‘SEND MORE BUTTER’:

FINDING MEANING IN

CIVIL WAR FOOD REFERENCES

by

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For my sister and best friend, Lisa Jacobs, without whom this would not have been possible.

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‘SEND MORE BUTTER’:

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Food in the American Civil War meant more than nutrition. It served as a means of communication, status elevator, social lubricant, and bridge between home and front, and even across battle lines. This work examines how food, cooking, and references to food can be interpreted to tell us more about how the war operated on different levels.

Approached thematically, the study looks at express boxes, mess bonding, cooking, social hierarchy of cooks, the blockade, and trade across lines. Central to the argument is that food references in Civil War letters acted as a subtle communications tool that give insight into how soldiers felt and responded to the historic events around them. Essentially, it seeks to decode the language of food in Civil War letters.

In addition to the letter diagnostics, the study takes a food-centric look at Sherman’s actions in Georgia and the Carolinas in 1864-65, with an eye toward how his seizure and destruction of the resources can be interpreted, and why he felt so confident in his success. Another intervention involves the express boxes and how they connected the home front and the war front. By

examining tax data, it becomes clear that many more boxes were sent to the front than previously estimated, which changes how we should approach these gifts and civilian contributions to the war effort. Food is also used as a lens into the blockade, women's resistance, and the formation of bonds between soldiers. Cooking is examined for its ability to change the social status of meal preparers, both white and Black, free and enslaved. Cooking changed attitudes and lives during the war, even as it is suspected to have ended others.

Food is more than calories and comfort, it is also a means of communication, identity, commerce, and social tie. Through this perspective, the Civil War takes on fresh nuances.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS IS NOT A COOKBOOK

The American Civil War's connection to food came before the first shots were fired. When rumors began to fly that the newly formed Confederacy intended to take Fort Sumter, President Abraham Lincoln reinforced the site with food, not arms. Equipped with bread but lacking men and cannon shot, the Union surrendered the fort within days after the first shot.[1]

Food also marked the end of the war. Throughout the four long years of the war, the South and North continued to do business with one another, trading cotton for food and other supplies, often over the strenuous objections of Union generals. Finally, in spring 1865, the line of trade was severed, and Lee surrendered two weeks later, unable to feed his army.

Food in the American Civil War has received its fair share of attention through insightful examinations of agriculture, transportation, medicine, and military strategy, almost all focused on food as a war materiel.[2] This study seeks to add nuance to the conversation by examining food for its communicative abilities and social rather than caloric content. It delves into how sharing food strengthened relationships within the ranks and externally between soldiers and civilians. It reveals how meal preparation improved the social status of both Black and white

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[1] U.S. President Abraham Lincoln's strategy was to make the South look like the aggressors by firing the first shot against a Union force merely trying to feed the fort's defenders. For a concise summation of Lincoln's resupply decision (and various historians' opinions on its cleverness) see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988): 272.

[2] Examples include Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011); William G. Thomas *The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2011); Thomas F. Army, Jr. *Engineering Victory: How Technology Won the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016); and R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

cooks, and how cooking altered views about gendered work. Food also served as a lynchpin between civilians and the government, whether it was women protesting high prices, or Sherman's bummers seizing (or destroying) everything edible. Finally, this work examines how food became a connection across battle lines, between individuals and savvy business people. In general, this study explores three main themes: relationships, status, and communication, all through the lens of food.

Food is not a major explanation of the Civil War, as it is in Lizzie Collingham's study on World War II, but it does provide an opening into the conversation of how people thought and felt during the war.[3] The way soldiers wrote home about food offers a method for examining attitudes, and gaining new insights into their thought processes.

Most Civil War letters offer little more than descriptions of weather, road conditions, a little gossip, and what they ate.[4] Reading them, a cultural historian might search through hundreds of letters and diaries for the rare heartfelt expressions of emotion.[5] Weather references are little help. Literary scholars use environmental theory to find meaning in descriptions of the weather in fiction.[6] However, in the case of Civil War soldiers who were exposed to real

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[3] Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012).

[4] To clarify, the *literary* environmental theory, also called eco-criticism, should not be confused with the *medical* environmental theory that uses factors such as weather and geography to explain disease etiology. Eco-criticism seeks to find and interpret metaphor within literary environmental descriptions. And neither should be confused with Civil War environmental scholarship, which examines how the war affected the land and our relationship to it. For a historiography of Civil War environmental studies, see Lisa M. Brady, "From Battlefield to Fertile Ground: The Development of Civil War Environmental History," *Civil War History* 58, No. 3 (Sept. 2012): 305-321.

[5] By cultural historian, I am using Peter Burke's catch-all definition: A historian concerned with the symbolic and its interpretations. Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History? Third Ed.* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019):3.

[6] Examples of eco-criticism (literary environmental theory) include Sarah Strauss, and Ben Orlove, eds. *Weather, Climate, Culture* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2003); and Jan Golinski, *British Weather and the Climate of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

elements all the time, often without recourse, weather accounts seem less symbolic and more practical. Of course, one could argue the same about comestibles, since food was critical to their fighting abilities. A crucial difference is that soldiers also took the time to write about what they *desired* to eat, or remembered eating *in the past*, as well as what they were currently consuming. This puts food firmly into the realm of memory and wish fulfillment, giving it more weight as regards to symbolism and metaphor. An example is this 1864 letter from D. Sample to his friend Sam. "What did father do with my pork? did he Salt it up or sell it if so how much did he sell and at what price? I would like very much to be at home to masticate some of the sosages, spare ribs and backbone with a few turnips taters cabbage and such like mixed in once and a while there."[7] Sample fantasizes about those sausages and spare ribs, not just about their monetary value, but about how they would combine with the potatoes and turnips to make a fine meal — especially if it were eaten *at home*.

Traditionally, Civil War scholars have focused on topics such as politics, race/gender/class, economics, and military strategies.[8] Yet honest feelings lay hidden within the seemingly innocuous discussions of food on the pages of common letters found in libraries and museums across the country. Structural anthropologist Mary Douglas argues in her groundbreaking essay "Deciphering a Meal" that all meals are encoded, and although no master

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[7] D Sample to Sam, January 8, 1864, from camp of Daniel's Brigade. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.285.01.

[8] The highest standards of Civil War scholarship focus on these issues, including James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel Was Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008); and literally thousands of others.

or universal key exists, we can read their meaning within the letters' context.[9] Toward that end, what is needed is a closer reading of Civil War letters with context in mind.

A typical Civil War letter contains comments or complaints about officers, messmates, or other soldiers; descriptions of their surroundings, such as weather, mud, flora, and fauna; news or movements, which might include battles or health issues; and very frequently what is for supper, or what they had for breakfast. Nineteenth-century masculine strictures forbade too-blatant expressions of feelings, but food remained a safe topic, a universal interest.[10] It is, for lack of a better term, sustenancial communication. In reading more closely, patterns emerge. While the negative emotions of anger, fear, loneliness, and homesickness might seem the most obvious, happiness, contentment and love are also common in Civil War missives. In fact, the details of a battle might never be mentioned, but grumblings or praise about supper offer clues to success or failure based on no details other than the food they ate, the date, and the location.

In recent decades, Civil War scholars have sought greater insight into the motivations of soldiers on both sides of the conflict, and at least some of their work relied on cultural history.[11]

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[9] Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedelus* 101: No. 1 (Winter 1972): 11.

[10] Much has been written about nineteenth-century masculinity, but this study relies on the idea that American masculinity at this time was at least partially defined by an adult male's ability to control his emotions and innate passions. For more on this notion, see Richard Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009): 1,166,198, 283. For how men's independence required emotional distance, see Kristin Sanner, *'A Very Different Type of Maternity': The Transformation of Familial and Gender Roles in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (PhD Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghampton, 2003): 2, 74-75.

[11] A modest sample of the studies addressing the question of why the war was fought or why men fought in the war includes Glenn David Brasher, *Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation: African Americans and the Fight for Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War,* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Gary W. Gallagher, *Confederate War* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1997); and Gallagher's *Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War*, New York: Vintage Books, 2007); and James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrade: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Aiding historians in that work is the timely addition of analytical methods used by anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists.[12] Instead of simply asking "what" and "how," we can also ask "why," with greater flexibility and discernment. That this level of analysis can be used in foodways is an even more recent development, but one which is gaining strength and popularity.[13] Food, we have come to accept, has significance well beyond calories and comfort. In her study of food in nineteenth-century novels, Annette Cozzi noted, "Food is about more than physical nourishment or sensual pleasure, it is about power: Power over life, and power over death, power over self and over the Other."[14] I would go a step further and suggest it is also about connections, and when examined together with the Civil War, food reveals new dynamics within those relations.

Most of these food references come from letters written by regular soldiers. Although it may seem odd to read into them symbolism, I argue that the authors intended for their missives to be interpreted this way. Even untutored soldiers understood food metaphors. Gastronomic symbolism lies at the heart of most religions and communal rituals, including Christianity; and is one of the more common linguistic tools. Breaking bread together in church, at the family table, around a campfire or a hearth, may communicate a myriad of messages, from a pact with the divine, to human love, friendship, and community. Given this reality, the error lies in ignoring food analogies, regardless of the class and education of the author.

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[12] Peter Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Pennsylvania State University: University Park, PA, 1993): 14, 32, 212,

[13] Simply put, foodways is a term for the culture of food, or how we acquire, consider, prepare, consume, and use food, including its emotional and cultural content.

[14] Annette Cozzi, *The Discourses of Food in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*," (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 6.

Education for an average American in the mid-nineteenth century often consisted of a few years of primary school, taught in a one-room schoolhouse where students learned their letters, some math and geography, a little history, and even less punctuation. Still, men with the slightest exposure to formal learning typically knew something about the Bible, since church and revivals were popular forms of live entertainment even among the religiously nonobservant. Literary works by best-selling authors like Charles Dickens and Harriet Beecher Stowe were read aloud and performed publicly. Non-food analogues in the English language can be a feast or famine, bitten off, crammed down our throats, gobbled up, or chewed over. Equally, a variety of non-edible things may be described by alimentary modifiers such as savory, oily, distasteful, and delicious. People or personalities are salty, sweet, sour, and bitter. So it was with soldiers of that day, who used these kinds of metaphors in letters to inform family and friends of their lives at war, and how they fared, both literally and figuratively.

The value of discerning emotional content within everyday letters lies in what they reveal regarding issues like morale and determination, as well as how soldiers felt about their comrades and their extended family and friends. An example is a June 1865 letter from Union soldier Hal Hayden, just months after the end of the war. Most of what we know about the immediate aftermath of the Civil War are newspaper accounts of jubilant crowds, triumphant victory marches, and general social confusion. But with food as his chief metaphor, Hayden wrote to his wife about his dreams of their new life: “When we get to May’s Landing we will have early gardens. Will live on oysters, clams, peaches, & strawberries. Fish are abundant there. Charley and Addie may go out to the ocean occasionally, & catch a shark or a whale. You and I and Ma

and Ruthie will go & take a sea bath - Won't we have fine times in our new home?"[15] His fantasy of living on sweet fruit and fish is one of family, plenty, and peace. Revealingly, his New Jersey utopia does not feature red meat such as pork or beef, typically associated with blood and violence.[16]

Food, real and symbolic at once, offers a starting point for examining the emotional states revealed in common letters which previously seemed to offer no significant information. Why this matters is the focal point of this study. What soldiers felt, even if it was not expressed plainly, lies at the heart of why they fought. Whether it was anger, fear, patriotism, pride (false or otherwise), love, hate, or greed, the Civil War was a conflict of emotions running high. Perhaps what makes scholars so determined to delve into this subject is a desire to find logic and reason in the madness. Too often we are misled by the nineteenth-century men's efforts to hide their emotions, to put on a brave face and sublimate their emotions behind codified language offering covert hints, but not open expression, to their feelings. By analyzing references to a common source of comfort and sensuality — food — we can break through their stoicism and recognize the emotional upheavals the war caused in the lives of everyday soldiers.

My primary research is not about food as energy, although I must cover some of the logistical details in order to set the stage. Instead, my goal is to delve into how food works as a means of communication and social tie. For example, eating together could express love and support, while the reverse of that — denying food to others — demonstrated dominance.

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[15] The war ended in April 1865. Hal Hayden to Frankie Hayden, June 23, 1865. Hayden Family Papers, 1864-1866. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.265.25.
[16] Nick Fiddes. *Meat : A Natural Symbol.* London: Routledge (1992): 68-69.

Observations about hierarchy and communication are helpful because they shed light not only on how our society evolved, but also where we are now. When attitudes change society changes.

We still communicate through food by making a meal for those who are grieving or are sick. We romance over dinner and send arrangements of cookies, fruit, or other treats to those whom we care about. At the same time, we avoid eating with those whom we dislike or distrust. Food allows for clear but silent communication. In the early twenty-first century, where sight and sound are often seen as the most important senses, taste and smell remain significant through the primal necessity and comfort of food. Today, cooks become celebrities and their books bestsellers. We acknowledge chefs as important regardless of skin color or ethnicity. We also recognize social status by what people eat — escargot versus menudo or chitterlings, lobster foam versus fried cod. Hierarchy remains part of that equation, whether demonstrating status, or fighting for it.

So, is food's meaning in the Civil War important? It is because we care about how people interact today. In looking at how people lived in the past, we gain insight into our own society. The past and present are inextricably tied, and we can understand ourselves better by seeing what others did before us.

Finally, my reasons for studying food in the Civil War are also personal. I find it fascinating and fun. When soldiers write about missing their mama's pies, or talk about an unusual Thanksgiving meal, I can recognize the conversation on more than one level. Sure, mom's cooking might be good, but these men are also saying they miss home. And Thanksgiving is about more than turkey, it is also about family, traditions, and stability. We can share in their delight at finding an "ocean" of blackberries and eating so many that they must lie

down and rest, regardless of the enemy army that might be lurking around the bend. There is humanity there, which pulls back the remove of time and brings us to one place.

This study came about because of the generous donation of the Pearce Civil War Collection to Navarro College where I was an adjunct instructor. As I began reading the letters in the collection, I was struck by the common denominator of food in so many of them. In arranging the study, I relied on the thematic approach laid down by Drew Gilpin Faust in her *This Republic of Suffering*. Since food touched so many aspects of the war this method allowed me to skip among the topics as they occurred in my research. I am aware that I missed many important issues, which I hope to explore more thoroughly in future.

The first section of this study deals with food as a means of communication. Chapter 1 covers the shipments of expresses, or boxes, from homes to the soldiers in the field. Soldiers came to treasure these crates of pies and cakes, or apples and onions as much for the silent messages included as for the physical edibles. The gift boxes were a tangible means by which family and friends were able to contribute to the war and support a loved one. This chapter also examines the business of express services, such as Adams, Wells Fargo and American Express. Their tax receipts indicate the enormous contributions made through the boxes sent from home, emotionally and substantively.

The second chapter deals with how sharing food aided unit cohesion and created those all-important "bands of brothers," so crucial to military success. Soldiers fight for each other as much as for a cause, and eating together, preparing meals, and sharing whatever they had helped form those bonds.

The third chapter covers a broader aspect of communication by focusing on foraging as a means of garnering resources, and a military strategy to assert dominance. This section focuses heavily on the strategies of Major-General William T. Sherman in his marches to Atlanta, from Atlanta to Savannah, and from Savannah to North Carolina. However, it also looks at how foraging was seen by common soldiers seeking to supplement their boring or meager rations.

The essential aspect of communicating through food lies within Civil War letters themselves. In the thousands of Civil War letters available to scholars in public and private collections around the country far too many are dismissed as shallow or lacking because they contain what seems to be ephemeral descriptions of weather or food. In chapter four, I look at the literary background of these writers, the predominant symbolic culture, and how that can be seen in these seemingly innocuous Civil War missives.

The second major theme is of relationships and food preparation. The boxes and letters certainly overlap with this issue, but in chapter five I look at how cooking changed these men, both in how they perceived the work, and (by extension) those who did the work. During the Civil War, common soldiers were typically issued supplies or rations and they prepared their own food in a mess of four to ten other men. For many, this would be their first attempt at cooking and cleaning, and it was an eye-opening experience. Most had no idea what they were doing, and once that initial shock passed, they showed surprising willingness to learn, adapt, and develop their skills. This chapter also deals with the issues of food preparers and status. Free and enslaved black men were often relegated to the position of cooks in the war, deemed unworthy of fighting alongside whites. Instead, many of them found new status as respected members of the camp by demonstrating not only cooking skills, but resourcefulness and courage in support

positions. Cooking did elevate some men above their fellows in the service, but the persistent racism and white supremacy that lay at the very heart of American society and the war could not be erased, only temporarily alleviated.

The sixth chapter deals with the logistics of food in the war. The work of supplying an army meant getting enough food to the men to be an effective fighting force, but also keeping them from simply leaving or deserting to save themselves from starvation. That chapter also deals with the issues of hygiene and cleanliness in an era before germ theory.

The seventh chapter deals with the Union blockade and how that affected the South. Specifically, this chapter addresses the issues of transportation and perceived shortages in the Confederacy. Every Civil War scholar must address the issue of the blockade, and I use letters to explore the real impact of that strategy.

The eighth chapter looks at the surprisingly common practice of trading across enemy lines for food and other supplies. War or not, both the North and South sought to continue the cotton trade to accommodate fabric producers, domestic and foreign. Southerners swapped cotton for food and goods, while Northerners used cotton to appease Europe and keep its own textile mills running. On a smaller, more personal level, addictions also led to trade across lines as Southerners sought coffee, impeded by the blockade, and Northerners longed for tobacco. Swaps were made by the steamship-load, and in tiny tobacco and coffee sacks by opposing sentries, but they all spoke to the persistence of American entrepreneurial cooperation despite philosophical differences.

The uniting thread in each of these topics remains food — as a war materiel, a means to building relationships and boosting status, and how it relates to power and dominance. Food's

significance culturally and emotionally is thrown into sharp relief in the immediacy of war. Combatants of the Civil War, the voices of whom remain uncensored and preserved in thousands of letters and diaries across the nation offer a unique opportunity through which we can explore the uses and limitations of a resource as historical lens.

CHAPTER 1

SHIPPING

It was the first Thanksgiving of the Civil War, 1861, and a clearly bitter Union Capt. C.S. Edwards wrote to his wife that the men of his company received no holiday parcels from their hometown of Bethel, Maine. "All the company in the Regt had a dinner sent them from Maine but Co. I. When the Express came in all the regt came around it after (their) Boxes. All had a box but the Bethel Co... I could but drop a tear to think that we were so soon forgotten."[17] The contrast was evidently painful. Other Maine villages, those of Biddeford and Saco, sent crates full of clothing, blankets, mittens, and food to the men stationed in Virginia, and those boxes came on a weekly basis, not just Thanksgiving, according to Edwards. It was thanks to the kindness of their comrades that the Bethelites still ate well that holiday, dining on beef, potatoes, mince pies, corn, green peas, and — from Capt. Sawyer from Portland — Edwards also got turkey and chicken pie. But none of these holiday treats allayed the anger he felt for his hometown. "It would be a long time before I would visit Bethel if it was not for you and the rest of the family. It makes me a little mad to look back on the Blood Suckers of Bethel."

This level of anger towards home is rare in Civil War letters, but it does reveal an expectation of civilian support for troops in the war. Demographic researchers Dora Costa and Matthew Kahn point out that morale in the Civil War depended on home support, competent

[17] C.S. Edwards to his wife from Camp Franklin, Nov. 22, 1861, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2002.310.

leadership, and low fatalities.[18] Edwards certainly felt justified in demanding more from their hometown, including a special holiday box.

The Civil War has been called the first modern American war, a reference to the death-dealing technology, large-scale movements, philosophical shifts, and horrifying numbers of fatalities.[19] But in terms of logistics, quality of supplies, and health care, the Civil War remained a primitive and rudimentary undertaking. Boxes from home showed emotional and physical support for soldiers by helping bridge gaps left by low pay, poor provisioning, and logistical problems on the part of Union and Confederate armies. N.W. Storer spelled it out for his mother back in Dexter, Maine by stating: "We – the soldiers – have come to the war – have sacrificed everything, that we might save our country – save our free institutions and free government – and we have a right to claim all the support that the people a home can give us."[20] In Civil War letters, diaries, and memoirs, references to the boxes express mailed from home are as common

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[18] Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, "Health, Wartime Stress, and Unit Cohesion: Evidence from Civil War Veterans," *Demography* 47 (Feb. 2010), 45-66.

[19] The concept that the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) was the first modern war has old roots, although its support among modern military scholars remains undiminished. Among those making the claim (in chronological order) are J.F.C. Fuller, *Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, (London: J.Murray, 1929): viii, 26; Bruce Catton, *America Goes to War: Civil War and Its Meaning in American Culture*, (Middletown, CT:Wesleyan University Press, 1958): 14; Joseph L. Harsh, "Battlesword and Rapier: Clausewitz, Jomini, and the American Civil War," Military Affairs 38, No. 4 (Dec. 1974): 133-138; Edward Hagerman, *American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization and Field Command* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988):xi; and Williamson Murray and Wayne Wei-siang Hsieh, *A Savage War: A Military History of the Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016):11, 40.
In his analysis of the debate A.D. Harvey tackled the question from the European perspective in his essay "Was the American Civil War the First Modern War?" *History* 97 No. 2 (April 2012): 272-280; and concluded that it had little impact on the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Harvey makes that assertion based on the military technology used in the U.S. Civil War, but already being developed in Europe before the war. However, in their interdisciplinary study of the Civil War and World War I, Nicholas and Peter Onuf assert that the Civil War was the first modern war because of the broader issues such as liberalism and economics, which may not have shown up in the Franco-Prussian War, but which had certainly arrived on European shores by the time of the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand. See Nicholas Onuf and Peter Onuf, *Nations, Markets, and War: Modern History and the American Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

[20] N.W. Storer to his mother, Mrs. L.H. Storer, February 25, 1863, from Camp Suffolk. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.135.

as descriptions of weather and complaints about officers. Soldiers' letters often expressed appreciation to the box preparers, while also making requests for the next package. The simple boxes packed with homemade foods and root vegetables are recalled in letters and diaries as precious. However, based on their descriptions, the physical contents were prosaic — food, clothing, hygiene products such as soap and razors, and medical supplies, basic items providing physical comfort, or reminders of familial or community support.[21]

Almost any collection of Civil War letters will include references to these boxes. And perhaps it is because they are so common that scholars tend to treat them as sideline to other topics. Bell Irvin Wiley's classics *The Life of Johnny Reb* and *The Life of Billy Yank*, discusses food and refers to the boxes as much-beloved by the soldiers. "Foods in greatest demand were vegetables and sweets, but these seem to have constituted the great bulk of packages sent from home."[22] John D. Billing, author of a memoir about camp life, *Hard Tack and Coffee or the Unwritten Story of Army Life*, refers to the boxes as important to camp morale. William C. Davis mentions the boxes in *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and the Gray*, as a means of smuggling alcohol to the soldiers. James McPherson's Pulitzer-winning *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, mentions them in conjunction with the work of the U.S. Sanitary Commission.[23] Frances Clarke, author of *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North* references the boxes when she describes women's contributions to the war effort. Like

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[21] In return, the soldiers shipped home money, battlefield souvenirs, such as the enemy's swords or insignia, photographs of themselves and friends, and their own used clothes, typically winter coats, which would be returned when winter set in again.

[22] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy.* Baton Rouge:Louisiana State University Press (1943): 99

[23] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988):481.

Davis, Clarke notes the impressive volume of boxes that must have been sent. "It is impossible to know how many women's groups sent donations directly to local companies. But soldier's letters make it clear that the mails were filled with packages of homemade food and clothing making their way directly to friends and family at the front."[24]

Although the express boxes are common in Civil War letters and diaries, and appear peripherally in studies of the war, they have not garnered much separate study. The shame of that neglect is that soldiers themselves saw the boxes as very important. This chapter seeks to demonstrate why historians should re-evaluate the boxes and their place in the war. In order to do so we must address two questions: Did the boxes contribute to the physical well-being of soldiers, or to put another way, were they essential to the nutritional support of the war? And second, what kinds of emotional bridges did the packages build between the home front and war front?

To establish whether the boxes made any nutritional difference in the war effort, it is helpful to understand what they were and how they were shipped. Unlike modern "care" packages, Civil War boxes from home were wooden crates or trunks designed to hold up to rough treatment on the journey, sometimes bound with metal straps. Former Union soldier John D. Billings described the boxes as "usually of good size, often either a shoe-case or a common soap-box, and were rarely if ever less than a peck in capacity."[25] In modern terms, about the size

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[24] Frances M. Clarke *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 90.

