during the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 64-103; James M. McPherson, *Marching toward Freedom: The Negro in the Civil War 1861-1865* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967); James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted during the War for the Union* (New York: Vintage, 1965); Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969 [1953]); John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998); Howard C. Westwood, *Black Troops and White Commanders and Freedmen during the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992); George W. Williams, *A History of Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969 [1888]).

rebels,” who Confederate soldiers saw as the opposite of the harmless plantation Sambo.⁶ What is important, however, is not merely that rebel troops detested black soldiers, but the extent to which black Federals affected Confederate military policy and the war effort. Joseph Glatthaar has argued that black troops were the deciding factor in the North’s victory.⁷ Confederates, however, believed they could defeat them with little effort. In their eyes, “Negro” soldiers were slaves and that no white man would ever retreat in the face of former servants, however well armed. But if rebels had little respect for black soldiers, they fought them zealously. Confederates’ proslavery ways of thinking and long-standing negative attitudes toward blacks led them to wage war harder than ever.

Interracial combat proved something of a tonic for Confederate troops. One veteran remembered that fighting black soldiers made Southerners even more efficient killers.

Comrades, did you ever fight negroes in the war? Well, if so, did you notice that your guns would shoot faster and straighter than ever before? Did you ever see a comrade after he had surrendered to a negro soldier, and if so, where? And did you ever take a negro prisoner, and if so, what did you do with him? I never saw one captured nor one after he was captured. General Sherman says “war’s hell,” and we found race prejudice to be strong there.⁸

War was hell, indeed. Battles between Confederates and black Federal troops revealed the even more desperate side of war that emerged after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Black soldiers were determined to show that the “bottom rail was on top.” Confederates, in contrast, were convinced that white Southerners had no

⁶ Robin D. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁷ See Glatthaar, “Black Glory,” Boritt, ed., *Why the Confederacy Lost*, 135-62.

⁸ U. R. Brooks, *Butler and His Cavalry in the War of Secession 1861-1865* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1909), 363-64.

master on or off the battlefield. Although relatively few Confederates ever confronted black soldiers in battle—and defeating them had more symbolic than military importance—to maintain human bondage, rebels believed they must prove they could defeat armies consisting of former slaves. With their manhood and combat reputations—not to mention slavery and the Southern social order—at stake, Confederates found that racially charged combat proved the bitterest fighting in a very bitter war.

In 1862, Confederates worried about what seemed the Lincoln administration’s move toward a harder war—a full-scale assault against Southern property, slave or otherwise.⁹ In their eyes, commanders who liberated and armed slaves were criminals. In late July 1862, John Letcher, the governor of Virginia, wrote to the Secretary of War concerning the treatment of those who incited blacks to rebel. The Confederacy, he believed, must punish armed blacks, their officers, and any Federal who sought to interfere with slavery. Yankees were not merely striking at slaveholders in Virginia or Alabama, but the Southern nation as a whole.¹⁰ By summer, the Confederacy had issued stern warnings to Northerners instituting a “get tough” policy on the rebels. In August, the South angrily responded to General David Hunter’s emancipating and arming of slaves in the southeastern Confederacy. Among a society of abolitionists, Hunter seemed an arch-abolitionist. In rebel eyes, as with the radical Republican Benjamin “Beast” Butler, he did the devil’s work in the South. Confederate commanders should therefore retaliate against Federal “crimes and outrages.” Hunter and others were not just enemies but “outlaws.” Rebels would treat Hunter as a criminal subject to execution, not a

⁹ On this hard war policy, see Joseph Allan Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 142-64; Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Royster, *Destructive War*.

¹⁰ John Letcher to George Randolph, July 28, 1862, *OR*, Series 2, Vol. 4, p. 829.

prisoner of war, and Jefferson Davis himself would determine the time and place of the execution.¹¹

As early as the summer of 1862, the Davis government refused to recognize black troops as combatants. By then, some had already fought in small battles. In August, a rebel wrote of a “good many Negroes” engaged in a skirmish in Arkansas,¹² and their presence gradually grew in the Union armies. In response, Confederates looked to their commanders and political leaders for guidance concerning how they should deal with black troops and their white officers. In November, the Alabama colonel John Tattnall wrote to the commander of the Gulf Department to say that he had ordered the shooting of blacks found in arms with “abolition troops” or who served as guides.¹³ He did not express regret about murdering captured blacks, but he wanted further instruction about executing white men. Colonel Tattnall received advice from General John Forney. Writing from Mobile, Forney urged him to hang rather than shoot black troops or guides—punishment he apparently deemed more appropriate for traitors and spies.¹⁴ Rebels had few qualms about killing blacks, but they were far more hesitant about murdering white men.

In late 1862, the seizing of black troops and other “Negroes” in the Federal armies became common. Confederate commanders subsequently questioned their superiors

¹¹ General Orders No. 60, August 21, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 599; on anti-Butler rhetoric, see A. M. Keiley, *In Vinculus; or, the Prisoner of War* (New York: Blelock and Company, 1866), 36, 45; on one woman’s hatred of Butler and his black troops, see E. W. Tazewell to J. Pembroke Thom, January 6, 1863, Catherine Thom Bartlett, ed., “*My Dear Brother*”: *A Confederate Chronicle* (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1952), 77; on Butler, see also, George Pickett to General S. Cooper, December 15, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 29, Pt. 2, p. 873.

¹² Henry Orr to parents, August 21, 1862, John Q. Anderson, ed., *Campaigning with Parsons’ Texas Cavalry Brigade, CSA: The War Journals and Letters of the Four Orr Brothers* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1967), 62-63.

¹³ Colonel Jonathan Tattnall to Captain S. Croom, November 8, 1862, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series II, The Black Military Experience*, 570-71.

¹⁴ Forney to Tattnall, November 11, 1862, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *ibid*, 571.

about what to do with captured blacks or whether they should take them prisoner at all. On November 14, Hugh Mercer wrote to P. G. T. Beauregard about black men's prisoner of war status. Beauregard in turn wrote to the Secretary of War, James Seddon, who talked with Jefferson Davis about the matter. Seddon reminded Beauregard that slaves in "flagrant rebellion" were subject to harsh penalties in all Confederate states. Seddon foreshadowed the Administration's December 1862 proclamation, which asserted that Confederates would not recognize blacks as prisoners of war. The only fitting punishment, the Secretary of War concluded, was summary execution. Seddon, however, included a caveat: he wanted officers to administer such discipline carefully in order to avoid "possible abuse of this grave power." The government worried that its soldiers might exceed their authority and execute blacks because of "immediate excitement" or "over-zeal." General Mercer, therefore, should practice his power discriminately and judiciously.¹⁵

In response to the Emancipation Proclamation, the rebel government developed a policy for dealing with black troops. Confederates, who saw "Negroes" foremost as slaves, would treat them with severity. In December, Jefferson Davis issued an official statement about his nation's conduct toward captured blacks. One could consider his document an anti-Emancipation Proclamation, which declared that rebel armies would return to slavery any black man found in Federal uniform and threatened to put to death any slave or white officer of black soldiers. The last two provisions of Davis' proclamation were the most important. The third said, "That all negro slaves captured in arms be at once delivered over to the executive authorities of the respective States ... to be dealt with according to the laws of said States." The fourth stated, "That the like

¹⁵ Seddon to Beauregard, November 30, 1862, *OR*, Series 2, Vol. 4, p. 954.

orders be executed in all cases with respect to all commissioned officers of the United States when found serving in company with armed slaves in insurrection against the authorities of the different States of this Confederacy.”¹⁶ Davis’ proclamation seemed to reiterate powers that the state governments already possessed, and in that light one could consider it a concession to states rights. The Confederacy did not have in 1862, nor would it ever, a national court system as existed in the United States. Thus, no Supreme Court could review laws concerning the return of former slaves in Federal uniform to their masters or the execution of their white officers. Davis instead let the states decide how to deal with such people. The president considered the legal status quo antebellum sufficient. Rather than make new laws, the Confederacy responded to emancipation and the arming of slaves by deciding to enforce existing ones. After all, as rebels believed, since black soldiers were merely slaves, why should the Confederacy adjust its statutes in order to deal with them? In their eyes, any alteration of racial laws would signify a change in the way men viewed slaves. To take a soft line toward black soldiers would undermine the legal and ideological foundations of human bondage and white supremacy.

In contrast, the Union believed that more important than following antebellum statute was respect for the “laws” of warfare. To Northern minds, the execution of white or black Northern soldiers clearly violated the unwritten code of battle, regardless of what the Confederate states said. Many Americans believed some acts of war were morally unacceptable. Just as the Union believed the Federal government superseded state authority, it thought Confederate commanders should respect black soldiers’ status as combatants. Northerners were more willing to respect slaves’ humanity, whereas Southern law mostly defined black people as property. Thus, in the eyes of rebels, the

¹⁶ Davis’ proclamation, December 23, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 15, p. 908.

Union should not have been surprised that they did not consider black soldiers the equal of white ones merely because “Negroes” were in uniform. For Confederates, race was a loophole in the laws of warfare.

Confederates had no intention of respecting black soldiers’ status as combatants. Since the Union had made war against Southern civilians, rebels believed they had no obligation to play by the North’s rules. In their eyes, the Union went too far by plundering homes and inciting blacks in order to destroy the rebellion and slavery. The result, Davis wrote in his December proclamation, was a “servile war ... far exceeding in horrors the most merciless atrocities of the savages.”¹⁷ The Confederate president knew the South could not have black “savages” terrorizing the countryside. The irony of Davis’ proclamation, however, was lost on the Confederacy. Secessionists legally justified their rebellion against the Union, but they would not allow slaves to rebel against the Confederates States of America. From the beginning of the war, the United States considered Confederates as rebels rather than citizens of another nation, but did not treat them as such. After all, the Union recognized captured Confederate soldiers as prisoners of war and blockaded the South as if it were a warring England or France. The South, however, branded black troops only as rebels, even if it did not want the United States to treat Confederate soldiers the same way. Southerners had extended blacks few legal rights under slavery. In wartime, they again discriminated against them: they would not give them protection under the makeshift “rules” of combat.

Davis’ proclamation was not the last official word on the Confederacy’s policy toward black troops. On January 12, 1863, the Administration said that military courts, not state governments, were responsible for trying white officers who led black

¹⁷ Davis proclamation, December 23, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 15, p. 907.

regiments.¹⁸ That spring, Congress, in retaliation for emancipation, passed a joint resolution reiterating what Davis had said in his December proclamation. The Confederacy, after trying them in a military court, would kill white officers who led black troops or trained them for battle. As for any slave captured in arms against the Confederacy, rebel soldiers would turn them over to the state governments. The execution of white officers never happened to the extent Southern law allowed, though Confederates murdered or returned to bondage many black soldiers.¹⁹

The Confederacy was intent—first *de jure*, later *de facto*—upon treating black soldiers and their officers as outlaws. The United States, however, would win the battle, diplomatically at least, regarding their status. David Hunter wrote to Jefferson Davis in late April 1863 to complain that Confederates had killed blacks and sold others into slavery. Hunter believed this went “against the laws of war and humanity.” In retaliation, he promised to execute immediately the highest-ranking officer in his possession. Hunter would not allow the Confederates to murder his men or sell them “into a slavery worse than death.”²⁰ Responsibility for the execution of prisoners of war would fall on the rebels, he believed, not the Federal government.

Davis’ December proclamation, therefore, had immediate consequences. In addition to complaints from men such as Hunter, it made the Confederacy look bad internationally.²¹ And just as the Confederacy’s reaction to emancipation was swift, so too was the North’s response to rebel retaliation. In July, in reaction to Davis’

¹⁸ Lynda L. Crist, *et al.*, eds., *The Papers of Jefferson Davis, Volume 9: January—September 1863* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 153n.

¹⁹ “Joint resolution adopted by the Confederate Congress on the subject of retaliation April 30—May 1, 1863,” *OR*, Series 2, Vol. 5, pp. 940-41; see also, William J. Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 408-09.

²⁰ Hunter to Davis, April 23, 1863, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series II, The Black Military Experience*, 573.

²¹ See Crist, *et al.*, eds., *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, Vol. 9, p. 153n.

proclamation, the Union promised to kill a rebel for every Federal soldier executed. It would also put one Confederate at work for every Northerner made to labor for the South.²² If rebels were going to force captured black troops to serve as slaves in their armies, the United States would make captured rebels work like “Negroes” too. The South might distinguish between black and white prisoners, but the Federal government would not. The Confederacy, in response, did not pursue its official no quarter policy any further.

In addition to having aroused Federal retaliation, the rebel government’s policy toward black soldiers and their officers posed other problems. For one, it probably confused more commanders than it helped. Southerners preferred to think of all black people as slaves, but as Treasury Secretary Christopher Memminger noted in July 1863, what would they do with captured free blacks? Nearly half of the Union’s black troops had never been slaves. Were Confederates to treat them as slaves inciting insurrection? Furthermore, how would the government control its armies’ actions?²³ Military authorities, after all, believed they were only following antebellum state law when they punished white and black Northerners for giving black men guns to use against Southern whites. The Confederate government, therefore, would have trouble controlling men who were following existing laws, not to mention generations of proslavery belief, when they executed black troops. Those raised thinking blacks were slaves were unlikely to back

²² See President Lincoln’s order of retaliation, July 30, 1863, Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume VI (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 357; Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle*, 201.

²³ On Memminger’s problems with the Administration’s stance on black troops, see Memminger to Edward G. Palmer, July 27, 1863, Louis P. Towles, ed., *A World Turned Upside Down: The Palmers of South Santee, 1818-1881* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 371-72; Palmer disagreed with Memminger, asserting that at the time the Federal Constitution was written, free blacks did not have rights of citizenship. It was only owing to a “spirit of fanaticism” that some states had made them “partial citizens.” South Carolina, however, did not, and of course would not, recognize free black citizenship; see Palmer to John S. Palmer, no date given, *ibid*, 372.

down in the face of the Federal government's protests against their ill treatment.

President Davis was unwilling to sanction the murder of Federal prisoners of war, but he could not control the actions of all his commanders, many of whom did not always defer to, or seek advice from, authorities in Richmond. If Confederates did not have no quarter as their official policy, on the battlefield, officers and common soldiers found they could act with impunity.

The political problems Davis' proclamation caused probably did not concern Confederate soldiers very much. Before the rebel government did, troops had expected trouble. "If [Davis' proclamation] does not produce a stir among the Yankees I am very much mistaken," said one in January 1863. "They will probably retaliate by hanging ... our officers." But such a possibility led him to a tighter embrace of the Confederacy. Even in mid 1863, he believed the rebels had an advantage were they to execute Yankees: they supposedly captured more prisoners and outfought the enemy.²⁴ In 1864, when the prisoner exchange ended, Confederates discovered that the Union could best stand attrition. But before then, rebels believed they could easily beat back any black troops sent to fight them.

By the summer of 1863, the Confederacy's policy toward black soldiers had become more complex. The South first branded "colored" regiments as outlaw bands and then rescinded its policy, officially at least, when President Lincoln threatened retaliation. The rebel government abandoned its stance that black forces would suffer execution for inciting servile insurrection. But in August 1863, James Seddon, at Davis' urging, wrote that blacks should not have prisoner of war status, and he recommended putting them at

²⁴ Cleland K. Huger, Jr., to D. E. Huger Smith, January 20, 1863, Daniel E. Huger Smith, *et al.*, eds., *Mason Smith Family Letters 1860-1868* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950), 33.

hard labor. Beyond that, the government left decision-making to army commanders. “Each case must depend upon its circumstances,” Seddon wrote, “and as the two govts will have different classes to deal with it is not seen how a definite answer can be given.”²⁵ If the Administration did not have no quarter as its official policy, officers carried out executions of blacks in an unofficial manner. It is not surprising that they exacted summary punishment, despite what their superiors said. The Confederate government was not about to punish its troops for the murder of black soldiers. For Yankees to obtain redress, they had to capture the perpetrators and prove their guilt. Unfortunately for them, the war’s worst massacres of black troops occurred at places where Confederates were victorious. With Southerners in control of the field, it was difficult for Northerners to bring guilty men to justice.

By 1863, Confederate troops seemed to act more on the Old Testament belief in “taking an eye for an eye” than antebellum legal statute. For some rebels, the war had become more destructive, even Biblical in nature. That March, concerning recent raids by black and white Union troops, a Florida soldier called upon God, “being our helper,” would clear out the invaders.²⁶ Confederate troops believed they must inflict Jehovah-like wrath on the “Yankee-Negro” alliance, and most felt up to the task. Daniel Hundley, drawing on an antebellum book, *Armageddon, or the United States in Prophecy*, believed the fighting between black and white troops echoed the words of the prophet Ezekiel. Hundley saw the North in the role of Gog, an invading power that worshipped a false god. The South naturally was the true Israel. Fighting alongside the armies of Gog, as

²⁵ James Seddon to [Milledge L. Bonham?], August 25, 1863, Crist, *et al.*, eds., *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, Vol. 9, p. 355.

²⁶ Winston to Octavia Stephens, March 16, 1863, Ellen E. Hodges and Stephen Kerber, eds., “ ‘Rogues and Black Hearted Scamps’: Civil War Letters of Winston and Octavia Stephens, 1862-63,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (July 1978), p. 82.

depicted in Ezekiel 38:5, were “ ‘Ethiopia and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet.’ ”²⁷ As Hundley interpreted the Old Testament, the armies of Ethiopia and Libya were the black soldiers who helped Lincoln defeat the South. The Civil War apparently had the characteristics of a racial Armageddon.

Some commanders, however, did not want the war to descend into racial killings.²⁸ Joseph E. Johnston, for example, wrote to General Stephen D. Lee regarding a supposed massacre of 22 black Federals and a white officer. The men, he wrote, were “put to death in cold blood and without form of law.” If the report were true, Johnston wanted to bring the culprits to trial.²⁹ As Johnston’s memorandum suggests, he did not necessarily protest the killing of Federal troops, but that Confederates punished them without due process of law. Johnston, however, was not a commander quick to seize on the tactics of hard war.

Nor were others. They saw that executing black troops served little purpose. Some Confederates believed they should instead return them to slavery, where they could renew the ties that had bound them to the white South. They thought blacks would realize the error of their ways if welcomed back into the Confederate fold. In the summer of 1863, for example, the rebel army inaugurated a campaign along the Mississippi to destroy anything of use to the United States. The Secretary of War informed General Kirby Smith that many of the Northern troops along the river were black. He gave “suggestions” rather than orders about how to deal with them and their white commanders. He wanted the races treated differently, and unlike most Confederates, he

²⁷ Daniel Hundley, *Prison Echoes of the Great Rebellion* (New York: S. W. Green, 1874), 40-44.

²⁸ See, for example, J. G. Walker to Major E. Surget, July 10, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 24, Pt. 2, p. 466; see also, C. D. Elgee to General C. J. Polignac, February 8, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Pt. 2, p. 952.

²⁹ Memorandum of August 31, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 30, Pt. 4, p. 573.

believed rebels should punish blacks with leniency. White troops, however, he said, “had better be dealt with red-handed on the field or immediately thereafter.” Black troops, in contrast, were mere dupes, “deluded victims of the hypocrisy and malignity of the enemy.” Therefore, they “should not be driven to desperation, but received readily to mercy, and encouraged to submit and return to their masters.”³⁰ Once they were under the care of their former slaveholders, he believed, blacks would find contentment. Such a policy made the war against black troops less severe as well as more paternalistic. As Secretary Seddon claimed, former slaves could not have fled on their own, rather, they were tools of the “abolitionists.” Since Southern society was superior to the free North, such men reasoned, blacks must have joined the Yankees only under duress. Black troops, therefore, deserved mercy. In rebel minds, masters should avoid punishing their slaves unless necessary. For Seddon, a servant who fled deserved swift justice, but a dead one was useless. “Negroes” may stray, but Confederates should not execute them. The army would show slaves that they had erred, but after defeating them, it was best to return them to their owners.

General Richard Taylor, for one, saw that blacks could again experience the happiness of living under their old masters by laboring on fortifications. Assigning them to such tasks, he said, proved more important “for the purpose of ... healthy employment than for the value of the work.” Taylor had no hesitation in playing master to their slave, and his black prisoners supposedly responded in a manner appropriate to the antebellum white-black relationship. “Thank you, Massa General,” he remembered one black worker

³⁰ Seddon to Kirby Smith, August 12, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Pt. 2, p. 965 (quoted); Seddon to Kirby Smith, August 3, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Pt. 2, pp. 952-53; see also.

saying to him. “They give us plenty of good victuals; but how you like our work?” Taylor replied that he liked their work just fine.³¹

Men such as Taylor thought that blacks would inevitably see Southern masters were kinder than men in the Northern army. In their eyes, Yankee troops were not friends of “the Negro,” but mere opportunists. The inclusion of blacks in the Federal ranks, one rebel asserted in March 1863, was a cynical attempt by Republicans to undermine the Democrats. He believed the move would backfire, pushing the Confederates further away from any possible reconciliation with the North.³² Federal soldiers apparently were brutes. As one rebel wrote home, “Let the negroes know how the Yankees put the negro soldiers in the front at Port Hudson, when nearly a whole Reg. was killed.”³³ Such a rumor served as a cautionary tale: blacks at home should reconsider any attempt to join the Union army. It might get them killed—certainly a lot faster than if they remained slaves. The reality of black Union troops in the South led rebels to spread rumors about them. A Confederate at Port Hudson, for example, heard that Northerners did not bury blacks killed in battle. And some rebels saw that black soldiers were not always willing to enter the service on their own. One serving in Florida said local Federals were gathering up blacks and hanging those who would not fight.³⁴

³¹ Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955 [1879]), 256-57.

³² Diary entry for March 1, 1863, Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Holding the Line: The Third Tennessee Infantry, 1861-1864*, by Flavel C. Barber (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), 96.

³³ Frederick Percival Leverett to mother, June 17, 1863, Frances Wallace Taylor, et al., eds., *The Leverett Letters: Correspondence of a South Carolina Family 1851-1868* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 223.

³⁴ Entry for June 4, 1863, J. V. Frederick, ed., “War Diary of W. C. Porten,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter 1952), p. 311; Winston to Octavia Stephens, March 16, 1863, Hodges and Kerber, eds., “‘Rogues and Black Hearted Scamps’: Civil War Letters of Winston and Octavia Stephens, 1862-63,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 81-82.

Confederates, however, could not deny that the Emancipation Proclamation had led many former slaves to enroll in the Union army, which gave them a new status. As one remembered, once in uniform, black men felt a “new sensation ... to be *somebody*.”³⁵ Rebels, therefore, were not blind to the enthusiasm of “Negro” soldiers. While a captive at Point Lookout prison in 1864, one Southerner saw contrabands promenading through the streets. Those who had recently worked as hacks and house servants were now wearing the stripes of non-commissioned officers. On Independence Day, he saw blacks with their “holiday sutes [sic]” following Union troops in parades around the city. At the prison, more of them were called upon to volunteer. He said that one who “waits in my room” had offered his services to the United States.³⁶

Confederates, however determined, could not stop the influx of black Union troops into the South. The rebel promise of showing black soldiers no quarter was an expression of desperation and defensiveness as well as vengeance. It became obvious to Confederate troops that many black men had not internalized proslavery thinking. For black soldiers, indeed, military service proved the greatest means of asserting power against their old masters—the most dramatic way of exercising their freedom. It seemed they were even more steadfast than white Federals in their desire to kill rebels. By the summer of 1863, one Confederate wrote that Nathaniel Banks was getting few reinforcements other than black troops.³⁷ Despite the discrimination they faced from Northerners, and the murderous rage they evoked from Confederates, black soldiers persisted. The spring and summer of 1863 served as their initiation into the world of Civil

³⁵ E. W. Williams, ed., *With the Border Ruffians: Memoirs of the Far West, 1852-1868* by Robert Hamilton Williams (Toronto: Musson Books, 1919), 449.

³⁶ Entries for July 3; July 4 (first quotation); July 5, 1864 (second quotation), E. L. Cox Diary, VHS.

³⁷ Entry for August 15, 1863, Ferrell, ed., *Holding the Line*, 145.

War combat. In that time, they took part in one hard-won, small battle at Milliken's Bend and also participated in the Port Hudson and Charleston campaigns.

In the summer of 1863, black troops fought in three memorable battles. The first was during Nathaniel Banks' campaign for Port Hudson, Louisiana, where black soldiers took part in a bloody assault in late May. The Union's eventual capture of Port Hudson helped the North seize control of the Mississippi and thus split the South in two. Because of their service in the Union army, blacks no longer were just fleeing to the Yankees as a way of undermining Confederates, they were now killing them. As one rebel remembered years later, the Port Hudson siege signaled "the first engagement of this war, of any magnitude, between the white man and negro."³⁸ It was, indeed, and Port Hudson's fall in July opened the Mississippi to the Federals.

The battle for Port Hudson was the first significant one in which blacks took part, but they were active in other areas of the South around that time. In June 1863, they fought in a small battle at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, where attacking Confederates shouted "no quarter" at defending black troops. After brutal, close-quarter combat, the rebels retreated. Confederates lost the battle, and with it, some of their belief in the inherent inferiority of black troops. In July, however, the rebels were more successful in throwing back a force of white and black soldiers during the attack on Battery Wagner in Charleston Harbor. After the battle, the rebels buried the white and black Federals in a pit

³⁸ Association of the Defenders of Port Hudson, "Fortification and Siege of Port Hudson," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 14 (1886), p. 321 (quoted); on blacks at Port Hudson, see James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire, Volume II: The Civil War, Second Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993 [1982]), 351.

in front of the fort. Although the slaughter was not as great as at later battlefields, some Confederates killed black troops when they tried to surrender.³⁹

Black soldiers, under any circumstances, faced great adversity once they put on blue uniforms. As with any group of men, courage did not necessarily make them good soldiers, and they had to work even harder than whites to impress fellow Northerners, win victories, and avoid rebel retribution. As brave as they might have been, their presence provoked Southerners to fight with greater desperation than usual. Confederates were quick to exploit black troops' weaknesses and tarnish their reputation when they failed. Confederates saw any defeat of black soldiers not as bad luck but a reflection on the "Negro" character. Southerners did not think much of black men's skill as soldiers. In their eyes, blacks were cowards—field hands, not soldiers. "Darkies," one Confederate wrote after the war, "understood the use of the hoe better than the fire-lock."⁴⁰ At best,

³⁹ On a Federal officer's positive appraisal of black troops at Milliken's Bend, see Elias Denis to Colonel John A. Rawlins, June 12, 1863, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series II, The Black Military Experience*, 533-34; on Richard Taylor thinking it unfortunate that any blacks were captured at the battle, see his report, June 8, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 24, Pt. 2, p. 459; on a Confederate commander's belief that black troops fought well, see General Henry E. McCulloch's report, June 8, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 24, Pt. 2, p. 467; on a surgeon's poor assessment of the black troops, see Junius Bragg to wife, July 1, 1863, T. J. Gaughan, ed., *Letters of a Confederate Surgeon 1861-65*, by Junius Newport Bragg (Camden, AR: n. p., 1960), 142-43; Richard Lowe, "Battle on the Levee: The Fight at Milliken's Bend," Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue*, 107-35; on not taking any black prisoners at Fort Wagner, see Samuel Kennerly to wife, July 18 [?], 1863, Julie Holcomb, "In Letters to his Wife, Lieutenant Samuel N. Kennerly of the 25th South Carolina Told of the Toll of War," *America's Civil War*, Vol. 15, Issue 5 (November 2002), p. 30 [online resource]; see also, Jefferson DeVotie to father, July 20, 1863, Mills Lane, ed., *Dear Mother: Don't Grieve About Me. If I Get Killed, I'll Only Be Dead*: *Letters from Georgia Soldiers in the Civil War* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1990), 253; on the battle at Battery Wagner, see also, Quarles, *Negro in the Civil War*, 17-18; George Smith to aunt, July [?], 1863, Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 253; Dr. A. E. McGarity to wife, August 2, 1863, Edmund Cody Burnett, ed., "Letters of a Confederate Surgeon: Dr. Abner Embry McGarity, 1862-1865," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (June 1945), p. 168; on the treatment of black prisoners after the battle, see Pierre Beauregard to Samuel Cooper, July 17, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 28, Pt. 2, p. 205; "Report of operations on Morris Island, SC, during the months of July, August, and September, 1863," submitted September 18, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 28, Pt. 1, p. 78; Governor Milledge L. Bonham to Beauregard, July 22, 1863, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series II, The Black Military Experience*, 579-80; on the politics of the exchange, see Johnson Hagood, *Memoirs of the War of Secession* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1910), 184; Howard C. Westwood, "Captive Black Union Soldiers in Charleston—What To Do?," Greenberg and Waugh, eds., *Price of Freedom, Vol. I*, 259-73.

⁴⁰ Donald E. Everett, ed., *Chaplain Davis and Hood's Texas Brigade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999 [1962]), 72.

they were simply pitiable. Confederates spoke of “poor Negroes” at battles, suggesting blacks were doomed to fail, yet put up a token resistance, or perhaps they were incapable of excelling at combat. At the December 1864 battle of Nashville, for example, a Confederate admired the bravery of a black flag-bearer, but his valor was conspicuous because those around him fled. After the man was hit, the rebel observer felt a “sudden compassion.” In a manner befitting an Englishman discussing the death of a comrade in an old campaign, he wrote, “He was a big, fine-looking chap. It seemed a pity.”⁴¹

Sympathy toward black soldiers, however, often occurred alongside descriptions of them as poor fighters. Such was the case with one rebel who said one could not consider a skirmish he had with black soldiers, who were guarding a train, a real fight.⁴² They apparently were no match for him and his men. When black soldiers were not barbarous Nat Turners, Confederates thought they acted like dim-witted Sambos. Said another in 1864, “I feel doubtful about shooting the ignorant negroes right and left.” His words underscored the Sambo-half of what Southern whites often saw as the black man’s dual nature: he was both Sambo and Nat Turner.⁴³ Southern troops would have had little sympathy for armies full of Nat Turners; a black soldier who was a Sambo, however, garnered more sympathy, even if rebels scoffed at his fighting abilities. Confederate troops believed blacks did not fare well on the battlefield because freedom and Yankee muskets could not make them soldiers any more than plantations could make them

⁴¹ John Smith Kendall, “Recollections of a Confederate Officer,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 1946), p. 1210; on “Poor, ignorant negroes,” see also, W. A. McClendon, *Recollections of War Times* (Carrollton, MS: Pioneer Publishing, 1997 [1905]), 178.

⁴² Aristides Monteiro, *War Reminiscences by the Surgeon of Mosby’s Command* (Gaithersburg, MD: Butternut Press, 1979 [1890]), 71.

⁴³ Milton Maxcy Leverett to mother, March 9, 1864, Taylor, *et al.*, eds., *Leverett Letters*, 289.

intelligent, hard working, honest, and chaste. In their view, when they were not villainous, black soldiers were simply incompetent.

In his memoir, Philip Daingerfield Stephenson compared black soldiers' attitudes before a battle with those during an engagement: they were buoyant before a fight, but were quick to collapse under pressure. After their surrender, he noted, they were "as pitiful and disgusting in their abject terror as they had been exasperating in insolence." "Insolence," as Stephenson put it, was a telling word. As a noun, it is a trait possessed by those who do not defer to their betters—or in this case, their masters. In the face of such disrespect, Confederates believed they must punish black soldiers who did not "know their place." After defeating a group of them, as a last humiliation, Stephenson and his comrades took their shoes, shirts, and caps. Stripped of their uniforms, blacks more readily took on the appearance of slaves. As Walter Johnson shows in his book *Soul by Soul*, in the market, stripped of one's clothes and awaiting sale, slaves suffered the uttermost of human indignities, which left them vulnerable, even powerless. During the war, to take a black man's uniform served as a way of degrading him. Confederates wanted not just to defeat black troops, but punish and debase them.⁴⁴

As rebels believed, black soldiers dirtied what should have been a gentlemanly, white man's war. One Confederate described such troops as especially dark and primitive. A. M. Keiley remembered walking past "rows of grinning Ethiops, dirty, oleaginous, and idle." Among them was an "odorous Congo," who had a "Nubian nose." Keiley said, "like every other negro soldier I met ... he was as black as Mason's

⁴⁴ Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, ed., *The Civil War Memoir of Philip Daingerfield Stephenson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 255; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

‘Challenge’ [see footnote], and as surly looking a dog as ever brake bread.”⁴⁵ Such a description called up the worst stereotypes of blacks during the antebellum or any era. For Confederates, “Negro” troops appeared as dark as they expected a man from African to look; and in their view, dark skin color reflected a primitive and depraved moral character. In the eyes of rebel soldiers, rather than ennobling “the Negro”—as they believed combat did for white men fighting for home and personal honor—military service only further degraded them. Keiley described soldiers who apparently had no white blood in their veins, and thus, as white Southerners were convinced, little of what made men civilized. The literally darker the “Negro,” such reasoning went, the more he would exhibit morally dark behavior. Whites often complained that black people seemed more African than American, and rebel troops similarly made the mistake of thinking that black Northern soldiers were fresh from Africa. Most black Union soldiers had indeed been slaves at one time, but Confederates acted as if they were a type of “Negro” who they had never before encountered.

Soldiers’ opinions rested upon generations of racial thinking and propaganda, which asserted that black people were best suited to slavery. After the American Revolution, proslavery ideologues articulated Southern racial views, underscoring blacks’ inability to perform complicated or cerebral tasks. Such attitudes, however, went back further than the founding of the United States. As Winthrop Jordan shows in *White Over Black*, in the Western white mind, people associated blackness with evil and ignorance.

⁴⁵ Keiley, *In Vincilus*, 47; Mason’s “Challenge” might be a reference to a toy locomotive that was produced in the 1860s and had black and white lithograph paper coverings. Mason was one of the more prominent locomotive manufacturers of the 1850s. The toy trains Keiley might be referring to had such names as “Union,” “America,” “U. S. Grant,” and “Challenge.” Help in determining the origin of this obscure reference came from Edwin P. Alexander, *The Collector’s Book of the Locomotive* (New York: C. N. Potter, 1966).

Jordan argues that because whites took slaves from “unenlightened” Africa, it made human bondage more acceptable. Race alone does not explain why Americans used Africans to clear woods, plant crops, and serve at tables. Yet, prejudice influenced their decision, as early as the 1650s, to enslave blacks at an institutional level, denying them the legal status of whites. In addition to oppressive laws was an equally strong political and intellectual culture that reinforced proslavery ways of thinking. The South became a paradoxical society, where Jeffersonian egalitarian principles conflicted with an elite-ruled slave society. Black people’s sexuality, religious beliefs, and skin color, provided a constant point of comparison with Anglo-Saxon mores, culture, and physiognomy. Slaves were people that all whites, regardless of social standing, could look down upon. By the 1860s, Confederates could respect a white Union soldier, but not a black one. Black troops, therefore, faced adversity double their white comrades: they confronted rebels who showed little mercy toward men they considered mere savages.⁴⁶

In the mind of Confederate soldiers, black men made for the lowest sort of combatants. They were marauders rather than disciplined soldiers. Fears of blacks pillaging their country reflected rebels’ belief that blacks could not become good troops. Confederate soldiers could easily imagine ex-slaves destroying property and raping white women but not marching well or dressing ranks amid withering fire. Robert E. Lee’s men, for example, prided themselves on supposedly leaving Pennsylvania untouched in 1863. In contrast, as one soldier believed, was the behavior of black troops that same

⁴⁶ Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); see also, George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975); Claude H. Nolen, *The Negro’s Image in the South: The Anatomy of White Supremacy* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968).

summer. While on Northern soil, a general in the Army of Northern Virginia heard of Colonel James Montgomery's "colored" troops putting the torch to Darien, Georgia. He compared such behavior with that of his own men, who had recently saved a Pennsylvania home from burning down.⁴⁷ His implication was that Confederates were gentlemen. To expect black troops would respect the rules of warfare, however, was absurd.

For the first time, black men were using rifles successfully against Southerners to win their freedom, but it came at a high cost. Confederates were just as determined to keep their way of life—and the racial foundation of Southern society intact—as blacks were to destroy it. It was not a matter of policy for armies to probe the countryside looking for blacks to kill in cold blood. Even so, such things happened. In early 1864, Captain Henry Chambers, a North Carolinian serving in Lee's army, wrote of hunting down blacks in Virginia—in a military version of the pursuit of a runaway slave—as if they were animals. Unlike in the antebellum period, in this case Confederates were out to kill blacks, not capture them. " 'Run boys, run,' " said one gleeful rebel as he and his comrades chased them. " 'We will catch the G-d-d-d niggers yet!' " The men were soon exhausted, but their excitement pushed them further. They surrounded a house in which the black troops had hid and burned it down with the men trapped inside.⁴⁸

Animosity between white and black soldiers was not confined to the battlefield and local Confederate communities. In early 1864, before he began his campaign against Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant ended the prisoner exchange. His decision contained a

⁴⁷ General Clement Anselm Evans to wife, July 4, 1863, Robert Grier Stephens, Jr., ed., *Intrepid Warrior, Clement Anselm Evans, Confederate General from Georgia: Life, Letters, and Diaries from the War Years* (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1992), 222.