[25] John D. Billings. *Hard Tack and Coffee or the Unwritten Story of Army Life* (C.J. Peters & Son, Boston, 1887): 218.

of two gallon jugs, or four liter bottles.[26] The boxes were packed tightly with food, such as pastries and jars of preserves or honey, as well as clothing, shoes, tools, bandages, liniment, paper, ink, books, soap, and razors. Typically they contained practical items, such as hatchets and leather-repair kits, but also canned milk, roasted chickens, chocolate, and bottled sauces like catsup.[27] Many soldiers' letters warn senders not to ship bread, as it would spoil, but others appealed for pies, meat, and butter. Timothy O. Webster wrote on January 24, 1864: "We hav got a plenty of cooking utencials we all take turn about in cooking we liv verry well two if the mess has had express boxes from home well filled with such nicks as we cannot get here."[28] The "nicks" or dietary augmentations most commonly requested were fruit preserves or jams, desserts, and butter. William Silsby wrote to his wife Helen to thank her for the box they received, which evidently contained a variety of items, including butter, a cap, towels, tomatoes, and plums. "We still have plenty of butter. It is of good quality none of it has yet become strong, and what makes it taste particularly good, is the fact that it came from home and was put up for our use by those we think right smartly of, and who we assume, in sending it to us, did it with the most friendly motives."[29]

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26 Vintage soap boxes measure about 22 inches long (55 cm), and sixteen inches wide (40 cm), and are nine to twelve inches deep (23-30 cm), or roughly the size of a modern boot box.

27 John D. Billings. *Hard Tack and Coffee or the Unwritten Story of Army Life*. (C.J. Peters & Son, Boston 1887): 220.
Nineteenth century catsup was any sauce that lent flavor to bland or unpalatable food. Although the modern version is tomato-based, the nineteenth-century version was more often sardine- or mushroom-based, similar to Worcestershire sauce.

28 T.O. Webster to his wife and children, Jan. 24, 1864, from Culpepper, Virginia, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1999.160.154.

29 William H. Silsby to his wife Helen, January 20, 1862, Birds Point, Missouri. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2004-373.132.

Food from home provided variety and touches of luxury otherwise not available. That is exactly how Robert Weir described the box he requested from his wife in October 1862. "I asked for a package of luxuries. They are hard to be obtained here, or indeed cannot be had - butter is now 40 cts per lb - & in N. Orleans is 80c. You need not send butter but you might send a few boxes as sardines, some currant jelly or things of that sort: I cannot favor 40ct lb butter."[30] Willis Benedict wrote to his brother, Edward to thank him for an express box in mid-1863. "I found everything as I could wish so far as shirt, handkerchief and hatchet were concerned and the lemons, sugar, and mustard were an unexpected treat."[31]

In the nineteenth century, the United States Postal Service did not carry packages, so all the boxes were necessarily hand-carried by friends or family, or were "expressed" through private companies. Leaders in the parcel business were Adams Express, American Express, Wells Fargo, National Express, U.S. Express, and Harnden & Co. Southern Express was an Adams offshoot created to serve the rebel states during the war years. Although these companies built their reputations by safely and swiftly carrying goods from one point to another, they also engaged in transferring money through branch offices linked by telegraph lines. Their reliability and reputations eventually allowed some of these companies to pivot entirely into money and credit services when the U.S. Postal Service began to compete with express companies by delivering packages early in the twentieth century. Adams Express became the investment group

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[30] Robert Weir to his wife, October 19, 1862, from the ship U.S. St. Richmond (off the coast of Trinidad). *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No.2005.186.02.

[31] Willis Benedict to Edward Benedict, September 1, 1863, from camp near Portsmouth, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection,* Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 96-033.70.

Adams Financial; Wells Fargo, a banking and credit company; and American Express became an international finance/credit group.[32]

At the dawn of the Civil War, Adams Express held the position as the country's largest express company. The firm owned a small fleet of ships, hundreds of railroad cars, and thousands of wagons and horse teams, as well as exclusive contracts with railroad companies and steamships to ensure the utmost speed of its deliveries.[33] As the most successful of the shipping companies, Adams Express serves as a worthwhile illustration of the industry. Examples of Adams' reputation abound. Adams was the company that carried the enslaved man Henry "Box" Brown from Richmond, Virginia to Philadelphia. Brown's uncomfortable trip in a wooden crate to the office of a Pennsylvania abolitionist took only 27 hours, albeit he arrived bruised and shaken.[34] Adams Express also successfully hauled tons of gold dust and nuggets from the gold rush in Northern California to the east coast in the 1850s.[35]

Because of this established reputation for security and trustworthiness, Civil War soldiers relied on the company when they wanted to send cash. On the other end of that connection, families felt they could only trust Adams with Aunt Mae's pie, or grandma's strawberry jam. Seth Gilbert wrote to his mother from a camp near Falmouth, Virginia: "Yesterday our Brigade

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[32] Harnden & Co., the first national express company, did not make the transition into the twentieth century. As competition built within the industry in the mid-nineteenth century, Harnden turned its attention to shipping people, becoming a leader in bringing immigrants to America and was eventually bought out by Adams. Charles E. Fisher, "The Birth of the Express Business," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 13, no. 4 (1939): 59-63.

[33] Shipping speed was particularly important for food deliveries because of the unreliable preservation methods available at the time.

[34] Robbins, Hollis. "Fugitive Mail: The Deliverance of Henry 'Box' Brown and Antebellum Postal Politics". *American Studies*. **50**: 5. (2009)

[35] Robbins, Hollis. "Fugitive Mail: The Deliverance of Henry 'Box' Brown and Antebellum Postal Politics". *American Studies*. **50**: 5. (2009): 13.

got paid off for four months. I recd 68 dollars of which I send you $50 by Adams Express."[36] Gilbert sent his letter through the U.S. Postal Service, but the money could only be entrusted to Adams.

The company's financial wherewithal and reach closely followed the Union army. When General Benjamin Butler's men stationed in New Orleans had not received their pay — some of them in arrears six months — Butler wrote a check to the local Adams Express office to get $25,000 in cash, and arranged for Adams to carry another $25,000 to the men's families.[37] He explained his actions to the Secretary of the Treasury in a letter: "I would not let my soldiers go longer unpaid. It was injuring the credit of the Government with our foes and breeding sickness and discontent among my men." Butler borrowed an additional $50,000 in gold coin from a New Orleans bank, pledging his own credit and the faith of the government, along with six percent interest. Butler turned to Adams for the cash because he could not get that much in U.S. currency from the banks.[38] To clarify, the New Orleans Adams office was a *branch* office of a shipping company, which had more U.S. dollars than the banks.

To answer whether the packages from home made a difference to the war nutritionally, it helps to have a better idea of how much shipping took place. As private companies in a competitive business, the records of express companies remain inaccessible, if they still exist.

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[36] Seth Gilbert, Evans Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1998.111.57.

[37] See letters from Major-General Benjamin Butler to Salmon P. Chase (Secretary of the Treasury), Asa Blake (Adams Express agent, New Orleans), and W.B. Dinsmore (President of Adams Express Co.), July 2-3, 1862. OR, Series I, Vol. XV (Washington: GPO, 1886):513-514.

[38] Confederate dollars were readily available, but could not be used by the Union army. Benjamin F. Butler to Salmon P. Chase, July 2, 1862, New Orleans. OR, Series I, Vol. XV (Washington: GPO, 1886):513. Butler states in the letter that he borrowed $50,000 in gold from the banks because he could not get Treasury notes, adding: "I shall also obtain from Adams & Co. here $50,000 in Treasury notes, or thereabout."

Alvin Harlow, who wrote a book about express companies in the mid-twentieth century, bemoaned the lack of public records. "Never was any hint given to the public as to size of the express companies' incomes…even stockholders were kept in ignorance."[39] Still, some evidence of how well Adams did during the war came in 1866 when the firm declared a stockholder dividend of $200 on each $100 share of stock, and additional bonuses of $300 in stock, while promising future annual dividends of 12 percent.[40] In addition to this rare dividend report, the firm's gross receipts are also recorded in federal tax records.

The U.S. Constitution did not allow for an income tax prior to 1913, but congress authorized a special income tax in 1862 to help pay for the war, while also establishing a fledgling Internal Revenue Service responsible for collections.[41] The most diligent of those collectors worked in New York City, then, as now, the financial capital for the nation. New York was also headquarters for the country's largest shipping companies. Like banks and railroads, express firms were taxed according to gross receipts. These early income taxes were collected monthly, and recorded in hand-written ledgers. Although gaps in the ledgers exist, enough notations survive to give us a glimpse into the massive war-related growth of these enterprises between 1862 and 1865, and their wane after the war's end.

The monthly totals are enlightening. For example, Adams Express reported gross receipts of $273,903 in July 1863 for its New York City office; U.S. Express made $137,233; and Wells

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[39] Alvin F. Harlow, *Old Waybills: The Romance of the Express Companies*, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1934): 457.

[40] Alvin F. Harlow, *Old Waybills: The Romance of the Express Companies*, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1934): 457. Outrage at what was seen as war profiteering caused the company to scale back the dividends to 8 percent after 1867.

[41] Although the Constitution forbade an income tax, the special war-time income tax remained in effect from 1862 through 1872. Later, the income tax became permanent with the 16th amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Fargo $87,774.[42] To give perspective, the 2021 equivalent would be $5.9 million for Adams, $2.9 million for U.S. Express, and $1.8 million for Wells Fargo, and these are *monthly* totals. A year later in July 1864, Adams reported $378,150 of gross receipts; National Express $19,916; and Wells Fargo $72,191. The war officially ended in April 1865 with Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, but many of the Union soldiers remained in uniform for months afterward, either securing the defeated Southern states or working their ways home. In July 1865, Adams reported $668,039 in gross receipts; U.S. Express, $290,470; and National $29,687. By mid 1866, most soldiers had returned to civilian life, and that is reflected in the sharp drop in shipping. In July 1866, Adams reported gross receipts of $256,594; U.S. Express, $267,120; and National $28,965.

Table 1. Monthly gross receipts from the New York express company offices:[43]

Company	July 1863	July 1864	July 1865	July 1866
Adams Express	$273,903	$378,150	$668,039	$256,594
U.S. Express	$137,233	NA	$290,470	$267,120
Wells Fargo	$87,774	$72,191	NA	NA
National Express	NA	$19,916	$29,687	$28,965

[42] U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Internal Revenue Assessment Lists for New York and New Jersey, 1862-1866; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M603, 217 rolls); Records of the Internal Revenue Service, Record Group 58; The National Archives at Washington, D.C.

[43] Empty columns reflect missing information in the archive records.

Another way of examining the success of express companies, and one which will help us calculate the impact shipping had on soldiers' diets, is the national tally of collected taxes. The following chart reflects the amount reported from all express companies annually to congress based on a fiscal year of July 1-June 30 of each calendar year.[44] The first row represents the amount collected in taxes for the year. The second row shows the gross receipts for all the express companies. Former rebel states are included in the 1867 collections.[45] The large difference in collections from 1862 to 1863 is caused by two primary factors: 1862 was a partial year, since the tax was passed into law in June and took effect September 1; and the first year of collections involved a period of education and training, both for collectors and taxpayers.

Table 2. Annual financials from all express companies combined:

	1863	**1864**	**1865**	**1866**	**1867**
Taxes	$2,680	$267,772	$529,275	$645,769	$558,359
Incomes	$134,000	$13,388,600	$17,642,500	$21,525,633	$18,611,966

Regardless of which source one examines, the amount of shipping skyrocketed during the war and declined after its end. At least some of the post-war reduction in business must have come from personal shipping of boxes to soldiers, but how much? The drop in New York City collections was $256,594 per month. Nationally, the reduction was about $3 million worth of

[44] Congress received reports on the results from the new income tax broken down in categories, such as railroads, steamships, and textile factories.

[45] Reports to congress from the Internal Revenue Commissioners. The tax rate for express companies was 2% the first year and a half, then 3% thereafter.

shipping from 1865 to 1866. Some part of the decrease is attributable to a drop in government contracts, but not all of it. The U.S. military remained heavily engaged in the South, through suppression and rebuilding until the end of Reconstruction in 1877. Both at the national level and the local level, the express businesses decreased about nine percent between fiscal year 1865-66 and 1866-67. Much of that must have resulted from decreased demand for the mailing of personal boxes, either from families to active-duty soldiers, or from soldiers back home.[46] Of course, calculating how many boxes this represents is difficult because the boxes' weights varied, and the charges largely depended upon distance shipped. However, we can get a rough idea of a family's costs to ship a box and estimate from that.

Adams Express advertised that it would carry any boxes to soldiers for half price, and would deliver free any boxes shipped to Union soldiers in Confederate prisoner of war camps.[47] Willis Benedict detailed these costs in a letter to his brother Edward:

> Robert Latta told me that he received a letter from his wife stating that she sent him a box (via Hinsdale & Co.) and had paid seven cents a pound, the box weighed 60 lbs., which made the expense $4.20 while by Adam's express it would have arrived one day sooner and have cost but 4 cts per lb. $2.40 for the box making a difference of $1.80 in the cost.[48]

The discounted prices helped Adams maintain its dominance in the business, but it also made it possible for more packages to be sent. In real terms, to ship a forty-pound box from

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[46] Although the sources are different: The New York figures come from the actual ledgers of collectors, and the national figures from the Congressional report, the drop remains statistically the same — 8.6%, lending credence to the accuracy of the estimate.

[47] S.M.Shoemaker, Superintendent, Adams Express to Col. T.A. Scott, Asst. Sec. of War, Nov. 25, 1861. "Adams Express Company will convey from any of the Northern cities to Fortress Monroe free of charge any blankets or other articles intended to be sent by the Government to parties held as prisoners of war in the South." OR, Series II, Vol. III (Washington: GPO, 1898): 141.

[48] Willis Benedict, March 11, 1863. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 96-033.37.

Connecticut to central Virginia would cost between $1.60 and $2.80, depending on the carrier. According to author John Billings's description of the boxes, an average box weighed between twenty and forty pounds, with some weighing one hundred pounds or more.[49] From the express company's gross receipts, and based on Union troop strengths of about 600,000 from 1863 through the end of the war, we can estimate each Union soldier received two to three boxes per year. In reality, of course, some soldiers got none, while others received multiple boxes each year, and sometimes crates were expressed to the entire unit. However, based on the level of business, the combined express carriers were likely hauling 1.2 million personal packages per year, or 100,000 per month. If we conservatively estimate personal shipping to be one-quarter of all the express business, then Adams probably carried about 42,000 boxes per month in 1863, and as many as 104,000 boxes per month near the end of the war.[50] This means that a "mess" of six or more men would expect to receive one box every couple of months.

Of course, express companies were not limited to the north. Three days before the war began, the Adams Express board of directors met secretly and split the company in two.[51] Adams Express continued serving the Union states, and a new company called Southern Express served the Confederate States of America. The southern territory of the business was bought by an Adams superintendent named Henry B. Plant, who had forewarned the board that Adams's

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[49] John D. Billings. *Hard Tack and Coffee or the Unwritten Story of Army Life*, (Boston:C.J. Peters & Son, 1887): 218.

[50] A conservative estimate is that each Union soldier received one 40-pound box per year, which would add up to roughly half the gross receipts lost when the war ended, or $1,080,000-$1,680,000 (for boxes costing $1.60-$2.80). However, we know that many boxes weighed less, and we know from letters that many soldiers received boxes monthly or quarterly. The average, however, seems to suggest two boxes per year for each soldier in the Union Army.

[51] Alvin F. Harlow, *Old Waybills: The Romance of the Express Companies* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1934): 457

property, including wagons, mules, and train cars, could be seized as enemy contraband in case of war.[52] For two years, Plant ran Southern Express just like Adams operated in the North. Plant left the Confederacy for Europe in August 1863, a month after the war began to turn. He returned to America in 1865.[53] Following the war, Adams Express waged a protracted legal battle over the war-time profits from Southern Express. In the suit, shareholders argued that Southern was merely a shell company for Adams, and they were entitled to lost dividends from its business.[54]

Regardless of whether Southern Express truly separated from its parent company, its business model reflected the Adams system, and it became the dominant shipper in the Confederacy. Southern Express carried the Confederate payrolls and most private parcels. Southern's grasp on the railroads was so strong that it was sometimes seen as jeopardizing the Confederates' ability to wage war. In a letter to Confederate Commissary-General Col. L.B. Northrop, Major S.B. French complains that Southern Express is commanding too much of the railroad business, cutting into the army's ability to ship food to the troops. In February 1864, he reported that the country's railroad freight receipts for the previous month were $336,603 from the Confederate government; $270,544 from all private freight combined; and $186,281 from Southern Express. His objection was how much of the freight space went to Southern Express, arguing that Southern was shipping more than the government, giving the company too much

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[52] After the war, Henry Plant organized an investment consortium and used the money to build railroad and steamship lines. In his later years, he focused on opening Florida to tourism. Henry B. Plant Museum, Tampa, Florida. http://www.plantmuseum.com/discover/learn/chronology

[53] August 1, 1863, J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866): 4; also see Henry B. Plant Museum, Tampa, Florida. http://www.plantmuseum.com/discover/learn/chronology.

[54] New York Times. "Adams Express in Trouble: Reminiscence of the War — Legal proceedings in Relation to the Old Adams Express Company," *New York Times* (Oct. 27, 1870): 3.

control of train traffic. "We are now dependent on the south for bread, yet under the most favorable circumstances, with existing arrangements, it is impossible to provide for the daily wants of General Lee's army and the troops in this State."[55]

The complaint about prioritizing express packages was echoed on the Northern side, too. By policy, both the Union and Confederate governments considered the shipping of personal packages an essential service, oftentimes even taking precedence over the movement of vital military materiel. This prioritizing puzzled Civil War scholar Bell Irvin Wiley.[56] "During the first two years of the war, food was frequently sent from home. With transportation getting worse this practice declined after the summer of 1863 but even in 1864 the railroads continued to deliver such a quantity of home packages to the army as to reflect poorly on the judgment of shipping officials, who often did not give precedence to more vitally needed military stores."[57] Prioritizing the delivery of personal boxes over military freight was quite possibly a conscious decision on the government's part to uphold morale among the troops. Hungry men would not have appreciated having their shipments of food and clothing cut off, regardless of how it affected the bigger picture.

While we can ascertain that shipping was a big business, and a priority for military leaders, the question remains whether it made a difference nutritionally. Wiley believed the boxes were a luxury, calling them "supplements."[58] Historian William Davis estimates that

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[55] S.B. French, Feb. 8, 1864, Richmond, Va. *OR* Series IV, Vol. III (1900) 89-91.

[56] Bell Wiley is the author of the *Life of Johnny Reb* and the *Life of Billy Yank*, composite portraits of the Confederate and Union soldiers that remain classics of Civil War scholarship.

[57] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy.* (Baton Rouge:Louisiana State University Press, 1943): 99

[58] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy.* (Baton Rouge:Louisiana State University Press, 1943): 100

"hundreds of thousands" of parcels of food were shipped during the war, "especially from the North, where more abundant foodstuffs and better shipping services made them a frequent and practical reality."[59] A few hundred thousand parcels would not have made an impact on the army's collective health, in which case Wiley was right and the contents were simply a rare treat. However, based on the gross income of the New York shipping offices and congressional tax reports, and estimating two packages per soldier per year for three years (1862-1865) that equates to nearly four *million* parcels. Even if only half of those were going to individual soldiers and units and contained some provisions, then the food likely did have some nutritional benefit for the men who received them regularly.

Shoring up this notion that express boxes were common, even expected, is that some men took them for granted, often sending long detailed lists of things they wanted in their next express boxes. Willis Benedict wrote home early in 1862 to request a box containing a new handkerchief, a small hatchet, a box of nails, and a file for whittling purposes. "If you can make up this box without too much trouble, I wish you would do so and send it by Hinsdale's express as he delivers his goods on the ground and is here at the present time having brought to this regiment and others around us over two-hundred boxes delivered in good order. I understand that he intends to be here regularly once every week."[60] The frequency of deliveries, their ubiquity in Civil War letters, and the gross receipts as reported in New York and Washington all seem to support the idea that care packages from home were commonplace.

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[59] William C. Davis. *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and the Gray* (Mechanicsburg, Penn: Stackpole Books, 2003):111

[60] Willis Benedict to Edward Benedict, February 1, 1862, from camp opposite Fredericksburg, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 96.033.04.

However, throwing doubt on this higher estimate of boxes is their reception. Soldiers receiving boxes gushed over them, treated them like treasure, and wrote effusive letters of thanks home, indicating the boxes were special. Oliver Walker described the receipt of box of goodies sent to him and his messmates in early December at Annapolis, Maryland. "You would be pleased to see us when a box arrives. It is an immense object of interest, and eyes are all open as the various goodies appear, only to close in delight, as the palate is tickled with the unusual taste of mince pie and cake."[61] If these estimates are accurate and each soldier received two or three express packages per year, would the boxes still be considered so special? I argue they would. The shocking brutality and emotional and physical deprivations of the American Civil War made any attention or sign of love deeply appreciated, whether it came once a year or once a month.

If the estimates are right, then the boxes can also be credited with helping Union soldiers eat and dress better. Beyond that, the boxes contributed to the emotional currency a soldier garnered through receiving a box. The trouble and cost of preparing and shipping a box elevated a man's profile within camp by demonstrating his family's and community's support. Billings explained that receipt of a box kindled both admiration and jealousy among the men.

> There were some men in every company who had no one at home to remember them in this tender and appreciative manner, and as they sat or stood by the hero of a box and saw one article after another taken out and unwrapped, each speaking so eloquently of the loving care and thoughtful remembrance of kindred or friends, they were moved by mingled feelings of pleasure and sadness: pleasure at their comrade's good fortune and downright enjoyment of his treasure, and sadness at their own lonely condition, with no one to remember them in this pleasant manner, and often would their eyes fill with tears by the contrast of their own situation with the pleasant scene before them.[62]

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[61] Oliver H. Walker to Father and Mother, December 29, 1861. *Pearce Civil War Collection*. Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.019.

[62] John D. Billings. *Hard Tack and Coffee or the Unwritten Story of Army Life*. C.J. Peters & Son, Boston (1887): 221-222

Soldiers found within the boxes physical proof of their importance to their families and communities. To paraphrase food theorist Katharina Vester, their families were literally asking them to incorporate home into their bodies, renewing their links to those left behind.[63] Vester was not talking about boxes of food from home in this reference, of course, but was talking about how specific foods can reflect a national identity and when cookbook authors urged people to eat those foods it was literally an invitation to incorporate those traits. In accepting these gifts, soldiers felt love, belonging, acceptance, courage, and strength of body and will. On the other end of the exchange, wives, parents, and friends, earned an opportunity to nurture men they loved, even if was from a distance. Underlying these transactions are clear expectations that a family will support the men in uniform, and in return the soldiers will remain at their posts protecting their respective nations and upholding the family's social positions. In his study of how Ohioans on the home front helped wage the war thousands of miles away, Gregory Jones notes that soldiers relied on the boxes from home as part of their "support system at home."[64] The treats boosted morale and provided much-needed variety in their government-issued diets, he asserts.

Finding meaning in the sharing, preparing, and provisioning of food is a form of communication, a language with rules like grammar, according to Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Social psychologists understand food does indeed possess the power to

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[63] Katharina Vester. *A Taste of Power : Food and American Identities*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015): 18.

[64] Gregory R. Jones, *They Fought the War Together: Southeastern Ohio's Soldiers and Their Families During the Civil War*, dissertation (Kent State University Dec. 2013).

communicate.[65] A home-cooked holiday feast, an intimate dinner at a nice restaurant, or chicken soup for a sick friend, all are examples of food-borne messages conveying care, even a specific kind of affection. Because food is a natural communication tool it plays a significant role in what Michel Foucault calls the discourses of power. Foucault explains that power can be a chain or system of support which these force relations find in one another.[66] In other words, the emotional needs of both soldiers and people at home were fulfilled by the exchange of boxes of food and toiletries.

People on the home front who supported a soldier received social benefit by providing a man and his comrades with food or supplies. Those families, friends, and sweethearts enjoyed a certain cache within their home communities by being associated with a local hero. Many communities organized large-scale express efforts, with contributions from many hands to help spread both costs and social benefits. On January 1, 1863, Willis Benedict wrote his brother Edward that their village in Connecticut had sent a bounty of 500 pounds of apples to the Connecticut regiments, along with turnips, carrots, and dried apples. "The apples were immediately distributed to the men and my share was three large and splendid apples. On Wednesday we had as fine a beef soup as I ever ate and thus used our vegetables to our advantage, 'though the share of each was not very large yet the fact that we are not forgotten in our good old state gives us much pleasure to reflect upon."[67] Billings notes that everyone in the

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[65] Mark Conner and Christopher J. Armitage. *The Social Psychology of Food*, (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 2002): 124.
[66] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* Robert Hurley, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1976): 92-93.
[67] Willis Benedict. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas, Accession No. 96-033.27

family or hometown wanted to contribute "some token of kindness" to the "far-away boy."[68] In an exchange between women, New Yorker Abby Howland Woolsey wrote another lady about her group's efforts in 1861:

> In the first place, E's cheque bought seven dozen and a half pairs of socks. . . . We have added as many more dozen as our own purchase, and friends sent in nearly two dozen knitted ones, so that the whole number is sixteen dozen. The pair of Mackinaw blankets looked like very heavy and handsome ones, from one of Robert's parishioners. We added two pairs more of less expensive ones, and in the folds of one are a couple of little framed pictures, out of a lot Charley brought down to be sent, but I thought two were enough to run the risk of breakage. . . . Of woolen gloves there are five dozen -Jane's purchase, etc., etc. . . . Lastly, after the box was all nailed up, came Dorus with a dozen of "country-knit socks" from the store in Friendsville, near where Annie Woolsey lives. We had the middle plank of the box taken off and stuffed them in. . . . It is unpardonable that Wrage's men, or any men, should be badly off for socks.[69]

William H. Silsby wrote to his wife in 1861 to thank her and all the other donors for goods from home, and explained how they were portioning it out to make it last longer. "The cake we have for dinner today. Our fruit cans we have not opened, but will keep them for extra occasions. In fact, we have a No 1 dinner today comprising cold chicken jelly cake, also good bread, beef potatoes, etc., being indebted for the most part for our dinner to the kindness of our loved ones at home."[70] Women formed local and state organizations to send boxes to soldiers, a fact that Willis Benedict noted after receiving such a parcel from the Bridgeport Ladies Soldiers Aid Society: "It shows the spirit of the people at home and makes us feel better here."[71]

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[68] John D. Billings. *Hard Tack and Coffee or the Unwritten Story of Army Life* (C.J. Peters & Son, Boston, 1887): 218.

[69] Abby Howland Woolsey to Georgeanna Muirson Bacon and Eliza Newton Woolsey Howland, Dec. 6, 1861, in *Letters of a Family during the War for the Union 1861-1865, vol. 1* (Privately Published, 1899): 245.

[70] William H. Silsby. September 15, 1861, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2004.373.

[71] Willis Benedict to his brother, Edward. January 10, 1862, from Portsmouth, Va., *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 96-033.29

Confederates also prepared and received express boxes. Samuel Kennerly wrote his wife in 1863, thanking her, his mother, and his sister for the parcel they sent, and sending second-hand praise and thanks to the many contributors for pies, fried chicken, syrup, butter, pickles, ham, potatoes, and peas. "Darlling -- please accept my sincere thanks for your kindness in sending me such a nice box."[72] These community efforts indicated support for the soldier while reinforcing a sense of loyalty toward those at home.

Even when boxes went awry, they were recognized as gifts from the heart. Edward Kendall writes to his father that the people of Hector sent a crate weighing 360 pounds to the "boys" from that town, but most of it had spoiled on the trip, including twelve pounds of honey and some cheese. "When it reached here there was but little left that was good or in good order excpte some dried fruit and some stuff that was canned. … the boys felt bad over it but kept up as good a face as poss."[73] In this and similar cases, it was quite literally the thought that counted.

Not surprisingly, this use of comestibles to secure relationships is ageless. In a study of Late Medieval Mantua, Allison Fisher notes that the ruler's wife sent her husband wine, melons and fruit while he was away at war against the French, at once performing her "appropriate wifely duties," but also demonstrating Mantua's ability to provide for her men. "Food gifts reflected status," Fisher points out.[74]

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[72] Samuel N. Kennerly Papers. October 12, 1863. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas, Accession No. 2001.173.

[73] Edward Kendall to his father, September 29, 1862, from camp near Harpers Ferry, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. Accession No. 2006.041.20.

[74] Allison Fisher, "Food as Power in the Letters of Isabella d'Este" in *Food and Power: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2019*, Mark McWilliams, ed. (London: Prospect Books, 2020): 85

Confederates were in one sense more fortunate, since they were closer to home, and so did not have to rely exclusively on the express companies. For example, B.F. Willeford wrote home in mid-1862 to request the usual goods, but also that his favorite horse be sent to him. "I will give you a list of the things wish you would send to me if they are convenient for you to obtain In the first Place I want a horse Old henry if you have not sold him if you have, Tell Father to send or bring me a good poney a good saddle saddle bags and bridle one pr spurs." He then details a laundry list of items he needs in the clothing department, including boots, socks, , shirts, pants, and "two pr drawers."[75]

The largest group effort to supply the men was organized by the U.S. Sanitary Commission, which had thousands of women from the Union states raising funds, packing, and shipping boxes, building and staffing hospitals and sanitoriums for recovering soldiers, and guiding troops in cleanliness and hygiene in the field.[76] The "San," was a national model for women volunteers, working hand-in-hand with the federal government. A similar effort, the U.S. Christian Commission, also packed boxes but they seem to have prioritized reading material (mostly proselytizing brochures and Bibles) over food and clothes.[77] In general, religious tracts were not as well received as boxes of food. Isaiah Cushman wrote to his Sunday School class back in Abbington, Massachusetts to thank them for a box of religious tomes, admitting, "At

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[75] B.F. Willeford to his wife, August 22, 1862, from a camp near Saltillo (probably Mississippi). Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.169.

[76] Cathryn Entner Wright, *The Home to the Army: Union soldiers, gender and the response to suffering during the United States Civil War,* dissertation (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2000); Judith Ann Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000).

[77] Theresa R. McDevitt, *Fighting for the Soul of America: A History of the United States Christian Commission*, dissertation, (Kent, OH: Kent State University, 1997).

present there is so little vital piety – and intrest in the great subject of the souls salvation that these volums are not popular as I hope they will be at no distant day."[78]

The Chicago's Colored Ladies' Freedman's Aid Society formed in 1863 to raise money and support the newly freed people and refugees of color, according to historian Jennifer Harbour. African American women in Indianapolis raised money and shipped boxes of food and "sundries" to black soldiers in the famous Massachusetts regiments. The women feared that African-American soldiers would be forgotten by the larger groups, particularly the U.S. Sanitary Commission. "African American women knew that the preservation of their families was intricately tied to the gendered roles of men. So in many ways, offering services to black soldiers offered protection for the whole community." They organized sewing circles to make clothes, and shipped boxes of fresh vegetables.[79] Harbour notes that the efforts of Black women gave them the moral authority to demand respect in the larger political and social spheres.

A package containing food, particularly something personal like a pie or preserves, evoked strong emotions and memories. Food-centered nostalgia is a recurring theme in studies of diasporic or expatriate populations, according to sociologist Jon Holtzman. Food offers a portable sense of home, which is why immigrants cling so tightly to their traditional meals and ingredients. Smells and tastes of lost homelands, in this case, a soldier's mother's pies, or a wife's cakes, "provide a temporary return to a time when their lives were not fragmented."[80]

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[78] Isaiah Cushman to his Sabbath School class, October 24, 1862, from Baltimore, Maryland. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.155.19.

[79] Jennifer Harbour, '"I Earn By My Own Labor From Day to Day: 'African American Women's Activism in the Wartime Midwest," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 108, No. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2015): 355, 357-366.

[80] Jon D. Holtzman. "Food and Memory," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006): 366.

This kind of food-centered recollection is a common theme among immigrant populations. Leslie Li, author of *Daughter of Heaven*, asserts that her memoir is also about an innate hunger for communication, connection, and continuity.[81] Certainly, this would apply to soldiers as well, men so far from home and hearth. That soldiers found emotional as well as physiological salvation in eating is not surprising, although the term "comfort food," is a modern one.

Indeed, the letters from Civil War soldiers make this link between feelings of home and food clear. Union private George J. Sager wrote to his mother in 1862 thanking her and the many donors for a box from home. The box apparently contained a nightcap, preserves, dried fruit, and canned apple sauce, but particularly welcome were his mother's sweets. "The fried cakes tasted so naturall and home like that I could imagine you frying them over the stove." He adds that although "we can get enough here, that wich comes from home is very dear to me."[82] The gifts from home fulfilled their emotional hungers, in addition to their physical ones. While he enjoyed those fried cakes, Sager was able to re-live the safety he felt in his mother's kitchen despite the distance, granting him a short reprieve from the war's realities.

All of these factors fed into the upkeep of morale. Morale was believed essential to physical health among Victorian medical professionals, since mind, body, and environment were deemed interconnected. The war came three decades before the widespread knowledge of germ theory, so the reasons for the spread of diseases often remained elusive for doctors in that conflict. Consequently, many illnesses were blamed on poor spirits, and "sadness" was seen as a

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[81] Jane Dusselier. "Understandings of Food as Culture," Environmental History 14, No. 2 (April 209): 335. Leslie Li. *Daughter of Heaven: A Memoir with Earthly Recipes,* (New York: Arcade, 2015).

[82] George Sager. December 7, 1862, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas., Accession No. 2007.168.10.

legitimate cause of death. Civil War contemporaries believed that attitude affected physical well-being, and a negative attitude could weaken a person or prevent healing, while a positive attitude could result in complete recovery.[83] Emotional health was believed to have such a profound impact on physical health that soldiers took care to control their emotions so as not to make themselves ill.[84] The value of a balanced diet lay in its ability to improve morale — with the added bonus of preventing scurvy, managing bowel complaints and strengthening overall fortitude.[85] During his experience in the war, Oliver Wendell Holmes explained to his mother the adverse *physical* effects of homesickness. "In my own case the scorbutic symptoms are not in general specific so much as they are traceable to the same cause (want of fresh food). . . . The homesickness wh. I mentioned in my last [the doctors] say is one of the first symptoms of scurvy."[86] The general conclusion was that a depressed soldier was less effective at daily duties and more likely to straggle or succumb to illness. Edward Kendall writes to his father that his health has been good. "I have noticed many that are sick who talk and think of home or of getting out of the army so much that it becomes a disease of itself, and unless the mind is right

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[83] Kathryn S. Meier. "'No Place for the Sick': Nature's War on Civil War Soldier Mental and Physical Health in the 1862 Peninsula and Shenandoah Valley Campaigns," *The Journal of the Civil War Era 1*, No. 2 (June 2011): 179.

[84] Frances Clarke. "So Lonesome I could Die: Nostalgia and Debates over Emotional Control in the Civil War North," *Journal of Social History* 41, No. 2 (Winter, 2007): 256.

85 Kathryn S. Meier. "'No Place for the Sick': Nature's War on Civil War Soldier Mental and Physical Health in the 1862 Peninsula and Shenandoah Valley Campaigns," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, No. 2 (June 2011): 193.

86 Oliver Wendell Holmes to his parents, July 5, 1862. Mark DeWolfe Howe (ed.), *Touched With Fire: Civil War Letters and Diary of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., 1861-1864* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1946): 58-59. See also, Kathryn S. Meier. "'No Place for the Sick': Nature's War on Civil War Soldier Mental and Physical Health in the 1862 Peninsula and Shenandoah Valley Campaigns," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, No. 2 (June 2011): 179.

the Physical Organs of man cannot perform much duty or be able to do duty."[87] James Wright wrote to his sister in mid-1863 to complain that morale was low and they were hungry and restricted to the camp by their general's orders.

> Our rations now are about quarter rations or one cracker and a small piece of meat for one day. General Decorsey our general is the strictest General ever I heard of He is so strict that we cannot even get out to buy any thing to eat Our Second Lieutenant is now under arrest for letting some boys across the guard about one rod to get some bread to eat Here we are penned up half starved but drilled and marched half to death.[88]

In her study of Civil War disabilities and deaths, historian Lori Duin Kelly points out that many suicides on both sides of the war were diagnosed as "nostalgia," or "melancholy," and it was seen as a potentially fatal camp illness. "These discussions in medical literature indicate that at least some physicians came to recognize that if left untreated, emotions associated with homesickness could escalate into a rapid physical and mental decline and certain death."[89] Morale, then, was key to physical fitness, not just emotional wellness. The challenges for soldiers are familiar refrains from all wars: difficult living conditions, demanding physical work, isolation, and the constant threat of a violent death. Food could not remove the stresses of war but was multidimensional in that it could offer both biological and mental respite.

If a box from home could alleviate some or all those concerns, it helps explain why military leaders of both armies prioritized those shipments over almost everything else. Food from home was a direct link to the heart of family life in mid-nineteenth-century America. Given

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[87] Edward Kendall to his father, September 29, 1862, from camp near Harpers Ferry, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.041.

[88] James M. Wright to his sister, August 29, 1863 from Crab Orchard, Kentucky. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.203.

89 Lori Duin Kelly. "Managing Memories: Treating and Controlling Homesickness during the Civil War," Journal of Medical Humanities, (August 15, 2016): 4.

the connection between food, home, and emotional comfort, it is little surprise, then, that soldiers writing home requested specific items be sent or brought to them.[90] For example, Union Lt. William H. Broughton wrote his father in 1863, complaining that he was tired, having just completed 18 hours on picket. "I wish you would send me a box of eatibles, cakes, pies, preserves, etc."[91] Like many such boxes, the "eatibles" can be recognized as quasi-medicinal, a balm for his low spirits.

In the late twentieth century, food scholars began to parse out what home cooks had unconsciously known for centuries, that food is a complex tangle of the material, social, cultural, emotional, sensual, and symbolic. "Next to breathing, eating is perhaps the most essential of all human activities, and one with much of social life is entwined," Sidney Mintz argues.[92] In keeping with the structuralist theories on foodways, the boxes from home to the Civil War soldiers could be seen as much-needed points of access to home, family, and society. The food and gifts gave concrete proof of emotional support and comfort. Dishes or treats prepared by loved ones, the taste of which called up memories of safer, happier times, conveyed personal affection, which was particularly important for men under stress. Victuals sent from home carried greater sentimental value for their rarity and emotional connection to family, friends, and security.

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[90] Lori Duin Kelly. "Managing Memories: Treating and Controlling Homesickness during the Civil War," *Journal of Medical Humanities*, (August 15, 2016): 5.

[91] William Broughton. Dec. 1, 1863, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas, Accession No. 2006.089.

[92] Sidney Mintz and Christine M. Du Bois. "The Anthropology of Food and Eating," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002): 102.

CHAPTER 2

BONDING

Three years into the war, Union soldier Edward Kendall wrote home to explain the loss of a comrade. "I cannot describe my feelings at his death. He has been my mess mate and tent mate for a long time and we had shared the duties of a Soldiers life together... I had ever cherished feelings of the deepest friendship and to see him whose place in the co will ever be missed to see him die cold and silent in death. It was the most trying part of my soldier life."[93] Kendall's letter describes his feelings over this death, but the order of how his friend will be missed reveals how he mentally tallies his losses. Kendall's friend was a messmate first and foremost, the man with whom he shared food and food preparation; then he was a tent mate, and finally a soldier.

The idea that men can become "brothers in arms," is hardly a strange concept in the twenty-first century. The United States has been embroiled in large and small wars throughout its history, and military concepts are deeply held in its culture. Where those interpersonal relationships are forged, however, is not always on the battlefield. Often it is in the quiet, still hours after battle or before action, when men gather around a fire to share provisions and talk, where moments of emotional intimacy take place.

A crucial part of the argument regarding the importance of food in the Civil War is how it contributed to the cohesion of units. This section examines how eating and cooking helped bring men together, and how that made a difference. Crucial to the argument is how it built unit

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[93] Edward Kendall describing the loss of Sgt. Benjamin Force of Altay, June 11, 1864. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.041.

cohesion, created or reinforced identity with the unit, and separated the men from "the other" which could be anyone from the military enemy to the next unit over.

Sharing and preparing food helped establish a soldier's place in that unique society, and strengthened his motives for remaining in danger, despite survival instincts that might tell him to flee. Finally, this chapter looks at how food worked as a means of aiding communications, at times even taking the place of talking. Those interpersonal relationships were forged through the fire of battle, but also around the campfires, when men had time to stop, talk, and relax their guard, so to speak. Eating together, although seemingly simple, is somewhat complicated. On the primitive level, it requires that the people be close together, that they be willing to share, and most crucially of all, not attack fellow diners who are both physically close and distracted, and thus vulnerable. On a more evolved level, sharing food typically involves talking, relaxing, trusting, and being trusted.

The trauma of battles contrasted with quieter time spent eating together, and it was those hours of normalcy that allowed for the construction of these deep-felt relationships. As soldiers relaxed their internal guards, mutual trust developed. George J. Sager of the 149th New York Volunteers attempted to describe these moments in a letter home:

> There is nothing we enjoy so much at night after halting to put up our little tent, fix the bed all out, build a fire in front of the tent, take our supper of hard tack and bacon, winde up with a quart cup of hot coffee, lite our pipe or mershaum as we like to call it stretch out before the fire and have a good little chat before we turn in for the night. I till you a soldier has some comforts that can't be had at home.[94]

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[94] George Sager to (sister) Emma, Nov. 8, 1864. Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2007.168.10.

For Sager and his fellows, supper provided the natural excuse for bonding. In his study of sports and recreation, *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga asserts that a communal meal can serve many purposes, and it shares at least one common trait with play: "Both proclaim a standstill to ordinary life."[95] Wartime meals are the other side of that coin — offering normalcy in an abnormal existence. Cooking and eating temporarily suspend death and destruction, interjecting sanity and familiarity amid the madness. The relaxation found around their campfire emanated from both the physical and emotional comfort of food and trusted friends.

Anthropologists tell us that a primary source of community-building occurs at the table. Foodways experts Sidney Mintz and Christine Du Bois argue that eating serves a crucial social function by bringing people together.[96] Social occasions often put food at the center, through dinners, luncheons, teas, coffee dates, and more complex rituals like weddings and funerals typically feature food and drink as a barrier-lowering staple of such gatherings.

Finding meaning in the sharing, preparing, and providing of food is a form of communication, a language with rules like grammar, according to Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Barthes asserts that social occasions signal specific situations (i.e. work or sport) and behaviors (i.e. leisure or celebration), and "every one of those situations is expressed through food."[97] Social psychologists are well aware that food does indeed possess the power to communicate.[98] Classic examples of food-speak include a home-cooked holiday feast, an

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[95] Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens.: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950): 22.
[96] Simply put, foodways is a term to encapsulate the culture of food and food preparation.

[97] Roland Barthes. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, Second edition. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds. New York: Routledge (1997): 33.
[98] Mark Conner and Christopher J. Armitage. *The Social Psychology of Food*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press (2002): 124.

intimate dinner at an exclusive restaurant, and chicken soup for a sick friend. Each of these situations are food-borne messages conveying care, even very specific kinds of affection. When Civil War soldiers wrote home about what they ate, how often, and how much, they were reporting their conditions to their loved ones, both physically and emotionally.

Boxes from home, discussed in Chapter 1, served one way of sharing and bonding. Giving generously to those who did not receive parcels served both strategic and emotional purposes. Sharing helped cement friendships and loyalty while also ensuring mutual defense in the midst of battle. In 1861, J. McDonald Smith wrote to his wife: "I made my supper of Bread a Sardine, some black berry preserves & a good cup of tea. the Sardines & blackberry were given me (a can of Each) by John Copley, who got a box."[99] In November 1862, Willis Benedict wrote to his brother that one of their messmates had received a box from home which took two men to carry into the tent. "We had a great deal of fun while he took article after article until he had exhibited a little of almost everything a soldier could need or wish for…This forenoon I had a fine meal of soda-crackers which we buy of the sutler and some fine peach preserves which came in the box."[100] Less than a week before Christmas in the second year of the Civil War Union private Willie Chitterden wrote to his mother in New York asking her to send a box of food for him and his friends. At that time, Willie was encamped just outside of Alexandria, Virginia, a distance of two hundred miles by land. He estimates the shipping would take two days.

> I am aware that this gives you short notice but connection now is so easy and direct and the things I want are I think capable of being got up in a day. And it is of so little moment about the particular day as long as it comes somewhere in the holy days that I guess you

[99] J. McDonald Smith to his wife, October 20, 1861, from Leesburg Pike, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection,* Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.066.01.

[100] Willis Benedict to Edward Benedict, November 16, 1862, from Camp Casey, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection,* Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 96.033.20.

> can manage it. There are only 7 of us in the tent, ... and what I want is a box of things to eat as good as you can make 'em.[101]

Since his mother was in New York, the choices available included perishables like salami, fruit, and pastries, as well as canned or "tinned" foods of all types. To avoid having the box delayed by the army's requisite search for liquor, Willie gave her careful instructions on shipping to an alternate address, explaining: "The boys have all sent for boxes and we 'calculate' to set a table and receive calls from the Ninth boys in Convalescent and Prisoner camps if all goes well."[102] By offering up the feast to his messmates as well as those imprisoned and in hospital, Chitterden could fulfill multiple important goals, according to food scholar Martin Jones, author of *Feast: Why Humans Share Food*. Breaking bread with close brothers-at-arms is pro-social and integrative, and would create that all-important fraternal bond, according to Jones' theory. On a different level, sharing Christmas treats with those outside their immediate circle would be public and competitive, escalating Chitterden's hierarchical position within the camp.[103] In addition, it would strengthen the bonds of battle brotherhood, a crucial line of defense for any soldier going into battle.

Although evidently rare, some soldiers refused to share their food from home, although it was socially reprehensible in camps, according to memoirist John Billings. "Such men would keep their precious box and its precious contents away from sight, smell, and taste of all outsiders."[104] Even without the insight of psychoanalysis, Billings recognized that this behavior

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[101] Willie Chitterden, December 19, 1862. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2008.111.
[102] Willie Chitterden, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2008.111
[103] Martin Jones. *Feast: Why Humans Share Food* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 149-150.
[104] John D. Billings. *Hard Tack and Coffee or the Unwritten Story of Army Life (*C.J. Peters & Son, Boston, 1887): 222.

was more than physical comfort the "selfish" ones were withholding, stating: "It was a little world to them, and all their own."[105] That "little world" was home — inspiring feelings of safety, comfort, peace, and happiness — emotions that were in short supply in the midst of war, but which could be recalled with a shoe box full of fruit, cookies, or jars of homemade jelly. These emotional ties could be extended to his new brothers in arms, or hoarded, according to a man's desire to bond or remain apart.

During a war these relationships between men, with the attendant inclusions and exclusions, could determine survival. When the members of a mess shared resources such as food, work, and shelter, they established a unique, quasi-tribe. Each mess became distinct from other units, officers, civilians, and the enemy. Everyone not in their mess was at least partially defined as "the other," according to Bruegel. "(Shared meals) created a sense of community, of shared values. However in doing this, they sorted people."[106] Whether soldiers gathered around a campfire or table, the act of eating together created an atmosphere of equality and exclusivity.[107] Sharing defined the boundaries of their group, declaring who belonged and who did not. During skirmishes or battle belonging became imperative because it meant protecting one's messmates became a priority as high as saving one's own life. This incredibly complex emotional logic came down to who could eat at their camp fire, and who could not.

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[105] John D. Billings. *Hard Tack and Coffee or the Unwritten Story of Army Life* (C.J. Peters & Son, Boston, 1887): 222

[106] Martin Bruegel. "'An Acceptable Refreshment': The Meaning of Food and Drink in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860," Institute National de la Recherché Agronomique, *Journal of Social History* (Summer 2011): 1167.

[107] Martin Bruegel. "'An Acceptable Refreshment': The Meaning of Food and Drink in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860," Institute National de la Recherché Agronomique, *Journal of Social History* (Summer 2011): 1166

Discussions of eating and cooking in war may seem frivolous, but the bonds forged over camp fires can make the difference between life and death for fighting men. Military cohesion, sometimes referred to as regimentation or unit cohesion, helps sustain soldiers' commitments to one another, their units, and the mission, regardless of their combat stresses, according to military analyst Muhammad Zafar. The "brother in arms" bond starts with common goals, traditions or culture, and gels through shared experiences. From a military perspective, the bond creates cohesive units that fight more smoothly, experience fewer casualties, and cope better with negative conditions like combat, loneliness, and anxiety, according to Zafar.[108] Ultimately, unit cohesion prepares soldiers for self-sacrifice by inculcating them with strong feelings of patriotism and personal loyalty to their friends, motivations to fight more fearlessly. Breaking bread together provides a common ground of comfort, an essential ingredient in creating that relationship.

In discussing these close relationships, it is important to clarify that men of the mid-nineteenth century were less inhibited about male-male relationships than their twentieth or twenty-first-century counterparts, so expressions of heartfelt love triggered admiration, not concern. It was not until the end of their century that Western society saw the creation of extreme social and legal stigmas toward same-sex relationships. The movement, meant to assert masculinity more clearly in the face of women's rights movements, resulted in considerable damage to men's emotional expression on the premise of stemming homosexuality. Before that change, men and women were freer to have bosom same-sex friends with whom they shared

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[108] Muhammad Zafar, Col. IQBAL, "Military Cohesion: PROs & CONs," (*Ninth International Scientific Conference*, Defense Resources Management in the Twenty-First Century, Brasov: 2014) 5.

everything.[109] After that, when any expression of admiration or affection became sexually suspicious, it made it more difficult, if not impossible, for men to express agape or platonic love without becoming ostracized at best, or incarcerated at worst. For mid-nineteenth-century men fighting in the Civil War, it was still perfectly acceptable to express love for their fellows. Confederate soldier D.C. Thomas of Dallas, Texas, spent two years in Alton Prison, a Union prison camp known for its harsh treatment of Confederate prisoners of war. While there, Thomas became friends with two other men, and he described that relationship fifteen years later in a memoir written for his children:

> We three were bosom friends and confidants, we were not afraid to speak to each other on any subject, knowing full well that confidence would not be betrayed. T'is time that I had other friends and pleanty of them in whoom I had great confidence but in those two I had implicit confidence, would risk my life with them, — we were a family... Bob and I had but one purse. It was our purse, our money when we had any, our blankets, our coats, our cups, our spoon, and our bread - meat or tobacco.[110]

For men like Thomas, sharing resources was a survival strategy and an emotional pact. That he compares his friends to family is significant because of the cultural position of family in nineteenth-century American society. Family equated to safety, stability, society, identity, and purpose. To admit someone other than a blood relation or marriage partner as family indicated momentous trust. The food and water they shared, more than any other resource, was a matter of

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[109] For more on this sad and well-researched process, see Katharina Vester, *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015):75-76; John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd., 2005); John Mayfield, *Counterfeit Gentlemen: Manhood and Humor in the Old South*, (Gainesville, FL.: University Press of Florida, 2009); John Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America, Second Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[110] D.C. Thomas, 1878, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas, Accession number 2003.L500: 96.

life and death in Alton Prison, and they recognized their interdependence while sharing it. The depth of the relationship also evidently persevered beyond the immediate threat for Thomas for him to recall it so lovingly fifteen years after the war's end.