⁴⁸ Entry for March 9, 1864, T. H. Pearce, ed., *Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers* (Wendell, NC: Broadfoot's Bookmark, 1983), 183.

racial motive: since rebel troops did not recognize black troops as equals, he would not parole any more Confederates. In his memoirs, General Jubal Early objected to what he believed was Grant's decision to punish the South.⁴⁹ He was correct in his assumption, though killing and wounding rebels were already punishing them, and besides, punishing them was the whole point. Grant understood that the Confederacy could less afford to have its men captured than he could. A rebel prisoner was almost as good as a dead one. General Early thought it was unfair, however, that Federals would keep captured soldiers behind prison walls for the rest of the war.

In prisons, rebels were dismayed to see black troops guarding them. But for Northerners, their use proved especially fitting, since the exchange stopped because of Confederates' refusal to recognize blacks as combatants. As early as August 1863, one rebel saw it coming. "God help the unfortunate ones," he said of those who would have to live under black guards.⁵⁰ Since race lay behind exchange politics, Confederate prisoners grew to hate black Federals even more. In reference to the prisoner exchange, Captain John O'Brien remembered how much he and his men disliked the "everlasting nigger" who "busted up the whole thing." Angry rebels cursed the "whole nigger race from Ham down," he remembered. O'Brien lashed out at white Yankees, too. In a *reductio ad absurdum* that many Southerners had always drawn upon, he thought that because Northerners wanted to extend greater rights to black people, Yankees desired nothing better than to marry a black woman. He reserved his greatest wrath, however, for black troops. In roughly a paragraph of his memoirs, O'Brien used the word "nigger" six times

⁴⁹ Lieutenant Jubal Anderson Early, *Memoirs* (Baltimore: Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1989 [1912]), 290-91.

⁵⁰ Walter Taylor to sister, August 1, 1863, R. Lockwood Tower, ed., *Lee's Adjutant: The Wartime Letters of Colonel Walter Herron Taylor* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 65.

when accounting for their role in the prison camps.⁵¹ His racial diatribe was about as vitriolic as any when discussing blacks in the Civil War.

In prisons, Confederate soldiers essentially found themselves servants to black masters. In their eyes, black prison guards were crueler than white Yankees and certainly worse than a Southern slaveholder. Masters, they knew, had financial incentives to keep their chattels alive. In wartime, however, Southerners knew life was cheap. For some infraction, their black captors might shoot them or starve them to death. Confederates believed they were as powerless as one could be. That their guardians were black proved a further humiliation. The highest compliment rebel troops could give them involved faint praise. One Confederate said blacks would shoot prisoners at the slightest provocation, but they treated the inmates better than their white officers.⁵² But for the most part, from Jacksonville, Florida, and Fort Pulaski, Tennessee, to Point Lookout, Maryland, imprisoned rebels agreed that black sentries were terrible. Although they emphasized the worst of black soldiers' behavior, Confederate troops believed they had good reason for their grievances. As Michael Fitzgerald has written, "Scholars have occasionally noted a tendency toward harsh treatment of Confederate prisoners of war by African American troops but tend to move past it quickly without pondering its lasting implications."⁵³ One cannot deny that some black troops were guilty of inhumanely treating Confederate prisoners.

Rebel troops, however, were content to endure Yankee captivity before they considered black men as prisoners of war. In January 1865, one Confederate expressed

⁵¹ Brian K. Robertson, ed., *Things Grew Beautifully Worse: The Wartime Experiences of Captain John O'Brien, 30th Arkansas Infantry, CSA* (Little Rock: Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System, 2000), 25-26.

⁵² W. H. Morgan, *Personal Reminiscences of the War, 1861-5* (Lynchburg, VA: J. P. Bell, 1911), 236-37.

⁵³ Fitzgerald, "Another Kind of Glory," *Alabama Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4, p. 244.

his desire to have authorities exchange him for black troops.⁵⁴ But before the war seemed lost, most rebels refused to acknowledge “Negroes” as equals. In February 1864, in defiant, though futile resistance, one Confederate said he would always hate the United States flag and vowed never to marry a woman who respected it. He was adamant about not recognizing blacks as soldiers, yet could write, “Man, however vile, whatever his perils, whatever his destination, was born Free and loves Liberty.”⁵⁵ Such a claim either contradicted his racial views or he believed the black soldier was not a man—or what is more likely, he had no sense of his statement’s irony.

In prison, as was often the case during the war, Confederates viewed blacks in a Sambo-Nat Turner dichotomy, as submissive “darkies” or violent race rebels. One captive wrote of guards who he believed were little more than plantation Sambos who called their captives “master.” In his view, black Federals had blue suits on, but that did not necessarily make them good soldiers. A man imprisoned at Fort Pulaski, for example, noted the peculiar nature of roll call. It only was done when the black soldier could read. When he could not, the men were counted.⁵⁶ Confederates believed that just below the surface of blacks’ martial, authoritarian demeanor lay the ignorance and subservient

⁵⁴ Entry for January 30, 1865, A. Virgil Barnhill, Jr., “The Diary of Samuel Beckett Boyd: January 1, 1865—April 3, 1865,” *Tennessee Ancestors: A Publication of the East Tennessee Historical Society*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (April 1995), p. 35.

⁵⁵ Entry for February 28, 1864 (p. 65), and July 2, 1864 (p. 86), Mattie Lou Teague Crow, ed., *Diary of a Confederate Soldier, John Washington Inzer* (Huntsville, AL: Strode Publishers, 1977).

⁵⁶ On negative experiences among blacks in Federal prison, see J. B. Stamp, “Ten Months Experience in Northern Prisons,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter 1946), pp. 490-95; on bad experiences at Point Lookout, see Marcus B. Toney, *The Privations of a Private* (Nashville: Privately Printed, 1905), 85-87; James Huffman, *Ups and Downs of a Confederate Soldier* (New York: W. E. Rudge’s Sons, 1940), 91-92; see also, entry for April 5, 1864, W. J. Lemke, “Prisoner of War Diary,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter 1953), pp. 362-63; A. M. Keiley, “Prison-Pens North,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 18 (1889), p. 335; entry for December 9, 1864, “Diary of Captain Robert E. Park, Twelfth Alabama,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 2 (1876), p. 233.

instincts of the plantation “darkie.”⁵⁷ “The negro *never* loses the instinctive respect which he feels for the Southern man,” said E. John Ellis in his reminiscences. In his eyes, the black soldier would never prove the white man’s superior, no matter how much temporary power he wielded. Confederates believed that whether or not they would lose the war, the inverted racial roles of Yankee prison camps would not last. The black soldier they saw in prisons bore a resemblance to the peasant in Mark Twain’s *The Prince and the Pauper*—he had merely switched coats with the truly powerful.⁵⁸

If some were like the familiar Sambo—who Southern whites most cherished—many black guards apparently acted more like Simon Legree than Uncle Tom. Their behavior was often not as slave-like as Confederates liked to believe. In February 1864, one wrote of an officer rapping him over the hand with his saber. The offense: he had laughed at a black guard. Another remembered sentries who would put a kettle over a comrade’s head, hit it repeatedly, and call him an “old overseer.”⁵⁹ Another rebel lived in fear of a man called Captain Black, who kept order as men received their rations, sometimes pushing captives along saying, “Hike out, you damn Rebel.” He avoided Black as much as possible. After refusing his rations one day because he was sick, he had a fight with him. In the scuffle, he seized Black’s gun, but was not able to use it.

⁵⁷ See, for example, James Anderson to “Dear Mary,” [late February or early March 1864], George M. Anderson, S. J., ed., “A Captured Confederate Officer: Nine Letters from Captain James Anderson to His Family,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (March 1981), p. 65.

⁵⁸ [“Never” is underlined in original version] E. John Ellis Memoir, [typescript], p. 51, Miscellaneous Collection, LLMVC.

⁵⁹ On punishment for laughing, see Ruth Woods Dayton, ed., *Diary of a Confederate Officer, James E. Hall* (Lewisburg, WV: n. p., 1961), 96; on being called an “old overseer,” see Byron Smith, *Reminiscences of a Confederate Prisoner* (Jackson, MS: Baptist Orphanage Press, 1910), 31, found in Lemanda Lea Papers, LLMVC.

Although he said the fight led others to sympathize with him—and Captain Black apologized—the Yankees put him in handcuffs.⁶⁰

In the Old South, whites often had unquestioned authority over black people. Union prisons inverted such a relationship, whereby black soldiers became the master to the Confederate's slave. As with the slaveholder, black guards apparently possessed a combination of affection and disdain for their captives. Rebel soldiers believed that blacks, however, lacked chivalry, which led them to abuse their new power. Most prison guards, Robert Park said with disdain, were arrogant—too enamored with their new status as free men to defer to their “true” superiors.⁶¹

Point Lookout, where Confederates accused blacks of various crimes, was the Union prison most notorious for racial tensions. One rebel said the nighttime police were so brutal that authorities had to remove them. Black troops made skeletal men, at the point of the bayonet, march at the double quick, which sometimes occurred in the middle of the night. They also forced prisoners to carry guards on their backs or to pray for Abraham Lincoln. And with Victorian restraint, one soldier alluded to other acts that “decency would not permit me to mention.”⁶² Among the greatest crimes at Point Lookout was the unprovoked shooting of prisoners. Confederates believed that Northerners should not have trusted black guards with guns. They shot each other accidentally; one even shot himself. But more often they would take aim at prisoners. One Confederate wrote of the cold-blooded murder of a “poor, feeble old man named

⁶⁰ Henry W. Graber, *The Life Record of H. W. Graber, a Terry Texas Ranger 1861-1865: Sixty-Two Years in Texas* (n. p., [Dallas?]: Privately Published, 1916), 104-05.

⁶¹ Entry for December 9, 1864, “Diary of Captain Robert E. Park,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 2, p. 233.

⁶² On rebels made to double quick, see Rev. J. B. Traywick, “Prison Life at Point Lookout,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 18 (1890), p. 433; on not wanting to offend his sense of “decency,” see Charles T. Loehr, “Point Lookout,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 18 (1890), p. 118.

Potts ... one of the most harmless creatures in the pen.”⁶³ In April 1864, Confederates demanded investigation into the killing of one of their men. A sergeant wrote of a “sort of rivalry among [the black troops] to distinguish themselves by shooting some of us.” In August, another incident occurred. A black sentinel killed without provocation a Virginia soldier. Later that month, black guards shot another inmate.⁶⁴

In the eyes of one Confederate soldier, wicked black troops looked the part. Captain Robert E. Park described one of Benjamin Butler’s contrabands as “coal-black” and “brutal-looking.” Yet, another rebel believed that “Negro” guards’ martial appearance was more ridiculous than intimidating. Byron Smith described black soldiers’ “white eyes, white paper collars, white gloves,” and their “fat knapsacks.” In his view, they proved something of a characterization of the Civil War soldier. They were overly dressed and too heavily outfitted to perform their duties. They were well drilled, Smith recalled, but had a tendency to “show off.” For him, their good showing was just that, a show. The guards soon grew tired of their heavy burdens and dropped their knapsacks to the ground.⁶⁵

As slaves had for years on the plantation, Confederate prisoners rebelled against their captors in many ways. One wrote of those at Point Lookout who stole a guard’s

⁶³ On shootings, see entry for April 5, 1864, William Whatley Pierson, Jr., and Bell Irvin Wiley, eds., *Whipt 'em Everytime: The Diary of Bartlett Yancey Malone* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1960), 101; on the killing of “Potts,” see Keiley, “Prison-Pens North,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 18, p. 337; on the shooting of a soldier at Fort Delaware by a black soldier, see Elizabeth Cometti, ed., “Excerpts from Swann’s ‘Prison Life at Fort Delaware,’ ” *West Virginia History*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January 1941), p. 128.

⁶⁴ On the poor behavior of African Americans at Point Lookout, see DeWitt Boyd Stone, Jr., ed., *Wandering to Glory: Confederate Veterans Remember Evans’ Brigade* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 222; on “shooting some of us,” see Edwin Warfield Beitzell, *Point Lookout Prison Camp for Confederates* (Abell, MD: E. W. Beitzell, 1972), 35-36; on separate shooting instances, see *ibid.*, 60-61.

⁶⁵ Entry for December 9, 1864, “Diary of Captain Robert E. Park,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 2, p. 233; Smith, *Reminiscences of a Confederate Prisoner*, 32.

knapsack, which had his sweetheart's picture in it.⁶⁶ The testing of Federal troops' patience, however, often proved more serious. One Confederate told a white soldier that "the negro was superior to the Yankee, and that all [Northerners] ever knew [they] learned from them." The white guard, he was told sarcastically, "was a fit subject to associate with them." Such words played on Northern prejudice. A Yankee did not like to hear that he was the inferior of a black man and might overreact to such barbs. The quarrel between the soldier and his prisoner apparently resulted in the killing of the latter.⁶⁷

Just as the United States could not stop executions of black soldiers from occurring, the Confederacy could do little about the excesses at Union prisons. In June 1864, Robert E. Lee considered sending a force to liberate prisoners at Point Lookout. Lee knew most of the garrison was composed of black soldiers. He believed the black Federals' commander a poor one. He apparently thought the black soldiers would not fight well enough to compensate for their officer's incompetence. Therefore, a "stubborn resistance ... may not reasonably be expected."⁶⁸ Confederates, however, never took the fort, and Federal misconduct continued.⁶⁹

Mistreatment of rebel prisoners at Point Lookout became scandalous, though not at a scale as existed at Andersonville or other, more notorious prison camps. And cruelty was not necessarily predicated on race. In July 1864, a Confederate noted that some black troops were humane, and he believed this was because they had been in the army for a

⁶⁶ Diary entry for April 5, 1864, Pierson and Wiley, eds., *Whipt 'em Everytime*, 101.

⁶⁷ Beitzell, *Point Lookout*, 33.

⁶⁸ Lee to Davis, June 26, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 37, Pt. 1, p. 767.

⁶⁹ See Beitzell, *Point Lookout*, 98; diary entry for September 8, 1864, Pierson and Wiley, eds., *Whipt 'em Everytime*, 110.

longer period than others. “Any soldier will tell you,” he said, “that an active campaign inspires very humane sentiments towards soldiers.”⁷⁰

For most Confederate soldiers, however, black Federals were intolerable. Byron Smith had to withstand black soldiers from the 36th “colored” regiment boasting how they would get even with their old masters once they were at the front. He recalled the 36th fared poorly at the July 1864 Crater battle, suggesting that they were wiped out—a fitting fate, he no doubt believed, for men who bragged before they went into battle.⁷¹ A 36th “colored” regiment did serve as part of Butler’s Army of the James at the Crater. A look at the *Official Records*, however, reveals no reported casualties for that regiment.⁷² Smith’s recollections might have reflected wishful thinking, or perhaps he remembered the wrong name of the regiment. Black soldiers did suffer heavy losses in that battle—the soldiers he wanted killed, however, apparently did not. Smith no doubt would have found it a matter of justice had such troops been slaughtered by his fellow Confederates. But fate did not always wreck vengeance on the rebellion’s enemies so readily.

The Union’s use of black guards made Confederate soldiers more defiant than ever. Rebels believed their prisoner status did not reflect poorly on their manhood. On a fair field of fight, they were formidable. In prison, they saw their powerlessness as frustrating and humiliating, but not natural. In their eyes, a Southern man, properly fed and free of chains, would show “the Negro” who was boss. “I shall take vengeance upon you,” Thomas Berry remembered himself saying to his black guards. He had reason to think he would; he had escaped eight times from six other prisons before Federals sent him to Rock Island, which lay in the middle of the Mississippi River between Illinois and

⁷⁰ Keiley, *In Vincilus*, 113.

⁷¹ Smith, *Reminiscences of a Confederate Prisoner*, 37.

⁷² “General summary of Casualties in the Union Forces,” *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 40, Pt. 1, p. 268.

Iowa. Mocking one of his guards, he said, “Do you understand me, you infamous coward? Arm me with sword or pistol, and I will fight you and any two of your nigger officers here.” His captor was not sympathetic and forced him into a steam sweatbox. Berry asked the Federals to kill him rather than continue the torture. They did not, but Berry lived to recount his adventures and sufferings.⁷³

Ulysses S. Grant’s end of the prisoner exchange in the spring of 1864 made the Civil War increasingly bitter, and the United States’ use of black troops united Confederates against their enemy. The battles between black soldiers and rebel troops in 1863 were fierce, but did not end in large massacres. It was only a matter of time, however, before Confederates killed blacks in cold blood in considerable numbers. The most infamous massacre of black troops during the war occurred at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, on April 12, 1864. At the battle, Nathan Bedford Forrest’s men overran the Federal position and killed dozens of men—some white, most of them black—as they tried to surrender or escape. The engagement achieved instant notoriety. The North created the Union Committee on the Conduct of War in order to investigate the reported massacre.⁷⁴ As one black survivor recalled, a rebel private had said that “all colored boys that could escape had best to do so by all means, for General Forrest was going to burn or whip them to death after they got farther south.”⁷⁵ Testimony about Fort Pillow proved controversial, however, for disagreement arose even among Federal troops about what happened.⁷⁶

⁷³ Dr. Thomas Berry, “Prison Experiences on Rock Island,” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 20 (1912), pp. 66-67.

⁷⁴ See Bruce Tap, *Over Lincoln’s Shoulder: The Committee on the Conduct of War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 187-92.

⁷⁵ Statement of Jerry Stewart, April 30, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, pp. 537-38.

⁷⁶ On Federal disagreement about what happened, see Captain John T. Young to Forrest, May 19, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, p. 595; report of Mack J. Leaming, January 17, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt.

Through the years, analysis of rebel conduct at Fort Pillow has centered on Forrest's role in it.⁷⁷ Whether he personally directed the massacre is not important. Most Confederates at the battle seemed willing to kill blacks without orders. Not all of them were indifferent to such butchery. "The slaughter was awful," wrote one disapproving soldier, who said his comrades shot "poor deluded negroes" who, while on their knees, had asked for mercy. Most men, however, had the stomach for such killing. The sight of black soldiers, said another, "stirred the bosoms of our soldiers with courageous madness."⁷⁸ As one veteran claimed, the reason the Federals fled was because they expected no quarter. Since they did so, the rebels had no choice but to hunt them down. Union troops apparently should have stayed their ground. For Confederate soldiers, to kill a man in flight was not cold blooded. In their eyes, they were forced to slay Yankees who would not surrender, and black troops were the Yankees the Confederates were most determined to kill. After the war, John Johnston discussed white Southerners' special relationship with blacks. He believed they were property, and thus Confederate soldiers had to treat them like "a refractory horse or child."⁷⁹ No one could blame a Southerner,

1, pp. 561-62; statement of James R. Bingham, April 18, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, pp. 521-22; statement of Daniel Stamps, April 25, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, pp. 530-31; report of Captain John G. Woodruff, April 15, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, p. 558; M. Brayman to H. Prince, April 28, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, pp. 518-19. On complaining that blacks insulted Confederates before the battle, see John Milton Hubbard, *Notes of a Private, Company E, 7th Tennessee Regiment Forrest's Cavalry Corps, C. S. A* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1911), 101-02; Stamp, "Ten Months Experience in Northern Prisons," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4, p. 490.

⁷⁷ On Forrest's lack of remorse for his men's behavior, see Forrest to Colonel Thomas M. Jack, April 15, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, p. 610; historians have also differed about what happened on April 12, see William R. Brooksher, "Betwixt Wind and Water: A Short Account of Confederate Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest's Attack on Fort Pillow," Greenberg and Waugh, eds., *Price of Freedom, Vol. 1*, pp. 287-97; Albert Castel, "The Fort Pillow Massacre: A Fresh Examination of the Evidence," *Civil War History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1958), pp. 37-50; John Cimprich, "The Fort Pillow Massacre: Assessing the Evidence," Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue*, 150-168.

⁷⁸ Achilles V. Clark to sisters, April 14, 1864 (first quotation, p. 67); report by "Memphis," April 18, 1864 (second quotation, p. 69), John Cimprich and Robert C. Mainfort, Jr., eds., "Fort Pillow Revisited: New Evidence About an Old Controversy," in Donald G. Nieman, ed., *The Day of Jubilee: The Civil War Experience of Black Southerners* (New York: Garland, 1994).

⁷⁹ On Forrest's men's lack of remorse, see James Dinkins, *Personal Recollections and Experiences in the*

rebel troops reasoned, for his conduct in an engagement that entailed race war on a minor scale.

On June 10 at the battle of Brice's Crossroads (or Tishomingo Creek), Mississippi, Union forces again suffered a humiliating defeat at General Forrest's hands. Black Federals, as would happen for the rest of the year, were ready to avenge those who had fallen at Pillow. They apparently had badges on their uniforms that said, "Remember Fort Pillow, Death to Forrest and his men." Forrest even heard that before the battle, black troops had fallen onto their knees and taken an oath to avenge their comrades. But if Federal soldiers had been bent on revenge, the Confederates soundly defeated them, and black troops apparently threw aside their "Fort Pillow" badges in their retreat.⁸⁰

The battles of 1864 were more desperate than those in previous years, and Forrest had no trouble in adjusting to the new climate of combat. In his eyes, he believed he had conducted the war so far according to "civilized principles."⁸¹ But while the Committee on the Conduct of War investigated his men's actions at Fort Pillow, Federals complained of further excesses. Union General C. C. Washburn expected better behavior of Confederates at Brice's Crossroads. Washburn's letter to Stephen D. Lee—then head of cavalry west of Alabama—revealed his outrage and disappointment. His understanding was that the Confederate government sought to kill all captured black troops. He was further dismayed that Forrest and his men had received "laudations from the entire

Confederate Army (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company Press, 1897), 155 (quoted); see also, William T. Alderson, ed., "The Civil War Reminiscences of John Johnston, 1861-1865 (Part IV)," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (December 1954), p. 331; in March 1864, General Abraham Buford congratulated Forrest and his men on saving Confederates from the "iron heels of abolition ... and the rule of the negro," see General Orders No—., March 28, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, p. 649.

⁸⁰ Dinkins, *Personal Recollections*, 162, 181; see also, Hubbard, *Notes of a Private*, 112.

⁸¹ Forrest to C. C. Washburn, June 14, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, pp. 586-87.

Southern press.”⁸² Of Forrest’s conduct, he said, “Your declaration that you have conducted the war on all occasions on civilized principles cannot be accepted.”⁸³ He conceded that the Confederates had not planned the butchery at Brice’s Crossroads, but Washburn wondered whether rebels were intent on murdering black troops, returning them to slavery, or both. In any case, he promised that if Forrest did not restrain his men, Federals would raise the black flag.

On June 23, Forrest wrote to Washburn, saying that the Union general’s previous letter was an insult, for it declared him a murderer. He denied that any misconduct had occurred at Brice’s Crossroads, and he refused to debate the subject at length. He said he would treat captured blacks as he would any seized property. Forrest, nevertheless, said, “It is not the policy . . . of the South to destroy the negro—on the contrary, to preserve and protect him—and all who have surrendered to us have received kind and humane treatment.”⁸⁴ Forrest was right: the South did not want to kill all blacks. It instead wanted to keep them enslaved and away from Federal control. Confederates, however, would kill as many in blue uniform as possible. That no black troops had received bad treatment after capture was as untrue for Forrest to say as it was for any commander. In defending his men’s behavior, Forrest certainly overstated his civility. He was not a merciful man. It made him a good soldier, but not a convincing diplomat. Federals and Confederates continued to fight with threats of no quarter. Miscommunication, hostility, and distrust characterized their relationship.

Stephen D. Lee did not apologize for Forrest’s behavior. “The case under consideration is almost an extreme one,” he wrote to General Washburn. “You had a

⁸² Washburn to Stephen Lee, June 17, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, pp. 587-88.

⁸³ Washburn to Forrest, June 19, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, pp. 588.

⁸⁴ Forrest to Washburn, June 23, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, pp. 590-91.

servile race, armed against their masters and in a country which had been desolated by almost unprecedented outrages.” He claimed Confederates had black and white soldiers in custody, which he believed proved they took prisoners.⁸⁵ Lee denied accusations of rebel misconduct at Brice’s Crossroads, saying to Washburn, “the statements of your negro witnesses are not to be relied on. In their panic they acted as might have been expected.” In his opinion, ex-slaves were liars and cowards. He said he would not treat them as prisoners of war, but promised they would be “retained and humanely treated, subject to such future instructions as may be indicated.”⁸⁶

General Forrest was not the only commander whose men were showing no quarter. Six days after Forrest’s assault on Fort Pillow, another massacre of black troops occurred at the battle of Poison Springs, Arkansas.⁸⁷ As with Forrest’s victory at Pillow, the battle did not have much effect on the war’s outcome. It was at best a morale booster for Confederate troops. It had less significance as a battle than a reflection of Southern racial attitudes and the climate of interracial combat in 1864. Confederates at Poison Springs were as unapologetic as those in Tennessee had been—and as those in Virginia would be later that year—about their conduct. The battle, however, involved not only

⁸⁵ Lee to Washburn, June 28, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, p. 600.

⁸⁶ Lee to Washburn, June 28, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 1, pp. 600-01.

⁸⁷ On the Poison Springs massacre, see Ira Don Richards, “The Battle of Poison Springs,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter 1959), pp. 338-49; Mark Christ, ed., *Getting Used to Being Shot At: The Spence Family Letters* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), 124; letter of an unidentified soldier, April, 20, 1864, *ibid*, 125; Henry Cathey, ed., “Memoirs of William Avera,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1963), p. 107; Edwin H. Fay to wife, April 25, 1864, Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., *“This Infernal War”: The Confederate Letters of Sgt. Edwin H. Fay* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 391; on racial atrocities in Arkansas during the war, see Gregory J. W. Urwin, “‘We Cannot Treat Negroes as Prisoners of War’: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in Civil War Arkansas,” Greenberg and Waugh, eds., *Price of Freedom, Vol. I*, 233-48; Mike Fisher, “Remember Poison Springs,” Greenberg and Waugh, eds., *ibid*, 311-22; see also, Mark Christ, *“All Cut to Pieces and Gone to Hell”: The Civil War, Race Relations, and the Battle of Poison Spring* (Little Rock: August House, 2003).

white and black troops, but Native Americans. They apparently were harder to restrain than white Confederate troops. They took no prisoners and scalped black soldiers.⁸⁸

In the view of rebel soldiers, Federal troops were naturally offensive and villainous, and they thought of black soldiers as much coarser and baser than white ones. They believed Northerners' intentions were wicked, but the threat of black Federals roaming the South cut at a deeper level, for some were known to threaten white women.⁸⁹ Whether or not Southerners' feared this because of what Wilbur Cash has called a "rape complex,"⁹⁰ Confederates clearly wanted to control the black population. In the summer of 1864, for example, one officer reported that black troops had raped the wife of a Virginia officer. The incident traumatized the woman, who had a small child. "She is now almost a maniac," he wrote, "and begs that some one will kill her."⁹¹ Although some evidence of blacks having committed crimes against white women was credible, other stories concerning their sexual advances were passed through more than one person. One soldier heard from an ambulance driver, who heard it from a "trustworthy lady," that a "big black negro" went to one of "the most respected young ladies in the city" and

⁸⁸ Cathey, ed., "Memoirs of William Avera," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 107. The Confederacy covered thousands of miles and included white, black, Native American, and Hispanic people. The government did ally itself with Indian tribes. But had the South won the war, it is unlikely that its Indian policy would have been any more benevolent than that of the United States. Generations before, Southerners had decided to enslave blacks rather than Native Americans. Thus, Indians, ironically, had a much more precarious place in the Confederacy than African Americans. Had the Confederacy succeeded, it most likely would have persecuted Native Americans just as the United States did after the war. On the inevitability of whites overcoming Native Americans, see W. R. Houghton and M. B. Houghton, *Two Boys in the Civil War and After* (Montgomery, AL: Paragon Press, 1912), 162-63; on the inability of Indians to serve well as slaves, see entry for January 8, 1864, James Thomas Perry Diary, VHS. If they were a marginalized group, some Confederates wanted to use Indian soldiers whenever possible; on the use of Native Americans by Stonewall Jackson, see Henry Kyd Douglas, *I Rode With Stonewall* (St. Simon's Island, GA: Mockingbird Books, 1961 [1940]), 39-40; Thomas Jackson to A. R. Boteler, January 24, 1862, Thomas Jonathan Jackson Papers, VHS.

⁸⁹ See Colonel Joel Griffin to George Pickett, December 15, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 29, Pt. 2, pp. 872-73; see also, Thomas Russell to Joseph Finegan, April 2, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, pp. 860-61.

⁹⁰ Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1941), 117.

⁹¹ Jonathan Braxton to Major T. O. Chestney, July 5, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 40, Pt. 3, p. 743 (quoted); Union officers also reported African Americans' rape of white women, see, for example, C. G. Hawley to Captain W. W. Deane, May 7, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, pp. 669-70.

offered her money for sex. His reaction was typical of Southern men: every nerve in his body was prepared for vengeance. He wanted to raise the black flag and “let slip the dogs of war.”⁹²

As a result, in 1864, the nature of interracial combat intensified. By then, both whites and blacks were vowing to show no quarter to the enemy. As Henry Handerson marched toward Fredericksburg in 1864, he saw some of Ambrose E. Burnside’s black troops. His comrades said it was “extremely likely that they would massacre us on sight.” Handerson, however, did not believe it. He thought the troops no more insulting or intimidating than white ones. Soldiers on opposing sides merely viewed with “mutual curiosity and dislike.”⁹³ But Confederates had reason to fear black retribution.⁹⁴ After the Southern victory at Jenkins’ Ferry on April 30, 1864, for example, the Federals retreated toward Missouri, leaving in their wake rebels with their throats slit, violence that black troops apparently had done. And it was not the only time Confederates believed blacks had butchered white soldiers.⁹⁵

War between black and white troops reached a climax on July 30, 1864 at the battle of the Crater outside Petersburg, Virginia. After months of heavy fighting, the Northern and Southern armies had reached a stalemate at Petersburg, roughly twenty miles south of Richmond. Grant’s men tried to break the siege there by placing a mine

⁹² Diary entry for September 23, 1864, Wirt Armistead Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers: The Campaign Diaries of Thomas J. Key, CSA, December 17, 1863-May 17, 1865 and Robert J. Campbell, USA, January 1, 1864-July 21, 1864* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), 138-39.

⁹³ Henry E. Handerson, *Yankee in Gray* (Pittsburgh: Press of Western Reserve University, 1962), 73.

⁹⁴ On African Americans’ bloodthirstiness, see account of the November 1864 battle of Johnsonville in Dinkins, *Personal Recollections*, 207-208.

⁹⁵ Dr. Edward W. Cade to wife, May 6, 1864, John A. Anderson, “A Texas Surgeon in the CSA,” *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 6 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1957), 99; on a massacre of whites by black troops, see also, diary entry for February 3, 1864, Homer L. Kerr, ed., *Fighting with Ross’ Texas Brigade, CSA: The Diary of George L. Griscom, Adjutant, 9th Texas Cavalry Regiment* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1976), 110; see also, Michael Fitzgerald, “Another Kind of Glory: Black Participation and its Consequences in the Campaign for Confederate Mobile,” *Alabama Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 2001), pp. 243-75.

underneath the rebel lines, filling it with gunpowder, and detonating it. The Union frittered away the initial advantage the mine explosion gave them. It took an hour for the Federals to launch their attack, and once they advanced, many of them went into the Crater rather than around it. The explosion initially shocked the Confederates, but they rallied and reformed their lines, pouring a deadly fire into the Union troops huddled at the bottom of the Crater. They won the battle and inflicted 4,000 casualties on the black and white Union forces.⁹⁶ Because of the North's failure, the siege at Petersburg continued.

The struggle at the Crater proved the bloodiest battle in which black soldiers in the Army of the Potomac took a large part. Grant had worried about what might happen were black troops to fail—the public might think he was using them as cannon fodder. He also knew that Northerners, among them his friend William Sherman, were dubious of black soldiers' abilities. Many Federals did not want to see them on the field, alive or dead. After the Crater battle, one Confederate noted “the loathing with which the Yankees took up and bore to the ditches [and] prepared the offensive remains of their African soldiers.”⁹⁷ Despite the controversy surrounding their role in the war, by summer 1864, Grant believed black troops were ready for heavy combat in Virginia.

Black soldiers went into battle vowing to avenge their comrades. They cried “Remember Fort Pillow!” as they emerged from their trenches to attack.⁹⁸ At the Crater,

⁹⁶ McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire, Vol. II*, 460-62; Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 276-78.

⁹⁷ Pendleton to [wife?], August 2, 1864, Susan Lee Pendleton, ed., *Memoirs of William Nelson Pendleton* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1893), 360.

⁹⁸ On blacks' vow to give no quarter and avenge Fort Pillow, see Milton Barrett to brother and sister, August 1, 1864, J. Roderick Heller and Carolynn Ayres Heller, eds., *The Confederacy is on her Way up the Spout: Letters to South Carolina, 1861-1864* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 123; entry for July 30, 1864, Pearce, ed., *Diary of Captain Henry A. Chambers*, 210; Walter Taylor to Bettie, August 1, 1864, Tower, ed., *Lee's Adjutant*, 179; entry for July 30, 1864, James Thomas Perry Diary, VHS; Alfred Lewis Scott, “Memoirs of Service in the Confederate Army,” [typescript], pp. 26-27, Thornton Tayloe Perry Papers, VHS.

however, black soldiers were the ones shown no quarter. Confederates, most of whom had never even seen “Negro” soldiers before, now had to fight them. Shock, outrage, and desperation overtook them. Rebels agreed that the battle was among the most desperate and bloody they had seen, which was telling considering the carnage of the previous months. The fighting was desperate, not only because of the racial element involved—Confederates were shocked that a huge explosion, which killed scores of men and buried others alive, had blown a hole in their lines. They fought not only to defeat detested black soldiers, but to prevent a possible breakthrough in the Petersburg line.

With the explosion of the underground mine, the rebels seemed victims of a deadly trick, and they were further dismayed to see black troops take part in the attack. Burnside’s corps, one noted, was made up of “negroes and mongrels.”⁹⁹ For rebels, the Federal assault involving black and white troops represented abolitionism at its most threatening. Together, the Federals at the Crater were “vile deceivers and ruiners.”¹⁰⁰ One Confederate remembered that he was more upset at whites arming black soldiers than the black troops themselves.¹⁰¹ Most were not, however. Their astonishment turned to anger and then rage against the “colored” regiments. Colonel William Stewart remembered the excitement he felt as the Yankees advanced. “I never felt more like fighting in my life,” he wrote. “Our comrades had been slaughtered in a most inhuman and brutal manner, and slaves were trampling over their mangled and bleeding corpses.”¹⁰² Seeing their white comrades falling before black troops, Confederates were eager for vengeance. In their

⁹⁹ Entry for July 30, 1864, James Thomas Perry Diary, VHS.

¹⁰⁰ C. W. Trueheart to brother, August 28, 1864, Edward B. Williams, ed., *Rebel Brothers: The Civil War Letters of the Truehearts* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1995), 114.

¹⁰¹ Scott, “Memoirs of Service in the Confederate Army,” Thornton Tayloe Perry Papers, VHS.

¹⁰² William H. Stewart, “The Charge of the Crater,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 25 (1897), p. 80.

eyes, they were witnessing a disturbing and violent betrayal of the South: the North had turned slaves against them. They believed it was the most repugnant thing the Yankees could have done. For these reasons, the battle of the Crater resulted in the greatest massacre of black troops during the Civil War.¹⁰³

Accounts of the struggle at the Crater are grisly. Hand-to-hand encounters were rare in the Civil War, but the black troops were so packed together at the bottom of the Crater that the rebels were able to club and bayonet many of them.¹⁰⁴ The closeness and intensity of combat proved similar to that at Milliken's Bend, Battery Wagner, and Fort Pillow. At the Crater, however, blacks were shown less mercy, and as with Forrest's men, Confederates were unapologetic about how they treated the enemy. "It seems cruel to murder them in cold blood," said artilleryman William Pegram. He believed his men, nevertheless, had good reason for doing so.¹⁰⁵ In their eyes, Southerners could not restrain themselves when fighting men they believed were born to be slaves.

Confederate soldiers' encounter with blacks at the Crater apparently gave them greater strength than usual. As one recalled, the rebels bayoneted surrendering blacks because of the "excitement of battle."¹⁰⁶ That their attackers included black troops, however, added to Confederates' fury, which made them determined killers. William Pegram wrote of a comrade who had been stabbed in the cheek with a black soldier's

¹⁰³ Bryce A. Suderow, "The Battle of the Crater: The Civil War's Worst Massacre," *Civil War History*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (September 1997), pp. 219-24; the best available description of the struggle between black and white troops at the Crater can be found in J. Tracy Power, *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 135-40.

¹⁰⁴ Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, eds., *The Haskell Memoirs by John Cheves Haskell* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), 77.

¹⁰⁵ William Ransom Johnson Pegram to "My dear Jenny," August 1, 1864, Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers, VHS.

¹⁰⁶ W. S. Dunlop, *Lee's Sharpshooters or the Forefront of Battle* (Little Rock: Tunnah and Pitard, 1899), 185.

bayonet. Rather than go to the rear, as would have been customary at other battles, he kept fighting, and ended up slaying his attacker. Desire to kill a black soldier, therefore, overcame his shock at being wounded. In rebel eyes, if Northerners had hoped black troops would demoralize Confederates, they had miscalculated. The opposite proved the case. "I have always ... wished the enemy would bring some negroes against this army," Pegram wrote. "I am convinced ... that it has a splendid effect on our men."¹⁰⁷ Were black Federals to attack again, Confederates promised them more of the same. A few days after the Crater battle, a soldier wrote home to his wife, saying blacks at home should hide themselves in order to avoid Yankee impressment. If they were forced into the Union army, they would suffer the same fate as those at Fort Pillow and the Crater.¹⁰⁸

Battles between whites and blacks had gone past the conventions of "civilized" warfare, taking on the character of a street brawl, and whoever had the upper hand would not take prisoners. If some blacks valiantly resisted, once the Federal attack at the Crater failed, it was only a matter of time before Confederates aided their comrades in killing their sable attackers. William Pegram saw one of his comrades and a black soldier engaged in a standoff. "I suppose that the Confederate told the negro he was going to kill him, after he had surrendered," he wrote. "This made the negro desperate, & he grabbed up a musket, & they fought quite desperately for a little while with bayonets, until a bystander shot the negro dead." Another rebel wrote of a disturbing scene in which a fellow Confederate beat a black soldier with a ramrod while another rebel negotiated a

¹⁰⁷ William Pegram to "My dear Jenny," August 1, 1864, Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers, VHS.

¹⁰⁸ Edgeworth to Sallie Bird, August 4, 1864, John Rozier, ed., *The Granite Farm Letters: The Civil War Correspondence of Edgeworth and Sallie Bird* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 181.

position by which to shoot him with a pistol. It took more than one shot to kill the black soldier, however; the fatal one was administered in the stomach.¹⁰⁹

As was the case at the Fort Pillow massacre, at the Crater, Confederate officers did not censure their men's conduct. General Mahone, who helped stop the Union attack, apparently gave his men contradictory orders. At one point, he rode along the lines, asking that his soldiers cease firing. But he then turned his head and uttered in a low voice, "Boys, kill everyone of those niggers." His men needed no such orders. They were glad to do so.¹¹⁰ One soldier wished they had taken no captives. "All that we had not killed surrendered," he wrote, "and I must say we took some of the negroes prisoners." As Confederates saw it, given the extent of the carnage and the shock of the Federal attack, Northerners could not hold them culpable for their actions.¹¹¹

Some rebels disassociated themselves from the massacre at the Crater. They were not among the butchers; they murdered no black prisoners or at least did not admit to it. Restraint apparently was possible despite such slaughter. "Oh boys, let the poor devils alone," one remembered saying to his comrades.¹¹² In contrast to the barbarity he saw around him, another rebel portrayed himself as humane. According to his memoirs, his role at the battle was one of a moderator, a voice of reason against unjustified bloodshed. He saved one black prisoner from being taken behind the lines and shot and he reunited another with his old master.¹¹³ Another soldier was humane enough to give a drink to a

¹⁰⁹ William Pegram to "My dear Jenny," August 1, 1864, Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers, VHS; George S. Bernard, "The Battle of the Crater," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 18, pp. 14-15.

¹¹⁰ F. R. Callaway, *The Bloody Links* (n. p., n. d.), 55-56; on Confederate officers' conflicting orders on dealing with blacks, see Scott, "Memoirs of Service in the Confederate Army," pp. 26-27, Thorton Tayloe Perry Papers, VHS.

¹¹¹ John C. Featherston, "Graphic Account of the Battle of the Crater," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 33 (1905), p. 373.

¹¹² Scott, "Memoirs of Service in the Confederate Army," pp. 26-27, Thorton Tayloe Perry Papers, VHS.

¹¹³ Govan and Livingood, eds., *Haskell Memoirs*, 78-79.

black soldier who was an artillery casualty. His gesture contained about as much good feeling as existed at the Crater battle. With his legs blown off, the black soldier made a crude tent of three muskets and a cloth with which to shield himself from the sun. Heat, shock, and his wounds, however, were quickly killing him. He got a drink, but the taste of water—as well intentioned as it was—finished him.¹¹⁴

Some Confederates saw themselves as not only more humane than their comrades, but also more so than the Yankees. They saw that some white Federals went to extreme lengths to avoid the fate of black Union troops. John Haskell remembered catching an officer not wearing an insignia. The man told him that white officers of black troops expected no quarter. The man, therefore, had tried to pass himself off as a private.¹¹⁵ If one can sympathize with Northerners' desire to avoid being murdered, they apparently were guilty of things worse than deception. One rebel remembered how Federals, too, had killed black troops. After the war, he spoke with a man who confessed to such murders. While hiding in a bombproof to avoid being killed alongside black troops, he and a handful of other whites murdered fourteen of them.¹¹⁶ The account seems shocking—even dubious. The accuracy of long-held memories is often suspect—doubly so recollections passed through someone else. More than one Confederate, nevertheless, remembered Federal officers killing black troops to avoid being murdered themselves. John Haskell, for example, wrote of a Union man who had “dashed out the brains of a colored soldier.” A black Federal informed him that the man was his captain. Haskell saw one of his comrades quickly put the officer to death. At the Crater, rebels justified the

¹¹⁴ Stewart, “Charge of the Crater,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 25, p. 89.

¹¹⁵ Govan and Livingood, eds., *Haskell Memoirs*, 77.

¹¹⁶ On Yankee excesses, see W. R. Houghton and M. B. Houghton, eds., *Two Boys in the Civil War and After*, 133; Bernard, “Battle of the Crater,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 18, p. 25.

killing of black soldiers after their capture. It was done in the aftermath of battle, when men's passions were high. But Haskell found it despicable that a Federal soldier—and an officer at that—could kill one of his own men in order to save himself.¹¹⁷

One can only estimate how many blacks the Confederates massacred at the Crater. The historian Bryce Suderow has put the number at more than two hundred, with the actual figure perhaps closer to four hundred. Whatever the number, the butchery proved extensive. “The negroes were wiped clean out,” said one Confederate. Rebels filled a long ditch with black and white bodies piled three deep. It was a grim, ignominious fate for the “abolitionist” forces. William Pegram estimated that six hundred black soldiers, a number that seems accurate, were killed in the attack and the carnage that followed. He also wrote that the black troops had thrown down their weapons as soon as the rebels came upon them. The Confederates, however, had not allowed them to surrender. As Pegram put it, killing them was “perfectly right as a matter of policy.”¹¹⁸

What that policy was, he did not say. Confederates' actions were more intuitive than anything else. As one soldier had written from Virginia in June 1863, “If [blacks] fight with spirit, and ever meet our Reg't, the carnage will be frightful. I believe our men would fight a Brigade of them without flinching.”¹¹⁹ Such attitudes contributed to what happened at the Crater. Southerners were determined that blacks would fare worse than their white comrades. One veteran remembered that he and his men had heard rumors of

¹¹⁷ Govan and Livingood, eds., *Haskell Memoirs*, 78.

¹¹⁸ Suderow, “The Battle of the Crater,” *Civil War History*, Vol. 43, No. 3, p. 223; Robertson, ed., *Things Grew Beautifully Worse*, 41 (first quotation); Scott, “Memoirs of Service in the Confederate Army,” p. 26, Thorton Tayloe Perry Papers, VHS; Featherston, “Graphic Account of the Battle of the Crater,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 33, p. 367; William Pegram to “My dear Jenny,” August 1, 1864, Pegram-Johnson-McIntosh Papers, VHS (second quotation).

¹¹⁹ Robert D. Graham to Susan Washington Graham, June 6, 1863, Max R. Williams, ed., *The Papers of William A. Graham*, Vol. 5 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1973), pp. 500-01.

black soldiers' mistreatment of Confederate prisoners of war. At the Crater, he wrote, the rebels "wanted a chance to appease our wrath."¹²⁰

Whether they were attackers or defenders, when black troops confronted rebels, they had reason to fear the worst. Regardless of some acts of humanity at the Crater battle, men in the Army of Northern Virginia were no less determined, and no less violent, than their Western counterparts. Robert E. Lee was a very different man from Nathan Bedford Forrest, but the men in his ranks were equal in their hatred of black soldiers. If Lee was in most respects a kind, Christian man, his job was to kill, wound, or capture as many Federals as possible. The West was a frontier compared to the Eastern states, but that did not make the war in Virginia humane. On the whole, battles were larger and casualties higher; unfortunately for blacks, massacres were also worse.

In commenting on the battle of the Crater, as usual, Confederates believed black troops were bad fighters. Of their abilities, Daniel Hundley expressed feelings of both pity and contempt, writing of the "recent cowardice of the poor blacks."¹²¹ One Mississippian attributed their poor showing to their servile nature. They had been slaves since they had inhabited Africa. In something of a non sequitur, he said that no men in "religious or economic slavery" could develop the "highest qualities."¹²² He mentioned Christ's liberating power as a remedy, but perhaps forgot that black Americans were Christian. No matter. In his view, they would always be slaves, the descendants of pagan savages from Africa.

¹²⁰ McClendon, *Recollections of War Times*, 178.

¹²¹ Diary entry for August 6, 1864, Hundley, *Prison Echoes*, 110; see also, entry for August 18, 1864, James Thomas Perry Diary, VHS; on rebels' poor view of black troops before ever meeting them in battle, see Jerome Yates to mother, August 11, 1863, Robert G. Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 193; W. W. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993 [1945]), 260.

¹²² Thomas Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard, eds., *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private Daniel Holt* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 289.

Had black troops been good fighters, Confederate soldiers reasoned, they would not have found themselves victims of rebel butchery. Some Southerners reported finding blacks drunk at the Crater. The “colored” troops apparently were so inept and cowardly that they could not face the guns sober. It was customary for some soldiers to have a drink before battle to steady their nerves, and black men were not the only soldiers during the war to be accused of drunkenness. But for Confederate troops, it seemed fitting to find black soldiers inebriated.¹²³

Other Confederates, however, were more analytical when considering why black troops had suffered defeat outside Petersburg. Their attack failed because of a lack of leadership and bad timing, not cowardice. Black soldiers were not the first choice to lead the charge, one Confederate asserted, but a last minute replacement—they might even have succeeded had the North not waited so long after the mine explosion.¹²⁴ And some Southerners could appreciate the way blacks conducted themselves in the field. A month after the Crater battle, one wrote that “the negroes who were wounded and lay there for 36 hours before they were attended to, bore their sufferings much better than the [white] Yankees.”¹²⁵ Perhaps blacks were not as cowardly as Confederates believed. They were capable of bearing suffering well and dying a “good death.”¹²⁶

¹²³ Houghton and Houghton, eds., *Two Boys*, 133; on drunkenness at the Crater, see also, McClendon, *Recollections of War Times*, 178; General G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992 [1905]), 227; Jeffrey D. Stocker, *From Huntsville to Appomattox: R. T. Coles' History of the 4th Alabama Regiment, Alabama Volunteers Infantry, CSA, Army of Northern Virginia* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 184; Stone, Jr., ed., *Wandering to Glory*, 196; McClendon, *Recollections of War Times*, 178.

¹²⁴ Dunlop, *Lee's Sharpshooters*, 162, 183-84.

¹²⁵ C. W. Trueheart to brother, August 28, 1864, Williams, ed., *Rebel Brothers*, 115; one Mississippian heard that the black troops fought better than the white ones at the Crater, see Jerome Yates to sister, August 3, 1864, Evans, ed., *16th Mississippi*, 281.

¹²⁶ On the importance of the “good death” during the Civil War, see Drew Gilpin Faust, “The Civil War Soldier and the Art of Dying,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (February 2001), pp. 3-38.

But for the most part, rebels believed that when under adversity, blacks humiliated themselves. One remembered that he was able to force a black soldier to fire upon his comrades as they retreated from the Crater.¹²⁷ In Confederate eyes, however, blacks apparently did just fine in degrading themselves. John Haskell said he did not take part in the massacre, but he almost killed a black soldier who came at him with a bayonet. In the language of a “rice field Gullah,” he wrote years later, his attacker threw up his hands and surrendered, asking to be spared. Haskell said he had no intention of killing him. His captive supposedly said he would gladly return to the cotton fields, where he would prove a “faithful worker.” Haskell instead sent him to the rear to help in the hospitals. For Confederate troops, the performance of black soldiers at the Crater showed that once a slave, always a slave.¹²⁸

John Haskell was not the only rebel soldier who wrote of blacks playing Sambo in order to avoid death. According to another Confederate, they fell on their knees, prayed for mercy, and asked for water in “a most abjectly submissive tone.”¹²⁹ Captured blacks affected Sambo accents, asking that their captors save them from the wrath of “massah.” Rebels might have expected such cowardly behavior of black troops. For them, it again showed that “Negroes” did not possess the mettle of white men. For black soldiers to take a Sambo posture seemed the antithesis of Confederates’ avowal—in the spirit of Patrick Henry—to seize their liberty or die trying. Hearing what they wanted to hear from black troops—that they were reluctant soldiers—Confederates believed their attackers shunned hard fighting. Such proved especially true when years elapsed between the battle and

¹²⁷ C. W. Trueheart to brother, August 28, 1864, Williams, ed., *Rebel Brothers*, 115-16; Stewart, “Charge of the Crater,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 25, p. 86.

¹²⁸ Govan and Livingood, eds., *Haskell Memoirs*, 78.

¹²⁹ See C. W. Trueheart to brother, August 28, 1864, Williams, ed., *Rebel Brothers*, 115; on blacks begging for mercy, see also, Bernard, “The Battle of the Crater,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 18, p. 12.

accounts of it, where Confederate veterans might have exaggerated black soldiers' servile behavior. One cannot dismiss claims that some black troops affected the guise of Sambo so that rebels would not kill them. Even so, their behavior after the battle did not necessarily reflect upon their bravery during it. One Confederate who said troops reverted to Sambos believed they had fought "with an obstinacy that was really surprising; and held their ground till our fellows came close quarters and knocked them in the head with muskets, or bayoneted them."¹³⁰

Rebel stories of drunken, cowering, and Sambo-like blacks are inconsistent with their accounts of them vowing to show no quarter. Could black soldiers filled with rage have become spineless once their attack failed? To a degree, Confederates' descriptions of black soldiers at the Crater and elsewhere were self-serving. If they made good troops, blacks undermined whites' belief in their racial superiority and skill as soldiers. In rebel eyes, in contrast to the gallant troops of the Army of Northern Virginia, blacks at the Crater were simply helpless. Those who acted like ignorant field hands might have been revealing their true selves, or as slaves had done for generations, they might have been "puttin' on ol' massa." For Confederates, however, the former was more likely. In their eyes, blacks naturally would turn from avengers to cowards. Such behavior, they believed, epitomized the dual nature of "the Negro." Most black men were really Sambos at heart, even if they sometimes wore the defiant mask of Nat Turner. When faced with punishment, they said they never really meant to join the Federal army. For rebels, blacks might prove brave when they had the upper hand. Confederates however, were not so easy to kill, and black soldiers, they thought, would do anything to avoid retribution.

¹³⁰ C. W. Trueheart to brother, August 28, 1864, Williams, ed., *Rebel Brothers*, 115.

Whether or not black men fought well, Confederate soldiers did not treat them as they did white Federals. Rebels believed black men were slaves, and those who took up arms against the South deserved no mercy. In late 1864, Confederate forces were still fighting to maintain the racial status quo. They believed they could deal out to all blacks and their white officers the sort of violence they had inflicted at the Crater. The war was not yet lost and neither was slavery. Whether in the Eastern or Western Theater, Confederate soldiers were exercising what they thought was the right of white men to make sure the “bottom rail” remained on the bottom.

At the Crater, Southerners took pride in their belief that they had again defeated duplicitous, “mongrel” Yankee forces. The Federals could explode a mine in an effort to win Petersburg, but rebels would not allow their passage into the city so easily. And in their view, as with field hands begging to avoid a whipping, blacks begged for mercy when Confederates seized control of the battlefield. In the eyes of one Southern soldier, the Crater battle seemed to have unnerved blacks. He noted that there was “scarcely a day but some of them come over & ask to be sent back to their masters.” Black troops apparently wanted nothing more to do with what they considered a “white folks fight.”¹³¹

The Crater battle was a climax, not an end, to interracial violence on the battlefield.¹³² The massacre of black troops at Saltville, fought in southwestern Virginia on October 2, 1864, was unique in that the killing happened not immediately after the

¹³¹ Rufus King Felder letter, September 18, 1864, Stephen Chicoine, “. . . Willing Never To Go in Another Fight”: The Civil War Correspondence of Rufus King Felder of Chappell Hill,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 4 (April 2003), p. 590.

¹³² On the African American assault on Mobile in 1865, see William Pitt Chambers, “My Journal: The Story of a Soldier’s Life Told by Himself,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series*, Vol. 5 (1925), pp. 373-74.

battle, but the next day.¹³³ The rebel victory at Saltville, however, was not a decisive one. The Union later seized the salt works. Massacring blacks at a minor battle could not turn the tide of war in the East in the Confederacy's favor. And farther north, Grant continued his siege.

Outside Petersburg, Lee's men continued to treat black prisoners as slaves. After the Crater massacre, rebels put them to work; some were made to bury the dead.¹³⁴ In Northern eyes, for the Confederates to make black Federals work on military projects proved another violation of the unofficial rules of warfare. In the fall of 1864, General Grant wrote to Robert E. Lee to complain of Confederates using black labor on fortifications. Lee's actions showed that he would work his captives like slaves or if possible return them to their masters. General Lee did not want black prisoners killed, but he did not believe them equal to white soldiers either. He said he would only pull blacks from his fortifications provided they had never been slaves.¹³⁵

Lee's promise was a delaying tactic. Proving whether black troops had been slaves would have made great difficulties for the North. In their search for proper documentation, Yankees probably would have gotten lost in the paper trail, and it was

¹³³ On details of the battle, see J. P. Austin, *The Blue and the Gray* (Atlanta: Franklin Printing, 1899), 100; George Dallas Mosgrove, *Kentucky Cavaliers in Dixie* (Jackson, TN: McCowatt-Mercer Press, 1957), 197-208; report of Surgeon James G. Hatchitt, October 4, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 39, Pt. 1, p. 553; report of Surgeon William H. Gardner, October 26, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 39, Pt. 1, pp. 554-55; itinerary of the first division, District of Kentucky, commanded by Brigadier General Nathaniel C. McLean, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 39, pp. 555-56; Colonel James S. Brisbin to Brigadier General L. Thomas, October 20, 1864, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series II, The Black Military Experience*, 557-58; Thomas D. Mays, "The Battle of Saltville," Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue*, 200-26; on the battle, see also, Thomas Mays, *The Saltville Massacre* (Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 1995); entry for October 2 and October 3, 1864, William C. Davis and Meredith L. Swentor, eds., *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 540-49.

¹³⁴ Bernard, "The Battle of the Crater," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 18, p. 21; see also, James Phillips, "James E. Phillips Reminiscences," [typescript], VHS.

¹³⁵ Grant to Lee, October 2, 1864, John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, Volume 12, August 16—November 15, 1864* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 258; Lee to Grant, October 3, 1864, *ibid*, 263; Lee to Grant, October 19, 1864, *ibid*, 324-26.

unlikely that Confederates would have released black prisoners from their labors even had Federal authorities proved they were free blacks. Lee's words suggest the Confederacy's continued reliance on enslaved labor and its troops' persistence in seeing blacks foremost as slaves.

Nearly two hundred thousand blacks would serve in the Union military, but in late 1864 and into 1865, they were still a new feature of war for most Confederates.¹³⁶ It was not until December 1864 that one of Lee's soldiers saw them in action. His reaction was typical of rebel troops. He described them as especially dark-skinned and offensive. "Got my first view of 'cuffee,' " he wrote. They "seemed the blackest of all black animals I ever beheld. They were pretty impudent, flaunting their newspapers in our faces for exchange! Strict orders were issued against firing else several of them would have gone to keep John Brown company in the 'Happy Land of Canaan.' " In contrast to these harsh statements, however, he became wistful when he heard them singing across the lines. It reminded him of the "good old 'husking' days in the happy past."¹³⁷ Thus was the racial mind of the Confederate soldier, mixing anger with paternalistic longing and

¹³⁶ Trading between the lines was common during the war, but less so between Confederates and black Federals. On a murderous encounter during the Petersburg siege, where rebels fired on "unsuspecting blacks" who were sharing a whiskey bottle, see Edmund F. Stone to Samuel Marion Stone, December 7, 1864, Edmund F. Stone Letter, VHS. "Equality" amid the realities of combat was sometimes expressed with some humor. If African Americans pled for mercy at some battles, Confederates were known to beg for quarter as well. After an October 1864 battle, a Union officer of a black regiment wrote of his men's capture of some South Carolinians, who were scared that they might be killed. He noted that "now the master begs favors from the slave and gets them too." At the battle, African Americans were willing to give quarter, even if the Confederates had not been as merciful at the Crater two months before. The South Carolinians fell onto their knees "and really craved for mercy and for life!" For some Confederates, they found racial equality at the point of a bayonet. One accidentally passed into an enemy trench while trying to desert from the army, "Well Johnny!" said one wry, black soldier, "were all brothers now ain't we!"; see Edward Bacon to sister, October 31, 1864 and Edward Bacon to sister, September 26, 1864, Edward W. Bacon Papers, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Any Confederate would have found such behavior, especially by South Carolinians, appalling. One reason for whites' desire to fight African Americans without mercy involved matters of honor. It was shameful to surrender to black troops.

¹³⁷ Entry for December 24, 1864, James Thomas Perry Diary, VHS; on a similar description, see entry for April 21, 1865, G. Ward Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 374.

sentimentality for the old days, when slaves worked in the fields and “knew their place.” Perhaps the fact that it was Christmas Eve made him so moody, angry at being in the army and at the black soldiers yards away who fought against him. He was no doubt eager to be home, where he could enjoy some semblance of antebellum life. In rebel eyes, black people were a tolerable, even desirable, presence as long as Confederates could maintain the “proper” relation between the races.

If the war between Confederates and Yankees ended in 1865, the conflict between blacks and whites did not. Rebels had scores to settle with blacks once they returned home. General Samuel W. Ferguson could not wait to avenge the wrongs he believed black troops had committed against his family. He was vague about the “indignities” they had done, but few white Southerners would have doubted his motives or have refrained from taking action. Men needed no urging to put blacks “in their place.” And they were even more angered when they believed blacks had assaulted their relatives. In order to protect his family from threatening “Negroes,” Ferguson was prepared to desert. The war by then was lost, but he knew he must preserve honor, which often made higher demands upon a man than remaining at his post. He believed he had to wipe “from the face of the earth” the offending black troops. Ferguson, however, was never able to, and he ultimately thought it for the best. He believed Federal troops might have hanged him had he killed such “rascals.”¹³⁸

W. W. Blackford, who had served with J. E. B. Stuart, recalled dealing with the freedmen even before he hung up his gray uniform. Days after Lee’s surrender, he and other Confederates attacked a band of twenty-five black troops who were ransacking

¹³⁸ Samuel W. Ferguson, “Memoirs of S. W. Ferguson, July 1864 to May 1865,” [typescript], Samuel Wragg Ferguson Papers, LLMVC.

local houses. The skirmish, he remembered, was “most salutary both on itinerant negroes and those of the country.”¹³⁹ As was the case during the war, for Southern white men, an armed struggle with blacks had a two-fold effect. It inflicted casualties on rebellious “Negroes” and served as an example of what would happen to others. Such violence would grow during the coming years of Klan attacks, urban riots, and political murders.

A South Carolina cavalryman recalled a situation, just before the end of the war, when a black man had the upper hand on a rebel. “ ‘You know, captain,’ ” he said, “ ‘when you catch a prisoner, you have to make him put his gun down.’ ” Quick on the draw, he killed the black soldier, whose “ ‘brains were spattered all over a tree.’ ” He ended his story on a curt, grim note, saying, “ ‘The people in that section were never molested after that.’ ”¹⁴⁰ Through the death of offensive blacks, former Confederates reasoned, they could preserve honor and the social order as a whole.

So went the Reconstruction era.

¹³⁹ Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart*, 303-05.

¹⁴⁰ Brooks, *Butler and His Cavalry*, 140-41.

VI
THE GREATEST OF MASTERS: THE CONFEDERATE ARMY AND
THE IMPRESSMENT OF BLACK LABOR

In order to maintain the war effort, the rebel army utilized slave labor as much as possible. Impressment proved one aspect, and a controversial one, of the Confederate military's use of black workers. From the war's beginning, the army found itself in a power struggle with masters who did not want their chattels taken from them, and the impressment issue created tensions between two powerful segments of the Confederacy—planters and military commanders—who increasingly depended on slave labor. Far from revealing that Southerners were fatalistic about emancipation, impressment again showed Confederates' commitment to and reliance upon the institution of slavery.

Despite the tensions that arose between the slaveholders and the rebel army, the use of impressed slaves, which the Confederate Congress sanctioned in March 1863, resulted more from the increasing seriousness of the military situation than the refusal of masters to provide the army with slaves. The government had passed a white conscription law after the Confederacy had suffered defeats in early 1862. By 1863, slaves, too, became conscripts, though in a sense they had always been. The military found black laborers invaluable, and it eventually had the power to impress them into service. Many masters did not like the military's strong arm tactics, but most continued to support the war effort and work with officers. The army became the greatest of masters, but not at the expense of planter patriotism.

The impressment issue, nevertheless, underscored whether or not slavery helped or hurt the Confederacy. Slaves were, to some degree, a liability in the war effort. "The

mere existence of slavery,” wrote one officer after the war, “gave the Federal Government a great advantage in the prosecution of the war and imposed additional cares and responsibilities upon those charged with ... military operations in the South.”¹ During the war, however, Southerners spoke of slavery’s advantages. As late as November 1863, an officer by the name of Samuel Merton emphasized its crucial role. In his eyes, slavery made “our 8,000,000 ... equal to the 20,000,000 of the North.” One might question whether slavery gave the South parity with the Northern war machine. Yet, slaves made up the majority of agricultural and industrial workers in the South, a fact that enabled eighty percent of white adult males to serve in the army. With slavery freeing up white Southerners to fight, on average, rebel armies were two-thirds the size of Northern ones. In any case, in late 1863, Merton believed the Confederacy needed to expand the use of its black labor force. As he saw it, the problem lay in adapting “our peculiar system of labor ... to relieve the fighting population from the obligations of production and manufacture.”² Just as they had for generations saved many white Southerners from digging ditches, cleaning stables, making supper, splitting their hands on cotton stalks, and getting tuberculosis in factories, slaves would allow soldiers to do what white men saw as the noble work of war, the fighting.

The Confederacy’s use of impressed slaves shows the rebellion’s continued reliance on human bondage, even as the war increasingly threatened the peculiar institution. As Clarence Mohr has written in his history of Confederate Georgia, masters

¹ Frederick Maurice, ed., *An-Aide-De-Camp of Lee: Being the Papers of Colonel Charles Marshall* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1927), 65.

² Samuel Merton to James Seddon, November 11, 1863, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 2, p. 946, on the benefit slavery gave the Confederacy, see also the *Montgomery Advertiser*, November 6, 1861, William Gienapp, ed., *The Civil War and Reconstruction: A Documentary Collection* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 197; on the relative size of Confederate armies, see James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire, Volume II: The Civil War, Second Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993 [1982]), 190.

adapted slavery to the demands of wartime. The use of slaves, for example, spurred Confederate industry in innovative ways. Mohr, however, contends that Southerners' belief in slavery eroded with the decline in their military fortunes. Over time, he argues, Confederates expressed second thoughts about the morality of human bondage, which led to efforts to reform slavery.³ For most Confederates, however, slavery became more important as the war dragged on. As Edward Ayers asserts in his recent study of the Civil War, by 1863, when Congress made impressment official practice, slavery "remained a crucial weapon of the Confederacy." "Despite all the damage that had been done to slavery in the first two years of war," Ayers continues, "its importance to the Confederacy not only remained undiminished but actually grew as white Southerners saw their men killed, maimed, and lost in [battle]."⁴ As one rebel soldier wrote in March 1862, "Every man, woman or child, negro or dog in the South that wants to submit ought to be hung up to the nearest limb as soon as possible."⁵ Confederates saw they must use black laborers to their advantage or Northerners would use slaves against them. Black Southerners did not enlist as Confederate soldiers in significant numbers—they more importantly served as common laborers. The armies used them as workers on fortifications and railroads, in hospitals, as haulers, teamsters, and ditch diggers. "I have all hands at work cleaning and whitewashing at the Hospital," said a surgeon a few weeks

³ Clarence L. Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 120-89.

⁴ Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 371.

⁵ E. John Ellis to mother, March 11, 1862, [typescript], E. P. Ellis Papers, LLMVC.

before the battle of Chancellorsville, “today the Medical Director sent me 12 negroes extra.”⁶ Slave labor made the Confederacy function, just as it had the antebellum South.

Historians, however, have given the subject of black military labor limited attention.⁷ Some have argued that the Confederacy’s impressment policy failed because of the refusal of planters and state officials to provide blacks to the military.

Confederates’ opposition to letting go of their slaves, they contend, created divisions within the South. The editors of *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation*, for example, conclude that impressment “divided [Confederates], exacerbating conflicts that pitted state officials against national officials, national officials against army officers, army officers against slaveholders, and slaveholders against nonslaveholders.”⁸ Although impressment was far from perfect, the Confederate army received tens of thousands of slaves from Southern masters, who were often unhappy about, but not necessarily resistant to, the taking of their slaves. “Despite occasional complaints about government requisitions of men and provisions,” William Scarborough has recently written in his study of the South’s largest planters, “wealthy slaveholders ... actively supported the

⁶ James M. Holloway to wife, April 28, 1862, James M. Holloway Papers, VHS; on a wife who had slaves at work making lint, serving in the hospital, and giving mint juleps to soldiers, see Catherine Capston to Lieutenant James Capston, May 22, 1863, McKenny Family Papers, VHS.

⁷ On impressment, see William C. Davis, *Look Away! A History of the Confederate States of America* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 149-50; on impressment and its constitutionality, see Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 236; on other aspects of impressment, see Bernard H. Nelson, “Confederate Slave Impressment Legislation, 1861-1865,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (October 1946), pp. 392-410; Harrison A. Trexler, “The Opposition of Planters to the Employment of Slaves as Laborers by the Confederacy,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (September 1940), pp. 211-224; on the use of black workers in the army, see James H. Brewer, *The Confederate Negro: Virginia’s Craftsmen and Military Laborers* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969); Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995 [1943]), 328-29; Bell Irvin Wiley, *Southern Negroes, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965 [1938]), 110-133.

⁸ Ira Berlin, et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Series 1, Volume 1, The Destruction of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 664.

Confederacy.”⁹ The relationship between the army and the master class was often tense, but planters and lesser slaveholders gave much support to the military. Through impressment and the volunteering of slaves, the army obtained much needed labor, which delayed the advance of Federal armies.

The most vital form of military labor involved the building of fortifications and entrenchments. Early in the war, Southerners saw taking cover as unmanly, and it took some time before they saw the value in it. Robert E. Lee won the dubious sobriquet the “King of Spades” for digging in during the Seven Days campaign.¹⁰ Confederates’ attitudes toward defensive tactics would change, but if troops eventually saw that entrenching saved their lives, they preferred to have slaves do the digging. For them, menial labor had no heroic quality. During the Charleston campaign in 1863, one rebel wrote of the “picturesque sight at [Fort] Gregg: the grim bastions looming up, the lurid glare of campfires lighting up the swarthy faces of our Southern soldiers, and an endless string of stalwart negroes busily carrying bags of sand.”¹¹ Black workers were valuable because they undertook physically demanding labor. Most Confederates were farmers who were used to hard work.¹² Yet, soldiers saw their duty was to fight rather than dig trenches or perform tasks that slaves could do for them. Writing near Jackson,

⁹ William K. Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 337; a contrary opinion can be found in Stanley Lebergott’s article, which asserts that the Confederacy failed because of greedy planters, see Lebergott, “Why the South Lost: Commercial Purpose in the Confederacy, 1861-1865,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (June 1983), pp. 58-74.

¹⁰ On Lee as the “King of Spades,” see entry for June 16, 1862, Ben Ames Williams, ed., *A Diary from Dixie* by Mary Boykin Chesnut (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 252.

¹¹ Entry for August 22, 1863, William Gordon McCabe Diary, McCabe Family Papers, VHS.

¹² See Carl R. Osthaus, “The Work Ethic of the Plain Folk: Labor and Religion in the Old South,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (November 2004), pp. 745-82.

Mississippi, shortly after the capitulation of Vicksburg, one soldier was plain about what he and his comrades did while slaves worked: “we layed around & took it easy.”¹³

Commanders tried, with limited success, to get soldiers to work as hard as slaves. White troops were often busy drilling or performing other tasks, but they found unsettling any work that paralleled what slaves did. In 1861, the sight of white men wielding axes and spades reminded one soldier of the “sable sons of Africa felling timber for their masters.”¹⁴ In his view, whites would do hard labor only if coerced. “I have overseen negroes at work,” one rebel said, “but never yet did I see anything work like white men when the fear of the guard house is before their eyes.”¹⁵ In the white mind, slaves were much better suited to taking orders and performing menial tasks. Generations of involuntary servitude, Confederate troops believed, had made blacks ideal for doing the labor required to fortify towns and strengthen defenses. Their supposedly “natural” docility and physical strength had made them ideal workers. As officers reasoned, why suffer soldiers’ complaints when black men could take their place putting up sandbags and constructing earthworks? They believed whites might work under duress, but black labor was more manageable and efficient. Slaves were used to working under difficult conditions and white supervision. In Confederate eyes, black men were necessary, not only because they were better workers, but because they were expendable. Concerning

¹³ Entry for July 8, 1863, A. D. Kirwan, ed., *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade: The Journal of a Confederate Soldier* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1956), 80; one wife of a Confederate Soldier described her husband’s camp near Chattanooga as the “laziest place imaginable,” but she herself needed the help of a female slave with her work, see Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, August 10, 1863, Louis P. Towles, ed., *A World Turned Upside Down: The Palmers of South Santee, 1818-1881* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 374; on an officer complaining that his men had to unload ships and that slaves should do such work, see Jonathan A. Winston to Colonel D. H. Hill, June 19, 1861, Berlin *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series 1, Volume 1, The Destruction of Slavery*, p. 684; on Hill’s reply to Winston, in which he said that most soldiers had not complained, see Hill to Winston, June 19, 1861, *ibid*, p. 685.

¹⁴ Charles to Albert Batchelor, October 10, 1861, Albert Batchelor Papers, LLMVC.

¹⁵ Robert H. Miller to William Miller, June 26, 1861, Robert H. Miller Letters, 1861, LLMVC.

the hard work white men did on fortifications, one soldier was blunt, “If the negro men had been enlisted to do all this hard manual labor, there would have been more white soldiers living at the close of the war, and fewer negro men to vote the radical ticket.”¹⁶

As the war progressed, therefore, slaves took an increasingly important role in keeping Yankees at bay. The use of slaves on fortifications reads like a list of important Confederate positions: Richmond, Forts Henry and Donelson, Island No. 10, Vicksburg, Port Hudson, Wilmington, and Mobile. If masters’ cooperation with the military was not perfect, it was often considerable. The government did not authorize the impressment of slaves until the middle of the war. Before then, however, many officers had impressed thousands of black workers into service. Often, the work they performed was on a scale much larger than any antebellum plantation. Few masters owned more than 50 or 100 slaves, but in September 1862, General P. G. T. Beauregard wrote of 1,400 slaves working on the defenses at Savannah.¹⁷ The city did not fall until December 1864, and when it did, it was not because of a lack of black workers. The Confederates there surrendered without fighting a battle.

Early in the war, appealing to civic responsibility was enough to get Confederates to turn over slaves to the army. Even before the conflict started, “patriotic planters” in Savannah, for example, provided Confederates with a large force of slaves.¹⁸ Such acts of

¹⁶ DeWitt Boyd Stone, Jr., ed., *Wandering to Glory: Confederate Veterans Remember Evans’ Brigade* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 163.