This emotional vulnerability may seem surprising, but the immediacy of death opens the door wide for men to express their emotions more honestly. Historian James Broomall, who studied relationships among Southern soldiers, argues that the war shifted fundamental attitudes from the hypermasculinity of the Confederate stereotype to men capable of expressing their vulnerability among their fellows. "Out of design or necessity, Confederates turned to their military companions for comfort and survival. The private's immediate sphere consisted of his messmates — a squad of four to eight men, with whom he cooked, ate, slept, lived, and fought."[111] It was to these companions that soldiers turned to relieve boredom, anxieties, and for protection. "Through the shared trials of military service, these relationships were born and men were changed. Soldiering created commitments among men, which fostered intimacy and community."[112]

In his study of a Arkansas Infantry unit, Andrew Bledsoe argues that the relationships begin before the war, since so many units came from the same communities, even family units, which kept them in the fight.[113]

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[111] James J. Broomall, "'We Are a Band of Brothers': Manhood and Community in Confederate Camps and Beyond," *Civil War History*, 60:3 (Sept. 2014): 293.
[112] James J. Broomall, "'We Are a Band of Brothers': Manhood and Community in Confederate Camps and Beyond," *Civil War History*, 60:3 (Sept. 2014): 278
[113] Andrew Bledsoe. "The Homecircle: Kinship and Community in the Third Arkansas Infantry, Texas Brigade, 1861-1865" Historical Quarterly 71, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 25.

Union prisoner Henry Sauer of Chicago, Illinois, found himself transferred out of the notorious Confederate Andersonville Prison to a prison near Savannah, and when Sherman's troops threatened to take the city, he was moved again to Millen. It was in Savannah that Sauer met Alfred Dunn, with whom he became friends, primarily because of Dunn's ability to trade skillfully for food and other necessities. "I had now a very good living again, plenty to eat, soap to wash with, and a comfortable living in the prison at Savannah, Georgia. I found this Dunn to be a true friend of mine, he was as good towards me as a brother could be."[114] Sauer was parted from Dunn in December, when Sauer was transferred back to Andersonville. There, he wound up in the prison hospital where he would have starved without the assistance of a fellow patient named George Green, who shared food with him. "He gave me a blanket, and something to eat moste every day while I stayed. It would of had been impossible for me to live here with such little food which I received, if it had not been for this friend of mine, the men would catch rats & mice to eat them & satifsy their hunger."[115] It was not the suffering that brought men together, it was the alleviation of suffering, the sharing of resources, that made them brothers.

This communion over shared meals created a unique culture within the Civil War camp, according to historian Broomall. "War shattered the closed veneer and certainty of southern culture, leaving men questioning themselves and the shape of their society. And many came to see their fellows as intimate, enduring companions, with whom they shared a common misery of

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[114] Henry Sauer diary, 67. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.278.

[115] Henry Sauer memoir, 89. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.278.

cold nights and fatigue from long marches."[116] Through shared experiences and vulnerabilities, their emotional dependence was at least partly transferred to their new brothers in arms. The common soldier's mess formed the center of an extended military family from which men drew strength by replicating their distant homes in military camps. They became "brothers," and formed "tight-knit communities to which soldiers were firmly attached," even to the point of reenlisting to remain with them, according to Broomall. Confederate soldier Richard W. Waldrop explained the communal atmosphere that pervaded his mess: "Whenever one of us gets any thing from home he throws it into the general fund of his mess & in that way we manage to live very well."[117] This sharing of food helped construct life-long relationships that were as strong as family to these men. When they shared food from home, they extended that family feeling to their new brothers, too.

Through this construction of community, Civil War soldiers from both the Confederacy and the Union reestablished the essential "us" and "the other," that made each battle less about higher ideals and more about the bonds they formed within their own spheres. Sociologists also theorize that it is bonding through food that helps create a sense of local and regional identity. Modern diners recognize that foods help define identity and culture, for example, food can be categorized as Chinese, Italian, German, Greek, or Mexican. Although anyone from those nations scoffs at the idea that "Chinese" food could be considered homogenous (likewise Italian,

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[116] James J. Broomall. " 'We Are a Band of Brothers': Manhood and Community in Confederate Camps and Beyond," *Civil War History* 60, No. 3 (Sept. 2014): 283.
[117] James J. Broomall. " 'We Are a Band of Brothers': Manhood and Community in Confederate Camps and Beyond," *Civil War History* 60, No. 3 (Sept. 2014): 292.

Mexican, or German), there remain identity signifiers such as the use of basil or cumin, which indicate to natives of those regions "this is home."

What people choose to eat or not eat can also indicate a whole world of identity exclusivity or inclusivity, all based entirely on symbolism. Vegetarians or vegans indicate pacifism and moral stances with their choices; while Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Mormons, Rastafarians, Baptists, Catholics, and Seventh-Day Adventists (to name just a few) use forbidden foods, fasting or feasting to clarify their positions on God's and man's relationships, as well as a person's identity, and status.[118] To be part of one group means giving up certain ingredients, such as pork or shellfish. On the other side of that equation are dishes that enfold people into an exclusive group by their nature, which might seem unpleasant to outsiders but which carries cultural or identity triggers. Examples of these kinds of dishes are menudo, chitterlings, pickled herring, and fois gras, each of which brings its own cultural burdens to the table; beloved by people within that group, despised by outsiders. Comestibles can also indicate intimacy, according to Sarah Sceats: "The use of food and eating as a deliberate sexual metonymy or

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[118] Examples of literature on vegetarianism and morality include Rod Preece, *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought*, Vancouver, UBC Press (2008); Leah Leneman, "The Awakened Instinct: Vegetarianism and the Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain. *Women's History Review* 9(2): 271-87; Tristam Stuart. *The Bloodless Revolution : a Cultural History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times (*New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008). Hundreds (if not thousands) of writers have broached the topic of religion and food, including these recent studies: Pamela V. Michaels. "Religion and Food," in *Food*: *In Context*, edited by Brenda Wilmoth Lerner and K. Lee Lerner (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2011): 679-682; Benjamin E. Zeller, *Religion, Food, and Eating in North Americ*a (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); and Terry Ray Clark, and Dan W. Clanton, *Understanding Religion and Popular Culture: Theories, Themes, Products and Practices* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012.)

metaphor is a long-established tradition."[119] Finally, classicist and author Margaret Visser has the last word (as she often does in regards to food): "Food is never just something to eat."[120]

In his exploration of American cuisine, Paul Freedman argues that certain dishes are such important hallmarks that they are internationally recognized, such as Italian lasagna and Indian curry.[121] Even if the regional differences get lost in translation, these crucial signifiers evoke memories of dishes and moments, uniting people who share similar evocations. Not surprisingly, Holtzman argues that "food is often used explicitly in the invention of national identities."[122] For Civil War soldiers, the receipt of a bottle of molasses, some pastries, or home remedy, if shared among comrades, would further unite them with their fellows, while differentiating them from the enemy. In this way, food served as a complex method of communication about identity, community, and the larger war effort.

For many Civil War soldiers, the construction of these relationships began before they left for training. Unit recruitment was organized geographically, with men from a common village or county joining with best friends and family members such as cousins, brothers, and fathers.[123] As the war progressed and deaths climbed into the hundreds of thousands, the depleted units were combined to form more diverse companies. Fortunately, by then the common

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[119] Sarah Sceats. *Food, Consumption, and the Body in Contemporary Women's Fiction*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 23.
[120] Margaret Visser, *Much Depends on Dinner.* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Weiden, 1986): 12.
[121] Paul Freedman, *American Cuisine: And How it Got This Way*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019): 38.
[122] Jon D. Holtzman. "Food and Memory," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35 (2006): 368.
[123] Thomas Earl Rodgers, "Billy Yank and G.I. Joe: An Exploratory Essay on the Sociopolitical Dimensions of Soldier Motivation," *Journal of Military History* 69, no. 1 (2005): 95.

experiences of veterans, that shared history of men under fire and under march, served the same function as a hometown.

In recent decades, Civil War scholars have focused on the motivations of common soldiers and civilians who participated in the war. Topics such as slavery/abolition, ideology of concepts such as freedom and democracy, the yearning for adventure or manhood, social and peer pressures, and financial and familial safety have all been put forward as valid reasons. For example, Thomas E. Rodgers argues that men on both sides shared a faith in the classic republican ideology, meaning they valued personal liberty over governmental power; and put the community's needs above their own desires. This required them to protect and act through military service or other involvement. These values existed in conjunction with religious values, class-related deference, and "aggressive masculinity in the South."[124] Their common backgrounds created the potential for initial unit cohesion, but it was their shared experiences after they left home that made them brothers.

Other motivations to fight include patriotism, duty, honor, adventurism, peer pressure, and community; as well as less-frequently cited reasons, such as abolition and personal rights according to James McPherson, who used samples of letters to determine motivations on both sides.[125] Confederates could add to that list defense of home and hearth against invaders. Messmates became interdependent through facing these new experiences together, both the dangerous and mundane, and these bonds simultaneously performed as peer pressure against

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[124] Thomas Earl Rodgers, "Billy Yank and G.I. Joe: An Exploratory Essay on the Sociopolitical Dimensions of Soldier Motivation," *Journal of Military History* 69, no. 1 (2005): 99.
[125] James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 18-28.

cowardice. Men who shirked any duties presented a threat to the group.[126] McPherson argues that Civil War participants ultimately fought for the men next to them, their comrades in arms whom they saw as their new brothers, as well as their respective causes. Bell Irvin Wiley argued that Southerners volunteered to seek adventure, find public approval, and to protect family and friends.[127] His research showed that Union men also sought adventure, but they also signed up because of peer pressure, for financial rewards, to avoid conscription, and out of duty or patriotism.[128]

Gary Gallagher argued that Northern soldiers wanted to demonstrate American exceptionalism and preserve the Union.[129] James Oakes, in his book *Freedom National*, argued that it came down to slavery — Southerners wanted to preserve the institution, while Northerners wanted it abolished and to preserve the Union.[130] Chandra Manning also looked at the proposition of slavery, but she saw slavery as more than a means of cheap labor, she also saw it as a social prop for white manhood for Confederate troops, and a moral afront to Union troops.[131] Ultimately, each soldier had to find his own reasons for going into battle, but significant motivation arose from the awareness of the man shoulder-to-shoulder with him on that advancing line, by that campfire, on the next bedroll, who relied on him. That trust was built

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[126] James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 85.
[127] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb,* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943).
[128] Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952).
[129] Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, MA:Harvard University Press, 2011)
[130] James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012).
131 Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War was Over*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

through the traumatizing experiences on battlefields, and the healing and rejuvenation found in camp between those hours of terror.

CHAPTER 3

FORAGING

Long after the Civil War, Elisha Doc Garey of Athens, Georgia, was interviewed for the WPA's Slave Narrative project. He recalled his family eating from the vast gardens on the plantation, as well as hunting and fishing for fresh game.[132] The end of the Civil War meant the end of slavery, but also the beginning of food insecurity for all Southerners. "Dem Yankees stole evvything in sight when dey come along," Garey said, referring to the Union soldiers who took all the produce and livestock. "Dey even stole our beehives and tuk 'em off wropt up in quilts."[133] For Garey, the food was "theirs," owned by the plantation owners and the laborers, not the invaders, even if the invader's goals meant the Garey family's freedom.

When Civil War scholars consider foraging — the act of taking food and animal feed from the land — the most common example cited is U.S. General William T. Sherman, who marched his army through Georgia and the Carolinas without a supply line.[134] Although foraging was ostensibly about provisioning a moving army, it became another weapon in Sherman's arsenal, like the effective use of artillery. Sherman used food to solve multiple problems at once: his logistical issues of supplying 60,000 men through hostile territory without allied help,

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[132] Elisha Doc Garey, interviewed by Sadie B. Hornsby, Athens, Georgia, May 16, 1938. *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 2, Garey-Jones*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn042/.

[133] The project's writers sometimes tried to recreate the dialect of the subjects, with greater or lesser success. Elisha Doc Garey, interviewed by Sadie B. Hornsby, Athens, Georgia, May 16, 1938. *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 2, Garey-Jones*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn042/.

[134] To avoid confusion, forage (n) is animal feed, which could be anything from hay, wheat, corn, grass, rice stalks or oats. Foraging (v) is the act of gathering animal and human food, both domesticated and wild.

punishing and weakening his enemies, and effectively communicating Union dominance to recalcitrant Southerners.

This chapter examines Sherman's actions, offers food-related explanations for his confidence in the seemingly risky effort and posits ideas on his actions and motivations. In addition, a brief look at independent acts of foraging are examined as they fit into the larger pattern of food as communication. These examples portray demands for subjugation, resistance to those demands, and individual acts of rebellion within the larger theater of war, all through the language of food.

Sherman's march to the sea and beyond maintains a special niche within Civil War scholarship. In recent decades, we have enjoyed greater understanding of the expeditions thanks to historians unveiling perspectives of civilians, women, and the formerly enslaved, many of whom were unwilling pawns for both sides. Anne Sarah Rubin's *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and Southern Memory* analyzes the incursion to determine how we should consider Sherman's reputation in history. Like their commander, Sherman's men do not fit neatly into the simplistic binary of evil or saintly, liberators or pillagers.[135] Rubin looks at how civilians were left unmoored, often homeless, lacking food or the ability to raise crops. Sometimes, Southerners received mercy from the Union troops, while other times they experienced cruel treatment.

Edward Caudill and Paul Ashdown examined cultural evidence such as marching songs and memoirs to demonstrate no clear consensus on Sherman. The union general embodied devil

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[135] Anne Sarah Rubin, *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 80.

and savior, modernity and barbarism, and his efforts to break the will of the South simultaneously subjugated the fledgling nation and cemented Southern hatred toward the North.[136] Scholars continue to analyze Sherman's footsteps. While historians traditionally described his route as a straight, unwavering line, Rubin and Noah Trudeau suggest that much of it was improvised and meandering.[137] Trudeau sees the main goal as asserting dominance while making a grand statement. In this, Trudeau agrees with both John Marszalek and Joseph T. Glatthaar. Marszalek argues that Sherman intended to "smash" his way to the Atlantic, but he did it to save lives and avoid more bloody confrontations such as those at Antietam, Shiloh, and Gettysburg. Sherman's invasion was "Purposeful destruction to save lives, not total war to crush the opposition."[138] Glatthaar asserts that the destruction and pillaging, even the looting, was a conscious effort to convince the South to surrender and rejoin the Union, to break the will "to resist Federal authority."[139] Of course, the scholarship on Sherman starts in 1865, with the first of many books written by the general's subordinates and colleagues seeking to explain his methods and reasoning. Sherman's own *Memoirs*, written ten years after the war, remains a touchstone for scholars, although it is controversial both for its tendency to paint the author in his

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[136] Edward Caudill and Paul Ashdown, *Sherman's March in Myth and Memory* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008): 163, 181.

[137] Noah Andre Trudeau, *Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008): ix. F. Edward Schwabe, who analyzed the right wing of the army, argues that the Fifteenth Corps spend more than a week lost in the pine barrens and certainly wandered aimlessly for much of it. However, it did serve some strategic function because while Howard's men were lost in the woods, it meant the enemy was equally confounded as to their destination. F. Edward Schwabe, Jr., *The March to the Sea: The Operational Role of Sherman's Right Wing* (E-book version: Pickle Partners Publishing, 2014): 66.

[138] John F. Marszalek, *Sherman's March to the Sea* (Abilene: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2005): 127.

[139] Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaign* (New York: New York University Press, 1986): 135.

best light, and for what some critics deem outright falsehoods.[140] What all these authors (including Sherman) agree on is that the 1864 excursion to the sea and then the early 1865 march through the Carolinas constituted much more than merely seizing resources for the Union's own use. Food, power, communication, and dominance were inextricably tied together in the expedition. Sherman was determined he would seize the reins of the South, and the invasions through the Southern states proved he had the manpower and boldness to do it.[141]

The Atlanta Campaign, then the famous march through Georgia to Savannah, and the subsequent foray through the Carolinas constitute three separate and unique expeditions, but all contributed to the effort of eroding the Southern will for war. Sherman's capture of Atlanta hardly needs elaboration here. After Atlanta fell September 1, 1864, and his main army moved into the city on September 8, Sherman set up headquarters nearby, expelled the civilians as potential enemies, and awaited orders. Meanwhile Confederates continued to harass and bedevil any Union troops who dared venture forth into the countryside.

It had taken four months to capture Atlanta, and as Ulysses Grant recalled later: "The troops now went to work to make themselves comfortable and enjoy a little rest after their arduous campaign."[142] Sherman used the rail lines and roads to supply his men on their way to

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[140] William T. Sherman, *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006). Regarding Sherman's tendency toward fabrications, see Albert Castel, "Prevaricating Through Georgia: Sherman's Memoirs as a Source on the Atlanta Campaign," *Civil War History* 40, No. 1 (March 1994).

[141] In September 1864, roughly two months before the march to Savannah, Sherman tried to negotiate safe passage through Georgia with the state's Confederate governor, Joseph E. Brown. The offer was that the Union would buy the corn and meat his men would need in traversing the state if Brown would pull Georgian troops out of the Confederate army and offer no resistance to the invasion. Skeptical that Sherman could carry out his threats, Governor Brown rejected the offer. Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* Vol. 3 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1939): 609.

[142] Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1886; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg 2004): 1071.

Atlanta, but Confederates attacked the lines so regularly that his strategy of relying on trains to provide rations was untenable, often leaving the men to their own resources. After the men took control of Atlanta one of their priorities was fresh food, which meant foraging on a wholesale scale to provide for the 60,000-strong army. Union soldier G. Senker wrote of foraging attempts outside of Atlanta, despite the hostile situation from Confederate guerrillas. "The boys often go out side the picket line in squads to forage for themselves, in one hand they hold their gun with the other they dig sweet potatoes. Squads of rebel cavalry hover about sometimes but the boys had experience and keep a good lookout."[143]

By necessity, the men also became very efficient at foraging. William Wallace of the Wisconsin Volunteers wrote home about how astonishingly fast the men could strip a cornfield. "They put one man in each row, and they just moved through the whole field that way...As fast as the mules could walk, we get to the end of our field."[144] In mid-October, Sherman wrote to his wife of his men "practicing the art of foraging and they take to it like ducks to water. They like pigs, sheep, chickens, calves and sweet potatoes better than rations. We won't starve in Georgia."[145] Gen. Alpheus Williams reported four expeditions around Atlanta averaged "650 wagon-loads of corn and fodder besides cattle, sheep, poultry, sweet potatoes, honey, sirup and

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[143] G. Senker to his brother, Sept. 25, 1864, near Atlanta, Ga., *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.072. In that same letter, he writes of the rewards implicit in the risks beyond just sweet potatoes. A week earlier, his regiment was "huge on a forage," returning to camp with "gun blankets full of sweet potatoes, apples &c others had hams, shoulders geese chickens, pigs and other decendents of Noah's fowls and animals presenting a comic party."

[144] John O. Holzhueter, "William Wallace's Civil War Letters: The Atlanta Campaign," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 57, No. 2 (Winter, 1973-1974): 111.

[145] W.T. Sherman to Eleanor Sherman, Oct. 21, 1864 from Gaylesville, Ala., in M.A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909): 314

the like."[146] In all, the yield for the four teams was 1,932,468 pounds of corn and 138,200 pounds of horse feed. These successful foraging operations added to Sherman's confidence that he could cut his own supply lines and survive.

Even as his men were scavenging around the countryside, Sherman was laying the groundwork for his plan through near-constant telegrams and letters to his commanders in Washington. In early September, Sherman wrote to Lincoln's Chief of Staff, General Henry Halleck, that he intended to clear out the countryside around Atlanta of people and food. "If the people raise a howl against my barbarity and cruelty I will answer that war is war, and not popularity-seeking. If they want peace they and their relatives must stop war."[147] Sherman wrote to Grant on October 11, 1864, warning that he cannot maintain a defensive position and protect his lines of supply and communications against General Hood's army and cavalry. "He can constantly break my roads. I would infinitely prefer to make a wreck of the road and all of the country from Chattanooga to Atlanta, including the latter city... and move through Georgia, smashing things to the sea."[148]

Still, the debate over the plan took weeks. At one point, a worried Halleck wrote that Sherman could not make the trek because of the lack of supplies for the 20,000 horses alone. "The amount asked for is more than can possibly be furnished in the Northern and Eastern States, and more than all the available sea-going vessels in the Northern ports could float."[149]

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[146] Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams, U.S. Army, 20th Army Corps, Report No. 23, Jan. 9, 1865 near Savannah. (OR, Series 1, Vol. 39, Part 1): 650.

[147] William T. Sherman to H.W. Halleck, Sept. 4, 1864, near Lovejoy's, Georgia, (*OR, Series I, Military Operations, Vol. 38, Part V*, 1891): 794.

[148] William T. Sherman to U.S. Grant, Oct. 11, 1865 from Kingston, Ga. (*OR, Series I, Military Operations, Vol. 39, Part I*, 1891): 28.

[149] Gen. Henry Halleck to Gen. Ulysses Grant, Oct. 2, 1864 (OR, Series I, Vol. 29, Part III, Correspondence): 25.

Lincoln's war cabinet recognized Sherman's intent, and most supported it. Opposing Sherman's plan were Halleck and John Rawlins, Grant's Chief of Staff, who went directly to Lincoln to argue against it. In Sherman's metaphorical camp were Grant, War Secretary Stanton, and, begrudgingly, Lincoln. The president agreed to the plan because of Grant's confidence in Sherman, but it was the overall goal of conquering Georgia that united them.[150] All the credit for the expedition, its conception and execution belonged to Sherman, Grant insisted later. If the invasion failed, no doubt the blame would have been Sherman's alone, as well.[151]

Sherman earned his reputation through his use of the "chevauchée method," a system that dates to the fifteenth century Anglo-Franco Hundred Years' War and still used in modern warfare. The method involves gathering food while disseminating terror through unpredictability and wanton destruction.[152] The systematic approach to taking food became a standard in twentieth-century wars to starve out enemies and weaken local support that might offer comfort or aid. Although the lingering Southern image of Sherman's march is that of the Union army run amok, this long foraging and pillaging expedition concealed a careful strategy. Special Orders No. 120, issued Nov. 9, 1864, from General Sherman's military headquarters near Kingston, Georgia, lays out the structure and goals of the expedition.

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[150] Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years,* Vol. III (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company): 616-17

[151] Even though they had decided on a plan and sent Sherman their blessings on October 11, Lincoln had a last-minute pang of doubt. In his *Memoirs*, Grant recalls: "This went so far as to move the President to ask me to suspend Sherman's march for a day or two until I could think the matter over." Grant may have tried to send a dispatch to delay the start, but it was apparently too late. The telegraph lines were already severed. Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1886; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg 2004):1160.

[152] Robert Christopher Welch, *Forage Liberally: The Role of Agriculture in Sherman's March to the Sea*, PhD dissertation (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University, 2011): 3.

The orders permit the seizure of all food, animals, transportation, and enslaved workers from the farms and plantations along their route. The commander's plan is to have two forces, each separated in two units, marching parallel to one another on four separate roads about 12 miles apart. In this manner, the army cleared a path 60 miles wide through the heart of Georgia, from Atlanta to Savannah, a 300-mile trek, with a stop in Milledgeville, Georgia's war-time state capital. The troops had no general train of supplies, according to Part III of the order: "The army will forage liberally on the country during the march." Each brigade commander was to organize a foraging party to gather corn, forage, meat, vegetables, corn-meal, keeping in the wagons at least ten days' provisions for the men and three days' forage for the animals. The orders forbade soldiers from going into people's homes, trespassing, although allowed them to "gather turnips, potatoes, or other vegetables, and to drive in stock of their camp," in the evenings.[153]

Part V of the field orders gives commanders the power to destroy cotton gins, grain mills, and houses in any district where the army is harassed or obstructed with burned bridges or blocked roads, or where "guerrillas or bushwhackers molest our march." The vagueness of the order gives broad leeway to soldiers and officers to act without much repercussion, increasing the unpredictability and terror. Item VI allows for seizing horses, mules and wagons, with emphasis on taking from wealthy Southerners. "cavalry and artillery may appropriate freely and without limit, discriminating, however between the rich, who are usually hostile,and the poor or industrious, usually neutral or friendly." The orders state that Union officers may not threaten or

[153] William T. Sherman. Special Field Order No. 120, *OR, Series I, Vol. 38, Part III (*1892): 713.

use abusive language, and should give written certificates (but not receipts) for items seized.[154] Finally, Article VII allows the taking of "Negroes who are able-bodied and can be of service," keeping in mind that extra laborers will increase the need for supplies, and a commander's "first duty is to see to them who bear arms."[155] Although Sherman and his men told newly freed people to remain on the plantations and in their homes, many followed the army, eventually growing to a mass of more than 14,000 people.