¹⁷ Report of General Beauregard, September 24, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 612; in 1863, an English traveler estimated that between six and seven thousand slaves were at work on the entrenchments at Richmond. In May 1863, an officer wrote to Joseph E. Johnston, saying that he had 10,000 men and 7,500 slaves at work at Mobile. He had so many slaves that he could not feed them all; see Benjamin H. Trask, ed., *Two Months in the Confederate States: An Englishman’s Travels through the South* by W. C. Corsan (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 77; Major A. D. Banks to Johnston, May 5, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 23, Pt. 2, p. 817.

¹⁸ Entry for January 19, 1861, George Mercer diary quoted in Mills Lane, ed., *The Times that Prove People’s Principles: Civil War in Georgia* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1993), 16; see also, Leonidas Polk to

patriotism, however, would become rarer as the war went on. The longer the conflict lasted, the more logistical problems the rebellion faced and the more reluctant planters proved in furnishing the military with slaves. Early on, Confederate soldiers learned that slaveholders were not always quick in filling quotas for black workers. In December 1861, an officer complained that he had not obtained enough slaves around Nashville, where citizens had hired out many black workers until the end of the year. Thus, it was unlikely that Confederates could make progress in building defenses. Several days later, Governor Harris of Tennessee stated that his agents had not obtained any black laborers. Therefore, he asked for permission to call upon local citizens for more.¹⁹

General John B. Magruder was the first commander to tackle the politics of impressing slaves. In 1861, his forces were building fortifications in order to stop the Federal approach to Richmond. As early as May, he complained about difficulties with slave-owners.²⁰ In response to hesitant masters, the army tried to reassure planters that it would treat slaves well and would pay masters fifty cents a day and rations for their labor. Agents would collect slaves, take down names, that of their owners, and provide a certificate for the days they worked.²¹ But because of a lack of black labor, rebels were having problems placing heavy guns in position. An engineer by the name of G. B. Cosby complained of having to dismiss slaves whose term of service had expired. Nevertheless, the increasingly powerful rebel military was putting black men to work. Writing from

Albert Sidney Johnston, November 28[?], 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 7, pp. 710-11; John P. Figh and G. M. Figh to Secretary Leroy Walker, April 26, 1861, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series 1, Volume I, The Destruction of Slavery*, p. 683; on one planter's plan to have 100 black workers put in each regiment, see A. P. Hayne to Jefferson Davis, August 8, 1863, *ibid*, pp. 695-96.

¹⁹ Gilmer to Colonel W. W. Mackall, December 7, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, p. 233; Gilmer to Harris, December 11, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 7, p. 757; Harris wrote to Albert Sidney Johnston, saying he had obtained 200 slaves, but he would like to triple that number; see Harris to Johnston, December 31, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 7, p. 811.

²⁰ Magruder to Garnett, May 25, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 2, p. 878.

²¹ G. B. Cosby to Colonel Crump, July 28, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 2, p. 1007.

Williamsburg, Cosby said that in addition to using slaves, he would also force free blacks into service if they refused to work. Slaves would deepen ditches, thicken parapets, and put up traverses. With a few hundred workers, he hoped he could complete the work at Williamsburg in a few days.²²

It quickly became apparent that the army would try as much as possible to get slaves to do the heaviest labor. By August 1861, a soldier in camp near Richmond remarked that the only workers he saw throwing up breastworks were black.²³ In the first summer of the war, the Confederate government had not expanded its power enough to impress workers or soldiers. Few people thought the conflict would last three more years or that the Confederacy would assert the most central power in American history up to that time.²⁴ The South still believed it could win the war without having to change the status quo antebellum regarding slavery. But in 1861, events in Virginia showed that the military would use its power to impress slaves when needed.

After the Confederacy's July 1861 victory at Manassas, the Union's main army in the East sat idle. It would not threaten Richmond again until the next year. In the first weeks after the South's inspiring success at Manassas, not all Confederates believed slave laborers were essential to the war effort. After all, it seemed the war might end soon. Why interfere with human bondage? In Virginia, some Confederates had begun to question the legality of General Magruder's actions, and those with slaves in the army wanted greater assurances "against possible contingencies of loss."²⁵ Some slaves had

²² G. B. Cosby to Colonel Crump, July 28, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 2, p. 1007.

²³ John Lee Holt to wife, August 29, 1861, James Mumper, ed., *I Wrote You Word: The Poignant Letters of Private Holt* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, 1993), 12.

²⁴ On the growth of the Confederate government in wartime in comparison with the North, see Richard Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁵ John Tyler and Hill Carter to James Seddon, August 26, 1861, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 4, p. 636.

never returned home. If the United States government was not going to protect masters' property, rebel slaveholders expected that the Confederacy should do so. Masters, therefore, wanted the army to return their black workers quickly.

In late January 1862, General Magruder said he had impressed local slaves two, three, or even four times. Were he to do it again, he worried about complaints flooding the War Department. Nevertheless, he needed black workers to alleviate the burden upon white soldiers. Despite the Army of the Potomac's inaction in Virginia, the Federal threat had not ended. Magruder's men were nearer to the enemy in some cases than the fortifications he had ordered built. His army was in winter quarters, and he believed it had labored enough, but getting enough slaves to replace white workers proved a problem. To collect several hundred took weeks or a month. Magruder, therefore, advised against ordering slave impressments in local counties. Congress could not pay for lost slaves, he wrote, nor could it compensate masters for their lost workers.²⁶

Magruder, nevertheless, believed Virginians preferred that the army impress their slaves. Why? The answer lay in slaveholders' financial worries. If commanders hired out slaves, masters would incur any losses suffered; if they impressed them, the army would have to compensate them.²⁷ Thus, slaveholders were seeing the wisdom of letting the army impress their slaves. Black laborers were finding new masters in the army, an organism stronger than any planter. If the plantation or farm had seemed large to slaves, the works the Confederacy needed to defend itself from the Yankees must have seemed colossal. With growing support for impressment, by mid February 1862, the army gave Magruder the authority to seize slaves for work on fortifications on the Peninsula

²⁶ Magruder to Samuel Cooper, January 30, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 457.

²⁷ Magruder to Samuel Cooper, January 30, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 457.

between the James and York Rivers. The army also subjected free blacks to impressment.²⁸

With Yankee armies on the offensive, the Confederacy needed all the workers it could get. By February, Grant was on the move in Tennessee and McClellan would soon march his massive army through Virginia. At Yorktown that spring, work went on. Slaves served a vital role in preparing the Confederacy for the impending Union advance. General D. H. Hill, serving with Magruder's forces, said his men were exhausted. They had worked hard to supply the army with guns, forage, and commissary stores. Hill had drawn slaves from the outworks in order to relieve his troops, but he needed more. Many had reported sick and were of no use to him.²⁹ John Magruder, too, complained of not having enough black workers.³⁰

For Magruder and other officers, resistant planters unfortunately were becoming more numerous, or at least more vocal, than those who volunteered slaves to the army. In March 1862, writing from South Carolina, a pessimistic John C. Pemberton spoke of the uncertain cooperation between slave-owners and the military. The government had recently given officers greater impressment power, but since Pemberton had not ordered any new defenses constructed, he did not need more black workers. Still, he knew he could not rely on local masters to furnish slaves voluntarily. Slave-owners had instead acted according to their "individual interest."³¹ Generals hoped they had the cooperation

²⁸ R. H. Chilton to Magruder, February 15, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, pp. 472-73.

²⁹ Hill to Johnston, April 26, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 3, p. 465.

³⁰ Magruder to Robert E. Lee, April 8, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 3, p. 430.

³¹ Pemberton to Isaac Hayne, March 22, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 6, pp. 415-16; on an officer in Mississippi complaining about planters not sending enough slaves to the army, see Colonel John Adams to Major J. R. Waddy, November 4, 1862, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I, The Destruction of Slavery*, pp. 701-02; on an engineer in Mississippi complaining that he did not have enough slaves, see Captain P. Robinson to John C. Pemberton, January 4, 1863, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I, The Destruction of Slavery*, p. 703.

of citizens. But if not, in the days before Congress made impressment official practice, commanders extracted as much work as possible from slaves before masters complained or lined up their political allies in order to get them back.

By May 1862, General Pemberton, commanding in Charleston, asked that planters furnish slaves “free of charge” for the defense of the Southeast coast. The work on Fort Jackson, he said, could not go on without additional slave laborers. Pemberton needed black workers, even though he worried about them being too close to the enemy. As always, those who supervised slaves had concerns about black loyalty. Slaves might flee at any second, and the chances of that seemed greater than ever. Pemberton, nevertheless, believed he could put 1,600 slaves to work on the defenses at Charleston and elsewhere for at least two months.³² Despite the problems they had dealing with slaves and their owners, commanders continued to rely on black labor to protect important cities.

Even if planters and lesser slaveholders were often reluctant to furnish slaves, soldiers were successful in getting thousands of much needed black laborers. The use of force, they believed, would get the army best results. If Pemberton was reluctant at first to impress blacks, General Beauregard was not. While stationed in Corinth after the battle of Shiloh, he gave the commander at Vicksburg the power to seize slaves to help with fortifications.³³ As 1862 progressed, commanders—long before Congress allowed them—increasingly took more slaves when needed. As Yankee threats mounted, officers

³² J. R. Waddy to Colonel W. R. Boggs, May 29, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, pp. 546-47 (quoted); Waddy to Mercer, June 11, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 557; Pemberton to Colonel Colquitt, June 14, 1862, *OR*, Vol. 14, Series 1, p. 565; Pemberton to James Chesnut, July 26, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 589; on a Virginia slaveholder’s complaint that soldiers were using runaways in camps, see L. H. Minor to Secretary G. W. Randolph, May 2, 1862, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I, The Destruction of Slavery*, pp. 698-99.

³³ Beauregard to Captain D. B. Harris, April 21, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 10, Pt. 2, pp. 430-31.

were less willing to grant masters immunity. In Mississippi, one commander wrote in June 1862 that impressment usually was done with concessions to cotton planters, but were an extremity to arise, he could no longer discriminate between taking slaves from small farms or plantations. As the war became harsher, masters could not always avoid impressment gangs.³⁴

Some Confederate officers, such as General Howell Cobb, opposed the impressment of slaves. Cobb, however, did not object outright to the use of black military laborers. He thought slaves served best as gatherers of corn and fodder, but the Confederacy should not make impressment official policy.³⁵ In August 1862, Cobb had complained to the Secretary of War about soldiers seizing slaves in Georgia. He said citizens “are willing to make any and all sacrifices, but they like to see reason and common sense in the officials of Government.”³⁶ Cobb sided with those who thought the army should only use slaves whose masters had volunteered them. And there were other officers who believed commanders should practice restraint when taking slaves from their owners. In February 1863, writing from Richmond, one engineer wanted to stop “onerous requisitions for labor.” He knew slaves were needed to make Richmond and Lee’s army secure, but he did not want to interfere with the harvest. In future, he wanted “such calls as light as possible.”³⁷

Despite the problems that impressment posed for bringing in the harvest, officers did not always arouse planter opposition. In August 1862, one general wrote of the

³⁴ George Brent to J. D. Martin, June 17, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 17, Pt. 2, p. 606.

³⁵ Horace Montgomery, “Howell Cobb’s Confederate Career,” *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 10 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1959), 65.

³⁶ Cobb to G. W. Randolph, August 5, 1862, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 2, p. 35.

³⁷ Gilmer to Seddon, February 9, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 679 (quoted); on a similar opinion, see J. A. Campbell to W. N. R. Beall, October 23, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 15, pp. 841-42.

slaveholders who “cheerfully” provided workers to the military, even if there were also “selfish individuals” who had “made all sorts of frivolous objections.” Some masters had refused outright to furnish any of their slaves. Even so, slave-owners were not undermining the military’s efforts.³⁸ Even as the war became more destructive, planters did not necessarily object to the army’s calls for black workers. In November 1862, General Beauregard said the planters had “done nobly” in providing the army with slaves, “but they must not stop three-quarters of the way.”³⁹ In his view, were the army to succeed, Confederates had to give themselves wholly to the war effort.

Over time, however, commanders made fewer apologies for taking slaves. In late November 1862, Robert E. Lee complained of obtaining only 3,330 of the 4,500 black workers promised him. General Lee had received about seventy-five percent—a figure close to the percentage of white men the Confederacy enlisted—of those he requested. Lee was not satisfied, but commanders were not always realistic about how many slaves they could obtain or how quickly. Receiving three-quarters of the slaves he had asked for was a considerable achievement. Lee was right in saying he needed more men, but the planters could do only so much to provide the military with black workers. Shortages were the story of the Confederacy. Even so, a lack of manpower led generals to lose patience with civilians. The army tried to persuade slaveholders to give up their chattels, arguing they were safer in camp than elsewhere, but such appeals were not free of threats.

³⁸ Entry for August 19, 1862, George Mercer diary quoted in Lane, ed., *Times that Prove People’s Principles*, 68; on a Georgia slaveholder’s complaint about General Mercer’s impressment order, see Joseph M. White to Secretary Randolph, September 8, 1862, Berlin, et al., eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I, The Destruction of Slavery*, pp. 699-700.

³⁹ Beauregard to Governor Pickens, November 8, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 672. In February 1863, a month before Congress passed the impressment law, one commander praised slaveholders who “have ever been found alive to the impulses of duty.” Such words softened the blow when he asked in the same sentence for 3,000 slaves; see circular issued by Thomas Jordan, February 17, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 782.

“If owners shall fail or refuse to comply with this request,” said Gideon Pillow in reference to Alabama planters in March 1863, “they need not complain ... if they should be robbed of their negro property.”⁴⁰

In March 1863, the Confederate Congress gave commanders the power to seize black laborers. Because of white soldiers’ refusal to do menial labor, masters’ and governors’ inconsistent efforts to furnish slaves, and general labor shortages and stresses of war, Congress passed an impressment law. The government issued it with the knowledge that most states had no laws concerning the impressment of slaves. Congress hoped the bill would enable the war effort to run more effectively. Slaves were ever needed to help commanders, and the military now had the authority to impress them. The rebel government believed it had to keep its priorities in order: hold key positions or acquiesce to masters or state officials who did not want Confederate troops to take slaves.⁴¹

The impressment law aroused opposition from many Confederates. Citizens understandably were irked. For many, impressment meant falling prey to the kind of despotism that they believed had taken over the North. In a war intended to protect Southern “rights” and “property,” Confederates were often resistant to handing over their black workers. In their eyes, the military’s efforts threatened the antebellum relationship between slaveholders, black laborers, and local and national government. In effect, the Confederate army was asking, and often forcing, masters to hire out their slaves, which in the view of many Southerners represented a serious threat to individual liberty.

⁴⁰ Pillow to Planters of Lauderdale, Lawrence and Franklin Counties, March 6, 1863, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 2, p. 421.

⁴¹ See, for example, S. G. French to James Seddon, January 7, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 18, p. 826.

Slaveholders' concerns, however, were more practical than ideological. They realized that the army's demands often conflicted with the use of slaves for bringing in the harvest. In the military's defense, commanders were never sure when Federal forces might make a concerted effort against them. War was far less predictable than growing corn, wheat, or cotton.⁴² And officers were not always deaf to slaveholders' complaints. From Jackson, Mississippi, in April 1863, one colonel wrote to John C. Pemberton, saying crops were "so backward" that he thought it best that slaves were sent home to help with the planting. He worried that cotton production would cease indefinitely, and he did not have to say that citizens needed corn.⁴³ With the tax in kind taking effect in 1863, masters felt pressed enough without having to hand over slaves to the military. Thus, civilians and the army came into conflict when both demanded the use of black laborers. The army could not rely on the volunteering of slaves alone. Masters, however, believed they had more of a right to keep their slaves than the military had to take them.

In addition to the demands of harvesting, masters had concerns for the health and safety of their slaves. Many planters let the army use their slaves, but the Confederacy's promises of good treatment of blacks, or that the military would pay for their labor, were not always kept. Whether because of disease, flight, or capture by Yankees, many never returned home. Nor did masters appreciate it when incompetent overseers abused their workers.⁴⁴ Slaveholders understood the government promised to compensate them for their losses, but they knew they were getting the bad end of the bargain—really, what

⁴² On fears of interrupting the harvest, see J. B. Lundy to George W. Randolph, June 13, 1862, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I, The Destruction of Slavery*, p. 745.

⁴³ Colonel T. N. Waul to Pemberton, April 27, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 24, Pt. 3, p. 796.

⁴⁴ See, for example, A. P. Barry to Jones Hamilton, April 14, 1863, Jerry Causey, ed., "Selected Correspondence of the Adjutant General of Confederate Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (February 1981), p. 49.

was not a bargain at all. With impressment, masters could only hope that their slaves would return alive, in relatively good health, and receive money for their labor. But in a Confederacy with a devaluing currency, short supplies, and Federal armies pressing down, masters were not always confident that they would get their slaves back or receive compensation for those lost. As they always had, they were better off taking their chances in the market.

Impressed blacks, even more so than normal field hands, endured harsh working conditions, and commanders had to defend themselves against accusations of mistreating them.⁴⁵ Soldiers took priority over black laborers, but as masters had for generations, officers tried to keep slaves relatively well fed and provided for. In September 1861, one conscientious captain complained of “needy & ragged Negroes, that demands prompt action.” He said his laborers were free blacks, not slaves, and they had received neither salary nor clothing for months. They were a “miserable squalid set,” he wrote. “The alacrity with which these poor creatures work, & the sadness of their appearance, has weighed upon me like a night-mare.”⁴⁶ No white man would have wanted to die in the place of a “Negro,” but that did not mean he lacked sympathy for them.⁴⁷ The army tried to give black workers decent care. Just as profit gave masters incentives to care for slaves

⁴⁵ See, for example, William H. Echols to Colonel D. B. Harris, June 11, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 972.

⁴⁶ Captain C. H. Dimmock to Governor Clarke, September 19, 1861, Buck Yearns and John G. Barrett, eds., *North Carolina Civil War Documentary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 253-54; on slaves needing to be better fed, see W. H. James to Zebulon Vance, April 2, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 18, p. 957; see also, entry for the “Sabbath,” June 1864, diary of “Miss Abby,” quoted in Lane, ed., *Times that Prove People’s Principles*, 194; see also, Milton Maxcy Leverett to mother, July 23, 1864, Frances Wallace Taylor, et al., eds., *The Leverett Letters: Correspondence of a South Carolina Family, 1851-1868* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 345.

⁴⁷ On the need to provide slaves with better clothing, see C. S. [?] Forshey, Lt. Col., & Engineer to Lemuel Conner [in Waco, TX], November 27, 1863, Lemanda Lea Papers, LLMVC.

on the farm, plantation, and in the factory, so did Confederate officers have reason to keep blacks healthy.

Many of them, however, did not receive the care that masters and army commanders would have liked. In June 1863, the chief engineer at Charleston defended his department from accusations of mistreating black laborers.⁴⁸ He admitted that they were working overtime, but this was because agents were unable to gather enough of them. He denied the charge that the army did not care for slaves, but he conceded that blacks were not productive after thirty days of labor.⁴⁹ Strenuous work, limited diet, and homesickness weakened them. He believed that until the army furnished officers with the workers they required, however, black laborers would suffer. He wanted servants kept longer, up to sixty days, and he considered whether masters should have the option of substituting one worker for another.⁵⁰ Thus, by mid 1863, black laborers had increasingly become like white soldiers. The army “conscripted” some, substituted others, and kept them as long as the military required them. Slaves were never impressed for the duration of the war, as were whites, but they too suffered for long periods in the army.

If masters opposed impressment for practical reasons, governors did so because of the political tug of war between state and Confederate officials. Some did not appreciate military commanders acting as if they were the ultimate authority.⁵¹ And in South

⁴⁸ D. B. Harris to Thomas Jordan, June 11, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 971.

⁴⁹ D. B. Harris to Thomas Jordan, December 5, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 28, Pt. 2, pp. 533-34; on slaves being treated well, see J. J. Ryan to R. L. Singletary, December 5, 1863, Berlin *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series I, Volume I: The Destruction of Slavery*, pp. 713-14; A. H. May to General G. Mason Graham, February 2, 1864, *ibid*, pp. 719-20; R. S. Vest to Captain W. G. Turpin, December 16, 1864, *ibid*, pp. 726-27.

⁵⁰ Harris to Jordan, December 5, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 28, Pt. 2, p. 533; in Texas in 1863, masters were to provide axes, spades, shovels, hoes, picks, and grubbing hoes for the army, see Edmund P. Turner to planters and farmers of Texas, December 7, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Pt. 2, p. 839.

⁵¹ See, for example, James Seddon to Joseph E. Johnston, November 29, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 31, Pt. 3, pp. 762-63; Davis to Mississippi governor Charles, November 19, 1863, *ibid*, p. 763; Davis to Clark, November 28, 1863, *ibid*, p. 763.

Carolina, Governor Francis Pickens wrote to General Beauregard in November 1862 about how black workers were not “assigned to the control or command of practical men.” As did other politicians, he complained the military had drained some districts of slaves more than others. The army, furthermore, had retained laborers longer than expected, which had led to much “derangement” in gathering crops.⁵² In March 1863, General Beauregard expressed concern about mediating between state authorities and the Confederate government, a task that annoyed officers for the rest of the war. If Beauregard could not get the slaves he needed, work would stop. He would then have to appeal to the people for help.⁵³

Governors Joseph E. Brown of Georgia and Zebulon Vance of North Carolina have solidified their place in Confederate history for obstructing Jefferson Davis. Although he hindered Davis’ efforts, on the subject of impressment, Brown was not necessarily hesitant in complying with officers’ requests. In November 1862, for example, he called upon 10% of the hands in the Savannah district to work on fortifications. When slaveholders sent only a few slaves to rebel camps, Brown threatened impressments. Several months later, he asked for 1,500 slaves to help build defenses at Charleston and Savannah.⁵⁴

Brown, however, was not always cooperative with commanders. In July 1863, General Hugh Mercer, serving in Savannah, said his agents had gone as far as Mississippi to gather slaves. Mercer appealed to Governor Brown for more black workers, but did not expect success. He was willing to go over the head of the governor in order to obtain labor at Savannah. He wrote to Secretary of War Seddon, saying that were he able to

⁵² Pickens to Beauregard, November 5, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, pp. 667-68.

⁵³ Beauregard to General Mercer, March 24, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 842.

⁵⁴ T. Conn Bryan, *Confederate Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1953), 73.

impress slaves, he could buy Savannah “at a cheap rate even if it cost them the labor of a thousand slaves yearly as long as the war may last.”⁵⁵ As Mercer’s complaints show, most commanders preferred to deal with Confederate authorities rather than state politicians.

When it came to providing the military with slaves, Governor Zebulon Vance was more obstructionist than Joseph E. Brown. In February 1863, Secretary Seddon asked Vance for black workers. “Full hires shall be paid,” he promised, “and every care possible shall be taken to provide for the comfort and safety of the slaves.” Vance, however, was slow in complying, saying that he did not want to impress any slaves. He suggested instead that the government call upon free blacks. He said he would assist in collecting them, but his tone was uncooperative.⁵⁶ Two months later, Vance wrote to the Secretary of War, James Seddon, to complain that the Confederate government had again called for black workers in North Carolina. The army had discharged white soldiers, he noted, and the military had stripped some counties of slaves. He said it “seems a physical impossibility to prevent a famine should all the balance of our labor be abstracted [sic].” He hoped attacks on Charleston had ended and that the government could focus more on the defense of Wilmington, which in 1865 proved the last major open port in the Confederacy.⁵⁷

If he was looking out for his home state, Vance created problems not only for those in Richmond, but generals in his own North Carolina. In June 1863, General William Whiting, who was defending Wilmington, complained to another officer. “What

⁵⁵ Mercer to Seddon, July 21, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 28, Pt. 2, pp. 215-16.

⁵⁶ Seddon to Vance, February 4, 1863, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 2, p. 386; Vance to Seddon, February 12, 1863, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 2, p. 393.

⁵⁷ Vance to Seddon, April 28, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 18, p. 1028.

little aid I can give I will,” he said, though he lamented that “I expect to need it sorely myself.” He went on to say, “I am more uneasy now ... than I have been at any time since I was here.” Vance, he wrote, was “calling in all the negro labor, which much embarrasses me.” Whiting was worried about an attack by land or sea, and said he did not have enough forces to hold off either. In March 1864, he said that free blacks could easily replace able-bodied whites at the state salt works. At Wilmington, he said, he was using some free black laborers, but was losing them to sickness and desertion. The men also were underpaid.⁵⁸ Unsympathetic toward the general’s difficulties, Governor Vance wrote to Whiting in curt phrases, sounding like Lincoln in his most frustrated moments with George McClellan. “Now, if I were to send you the negroes and the home guard,” he asked, “what labor would be left to do anything at all?” He went on to say, “I admit that almost anything is preferable to the capture of Wilmington, but, destitute as the country is of labor, I had earnestly hoped that the militia would be spared until the last moment.” Vance knew Whiting had impressment power, but he stated, “You have already the power, under act of Congress, to impress slave labor.” At once vague and threatening, he went on to say, “I prefer you should [impress slaves], unless I have the power of returning them when I thought proper.”⁵⁹ The point was not so much who had the power to impress labor, but that there would be only hesitant cooperation between the governor and the military.

Rebel officers had their differences with Vance, but it is easy to make too much of the governor’s role in undermining Confederate policies. As William J. Cooper has

⁵⁸ Whiting to D. H. Hill, June 8, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 27, Pt. 3, p. 870 (quoted); Whiting to Vance, March 22, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 840; Whiting to Robert E. Lee, September 24, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 2, p. 1281.

⁵⁹ Vance to Whiting, September 28, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 2, p. 1300.

written, “Vance is usually coupled with [Joseph E.] Brown as a gubernatorial opponent of Davis’s administration.” Cooper concludes, however, “he was no such thing.” Despite “widespread unhappiness caused by overzealous impressment and conscription officers,” in 1864, Cooper writes, Vance succeeded in “isolating and crushing the antiwar and anti-Davis faction.” If Vance did not always make life easy for Confederate officials, he pursued policies that he believed would assure Southern independence. The goals of the North Carolina governor were not antithetical to those of the Davis administration.⁶⁰

If there were planters and governors who occasionally opposed the army’s taking of slaves, soldiers supported impressment for several reasons. For one, officers saw that blacks simply were better workers than white men. In April 1863, the chief engineer at Galveston noted how slaves—who were sweating in sawmills, cutting and carrying sod, and hauling timber and iron—were far better workers than white men. “The work of soldiers,” he said, “amounts to very little, as the officers seem to have no control whatever over their men.” In his eyes, “The number of soldiers at work is about 100 men, whose work amount to 10 negroes’ work.” That black labor was superior to whites’ by a factor of ten was a damning indictment of soldiers’ value as workers. Too many Confederate troops apparently had internalized the racial hierarchy regarding work. Wherever they could find it, officers preferred using non-white labor.⁶¹

⁶⁰ William J. Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 477; for a recent biography of Vance, see Gordon B. McKinney, *Zeb Vance: North Carolina’s Civil War Governor and Gilded Age Political Leader* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁶¹ V. Sulakowski to Captain Edmund P. Turner, April 30, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 15, p. 1064 (quoted); in November 1862, General Beauregard noted that white troops “object most strenuously to work with spades and shovels.” They might pick up a tool in an emergency, but otherwise they mostly did “more grumbling than work, see Beauregard to Governor Francis Pickens, November 8, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 672; Magruder to Colonel R. H. Chilton, June 11, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 11, Pt. 3, p. 593; on the desire to use Mexicans as teamsters, see Major Charles Russell to Colonel H. C. McNeill, May 4, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 15, p. 1072.

Some rebels supported the impressment of slaves because it would free up white men to fight. In July 1863, one slaveholder offered the use of a quarter of his black workers to the army if it would relieve white men of hard labor. He had another reason for the army to take his slaves: he believed they were safer under the watch of soldiers than with him. Northerners, in his eyes, easily manipulated blacks. Were slaves to come in contact with the enemy, the Federals might enlist them into their army.⁶² Thus, not only were black men better workers than whites, Southerners saw that “Negroes” were safer in Confederate camps than elsewhere. In August 1863, one citizen of Meridian, Mississippi, wanted slaves to replace white workers at hospitals and railroads. He also wanted them to serve as wagon drivers, pioneers, sappers, and miners. Federals, he noted, were already using slaves against the Confederacy. At Memphis and Corinth, for example, there were thousands of them taking drill, and he wrote of the possibility of them “being made pretty good soldiers.” He thought it was better to use blacks as allies than allow the North to use them. “Under judicious treatment,” he believed, “the army is really the safest place for the negroes.”⁶³

Confederate troops saw that the government must undertake greater powers in order to conduct the war effort. They were realistic enough to see that the South needed every available black worker. From a hospital in 1864, one soldier wrote that the army should use all nearby blacks to repair supply roads. He lamented, however, “the powers

⁶² W. C. Bibb to James Seddon, July 23, 1863, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series 1, Volume I, The Destruction of Slavery*, pp. 704-05.

⁶³ Jonathan Watson to Samuel Cooper, August 4, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 24, Pt. 3, p. 1044; on a similar opinion, see William to Elizabeth Neblett, October 5, 1863, Erika L. Murr, ed., *A Rebel Wife in Texas: The Diary and Letters of Elizabeth Scott Neblett, 1852-1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 162-63.

that he will wait a week or ten days & then do what they could as well do today.”⁶⁴

Confederates did not necessarily oppose interfering with slavery, but they often worried whether the government could or would effectively use its resources.

Soldiers most likely had little problem with the Confederacy impressing slaves. A majority of them were not from the master class. Thus, most knew they would not have to furnish slaves for military labor. If they had been upset about the 1862 planter exemption, soldiers could now take comfort that masters were forced to be patriotic in other ways—even though slaveholders had already made great sacrifices for the cause. Many soldiers no doubt saw the giving up of slaves was not comparable to serving in the army. Black workers, they knew, would return home in a month or two, whereas soldiers were in the war for the duration. General Richard Taylor, himself a planter, did not understand why citizens complained more about the impressing of slaves than they did white conscription.⁶⁵ If planters and lesser slaveholders had to provide black workers now and then, white men were prepared to give their lives for home and country.

Not all impressed black workers were slaves. Early in 1863, the Virginia legislature made possible the impressment of free black labor. That March, Robert E. Lee wrote that workers—whether free or slave—were required on fortifications and railroads, where they would allow him to move his soldiers without neglecting the demands of army labor.⁶⁶ In late May, he reported that roughly a thousand blacks were at work at

⁶⁴ James Bates to sister, July 16, 1864 [includes entry for July 22], Richard Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War: The Diary and Letters of James C. Bates* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 311 (quoted); on support for impressment, see William Blair, *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 71.

⁶⁵ Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955 [1879]), 147.

⁶⁶ See Gilmer to Seddon, March 4, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 684; Gilmer to Lee, March 9, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 683; Lee to Seddon, March 25, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 25, Pt. 2, pp. 683-84.

Fredericksburg, doing the kind of digging his troops hated to do.⁶⁷ Free black men had always lived in something of a racial limbo in the South. They were not slaves, but did not have the legal rights or economic opportunities that whites possessed. Southern whites never seemed to know what to do with free blacks, and the same proved true in wartime.⁶⁸

Some commanders argued that the Confederacy should have used all of its available manpower, including free black labor. In 1863, with whites conscripted and blacks impressed into service, one provost marshal wondered about the South's unexploited free black labor pool. "The free man of color thus enjoys the increased profits of his business and makes money," he went on to say, "whilst the white man does the hard work of the day." He decried the "inequality and injustice" of the situation, asking that freedmen do the "menial and much of the mechanical service" for the army. They should serve as cooks, cobblers, teamsters, and nurses—all for a "moderate rate of wages."⁶⁹ He essentially wanted free blacks to do work that slaves performed in other theaters of war.

In order to handle its thousands of black workers—whether free or slave—the Confederacy became increasingly bureaucratic. In October 1863, Samuel Cooper, the highest-ranking general in the Confederacy and Jefferson Davis' military advisor, issued a special order based on Congress' earlier impressment law. Cooper said that

⁶⁷ Lee to General Arnold Elzey, May 22, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 25, Pt. 2, p. 816.

⁶⁸ On free blacks in the Civil War era, see Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975); Melvin Patrick Ely, *Israel on the Appomattox: A Southern Experiment in Black Freedom from the 1790s through the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004); Michael Johnson and James L. Roark, *No Chariot Let Down: Charleston's Free People of Color on the Eve of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); David Rankin, "The Forgotten People: Free People of Color in New Orleans, 1850-1870" (Ph.D., dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1976); Marina Wikramanayake, *A World in Shadow: The Free Black in Antebellum South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973).

⁶⁹ Francis Parker to William P. Miles, November 23, 1863, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 2, p. 979.

commanders could not take slaves from plantations solely dedicated to the production of grain, though they could “in cases of urgent necessity.” His order, however, created a loophole in the impressment law. “Urgent necessity” was something the military usually acted upon. But now, because of Cooper’s order, masters who were slow in furnishing slaves, and had no good excuse for doing so, faced penalties. Were they not to bring workers to designated collection points, the army could detain slaves an extra month. Masters could send overseers along, but officers had the power to dismiss them for any misconduct. Those who provided slaves on demand would receive \$20 a month for each of them. Were a slave to die, “a board of experts” would decide his value. But a master could not hold the military responsible for slaves killed “by the act of God, or by disease existing when the slave is received by Confederate authorities.” By spring 1863, the army had a contract with the states for black labor, the largest such contract in the history of American slavery. The Confederacy had a board to determine a slave’s worth and was not responsible for slaves struck by lightning, washed away in a flood, or otherwise taken by the hand of Providence. If it were not obvious by then, slave-owners now knew who came first—the owner, the state government, or the rebel army.⁷⁰

In June 1863, the Confederate government put John Magruder in charge of an impressment bureau in Texas, where he would ensure “that the injustice heretofore operating upon a patriotic few will be speedily removed, and the burden extended, by an equitable apportionment, over the entire body of slaveholders.”⁷¹ In other words, masters would soon have to furnish more slaves to the army. Slaveholders might see such action as an evil, but the army believed it a necessary one. In their view, the alternative—defeat

⁷⁰ General Orders No. 138, October 24, 1863, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 2, pp. 897-98.

⁷¹ J. Y. Dashiell to Magruder, June 4, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, p. 36.

and subjugation—would prove far worse. Planters and smaller slaveholders, nevertheless, continued to complain and hesitate to relinquish black workers. “Slavery is a most delicate question,” one Confederate said to General Magruder in June 1863. In some parts of Texas, he believed, “the production is so varied that free labor is very profitable.” Thus, it was better that Magruder appeal to planter patriotism and the hiring out of blacks rather than impressment.⁷² State elections were coming up in August. The impressment of slaves would prove a controversial issue. Better to leave meaningful debate aside, such men believed, when trying to win over voters. The South being the South, only Democrats would run, but staunch Confederates might face defeat.

Magruder, therefore, tried to rely on persuasion rather than impressment. In July, he appealed to planters for slaves, assuring them that the army would not move them past the San Antonio River.⁷³ Magruder, however, was not hesitant to use force. Around Niblett’s Bluff, Texas, he wanted authorities to stop and put to work all blacks passing through the area.⁷⁴ For the most part, Magruder’s men were having little luck in getting slaveholders to provide servants voluntarily.⁷⁵ Magruder, who had experienced similar problems before in northern Virginia, had more to consider than planters’ hurt feelings. He feared Federal troops in northern Texas and western Louisiana would draw his own men from the coast, the defense of which proved essential to keep slaves, cotton, railroads, and sugar in the hands of the Confederacy. He had to concentrate his forces as much as possible, and he believed he needed slaves in order to do it.⁷⁶

⁷² S. S. Anderson to Magruder, June 26, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, pp. 85-86.

⁷³ Stephen Yancey to the Planters of Texas, July 4, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, p. 103; see also, S. S. Anderson to General T. H. Holmes, July 7, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 22, Pt. 2, p. 907.

⁷⁴ Edmund P. Turner to W. R. Scurry, July 29, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, p. 126.

⁷⁵ S. Hart’s Endorsement, August 4, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, p. 155.

⁷⁶ Magruder to W. R. Boggs, September 1, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, pp. 195-96.

Despite problems in Texas and elsewhere, masters were still supportive of the war effort and the use of slaves in the army. In September 1863, there was good news for Kirby Smith, who commanded the trans-Mississippi region. He said Texas planters—who understood such calls would equally fall on masters—were cooperating with impressment officials. “The public-spirited man,” General Smith said, “whilst he gives up his slaves, objects that his unpatriotic neighbor should receive the protection of the Government without adding his quota to its support.” With the Federal threat ever increasing, he believed the idea that “slave property is uncertain has been gradually gaining ground in the public mind.” In his view, it was better that the army impress slaves rather than let them fall into enemy hands. He was willing to employ slaves wherever he could find them, and they were numerous in Texas.⁷⁷

Magruder, however, did not support Kirby Smith’s plan. He thought it put an unequal burden on Texas planters. Rather, he believed that Louisianans and Texans should furnish slaves at the same rate. Magruder wrote that he had lost few slaves in his district, nor had he impressed many. To change the Confederacy’s policy to one exclusively based on impressment would result in masters finding no “home for their slaves,” thus causing “great confusion.” Magruder believed that he had made great gains in handling Texas’ labor needs. “The business of the negro bureau works well now for the first time,” he wrote, “and I do hope [Kirby Smith] will not permit ... interested parties (planters from Louisiana or elsewhere) to interfere with it.”⁷⁸ Magruder worried that if impressment was the sole policy for acquiring black laborers, it would anger masters, who might flee beyond the reach of Confederate authorities.

⁷⁷ Kirby Smith to Richard Taylor, September 10, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, pp. 217-18.

⁷⁸ Magruder’s Indorsement No. 2, October 9, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, p. 269.

By February 1864, Richard Taylor, then commanding western Louisiana, grew fatalistic about slavery's survival in his district. Whether or not the army resorted to impressment, the institution seemed on the brink of destruction. On the one hand, to rely upon slaveholders to volunteer their servants was to risk all. On the other hand, if the army resorted to impressment, Taylor believed there would be a "general stampede" of masters to Texas. Were that to happen, the responsibility for it would lie with the army. Out of desperation, some masters preferred slaves went to the army rather than see them run away or have the Federals seize them. Even so, Taylor—in contrast to Kirby Smith—thought impressment an unwise measure.⁷⁹

General Magruder was less pessimistic than Richard Taylor about the survival of slavery in the far West. Even late into the war, with the Confederacy suffering everywhere, commanders debated the best way to maintain slavery and the use of black labor for the army's benefit. Texas was far from the center of military events, but some men believed slavery might survive indefinitely. After all, it was not until June 19, 1865 ("Juneteenth") that slaves in Texas heard about the Emancipation Proclamation. In November 1864, writing from Arkansas, John Magruder estimated that masters had taken 150,000 slaves from Missouri and Arkansas to Texas during the war. He wanted to impress more black laborers, even though he worried it would send more planters west. If slave-owners fled to Texas, he reasoned, they were still within Confederate borders. Black laborers remained vital to the army. "My judgment tells me the negroes are

⁷⁹ Taylor to Brigadier-General Walker, February 3, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 34, Pt. 2, p. 939.

absolutely necessary,” said Magruder, who realized he did not have enough soldiers to labor on forts.⁸⁰

In 1864, whether in Texas or elsewhere, the Confederate army continued to rely on slaves to bolster its military effort, and commanders wanted to make them a permanent feature of army life. By 1864, they were seeing the desirability of creating a corps of black laborers. “The advantages of such an organization,” one officer concluded in December 1863, “are too obvious for me to venture.”⁸¹ The Confederacy never created such a force, but in February 1864, Congress passed a third draft bill that allowed for the conscription of 20,000 slaves—a number equal to a corps—for use as teamsters and cooks. The South, however, never created an official corps of black workers who would act as a cohesive labor unit. For Confederates, it proved unfortunate, because officers could have used such a force in their armies. From Dalton in February 1864, for example—before the draft bill passed—the Army of Tennessee ordered the employment of thousands of slaves as washers, cooks, and teamsters.⁸²

Later in the year, Robert E. Lee saw that he must enlist blacks to an extent greater than Congress had authorized. In his eyes, the February draft bill did not prove effective. In September, he wrote that blacks should replace whites as menial laborers. For Lee, the rationale was simple. “It seems to me,” he said to Jefferson Davis, “that we must choose between employing negroes ourselves or having them employed against us.”⁸³ The general’s thinking foreshadowed that of early 1865, when he favored enlisting blacks as

⁸⁰ Magruder to Senator Robert Johnson, November 5, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 4, p. 1030 (quoted); Kirby Smith also complained of shortages in slave labor, see Smith to Magruder, December 7, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 4, pp. 1101-03; see also, Magruder to W. R. Boggs, December 4, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 41, Pt. 4, p. 1097.

⁸¹ Von Sheliha to Governor Watts, December 13, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, pp. 504.

⁸² General Orders No. 20, February 6, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 2, p. 683.

⁸³ Lee to Davis, September 2, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 2, p. 1228.

soldiers. Lee thought the same as Lincoln and the abolitionists: every slave that fled to Union lines took away a laborer from the Confederacy and added one to the Federals. Lee preferred not to free any slaves, knowing how powerful a force they were in the war effort. In September 1864, he needed 5,000 of them for his army, and that meant, as it always had, 5,000 white troops could remain at the front. As Lee saw it, the February 17 act gave impressment power not to the Secretary of War, but to commanding officers.⁸⁴ He wanted to use slaves not just for military work, but anywhere that freed up white soldiers. Lee asked that the Confederacy create a corps of black workers to perform such tasks as cutting wood and roadwork.⁸⁵ He wanted them to be exclusively slaves: no free blacks and no contract laborers.⁸⁶ Late in the war, Lee saw that his army had to rely more than ever on slave labor.

His superiors, who could not resist Lee's influence, tried to aid him. In late September 1864, Secretary Seddon said he would at once impress 20,000 slaves, effectively a corps, as authorized by Congress. He believed "many advantages ... would result from this system in enabling us to preserve better order and exercise more care and supervision over the negroes so employed." Impressment might prove a panacea: putting slaves into the army would solve both the discipline problem among slaves and the army's labor shortages.⁸⁷ But it was perhaps too late. Lee replied that the slaves he needed had not arrived, and he warned that were they not to come, "it will be very difficult for us to maintain ourselves." He knew his lines were stretching ever thinner.⁸⁸ Seddon was hesitant about raising an entire corps of impressed workers, but as usual, Lee

⁸⁴ Lee to Seddon, September 17, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 2, p. 1256.

⁸⁵ Lee to Seddon, September 20, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 2, pp. 1260-61.

⁸⁶ Special Orders No. 224, September 21, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 2, p. 1268.

⁸⁷ Seddon to Lee, September 21, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 2, p. 1269.

⁸⁸ Lee to Seddon, October 4, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 3, p. 1134.

got what he wanted—at least in theory.⁸⁹ In December, Lee complained that only 2,000 of the 5,000 requested slaves were in camp. It was a formidable number of workers, but Lee was not satisfied. He had not received enough slaves to replace white teamsters—only enough to supply A. P. Hill’s Third Corps and a portion of a division.⁹⁰ Lee was not the only one who understood what a lack of black laborers meant for the rebels at Petersburg. In late December 1864, James Longstreet complained that the army would have to abandon a line of defenses unless it put black workers there.⁹¹

Generals never received the number of slaves they requested, but that does not mean they did not make considerable efforts to get them. In 1864, William Sherman’s army moved into the heart of Georgia. Slaves subsequently became part of the Confederate campaign to save Atlanta from capture.⁹² One rebel recalled how General Johnston at one point called for 12,000 blacks to act as teamsters and cooks.⁹³ However many were needed, 12,000 was a fantastic number, constituting a small army of laborers. The Confederacy never furnished so many slaves at one time for any general, even Robert E. Lee. And such numbers were difficult to meet, especially as late as 1864. If masters were pleased when they kept their slaves from the army, officers grumbled that their fortifications lacked sufficient workers. In September 1864, General Beauregard complained that despite his “constant appeals” he did not get the 2,500 slaves per month he desired when he was in Charleston. Instead, he had only received an average of 330.

⁸⁹ Seddon to Lee, October 5, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 3, p. 1135.

⁹⁰ Lee to Seddon, December 11, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 3, p. 1267.

⁹¹ Longstreet to Lee, December 27, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 42, Pt. 3, p. 1324.

⁹² Entry for May 7, 1864, Norman D. Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne’s Command: The Civil War Reminiscences and Diary of Captain Samuel T. Foster, Granbury’s Texas Brigade, CSA* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 71.

⁹³ Bell I. Wiley, ed., *Four Years on the Firing Line* by James Cooper Nisbet (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1963), 169.

Because of labor shortages, he kept his black workers longer than first promised.⁹⁴ Sam Jones, who succeeded Beauregard in Charleston, asked that planters send slaves to the military provided it did not interfere with rice harvesting. He was not going to impress blacks, but hire them out, and he promised the military would treat slaves well. As things were, his ranks were depleted of labor. Where 2,000 slaves were needed, his agents had obtained only nine. Where 200 were required, he had only a dozen. "I cannot order the impressment of negroes in those States which have taken action on this subject," Jones complained.⁹⁵ Yet, if Beauregard and Jones lamented labor shortages, Charleston held out longer than most important Confederate cities.

Mobile proved a similar case. In December 1863, local masters were angry that the army had kept slaves at work for what they believed was too long a period. Von Sheliha, an engineer, thought that the planters rather than the military were responsible. They had hesitated to send slaves and then complained when they were not quickly returned. He also dismissed complaints that soldiers did not treat blacks well. Sheliha said the problem, again, lay with masters, who hired overseers who were "not always men who deserve the confidence of their employers." Even so, the situation was not dire. He claimed that the number of sick men under his command was not excessive. Confederates, however, needed to do more. He believed the government should increase slaves' pay to \$30 a month and that the planters should also provide them with rations. Despite shortages and other problems in Mobile, Confederates had considerable success

⁹⁴ Report of Beauregard, September 18, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 28, Pt. 1, p. 70. Beauregard at the time was in Virginia, helping Lee's army against Grant. Officers often waited months before writing their official reports of battles or campaigns.

⁹⁵ Jones to R. S. Ripley, June 23, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 35, Pt. 2, p. 537; Jones to Governor M. L. Bonham, June 29, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 35, Pt. 2, pp. 542-43 (quoted); see also, report of operations in Georgia, March 30, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 14, p. 871.

in getting needed slaves. On January 28, 1864, Leonidas Polk, commanding in Mississippi after his fallout with Braxton Bragg, wrote that he had sent 5,000 slaves to rebel camps.⁹⁶

Federal forces were also soon in coming. In 1864, David Farragut's fleet planned to take Mobile Bay. General Dabney Maury, commander of the District of the Gulf, wanted as many slaves as possible for work at Mobile. Maury, however, feared not getting more until after the harvest. Even after Farragut's victory at Mobile Bay in August, slaves were still needed for work around Mobile itself, which had not yet fallen to the Federals. In 1865, the campaign for Spanish Fort guarding the city had little bearing on events elsewhere, but the Federals spent much blood in the last weeks of the war to take it. On April 5, a worried Confederate officer complained that he needed "more heavy guns, more mortars, more axes, more negroes."⁹⁷ The fort surrendered three days later. The rebels, indeed, had needed more of everything, but the shortage of black workers alone did not lead to Mobile's fall.

Out west, other Confederates could not halt the Yankee tide merely by using more slave labor. By 1864, Mississippi, unable or unwilling to send more troops to the front, effectively was out of the war.⁹⁸ Nathan Bedford Forrest, however, was gathering more slaves there. In August, he said he needed five hundred for the works around Grenada and Graysport. A citizen might not send a son to war, but he would probably have greater

⁹⁶ Von Sheliha to Governor Watts, December 13, 1863, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 26, Pt. 2, pp. 503-04; Polk to Lt. Colonel Jack, January 28, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 2, p. 629; Polk to Governor Watts, January 28, 1864, *ibid*, pp. 629-30; see protest by those at public meeting in Talladega, Alabama, April 4, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 32, Pt. 3, p. 765; citizens of Randolph County, Alabama, to Jefferson Davis, May 6, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, pp. 667-68.

⁹⁷ Dabney Maury to Colonel Jack, April 16, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Pt. 3, Vol. 32, p. 788; Samuel Lockett to Colonel E. Surget, March 13, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 49, Pt. 1, p. 1055; R. L. Gibson to Dabney Maury, April, 5, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 1204.

⁹⁸ On the plight of Mississippi, see Paul Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 207.

difficulty in refusing General Forrest needed black labor. Forrest was unlikely to let others slight him in any way.⁹⁹ Yet, by the fall of 1864, even he was unable to work miracles. He reported his failure to provide all the slaves that Richard Taylor—then commanding eastern Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama—needed in his theater of combat. The tenacious Forrest, however, had captured roughly 1,000 slaves and sent about 800 of them to Taylor.¹⁰⁰

In the last months of war, soldiers still hoped they could obtain needed slave laborers. In February 1865, Mississippi authorities ordered that officers must not disturb slaves working on railroads used for military transportation.¹⁰¹ The Confederacy was in its death throes, but commanders were still shuffling slaves into the army. In March, General Forrest said that all wagon drivers in his forces were to be black; in addition, every ten men were allowed one black cook, and no officer could claim a slave that was not in his immediate service.¹⁰² Such orders had little importance given that the rebellion would soon end, but they underscore the Confederate army's continued reliance upon slavery.

Four days before Lee surrendered, one commander asked a cavalryman to impress slaves, but not so many as to interrupt the harvest. Days before defeat, the rebel army still acted as if the peculiar institution had a future.¹⁰³ In February 1865, no doubt out of desperation, one commander wanted to impress Indians, Mexicans, even Mormons for use in the army. Mormons might have found it odd that a Confederate officer mentioned

⁹⁹ Charles Anderson to James Chalmers, August 4, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 39, Pt. 2, pp. 752-53; Chalmers to H. C. Davis, August 5, 1864, *ibid*, p. 757.

¹⁰⁰ Forrest to Taylor, October 12, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 39, Pt. 3, p. 817.

¹⁰¹ Circular No. 3 by Richard D. Screven, office commandant for Mississippi, February 17, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 49, Pt. 1, p. 1019.

¹⁰² General Orders No. 99, March 3, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 49, Pt. 1, p. 1025.

¹⁰³ Brigadier-General J. L. Brent to Colonel L. A. Bringier, April 5, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Pt. 2, p. 1264.

them in the same breath as Indians and Mexicans, but they too had become a marginalized group in America. And where the rebels were to get a sufficient supply of Mormons he did not specify.¹⁰⁴ As far reaching as it was, the Confederacy did not have a hold on the Utah territory. His words, nevertheless, show the extent to which rebels desired slave labor. Slavery survived for so long because blacks were hard working and reliable. Even if the opposite proved true in many cases, whites did not want to trade places with them. In March 1865, some Southern blacks put on Confederate uniforms, but most remained slaves. Whites felt much more comfortable using black men as menial laborers than in any other capacity.

For much of the war, masters volunteered slaves to the army, but the military eventually resorted to impressment. In the army's defense, considering that millions of slaves lived in the Confederacy, even with thousands of them serving on military projects, it impressed relatively few in number. And those that rebels seized usually were not kept for more than a couple months. The army, furthermore, assured masters that they would return their black workers and pay them what it thought was a fair wage. Not all blacks made it back to their farms or plantations, however, and the war's increasing destructiveness exerted great pressure on the master class. For slaveholders, it was bad enough that Federals took their chattels without having to worry about Confederate press gangs doing the same. They might never see their slaves again. Thus, many masters resisted impressment.

Despite the complaints of slave-owners and state authorities, however, impressment did not undermine civilian support, nor did shortages of black labor lead to the loss of Confederate strongholds. Masters could have proven quicker in supplying

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Ruggles to General S. Cooper, February 18, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Pt. 1, pp. 1393-94.

slaves or have sent more to the army, but slaveholders made great sacrifices for the war effort. To ask them to hand over slaves deprived them of workers needed to grow cotton or necessary foodstuffs. Masters' reluctance was the result not of a lack of patriotism or a rigid adherence to states rights or proslavery ideology—though these proved true in some cases—but a realistic assessment of what the war was doing to slavery. With Yankee soldiers taking their laborers, enslaved people fleeing their masters, and Confederate troops roaming plantations for military workers, masters were understandably cautious about giving up their “property.” Yet, slaveholders did not undermine the Confederate war effort. Some were not happy with the 1863 impressment law, but many conceded that blacks were probably safer in the army than not. In one form or another, masters provided the Confederate army with tens of thousands of black laborers. One wonders about the public reaction had the United States passed an impressment law in the North.

For rebels, the conflict required much greater sacrifice on the home front than was the case in the North. Thus, shortages in the army—whether in regard to rations or the supply of black laborers—were quickly felt. Commanders issued impressment orders to obtain slave workers, not necessarily because masters would not provide them, but because their military situation demanded immediate action. What is impressive is not that masters resisted calls for slaves, but that they furnished as many as they did. At important cities, commanders could boast of thousands of slaves serving on fortifications.

Slave laborers were an important source of manpower in a Confederacy that lacked the white males needed to match Northern armies. If Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation hurt the Confederacy by inducing slaves to flee, the rebel government compensated to some degree by using slaves to resist the Yankees. In the antebellum

period, Northern reformers argued that slavery kept the South far behind the North as an economic power. Southerners responded by saying the peculiar institution was the source of the region's wealth and racial harmony. Similar arguments proved true regarding blacks impressed into the Confederate army. If the South was outnumbered from the war's outset, by using slaves, its forces hoped to keep parity with the North.

In the end, the Confederacy's decision to impress slaves was a natural and logical, albeit controversial, one. Thousands of slaves, doing the hard labor they had done for generations, kept the rebel armies in the field longer than they would have otherwise. Confederates often considered blacks lazy, but the army knew they did the most menial and difficult work in the South. In resorting to impressment, the Confederacy faced one of the many dilemmas it confronted during the war: whether or not they worked slaves in the army, or kept them at home, they were merely transferring labor forces, not employing unused resources. Every slave used in the army allowed one soldier to serve at the front, but it also meant the absence of one more slave on the farm or plantation. Slaves were rarely idle. Their usefulness to the South depended on where and when they worked, not whether or not they would. When they were under white supervision, and even when they were not, blacks provided the main source of labor for the South.

In wartime, masters were subject to having the government take their chattels. But events did not lead either the army or civilians to abandon human bondage. They instead applied antebellum laws and custom as much as possible to the contingencies of war. The conflict led to the passage of new laws governing the peculiar institution, but rebel authorities hoped that people understood that impressment was a war measure. If they interfered with slavery, Confederate soldiers did not want to change it fundamentally.

Even when defeat increasingly seemed likely, commanders, citizens, and politicians continued to find new sources of slave labor. The issue of impressment did not lead Confederates to question the validity and practicality of human bondage, but how best to keep it alive without starving the war effort.

Given the considerable use of black men in the military, for many Confederates, the next logical step seemed the arming of the slaves. Many Southerners, however, would oppose it more strongly than those who resisted impressment. Most Confederates thought the idea of blacks taking up arms threatening and offensive. Fighting was the one form of physical work that they felt uncomfortable allowing blacks doing. Thus, it was not until very late in the war that they agreed to emancipate some of their slaves in order to fight for the cause. By then, however, it did not matter. The Confederacy was either going to live or die with most black people behind the lines remaining in bondage.

VII
THE CONFEDERATE ARMY AND THE RELUCTANT ENLISTMENT OF BLACK
TROOPS, 1864-1865

“I think that the proposition to make soldiers of our slaves is the most pernicious idea that has been suggested since the war began,” wrote Howell Cobb in a letter to the Secretary of War on January 8, 1865. Historians have almost inevitably quoted Cobb as being foremost in the camp opposing enlisting blacks, for he articulated the ideological dilemma that such a measure posed: if slaves could make good soldiers, then the whole idea of slavery was wrong.¹ In late 1864 and early 1865, many Confederates thought it was time to arm black Southerners, but Cobb disapproved of the idea. For him, to do so would betray the cause. Men had been raised to think blacks the inferior of the white man. In Cobb’s view, how could slaves become good troops? “As a class they are wanting in every qualification of a soldier,” he wrote.² Even as late as 1865, the general believed the Confederacy could continue its war effort without fundamentally affecting slavery. In his eyes, fighting reform from without—in the shape of “abolitionist” Yankees—was better than yielding to anti-slavery forces from within.

¹ Cobb to James Seddon, January 8, 1865, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 3, p. 1009; on those who have quoted Cobb in the past, see Robert F. Durden, *The Gray and the Black: The Confederate Debate on Emancipation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000 [1972]), 183-85; Shelby Foote, *The Civil War, A Narrative: Red River to Appomattox* (New York: Vintage, 1974), 859-60; William W. Freehling, *The South vs. the South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 194; Allen C. Guezlo, *The Crisis of the American Republic: A History of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 288; Randall C. Jimerson, *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought during the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 118; Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 235; James M. McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire, Volume II: The Civil War, Second Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993 [1982]), 477; Randy L. Reid, “Howell Cobb of Georgia: A Biography,” Volume III (Ph.D., dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1995), 1276-79; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 292-93.

² Cobb to James Seddon, January 8, 1865, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 3, p. 1009.

In January 1865, Cobb's reasons for holding onto slavery were many. He was a planter who in the 1850s wrote a Biblical defense of human bondage. After his death in 1868, other Southerners lauded him as a good Democrat, political moderate, exemplary Christian, and kind slave-owner.³ In 1865, in contrast to those who wanted to loosen the chains upon black people, Cobb believed the South could still win the war and maintain slavery. In a bid for European recognition, he thought it better to acquiesce to emancipation at the hands of England and France than it was to arm the slaves. But such a measure was not necessary. It was possible, Cobb believed, to get more white soldiers to volunteer. "I have more fears about arms than about men," he wrote. His words mixed optimism and pessimism in a way common in Confederate correspondence, especially in letters rebels wrote in 1865. For Cobb, looking to slaves to fill depleted ranks was demoralizing, indeed, suicidal to the Confederacy.⁴ White soldiers, he believed, could still win the war on their own. In 1865, Cobb's opposition to enlisting blacks epitomized the Confederacy's problem—it was greatly outnumbered, but it hesitated to give black men rifles in order to defend itself. For Cobb, there was no shame in fighting to keep "Negroes" enslaved, and to emancipate them would betray the South.

The Confederacy's dilemma underscored one that all political movements must face: to diverge from its initial mission and principles was treachery, whereupon the

³ See Cobb, *A Scriptural Examination of the Institution of Slavery in the United States, with its Objects and Purposes* (n. c. [Perry?], GA: Privately Printed, 1856); one should not glean a memorial volume for a balanced view of a Confederate veteran's behavior as slaveholder, nevertheless, of Cobb it was said after his death, "A more liberal, indulgent or kind master never lived. When he died all of his old servants who could do so attended his funeral, and there were but few more sincere and afflicted mourners at his grave than those negroes." Cobb apparently supported his slaves after emancipation. All of his former servants had "good houses, ample food and fuel, comfortable clothing and medical care; and whenever he visited the places where they live, he always took care to see that these pensioners were comfortable," see Samuel Boykin, ed., *A Memorial Volume of the Hon. Howell Cobb of Georgia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1870), 47-48.

⁴ Cobb to James Seddon, January 8, 1865, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 3, p. 1010.

revolution would destroy itself. With a conditional promise of freedom, however, the Confederacy ultimately decided to enlist some black men. Its hesitancy to do so until only the last few weeks of the war reflects how dedicated the South was to preserving slavery, even as the United States was about to supply the coup de grace. The enlistment of blacks proved radical on the surface, but it mostly was a token effort by a slaveholding nation that had run out of options. The South debated freeing the slaves when it became obvious that the North would soon free all of them anyway. Even then, Confederates believed they could give slaves muskets without having to free most of them.

In their eyes, they had reasons for such reluctance. The Confederate Constitution, for one, had made explicit slavery's existence, a guarantee born of Southerners' strong pro-slavery convictions. Although the South had always contained people who sought to reform human bondage, for Cobb and many others, the prospect of enlisting slaves went too far. For generations, the South had lived on the edge of a slippery slope: to allow greater freedom for blacks might inevitably lead to abolition. In the early 1830s, for example, Nat Turner's revolt had prompted calls in Virginia for gradual emancipation. But Virginia and the South had instead cracked down, making manumission more difficult and passing stricter laws against slaves learning to read and write.⁵ Now, in 1865, it seemed the Confederacy was going to turn back decades of legal restrictions against slaves, freeing some in order to aid the withering war effort.

Rather than keep the racial status quo, men such as Cobb saw that the Confederacy was bending to the forces of abolition, which in effect said black men could become the white soldier's equal. In the war's last days, even Cobb facilitated the

⁵ See Alison Goodyear Freehling, *Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate 1831-1832* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Louis Masur, *1831: Year of Eclipse* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 48-62.

enlistment of slaves into the army and volunteered one of his overseers as an officer for a black regiment. The Confederacy's defeat in April 1865, however, made the prospect of conscripting blacks irrelevant.⁶ To enlist "Negroes" was not suicidal, as Cobb believed, for the Confederacy did not commit suicide—instead, Yankee armies had defeated it. As soldiers, therefore, blacks were never a significant factor in the Confederate army. In mid March 1865, the South allowed them to serve, but Lee surrendered a few weeks later.

Historians have debated to what extent the Confederacy's arming of slaves was a revolutionary measure. Robert Durden's *The Gray and the Black* concludes that their enlistment was forced on the rebels. Even so, the fact that the Confederacy instituted the measure at all shows how much had changed in the South. Regarding the enlistment debate, Emory Thomas has asserted, "The new nation and its war had achieved a dynamic of their own—a dynamic which overshadowed principles and poses."

Southerners' dedication to their cause, scholars have argued, trumped any allegiance to human bondage. And the Confederate army—despite the fact that it had massacred blacks troops at various battles and was fighting to preserve slavery—proved perhaps the most flexible element of Southern society on the subject of enlisting slaves. J. Tracy Power contends in his work, *Lee's Miserables*, that the majority of soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia supported black enlistment.⁷ If they would have preferred that the Confederacy not enroll blacks, men believed that the military situation called for desperate efforts.

⁶ On Cobb's later support, militarily if not ideologically, for the enlistment of blacks, see Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 285.

⁷ Durden, *Gray and the Black*, x; Emory Thomas, *The Confederacy as Revolutionary Experience* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991 [1971]), 131; J. Tracy Power, *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 251-55.

If J. Tracy Power is right that a majority of Lee's men supported enlisting blacks, it was most likely not by a considerable margin. The Confederacy would not have existed without slavery, and most of its soldiers believed a Southern nation without slavery was not worth having. To free the slaves was to mold the South in the North's image. Paul Escott has shown that proslavery forces were too strong for Confederates to change slavery radically. Masters, he argues, were more tied to the peculiar institution than to the Confederate nation.⁸ If Escott perhaps errs in suggesting slavery was more important for Confederates than the rebellion itself, he correctly states that the Confederacy dealt cautiously with slavery, whether in regards to the "Twenty Slave" exemption or the impressment of black laborers. The impressment of blacks, however, did not force men to reconsider their racial assumptions. The enlistment of slaves did. Thus, it was far more radical a measure for the Confederacy to take. Ideas of racial superiority aside, too much economic and political pressure existed for Southerners to eradicate human bondage. Only as it became apparent that they would lose the war did they seriously consider enlisting blacks. Even then, few wanted immediate and wholesale emancipation.

For almost four years, the Confederacy prevented free and enslaved blacks from enlisting in the army or even bearing weapons. It had thousands of free blacks who it could have enlisted, but did not, and even turned away many who volunteered. In September 1861, a militia officer refused help from the Louisiana "colored" guards. He thanked them for their willingness to help and was "assured that they will be equally ready upon a more important occasion."⁹ Such occasions would arise in Louisiana and elsewhere, but Confederates did not want blacks, free or slave, in uniform. In March

⁸ Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 226-55.

⁹ Lt. Jonathan Devereaux to General J. L. Lewis, September 29, 1861, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 1, p. 625.

1862, the Louisiana governor called upon the free black population of the state, especially in New Orleans, to aid the Confederacy. He asked black people to defend their homes, property, and “Southern rights” from the Federals.¹⁰ The Confederacy enlisted some free blacks to fight, but after the Federals seized Louisiana, the Native Guards switched their allegiance. It is no wonder they did. They identified more with the politics of the Union than the Confederacy, the latter of which sought to keep millions of black people enslaved.

For most of the war, Confederate soldiers could not imagine black men fighting alongside them. Early in the conflict, a New York *Herald* article mistakenly wrote of “black” troops attacking Union men. Men in camp had a good laugh at the story. Their unwashed appearance apparently must have made them look darker than usual.¹¹ Humor aside, for white Confederates, the presence of black soldiers would have signified that slaves were too close to being their equal. As George Hundley recalled in his account of the battle of Manassas, a slave wanted to leave his job as a cook, grab a musket, and fight the Yankees. “Much to my regret,” he recalled, an officer stopped the man from doing so. To let him fight, he explained, would have made the slave an equal to the white man.

¹⁰ General Orders No. 426, Headquarters of Louisiana Militia, March 24, 1862, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 1, p. 1020; on the Native Guards, see James G. Hollandsworth, *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience during the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Lawrence Lee Hewitt, “An Ironic Route to Glory: Louisiana’s Native Guards at Port Hudson,” John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 78-106; Manoj K. Joshi and Joseph P. Reidy, “To Come Forward and Aid in Putting Down This Unholy Rebellion: The Officers of Louisiana’s Free Black Native Guard during the Civil War Era,” Martin H. Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh, eds., *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and the Civil War, Volume I: The Demise of Slavery* (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2000), 145-57.

¹¹ Donald E. Everett, ed., *Chaplain Davis and Hood’s Texas Brigade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999 [1962]), 62.

Hundley thought it ironic, since blacks did not fight for the South, but they later made laws for it during Reconstruction.¹²

Early in the war, an Alabama civilian, who worried about rebellious slaves, wrote to Jefferson Davis concerning the possibility of enlisting “Negroes.” He said that if men were not to be returned home to help families in need, then perhaps, “All the Negroe felers from 17 years oald up Ether fort them up or put them in the army and Make them fite like good fells.”¹³ In 1861, Jefferson Davis certainly was not about to enlist blacks. Most Confederates believed that white volunteers had enrolled in sufficient numbers so far. That July, however, another rebel wanted the army to enlist blacks as soon as possible. He was convinced that they were more than a match for “Lincoln hirelings,” and he thought little of the North’s claims of fighting for emancipation. The Confederacy, he believed, must show how the “true Southern cotton-patch negro loves [Yankees] in return.” Turner wrote that he had much knowledge of the “negro character.” Given his experience, he knew that white men could easily discipline blacks, who were “less trouble” than whites. Turner—long before others took up the enlistment issue—bent the proslavery argument to support his own views. It was a malleable enough ideology to reinforce any claims about the character of black people. If one disagreed with enrolling “Negroes,” it was because they were lazy and mentally inferior, which would make them poor soldiers. If they supported arming slaves, it was because blacks—as the proslavery

¹² General George Jefferson Hundley, “Beginning and the Ending: Reminiscences of the First and Last Days of War,” article from an unidentified Richmond newspaper, *George Hundley Reminiscences*, VHS’ although Hundley listed himself as a general, he apparently was not at the time of the Civil War. Neither Bruce Allardice nor Ezra Warner have included Hundley in their catalogue of Confederate generals; see Allardice, *More Generals in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959).

¹³ William H. Lee to Jefferson Davis, May 4, 1861, J. Matthew Gallman, ed., *The Civil War Chronicle* (New York: Crown, 2000), 61.

argument went—were easily disciplined, naturally loyal, and physically strong. Provided that blacks served under white officers, Turner supported their enlistment. The sooner the Confederacy recruited them, the quicker it would win the war. Several weeks later, Turner received a reply, which said that most blacks would no doubt “cheerfully” aid their masters in order to throw back the “fanatical invader.” Authorities, however, rejected Turner’s proposal. More than enough white troops had joined the army, and there were too few muskets to arm even them.¹⁴

As Yankees penetrated further into their territory, more Confederates wondered whether the South should adopt the enlistment of blacks. After the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson, General William Withers wrote to authorities in Richmond, saying that the only way to resist the enemy’s advance along the Mississippi River was “by the surplus slave labor of the South.” Otherwise, the Confederacy could not grow enough cotton. “If this plan of bringing to the aid of the Government the able-bodied slaves be adopted,” he went on to say, “immense results could be ... accomplished.” By bringing slaves into the army and furnishing them with “armaments,” they could be “converted into a powerful and reliable means of defense.” In the Mississippi Valley, he believed that slavery was losing its “patriarchal character.”¹⁵ Some rebels believed the South must change how it viewed its black population. In April 1862, the Confederate government was able to extend blacks equality in one aspect of military service—it said that regimental musicians would receive the same pay regardless of race.¹⁶ As the war progressed, however, it

¹⁴ W. S. Turner to Walker, July 17, 1861, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 1, p. 482 (first quotation); A. T. Bledsoe to Turner, August 2, 1861, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 1, p. 529 (second quotation).

¹⁵ General William T. Withers to John Perkins, *et al.*, February 28, 1862, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, pp. 278-79.

¹⁶ Law approved by Congress, April 15, 1862, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 1, p. 1059.

became apparent that the Confederacy would have to go further than such token measures.

Colonel William C. Oates, who served in the Army of Northern Virginia, claimed Confederates were right to fear emancipation. Yet, as early as 1863, he supported the enlistment of blacks. “It required all the pounding, beating, mangling, and killing of [1864],” he said, “to get ... Mr. Davis and the autocratic collection of dolts called the Confederate Congress ... to pass the impressment law for negro laborers.” He called politicians not only “dolts,” but “Bourbon incapables.”¹⁷ Whatever insults he used, Oates was in error, for the government had legalized slave impressments in 1863. He nevertheless believed the Confederacy should have gone further and armed blacks earlier in the conflict. A subtitle of Oates’ reminiscences, after all, referred to the war’s “lost opportunities.” He believed the government should have met the Emancipation Proclamation with a counterblow: fight abolition with abolition.

It was easy, at the turn of the century, for Oates to blame politicians for losing the war, just as it was to lambaste a single commander for the Confederacy’s defeat at Gettysburg. But Oates did not criticize politicians alone. He also said James Longstreet rejected the idea of enlisting blacks, “as he did ... everything which did not originate with him.”¹⁸ Men in the Second and Third Corps in the Army of Northern Virginia, Oates wrote, were more enthusiastic. He thought delay, however, frittered away a chance to acquire a powerful ally of the rebel armies. Oates was willing to go further than other Confederates on the subject of arming the slaves. He remembered his Alabama Congressman was not sympathetic. He thought slaves would not fight and desert to the

¹⁷ William C. Oates, *The War between the Union and the Confederacy* (New York: Neale, 1905), 499 (first quotation), 500 (second quotation).

¹⁸ Oates, *War between the Union and the Confederacy*, 500.

enemy at the first opportunity. Oates agreed, provided the South did not free its slaves in some form. He suggested the Confederacy should have liberated those who received an honorable discharge, given them a land bounty, and offered gradual emancipation for their wives and children. He thought his plan would have gained friends in the Border States, though it would have proven less popular in the Deep South. In any case, had the Confederacy enlisted black troops early on, he believed it would have won the war.¹⁹

Oates was passionate in his belief that blacks should have fought in large numbers. But his belief was not free of prejudice. “The enlistment of negroes would have spared the lives of many white men,” he said.²⁰ Any suggestion that slaves would have provided cannon fodder for the rebel armies most likely would not have encouraged potential black recruits. Oates reasoned, nevertheless, that the Confederacy had its priorities backward: white men were dying for slaves rather than vice versa. As grounded as his ideas were in white supremacy, he thought black troops would have terrorized the North, undermined abolitionists, and increased the chance of European recognition. With 50,000 black soldiers, he believed, Robert E. Lee would easily have defeated General Meade at Gettysburg. Oates was convinced that wartime events showed that slavery had outlived its purpose. “The young men and women, children of large slave-owners,” he wrote, “were growing inert physically and indolent by luxuriant living, which, when long continued, always stimulates pride, but impairs industrial activity and progress in the race of life.”²¹ The master class might have disagreed with his claim that planter families had become decadent, but he was clear in his belief that the Confederate cause was more important than maintaining slavery.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 503.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 503.

²¹ *Ibid*, 505.

The enlistment of blacks was not just wise Confederate policy, Oates believed, for it had a foundation in the culture of slavery itself. Southerners, he was convinced, understood black people. As he wrote, “the bonds of friendship between white boys and negroes were strong.” If “Negroes” had fought, it would have strengthened that relationship. Why should blacks fight for strange Northerners, he reasoned, who shared none of the ties that bound white and black Southerners? Oates remembered consulting with General Richard Ewell, who agreed with him, saying, “Captain, I think that you are right ... the need of additional troops will bring us to [the enlistment of blacks] later.”²² In July 1862, in the wake of the Confederate success at the Seven Days battles, Ewell indeed had written to his wife about the possibility of using black Confederate troops. “The Yankees are fighting low foreigners against the best of our people,” he wrote, “whereas were we to fight our Negroes [against them] they would be a fair offset.”²³ As low an opinion as some Southerners had of black workers, they thought that even slaves were superior to Northerners. Ewell’s positive appraisal of blacks, however, might have had more to do with rebel optimism following the Army of Northern Virginia’s success in the summer of 1862 than a true reflection of soldier’s views of blacks’ fighting abilities.