Without parts V, VI, and VII of Special Orders 120, it would be feasible to interpret the instructions as prioritizing expediency. However, Sherman's letters and telegraphs to fellow commanders tell a different story. In his memoirs, Sherman states that he told Grant that he intended to move through Georgia destroying railroads and everything else. He famously added: "I can make this march, and make Georgia howl!"[156] The incursion to the sea, the first leg of Sherman's sweep through the South, was meant to punish Georgians for supporting the rebellion while demonstrating the power of the Union Army to take and do whatever it wanted, even in the strongholds of the Confederacy.[157]

Sherman's 1864 Special Orders 120 is nearly the complete opposite of General Orders No. 46 issued by Union General Henry Halleck for the Department of the Missouri in early 1862. That earlier order forbids Union soldiers from pillaging, destroying or taking property including

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[154] Receipts would indicate the owner was owed compensation. Sherman's method relied on the European system of locals being required to provide for the invading army without expectation of payment.

[155] William T. Sherman. Special Field Order No. 120, *OR, Series I, Military Operations, Vol. 38, Part III* (1892): 713-714.

[156] William T. Sherman, *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1237.

[157] Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 190-191; Lisa M. Brady, "The Wilderness of War: Nature and Strategy in the American Civil War" *Environmental History* 10 (July, 2005): 428.

enslaved people. As for food, Halleck states: "Whenever it becomes necessary to levy forced contributions for the supply and subsistence of our troops, such levies will be made as light as possible, and be so distributed as to produce no distress among the people. All property so taken must be receipted and duly accounted for."[158]

Of course, this was not always taken at face value by the men who tended to seize opportunities as they came. In a letter home in autumn 1861, J. McDonald Smith writes that a herd of pigs came into their camp, but did not make it out again. "Too far were the men carrying the warfare on the porkers that the officers of the day & guard had to interfere & put several under arrest to stop it. At roll call all got a lecture & each company was instructed not to meddle with private property The smell of fresh roast pork was every where in camp this morning."[159] In a letter to his sweetheart in Ohio, a Union officer writes that "A few rods from where I am seated there is a fine plantation with some 75 negroes the owner of which is a Lt in the rebel army yet we keep 15 men constantly imployed guarding his property and if one of our soldiers should take as much as an onion off his plantation he would be tied up by the thumbs."[160] Despite this, the officer boasts that he and his men killed and roasted a pig from another plantation, and that they milked the cows, raided the garden, and ate the chickens from a third farm. "I can assure you, at night we visited the garden and got a fine lot of beets onions cuckumbers and a few fine chickens." The crucial difference is that Sherman's men took the whole garden and ate all the chickens in broad daylight. Halleck sought to win over the hearts

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[158] General Orders No. 46, Department of the Missouri, St. Louis, Feb. 22, 1862, OR Series 1, Vol. 8, 563-64.
[159] J. McDonald Smith to his wife, October 20, 1861, from Leesburg Pike, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College*, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.066.01.
[160] Union officer (unnamed) to Olive Rowland, July 8, 1862 from camp near Decatur, Georgia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No.2005.083.

and minds of the Southerners as his troops advanced. Three years later, Sherman sought only to win Southern compliance.

The decision to move 62,000 men and 20,000 horses through Georgia with no guaranteed supply chain equated to an enormous gamble. Grant managed something like it at Vicksburg, and Sherman on the Chattanooga campaign, but never on such a massive scale as Sherman was now proposing. Pre-war information, such as the 1860 census, indicated that the Georgian heartland teemed with produce and cattle. However, Sherman could not have known that the intervening four war-filled years had not left the land barren, as it had done in other parts of the South. Agriculture historian Robert Welch sums it up nicely: "If Sherman had been wrong about the wealth of Georgia's agricultural resources, history would remember the Savannah campaign as a failed expedition, an incident similar to Napoleon's retreat from Moscow."[161]

After the expedition concluded, Sherman defended his decision to invade Georgia, saying it was a calculated decision based on facts.[162] When asked, he typically referred to the 1860 census. Ironically, his strongest evidence may have come from the enemy. In a speech meant to buoy morale after the fall of Atlanta, Confederate President Jefferson Davis praised Georgia for its capacity to feed an army — Lee's Army. Before the war, the South imported wheat and meat from the North, Davis told the crowd. "Now the State of Georgia alone produces food enough

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[161] Robert Christopher Welch, *Forage Liberally: The Role of Agriculture in Sherman's March to the Sea*, (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University dissertation, 2011): 1-2.

[162] W.T. Sherman to Gen. Charles Ewing (his brother-in-law), Dec. 31, 1864 from Savannah, in M.A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909): 321. In that same missive, he adds: "My army has by time and attention acquired too much personal experience and adhesion to disintegrate by foraging."

not only for her own people and the army within it, but feeds, too, the Army of Virginia."[163] A transcript of the speech was printed in the Richmond *Dispatch* a month before Sherman's expedition commenced. The Confederate president virtually guaranteed Sherman that the state of Georgia had the supplies the Union needed. That assurance, combined with their successful foraging efforts, no doubt compounded Union confidence in the proposed plan.

In his memoir about the adventure, Sherman's aide Jacob Cox recalled that the commander meant to go to the sea but did not inform either his superiors or subordinates of his specific destination. Supposedly, Sherman's primary objective was always Savannah, but he wanted to keep his options open, Cox recalled. Instead, the wily Sherman told Halleck and Grant to have the Navy watch for him at Charleston, Savannah, Pensacola, or Mobile "saying, 'I will turn up somewhere.'"[164] Grant favored Mobile, and in his *Memoirs* said he had intended that port as a supply staging point back in 1862. The reason Sherman did not specify where he would go was apparently because he was not certain where the most opposition would be. Sherman made the final decision to seek Savannah in early December, two weeks into the expedition. Because he was deep in enemy territory by that point, he could not inform his superiors.

Misdirection was certainly one objective, and it worked to hide Sherman's intentions from friends and foes alike. Confederate General Hood believed Sherman would retreat north after Atlanta. Echoing that confidence, President Jefferson Davis assured the Confederate congress in early November that Sherman was already heading back to Chattanooga. "For the

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[163] Jefferson Davis, October 5, 1864, address at Augusta, Georgia, printed in the Richmond (Virginia) *Dispatch*, October 10, 1864. Published in Dunbar Rowland, ed. *Jefferson Davis: Constitutionalist, His Letters, Papers and Speeches*, Vol. VI (Jackson, Miss.: Mississippi Department of Archives and History 1923. E-version scanned by Saint Louis University Law Library and made available through LLMC Digital.): 357.

[164] Jacob D. Cox, *Military Reminiscences of the Civil War*, Vol. 2 (Ebook version, Project Gutenberg 2004): 534.

second time compelled to withdraw on the line of his advance without obtaining control of a single mile of territory beyond the narrow track of his march, and without gaining aught beyond the precarious possession of a few fortified points."[165] This assumption of Sherman's retreat proved fatal.

While the Richmond high command speculated, average Georgians had a front-row seat to the reality of the enemy tromping through the heart of the state. Confederate Cavalry General Joseph Wheeler also knew Sherman was not returning north and was telegraphing intelligence about the enemy's plans to the Confederate war offices. Before the expedition commenced, Wheeler reported that his scouts and captured prisoners told him that Sherman intended to march to Augusta and Savannah — in other words, to the sea. Wheeler also informed his commanders on November 16, the day after Sherman left Atlanta, that Sherman had 60,000 men, and even identified the corps as the Fifteenth, Seventeenth, Twentieth and Fourteenth.[166] On November 17, General Howell Cobb wrote to President Davis that Sherman's incursion was "formidable, and the most dangerous of the war. His policy is universal destruction."[167] But Sherman headed out in the opposite direction expected by top Confederate strategists, and he moved relatively quickly, making it difficult for the unprepared war office to anticipate and get ahead. Two days after the Union army left Atlanta heading Southeast to the Atlantic, General P.G.T. Beauregard

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[165] Jefferson Davis to the Confederate Congress, Richmond, November 7, 1864. Published in Dunbar Rowland, ed. *Jefferson Davis: Constitutionalist, His Letters, Papers and Speeches*, Vol. VI (Jackson, Miss.: Mississippi Department of Archives and History 1923. E-version scanned by Saint Louis University Law Library and made available through LLMC Digital.): 386.

[166] Joseph Wheeler to John B. Hood, with copies sent to generals Beauregard, Bragg, Hardee, Taylor, Cobb, Smith, Georgia Governor Joseph Brown, and Col. M.H. Wright in Columbus, Nov. 16, 1864, near Jonesborough. OR, Series I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893):860.

[167] Maj. Gen. Howell Cobb to President Davis, Nov. 17, 1864, Macon. OR, Series I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893):861.

asked for supporting cavalrymen to be sent from Tennessee to Georgia to slow Sherman down.[168] His request was denied by his commander, John Hood, who still believed the major fighting would take place in Tennessee.

Sherman's bold move was effective in the goal of eroding the willingness of the South to continue, according to British author T. Miller Maguire. When the Union general severed his last communications and supply lines tying him to Washington and headed south into Georgia, he demonstrated his mastery over the situation. Maguire compares this to similar bold actions by Napoleon, Wellington, and Suleiman. "There has been no finer, no more brilliant military conception, than the disappearance of his army from the public ken to the east of Atlanta and its reappearance in triumph on the Atlantic coast."[169] However, Maguire argues that it was the unwillingness of the Confederates to match Sherman's cruelty that saved the Northern general. If the Confederates had maintained a scorched-earth policy by destroying the food in front of the invading armies Sherman would have been forced back.[170] Instead, hopeful Southern farmers refused to destroy their own harvests and essentially preserved the food for the invaders. Aided and comforted by the optimism of Southerners from their president down to the lowliest farmer, Sherman successfully made his march.

Food was Sherman's key to controlling both his enemies and his allies. Although Sherman's veterans were loyal to him, those who had signed up in the first year of the war were

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[168] Alfred Roman, *The Military Operations of General Beauregard in the War Between the States, 1861-1865*, Vol. II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884, Digitized by Google Books): 300-301.
[169] Miller Maguire, "A Study in Devastation: General W. Sherman in Georgia, 1864," *The National Review*, 37 (Aug. 1901): 903-904.
[170] T. Miller Maguire, "A Study in Devastation: General W. Sherman in Georgia, 1864," *The National Review*, 37 (Aug. 1901): 905.

due to head home that fall, with their three-year terms completed. Sherman took enough food from the countryside to sustain his men and destroyed the rest, not only to prevent the enemy and the enemy's civilian support structure from thriving, but also to prevent his own men from backtracking. It was his version of Hernan Cortez destroying his ships.[171] They had to go forward or perish, according to historian Earl McElfresh.[172] Military analyst F. Edward Schwabe Jr. echoes this reasoning. "Without a base of supply, living off the land, Sherman's Army would be like a swarm of locusts — always needing to move forward to new sources of food and forage. If the army was stopped or forced to turn back on itself it would starve."[173] A veteran of the war, D.W. Schaeffer wrote home in late September 1864: "Three years is Enough for a Man of Family to be away from home. I think I have done my duty, and Shall therefore leave the service without feeling any Compunctions or regrets. I have never regretted that I enlisted, but having Served the time for which I enlisted, I dont feel like remaining any longer."[174] This strategy of severing the supply line effectively committed Sherman's army. They could not retreat, and his veterans could not leave. Once the expedition began, they must continue or be left in the middle of hostile territory with no food or defenses.

Sherman understood supplies as both necessity and symbol, a two-edged sword capable of granting success or failure to the expedition. Food represented a prize the Union army could take, while depriving the civilians and enemy combatants of their stores was their punishment.

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[171] Winston A. Reynolds "The Burning Ships of Hernán Cortés," *Hispania* 42, No. 3 (Sept. 1959): 317.
[172] Earl McElfresh, "Mapping out a Total War Strategy," *America's Civil War* (May 2009): 59.
[173] F. Edward Schwabe, Jr., *The March to the Sea: The Operational Role of Sherman's Right Wing* (E-book version: Pickle Partners Publishing, 2014): 26.
[174] D.W. Schaeffer to his brother and sister, September 25, 1864, from Dayton, Virginia (Rockingham County). *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2008.032.

Agriculture historian Robert Christopher Welch emphasizes the punitive aspect of the Georgia excursion. "I view the foraging of Georgia's farms as the central theme of the March to the Sea... The act of foraging brought war to the doorstep of Georgia's farms and plantations, and it implied that the operations of Sherman's army could be replicated wherever rebellion still existed within the South."[175] Mark Dunkeleman calls it the psychological aspect of Sherman's scheme. "Sherman meant to wage total war by breaking supply lines, and demoralizing the population and destroying or taking all its resources."[176] Not only did he seize all the resources for his own men, but in doing so he deprived his enemy, his enemy's supporters, and their dependents of that same life-sustaining product. Sherman's memoirs record the famous boast about making Georgia howl, but the lesser-well-known earlier part of that same telegraph to Grant is informative.[177] He explains: "The utter destruction of its roads, houses, and people will cripple their military resources."[178]

In her account of Sherman's march, Anne Sarah Rubin asks the question of whether Sherman could be considered a terrorist by nineteenth-century warrior's standards. "He certainly used calculated brutality to terrorize the Southern population."[179] Her conclusion is that he does not qualify for the title because his actions were sanctioned by his government and because the violent rampaging ended with the war. Sherman's goal included taking Georgia's war-time

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[175] Robert Christopher Welch. *Forage Liberally: The Role of Agriculture in Sherman's March to the Sea*, PhD dissertation (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University, 2011): 7

[176] Mark H. Dunkelman, '"Death to all Foragers,'" *American History* 37, No. 3 (Aug. 2002): 28.

[177] William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman, Second Edition*," (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889, e-book version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1237.

[178] William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman, Second Edition*," (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889, e-book version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1236.

[179] Anne Sarah Rubin. *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 143.

capital, Milledgeville, but also breaking Georgia's spirit. Here, food scholarship proves its worth: The act of taking by force or theft another animal's food is a power play. The move to the sea was about asserting dominance on an animalistic and primitive level, and a crucial aspect of that was starving or at least depriving of food the military and civilian population.

Numerous accounts have described Sherman's army as sweeping through the South like a swarm of locusts, devouring and destroying everything in its path. However, modern analysis of the route and the actual accomplishments reveal that Sherman's efforts were not quite that thorough. In the 1950s, almost a century after the war's end, geographer David J. deLaubenfels tracked Sherman's path and found that hundreds of the structures supposedly destroyed by the Union army were still standing, although many suffered from termites and time's ravages.[180] Perhaps rather than insects, the army is better imagined as a tornado: massive, incredibly dangerous, thundering across the landscape and ripping up everything in its immediate path, yet still leaving one house standing while its neighbor is reduced to splinters. This incomplete skipping trail of destruction extended 50 to 60 miles wide, approximately 300 miles long. Also like a tornado, its destructive force left the civilian population shocked and fearful.

To get an idea of how much food was taken from Georgia, we can compare the Atlanta-Savannah excursion to Sherman's march to from Chattanooga-Atlanta earlier that year. Quartermaster J.L. Donaldson reported that his crew of 3,000 men and 400 teams of mules worked twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for several weeks, moving two to three thousand pounds of food per day into the warehouses in preparation for that trek. The supplies

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[180] David J. de Laubenfels, "Where Sherman Passed By," *Geography Review* 47 (1957) 381-395.

filled all the available storage and then he built two huge new warehouses along the riverbank to hold it all. To feed all the horses and mules, he collected 108 million pounds of oats and hay, which had to be stored outdoors, but which they covered as best they could with tarps to protect it from the rain. The animal fodder "drained the whole Northwest," and he warned the men to "husband it well," because they could not get any more until the summer crops were harvested.[181]

In comparison, Sherman's expedition to Savannah was relatively light in terms of what they carried from the Union supplies. Cumberland Army Chief Quartermaster L.C. Easton reported they took "only" a twenty days-worth supply of bread; five days' worth of salted meat, soap, rice, and candles; 30 day's worth of sugar and coffee; and 80 days' worth of salt.[182] Mounted Union soldiers also drove about 5,500 cattle to provide fresh beef. The cavalry, officers, and wagons used 34,000 horses and mules. Nearly all the animal feed was taken from the countryside, and Easton figured it at 15 million pounds of grass and hay, and 11,000 pounds of grain, such as corn or oats.[183] After the war, Sherman put pencil to paper and estimated that each soldier needed three pounds of food (bread and meat) per day, and a horse or mule needed twenty pounds. For an army of 100,000 men, he advised a minimum need of two million pounds per week, a number which Sherman admits will cause any future commander "dismay."[184]

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[181] Sept. 15, 1864 report from J. L. Donaldson, Col. and Chief Quartermaster of the Department of the Cumberland (OR, Ser. I, Vol. LII, Part I): 620-621.

[182] The blockade supposedly prevented Southerners from getting salt, and reports in the North were that Confederates was dying for lack of the mineral. Some areas were hard-hit by the lack of salt, while others with access to the ocean, including Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas, were able to manufacture salt from seawater.

[183] Final annual report of the war, Aug. 18, 1865, from L.C. Easton, brevet Brigadier General and Chief Quartermaster for Major-General W.T. Sherman to M.C. Meigs, Union quartermaster. (OR, Series I, Vol. LII, Part 1): 698, 702.

[184] William T. Sherman, "Conclusions: Military Lessons of the War," from *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 2167

Supplying the Chattanooga to Atlanta offensive took 50 million pounds of meat and bread. In real terms, the marches meant dining on the hoof on a truly massive scale, but it also translated into less food for both the civilian and military Southerners.

The foraging process began around 7 a.m. every morning when teams of soldiers and civilian scouts fanned out, working five or ten miles out from the main lines, searching through farms and plantations for anything edible or useful for the army, then returning each afternoon with their loads in seized wagons, carts and carriages. "The evening meal would then be cooked over fires fueled by fence rails; dinner for a single corps could consume six miles of fencing."[185] The first stage of foraging fell to the "bummers" or "bums," the infamous camp followers who used Sherman's army to camouflage their unauthorized thieving and vandalism. Because they scouted and pointed legitimate army foragers toward rich resources, their actions were tolerated. However, their lawless methodology eventually infected the larger army, and equated to quite a bit of looting. It also resulted in the entire 62,000-man unit being labelled as "Sherman's Bummers." Although some disliked the reputation, the bummers' hypermasculine behavior and devil-may-care attitude was feared if not admired, and the appellation eventually became a point of pride.

On a practical basis, the bummers acted like advance foragers, scouting a day or two ahead of the main body where they could find likely sites for food while also cherry-picking valuables, such as the family silver or the best horses, for themselves. Atkins's description of the bummers indicates their usefulness as well as their questionable ethics: "They were brave to

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[185] Lee B.Kennett, '"HELL 'or 'HIGH OLD TIMES.'" *America's Civil War* 17 (6, 2005): 46.

recklessness, loving adventure, not wholly bad, and sometimes furnishing valuable information."[186] The bummers' progression of priorities was food first, then wagons and carriages, and finally anything else they desired.[187]

It was the bummers' violent tactics that served Sherman's propagandist purposes. Locals quickly spread stories about being threatened with guns, torture, and fire, so that they trembled at the very mention of Sherman's name, even if they never saw a single soldier. The actual foragers emulated the bummers' behavior if their officers permitted it, Schwabe asserts. "Those who were properly led avoided the depredations which were often attributed to Sherman's troops... Evidence suggests that below regimental level, officers and non-commissioned officers (most of whom were elected by their men) allowed discipline to break down."[188] Since it suited the purpose of frightening the populace, the implication that all the men were amoral savages was ignored. After the war, Sherman and his subordinates, including Major-General Oliver O. Howard, spent decades trying to reform the reputation of their men, which imagination and exaggeration turned into something akin to undisciplined, rapacious Visigoths sacking Rome. Clearing the record proved difficult because of the kernel of truth in the stories.

In his own account of the march, Sherman downplayed the excesses of his bummers. Of the foraging he writes: "No doubt, many acts of pillage, robbery, and violence, were committed by these parties of foragers, usually called 'bummers;' for I have since heard of jewelry taken

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[186] Smith D. Atkins, "With Sherman's Cavalry," Military Essays and Recollections: Papers Read before the Commandery of the State of Illinois, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS): Vol. II (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1894): 389.
[187] Sarah Anne Rubin. "Forage liberally on the Country," *Civil War Times* 54, No. 1 (February 2015): 52.
[188] F. Edward Schwabe, Jr., *The March to the Sea: The Operational Role of Sherman's Right Wing* (E-book version: Pickle Partners Publishing, 2014): 110-111.

from women, and the plunder of articles that never reached the commissary; but these acts were exceptional and incidental."[189] He objected to the idea that the men were completely uncontrolled, since he "never heard of any cases of murder or rape," and defended foraging for food as necessary.[190]

Ironically, earlier in the war, a much more fastidious Sherman compared the volunteers of the Union to those same undisciplined invaders when he wrote to his wife July 28, 1861, to say "No Goths or Vandals ever had less respect for the lives and property of friends and foes, and henceforth we ought never to hope for any friends in Virginia...If he thinks right, he takes the oats and corn, and even burns the house of the enemy."[191] His attitude obviously changed as the war progressed and after successfully taking Savannah, Sherman proudly labeled himself "the vandal chief," in a letter to Eleanor about his reception by the Southerners of the city. "They regard us as the Romans did the Goths and the parallel is not unjust. Many of my stalwart men with red beards and frames look like giants."[192] The viciousness of hard war and the recognition of necessity taught Sherman to abandon his concepts of gentleman's war and learn to use food as a weapon.

For Sherman to have mentioned pillaging at all is an indication of how close the army came to it. Many excesses by the "bummers" are preserved in the soldier's and civilian's

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[189] William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman, Second Edition*," (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889, e-book version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1300.
[190] William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman, Second Edition*," (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889, e-book version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1300.
[191] W.T. Sherman to Eleanor Sherman, in M.A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909): 209.
[192] W. T. Sherman to Eleanor Sherman, Jan. 15, 1865 in Savannah, GA., in M.A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909): 326.

memoirs, letters, and diaries, and the official claims filed post-war by property owners seeking reimbursement. In the decade after the war, the Southern Claims Commission reviewed files submitted by Southern civilians who protested the loss of their property, arguing they remained loyal to the Union throughout the war. Of those, just over 2,000 came from Georgians, most of whom claimed they lost property to Sherman's forces.[193]

In addition to seizing the food and looting, Sherman's men displayed their dominance through random destruction along the way. Soldiers sometimes "fired" or torched homes, but they purposely targeted the productive structures of a farm, such as barns, corn cribs, smokehouses, and kitchens.[194] Any healthy horses, mules, and cattle were seized, and the rest slaughtered. Cavalry officer Atkins recalled one instance in which they had too many captured horses in late November. After carefully going through the herd and choosing the healthiest, they put blankets over each remaining animal's head and knocked it between the ears with an ax, systematically killing 500 in one day. The carcasses were "left in ranks around the Georgia mansion used for brigade headquarters."[195] The house's owner had to move out, since there were no animals left with which to haul away the rotting corpses.[196] Pigs, sheep, older cows, and

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[193] Frank Wysor Klingberg, "The Southern Claims Commission: A Postwar Agency in Operations" *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* Volume 32, No. 2 (September, 1945): 195-214.

[194] Southern kitchens were often built apart from the main structures, both to isolate the living areas from the heat produced by cooking and to protect the primary residences from fires.

[195] Smith D. Atkins, "With Sherman's Cavalry," Military Essays and Recollections: Papers Read before the Commandery of the State of Illinois, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS): Vol. II (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1894): 390.

[196] Smith D. Atkins, "With Sherman's Cavalry," Military Essays and Recollections: Papers Read before the Commandery of the State of Illinois, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS): Vol. II (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1894): 390.

young calves, were also brained to save ammunition. Every fowl, to "the last chicken" was taken for the army's suppers.[197]

Georgians in the wake of the army were left with smoldering barns, looted homes, and piles of wasted livestock. Eliza Andrews recalled the stench as unbearable in places: "The fields were trampled down and the roads lined with carcasses of horses, hogs, and cattle that the invaders, unable either to consume or to carry away with them, had wantonly shot down to starve out the people and prevent them from making their crops."[198] This effort to despoil the land worked on several levels. It was effective in destroying the economic ability to provide for the army and civilian supporters, and psychologically, it worked by undermining Southern morale. Military historian John Bennett Walters compares Sherman's invasion and strategies to those used in World War II. Walters explains that Sherman's goals were remarkably sophisticated, even if brutal in their execution. This was Sherman's version of total war. [199]

Afterward, many veterans on both sides wrote about the famous Georgia march, presenting their own observations, but also recording possibly apocryphal accounts. General Jacob Cox, who later became governor of Ohio and U.S. Secretary of the Interior, wrote that the trip took on a carnivalistic air, with foragers and scouts dressed in stolen satin and lace, driving silver-mounted carriages full of corn and ham. It was remembered at veteran's reunions as "a

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[197] Grant relates the story of some of Sherman's foragers chasing hens in a woman's yard while she begged for some to be left to provide for her family. "The soldiers seemed moved at her appeal; but looking at the chickens again they were tempted and one of them replied: 'The rebellion must be suppressed if it takes the last chicken in the Confederacy, 'and proceeded to appropriate the last one." Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1886; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg 2004): 1341.