By 1863, however, other Confederates were also changing their minds about whether or not the rebels should keep its fighting ranks all white. That August, the Alabama legislature submitted to the Confederate Congress a proposal for using slaves more actively in the military. The General Assembly was vague about what blacks would do in the service as well as how many of them the army should use. It only referred to a

²² Oates, *War between the Union and the Confederacy*, 497.

²³ Richard to Elizabeth Ewell, July 20, 1862, Percy Gatling Hamlin, ed., *The Making of a Soldier: Letters of General R. S. Ewell* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1935), 113.

“certain percentage” of male slaves that would perform “such services as Congress may by law direct.”²⁴ In light of the Union’s use of black troops, Alabamans believed the South must utilize its black population; otherwise, they would watch blacks flee to the Yankees. Since the Confederacy already used blacks on fortifications and as camp servants, Alabamans tactfully asked that the government allow them to take up arms. Such a proposal, however worded, was too drastic a step for the South to take. And by the summer of 1863, Alabama’s resolution reflected more the increasing vulnerability of the rebel military than it did a change in Southern racial views.

Even so, the issue would not go away. “This is one of the weightiest questions that has been brought forth since the beginning of this revolution,” said one soldier in December 1863 about the enlistment of blacks. “It will make or ruin the South.” It would end the conflict sooner or lead to even greater bloodshed.²⁵ By the end of 1863, most Confederate soldiers were probably not enthusiastic about the use of black troops, though that does not mean most were opposed to it outright. As 1863 became 1864, some were convinced that the South would face defeat if it did not do something drastic. One officer wrote in December 1863 that he hoped the Confederate Congress would put the South’s “fine negroes” into the army. He was unenthusiastic about such a plan, but believed the Confederacy had no choice given its numerical disadvantage. Enlisting blacks, he reasoned, was the only way the rebels could maintain parity in the prisoner exchange.²⁶ His ideas were based more on the state of the war effort than ideological commitment to

²⁴ Resolution passed by the Alabama legislature, August 29, 1863, Gallman, ed., *Civil War Chronicle*, 352.

²⁵ Diary entry for December 28, 1863, Wirt Armistead Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers The Campaign Diaries of Thomas J. Key, CSA, December 17, 1863-May 17, 1865 and Robert J. Campbell, USA, January 1, 1864-July 21, 1864* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), 17-18.

²⁶ Lt. Col. Caleb Hobson to Dr. B. Dozier, December 12, 1863, Allen Paul Speer, ed., *Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Asbury Speer* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1997), 182.

emancipation and black equality. Yet, his views show that soldiers would prove the most essential players in the enlistment controversy, for they were the ones who would have to arm, train, and fight alongside black troops.

General Patrick Cleburne, an Irish-born non-slaveholder, was the first prominent Confederate soldier to write an extensive proposal for his superior officers, Jefferson Davis, and Congress that suggested emancipating and enlisting slaves. By 1864, Cleburne did not have a sanguine view of the war effort. He did not blame specific individuals, but he clearly believed the South suffered from a lack of imagination and initiative at the higher levels of government. The Confederacy needed to do something about the “Negro” question. By enlisting blacks, Cleburne believed, slaves would spy no more for Federals, and fears of insurrection would end. The South should free some blacks so that they could wage war for the Confederacy.²⁷ Slavery, Cleburne believed, had helped the South earlier in the conflict, but now proved a liability. By 1864, he noted, the North had 100,000 black men in its armies, and Europe had failed to ally with the Confederacy because of inflated stories about the evils of the peculiar institution. In his view, the Yankees clearly had used racial propaganda to their advantage. The South, then, must strike at slavery, too. Cleburne argued that freeing the slaves might help the cause, but to free them and give them muskets would prove better. He thought his plan might even lead to European recognition. At the very least, black men could perform tasks that whites presently were doing in the army, such as cooking, nursing, and driving wagons.²⁸

True to the Revolutionary tradition, Cleburne stressed that the South must take drastic measures in order to avoid “subjugation.” In addition to putting blacks into the

²⁷ Cleburne’s proposal submitted January 2, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, pp. 586-87.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 587.

army, he believed the Confederacy should revise its substitution and exemption laws. As with Jefferson Davis, Cleburne put independence before maintaining slavery. Employing blacks as soldiers was one of the sacrifices Confederates must make if they were to avoid becoming slaves themselves. If the North were to win—and it seemed likely given the way the war was going—it would turn the South into a school for Yankee ways. Slaves, he wrote, were already a “secret police” for Northern forces.²⁹ The Confederacy wasted resources by using valuable white men to guard slaveholding areas. Servants and laborers who needed heavy supervision were of little value to Confederates, but they were invaluable to the Yankees. Better to free the slaves, Cleburne thought, than let them fall into enemy hands. He wanted to remove all the “vulnerability,” “embarrassment,” and inherent “weakness” which resulted from slavery.³⁰

Cleburne’s proposal was a military, not a moral measure. It did not express revulsion at the peculiar institution. The general sought to free slaves in order to fill Confederate ranks, not because he thought human bondage was wrong. The enlistment of blacks, he said, would “enable us to take the offensive, move forward, and forage on the enemy.”³¹ In a year that would see the worst fighting of the war, Cleburne wanted blacks to help the rebels bring the battle to the North. Much of his plan suggested that he wanted immediate and total emancipation. Rather, he wanted to reform slavery, not end it. He suggested the Confederacy first make some changes in the institution, including the legalization of slave marriages and the end of the slave trade. Cleburne, who paid lip service to decrying Northern fanaticism—from John Brown to Henry Ward Beecher—was not an abolitionist. He did not want the Confederacy to free its slaves overnight.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 587

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 590.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 590.

Cleburne, in effect, wanted a Southern brand of abolition: liberate the slaves without their being truly free, without the trappings of free love and black equality.

His views had Jeffersonian overtones. He claimed that white Southerners, who understood blacks, were best at controlling them. He wanted freedom upon “reasonable terms, and within such reasonable time as will prepare both races for the change.”³² At the earliest, emancipation would not come until after the war. “Satisfy the negro that if he faithfully adheres to our standard during the war he shall receive his freedom and that of his race,” he wrote. Most slaves would remain on the farm and plantation while others did the fighting. “Leave some of the skill at home and take some of the muscle to fight with,” he wrote.³³

Could slaves fight? Cleburne had to reach back to ancient times for an example; he looked to those who had fought under the Spartans as proof that they could.³⁴ Whether black slaves would have enthusiastically fought for the Confederacy, however, is open to question. The historian William Freehling thinks they would have, but he also thinks black disloyalty contributed much to the South’s defeat. Even so, he argues that blacks would have embraced military service had white rebels given them the chance. “Under the Cleburne proposal,” Freehling writes, “Confederate recruiters, pressing the only opportunity in town, would have offered slaves quite an inducement: freedom not only for husbands but also for wives and children.”³⁵ Freehling seemingly wants it both ways. As slaves, blacks undermined the Confederacy, but as free black fighters, they apparently would have embraced the cause. Could whites have convinced slaves that their fighting

³² *Ibid*, p. 591.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 591.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 591.

³⁵ Freehling, *South vs. the South*, 195.

would help win the war? And would they have been able to arm and train them in time to do so? Many black people no doubt loved the South, but they were more sympathetic toward the Federals than the Confederacy. For the most part, they could not express enthusiasm for a nation that had kept them in bondage, even had it freed them as a condition of military service. As one Confederate soldier observed, black Union soldiers and slaves sometimes fraternized, while the rebels looked on. After slaves and black Yankees spent a night drinking, one Confederate soldier's servants "got so drunk that they were good for nothing next day!"³⁶

Whether or not black Southerners would have enthusiastically fought for the Confederacy is open to speculation. In any case, Cleburne believed that abolition would surely come if the South lost the war. The Confederacy, therefore, had to maintain control over its institutions, which meant striking at its strongest and weakest: slavery. In Cleburne's eyes, it was strong in what it had done for the South for generations, weak in what it was doing to it now. If politicians were worried about the legality of his plan, Cleburne said emancipation was constitutional, for slaves were allowed to act in the service of their state. He was convinced that slaves could make good soldiers, and he was willing to lead them himself. Although Cleburne's scheme did not advocate immediate emancipation, it certainly would have proved faster than most Southerners wanted to go on the slavery issue.

Cleburne's superiors in the Army of Tennessee, some of whom were planters, were divided over whether to implement his plan. Generals William J. Hardee and Joseph E. Johnston gave slight approval to it. Johnston, mostly as an afterthought, submitted the

³⁶ E. W. Williams, ed., *With the Border Ruffians: Memoirs of the Far West, 1852-1868* by Robert Hamilton Williams (Toronto: Musson Books, 1919), 449.

proposal to Jefferson Davis. In contrast to Johnston, others were not as ambivalent. They were appalled at the idea of arming slaves, and their vehement opposition won out. For them, Cleburne's ideas were antithetical to the Confederate cause. On January 14, 1864, Patton Anderson wrote to General Leonidas Polk, saying he believed Cleburne's plan "monstrous." If the Confederacy enacted the measure, he thought every man would desert the army. The military, therefore, must reject it for the sake of morale. Before Anderson left for Florida to be with his family, he urged Polk to quash Cleburne's proposal. He said Polk was a man of "clear head, ripe judgment, and pure patriotism," suggesting that Cleburne and his supporters lacked such qualities.³⁷ Anderson did not need Polk's advice. Commanders in the Army of Tennessee were determined to kill the proposal before common soldiers or civilians heard of it. Yet, General William T. Walker was so incensed that he wanted the president to know about it. Walker believed enlisting blacks "would ruin the efficacy of our Army and involve our cause in ruin and disgrace," and he wanted Jefferson Davis to see Cleburne's document.³⁸ No doubt he assumed that Davis—who later proved in the forefront of the supporters of black enlistment—would express equal revulsion at the proposal.

Although his superiors had no intention of reprimanding him, once his ideas became known, Cleburne became very nervous about his future. He hoped that if the army court-martialed him, he could enlist in his old regiment, the 15th Arkansas. As it turned out, the Davis administration had no intention of executing Cleburne's plan, but it did not censure him either. By late January 1864, the Secretary of War, James Seddon, had decided upon the matter. Men in the Army of Tennessee were not to speak of

³⁷ Patton Anderson to Polk, January 14, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 51, Pt. 2, pp. 598-99.

³⁸ Walker to Davis, January 12, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, p. 595.

Cleburne's proposal again. It proved too controversial, and Secretary Seddon made it clear to Joseph E. Johnston that he spoke for Jefferson Davis.³⁹ Johnston in turn wrote to eight of his generals, including William Hardee and Cleburne, to say that enlisting blacks was impossible. He then reassured the Secretary of War that the subject was dead. Cleburne's proposal, he said, had made no "impression" in the army.⁴⁰ It had indeed left an impression—a very unsettling one. Influential Confederates were shocked at the idea that they could not win the war without the help of black troops.

The Confederacy rejected Cleburne's radical plan, but the idea had later importance. In January 1864, Colonel A. S. Colyar, a Tennessee member of the Confederate Congress, disagreed with Cleburne's dour view of the rebel war effort and the need to arm slaves—a proposition he said would overwhelm Cleburne in "ruin." But he believed the general's ideas had validity. Colyar did not think freed slaves would willingly fight for the South, nevertheless, he saw that the Confederacy was headed toward a "crisis," which was giving rise to surprising new strategies. Freeing some slaves might make blacks easier to control and give them an incentive to remain as laborers in the South.⁴¹

At the time it was issued, Cleburne's proposal had more symbolic than practical importance. Authorities quickly suppressed it, and Cleburne died at the November 30, 1864 battle of Franklin, before the South enlisted black troops. But after Cleburne's death

³⁹ See Johnston's circular to Generals Hardee, Cheatham, Hindman, Cleburne, Stewart, Walker, and Brigadier-Generals Bate and P. Anderson, January 31, 1864, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 52, Pt. 2, p. 608; see also, Johnston's letter to Seddon, February 2, 1864, *ibid*, pp. 608-09.

⁴⁰ Johnston to Seddon, February 2, 1864, quoted in Bromfield L. Ridley, *Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee* (Mexico, MO: Missouri Printing and Publishing, 1906), 293.

⁴¹ Colyar to Colonel Albert S. Marks, January 30, 1864, quoted in Thomas Robson Hay, ed., *Cleburne and his Command* by Captain Irving Buck (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 46. After the war, J. P. Young, who had served in Forrest's cavalry, said few men had supported the enlistment of blacks. Even so, he thought it had little to do with why Cleburne—considered the "Stonewall Jackson" of the West—was not promoted to lieutenant general, see *ibid*, 53.

and Lee's surrender, some veterans asserted they had always been hopeful about blacks' fighting abilities. Cleburne's proposal made sense to veterans re-fighting the conflict in print. William Hardee, who had supported the plan in 1864, asserted that Southerners unfortunately recruited blacks only when "it was too late."⁴² In his memoirs, John Bell Hood, who ordered the charge at Franklin, Tennessee, that killed Cleburne, said the Arkansas general had the "boldness and the wisdom" to propose arming the slaves. Had the Confederacy adopted his plan, Hood believed, it would have gained its independence.⁴³ At the time Hood wrote, the racial climate in America had not changed much. Men who had fought to keep blacks enslaved mostly did not become their friends after the war. In their post-war writings, few Confederate veterans thought of Cleburne when they considered where the war had gone wrong. They focused instead on the battle of Gettysburg and various command decisions. Hood and others, however, at least dwelled on what slaves might have done to stave off Confederate defeat.

Still, it was easy after 1865 to imagine how the South's fortunes could have gone differently. Some veterans believed that "Stonewall" Jackson surely would have whipped the Yankees at Gettysburg, and others thought that Cleburne's proposal would have swelled muster rolls, which would have enabled black and white Confederates to march side-by-side to victory. At least one former soldier, who served in the Army of the Tennessee, knew why Southerners had hesitated to enlist slaves. "The slave holders were very sensitive," he wrote, and "totally unprepared to consider such a radical measure."⁴⁴

⁴² General W. J. Hardee, "Sketch of Major-General Patrick R. Cleburne," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 31 (1903), p. 157; on another veteran's support of the arming of black troops, see John A. Simpson, ed., *Reminiscences of the 41st Tennessee: The Civil War in the West*, by Sumner A. Cunningham (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 2001), 130.

⁴³ John Bell Hood, *Advance and Retreat: Personal Experiences in the United States and Confederate States Armies* (New Orleans: Hood Orphan Memorial Fund, 1880), 296.

⁴⁴ Irving Buck, "Negroes in Our Army," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 31 (1903), pp. 215-16.

In January 1864, the Confederacy could not take the drastic steps Cleburne advocated. Rebels feared that abolitionists wanted to institute legal equality and promote racial amalgamation. Even late into the war, most Southerners rejected any interference with slavery. Their hesitancy to move against the institution in any fundamental way had remained consistent since America's founding.

Wartime was the last chance Southerners had to save slavery, and even early in 1865, they resisted reform, which they believed would only hasten the miseries they were sure would follow emancipation. Resistance to change was not only ideologically grounded, it also had an element of defiance—or perhaps more accurately, spitefulness. For many Confederate soldiers, to acquiesce to emancipation was to concede defeat. Even into 1865, many Southerners refused to accept an impending Federal victory.⁴⁵ In essence, they thought that freeing blacks would show that the North had been right about slavery all along. In December 1863, one soldier best summarized Confederate views of the war. In his eyes, the rebels wanted independence and were willing to “sacrifice everything” to obtain it. Everything, that is, except slavery, an institution that Confederates saw as a “wise one and sanctioned by God.” He thought that Southerners should pause before divorcing themselves from an institution that Providence had sanctioned.⁴⁶

Proslavery ideology, therefore, proved the greatest obstacle to enlisting blacks. As Howell Cobb noted, how could the Confederacy make soldiers of men reared as slaves and racial inferiors? Cleburne's proposal proved controversial not only because it would

⁴⁵ See Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); George Rable, “Despair, Hope, Delusion”: The Collapse of Confederate Morale Reexamined,” in Mark Grimsley and Brooks D. Simpson, eds., *The Collapse of the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 129-67.

⁴⁶ Diary entry for December 30, 1863, Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers*, 19.

have given rifles to blacks—who many Southerners believed were untrustworthy—but because of its implicit insult to white manhood. In rebel eyes, the conscription of slaves meant that white men could not win the war themselves. Even late into the struggle, Confederates wanted the war to remain a white man’s fight. “Many of us felt that if we could not win without the negroes, we could not win with them,” one Virginia cavalryman remembered. Nor did he see how the Confederacy could have overcome the logistical problems inherent in arming and feeding thousands of black troops while whites were starving. “Impressed by these views the vote of the army was against it,” he concluded.⁴⁷

The enlistment of blacks, therefore, faced logistical as well as ideological obstacles. Cleburne believed the South could have put 300,000 black men under arms, but even the Union did not enlist that many blacks during the war. That the Confederacy could have enrolled such a number—black or white—would have proven a considerable achievement in 1864 or 1865. Furthermore, service in the army would have stripped slaves from other work projects, which were often as important as the fighting. As with the impressment controversy, the question of how to use slaves in the army always conflicted with Confederate manpower shortages. Proslavery and states rights ideology aside, masters would have proven resistant to the army taking their slaves. Their opposition would have proven a logical response to the effect that enlisting blacks would have had on their investment in human beings. The enrolling of 300,000 slaves would have put even greater stress on an already suffering master class.

⁴⁷ Mason Graham Ellzey, “The Cause We Lost and the Land We Love,” [typescript], pp. 64-65, VHS; on those opposed to the measure, including General Osmund Latrobe, James Longstreet, a soldier in the 6th Texas, troops in the Jordan Battery, and the 3rd Virginia Cavalry, see Durden, *Gray and the Black*, 217-18, 223.

Whether its soldiers were black or white, the Confederacy faced the problem of having too few men to work at home and serve at the front lines. Had the South conscripted slaves for combat duty, it would have aroused even more grumbling from planters than the impressment issue did. Confederates were aware of the possible problems that drafting slaves would have caused among planters. Thus, no one advocated the conscription of blacks. Instead, Southerners hoped enough masters would consent to their slaves volunteering for the military. In any case, estimates of the number of blacks the Confederacy could have enlisted were pure guesswork. Cleburne and others would have been pleased to see a fraction of 300,000 enrolled. Whether the adoption of Cleburne's measure would have changed the war in any significant way is impossible to assess. To imagine large numbers of black Confederate troops helping win the war contains two nonfactual statements: blacks never served in large numbers and the Confederacy did not win the war.

In January 1864, few Southerners admitted the military situation was as dire as Cleburne described it. In the course of the year, however, they moved closer to arming blacks. In February, Congress authorized the use of free and enslaved black workers as teamsters and cooks in the army. The military had been using them for some time, but now the Confederacy could draft up to 20,000 to perform various duties. In February 1864, the South stopped short of an outright draft of black men. But by late 1864, the idea of enlisting them gained more support.⁴⁸ In October 1864, a soldier on Longstreet's staff worried about the lack of new soldiers coming into the army. He wanted slaves to fill as many positions as possible, and if necessary, wanted them put into uniform—to “fight

⁴⁸ On discussion of black enrollment in this period, see entry for November 7, 1864, “Diary of Captain Edward Crenshaw of the Confederate States Army,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer 1940), p. 228.

negro with negro,” as he put it. He believed blacks had more reason to fight for the South than for the Yankees, and it was better for the Confederacy to emancipate its slaves than endure subjugation at the hands of the Federals.⁴⁹

By November, the South had suffered serious military defeats and the North had reelected Abraham Lincoln. The rebellion faced a conundrum: the enlistment of blacks had greatest support when it could do the least good, that is, when the South was at its weakest. For Confederates, the more victories white men won, the less sense it made to enlist the help of slaves. The prospect of black soldiers, therefore, proved appealing only when white soldiers had already lost the war. Jefferson Davis, nevertheless, in a November 7, 1864 speech, advocated using greater numbers of black men in the army. He stopped short, however, of giving them rifles. He believed the Confederacy should do so only when the white population was overwhelmed (which, arguably, had already happened).⁵⁰ Thus, regarding slavery, a metaphor familiar to Southerners again proved true: citizens could not tear down the old meetinghouse until a new one was built on the same spot. They obviously could not build the new one as long as the old one stood. In other words, the Confederacy would emancipate its slaves only when the North had already done it. Had the South effectively wanted to use black troops, it should have recruited them at least as early as the United States did. But in 1863, the Confederacy was too busy denouncing the Emancipation Proclamation, or ignoring its impact, to consider arming its slaves.

⁴⁹ Thomas J. Goree to Mary Frances Goree Kittrell, October 21, 1864, Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 137.

⁵⁰ Davis to Congress, November 7, 1864, Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers and Speeches*, Vol. 6 (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1923), 394-97.

By November 1864, the Confederacy faced the prospect of at least four more years of “Black Republican” rule unless it did something drastic. With defeat more real than ever, slavery seemed no longer viable, though that did not make it unimportant. Many areas of the South were still free of Federal occupation. Even so, for many rebels, holding onto slavery meant losing the Confederacy. “There will be many changes in the country in its people and its institutions,” Captain E. John Ellis predicted in December 1864. “Slavery I think will be abolished,” he said, “and I for one won’t care a particle.” Not only did he not care, he saw abolition as advantageous. The previous year, however, he had been less enthusiastic about emancipation. The Union, he then had written, had “placed arms in the hands of our slaves and incited them to excess. We owe them only hatred!”⁵¹ What had caused such a change in Ellis? By December 1864, he must have seen the difficulty the South would face in its upcoming campaigns. He saw that for Confederates, it was better to determine slavery’s future than have the Federals do it for them. Rebels did not like abolitionists of any kind, but they could perhaps institute their own brand of emancipation if it would aid the war effort.

As the end of the war loomed, it became easier for rebels to accept any measure to stave off defeat. One soldier spoke of his men’s desire that the Confederacy should enlist between 200,000 and 500,000 blacks. “I can but question the expediency of such a move,” he said in December 1864. “Of the propriety,” he added, “I have no doubt.” Supporters of the enlistment of blacks, he noted, included General Lee and the Richmond papers.⁵² It was ironic that the enlistment of slaves became the last great hope for the

⁵¹ John Ellis to father, December 27, 1864 (first quotation); John Ellis to mother, June 26, 1863 (second quotation), [typescripts], E. P. Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC.

⁵² C. W. Trueheart to father, December 31, 1864, Edward B. Williams, ed., *Rebel Brothers: The Civil War Letters of the Truehearts* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1995), 135; on General St. John

Confederacy. By late January 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment had freed them, but rebels still carried on as if they had control over the pace of emancipation.

Confederates divided into two camps. Generals such as Beauregard, Longstreet, and James Patton Anderson opposed the enlistment of blacks. But the idea had supporters among General John B. Gordon, Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin, and Jefferson Davis.⁵³ Henry Watkins Allen, former general and governor of Confederate-held Louisiana, supported the enlisting of blacks, as did the Richmond *Enquirer*, Lynchburg *Virginian*, and Mobile *Register*.⁵⁴ In January 1865, one rebel wrote in his prison diary about some of the Richmond papers advocating emancipation. He agreed with them. Slavery, he believed, “must fall, and the sooner, the better for us.”⁵⁵

In January 1865, in a letter to Congressman Andrew Hunter, Robert E. Lee gave his support to the enlistment of blacks. He believed the master-slave relationship was the best that existed between the races. Nevertheless, events had severely weakened it. Given the disparity in numbers between the Union and Confederacy, now was the time for the South to take control of slavery or become slaves to the Yankees. “Long habits of obedience and subordination,” Lee wrote, “coupled with the moral influence which in our country the white man possesses over the black, furnish an excellent foundation for that discipline which is the best guaranty of military efficiency.” As the Confederacy had sought throughout the war, but which had never fully achieved, Lee wanted to secure black people’s “fidelity.” To win their trust, he believed the Confederacy should free the

Liddell’s support for emancipation, see Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, ed., *Liddell’s Record* by St. John Richardson Liddell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997 [1985]), 192.

⁵³ Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom*, 278; Charles H. Wesley, “The Employment of Negroes as Soldiers in the Confederate Army,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (July 1919), p. 248.

⁵⁴ See Durden, *Gray and the Black*, 74-142.

⁵⁵ Entry for January 8, 1865, Mattie Lou Teague Crow, ed., *Diary of a Confederate Soldier*, John Washington Inzer (Huntsville, AL: Strode Publishers, 1977), 119.

families of black soldiers who fought honorably. If slaves did not win their freedom before they entered the military, Lee thought they would desert to the enemy. The South, therefore, could not delay. Lee believed gradual or immediate emancipation schemes “immaterial,” for if the Confederacy did not do something quickly, the North would liberate its slaves anyway.⁵⁶

As Lee’s words show, the enlistment debate sheds light on the South’s conflicted, even paradoxical, perception of black people. White Southerners could argue for or against black recruitment by emphasizing stereotypical characteristics in the “Negro’s” nature. Some whites thought the army should not put slaves into uniform because they might revolt. Such fears, however, were undermined by the belief in the “loyal darkie.” As Dick Taylor wrote after the war, “[White men’s] wives and little ones remained safe at home, surrounded by thousands of faithful slaves, who worked quietly in the fields.” In Taylor’s view, the serenity of the home front proved that masters were kind and slaves contented. Blacks would have fought for the Confederacy, he argued, because they were fighting for their homeland.⁵⁷ Taylor, as with many of his comrades, did not think Confederates waged war for slavery. And since they did not, he believed blacks would fight for the rebellion.

In January 1865, John Tyler, Jr., who had accompanied Lee’s staff during the Wilderness campaign, wrote to General Sterling Price about the practicality of enlisting blacks. Robert E. Lee, he noted, supported the measure, and from a constitutional point of view, Tyler suggested, it was permissible, since the Confederacy had already impressed black laborers into the army. Slavery had been a state issue, but the rebel government had

⁵⁶ Lee to Hon. Andrew Hunter, January 11, 1865, *OR*, Series 4, Vol. 3, pp. 1012-13.

⁵⁷ Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1955 [1879]), 257.

shown that when it came to military matters, the states were subservient to national authority. As with President Davis, however, Tyler thought differently from his fellow Southerners, who could not imagine a Confederacy without the peculiar institution. “The time has come,” he wrote, “to decide our fate, and everything should be done and surrendered to the cause.” Jefferson Davis might have written those words, and in a precise summation of Southern political thinking, Tyler added, “Life, property, and honor are all lost by submission as fully as by subjugation.”⁵⁸ In his sentence was two-thirds of the Lockean triad of life, liberty, and property. Southerners had not forgotten Thomas Jefferson, who had drawn on Locke in writing the Declaration of Independence. Added to Tyler’s Jeffersonian lament was the antebellum fear of Southerners becoming slaves to Northern interests. Still more was a Jefferson Davis-like appeal to the idea that independence trumped the politics of slavery.

By 1865, it seemed the South was about to lose its bid for nationhood and the peculiar institution. The Confederacy’s military and diplomatic situation was growing ever worse. In January, in secret, the Davis administration sent Duncan Kenner of Louisiana to Europe in a last effort to win foreign recognition for the Confederacy on the condition of emancipation. The mission failed. That same month, the Federals captured Wilmington, North Carolina, a lifeline for supplying Lee’s army, which was stymied outside Petersburg. In February, Confederate officials met with Lincoln and Secretary Seward at a conference at Hampton Roads, Virginia, to discuss a possible ceasefire. The North and South, however, were unable to negotiate a peace.⁵⁹ The war continued.

⁵⁸ Tyler to Sterling Price, January 23, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Pt. 1, p. 1342.

⁵⁹ Durden, *Gray and the Black*, 143-86.

At Hampton Roads, the Davis government proved unwilling to emancipate the slaves or stop the war, though they were more flexible on the former than the latter, and Confederate minds were changing along with the Administration. In January, Chaplain Charles Quintard spoke with citizens about the enlistment of black troops. One man said all his wealth was in slaves, but he would emancipate them if it meant Confederate independence.⁶⁰ Elsewhere, a Louisiana soldier was against the idea of abolishing slavery, but he felt it preferable to reunion with “vile Yankees.”⁶¹ That same month, Kirby Smith wrote to John Slidell, who was living out the war in Paris, to say that the situation in his theater of combat had “reached a crisis.” He believed that nineteen out of twenty planters favored gradual emancipation were it predicated on Southern independence.⁶² Confederates were about to lose their slaves regardless. Offering to sacrifice them in exchange for independence was an extremely desperate measure—and for Northerners, at least, meaningless as long as the rebellion continued.

Although Congress eventually passed a bill that allowed for the enlistment of blacks, much opposition to it still existed. Some troops simply found the idea of fighting alongside “niggers” repellant. In January 1865, Grant Taylor heard his officers were in favor of the controversial measure. He could not, however, bear the idea of fighting with the “stinking things,” and believed his men agreed with him. They would go home rather than fight alongside blacks. “To think we have been fighting four years to prevent the slaves from being freed,” he lamented. Now he and his men would have to “turn round

⁶⁰ On mention of black baptism, see entry for January 4, 1865 (p. 211); on mention of emancipation, see entry for January 26, 1865 (p. 222), Sam Davis Elliott, ed., *Doctor Quintard, Chaplain CSA and Second Bishop of Tennessee: The Memoir and Civil War Diary of Charles Todd Quintard* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

⁶¹ Entry for January 22, 1865, Edwin C. Bearss, ed., *A Louisiana Confederate: Diary of Felix Pierre Poche* (Natchitoches: Louisiana Studies Institute, Northwestern State University, 1972), 208.

⁶² E. Kirby Smith to John Slidell, January 9, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 48, Pt. 1, pp. 1319-20.

and free them to enable us to carry on the war. The thing is outrageous.” In his view, the Confederacy should instead surrender—the cause obviously was lost. For him, it was a blow to a white man’s pride to think, as Taylor did, that he needed the help of “the nigger” to save his country.⁶³

Most Confederate soldiers had internalized the proslavery argument. They rejected the notion that blacks were capable of things other than performing menial tasks. For many, the idea of enlisting blacks turned the antebellum social order upside down, and they believed it could only undermine morale. Such troops were fighting to preserve slavery. For them, to put blacks into the army would move them closer to racial equality, even if the South did not emancipate slaves as a condition of service. To give servants a powerful and dramatic way to serve the Confederacy broke down a barrier that existed between the races. Southern whites needed such barriers. Had blacks served in great numbers, Confederates would no doubt have maintained the racial hierarchy as much as possible, but opponents of black enlistment believed it would have made their armies too much like dreaded Northern ones.

“I will stay ... until the war ends or they kill me,” vowed a soldier to his wife in January 1865, but he had no delusion as to where the rebel war effort was going. “I think the best thing we can do is to go back into the Union,” he said. “The Negroes are certain

⁶³ Grant Taylor to wife and children, January 11, 1865, Ann K. Blomquist and Robert A. Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War: The Civil War Letters of Grant and Malinda Taylor 1862-1865* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2000), 323 (quoted); on a similar opinion—that black freedom meant a betrayal of the cause—see entry for April 8, 1865, Michael E. Banasik, ed., *Unwritten Chapters of the Civil War West of the River, Volume III, Serving with Honor: The Diary of Captain Eathan Allen Pinnell of the Eighth Missouri Infantry (Confederate)* (Iowa City, IA: Camp Pope Bookshop, 1998), 214-15; on not wanting to fight with blacks, see Benjamin Freeman to father, mother, and sister, March 15, 1865, Stuart T. Wright, ed., *The Confederate Letters of Benjamin H. Freeman* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1974), 61.

to be set free.”⁶⁴ Confederates accepted emancipation only with impending defeat. But not all soldiers believed abolition inevitable. Men such as Howell Cobb were hesitant about enlisting “Negroes” because they thought they could still win the war and preserve slavery. Others resisted the enlistment of blacks because they could not trust slaves. Slaves’ behavior in wartime had undermined many Confederates’ belief in the loyalty of black people. The only shelter or property slaves had, one soldier asserted in February 1865, was “obtained by indiscriminate plunder and murder.”⁶⁵ The proslavery argument made it difficult for many Confederates to think blacks could effectively serve as soldiers.

In February 1865, one rebel wrote of some “*bloody* resolutions,” in Congress, among them the proposed bill for putting slaves into uniform.⁶⁶ Many troops were content to let the Confederacy go the way of human bondage. Richard Maury, once a colonel in the 24th Virginia, wounded earlier in the war and living out the conflict in Richmond, best summarized Confederates’ views of enlisting blacks. In late February 1865, he said the possibility of slaves entering the army was a “*bitter pill*” to swallow. He found emancipation in any form unacceptable. The next day, he wrote of a letter by men in the 15th Alabama—published in the Richmond *Enquirer*—that supported Robert E. Lee’s decision to enlist blacks. Support for the measure had “increased very rapidly lately.” Maury understood that whatever Lee wanted, he should get. He conceded that

⁶⁴ J. H. Jenkins to wife, January 21, 1865, Mills Lane, ed., “*Dear Mother: Don’t grieve about me. If I get killed, I’ll only be dead*”: *Letters from Georgia Soldiers in the Civil War* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1990), 341.

⁶⁵ Resolution of Colonel Thomas Munford, adopted by the 2nd Virginia Cavalry Regiment, February 28, 1865, *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 16 (1888), pp. 355-56.

⁶⁶ Entry for February 19, 1865, William Pitt Chambers, “My Journal: The Story of a Soldier’s Life Told by Himself,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Centenary Series*, Vol. 5 (1925), p. 362.

Lee was probably right, yet, he added, “Dont free the negroes.”⁶⁷ For generations, Southerners had always wanted to wait a bit longer before emancipation took effect. Even as the Confederacy crumbled, such attitudes persisted.

In Southern minds, when discussing gradual emancipation, the key word had always been “gradual.” In February 1865, one soldier suggested that emancipation—were it to come— would take thirty-five years.⁶⁸ In one of the many ironies of the war, were slavery to end around 1900, such was identical to Lincoln’s plan for ending slavery by the end of the century.⁶⁹ For rebels, gradual emancipation schemes tried to wish away the impending end of slavery. They were ploys to buy more time for the withering Southern nation. Confederates considered enacting emancipation themselves, but they hoped, as they always had, that it would happen in the future—most likely after they had died, when their descendants could take on the burdens of abolition. They believed emancipation would, in theory, one day benefit the South. Few, however, wanted it to occur any time soon.

The enlistment debate reveals that much had changed between the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation and 1865. But military events, rather than doubts about the morality or desirability of human bondage, led soldiers to reconsider their views of black people and slavery. In late February 1865, a committee of men in a South Carolina regiment, for example, gave reluctant support to enlisting blacks. Their belief that no “military necessity” existed suggests they were fighting in some other war. But rather than a refusal to see where the war effort was going, the committee members meant to

⁶⁷ Entry for February 20 and 21, 1865, Richard L. Maury Diary, VHS.

⁶⁸ Entry for February 13, 1865, Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., *Fourteen Hundred and 91 Days in the Confederate Army: A Journal Kept by W. W. Heartsill* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1953), 230.

⁶⁹ See David Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 396.

say that help from slaves was not essential.⁷⁰ They supported enlisting blacks, but with reservations. Their half-hearted acquiescence probably was as progressive as Southerners were about enrolling slaves into the army.

As the Confederate army limped on, men increasingly considered the wisdom of recruiting slaves. In February 1865, one soldier thought it “humiliating” to have to consider abolition. Nevertheless, he thought Southerners must do it soon. He believed the rebellion could put 100,000 blacks into uniform and give them the discipline necessary to “do good fighting.” All of a sudden, slaves had become the last hope of the Confederacy.⁷¹ Some troops wrote of an odd and elaborate plan for putting blacks into the army, whereby the military would enroll one black soldier for every white one. The former would become the latter’s “own individual property.” White soldier-overseers would then train these men, who were to be treated well by their “temporary masters.” These black troops would perform not only military labor, but also washing and cooking (even if they would not stand guard). When it came time for battle, they would fight alongside whites and would “fight better than . . . the enemy.” Impending defeat had made some rebels use their imaginations to come up with ideas for defeating the Yankee armies.⁷² But in their plans for what to do with black recruits, they described their role in the language of master and slave. For most Confederates, black people and slaves were still synonymous.

⁷⁰ Report issued February 23, 1865, Ira Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-1867, Series II, The Black Military Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 299.

⁷¹ Lavender Ray to father, February 14, 1865, Lane, ed., *Dear Mother*, 345.

⁷² R. C. Beckett to the *Evening News*, February 10, 1865, R. C. Beckett, “A Sketch of the Career of Company B, Armistead’s Cavalry Regiment,” *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, Vol. 8 (1904), p. 42; see also, Grant Taylor to wife and children, January 11, 1865, Blomquist and Taylor, eds., *This Cruel War*, 322-23.

Many soldiers, nevertheless, supported the idea of enlisting blacks.⁷³ In mid February 1865, a private wrote of the support it had among the men. Were slaves to join the fight, he believed, “we will whail out the Yankees.” He said two-thirds of the blacks at a Richmond hospital had offered to volunteer, and he thought such men would fight “first rate.”⁷⁴ That same month, the 6th Virginia regiment supported enlisting slaves, saying that they would add strength to “our thinned, though determined ranks.”⁷⁵ Common soldiers’ support was important, but enlisting blacks probably would not have come about were it not for Robert E. Lee. By February 1865, Lee had become the general-in-chief of the Confederate armies. On February 18, he wrote to a Congressman in support of “Negro” enlistment. Lee believed it “not only expedient, but necessary.” Were the army not to use slaves, the Federal army would continue to do so. The South had exhausted its manpower pool, and Lee did not want to impose any more “suffering” upon his people. A slave, he concluded, “under proper circumstances, will make an efficient soldier.” He believed blacks had “all the physical qualifications” necessary. In addition, he said, “their habits of obedience constitute a good foundation for discipline.” General Lee, agreeing with Jefferson Davis, wanted to liberate black men who served. In his mind, independence trumped the maintenance of slavery. Military service, he thought, proved more important than one’s status as a free man or slave. The army should get whatever men it needed to carry on the war effort. Lee believed it better that a Southerner, whatever his color, should serve his country than become a servant to the

⁷³ Supporters included General John B. Gordon, Davis’ Mississippi brigade, the 15th Alabama, the 56th Virginia, and Griffin’s Company, 18th Virginia artillery, see Durden, *Gray and the Black*, 219-24.

⁷⁴ Joseph F. Shaner to sister, February 15, 1865, Civil War Letters of Private Joseph F. Shaner, CSA, typescript letters copied and arranged by James Bramham, Jr., and Margaret Tucker Scott, VHS.

⁷⁵ “Resolution of the Sixth Virginia Regiment,” February 18, 1865, Berlin, *et al.*, eds., *Freedom, Series II, The Black Military Experience*, 297; on other soldiers’ support, see Colonel A. A. Luther to Colonel Walter Taylor, February 14, 1865, *ibid*, 296.

Yankees. He thought it best to have blacks voluntarily enter the army with the permission of their masters, and Lee sought the cooperation of slaveholders not only in giving up their slaves, but in preparing them for combat. He believed conscription would not bring in the “best class” of the black community. Nor did he care to have the central government control enlistment. General Lee wanted to leave the matter, as much as possible, to the conscience of the people and the states.⁷⁶ The process would take time, which he believed the Confederacy did not have. Thus, Lee saw no point in waiting. “It will probably be impossible,” he said to Jefferson Davis, “to get a large force of this kind in condition to be of service during the present campaign, but I think no time should be lost in trying to collect all we can.”⁷⁷ It was good politics. Lee proposed enlisting blacks without the immediate emancipation of the slaves, and he wanted the states and individual slaveholders to initiate recruitment. Thus, the Confederacy might please slaveholders and states rights men as well as the army.

Lee’s endorsement proved good enough for many. One soldier regretted that slaves would enter the army, for he feared it would “inevitably lead to emancipation.” He deferred, nevertheless, to Lee’s judgment, believing the general knew what was necessary to continue the war effort. If Confederates did not recruit blacks, the enemy would do so for them. The South, therefore, should exert as much control as possible over its slaves, and, if necessary, their emancipation. As with Lee, he believed blacks would make good soldiers. For him, there was no contradiction in freeing slaves and continuing the struggle. “We entered this war,” he wrote, “not to perpetuate slavery, but to maintain our

⁷⁶ Lee to Barksdale, February 18, 1865, copy of letter in St. Paul’s church vestry book, VHS.

⁷⁷ Lee to Davis, March 10, 1865, Clifford Dowdey and Louis Manarin, eds., *The Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), 914.

own right to govern ourselves.”⁷⁸ In his mind, just because Southerners were hesitant to free their slaves did not mean they wanted to keep that right above all others.

In March 1865, when one soldier heard that the army would soon muster 300,000 blacks, he said anything was better than “subjugation.”⁷⁹ Another rebel overheard an officer say that three-fourths of the people would accept emancipation were the war to end.⁸⁰ As it turned out, Confederates accepted the Union’s conditions for emancipation rather than let the war go on, but they had little choice in the matter. Nevertheless, with General Lee behind enlisting blacks, other rebels followed. A Georgia regiment in the Army of Northern Virginia, for example, petitioned the government in favor of it. As with Jefferson Davis, the men believed Southerners should take radical measures in order to achieve their independence. The Georgians remembered that as younger men they had toiled alongside slaves in the field and at the same workbench. They had known and understood black people. They were convinced that white Confederates were not going too far in allowing slaves to fight, since they had served the South for generations. The Georgia regiment sought the maximum number of black troops that Congress had considered enlisting, and to quicken the process of bringing them into the army, they thought slaves should serve with their former masters or men who knew them.⁸¹ But their public show of support came after Congress had already acted. On the March 13, the Confederacy made it official: slaves and free blacks could now serve as soldiers.

⁷⁸ Samuel J. C. Moore to Dr. Randolph Kownslar, February 22, 1865, Thorton Tayloe Perry Papers, VHS.

⁷⁹ Joseph D. Stapp to mother, March 4, 1865, Joseph D. Stapp Letters, VHS; on a similar view among troops of an Alabama regiment, see entry for February 17, 1865, G. Ward Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 354-55.

⁸⁰ J. F. Morton to Joseph E. Brown, December 24, 1863, Mills Lane, ed., *The Times that Prove People’s Principles: Civil War in Georgia* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1993), 135.

⁸¹ Camp of the 49th Georgia Regiment to Colonel Walter Taylor, March 15, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 46, Pt. 2, p. 1316.

President Davis called up 300,000 of them, who would receive the same rations, clothing, and compensation as white soldiers. Only a quarter of them, however, were to be between the ages of 18 and 35.⁸²

As always, Congress' decision raised constitutional issues. Perhaps by March 1865, such concerns were moot. Yankee armies were pressing down everywhere, and as one soldier put it, conscripting blacks was likely to happen because it was deemed "necessary by those who run our machine." A "machine" apparently had taken over what had begun as an experiment in maintaining a state rights republic.⁸³ The hyperbole of white men being "enslaved" in the army aside, a defender of Southern rights would have said that were the Confederacy to throw out its constitution and free its slaves, then the war was already lost. But as William C. Oates observed, the South had to do everything for the sake of winning independence. He suggested it made little difference whether the Confederacy acted constitutionally or not. The government had already extended its tentacles into seemingly every aspect of Southern life. The problem with the enlistment bill lay not so much in its constitutionality, but its wording. Its fifth section, Oates noted, said, "That nothing in this act shall be construed to authorize a change in the relation which the said slaves shall bear toward their owners, except by consent of the owners and of the State in which they may reside." Any black soldier who did not desert to the enemy, Oates wrote, would have been an idiot. General John B. Gordon, who also served in the Army of Northern Virginia, concurred. The problem with the law, as he saw it, was that it did not offer freedom as a condition of service. Jefferson Davis, however,

⁸² McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, Vol. II, 478; see also, Bell Smith to Jefferson Davis regarding the law, March 16, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 46, Pt. 3, p. 1315.

⁸³ Hugh W. Montgomery to Lt. Col. A. W. Hyatt, February 1, 1865, Arthur Hyatt Papers, Vol. 2, LLMVC.

“bootlegged freedom” into the enlistment bill. The president thus assured that no black man would have to fight for the South as a slave.⁸⁴

Davis’ actions ably summarized the relationship between the rebel army and the Confederate government. Troops believed they could determine the future of slavery. The army had impressed blacks into the military and would now recruit them. The support of Congress was necessary, but in the end, General Lee had more influence than any representative, senator, or governor. In 1861, rebels saw that the army was the instrument that would achieve their independence and maintain slavery. Now, in March 1865, it would serve as the most radical of any Southern institution, having the greatest level of equality between the races. The first of the South’s new breed of free black laborers would serve as soldiers in the army.

Whether or not most Confederates opposed enlisting slaves, there was no shortage of men applying for a commission to lead black troops. Robert E. Lee, however, expressed caution about sending out recruiters. He told General Longstreet that the army should select men with “influence & connections” for the job. Only those with experience need apply.⁸⁵ Lee’s eldest son, Custis, wrote to a comrade about the creation of a division of black troops. Custis, however, could not promise the major a place in such a paper force.⁸⁶ Requests to lead black troops perhaps had more to do with hope for promotion than white Confederates’ eagerness to lead them into battle. But it showed, at least, that men were tolerant enough to serve with “Negroes.” Officers, after all, would live with

⁸⁴ Oates, *War between the Union and Confederacy*, 501 (quoted), 502; John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 382; Durden, *Gray and the Black*, 268; Cooper’s orders are dated March 23, 1865, *ibid*, 268-69.

⁸⁵ On men applying for a commission, see Simpson, ed., *Reminiscences of the 41st Tennessee*, 130; on Lee’s caution, see Lee to Longstreet, March 28, 1865, John Walter Fairfax Papers, VHS.

⁸⁶ George Washington Custis Lee to G. Carter, March 14, 1865, Carter Family Papers, VHS; on applications, see also, J. E. Shuman to Thomas S. Hayward, March 20, 1865, J. E. Shuman Letter, VHS.

them and drill them, and they would bear the responsibility for how their “colored” troops fared in battle.

Perhaps some white soldiers, however, knew there was little chance that blacks would serve in combat before the war ended. Officers’ willingness to lead them might have resulted from a desire to escape danger. In late March 1865, James Longstreet wrote of a “growing evil ... in the shape of applications to raise negro companies.” He said the “desire for promotion seems to have taken possession of our army, and it seems that nearly all the officers and men think that they could gain a grade or more if allowed to go home.” Men were volunteering, he believed, only to get a furlough.⁸⁷ In March 1865, with Federal armies poised to undertake another campaign for Richmond, Longstreet wanted as many men as possible kept in the ranks. He believed he could not spare officers to go home and take months, perhaps a year, to raise black regiments. Longstreet’s complaint again underscored the Confederacy’s dilemma: the lack of white men at the front made the creation of black units difficult if not impossible—whether before or after Congress allowed it.

Just because black Southerners would fight did not lessen some Confederates’ skepticism of their abilities. In early March, one surgeon wrote of the “dangerous environment” that blacks would create. He feared they would join the army only to run away. He did not believe they would make good soldiers, but he had little confidence in the Southern people either. They were “not the same [as] they were four years ago,” he lamented. But for him, a few slaves in the army did not change the status of the black

⁸⁷ Longstreet to Walter Taylor, March 25, 1865, James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1896), 651.

race very much. After hearing that Congress had passed the enlistment bill, he asked those at home to send him a servant.⁸⁸

On March 23, Richard Maury wrote that black recruitment went on “bravely.” He was eager to see the new troops parade through the streets of Richmond, and he said they looked “quite military.” Black Confederates now had an honorable role to play in the war effort. They were a curiosity. Children followed them through the streets. People filled the streets of the capital at the late March parade, but most of the onlookers were black. Maury himself was not effusive in his view of “Negro” troops. “I hate the idea of ... Cuffee and Sambo [having to serve] very much,” he said, “and confound it all if the miserable men at home would only do their duty.” Had white men defended the South as they should have, “we would never have had to resort to [slaves’] aid.” For him, the rise of the black soldier signified the failure of white manhood—strong words coming from a soldier who sat out most of the war in Richmond. Nevertheless, in his eyes, had whites answered the call, Confederates never would have had to consider emancipation. Black soldiers, Maury feared, would “become a too common sight to all of us.”⁸⁹

By the spring of 1865, the rebellion was nearly over, and the change that had occurred in the South was obvious. One soldier, for example, wrote of his reselling a captured slave, but a few sentences later, he mentioned that five hundred blacks in Richmond had volunteered to defend the capital.⁹⁰ As defeat loomed, some slaves fled, others were recaptured, and still others were on their way to becoming Confederate troops. As one would expect, the news of conscripting blacks took some time to reach

⁸⁸ A. E. McGarrity to wife, March 6, 1865, Edmund Cody Burnett, ed., “Letters of a Confederate Surgeon: Dr. Abner Embry McGarrity, 1862-1865,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 1946), p. 62 (quoted); A. E. McGarrity to wife, March 11, 1865, *ibid*, p. 64.

⁸⁹ Entry for March 23, 1865, Richard L. Maury Diary, VHS.

⁹⁰ Diary entry for March 1, 1865, Cate, ed., *Two Soldiers*, 198.

soldiers out west. One officer, writing from Meridian, Mississippi, said he had no objection to black troops joining the army, but he said he did not have enough arms for them at such short notice. He would enlist them as soon as possible, provided masters were willing.⁹¹ On April 7, a soldier in Texas heard that the government was about to emancipate the slaves in order that they may fight, and he heard that Robert E. Lee was foremost behind the measure.⁹²

Although Davis' government had enlisted blacks, they would not soon appear on the battlefield. Nevertheless, Joseph E. Johnston, in trouble in North Carolina, sought these new Confederate soldiers. He wanted them to serve as "substitutes for extra duty and detailed men."⁹³ The war might have gone on much longer had blacks enrolled in the rebel armies as much as they had in the North. By spring 1865, however, there was not enough time for them to make a difference on the battlefield. Earlier in the war, the North had rushed some black units into combat, but it had done so with ample supplies, which enabled its forces to take part in offensives. Confederates never had the luxury of Northern resources and mostly had to remain on the defensive.

In 1865, blacks were emancipated, but this did not endear them to whites. The proslavery argument had drilled into millions of rebel minds the evils that would follow abolition. The war ultimately altered slavery much faster than it did the Southern racial mind. Whatever changes Confederates had adopted regarding human bondage were done out of military necessity, not moral reconsideration. To be fair to those who supported the conscripting of blacks, many Southerners were not averse to change, which the

⁹¹ E. Surget to William Lyon, April 4, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 49, Pt. 2, p. 1199.

⁹² George to Martha Ingram, April 7, 1865, Henry L. Ingram, ed., *Civil War Letters of George W. and Martha F. Ingram* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1973), 79.

⁹³ Johnston to Robert E. Lee, April 1, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 47, Pt. 3, p. 737.

ambiguities in the proslavery argument made possible. Just as they believed a black man was born to serve whites, he could also serve in the army—where taking orders proved routine. Before they became soldiers, slaves had already served well as cooks, teamsters, and body servants. Some had even taken shots at Yankees.

Black men might have made good soldiers, but Confederate defeat occurred before they could serve in battle. The Union had emancipated the slaves partly as a war measure, partly as a moral act. There was no moral equivalent, however, in the Confederacy's desire to emancipate its slaves. For rebels, a black man should not obtain freedom without fighting for it. Even had the Confederacy enlisted the 300,000 black troops Cleburne dreamed of, and which Davis called up, that would have been a fraction of those still enslaved. Furthermore, had the war continued a few more years, disease and bullets would have made thousands free only in death.

The war ended before Confederates could worry much about the consequences of arming black troops. On April 9, 1865, Lee's men became prisoners and black Southerners became wards of the United States. In June in Texas, the last Confederates laid down their arms, while other states were already constructing black codes. The race issue was central to the war; it would prove central to peace. The conflict had ended with Confederates becoming more liberal on the role of blacks in the military, but Southern whites strongly opposed anything approaching equality of the races. After the war, former rebel soldiers worked to destroy black suffrage and civil rights. Thousands of them would come home with military experience that they would use in paramilitary actions against blacks and Southern scalawags. After 1865, the rebel spirit was still strong in the South. Even the pro-slavery argument would not die.

VIII:
RELICS OF THE ANTEBELLUM ERA:
CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS AND THE END OF SLAVERY

After fighting four years in a conflict that took 620,000 lives, Confederate soldiers returned home to communities impoverished and scarred by war. 260,000 of their comrades had died, the Federal army had done untold damage to homes and farms, and emancipation had liquidated billions in Confederate wealth.¹ The war, furthermore, had dramatically changed Southern society, making race relations increasingly tense. Veterans would remember loyal “darkies” later, but in their eyes, such faithful black people seemed less prominent during Reconstruction, when the freedmen worked for civil rights and political power.

In April 1865, with the Confederacy defeated and slaves freed, the Federal government began Reconstruction in earnest.² The United States forced Confederates to

¹ Estimates concerning the economic costs of emancipation differ, James L. Sellers has put the wealth of the Confederate states at \$4 billion in 1860, with the loss in slave property at \$1.6 billion, see Sellers, “The Economic Incidence of the Civil War in the South,” Ralph Andreano, ed., *The Economic Impact of the American Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1962), 81; Claudia Goldin puts the value of slaves in 1860 at \$2.7 billion, see Goldin, “The Economics of Emancipation,” reprinted in Paul Finkelman, ed., *Articles on American Slavery: Economics, Industrialization, Urbanization, and Slavery* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989); Gerald Gunderson also puts slave wealth in 1860 at \$2.7 billion, see Gunderson, “The Origin of the American Civil War,” *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (December 1974), p. 917; James L. Huston has also put the value of slaves in 1860 at about three billion dollars; see Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union: Slavery, Property Rights, and the Economic Origins of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

² The Union had, to some degree, begun the process in 1863, when Lincoln issued his 10% plan for admitting states back into the Union. Some areas of the Confederacy, such as southern Louisiana, western Tennessee, and the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina, were already under Federal control by then. Willie Lee Rose, in her work *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), has argued that the Sea Islands, which fell to the Yankees in early 1862, served as a laboratory for a free labor society in the South. There, the Federal government had a three-year start on the rest of the country in creating a working black community. Rose’s classic study, however, examines this society in an isolated area that was overwhelmingly African American even before planters were driven out. The absence of whites during Union occupation certainly made the process of Reconstruction easier than it would be elsewhere after the war. The Port Royal experiment, however radical it was in some ways, was undertaken without having to combat the kinds of white opposition that existed in the South after Lee’s surrender. In many ways, then, the Port Royal experiment was not a rehearsal for Reconstruction.

accept abolition, which rebel troops had fought hard to prevent. In the face of a Northern political and military presence in the South, resourceful and ruthless former Confederates realized that white supremacy did not depend on slavery. Had Congressional Reconstruction not occurred, they would have restored “white man’s government” in the Southern states even sooner. After 1865, slave patrols no longer existed, but the black codes and the Ku Klux Klan tried to reestablish what whites believed was the “proper” order between the races.

After the war, veterans battled free blacks, scalawags, and carpetbaggers in their effort to restore home rule. The resurrection of white supremacy took on many forms, from politics to economics, to the reiteration of proslavery ideology. “Redemption” would take years, but after Lee’s surrender, ex-Confederates did not abandon their war against Northerners’ and black people’s attempts at establishing racial equality—or at least equality of opportunity—in the South. Veterans’ post-war racial views provide not only an epilogue to the story of wartime relations between white and black Southerners, but further insight into why Confederates acted as they did during the war, Reconstruction, and after.³

The passage of the Thirteenth Amendment did not effectively free slaves in the United States—Lee’s surrender did. Confederate soldiers had tried as much as possible to keep slavery intact, but by 1865, they were men waging a war they could no longer win. As the year began, the peculiar institution was nearly dead, even if millions of black people remained in bondage. Soldiers’ concerns for their slaves made for pathetic letters.

³ On white opposition to emancipation and Presidential Reconstruction, see Dan Carter, *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); on the effects of emancipation on the South in the last days of the war, see Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

“You asked after the servts,” wrote James Stubbs to his father in January 1865. “Eliza is still very ill & I would not be surprised if she never recovers.” A slave’s illness and possible death was not unusual, but Stubbs probably would not have been as pessimistic in 1862 or 1863. Things had worsened for everyone, he noted, “since our recent national reverses.” After he returned home, Stubbs gave \$20 to the care of his slaves. It was all he could spare. He considered hiring his servants out, but in January 1865, he noted they were not getting a third of the asking price in Richmond.⁴

If Stubbs’ mastery over his chattels had withered, some soldiers were defiant to the point of delusional in the face of defeat and emancipation. In 1865, writing from camp in Shreveport, the capital of Confederate-held Louisiana, Hugh Montgomery still believed European recognition would come to a South that supposedly was not fighting for human bondage. The maintenance of slavery, he guessed, would be a “privilege” of the victorious Confederacy. “I think Europe will permit emancipation in seventy five years,” he wrote. No one can know how long slavery would have continued had the South proven victorious, but by 1865, even the most diehard rebels must have doubted its future. In what was a considerable understatement, Montgomery admitted that slavery “will never be what it has been.”⁵ A week after he wrote these words, the United States abolished slavery in the Thirteenth Amendment.

As they had for years, rebel commanders complained of slaves fleeing, which they seemed to be doing everywhere.⁶ In March 1865, one officer wrote of how the Federals had no real presence in Charleston or Savannah, but they had wrought damage

⁴ Stubbs to father, January 21, 1865, Stubbs Papers, LLMVC.

⁵ Hugh W. Montgomery to A. W. Hyatt, January 24, 1865, Arthur W. Hyatt Papers, Vol. 2, LLMVC.

⁶ See, for example, Joseph Wheeler to L. McClaws, January 21, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 47, Pt. 2, pp. 1034-35; D. H. Hill to General G. W. Smith, January 30, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 47, Pt. 2, p. 1061; William T. Poague to mother, February 21, 1865, Monroe F. Cockrell, ed., *Gunner with Stonewall: Reminiscences of William Thomas Poague* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1957 [1903]), 150.

in any case. The “negroes everywhere within their reach have become much demoralized,” he said. Large numbers had gone to the enemy and he had to send cavalry to prevent further escapes.⁷ By 1865, the Confederacy tried to keep its slaves under control, but there was little hope of further large-scale, organized resistance to the United States army. Even when Federal forces evacuated occupied areas of the South, the spirit of abolition remained. It actually had always been there, but it was waiting for the first opportunity to take flight. Colonel Christopher Tompkins saw that in April 1865, many Virginia slaves “were slow to realize the fact that they were free.” Once they did, they rushed to Richmond to find new opportunities amid the death of the *ancien regime*. “Never was change accomplished so silently & so quickly,” Tompkins wrote.⁸

Even in the spring of 1865, however, some Confederates vowed to fight on. They continued to believe that freedom for the slave meant subjugation for Southern whites. In late April 1865, one Texan still thought there were men to keep the Federals busy for some time. Fighting, he was convinced, would prove better than surrender, Yankee domination, and black equality.⁹ Such men worried the Union would wreck vengeance on the defeated South—a fear that might have provided the only reason why some rebels remained in the ranks. After Lee’s surrender, Captain Samuel Foster said that Joseph E. Johnston could not make any peace terms “but submission reunion free negroes &c, and we have been fighting too long for that.” The dichotomy of free and slave still existed in Southern minds. Rebels had fought for four years to overthrow what they saw as

Abraham Lincoln’s brand of despotism, which they believed would put Southern men

⁷ B. D. Fry to J. M. Otey, March 12, 1865, *OR*, Series 1, Vol. 47, Pt. 2, pp. 1383-84.

⁸ Memorandum for April 7, 1865, William M. E. Rachal, ed., “The Occupation of Richmond, April 1865: The Memorandum of Events of Colonel Christopher Q. Tompkins,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (April 1965), pp. 192-93.

⁹ Junius N. Bragg to wife, April 23, 1865, T. J. Gaughan, ed., *Letters of a Confederate Surgeon, 1861-65* by Junius Newport Bragg (Camden, AR: n. p., 1960), 272.

and women at the foot of Northern masters and freed slaves. Booth assassinated Lincoln only a few days after Lee's surrender, but Confederates still feared the worst. Captain Foster wrongly believed that Andrew Johnson would have "all the prominent men concerned [in the rebellion] put to death, and the rest banished or made slaves."¹⁰ As events developed, President Johnson's peace terms were generous, so much so that the South passed restrictive black codes while Congress was not in session. And rather than punish prominent former Confederates, Johnson pardoned most of them. But in the spring of 1865, Confederates could not have known the course Presidential Reconstruction would take. As soft as Johnson's peace plan proved, former Confederates worried that the North might put them at a level below that of black people.¹¹ Thus, they resented the restored Union and the freedmen. This did not mean that former secessionists would do anything—such as resorting to guerrilla warfare—in order to continue the rebellion, but even very late into the conflict, many Confederates tried to keep the peculiar institution going.

In the spring of 1865, however, Confederate troops decided to stack their arms rather than fight Yankee armies any longer. Their decision proved more realistic than accommodationist. In contrast to those who had vowed to fight to the last, there were some soldiers who preached that the best way to confront defeat was to tend to one's business and avoid political debates. M. Jeff Thompson was the "Swamp Fox of the

¹⁰ Diary entry for April 22, 1865 (p. 166, first quotation) and April 26, 1865 (p. 168, second quotation), Norman D. Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne's Command: The Civil War Reminiscences and Diary of Capt. Samuel T. Foster, Granbury's Texas Brigade, CSA* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980); on John Magruder's wish that he not become "a slave to Yankee power," see "General Magruder's Address to the Soldiers at Houston, Texas," May 25, 1865, Lizzie Cary Daniel, *Confederate Scrap-book* (Richmond: J. L. Hill, 1893), 4.

¹¹ On Johnson's Reconstruction policy, see Carter, *When the War Was Over*; Eric McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

Confederacy,” a partisan active in the Western theater. He waged war longer than most, but he was conciliatory, albeit crude, when discussing how to act after Lee’s surrender:

Work early and late and get up nights and see if your crops are growing. Above all things avoid political discussions. If anybody says nigger to you, swear you never knew nor saw one in your life. We have talked about niggers for forty years and have been out-talked. We have fought four years for the nigger and have been damned badly whipped.... The Yankees have won the nigger and will do what they please with him and you have no say in the matter.¹²

Robert E. Lee would not have put things as Thompson did, but his and the “Swamp Fox’s” views about confronting the new era were similar.¹³ Since the North had settled the issue of secession and slavery through force, they believed it was better to say nothing than to agitate old issues. It was a way of thinking that many Confederate soldiers would follow in their later writings about the role of slavery in the Civil War. They often led readers to believe that slavery was not part of the Confederate mission.¹⁴ In March 1865, as Thompson believed, one bloody conflict was enough. Yankee might did not make right, he believed, but rebels should accept defeat and emancipation rather than re-fight old battles. The Confederacy had failed. It was best, therefore, to tend to one’s crops. Thompson essentially said that wise soldiers should carry on the tradition from Cincinnatus to Washington of quietly returning to the farm once the fighting ended.

With Lee’s surrender, some men reconsidered the role slavery had played in the Confederacy. Men such as Thompson preferred to ignore the issue in future, even if he

¹² Thompson gave his speech shortly after the war, see Jay Monaghan, “Swamp Fox of the Confederacy,” *Confederate Centennial Studies*, No. 2 (Tuscaloosa, AL: Confederate Printing, 1956), 105; on attempts by planters to remain in control of the Southern economy after defeat, see James L. Roark, *Masters without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

¹³ On Lee and the post-surrender period, see Emory M. Thomas, *Robert E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 380-92.

¹⁴ On the erosion of the emancipationist legacy in Americans’ memory of the war, see David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

accepted the importance of the “nigger question” in wartime. Captain Samuel Foster, who had served in the Army of Tennessee, went even further, expressing misgivings about human bondage. His reasoning was based more on slavery’s negative effect on whites rather than concern for the black population. He believed the peculiar institution had not been worth the price paid to keep it. “Who is to blame for all this waste of human life?” he asked. “Has there been anything gained by all this sacrifice? What were we fighting for, the principles of slavery? And now the slaves are all freed, and the Confederacy has to be dissolved.”¹⁵ Had he truly been guilty about human bondage, Foster would have been pleased that the war freed the slaves. Rather, he lamented that too many white soldiers had died in the defense of slavery. Foster, nevertheless, wondered—as did Lincoln in his Second Inaugural—whether the war had proven a national punishment for human bondage. He thought slavery had been “abused,” and believed the war was an affliction that all Southerners were forced to suffer. Foster might have echoed the sentiments of Lincoln’s famous speech, but he thought his feelings, “come not from the Yanks or northern people but ... reflection, and reasoning among ourselves.”¹⁶

If Foster second-guessed slavery’s goodness, other whites were unwilling to see it go. In April 1865, Foster wrote of rumors that slavery might survive the war. Ten days after Lee’s surrender, he heard that the United States had recognized the Confederacy and would allow it to maintain human bondage were Southerners to “help them to fight all their enemies whatsoever.” Some rebels still believed slavery might continue, but Foster was not convinced of their sincerity. On April 30, he wrote that rebel soldiers had

¹⁵ Diary entry for April 28, 1865, Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne’s Command*, 170.

¹⁶ Diary entry for April 30, 1865, Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne’s Command*, 171; on one rebel’s belief that Lincoln’s Second Inaugural was sacrilegious, see James A. Graham to mother, March 8, 1865, Henry McGilbert Wagstaff, ed., “The James A. Graham Papers, 1861-1884,” *James Sprunt Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1928), p. 211.

undergone a transformation in their thinking. “Men who have not only been taught from their infancy that the institution of slavery was right,” he said, “but men who actually owned and held slaves up to this time,—have now changed in their opinions.” Defeat supposedly acted like a bolt of lightning on men’s views about race: human bondage had been wrong. The Declaration of Independence’s claim that all men were created equal apparently now took on new meaning.¹⁷

Foster’s reconsiderations—and those of his comrades—were perhaps heartfelt. But the fact that their views of slavery changed after the Confederacy’s defeat suggests more regret about Southerners having started the war than having kept human bondage for so long. In hindsight, the South could have maintained slavery much longer had it not fired on Fort Sumter. But in 1861, Confederates believed war a necessary gamble to protect their “institutions.” For most of them, maintaining slavery was worth the cost because of the political forces at work in the struggle. They believed that if they did not have a right to a white man’s government, then their whole political tradition was flawed. In retrospect, the North defeated the rebellion and freed the slaves, but in Southern eyes, that did not make the Confederacy and holding onto slavery ignoble. Men bowed to superior military power, but that did not invalidate the cause or render it immoral. Diehard Confederates might forgive men such as Foster for a brief lapse of reason—they should have known better than to suggest that God did not smile upon Southern slavery. The Word, after all, supported it. After the war and Reconstruction, slavery would move to the periphery of Confederate memory, but that did not mean veterans rejected its importance as an economic resource or tool of social control.

¹⁷ Diary entries for April 19, 1865 (p. 165) and April 30, 1865 (p. 171), Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne’s Command*.

Foster's regrets about the cost of war were understandable. If Confederate soldiers' guilt about slavery proved dubious, no one could deny the war's effect on the racial status quo. After Lee's surrender, for veterans, the social order appeared upside down. If a white man took the law into his own hands, he might find himself in trouble with authorities. In May 1865, General Lafayette McLaws wrote of a local man who had been fined for shooting at a black man who stole from a neighbor. The man, unfortunately for him, had to testify against himself, as he had told an untrustworthy person about what he had done. In the antebellum period, a black man could not testify against a white one in court. Now, a Southern man incriminated himself in a case involving his punishing of a black thief.¹⁸ It seemed that whites were masters no more. Black people now had legal power never before seen in the South.

Soldiers lamented the disappearance of the old order. Almost as soon as Lee surrendered, there emerged sentimental musings for the antebellum South. Former soldiers saw it as a place of glistening cotton fields and happy, smiling "darkies." In June 1865, one soldier wrote of how he missed the "old times, no more corn shuckin' songs, no more pattin' Judas, no more plaintiff negro melodies, big camp meetin's over yonder soon to go. Old Aunt Dinah and Uncle Tom will only be heard of in the past." Yet, if one wanted to hear black people's songs, he still could. The meaning of such tunes, however, had changed. This same soldier wrote of one, "De Year of Jubilo," that contained the lines:

Massa run, aha!
Darky stay, oho!
It must be now dat de kingdom's comin'

¹⁸ McLaws to wife, May 23, 1865, John C. Oeffinger, ed., *A Soldier's General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 274.

In de year of Jubilo.¹⁹

Black hymns frequently spoke of suffering on earth, but hoped for better things in the afterlife.²⁰ With emancipation, it seemed the “Year of Jubilo” had indeed come.

Whether former slaves would find equality in an emancipated South was another matter.

If the war had brought radical change, some white Southerners saw that blacks remained reliable servants. Many former slaves apparently were quick to show loyalty to their old masters. One black woman, for example, defended her family’s silver from bushwhackers, who she called “*poo* white trash.”²¹ In Confederate eyes, such incidents supposedly epitomized black people’s devotion to their white “family.” For them, the Yankees might have defeated the Confederacy, but they could not destroy the love black people had for their former owners. One soldier said that relations between masters and the freedmen after emancipation were “cordial.”²² And on the road home, Captain E. John Ellis remembered a slave binding up his feet “as only a darkie knows how.” Ellis also met a black man who still considered himself in the rebel service and insisted on

¹⁹ Diary entry for June 5, 1865, Bromfield L. Ridley, *Battles and Sketches of the Army of Tennessee* (Mexico, MO: Missouri Printing and Publishing, 1906), 481 (quoted); on nostalgia for the Old South, see David Anderson, “Down Memory Lane: Nostalgia for the Old South in Post-Civil War Plantation Reminiscences,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (February 2005), pp. 105-36.

²⁰ On black hymns, see for example, Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible” Institution in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

²¹ A. D. Kirwan, ed., *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade: The Journal of a Confederate Soldier* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1956), 202-03; on his family’s servants remaining with them, see James A. Graham to father, May 30, 1865, Wagstaff, ed., “Papers of James A. Graham,” *James Sprunt Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 216.

²² John E. Fisher, “Life on the Common Level: Inheritance, Conflict, and Instruction,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall 1967), p. 307 (quoted); on good relations between masters and slaves, see also, William C. Breckinridge, “What the Ex-Confederate Has Done in Peace,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 20 (1892), p. 231.

wearing “his Confederate gray.”²³ For Ellis and others, black people seemed perpetually faithful.

Some former soldiers wrote of returning to beaming former slaves. Upon his arrival, one rebel received hugs from the family servants. In some accounts, veterans of bloody battles were reunited with their “mammy,” and a former slave might break out a bottle of whiskey in celebration. Such receptions signaled the end of men’s lives as Confederates and inaugurated a new era. They also suggested that veterans believed they could count on the freedmen to get their former masters through hard times. One soldier recalled returning home to children crying for bread. In the face of such misery, a sympathetic servant asked that the family sell him in order to help out the family. Despite the fact that he was no longer a slave, he said that he would work hard and “never claim his freedom.”²⁴

Good relations between the races, however, were not always in evidence. After the war, Southerners noted what they saw as an increased problem of theft among black people. Some families had to conceal items not just from Northern marauders, but the freedmen.²⁵ Whites had often complained of enslaved people stealing from them, but after the war—now that they no longer had the legal recourse that slavery had given them—they had less power to control black people. One soldier noted that servants on the

²³ Diary entry for July 1, 1865, E. John Ellis Memoir, [typescript], pp. 37-38, Miscellaneous Collection, LLMVC.

²⁴ On a joyous reception among “faithful blacks,” see George Skoch and Mark W. Perkins, eds., *Lone Star Confederate: A Gallant and Good Soldier of the 5th Texas Infantry* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2003), 91; on a soldier’s cook giving him an enthusiastic welcome upon his return, see R. S. Bevier, *History of the First and Second Missouri Confederate Brigades, 1861-1865, and from Wakusa to Appomattox, a Military Anagraph* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company, 1876), 472; W. R. Houghton and M. B. Houghton, *Two Boys in the Civil War and After* (Montgomery, AL: Paragon Press, 1912), 153 (quoted).

²⁵ Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, ed., *The Civil War Memoir of Philip Daingerfield Stephenson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 376-77.

farm disappeared after the war, but not before they stole all their master's chickens.²⁶ In the eyes of former Confederates, just as the hiding of silver was a "typical" action among loyal slaves, there were other blacks who were willing to betray or undercut white people at the first opportunity.

Some black people expressed their defiance in ways that were less clandestine than stealing from their former masters. Writing from Florida in May 1865, one Confederate soldier wrote of being "subjected to a trial such as I had hoped never to have been called on to endure," namely, his surrender to black troops, who stripped rebel officers of their pistols and then escorted their captives into town. Along the way, other black soldiers insulted them. He was fatalistic about his humiliation. "It is of no use," he wrote. "The whole country lies prostrate & it is but little use to kick unaided against the breaks."²⁷ A soldier in North Carolina suffered a similar experience. As with other Confederates during the war, he described the thousands of black soldiers he saw as "exceedingly black." The rebels kept silent as the "Negro" troops abused them. The black soldiers were angered not only at the sight of Confederates in their midst, but the death of President Lincoln.²⁸

Some rebels, however, were not passive in the face of black troops' taunts. In their eyes, they were defeated, but still white men. As Michael Fitzgerald has written, the

²⁶ On stealing, see Kirwan, ed., *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade*, 200.