[198] Eliza Frances Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of A Georgia Girl, 1864-1865*. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1908):21.

[199] John Bennett Walters, "William T. Sherman and Total War," *The Journal of Southern History* 14 No. 4 (Nov. 1948): 448.

romantic dream more than reality."[200] In this festive manner, the army reached Savannah in mid-December, about a month after leaving Atlanta, and Sherman wrote to his wife Eleanor of their safe arrival. "We came right along living on turkeys, chickens, pigs, bringing along our wagons loaded as we started with bread, etc. I suppose Jeff Davis will now have to feed the people of Georgia instead of collecting provisions of them to feed his army."[201] Throughout the expedition, this army of 62,000 men ate off the fat of the land, encountering relatively few problems with provisions, and came away with excess, primarily because of successful foraging efforts, and a unforgiving ethos that regarded food as the crucial war materiel, and determination to leave none for their enemies or their enemy's supporters.

Those wagons full of excess food gathered along their trek likely saved the army in the next few weeks. After arriving in the Savannah swamps, Sherman's men settled in for what was known as the "starving time." In his letters to his mother, George Cram writes that it was an abrupt awakening to suddenly find themselves short of supplies. Provisions were plentiful only so long as the troops changed camps every night, but when they came to a "dead halt in front of an armed city... affairs looked alarming enough."[202] Food was distributed among those brigades that had none, and foraging became a serious and life-or-death endeavor. In his official report, General William Hazen stated that his division's supply train left Atlanta with eighty-three six-mule wagons, and when they arrived in Savannah he shared 22,000 rations with other

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[200] Jacob D. Cox, *The March to the Sea*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons,1900): 41-42.
[201] W.T. Sherman to Eleanor Sherman, December 16, 1864, near Savannah, GA. in in M.A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909): 316.
[202] George F. Cram to his mother, Dec. 18, 1864, four miles north of Savannah, Ga. Jennifer Cain Bohrnstedt, ed. *Soldiering with Sherman: Civil War Letters of George F. Cram* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000): 151.

commands.[203] In this sea-ward section of the state, the principle food crop was rice, and the men subsisted on it for about two weeks until Fort McAllister fell, granting them free access to the supplies on Union ships waiting at the mouth of the Ogeechee River. The troops survived on rice foraged from nearby plantations, freshly slaughtered beef from the herd collected on their move south, and fish from the river. In a letter to his father, Edward Kendall wrote that the trip was made on pork and sweet potatoes, but in Savannah their diet changed. "Very large numbers of Able bodied Negroes joined & came through with us & are now busy at work on the Rice plantations threshing & cleaning Rice for Army use. We are camped on a Rice Plantation – fish & Rice are plenty."[204]

Sherman tried to make light of this period in a letter to his wife. He relates the story of a group of foragers who set out in a boat and met a steamship where the Ogeechee and Ossabaw met up. "They hailed her and got answer that it was the *Nemeha*, and had Major-General Foster on board; the soldiers answered 'Oh Hell, we've got twenty-seven Major-Generals up at camp. What we want is hard tack.'"[205] Still, their collective memories of the Georgia expedition compare favorably with that of the move north through the Carolinas, a trip better recalled for its mud than its provisioning.

In an essay examining Sherman's West Point education and his subsequent experiences during the war, John W. Brinsfield argues that the pragmatist in Sherman rationalized the

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[203] Brigidier General William B. Hazen, Commanding 2nd division, 15th Corps. Report No. 23, January 9, 1865, Savannah, Ga. (*OR, Reports, Correspondence*, Series I, Vol. 44, 1893): 111.

[204] Edward Kendall to his father, December 17, 1864, from Argyle Island, Georgia. Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No.2006.041.

[205] W.T. Sherman to Eleanor Sherman, Jan. 15, 1864 from Savannah, GA. in M.A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909): 328-329.

destruction as necessary to expedite the end of the war, the same rationalizations later used to dominate Native Americans during the Indian Wars. Sherman reasoned that Southerners were rebelling illegally, and as traitors were subject to anything that sped their reformation. "Sherman was clearly a utilitarian thinker. What the South learned to fear was not Sherman's aggression nor his lack of mercy. It was his revenge."[206] For example, the town of Cassville, Virginia was destroyed because of guerrilla action. It was not rebuilt. In another instance, Confederate prisoners of war were forced to walk ahead of Union troops into mine fields, and others were killed in retaliation when foragers were found executed. Nearby homes and towns were burned when the army found itself frustrated by burned bridges or blocked roads. Every action his army committed was justified as necessary for the psychological intimidation meant to push the South into surrendering.[207] In Sherman's final report on the Georgia march to the sea, the general estimated the army took $20 million in provisions, but did $100 million in damages.[208]

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[206] John W. Brinsfield "The Military Ethics of General William T. Sherman: A Reassessment," *Parameters (Journal of the U.S. Army War College)* 12 (June 1982): 36.

[207] Like Sherman, the Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard believed in retaliation. He requisitioned Union prisoners in January 1865 to clear torpedoes (land mines) from the rail lines. When the Confederate high command refused permission, arguing it was not "legitimate work for prisoners of war," Beauregard justified it by pointing to Union General McClelland, who used Confederate prisoners for the dangerous work. "And all the Federal letter writers allege that Major-General Sherman resorted to the same illegitimate measures at Fort McAllister." While it defied the behavior of civilized warfare, it was "a legitimate act of retaliation." Gen. Beauregard responding to John H. Winder and Asst. Sec. of War J.A. Campbell, March 4, 1865, OR, Series II, Vol. VIII (Washington: GPO, 1899): 49.

[208] W.T. Sherman, official report, Jan. 1, 1865, from the field near Savannah, Ga. OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893): 13. In his report, Sherman states: "We have also consumed the corn and fodder in the region of country thirty miles on either side of a line from Atlanta to Savannah, as also the sweet potatoes, cattle, hogs, sheep and poultry, and have carried away more than 10,000 horses and mules, as well as countless numbers of their slaves. I estimate the damage done to the State of Georgia and its military resources at $100,000,000; at least $20,000,000 of which as inured to our advantage, and the remainder is simple waste and destruction. This may seem a hard species of warfare, but it brings the sad realities of war home to those who have been directly or indirectly instrumental in involving us in its attendant calamities."

After capturing Savannah — and assuring Grant and Lincoln that he and his army were still alive — Sherman then turned his eyes on the Carolinas and repeated the process through those two states at a double-time march. In a letter to his father written March 12, 1865, Edward Kendall related marching twenty-one miles in one day, from early morning until around 10 p.m. "We have lived wholly on the Country since the 10th of February drawing no rations whatever save a little Coffee & sugar. have plenty of everything needfull. the Country through which we passed has been stripped clean of Corn — meat potatoes."[209]

The nature of the expedition became more vicious in South Carolina, the first state to secede. In his *Memoirs*, Sherman relates that "somehow our men had got the idea that South Carolina was the cause of all our troubles," and they took out their frustration on the residents of that state.[210] Sherman did not try to restrain them because he felt it might diminish their effectiveness. "I saw and felt that we would not be able longer to restrain our men as we had done in Georgia."[211] Rules against entering houses, threatening and harming civilians, taking from the poor, and abusing their power were ignored without repercussions. Rubin notes: "This was personal, not strategic."[212]

Fire was a favorite tool on this expedition. Homes were looted, then burned. In South Carolina the men pursued their own satisfaction and greed. "If Sherman's men were ever out of

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[209] Edward Kendall to his father, March 12, 1865, from bivouac near Fayetteville. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.041.

[210] William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman, Second Edition*," (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889, e-book version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1462

[211] William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman, Second Edition*," (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889, e-book version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1462

[212] Anne Sarah Rubin, *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 31

control, it might have been on their movement north through South Carolina. There were stories of civilians being hanged if they did not reveal the locations of valuables, of women being raped."[213] Because many of these crimes were committed in private homes or on remote farms, crimes became difficult to prove. In a letter to his mother, Laurens Welcott said they had not encountered much opposition, and he commented briefly on the overall destruction of the army. "I assure you the people of South Carolina won't wish for another visit. the cities of Columbia & Cheran are almost entirely destroyed as well as most of the farm houses and small villages."[214] Welcott's account is typical of letters from Union soldiers who participated in that campaign.

The most public atrocity, and one which drew some of the loudest criticism, was the burning of South Carolina's capital city, Columbia.[215] An estimated 1,400 buildings were destroyed, about three-fourths of the city, leaving thousands homeless and without food or possessions. Some 370 men were arrested for looting and arson, most of them Union soldiers.

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[213] Anne Sarah Rubin, *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 35. The sexual assault accusation is problematic. The Official Record includes two official charges of rape by Sherman's men, and both soldiers were forced out of the army. However, their commanders and friends said the claims were specious, counter-accusing the women of being sex workers and/or liars, destroying the women's reputations. One man was pardoned immediately, while the other spent three months in prison before being pardoned. What makes this difficult for scholars is the remote nature of the army's progression, and the social pressure women faced to keep silent on the matter. A raped nineteenth-century Southern woman faced stigma and condemnation. Any woman brave enough to step up and ask for justice could suffer greater punishment than the offending soldier, since she might never be considered suitable for marriage or polite society again. Black women were even more vulnerable, since they did not have white Southern society's even modest support. Union troops were aware of that weakness and undoubtably took cruel advantage. Realistically, it is impossible to know how much sexual violence against civilians took place during the march through the South. Women's diaries record gossip to that effect, but the victims did not step forward to press their claims.

[214] Lauren Welcott, Co. D, 52nd Illinois Volunteers, March 14, 1865, near Fayetteville, N.C. to his mother, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.038.

[215] After the war, Georgia journalist Henry Woodfin Grady, who encouraged industrialization of the South as a means of reintegration with the rest of the nation, commented that Sherman was a smart man "but mighty careless about fire." Rossiter Johnson, John Clark Ridpath, Gen. J.T. Morgan, Gen. O.O. Howard, Gen. Selden Connor, Henry W.B. Howard, and Gen. John B. Gordon, *An Illustrated History of the Campaigns and Conflicts of the Great Civil War*, Project Gutenberg e-book prepared by Ron Swanson (New York: Bryan, Taylor & Co., 1894): 2123.

Sherman blamed the fleeing enemy for sparking the fire by trying to destroy cotton bales, the wind escalated and spread it, and freedmen for providing alcohol to his men. However, the official reports his subordinates filed clearly state that the drunken revelries of Union soldiers either caused or contributed significantly to the city's losses.[216] Sherman denied responsibility and he was cleared by civil courts after the war.[217] In his *Memoirs*, Sherman recounts two incidents of him protecting Columbian women he had known before the war from either his own men's pillaging or the fires. He cites these as proof that he did not have malice or desire to destroy the city "as is generally believed in the South."[218] Of the pillaging, Sherman acknowledged it, and chalked it up to war's cruelty.

In contrast, the punitive aspect of the North Carolina trek focused on taking livestock and destroying train rails. "Tearing up the Track twisting the Rails to Williston," according to one soldier on that mission.[219] North Carolina apparently received the same level of treatment as Georgia, that is, as a territory of traitors, but not deserving of complete destruction. Two weeks after Lee surrendered, William Selsby wrote to his wife, describing the contrast in how the army behaved in defeated North Carolina. "There was a very noticeable diference between this march and our previous marches in this war... Very strict discipline was maintained. No foraging was

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[216] See Reports, John Oliver, March 30, 1865, "The Campaign of the Carolinas," (*OR, Series I, Vol. 47, Part I*, *Reports,* 1895): 310; as well as George A. Stone, Report No. 19, March 26, 1865 "Campaign of the Carolinas," (*OR, Series I, Vol. 47, Part 1, Reports,* 1895): 264-265; also John Logan, April 1, 1865, "The Campaign of the Carolinas," (*OR, Series I, Vol. 47, Part I*, *Reports,* 1895): 227.

[217] Almost two dozen Columbia property owners sued Sherman and the U.S. Government after the war, accusing him of "wantonly" firing the city. Sherman was cleared of the charge and the official blame laid at the feet of the retreating Confederates. See W.T. Sherman, "Address to the Army of the Potomac," *Army-Navy Journal* 11 (June 1881): 945.

[218] William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General W.T. Sherman, Second Edition*," (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889, e-book version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1529.

[219] Edward Kendall to his father, March 12, 1865, from a bivouac near Fayetteville, N.C. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.041.

allowed, The march was — contented in the most orderly manner Fences were not allowed to be burned, the soldiers having to hunt up woods, to cook their rations."[220] The change of behavior is further evidence that Sherman's strategy had shifted away from the previous seemingly licentious behavior and destruction of Georgia and South Carolina.

Although Sherman's army was a nearly unstoppable force in an area already depleted of soldiers and defenses, the Southerners still fought back, defending their homes and towns against their enemies. Confederate resistance came from both civilian and military sources, and, like Sherman's overall scheme to use hunger and lack of food to dampen the ability to wage war, many of these efforts were also rooted in psychological manipulation. The military opposition to these incursions came from three sources: Hood's Army, which fought Sherman during the Atlanta campaign; Wheeler's cavalry, a mobile and quick-moving strike force that harried Sherman's troops through most of Georgia; and Johnston's army, which fought Sherman in the Carolinas.[221] At a Confederate veteran's meeting after the war, former Colonel C.C. Jones Jr., rejected the portrayal of the Georgia invasion as an easy "holiday excursion," adding: "This impression is not only exaggerated, but also positively erroneous."[222] Although defenses were depleted, these states did not suffer Sherman's army quietly.

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[220] Wm. H. Selsby to his wife, Mary 8, 1865 near Raleigh, NC. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No.

[221] The military aspects are thoroughly detailed in other books and articles and will not be revisited here. It should be pointed out, however, that while Sherman's advances are often portrayed as steamrollers or tidal waves moving across the countryside relatively unopposed, in the 34 days of his march across Georgia, Union troops engaged Confederate opposition forty-nine times in either skirmishes or actions, some of them quite serious. Savannah Campaign encounters, OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893) 1-2.

[222] Col. C.C. Jones, Jr., "General Sherman's March from Atlanta to the Coast — Address Before the Survivor's Association of Augusta, Ga., April 20, 1884," in *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. XII, Rev. J. William Jones, ed., (Richmond, Va.: William Ellis Jones, 1884): 297.

The resistance to Sherman was also reflected in the foraging. Every time men peeled off to raid an isolated home they risked their lives. Any captured bummers or scouts would be summarily executed, and the bodies left with warning notes stating, "Death to All Foragers," pinned to their clothes.[223] One of Sherman's cavalry officers wrote of foraging around Atlanta: "Every wagon-load of corn costing a wound or the life of a soldier. It was a sad sight to see the forage trains return with their wounded and dead up on their light loads of corn. The daily trading of men for corn was the saddest service performed by the writer during the war."[224] The advancing Union troops were constantly harassed by the Confederate cavalry, and skirmishes and battles were waged throughout these campaigns, a struggle not just for territory but for food. In some tragic instances, resistance took the form of stand-offs outside of towns or villages with armed children and old men pitted against tens of thousands of hardened Union veterans.[225]

Most of the encounters were between trained warriors, principally the men of Wheeler's or Johnston's forces. Wheeler's cavalry was a constant thorn in Sherman's side, keeping foragers and stretched-out wagon trains alert and wary. Rubin estimates Wheeler's men executed sixty-four Union foragers in Georgia, and another 110 in South Carolina.[226] Sherman's response to the killing of foragers was to order the execution of prisoners of war — one for one — starting with the officers. Because he held 1,000 Confederate prisoners, it was a considerable threat, and

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[223] Burke Davis, *Sherman's March* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988): 187–188; John G. Barrett, Sherman's March through the Carolinas (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956): 104–105.

[224] Smith D. Atkins, "With Sherman's Cavalry," *Military Essays and Recollections: Papers Read before the Commandery of the State of Illinois, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (MOLLUS): Vol. II (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1894): 387.

[225] Noah Andre Trudeau, '"I Saw a Column of Black Smoke': Two Confederate soldiers recount their dogged efforts to stop Sherman's March to the Sea despite confusing orders and overwhelming odds," *America's Civil War* 21, No. 5 (Nov. 2008): 40.

[226] Anne Sarah Rubin, *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 36.

effective. "While Hampton threatened to kill even more Union men, officers first, should Sherman carry out his threat, the killings of foragers stopped."[227]

Confederates knew that the most effective way to stop Sherman was to cut off his food. Senator B.B. Hill issued an open letter to the people of Georgia, approved by the Secretary of War James Seddon, to "remove all provisions from the path of the invader, and put all obstructions in his path."[228] That same day, General Beauregard issued a similar call to arms to Georgians, asking them to "Arise for the defense of your native soil!" In his circular, Beauregard instructs the people to "Obstruct and destroy all roads in Sherman's front, flank and rear, and his army will soon starve in your midst!"[229] Long after the war, Grant recalled Beauregard's efforts to stop Sherman. "He made the most frantic appeals to the citizens... but it was hard to convince the people of the propriety of destroying supplies which were so much needed by themselves, and each one hoped that his possessions might escape."[230] Instead, they hoarded their supplies, and allowed Sherman's men to arrive well-fed in Savannah.

The same day that Sherman's army left Atlanta, Confederate cavalry general Wheeler issued orders to his men to remove horses, mules and cattle in front of Sherman's army, as well

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[227] Anne Sarah Rubin, *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 37. See also, Barrett, *Sherman's March through the Carolinas*, 104–105; and Davis, *Sherman's March*, 187–188.

[228] C.S.A. Senator B.B. Hill to the People of Georgia, Nov. 18, 1864, from Richmond, VA. OR, Series I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893): 867.

[229] Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard to the People of Georgia, Nov. 18, 1864, from Corinth, MS. OR, Series I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893): 867.

[230] Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1886; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg 2004): 1140. Later, as Sherman headed through North Carolina, Lee wrote to Confederate Secretary of War J.C. Breckinridge on Feb. 19, 1865: "Everything should be destroyed that cannot be removed out of the reach of Generals Sherman and Schofield." It was advice that North Carolinians also ignored. Cited in Alfred Roman, *The Military Operations of General Beauregard in the War Between the States, 1861-1865*, Vol. II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884, Digitized by Google Books): 643.

as to break mills to render them useless.[231] General Hood, who was in charge of the region, ordered: "keep them (the cavalry) constantly harassing the enemy, destroying his trains, and cutting off foraging parties."[232] On the ground, facing that intimidating sight, Wheeler knew their only hope was to keep the Union army hungry.

Four days after Sherman began the move south, Georgian congressmen went to Davis demanding he defend their state, and then issued a notice to the people of Georgia. "Remove your negroes, horses, cattle, and provisions from Sherman's army, and burn what you cannot carry."[233] Some Georgians took precautions to withhold resources from the enemy. They hid horses, mules and cattle in the woods, buried food, or sank it into ponds or streams, and hid it under beds or in slaves' quarters. Still, far too much remained readily available for foragers.

In Dolly Burge's journal, she recalls that neighbors warned her to hide everything in the days before Sherman's men arrived on her plantation. In preparation, all the meat in the smokehouse was divided and hidden in slave cabins, and an enslaved cook named Julia buried a jar of lard. Burge's silk, muslin, linens and hose were stashed away in trunks and under their beds, while china and silver were buried underground.[234] Some of the enslaved residents of the plantation owned livestock — mules and some hogs — and they took care to hide the animals in the woods for fear of losing them to "the Yankees." It did little good. When the Union troops did

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[231] M.G. Hudson (Aide-de-Camp to Wheeler) Nov. 15, 1864 in a Circular from Wheeler's headquarters. OR, Series I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893): 859.
[232] J.B. Hood to Wheeler, Nov. 18, 1864, Florence, Ala. OR, Series I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893): 868.
[233] C.S.A. Congressmen Julian Hartridge, J.H. Echols, John Shewmake, Mark Blandford, Geo. N. Lester, and Jas. M. Smith to the People of Georgia, Nov. 19, 1864, Richmond, Va., OR, Series I, Vol. XLIV (Washington: GPO, 1893): 869.
[234] Dolly Sumner Lunt Burge, "July 22, 1864" A Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, (New York: The Century Co., 1918): 5.

arrive, Burge compared them to "demons" and "famished wolves," who took a thousand pounds of meat, all the dairy products, and anything pickled. All the fowl were shot in the yard, as well as the young pigs.[235] She recorded that no one's possessions were safe, including those of the enslaved. Their cabins were broken into and their possessions taken, including cash and Sunday clothing.[236]

For enslaved people unable to make it to Union lines, food was a two-edged sword. Prior to the war's outbreak events like hog killings, corn-huskings, and similar harvests meant celebration and community, an excuse for a party, and a few happy hours amid the heartbreaking existence for people who lacked autonomy over anything, including their own names, their labor, even their families. But food shortages during the war and in its aftermath hurt those on the bottom rung of that social and economic ladder first and hardest.

In the *Slave Narratives*, recollections of former enslaved Americans recorded in the 1930s as part of the Works Progress Administration, plentiful food represented one of the few positive memories from the slavery era. Carrie (Rucker) Hudson's grandmother was the cook on the Rucker plantation near Richmond, and the antebellum slaves did not lack for food on that farm, she said. "Our white folkses b'lieved in good eatin's." She recalled meals of bread, meat, cabbages, collard and turnip greens, tomatoes, potatoes, chickens, ducks, possums, and rabbits.

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[235] Dolly Sumner Lunt Burge, "July 22, 1864" A Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea, (New York: The Century Co., 1918): 19, 23.

[236] Dolly Sumner Lunt Burge, "July 22, 1864" *A Woman's Wartime Journal: An Account of the Passage Over a Georgia Plantation of Sherman's Army on the March to the Sea*, (New York: The Century Co., 1918): 26-27. Burge claims she allowed her enslaved servants to raise livestock, crops, and even work off-site to earn money. Frank, identified as a thrifty, hard-working man, had apparently earned $500 each season off his crops, saving it in a locked chest along with his tobacco. That money was taken by the invaders, who claimed it could not possibly belong to a slave.

"When dem Yankees come thoo' dey stole evvything dey could take off wid 'em. Dey even tuk Sue, my brothers nice hoss, and left him with a poor old bag-of-bones hoss."[237]

On a farm where food was previously plentiful, and the enslaved were among the victims of indiscriminate foraging, the arrival of Union forces was a mixed blessing. Not all slave owners were generous with comestibles, of course. Della Briscoe of Macon, Georgia, recalled the enslaved workers on their farm were allowed salted meat, meal, flour, lard, syrup vegetables and milk, but were not given fresh meat or chickens, although she notes that they often took matters into their own hands. "Some frequently went night foraging for small shoats and chickens."[238] When the Yankees came, soldiers entered the house and tore up the interior and smashed "so many barrels of syrup that it ran in a stream through the yard." Briscoe recalled that they carried off most of the meat from the smokehouse and gave the remainder to the enslaved workers they freed. Chickens were caught and fried immediately in the yard. Enslaved farm workers hid the farm's draft animals, and one of those men was tied up and forced to reveal where the mules were concealed, a significant loss among so many others.[239] Emma Hurley's memories of the Union army are similar, including smashed syrup barrels and raided smokehouses, but those Union raiders called all the field workers together and tossed them the meat from the smokehouses, saying: "'Here, take all this, we knows it's yours anyhow, you

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[237] Carrie Hudson, interviewed by Sadie B. Hornsby, Athens, Georgia, May 19, 1938. *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 2, Garey-Jones*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn042/.

[238] Shoats are young pigs.
Della Briscoe interviewed by Adella S. Dixon, Macon, Georgia, July 28, 1937. *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 2, Garey-Jones*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn042/.

[239] Della Briscoe interviewed by Adella S. Dixon, Macon, Georgia, July 28, 1937. *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 2, Garey-Jones*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn042/.

worked for it.'"[240] She said that "most" of the enslaved gave the meat back when the soldiers left, even while syrup made muddy streams in the dirt. Afterward, the freedmen and women and their former owners were equally bereft of any means of production and had little food. "Them was bad times," Hurley remembered.