²⁷ Entry for May 26, 1865, A. J. Hanna, ed., "The Confederate Baggage and Treasure Train Ends its Flight in Florida: A Diary of Trench Francis Tilghman," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (January 1939), p. 177.

²⁸ R. M. Collins, *Chapters from the Unwritten History of the War between the States* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones, 1893), 305-06; on problems with black police forces a month after Lee's surrender, see entry for May 26, 1865, G. Ward Hubbs, ed., *Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 383; on his need to show a pass to "jet black negro soldiers," see memorandum for April 13, 1865, Rachal, ed., "Occupation of Richmond, April 1865," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 73, No. 2, p. 195.

presence of black soldiers led not to white people's acceptance of their new status, but further opposition to Northern rule. "Exemplary battlefield performance [by black soldiers] only infuriated local whites," as it "exacerbated the racist hatred and violence that bedeviled black lives in the postwar period."²⁹ Confederate soldiers, indeed, did not respect black troops. Surrounded by them, one rebel soldier sarcastically remarked that someone should give him a candle, for it was so dark that he could not see. Another said that if he were to have such a gang of blacks, he would put them to better use: as workers. The Federals responded with cries of "bottom rail on top."³⁰ Such incidences suggested there seemed little hope that black and white Southerners were about to work together to rebuild the South.

Black people who exercised their new power often went further than mere taunts—they literally struck at former Confederates where they lived. One of the consequences of emancipation that secessionists probably had never considered—though some had included it in their fears of Northern egalitarianism and socialism—was land redistribution.³¹ In 1865, General Sherman wanted to set aside some land in Georgia for the freedmen, but land distribution never became part of Federal policy.³² Some property seizures did occur. Robert E. Lee's home, for example, became Arlington National Cemetery—the United States' most hallowed ground. But most former Confederates returned to their homes unmolested. Private Marcus Toney found his land occupied by what Confederates would have derided as the literal spawn of abolition: a white woman

²⁹ Michael Fitzgerald, "Another Kind of Glory: Black Participation and its Consequences in the Campaign for Confederate Mobile," *Alabama Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 2001), p. 275.

³⁰ Diary entry for May 17, 1865, Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne's Command*, 178.

³¹ On fears of land confiscation, see diary entry for May 4, 1865, Brown, ed., *One of Cleburne's Command*, 174.

³² On the failure of land redistribution policy, see Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Labor in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

(a Northerner no less) and her mulatto children. The woman was the wife of one of Toney's "former faithful slaves." He quickly settled the issue as to whether he or a black man had claim to his property. After Toney took his loyalty oath, he wrote, "Jim and his wife had to vamoose the ranch."³³

After Lee's surrender, Confederates had much work to do. Returning home from the army, Lafayette McLaws wrote of his brother who had the dubious task of "planting his swamp place." His brother's servants had left him, except for two women and the "little negroes."³⁴ That same month, another soldier wrote of his travels down the Savannah River, passing rice plantations as he went. Black people apparently were too enamored with freedom to cultivate crops, and the scenery was depressing proof of the South's decline. "Stately mansions" had been burned, with ashes, debris, and chimneys the only markers of their past glory.³⁵ One former Confederate soldier heard from home that no crops were being grown on the plantations and the freedmen were in a state of "total demoralization." He went on to say that it was dangerous to leave the house because nearby blacks were shooting at people.³⁶

In the post-war era, economic tensions compounded racial ones, and white men felt the sting of competition. One Englishman who had served in the Confederate army found he could not get a job as a dray driver. He understood that his employer had the choice to turn him down, but he said, "it was mortifying to me that a negro should be allowed to earn his bread, and a white man, who was willing to do the same work, be

³³ Marcus B. Toney, *The Privations of a Private* (Nashville: Privately Printed, 1905), 122-23.

³⁴ McLaws to wife, May 23, 1865, Oeffinger, ed., *Soldier's General*, 274.

³⁵ Entry for May 12, 1865, George Alexander Martin Diary, [typescript], VHS.

³⁶ Miss Addie Duncan to Colonel A. W. Hyatt, January 24, 1865, Arthur Hyatt Papers, Vol. 2, LLMVC; on African Americans who seemed unwilling to work, see also, diary entry for July 1, 1865, E. John Ellis Memoir, pp. 37-38, Miscellaneous Collection, LLMVC; Houghton and Houghton., *Two Boys*, 56; Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia 1861-1865* (Richmond: B. F. Johnson, 1899), 178.

denied the opportunity.”³⁷ As always, white men believed the rise of the black man could only come at their own expense. To feel below the status of a black person was to have one’s pride suffer, and it might take food from his table in the bargain.

Slaves no longer, black people had greater freedom than ever. In the view of ex-soldiers, they seemed to avoid doing anything productive. In July 1864, one Confederate soldier had written about the injustice of the army exposing slaves—who were working on fortifications in Georgia—to shelling. “Poor wretches,” he said, “they see a dreadful time of it, are worked very hard ... I feel very sorry for them.” By February 1866, however, he was less sympathetic. He had tried to “drum up negroes all about” to work, but had no luck. “They are such disgusting slow procrastinating wretches,” he moaned, who had “put off and put off and promise and promise until it will be too late to do anything.” Exasperated, he considered free labor “the most difficult task the world has ever seen.” The North had great success with it, but many Southerners, who lamented the loss of slavery’s comforts, did not want to emulate the Yankees. In their eyes, blacks were now too difficult to manage. As free people, they apparently neglected their work so much that whites were in danger of extreme shortages.³⁸

Some former soldiers were successful in reclaiming their family’s wealth. David Pipes tried the best he could to work within the new free labor system. His father, who had owned hundreds of slaves, survived the war with his wealth intact. His son, knowing more about planting than anything else, took over the farm. In 1866, Pipes had fourteen

³⁷ Bell Irvin Wiley, ed., *Reminiscences of Confederate Service 1861-1865* by Francis W. Dawson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 150.

³⁸ Milton Maxcy Leverett to mother, July 23, 1864 (p. 345, first quotation); Milton Maxcy Leverett to mother, February 3, 1866 (p. 402, second quotation), Francis Wallace Taylor, *et al.*, eds., *The Leverett Letters: Correspondence of a South Carolina Family, 1851-1868* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000); see also, Wiley, ed., *Four Years on the Firing Line*, 241; General Wigfall to son, September 21, 1868, Sarah Agnes Wallace, ed., “Confederate Exiles in London, 1865-1870,” *South Carolina Historical and Geological Magazine*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (July 1951), p. 146.

workers and managed to grow ninety bales of cotton, a very good yield. He soon increased his labor force to fifty, but he had problems with a black couple who constantly fought. The husband was jailed at one point, only to return to the farm to begin the squabbling anew. Pipes believed that his black workers could not take care of themselves. One of them, named Henry, decided to cash out. Pipes warned him that it was the most money he would ever have, and events apparently proved him right. Twenty years later, he again met Henry, now destitute. "You sure told the truth," Henry told his former boss.³⁹

Some former Confederate soldiers and slaveholders decided to flee the South and find economic opportunities elsewhere. Since they could not or would not go north, and with travel to Europe beyond most men's means, they believed their only option lay in going further south. In South America, some hoped, they might find their El Dorado. Such dreams had swirled around Southerners' heads in the antebellum period. Slavery expansionists and filibusters had once hoped to seize territory from Cuba to Nicaragua. And during the Civil War, Confederates had invaded New Mexico, where they had brief hopes of putting a foothold in northern Mexico with ambitions of invading South America.⁴⁰ Former Confederate generals such as Sterling Price, Jubal Early, and Joseph O. Shelby had plans to settle in Mexico after the war. As Shelby put it, "We are the last of our race. Let us be the best as well." Shelby had been a slaveholder who hoped Emperor Maximilian would allow Mexico to become a haven for former Confederates. Such determined Southerners hoped to recreate the world of the antebellum master class.

³⁹ David Washington Pipes, "David Washington Pipes Memoirs," [typescript], pp. 73-76, VHS.

⁴⁰ On slavery expansionism, see Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage, 1965), 243-70.

Mexico had no slaves, but its economic and political instability gave some men hope of setting up their own fiefdoms there.

Veterans who sought a better life in South America were exceptional in the lengths to which they wanted to recreate the life of antebellum planters. But if they were unusual, they underscored former Confederates' resentment with the political, racial, and economic environment that existed after Lee's surrender.⁴¹ Among South Americans, perhaps former Confederates would have better luck than they had in the United States. "The Southern States can now no longer compete," wrote one pessimistic veteran in May 1865. He had no doubts about the effect the war had on the once proud slave states. "*Free* Negro labor is the most perfect hallucination that ever entered the brain of the Fanatic," he complained. He planned to settle along the Amazon in Brazil, where he could use slaves to grow cotton and thus recreate the antebellum South.⁴² For optimistic souls who had dreams of migrating there, Brazil still had slavery, which it would not ban until 1888. With its sweltering climate, agrarian economy, tracts of uncultivated land, and large black working population, the place gave hope to ex-Confederates searching for a new life.

For one Mississippian, the old state of race relations was no more. In the Old South, masters believed conscientious care for their workers made for contented slaves.

⁴¹ Shelby quoted in Robert E. Shalhope, "Race, Class, Slavery, and the Antebellum Southern Mind," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (November 1971), p. 568 (quoted); see also, Lawrence F. Hill, "The Confederate Exodus to Latin America," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 39 (July-April 1935-36), pp. 100-34, 161-99, 309-26.

⁴² Henry M. Price to Sir Frederic Bruce, May 24, 1865, Frank J. Merli, ed., "Alternative to Appomattox: A Virginian's Vision of an Anglo-Confederate Colony on the Amazon, May 1865," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (April 1986), p. 217; see also, Cyrus B. Dawsey and James M. Dawsey, eds., *The Confederados: Old South Immigrants in Brazil* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995); William Clark Griggs, *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Eugene C. Harter, *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985); on a comparison between Brazilian and Southern slavery, see Carl Degler, *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

But in his eyes, emancipation ruined the slaveholder's Utopia. He complained that after the war, whites now had to deal with a new breed of black people, who supposedly filled jails and insane asylums. These criminals and unfortunates apparently were not made up of former slaves, but their sons and daughters. Murder and madness had been rare before the war, he asserted, but by the latter part of the century, they were rampant among the black community. What this former soldier, now a judge, found most disturbing were the crimes committed among blacks themselves. One of his former slaves descended into morphine addiction and killed himself after being convicted of murder.⁴³ If things had changed, veterans believed that the Old South solution to the race problem still proved true: white people needed to save blacks from themselves.

If unchecked, freedom for black people, former soldiers warned, might lead to the dying out of the black race. In June 1865, George Mercer believed the fate of the "unhappy Negro" would involve either acquiescence to white rule or, as apparently was proving the case with the Indians, annihilation. White Southerners had long believed that slavery kept the "Negro" race alive. Native Americans, however, had never become slaves in large numbers. In the white mind, since they served no purpose in the South, they were put on the path to extermination. Now that blacks were no longer slaves, they too might go the way of the Indian. Their only chance for survival depended on the efforts of white Southerners to save them from ruin. By 1865, many black people, Mercer asserted, had already died. They had toiled on the plantations, but now were in their graves.⁴⁴ According to the highly flawed 1870 census, the black population stagnated

⁴³ Frank A. Montgomery, *Reminiscences of a Mississippian in Peace and War* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Company Press, 1901), 21, 113, 260-64; see also, Toney, *Privations of a Private*, 11-12.

⁴⁴ Entry for June 11, 1865, George Mercer diary quoted in Mills Lane, ed., *The Times that Prove People's Principles: Civil War in Georgia* (Savannah: Beehive Press, 1993), 254; on a similar view, see

during the 1860s. But the general trend in the late 1800s was toward demographic growth. Roughly 4.4 million blacks lived in the United States in 1860; in 1900, there were over eight million.⁴⁵

Black people were hardly “going the way of the Indian.” During Reconstruction, they seized considerable political power and civil rights. Although black people believed such gains long overdue, former Confederate soldiers thought of Reconstruction as a period of “African domination.”⁴⁶ They wrote impassioned, purple passages about the horrors of the post-war years. “As a fit climax to . . . Yankee hatred, malice, revenge, and cruelty practiced during the war” wrote one veteran in the early 1900s, “the North bound the prostrate South on the rock of negro domination, while the vultures ... preyed upon its vitals.” Nor did he believe such abuses had ended with Reconstruction. At the turn of the century, he noted, “many at the North are still growling and snarling, threatening reduction of representation in Congress, howling about negro disfranchisement, and the separation of the races in schools and public conveyances.”⁴⁷ In veterans’ view, Republicans—New Englanders foremost among them—duped ignorant blacks with false promises, raising their hopes that equality might ever exist in the South. Yankee

memorandum for April 8, 1865, Rachal, ed., “Occupation of Richmond, April 1865,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 73, No. 2, p. 194.

⁴⁵ On census statistics, see Maurice Davie, *Negroes in American Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949), 231.

⁴⁶ See Wayland Fuller Dunaway, *Reminiscences of a Rebel* (New York: Neale, 1913), 129-30 (quoted); on the evils of Reconstruction, see also, J. William Jones, *Christ in Camp or Religion in Lee’s Army* (Richmond: B. F. Johnson, 1887), 461; Thomas D. Duncan, *Recollections of Thomas D. Duncan A Confederate Soldier* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing, 1922), 200; Joseph T. Durkin, ed., *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1945), 205; John Cater, *As it Was: Reminiscences of a Soldier in the Third Texas Cavalry and the Nineteenth Louisiana Infantry* (Austin: State House Press, 1990 [1981]), 218-29. The view of Reconstruction as a tragic period survived well into the twentieth century. Historians such as Claude Bowers and Charles Dunning perceived the era as one of incompetent blacks and scurrilous whites taking advantage of a prostrate South; see Dunning, *Reconstruction: Political and Economic, 1865-1877* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907); Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929).

⁴⁷ W. H. Morgan, *Personal Reminiscences of the War* (Lynchburg, VA: J. P. Bell, 1911), 272.

meddling upset the “natural” balance between the races and led to subsequent bloodshed. In the opinion of former soldiers, killing would not have been necessary had the North left the South to its own affairs.

As was the case from 1861-1865, during Reconstruction, violence became essential in keeping the racial balance—that is, white supremacy. In the face of the threatening and debased “Negro-Yankee” alliance, veterans believed they must restore home rule by force. Soldiers had worried that black people, once freed, would run rampant in Southern communities. They had feared such things during the war, but troops could not be at the front and at home at the same time. When they returned, however, they worked to undermine Reconstruction policies.⁴⁸

For some former Confederates, the Klan proved the savior of the South. The tyranny of “Negro rule,” said one veteran, “lasted some years, and had it not been for the secret organization of the Ku Klux Klan would have completely ruined the South.”⁴⁹ The Klan’s aim, said another, “was a laudable one.... The blacks who behaved themselves had the best of friends in the Kuklux Klan. I never heard of but two deeds of violence [done] in our midst.”⁵⁰ Yet another veteran admitted it was not made up of white trash, but

⁴⁸ On the collapse of Reconstruction because of the North’s failure to use military force to put down Klan activity and to assure fair elections, see William Gillette, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); on the collapse of Reconstruction governments due to paramilitary terror, see Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); on the failure of Reconstruction because of the reemergence of Democratic politics in the South through fraud and intimidation and the backlash against Republican policies, see Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); on the inability of black Reconstruction governments to function in the South because of internal problems, see Thomas C. Holt, *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Eric Foner, in his work *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), asserts that Reconstruction failed because it did not go far enough, not because it was too radical—it was abandoned due to the North’s preoccupation with matters outside the South, such as labor tension and financial and political scandals.

⁴⁹ James Huffman, *Ups and Downs of a Confederate Soldier* (New York: W. E. Rudge’s Sons, 1940), 107.

⁵⁰ Toney, *Privations of a Private*, 124-25.

Confederate officers and “the best citizens of the South.”⁵¹ The violence and intimidation of the Klan and other white paramilitary groups continued the racial violence that had flared during the war. It is no surprise that Nathan Bedford Forrest, conqueror of Fort Pillow and a former slave-trader, became the first “Grand Wizard” of the KKK. Unlike former rebel officers such as General John B. Gordon, Forrest did not find success in politics. Not did he prosper under the new free labor system. Once nicknamed “The Wizard of the Saddle,” however, “Grand Wizard” was a role ideally suited to Forrest. The Klan was created in his home state of Tennessee, which experienced some of the worst violence of the Civil War. Forrest’s image as cunning, violent, intimidating, mobile, and invincible perfectly matched the Klan’s mission. As had Forrest, the Klan struck quickly and hard and seemingly disappeared afterward.⁵²

Ex-Confederate soldiers played down the Klan’s excesses. The KKK “never burnt negroes,” one wrote, but in Delaware and Illinois he believed white people did.⁵³ He was right in saying that areas outside the former Confederate states were not free of discrimination and racial violence. The New York Draft Riot is just one example of how Northern racial tensions exploded into violence in the nineteenth century. In pointing their finger at Northern hypocrisy, however, former Confederates diverted attention from what was happening in the post-war South. True, the North was not a stranger to alarming acts of racial violence, but during Reconstruction, a window of opportunity existed in the South where blacks could have obtained rights and privileges equal to whites. No such opportunity existed in the North.

⁵¹ See John Allen Wyeth, *With Sabre and Scalpel: The Autobiography of a Soldier and a Surgeon* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1914), 322.

⁵² On Forrest’s role as a Klansman, see Jack Hurst, *Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 259-356.

⁵³ U. R. Brooks, ed., *Stories of the Confederacy* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1912), 351.

Racial propaganda accompanied post-war racial violence. Veterans used Old South rhetoric to justify the continued violence and oppression of black people. After Reconstruction ended, amid the rise of segregation and lynching, some veterans initiated a belated defense of the peculiar institution, making a proslavery argument without human bondage.⁵⁴ If many of those living in the New South were busy constructing textile mills, drinking Coca-Cola, smoking Durham cigarettes, and building trolley car lines, their racial attitudes drew heavily on Old South ways of thinking. If segregation and Jim Crow laws were something new, only the means, not the ends, of white supremacy had changed. One way or another, white Southerners wanted blacks kept subservient, and they would use the political, social, legal, and economic tools at their disposal to maintain white domination.

The proslavery argument contained much that was of use to segregationists and other late nineteenth century white supremacists. The proslavery way of thinking was a relic of the antebellum era, but former soldiers enjoyed making the case for white supremacy yet again. To some extent, veterans revisited old debates about states rights versus Federal power. Yet, even the most diehard ex-Confederate did not think seriously about seceding again. White Southerners, however, believed they could again achieve

⁵⁴ On the late-nineteenth century as the low point of race relations, see Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954); on lynching and America's race problems in the New South, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Random House, 2002); Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968); Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); on lynching in the 1890s and first decade of the twentieth century, see Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 351-52; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow, Second Revised Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966); George C. Wright, *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940: Lynchings, Mob Rule, and "Legal Lynchings"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

domination over black people. In their view, the Federal government was far less an immediate threat than local “Negroes,” who might ravish white women the minute white men’s backs were turned. For some Confederate veterans, slavery had proven the best means of keeping blacks under control. One need only look to the past, former soldiers saw, to see the necessity of racial violence. Their post-war, quasi-slavery defense was not original, but it did have a point: men wanted to show that Southerners had not been wrong in keeping the peculiar institution for so long. Long after Lee’s surrender, former Confederates had a New South to compare to the Old. Fears of what slaves would do if freed were hypothetical until emancipation took effect. After the freeing of the slaves, some former rebel soldiers saw their worst fears had become reality: once docile blacks had become a threatening presence in the South.

Veterans made perfunctory claims that emancipation was needed medicine. They might say, ‘*It is best that slavery was eradicated from American life, but*’....⁵⁵ But in their eyes, it was the best foundation for the relationship between whites and blacks; the United States Constitution sanctioned it; it was doomed to die a natural death; slaves were well treated and contented; human bondage had civilized blacks; Reconstruction proved that Southerners had always been right about what would happen if the slaves were freed; the institution of slavery did not originate in the South, and they had only followed a traditional way of life in holding onto the institution. Some men’s attitudes

⁵⁵ See W. W. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993 [1945]), 12-13, “I am heartily glad that slavery is gone on my children’s account, though they would have inherited a goodly number, and on account of the white race of the South, because I think they are better without them. But, when time removes the fog of fanaticism that has surrounded the subject, the world will see that never before were labor and capital brought together under circumstances more advantageous to the development of the laborer—nor was there ever a greater blessing bestowed on the negro race. If it was not a blessing, but an evil, then logically it should not have been. Now can any unprejudiced person, who wishes the negro well, wish him to have remained in heathenism and barbarism as they were when slavery rescued them from it?” On a similar opinion, see, Montgomery, *Reminiscences of a Mississippian*, 264-65.

revealed a Jeffersonian lament over slavery. “As an institution of government [slavery was] wrong, no right-thinking man can deny,” said one. But he said, “It is regrettable . . . that the world will never understand the true relation between the master and the slave of the Old South.”⁵⁶ The “true” relationship, he believed, was a benign one.

As was often the case with white Southerners, men’s racial thinking was not always consistent. “Extinction of slavery was expected by all and regretted by none,” wrote Richard Taylor.⁵⁷ But he was bitter toward the United States for bringing about abolition. “Humanitarians shuddered with horror and wept with grief for the imaginary woes of Africans,” he wrote. In his eyes, in succumbing to a weepy love for black Southerners they did not understand, Northerners had betrayed their fellow whites. For him, men of similar skin color should have showed solidarity.⁵⁸ As Taylor’s words show, it was contradictory that men believed slavery better off abolished and then defend its positive aspects. Southern white thinking about race, however, had never proven entirely consistent.

In veterans’ eyes, slavery might have been an economic and political liability, but it was not a sin. It was an “inheritance from their forefathers [and] by no means an unmitigated evil,” one veteran wrote.⁵⁹ Southerners did not argue from a “collective guilt” thesis because they did not feel guilty about slavery.⁶⁰ During the war, some had expressed regret over keeping human bondage, but such laments occurred late in the conflict, when melancholy rebels calculated the price slavery had exacted on the South.

⁵⁶ Duncan, *Recollections*, 172.

⁵⁷ Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War* (New York: Longmans Green, 1955 [1879]), 288.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction*, 288-89.

⁵⁹ Henry E. Handerson, *Yankee in Gray* (Pittsburgh: Press of Western Reserve University, 1962), 28.

⁶⁰ On guilt over slavery, or the lack thereof, among Southerners as depicted in the works of historians, see Gaines M. Foster, “Guilt Over Slavery: A Historiographical Analysis,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (November 1990), pp. 665-94.

Few, however, had considered eradicating it in the boom times of the 1850s. And after the war, veterans mostly were not afflicted by guilt over the peculiar institution. “The ‘sin of slavery,’ they never felt,” wrote John Morgan in 1878. “If this is moral obliquity,” he said, “they are still blind.”⁶¹ Confederate veterans felt no need to retract anything.⁶² Saying good riddance to slavery was not the same as expressing guilt over it. Slavery was troublesome, as the war had shown, but veterans believed it had not been undesirable.

Concerning human bondage, former soldiers often deflected blame—if they were to cast it at all—away from themselves and onto Northerners. “We did not enslave [black people],” wrote John Morgan. “If their enslavement was a sin, it is not at our door.”⁶³ At worst, Southerners argued, Americans as a whole were responsible for it. “I believed Negro slavery was a curse to the people of the Middle States,” Henry Kyd Douglas wrote after the war. He claimed to have no resentment toward abolitionists, but his assessment of Northerners contained sarcasm. “I had determined never to own [a slave],” he wrote. “Whether I would have followed the example of shrewd New Englanders ... by selling my slaves for a valuable consideration before I became an abolitionist, I will not pretend to say.”⁶⁴ As they had argued before the war, Southerners saw Yankees as hypocrites. Northerners had made fortunes from the peculiar institution, they knew, but when Southerners defended the right to own slaves, the North turned on its white neighbors in “Dixie.” Determined Southerners eventually rose from the ashes of war, veterans reassured themselves—they reasserted white supremacy and achieved reconciliation with

⁶¹ John T. Morgan, “Address by John T. Morgan,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 5 (1878), p. 15.

⁶² See address by Peter Turney, “They Wore Gray—The Southern Cause Vindicated,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 16 (1888), p. 319.

⁶³ John T. Morgan, “Address by John T. Morgan,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 5, p. 25.

⁶⁴ Henry Kyd Douglas, *I Rode with Stonewall* (St. Simon’s Island, GA: Mockingbird Books, 1961 [1940]), 15.

the North.⁶⁵ But they still harbored resentment against what the North had done to the “righteous” South.

If James Henry Hammond and George Fitzhugh had made names for themselves as slavery apologists, Confederate veterans who defended human bondage were an anachronism. Their post-war, proslavery views were of little interest to anyone outside the South. Northerners had reason to listen to the Fitzhughs and Hammonds of the 1850s, but not their late nineteenth century imitators. “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman and James K. Vardaman were the new race baiters with which Americans had to contend.⁶⁶ Former Confederates, nevertheless, continued to raise issues that they believed were embarrassing to a North that thought itself more progressive on racial issues. In many ways, their indictment was as relevant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as it had been decades before. Veterans asserted that if the South wanted black people kept down, the North did not want them at all. In their view, some Northern states—even that stronghold of abolitionism, Massachusetts—had made it clear how undesirable blacks were. And in the 1850s, Lincoln’s Illinois made it a crime for black people to enter the state. The North, Confederate veterans asserted, clearly was not free of racists.⁶⁷ One is not struck at how much ex-rebel soldiers criticized the North, but how they failed to carry their indictment further. They could have said how few Americans were abolitionists at any time and even most of them did not want blacks to become the legal and social equal of whites.

⁶⁵ See Blight, *Race and Reunion*.

⁶⁶ On Tillman, see Stephen D. Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); on Vardaman, see William F. Holmes, *The White Chief: James Kimble Vardaman* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970).

⁶⁷ On Massachusetts and Illinois, see Colonel Thomas Smith and Leigh Robinson, “Brilliant Eulogy on General W. H. Payne,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 36 (1908), pp. 319-21; on Sherman’s and Lincoln’s racial views, see A. H. Lankford’s editorial, “Hypocrisy of the ‘Elson History,’ ” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 20 (1912), p. 103.

Veterans believed that Yankees could not absolve themselves of racism or profiting from slavery. As one veteran said, “An old maxim tells us: ‘the receiver is as bad as the thief.’”⁶⁸ In his eyes, had Northern merchants felt guilty, they might have given their fortunes back, but they never did. Although by the mid 1800s the North had abolished slavery in its borders, veterans asserted that it was no friend of “the Negro.” And for them, free labor proved much more brutal than slavery. The Old South, as they saw it, had been devoid of exploitation. The slave had little reason to complain. But Northerners, they were convinced, had exaggerated the ills of human bondage. In 1911, elderly ex-rebel soldiers could read in *Confederate Veteran* an article that asserted that some masters were cruel, but such was “the exception and not the rule.”⁶⁹ Southerners believed they had invested too much money in the system for the master to treat slaves badly. Slave-owners provided good food, shelter, and medical attention for black people. Abuses did exist, veterans believed, but no institution was devoid of suffering.

In the mind of ex-soldiers, if Yankees had ever thought they were morally better than the South, they were in error. They asserted that the emancipation of the slaves, whether in the Revolutionary or Civil War era, hinged on Northerners’ practical rather than moral considerations. Colonel Edward McCrady said the North could afford to let slavery go after the Revolution because there were few black people there. Before then, however, all the colonies contained slaves. Later, only those states that had few black people quickly abolished it. As veterans reasoned, Northerners’ abolition of the institution in its borders (and, implicitly, later in the South) was not much of a sacrifice on their part. And in some Northern states, emancipation was only gradual. Indeed, as

⁶⁸ Smith and Robinson, “Brilliant Eulogy on General W. H. Payne,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 36, p. 314.

⁶⁹ L. R. Burrell, “Civilization of Negroes in the South,” *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 19 (1911), p. 229.

late as the 1830s, some slaves still lived there. Sojourner Truth, for example, was a New York slave, not one from the South. “If our Northern brethren had been earnest in freeing these people,” McCrady said to a crowd of South Carolina veterans, “they would all have been as philanthropic and disinterested as Vermont with her *seventeen* slaves, and would have emancipated their negroes as suddenly and more immediately than Mr. Lincoln did ours by his famous proclamation.”⁷⁰ In McCrady’s view, it was no great sacrifice to free slaves where few lived, and he reminded listeners that the North had benefited from slavery as much as the South.

In veterans’ eyes, if slavery had led to some abuses, free society’s hands were not free of blood. At the turn of the century, they saw that Yankee industrialists exploited factory workers and the United States was waging a racist war in the Philippines. The North denounced the South for lynching, but as the ex-Confederate soldier Charles Minor noted, the United States was doing worse in the Philippines, where its actions against insurgents was “without a parallel in history.”⁷¹ The United States, indeed, killed far more Filipinos than the South lynched black people in the same period. How could Northerners berate the South, veterans asked, when it was treating their “little brown brothers” in the Philippines far worse?⁷²

⁷⁰ Colonel Edward McCrady, Jr., “Address by Colonel Edward McCrady, Jr.,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 16 (1888), p. 250.

⁷¹ Charles Minor, “The Old System of Slavery,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 30 (1901), p. 127.

⁷² In the 1890s, the United States averaged 188 lynchings a year, 82% of which occurred in the South. Of those lynched, 32% were white. From 1900-1909, 93 lynchings a year occurred in the United States, with 92% of them happening in the South. 11% of those lynched were white. These figures come from George B. Tindall and David Shi, *America: A Narrative History, Volume II, Third Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 747. In contrast to the number of African Americans lynched in the South at the time of the United States’ war in the Philippines, approximately 20,000 Filipino soldiers died. Upwards of 200,000 civilians also lost their lives from disease, starvation, and the killings that were a direct result of the United States’ actions there, see Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America’s Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Random House, 1989), 194.

If veterans criticized Americans' brand of imperialism, in regards to the South, they argued along the lines of Rudyard Kipling, who famously wrote of the "white man's burden." Former Confederate soldiers believed they had a duty to civilize blacks. They, too, shared the white man's burden: they must tame what they saw as a primitive race of people. In their eyes, Anglo-Saxons were the civilizers of the world, the makers of laws, the builders of empires, and the maintainers of order.⁷³ Southerners had inherited a political, legal, and economic tradition that depended on white supremacy. The antebellum period, they believed, had been one of black people's uplift. General Bradley Johnson said that slavery "is the organization of labor in all primitive societies." He did not dwell on whether the South was "primitive," but he did say that the peculiar institution had benefited blacks, exposing them to Western culture.⁷⁴

Winthrop Jordan has called Europeans' decision to enslave Africans as "unthinking."⁷⁵ For two former soldiers, however, it was a thinking decision. "Let us use the idle sinews of the east to develop the idle fertilities of the west," they wrote in an address published in the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. "Out of two refractory negations make one intelligent affirmative; thus supplying a reason for existence to two continents, otherwise having none." In other words, the African would be defined by the labor he did in the New World. In the mind of such veterans, Europeans had done blacks a favor. Christianity saved them from hell and slave labor rescued them from idleness. America became a "huge employment agency for the idle hands and idle acres of two worlds." Southerners did not like to associate themselves with Yankee virtues, but here

⁷³ Breckinridge, "What the Ex-Confederate Has Done in Peace," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 20, p. 230.

⁷⁴ Bradley T. Johnson, "Address to the Confederate Association of St. Mary's County, Maryland," *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. 2 (1894), p. 260.

⁷⁵ Winthrop Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 26.

was the Protestant work ethic in its starkest form: men should work whether or not they wanted to. The New World, thus, became a factory for black idlers. From Africa came the “heathen raw material” that whites would use in America.⁷⁶

Former soldiers saw that in America, black people had adopted many aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture as their own. They had converted to Christianity and internalized white customs and institutional ways of thinking. In the late-nineteenth century, veterans emphasized what they believed was the poverty of African culture. As one said:

For at least forty centuries they have held undisputed possession of a continent, and yet their passing generations have not left a trace on the page of history. Time has overflowed with miracles of human achievement wherever else man’s foot has trod, but here there is only a dreary blank. In all these teeming centuries *they* have stood still. They have written no book, painted no picture, carved no statue, built no temple, established no laws, launched no ships, developed no language, achieved no invention.⁷⁷

It would be fruitless to correct such assumptions about black and African history. What is important is that veterans worked hard, long after slavery, to justify human bondage. If conditions in the South by 1900 were not ideal, Confederate veterans believed white Southerners had done more for black people than anyone else in the United States had.

In conclusion, by 1900, after centuries, the black character still fascinated the Southern mind. Although whites claimed to understand the “Negro,” an odd term that comes up when veterans discussed black people was that they were “aliens.”⁷⁸ Veterans continued to see them as at once part of and outside Southern culture. Perhaps those that saw them as “aliens” had not lived with blacks, or if they had, always treated them as

⁷⁶ Smith and Robinson, “Brilliant Eulogy on General W. H. Payne,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 36, pp. 310-11.

⁷⁷ A. M. Keiley, *In Vinculus; or, the Prisoner of War* (New York: Blelock & Company, 1866), 210.

⁷⁸ See Houghton and Houghton, *Two Boys*, 56; see also, Wyeth, *With Sabre and Scalpel*, 320.

foreign creatures. More so, rather than a desirable part of the white world, they saw they had to keep blacks in their place, which required keeping them at a literal distance. It ironically was in the 1880s and 1890s—not during the slavery period—that whites established a segregated society. In a “progressive” era, they saw Jim Crow laws as the best means of assuring white supremacy in the South.

William C. Breckinridge wrote that white Southerners had no choice but to acquiesce to the politics of white supremacy after Reconstruction. They “did not intend that [blacks] should be our enemies,” he said, “we did not intend to be barbarous or cruel; and yet we knew that their domination meant ruin and disaster, and that we could not leave the country any more than we could export them.”⁷⁹ The post-war era showed that America’s problem was race, not slavery. For former Confederate soldiers, their transition from pro-slavery men to segregationists was a relatively easy one. In their eyes, the white South had the same problem as before, “the Negro.” Just as they were convinced that the slavery was the best condition for blacks, so too was segregation. Southerners believed they had made the best of an inherited burden. Until America could somehow send black people back to Africa or otherwise literally make it a white person’s country, veterans must cope with blacks. They thought their way was the best way, and Northerners were arrogant when they believed they knew better. In the view of veterans, white Southerners were the black man’s friend—or at least more so than the Yankee—as well as his caretaker and benefactor.

After the war, with segregation and white supremacy achieved, with black people pushed to the margins of the Southern world, for ex-soldiers, “the Negro” again became

⁷⁹ Breckinridge, “What the Ex-Confederate Has Done in Peace,” *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 20, p. 231.

an abstraction, a tool for argument that encompassed contradictory traits. Black people had always proven essential in giving shape to Southern politics, and Confederate veterans used them as a metaphor for whatever intellectual purposes they desired. The proslavery argument had never been a fixed one, but one susceptible to political, economic, and social changes in America. After 1831, the peculiar institution increasingly became one without flaws, one free of guilt. It was as good as any institution could be. Confederate soldiers had grown up in this new environment of slavery as a “positive good.” After the war, they modified that argument into a new but familiar creed. The Civil War eradicated slavery, but not white supremacy, racial violence, and paternalistic attitudes. By 1900, the United States was still a “white man’s country.” White men’s hold on Southern politics, as ever, was a question of means rather than ends: they must keep black people “in their place.”

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Southerners constructed an ideology of slavery and white supremacy that contained paradoxical tenets. Blacks were lazy but the foundation of a social and economic “mud sill” class; slaves were “savages,” but rarely revolted and were malleable to discipline; they were not intelligent enough to rise above being field hands, but were clever enough to make laws that supposedly subjugated the South during Reconstruction; black people were faithful holders of silverware and disloyal runaways; humans and property; beloved family members and “aliens”; Africans and Americans; heathens and Christians. That Southern whites described black people in such extremes suggests the cultural gap that existed between the races, a divide that would cause problems well beyond Lee’s surrender. Racial politics survived the Civil War, with a few variations on old themes. After the conflict, Confederate veterans certainly lived in

a different world, but the “Negro problem” gave them a familiar subject upon which to create a New South.

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VITA

Colin Edward Woodward is a native of Massachusetts. In May of 1997, he graduated with honors in history and religion from Trinity College, Hartford. In December of 1999, he obtained a master's degree from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. In 2004, he was awarded the T. Harry Williams fellowship for 2004-2005. He received his doctoral degree in history in May 2005.