Anna Scott, who joined an African colonization experiment after the war, said enslaved people commonly helped hide food from the Union soldiers. "Provisions intended for the Confederate armies were broken open by the Union soldiers and their followers," she remembered. To prevent it going to Union stomachs, meat already loaded on box cars was carried away and concealed in a cool place under her owners' house. "This meat was later divided between Negroes and whites," according to Hurley.[241]

The irony is inescapable, of course. For these enslaved Southerners, their Northern saviors were doing them immediate harm in pursuit of greater justice, while their historic oppressors were, in this rare instance, their allies. Particularly on farms where they had been shown nutritional generosity before the war, enslaved people and plantation owners came together to keep *their* food from being destroyed and away from Union soldiers. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the South was in a state of political, economic, and social chaos,

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[240] Emma Hurley interviewed by Minnie Branham Stonestreet, Washington, Georgia, March 22, 1937. *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 2, Garey-Jones*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn042/.

[241] Anna Scott interviewed by Viola B. Muse, Florida, January 11, 1937. *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 3, Florida, Anderson-Wilson with combined interviews of others*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn030/.

and for refugees from all classes not knowing where their next meal would come from was another form of insecurity.[242]

During the war, many newly freed people chose to strike out on their own, not always successfully. William Sherman, whose father was a free man and his mother enslaved, led a small revolt of about 500 enslaved people away from plantations in central Georgia to the Union lines.[243] The group encountered a contingent of Sherman's forces leaving Savannah and bound for the Carolinas. William and the other escapees faced the choice of going north with the advancing troops, or south to Savannah on their own. William chose the Savannah route, which turned out to be perspicacious of him. Those who followed the Union army found themselves unable to keep up with the veteran marchers and were picked off by Confederate bushwhackers, decapitated, and their heads mounted on fence posts as a warning to others who might be tempted to run away. The presence of the Union Army offered freedmen and women only so much protection.

Jealousy over food was cited as one reason for the December 9, 1864, massacre at Ebenezer Creek. People fleeing slavery who joined up with the Union Army could expect to

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[242] Unfortunately, many freedmen lacked alternatives. Of the approximately four million enslaved African Americans in the South in 1860, an estimated three million remained in bondage at war's end in April 1865. With surviving family members spread out across the country and Canada, and lacking money, education, friends, and fearing persecution if they traveled, many formerly enslaved people stayed on or near the plantations, sometimes for decades after the war. In their narratives and in the records of the Freedman's Bureau, these Americans related their vulnerability to unscrupulous employers or merchants in those early days of freedom.

[243] William Sherman, interviewed by Jim Johnson, Chaseville, Florida, August 28, 1936. *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 3, Florida, Anderson-Wilson with combined interviews of others*. 1936. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn030/.

Although some freedmen took new names after emancipation, this William Sherman was named after his father, also William Sherman, a free man and blacksmith, who died trying to raise the money to buy freedom for his wife and son.

work as "pioneers," that is, men who cut down trees and built roads for the advancing army. Some women were put to work as cooks and laundresses, but the elderly and those burdened with small children lagged in the rear of the column. At the crossing of Ebenezer Creek, a tributary of the Savannah River, thousands of these slower refugees were ordered to wait until the army had crossed the pontoon bridge first. However, before the refugees could follow them, the bridge was taken up, leaving the unarmed people — mostly women, children, and the elderly — to face the pursuing Confederate cavalry.[244] Some threw themselves into the swollen icy creek and drowned trying to escape, and thousands were forcibly returned to bondage.[245] One estimate asserted that 800 people died in that incident. The decision to strand them was given by Jefferson C. Davis and has been called "the worst act of the campaign."[246] The outrage in the press and in Washington caused U.S. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to visit Sherman in the field and demand accountability. Sherman defended Davis then, and later in his memoirs. "General Jeff C. Davis was strictly a soldier, and doubtless hated to have his wagons and columns encumbered by these poor negroes, for whom we all felt sympathy, but a sympathy of a different sort from that of Mr. Stanton, which was not of pure humanity, but of politics."[247] For Sherman and Davis, the camp followers were an encumbrance, moving too slowly and consuming food needed by soldiers. Sherman said that the camp followers were sleeping when

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[244] "Horrible Treatment of Negroes on Sherman's March," Jan. 27, 1865; *Liberator,* (1831-1865): 16.

[245] Sarah Anne Rubin, "Uncle Billy, Merchant of Terror," in *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 125.

[246] John Wesley Moody III, *Demon of the Lost Cause: General William Tecumseh Sherman and the Writing of Civil War History* (dissertation, Georgia State University, 2008): 198.

Jefferson C. Davis was a Union general who answered to Major-General William T. Sherman, not to be confused with Jefferson F. Davis, the Confederate president.

[247] William T. Sherman, *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 1781-1782.

the bridge was taken up, although witnesses later claimed they watched while the army pulled away their means of escape.[248] Following Stanton's criticism Sherman stepped up recruitment of black volunteers.

Sherman's relationship with the African Americans he helped free is muddled, and his memoirs tend to exaggerate and paint him in the best light.[249] However, his actions during the war did sometimes benefit African Americans. On paper, congress began the process of freeing people in the South as early as 1862, but it was not until the Union Army arrived that most enslaved people could truly taste liberty, according to historian Gary Gallagher, author of *The Union War*. "No matter how desperately slaves wanted to be free, the chance for a successful escape was negligible unless Union military forces had reached their area."[250] Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863, but for enslaved people it only became real when those food-stealing Yankee soldiers rode into the yard.[251]

Although Sherman made foraging into a curse word, the process of taking either cultivated or wild food from the land was a common tactic throughout the war years by people on both sides. With the exceptions of raids across the battle lines and the short-lived push into Pennsylvania, most fighting happened on Southern soil, so Confederates had fewer opportunities

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[248] Edward M. Churchill, "Betrayal at Ebenezer Creek." *Civil War Times Illustrated* 37, No. 5 (Oct. 1998): 52.

[249] Among Sherman's many detractors is Albert Castel, "Prevaricating Through Georgia: Sherman's Memoirs as a Source on the Atlanta Campaign," *Civil War History* 40, No. 1 (March 1994).

[250] Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011): 150.

[251] In the WPA slave narrative of Alice Green, of Athens, Georgia, she refers to the Union soldiers who came to the plantation as "thievin 'sojers." Apparently, they took the food and encouraged the enslaved people to take what they wanted, too. However, the final straw for her mistress was when one of the soldiers tried to carry off one of the infants. Alice Green, interviewed by Corry Fowler, Athens, GA., *Slave Narratives*, Georgia, Part II (Washington, 1941): 35.

to take from Union farms, but they took from fellow Southerners according to their needs.[252] The Confederate government "impressed" food from farmers throughout the South to feed the army and urban dwellers, sometimes at the point of a gun. Sometimes the producers were given receipts or bonds for reimbursement, but not always. To get reluctant farmers to give up more of their production, the Confederate congress passed legislation calling for tithes or taxes-in-kind. In many cases, they preferred to pay the cash and keep their food, since inflation was undermining currency anyway. From a Union prisoner-of-war camp, D.V. Dickenson advised his wife to do just that. "You fear that you will not make meat enough I hope that you are mistake as I know your economical habits. If you can so arrange it you had better keep the tith of the bacon that is due the government & pay the money which can be done under the law."[253]

The law said impressments should be done by certified government officials, but army officers and even individual soldiers took from farmers as needed. For example, Confederate Cavalry General Joseph Wheeler's men, albeit Southern defenders, were often viewed with the same level of fear and loathing as those in Sherman's army.[254] Wheeler's fast-moving cavalry troops worked entirely without a supply line, and took food, clothing, tack, and horses, as they needed them from the local populace, and often by force.

Rossiter Johnson's *Campfire and Battlefield* is a book co-authored by half a dozen U.S. Major Generals, including O.O. Howard, commander of the right wing of Sherman's Army. The

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[252] These raids, for example Lee's raids into Maryland and Pennsylvania, or Morgan's famous raids wherein he went north of the battle lines to burn barns or raid depots, were short, quick expeditions that today would be classified as surgical strikes more than invasions.

[253] D.V. Dickenson to his wife, November 28, 1863, from Johnsons Island, near Sandusky City, Ohio. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.154.09.

[254] Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers: Their Expectations and Their Experiences* (New York: Viking, 1988): 163.

book is decidedly pro-Union in its slant, representing Union soldiers as more hygienic, pure of heart, energetic, better trained and supplied, and all-around finer people, despite the fact that Confederates and Union officers had the same training and traditions, and the soldiers sometimes hailed from the same families. One exception to the book's post-war propagandizing is the discussion of foraging. Johnson states the distinction between Southern troops and Northern troops came down to willingness to harm through foraging. "A Southern army was careful not to forage promiscuously, or appropriate to its own uses the various provisions and live-stock of non-combatants. But the Northern troops felt they were in the enemy's country and entitled to live off it.[255] In addition, receipts were only given by Union soldiers if the family was loyal to the Union. If a home was Confederate, either by self-proclamation or accusations from neighbors, Northern "pillagers" took what they wanted, bringing into camp chickens, pigs, cows, vegetables, money, and jewelry, according to Johnson. "The Southern soldiers usually paid for what they took, even if it was in Confederate script; but the Northern pillagers did not do even that."[256]

It might be more accurate to say that Southern foraging typically took place on a smaller scale, as Rebs took matters into their own hands when they got hungry. In his war memoir, Confederate enlistee Sam Watkins recounts numerous times when he and his fellows supplemented their rations by picking berries, hunting, or minor thievery. On one officially

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[255] Rossiter Johnson, John Clark Ridpath, Gen. J.T. Morgan, Gen. O.O. Howard, Gen. Selden Connor, Henry W.B. Howard, and Gen. John B. Gordon, *An Illustrated History of the Campaigns and Conflicts of the Great Civil War*. Project Gutenberg e-book prepared by Ron Swanson. (New York: Bryan, Taylor & Co., 1894): 2152.

[256] Rossiter Johnson, John Clark Ridpath, Gen. J.T. Morgan, Gen. O.O. Howard, Gen. Selden Connor, Henry W.B. Howard, and Gen. John B. Gordon, *An Illustrated History of the Campaigns and Conflicts of the Great Civil War*. Project Gutenberg e-book prepared by Ron Swanson. (New York: Bryan, Taylor & Co., 1894): 2153.

sanctioned foraging expedition, Watkins attempted to explain the feelings of liberation involved in taking what one wanted without heed of moral or military regulations. "I felt like a free man. The shackles of discipline had for a time been unfettered. This was bliss, this was freedom, this was liberty."[257] For soldiers expected to abide by discipline every hour of the day, the ability to simply take what one wanted must have been heady stuff, which also explains its ubiquity.

In an interesting parallel, freedmen who joined the Union army reported the same emotions when they foraged on Southern farms. Freedmen who became Union soldiers were used in raiding along the banks of the Mississippi and Yazoo because of their familiarity with the territory, according to historian Andrew Lang. The soldiers reveled in the freedom to take what they wanted, seizing anything from food to tobacco and livestock. "The act of confiscating food was not done purely out of the rowdy behavior typical of many volunteer soldiers, … they had separated themselves from the unfree conditions in which they had previously lived."[258]

It was the Confederate government's food impressments that caused numerous problems, not just for individual farmers, but for the Southern economy at large. In his study of Southern agriculture during the war years, Douglas Hurt notes: "Confederate impressments of agricultural commodities at less than free-market prices angered farmers and planters. Increasingly, they expressed animosity toward the Confederate government for its policies that led to inflation, depreciating currency, and fixed prices for agricultural provisions."[259]

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[257] Sam R. Watkins, *'Co. Aytch': A Side Show of the Big Show* (New York: Collier Books, 1962): 98.
[258] Andrew F. Lang, *In the Wake of War: Military Occupation, Emancipation, and Civil War America*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017): 171.
[259] R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 9.

Confederate military leaders made some attempts to rein in their men, although not always successfully. In his diary, Confederate Captain Ezekiel Ellis praises General Braxton Bragg for trying to control these kinds of raids by ordering the execution of a private who stole a chicken. Although Bragg was called a "monster," by some, Ellis argues it was justified because the troops all knew the penalty and had been warned. "Soldiers singly and in squads were all the time straggling away from their commands and committing every sort of depredation upon the property of citizens and the army was fast becoming an armed mob. The firm and prompt measures of Gen. Bragg alone saved it."[260] In his study of why some South Carolinians were disloyal to the Confederacy, James T. Otten points to impressment of food and conscription as main reasons for disaffection among both soldiers and civilians.[261]

Whether sanctioned or not, Union soldiers also targeted corn cribs and smokehouses on any Southern farm. Even unharvested crops in the fields served to supplement monotonous military rations of salt pork, hardtack and dried vegetables with variety and taste. Even more importantly from the standpoint of fighting effectiveness, fresh vegetables were an antiscorbutic, providing Vitamin C to stave off scurvy and other vitamin deficiency-related diseases. Foraging was obviously easier in summer for men as crops and wild flora were in fruit, but fall and winter offered opportunities for fishing, hunting, and trapping. In July 1863, Connecticut volunteer

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[260] E. John Ellis Diary, Feb-March, 1865., Vol. I, Mss. 2795: 30. *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

[261] James T. Otten "Disloyalty in the Upper Districts of South Carolina during the Civil War," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 75 No. 2 (April 1974): 99. Otten follows in the footsteps of other scholars of Southern class warfare and disillusionment, including such Henry T. Shanks, "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1965," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XXI (April 1944): 118-135; and Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934). These studies cite economic woes, including those self-imposed by hungry soldiers, as a cause of friction between civilians and representatives of their new government.

infantryman Willis Benedict wrote of making use of what they found on local properties. Wheat stacked in sheaths in the field made fine beds, and the local farmer's sheep and fowl were slaughtered to feed the hungry men. "Thirty sheep suffered the death penalty at the hands of our regiment alone to say nothing of the rest of the Division; chickens — geese and turkies also suffered largely at our hands."[262] In that same letter, Benedict also describes gleaning from the wild. After a hard march on July 5, their colonel finally gave orders to rest and make coffee:

> But the command was no sooner out of his mouth than we were all blackberrying and in a few minutes I saw him as busy as any of the rest at the same employment. Shortly after I started across the road for some poles to put up my tent; here I found the berries so thick and large that I could not resist the temptation, and in a few minutes my cap and belly were both full to overflowing; in fact our raid was one grand blackberry excursion.[263]

In an essay about post-war foraging, Bruce E. Baker argues that blackberries were "an underground food," in that the fruit was not recognized as an agricultural product, nor was picking it recognized as an occupation.[264] However, the berries and the berrying are culturally significant because berrying was "itself often a social activity, giving an occasion for talk and the strengthening of social relationships," while sharing the fruit fostered habits of interreliance.[265] Although his article relates to the aftermath of Sherman's march when the landscape was left barren by the military foraging parties, Baker notes that the berries were a welcome addition to

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[262] Willis Benedict to Edward Benedict, July 15, 1863, in camp near Portsmouth, Va. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 96-033.63.
For reference, a typical Union regiment at that time consisted of 1,000 men, and a division was roughly 6,000-10,000 men, according "Civil War Army Organization, *American Battlefield Trust*, battlefields.org.

[263] Benedict states that he does not know the military point of the maneuver, only that he expected he would eventually read about it in the Hartford newspaper. Willis Benedict to Edward Benedict, July 15, 1863, in camp near Portsmouth, Va. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 96.033.63.

[264] Bruce E. Baker, "'A Recourse that Could be Depended Upon': Picking Blackberries and Getting By After the Civil War," *Southern Cultures* 16, No. 4 (Winter 2010): 25.

[265] Bruce E. Baker, "'A Recourse that Could be Depended Upon': Picking Blackberries and Getting By After the Civil War," *Southern Cultures* 16, No. 4 (Winter 2010): 26.

everyone "whatever their race or station... a shared pleasure, a democratic delight."[266] Certainly, infantryman Willis observed this fact because he points out that their colonel was also among the party of pickers. For that few hours, the war took second place to the social and gastronomic distraction of berrying together.

According to numerous accounts, foraging frequently took precedence over fighting. Foraging encompassed every level of subsistence from the lucky supplemental opportunities like Willis's blackberrying, to large scale plundering and destruction. "Food was a powerful motivator, sometimes keeping whole units roaming out in the countryside even after dark."[267] Confederate Watkins relates standing on the Southern banks of the Tennessee River and seeing the fields of green corn on the Northern side like an Eden of edibles. "Everything seemed to say, 'Come hither, Johnny Reb; come hither, Johnny; come hither.' The river was wide but we were hungry."[268] Determined to have some of the corn, they stripped off all their clothes and swam the river. Soon into their naked expedition, they realized their dilemma: They had no way to transport the purloined produce back to their side of the river. They solved the problem by braiding the husks together. "We put the train of corn into the river, and as it began to float off we jumped in, and taking the foremost ear in our mouth, struck for the other bank." Watkins explains: "I merely mention the above incident to show to what extremity soldiers would resort. Thousands of such occurrences were performed by the private soldiers of the Rebel army."[269]

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[266] Bruce E. Baker, "'A Recourse that Could be Depended Upon': Picking Blackberries and Getting By After the Civil War," *Southern Cultures* 16, No. 4 (Winter 2010): 28.
[267] Eric Ethier, "Living off the Land," *Civil War Times*, 44, No. 5 (December 2005): 18.
[268] Sam R. Watkins, *'Co. Aytch': A Side Show of the Big Show* (New York: Collier Books, 1962): 97.
[269] Sam R. Watkins, *'Co. Aytch': A Side Show of the Big Show* (New York: Collier Books, 1962): 97.

Solo or individual acts of foraging should also be recognized as a sign of desperation. Writing from a convalescent hospital a Union soldier named DeForest described his escape while being transferred from a hellish prisoner of war camp, probably Andersonville. After jumping off the train near Augusta, Georgia, they traveled through Southern states by night, foraging for any scrap of nutrition. "We wer obliged to lay in a swamp all day. where the musquitoes wer more plenty than provisions, for we wer again obliged to live on parched corn alone."[270] On their third night, they crossed a field of sweet potatoes and another of peanuts, and those were boiled with "stock peas," to make their meals. "Foraging for a living in the land of Dixie was not very profitable, but it was not to be helped." Confederate cavalryman J.N. Crawford said they were given orders to take what they needed from nearby farms, although in some cases there was nothing to take. "The Boys this forenoon caught a Sheep and we had it for dinner… we built a fire and rosted it, we only had about a teaspoonful of Salt. Salt is ten dollars a Bushel, the most of them dont have any attall, we have just got Orders to take anything that we want for our use."[271]

Between the 600,000 Union soldiers, and the 300,000 Confederates who ranged over the South for the four years of the Civil War, the number of foraging adventures likely tallied in the millions. Tristan Jolivette, who studies Union reenlistments of 1864, posited that this kind of food acquisition aided military retention. Allowing the men to forage freely fulfilled several Union goals, including supplementing Union rations, entertainment or diversion from the

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[270] (Unknown) DeForest to Mary, January 14, 1865 from Camp Convalescent, Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2008.006.

[271] J.N. Crawford to "Mac," August 4, 1862, from Culpepper, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2004.422.05.

monotony of military life, and punishing enemy sympathizers, not necessarily in that order.[272] This undoubtably applied to the Confederates, as well. Whether it was large-scale stripping the countryside, such as that practiced by Sherman's army, or smaller-scale operations, such as Watkins' naked corn filching, foraging provided a variety of outlets for military men of both armies.

Beyond sustenance, the action of taking food also communicated a handful of important statements: dominance of one group over another, the entitlement of fighting men over civilians, and freedom from moral and institutional restrictions. In some ways, the food was incidental except in the immediate moment. The seizures, the unrestrained consumption, and criminal waste of slaughtered animals left to rot, barns and corn cribs burned, all sent a significant message. As Sherman's troops demonstrated on a grand scale, the taking of food demonstrates at a primal level the winner in any struggle. According to the law of the jungle, the biggest, meanest animal gets the choicest bites, while the weaker ones must scrounge or starve. As fighting men of the North and South took what they wanted, they simultaneously asserted their rights as alpha animals, as military men, and as free Americans, even if they called themselves Confederate Americans. Their struggles determined who ate or did not; a primitive yardstick, but an effective one.

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[272] Tristan E. Jolivette, *Continuing the Cause: Union Soldier Reenlistments of 1864* (Fullerton: California State University master's thesis, 1999): 64.

CHAPTER 4

READING

It is Bell Wiley, who read more than 20,000 letters to create his composite Yankee, who said the true motivations of a Union soldier were muddled and varied. "One searches most letters and diaries in vain for soldiers' comment on why they were in the war or for what they were fighting."[273] In reading all those letters, Wiley found that soldiers were far more interested in topics like food, drink, women, furloughs, mail, and gambling than about introspection. This study seeks to show that all those references to food were more than just indications of physical comfort or discomfort. Those thousands of references to food were codified messages about emotional issues nineteenth-century soldiers could not comfortably express aloud or on paper. This chapter examines the prominence of food metaphor in nineteenth-century culture, as well as the detectable patterns found in letters.

Wiley's frustration is justified, since most Civil War missives are seemingly boring, prosaic descriptions of what the writers ate, the weather, and how much mud they slogged through.[274] Easily overlooked are the emotions hidden within these seemingly innocuous discussions of food in the common letters found in libraries and museums across the country. If

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273 Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1952): 39.

[274] Literary scholars use an environmental theory to find meaning in fictional descriptions of weather. In the case of Civil War soldiers who were exposed to the elements most of the time, descriptions of weather seem less symbolic and more pragmatic. One could argue the same about food, since food is critical to their fighting abilities, but the crucial difference is that they took the time to write about what food they desired to eat or enjoyed in the past, about food dreams, and food fantasies, as well as what they were currently eating. This puts food into a different category and lending it more weight as regards to symbolism. One last clarification: the literary environmental theory should not be confused with the medical environmental theory which uses factors such as weather and geography to explain disease etiology in the Civil War.

indeed all meals are encoded, we should be able to read their meaning within the context even if no master key exists.[275] What is needed is a closer reading of these letters, but with context in mind.

For Civil War soldiers, nineteenth-century masculine strictures forbade the blatant expression of feelings, but food was a safe topic in letters to loved ones.[276] Patterns emerge quickly for a reader looking for them. A typical Civil War letter has a description of dinner or breakfast, separated by some news of a friend or questions about relatives, and somewhere within the letter it contains the crucial context of a battle, a friend's death, a sickness, or perhaps a line about general contentment or misery. The key to the food-related code is within the letter, although it may be brief and somewhere else on the page. While the negative emotions of anger, fear, loneliness, and homesickness might seem the most obvious, happiness, contentment and love are also fairly common in Civil War missives.

In this section, Civil War letters about food are scrutinized, and alternative interpretations of their meanings proposed. Specifically, I attempt to show that strong emotions are conveyed through discussions of edibles, albeit with the awareness that this is the merest outline of a larger pattern of codified communication. In order to prove the point, I also analyze letters of raw and open emotion, full of love, fear, horror, and pining, which are unusual not only in their frankness,

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[275] Douglas, Mary. "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedelus*, 101: No. 1 (Winter 1972): 11.

[276] Much has been written about nineteenth-century masculinity, but to clarify the position used in this study: American masculinity at this time was defined (at least partially) by a man's ability to control his emotions and innate passions. Richard Stott. *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (2009): 1,166,198, 283. For how men's independence required emotional distance, see Kristin Sanner, *'A Very Different Type of Maternity': The Transformation of Familial and Gender Roles in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, PhD Dissertation, New York: Binghampton University State University of New York (2003): 2, 74-75.

but in that they do *not* mention food. Those rare pieces support my argument that men who can discuss their deeper emotions openly need not rely on this culinary code to speak for them, while those who cannot stomach emotional honesty use food to convey their meanings.

Context is essential in interpreting food references in Civil War letters. For example, Willis Jones writes to Rachel Jones some descriptions of the local flora in Tennessee: "we have the finest of wether at this time every thing looks well that has bin planted but there is not much planted... wheat is out in bloom at this time early corn is half leg high peaches is as big as quail eggs and there is lots of them here there will be lots of all kinds of fruit here if nothing dont happen it."[277] Superficially, the conversation is perfectly in keeping with a farmer to his wife, starting with the bland comment about the weather and continuing with normal descriptions of spring plants. The only jarring note lies at the end of the sentence "if nothing dont happen it." The context comes later in the letter when he reveals his company has sent all their surplus clothing to Nashville for storage, the preliminary step for a company preparing to go into action. "what it means i do not no unless we are going to march." He signs the letter: "no more at this time only remain your true and beloved husband tell death yours in Love for ever." Without using any emotional language except in his signature line, he relies on the discussion of food to reveal his anxiety about their troop movements and his fear that something dire could "happen it." More than a year later, Willis Jones writes from a Rhode Island hospital and again uses food as a way of revealing his concerns: "I must tell you what we had for supper it was tea and bread

[277] Willis Jones to Rachel Jones, May 24, 1863. Jones (Willis) Papers. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.246.35.

and not much of that so you ma guess that I want to go home."[278] The northern hospital would not lack resources for ill soldiers in 1865, so he was likely on a restricted diet of tea and bread. His wife would understand from this one sentence that he remained unwell, and was melancholy in his hospital environment. H.B. Crosby writes his wife at the end of 1862 in which he speculates on how quickly the war will end. "Keep up good courage there will finally be an end to all things eat apples drink cider visit & enjoy yourself as best you can & when I get home if ever we can settle down & be old folks together."[279] Using the symbolism of apples and cider, he urges her to eat, drink and be merry, but without the idea of dying young. Instead, he proposes that they (hopefully) live and grow old together.

Even relatively unsophisticated men were still familiar with the concepts of food-related symbolism. Representation through victuals is a tradition as old as literature itself, and religious literature was one type familiar to almost all nineteenth-century Americans. The largest religion in the United States at the time was Christianity, the worship of which is heavily imbued with food symbolism. Sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark estimate 37 percent of Americans in 1860 were Christian adherents, by which they mean actual attending members of a congregation, and Bell Irvin Wiley's studies of both Southern and Northern common soldiers found that most called themselves Protestants, even if they were not practicing.[280]

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[278] Willis Jones to Rachel Jones, May 25, 1865, Lovell General Hospital, Portsmouth, R.I. Jones (Willis) Papers. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.246.58.

[279] H.B. Crosby to Ann E. Crosby, Dec. 24, 1862, from camp near Stafford Court House. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2007.130.19.

[280] Roger Finke, and Rodney Stark, "Turning Pews into People: Estimating 19th Century Church Membership," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 25, No. 2 (June 1986): 187.

Finke and Stark report that church membership dropped during the Civil War, which they attribute to the disruption of congregations, and refugees in the South being set adrift by the "tens of thousands." (186)

Bell Irvin Wiley reports that Southern soldiers 'depth of faith increased as the war progressed, a factor which he attributes to escalating losses and subsequent fear of death; revivals and the steady distribution of religious

Among Christianity's sacraments or sacred rites is the act of communion, which involves eating bread and drinking wine to represent consuming the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is a sacrament repeated monthly in some Christian churches, weekly or daily in others. Other common Biblical uses of food as allegory include the apple in the Garden of Eden; manna provided for the Jews fleeing Egypt; and Jesus's manipulations of food and wine to demonstrate his divinity, such as feeding masses from two loaves and five fishes, and turning water into wine. For example, Albert Whitley writes to his sister: "I will try and give you a discription of this part of Dixy if you think this is a land of rare bueuty you are much mistacken for it is as far from it as Green Bush is from the garden of Eden."[281] All of these examples, and their attendant, deeper lessons, would have been familiar to soldiers and their families through their own readings, church sermons, Sunday schools, or revivals.

Secular and pre-Christian symbols also familiar to nineteenth-century Americans would include Greco-Roman food references, for example, the cornucopia as a symbol of plenty, wine as debauchery or celebration, bread/wheat as life, and salt as money. All of these cultural signals appeared in art, literature, and music in mid-nineteenth-century America.

In song, Julia Ward Howe's 1861 "Battle Hymn of the Republic," with its lyrics of the Lord "trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored," remains a well-known

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tracts and Bibles; reassertion of evangelistic cultural norms (following the initial casting off of behavioral restrictions during the first year or two of the war); and pessimism about the Confederacy's future. Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989 printing): 183-185. Conversely, Wiley argues that Union soldiers maintained a steady degree of religious conformity, which he calls "practical, unobtrusive." Conversions among Union soldiers did not increase as the war progressed, as it did among Southern brethren. Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991 printing): 263-264.

[281] Albert Whitley to his sister, October 4, 1862, from Muirkirk Station (Maryland). *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2007.096.09.

Civil War-era example, as is the popular 1846 tune "Blue Tale Fly," also known as "Jimmy Crack Corn," which begins "When I was young I us'd to wait/ on Massa and hand him de plate/ Pass down the bottle when he git dry/ and brush away the blue tail fly."[282] "Blue Tail Fly" was a popular minstrelsy song before and during the war, and remains a familiar American folk song. Although nominally about the accidental death of a slave owner, it could also be seen as the celebratory anthem of an oppressed man whose lazy owner dies violently.[283] One hint of the singer's feelings may be seen in the chorus "Jimmy Crack Corn, (and) I don't care." This could allude to poor slave rations, (cracked corn), or cheap corn whiskey. Regardless of how it is interpreted, it is only superficially about food, and most contemporary listeners were cognizant of that fact.

As the war progressed, soldiering-themed songs, both romantic ballads and military-themed marches, became more popular. Comestibles, both symbolic and literal, are featured in many lyrics. For example, "Hard Tack Come Again No More"[284] possibly written by Josiah Fowler, 1861, can be viewed as a complaint about the quality of the dry, hard army bread, which the song calls "dried mummies of hard crackers" but may also be seen as a deeper song of woe about the war itself.[285] Sung to the tune of "Hard Times Come Again No More," a very familiar

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[282] Virginia Minstrels, "Jim Crack Corn or the Blue Tail Fly," (Baltimore: F.D. Benteen, 1846).

[283] The idea that the song recounts the tale of a gleeful slave whose neglect kills his owner is frequently attributed to musician and folk-singer Pete Seeger. Also see Abhik Maiti and Deep Naskar, "Of Deception and Dogma: The Delusive History Behind Nursery Rhymes," *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies* 5, No. 4 (April 2017): 47; also William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Face: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999): 234, 244.

[284] Hard-tack is a dry military-issued bread consisting of flour, water, and salt. Difficult to eat but life-sustaining, it has been much-maligned by sailors and soldiers for hundreds of years.

[285] Sigmund Spaeth, *A History of Popular Music in America* (New York: Random House, 1948):143; also E.F. Ware, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri: Being a History of the First Iowa Infantry*, (Topeka, Kansas: Crane & Company, 1907): 218.

American parlor song, the parody's chorus states: "'Tis the song, the sigh of the hungry/ 'Hard tack, hard tack, come again no more.'/ Many days have you lingered upon our stomachs sore/O, hard tack, come again no more!" Like most funny songs, it contains more than one meaning.

Music was "extraordinarily important," during the war years, according to music historian Bruce Kelley. Not only did it provide a cultural reprieve from the war's gruesome realities, but it also helped define national identity by glorifying each nation's cause and vilifying their respective enemies.[286] The first of Beadle's dime books was a songbook containing about a hundred popular songs. It sold more than 350,000 copies and spawned more than a dozen subsequent editions in the decades afterward.[287] Although this era predates recordings, music was an integral part of the American Civil War era culture, and an effective method for transmitting ideas, including food symbolism.

Poetry was another popular diversion in the nineteenth century, and long epic poems, such as those by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, were memorized and recited aloud as entertainment and to demonstrate a person's memory and oratorial skills. Longfellow's 1855 epic *Song of Hiawatha* is one of the rare examples wherein he makes use of alimentary metaphor. When Hiawatha slays Nahma (a sturgeon, king of the fishes), the warrior gives some of its huge corpse to his allies, Kayoshk and the other sea-gulls (the rest of the fish is consumed at Hiawatha's wedding feast); and when he woos Minnehana, his first gift to her is a deer.

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[286] Bruce C. Kelley, "'Old Times There are Not Forgotten': An Overview of Music of the Civil War Era" in *Bugle Resounding: Music and Musicians of the Civil War Era*, Mark A. Snell and Bruce C. Kelley, eds. (University of Missouri Press, 2004.): 13.

[287] Della T. Lutes. "Erastus F. Beadle: Dime Novel King," New York: *New York History*, 22, No. 2 (April 1941): 151; and William Everett, "Beadle's Dime Books," *North American Review* 99 (1864): 303.

Longfellow's 1842 poem "God's Acre," combines a variety of food and farming metaphors.[288] "Their bread of life, alas! no more their own,/Into its furrows shall we all be cast,/ In the sure faith, that we shall rise again/ At the great harvest, when the archangel's blast/ Shall winnow like a fan, the chaff and grain."[289] In this poem, Longfellow is referring to life after death, another Christian reference. In the poem the grain or seeds are human souls that will be determined worthy or worthless "chaff" after death. Since Longfellow's works were favorites for public recitations, many of these poems and their attendant multiple meanings would have been familiar to Civil War readers and listeners.

Soldiers saw similar representations in popular prose literature, which is also reflected in their own epistolary efforts. A runaway best seller in the decade before the Civil War was harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The morality tale of a patient and loyal enslaved wiseman named Tom, and a series of doomed slave owners teaches the perils of slavery and those who traffic in it. When the young mother Eliza flees bondage with her young son Harry, Stowe uses Eliza's first "free" meal in a Quaker cabin to represent an idealized version of home. Stowe begins by describing the meal preparations. "For breakfast in the luxurious valleys of Indiana is a thing complicated and multiform, and, like picking up the rose-leaves and trimming the bushes in Paradise, asking other hands than those of the original mother." Rachel, the Quaker mother, makes biscuits and cuts up chicken while she is "diffusing a sort of sunny radiance over

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[288] The term God's Acre is a reference to tithing. Traditionally, devout but cash-strapped farmers planted an extra "Lord's Acre" or "God's Acre" on behalf of the church and donated the proceeds.

[289] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Best Loved Poems*, (Chicago: Spencer Press, 1959): 140 (fish), 152 (deer), 86 (drinking), 342 (acre).

the whole proceeding generally." She is aided in the food preparation by her children, who fetch water, sift corn, and grind coffee.

> Everything went on so socially, so quietly, so harmoniously, in the great kitchen — it seemed so pleasant to every one to do just what they were doing, there was such an atmosphere of mutual confidence and good-fellowship everywhere — even the knives and forks had a social clatter as they went on to the table; and the chicken and ham had a cheerful and joyous fizzle in the pan, as if they rather enjoyed being cooked than otherwise; and when George and Eliza and little Harry came out, they met such a hearty, rejoicing welcome, no wonder it seemed to them like a dream.[290]

Using food preparation, Stowe conveys the idea that freedom is more than the ability to decide one's own fate, but it is also the promise of bounty in the form of food, choices, comfort, help, and cheerfulness. Stowe's Indiana-based paradise surpasses the Biblical original, however, since in the Quaker home even the meat enjoyed being eaten.

That scene contrasts with Uncle Tom's first meal on the evil Simon Legree's plantation, a virtual Purgatory, where the enslaved workers received no religious instruction and never heard of the Bible. The food reflects the spiritual paucity of their lives. Tom's rations for the week consist of a peck of corn tossed to him in a coarse bag. Each worker grinds his or her own corn for supper, with no cooperation or consideration offered to their fellows. "...For the mills were few in number compared with the grinders, and the weary and feeble ones were driven back by the strong, and came on last in their turn." Their behavior and attitudes mirrored how they were treated, Stowe implies. "The gross, unrestricted animal selfishness of human beings, of whom nothing good was expected and desired; and who, treated in every way like brutes, had sunk as nearly to their level as it was possible for human beings to do."[291] The contrasts could not be

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[290] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (London: J. Cassell, 1852): 119.
[291] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (London: J. Cassell, 1852): 301.

more clear: cooperation and happiness, or competition and cruelty. Through her description of the meal preparations, Stowe offers the reader two choices: Heaven or Hell.

Stowe's publisher produced 310,000 copies of Uncle Tom's Cabin in its first three years, according to literary historian Claire Parfait. However, its popularity bred dozens of unauthorized international editions — producing an estimated 1.5 million. In addition, Parfait estimates each copy of the book was read by eight to ten readers.[292] Stowe received an estimated $30,000 for the novel, and nothing from the dozens of plays, songs, and most of the international editions. However, her cultural contributions are immeasurable, and the book and its offshoots were part of the culture of Civil War participants on both sides.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was a huge success, but the relatively new technology of steam-powered printing presses made all kinds of fiction and non-fiction more accessible to American audiences. War-time literature was produced mostly in the North, and understandably biased toward that political viewpoint. The year before the war began, the U.S. census showed 986 printing houses in New England and the middle states, and 155 in what would become the secessionist South. Of the Southern presses, 21 were located in Tennessee, which fell to the Union early in the war.[293] New York counted 17 book publishers; Philadelphia, 40; Boston, 23; Cincinnati, 32. Although printers were in the North, books found their way South and West by boat (ocean and river) , traveling salesmen, trains, and mail. The war curtailed much of the regular trade, but books were mailed, smuggled through the blockade, and traded across lines.

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[292] Claire Parfait. *The Publishing History of Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1852-2002* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007): 100-104.

[293] Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999): 21.

Illiteracy was highest in rural areas, the Southern states and the Northwestern ones, but that is largely attributed to the difficulty of creating schools with spread-out populations and no efficient means of transportation. According to an analysis of the 1840 census by historian George Tucker, the highest rates of literacy among whites over the age of 20 were in the Northeastern states, followed by the Middle states, such as New York; Southwestern states like Alabama and Louisiana; Midwestern, including Ohio; and Southern, which constitutes Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas. Undeniably, people in the Northeast had the most formal education, but the value of education was well-established even if it was difficult to obtain in other parts of the young nation. In the 1840 census, the Northeast and Middle states had a total of 69 universities, while the South and Southwestern states had a total of 56, and the Northwestern states had 48.[294] So, while the literacy rate was around 80 percent in the South, and over 90 percent in the North at the start of the Civil War, the majority of Americans on both sides of the battle lines were at least somewhat literate, and the demand for reading material was enormous.[295]

American bestsellers in the mid-nineteenth century were religious books, such as Justin Edwards '*Sabbath Manual*, 600,000 copies; and Richard Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, 425,000 copies; non-fiction like Washington Irving's *Life of Washington* (42,000 sets printed),

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[294] Illiteracy was defined as a white person over the age of 20 who could neither read or write. It did not include enslaved people or free African Americans. In 1840, the "Southwest" states then were Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee. The Southern states were Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida. The Northwestern states were Missouri, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. George Tucker, *Progress of the United States in Population and Wealth in Fifty Years as Exhibited by the decennial census*, (New York: Hunt's Merchants 'Magazine, 1843): 144.

[295] Beth Barton Schweiger. "The Literate South Reading Before Emancipation," *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 3, No. 3 (Sept. 2013): 333.

and David Livingstone's *African Travels*, with 60,000 copies. Fiction, which made the greatest use of food metaphors, ranged from the treacly sentimental, like best-seller Susan Warner's *Wide, Wide World,* to the improbably adventurous *Leatherstocking* books by James Fenimore Cooper.

In 1860, the *Boston Post* compiled tallies of American bestsellers. On the list were George W.M. Reynolds, *Life in London* (67,000 copies); Sara Parton, *Fern Leaves* (96,000); Maria Cummins, *The Lamplighter* (93,000). Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1853 follow-up to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* featured "true" accounts from escapees. Titled *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it sold 90,000 copies.[296] What becomes evident from this list and anecdotal evidence from author' biographies is the demand for reading material in the United States prior to the Civil War. And within all those pages is widespread exposure to allegory, metaphor and the use of food to represent other than edible commodities.

Charles Dickens was the British darling of the American reading public, and already well-established prior to the Civil War. Dickens specialized in description and symbolism, and food and hunger are frequently used to establish class in his tales. In her study of food references in ten of Dickens 'novels, Caroline Trefler finds that Dickens uses food metaphors or similes to convey everything from sights, sounds, appearances and behaviors, thus his characters and their environs are peppery, spicy, salty, bitter, tart, or sweet.[297] Hunger appears in *Oliver Twist* to illustrate the cruelty of poverty, and is used similarly in *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity*

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[296] Harrison T. Meserole. "The 'Famous Boston Post List': Mid-Nineteenth Century American Bestsellers," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 52, No. 2 (Second Quarter, 1958): 93-110.

[297] Caroline Trefler, *Dickens and Food: Realistic Reflections in a Puddle of Chicken Grease* (Master's Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1996): 2, 10.

Shop, *Bleak House*, and *David Copperfield*. Conversely, Dickens uses ample food to illustrate generosity, such as the prize turkey given by Scrooge to Bob Cratchit's family on Christmas after his turn of heart in *A Christmas Carol*. Hunger and plenty stir visceral reactions in human beings.

Dickens's *Great Expectations*, published in 1861, the first year of the war, contains one of the most memorable and repulsive food references in the author's catalogue: Miss Havisham's cobweb-cloaked wedding cake, home to thousands of spiders, beetles and mice. "It was so heavily overhung with cobwebs that its form was quite indistinguishable... seeming to grow like a black fungus, I saw speckled-legged spiders with blotchy bodies running home to it, and running out from it."[298] Better than any ranting or raving, the mental image of that cake firmly and forever establishes the madness of the jilted elderly bride.

Earlier in the same book, Pip steals food from his family for the prison ship escapees. Soon afterward he sits down to a family dinner and two distant relations enjoin the orphan boy to be grateful, never greedy, or cause trouble or worry, even while his brother-in-law Joe, a character of goodness and generosity, repeatedly plies Pip with gravy and guilt.[299] In *Great Expectations*, Pip's food-related fantasies include cleaning away Miss Havisham's horror cake, and feeding the village to assert his arrival as a gentleman. That dream feast would include "roast-beef and plum-pudding, a pint of ale, and a gallon of condescension, upon everybody in the village."[300] Dickens' detailed descriptions bring verisimilitude to his stories, along with emotional content, lending additional layers to complicated plots and large casts of characters.

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[298] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015):141.
[299] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015): 42, 44, 45-46.
[300] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015): 249.

For variety, Dickens also uses the negative connotations of edibles, things such as poison and spoilage. Miss Havisham's rotten cake is one example, along with the watery gruel in *Oliver Twist*. "An almost invariably consistent feature of his style, though, is the specter of food: at one point or another, and in some shape or form or presence, food is incorporated into virtually all of his linguistic and thematic manipulations," according to Trefler[301]

The use of comestibles in writing was a familiar and admired skill to help readers relate and understand concepts that would otherwise be complicated or too painful to explain, and Dickens played an important part in that cultural effort. Madness in a decayed wedding cake, guilt in accepting gravy after stealing a pork pie, superiority served up alongside roast and plum pudding, are recognizable emotions, all the easier to empathize with because of the tasty language.

Even as English speakers on both sides of the Atlantic were wading through the density of Dickens, many others were dipping into literature's younger, brasher sibling, dime novels. These inexpensive publications launched in 1860 and quickly became a favorite of soldiers and civilians alike. In addition to affordability, dime novels offered thrilling adventures and romances, the nineteenth-century equivalent of action films in a pre-film era. The first dime novel, *Malaeska,* about an Indian chief's daughter who marries a white hunter, offers pathos, romance, and adventure, as well as a tragic but moralistic ending, and it quickly became a best-seller. Florid in style and rife with melodramatic misunderstandings and unlikely coincidences, food becomes a grounding element, giving human details to an outlandish scenario. Widowed by

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[301] Caroline Trefler, *Dickens and Food: Realistic Reflections in a Puddle of Chicken Grease* (Master's Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1996): 18.

her white husband and kicked out of her father's tribe, Native American "princesss" Malaeska and her son William are living with her husband's wealthy parents in the city when Malaeska kidnaps William and flees to the forest. There, she literally feeds her heritage to her son by preparing food from only wild-caught ingredients. "How proudly the Indian mother broke the food and surrendered it to his eager appetite."[302] The fast-moving novel covers a lot of territory in only 120 pages, but still manages to include critical food symbolism.

Malaeska was followed quickly by another dime novel bestseller, *Seth Jones: The Captives of the Frontier* by E.S. Ellis. Although not high art, these books were influential through their ubiquity. *Malaeska* and *Seth Jones* each sold about 300,000 copies.[303] Common denominators of the dime novels included romance, mystery, adventure, the triumph of virtue and punishment of evil, and many used symbolism and metaphor. The price, availability, and the subject matter all appealed to common soldiers during the war years. In 1864, at the height of the war, pulp fiction publisher Beadle's Dime Novels printed five million books from January to April.[304]" The Beadle books flourished best during the Civil War, according to dime novel historian Della Lutes. They were shipped to the soldiers literally in bales, on freight cars, ships, by wagon. Today these stories might be called escapist literature, but at that time they were

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[302] Ann S. Stephens, *Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter* (New York: Beadle's Dime Novels, 1860): 106.
[303] R. Clay Reynolds, *The Hero of a Hundred Fights: Collected Stories from the Dime Novel King, from Buffalo Bill to Wild Bill Hickock* (New York: Union Square, 2011): 20.
[304] William Everett, "Beadle's Dime Books," *North American Review* 99 (1864): 303.

simply dime novels and therefore "good reading."[305] In a war where even a small battle could result in tens of thousands dead, escapism was welcomed.[306]

Another illustration of the cultural persistence of provender in literature can be found in the work of Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens). Clemens was a newspaper writer, essayist, riverboat pilot, and novelist who bridges the gap between the antebellum and postbellum periods. Although his most famous works were written after the war, racism, autonomy, freedom, and innocence are common themes in his writing, and he sets many of his novels in the pre-war years of his childhood. Twain's folksy writing style is seen as pared down, especially when compared to literary predecessors like Dickens or Stowe, but Twain also made metaphoric use of food in his fiction.

In Twain's *Puddn'head Wilson*, a servant named Roxy swaps out her white-skinned enslaved child, Chambers, with the master's nearly identical infant, Tom, and raises them in their opposite's caste. Roxy, the doting mother, then proceeds to spoil her switched child, while neglecting the displaced one. Twain cleverly illustrates the class divide with their diets. "Tom got all the petting, Chambers got none. Tom got all the delicacies, Chambers got mush and milk, and clabber without sugar. In consequence, Tom was a sickly child and Chambers wasn't. Tom

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[305] Della T. Lutes. "Erastus F. Beadle: Dime Novel King," New York: *New York History*, 22, No. 2 (April 1941): 153

[306] The statistics are grim and relatively well-known. The Civil War saw eight major battles with more than 20,000 casualties, including Gettysburg (51,000), Chickamauga (34,600), Spotsylvania (31,000), Chancellorsville (30,500), Wilderness (28,700), Murfreesboro (24,600), Shiloh (23,700), Sharpsburg (23,700), and Antietem (22,700). Numbers rounded down to the nearest hundred. J. David Hacker's latest estimates of total dead is 750,000 on both sides. In 1860, the U.S. had a total population of 31 million, of which war fatalities were 2.4% of the population. Comparatively, 416,800 American soldiers and sailors died in World War II, when the total U.S. population was 132 million, translating to one-third of one percent. The Civil War fatalities impacted every community and every family in some way.

was 'fractious,' as Roxy called it, and overbearing; Chambers was meek and docile."[307] Twain credits the displaced boy's good health to the treatment he received. "Strong because he was coarsely fed and hard-worked about the house, and a good fighter because Tom furnished him plenty of practice."[308] In *Pudd'n Head Wilson*, food defines a man's station in life, while forming him as a man, for good or for ill.[309]

Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is the fictional account of an orphan boy who escapes his onerous life of education and obligations by rafting up the river to freedom with a former enslaved man named Jim. Although Huck is white and Jim is not, the true nature of their relationship is demonstrated when they cook and eat together as equals. When Huck meets up with Jim after Huck's "death," and Jim's escape, Huck shares everything he has with Jim, including his meal, bacon, and cup. They shared the work, too, for Huck caught a fish and Jim prepared it. "When breakfast was ready, we lolled on the grass and eat it smoking hot; Jim laid it in with all his might for he was most about starved. Then when we had got pretty well stuffed, we laid off and lazied."[310] In this example, Twain gives no distinction between what the characters eat based on skin color, nor any hint that there should be a difference, despite their divergent legal statuses. Repeatedly, Twain uses diet and dining as a way of determining social hierarchy. In *Puddn'head*, the enslaved and free children are distinguished by what they eat, but Huck and Jim eat the same food on the ground together when Twain wants to establish their

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[307] Mark Twain, *Puddn'head Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* (New York: Gabriel Wells, 1923): 28.
[308] Mark Twain, *Puddn'head Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* (New York: Gabriel Wells, 1923): 30.
[309] It should also be pointed out that the book's title, *Puddn'head*, is also illustrative of Twain using food allegorically, since the smartest person in the village is deemed to have mushy brains, or a "pudding head."
[310] Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Tom Sawyer's Comrade* (London: T.Nelson & Sons, 1900): 62-63.

social equality. The picnic meal with Jim contrasts with Huck's description of eating with Huck's foster mother Aunt Polly, also called the Widow Douglas. When Huck as the narrator tries to explain the horrors of being "sivilised," he uses the dinner table to illustrate it.

> The widow rung a bell for supper and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though there warn't really anything the matter with them. That is, nothing only everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends it is different: things get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.[311]

Since the primary theme of Huck Finn is racial harmony, suffice to say that Twain is not only talking about gravy when it comes to the benefits of blending flavors. Twain was a contemporary of Civil War-era letter writers. He, too, was taught to "speak" in food, and he uses it to beautiful effect. Twain's grasp of English ranged from sophisticated to rustic, but he understood the efficiency of food as a universal shorthand with which to convey heavy emotional content.

Dining continues to be a major theme in literature well into the twentieth century, and post-war literature would seem irrelevant to whether soldiers wrote metaphorically in their letters. However, one example of post-war fiction may help us establish the solidity of the argument. Stephen Crane's 1895 *Red Badge of Courage* is a novel set in the Civil War, but which contains few references to meals, food, or even hunger. Importantly, it is a war novel by an author who had never seen war, even as a bystander. Crane was born in 1871, six years after the Civil War's end, and he never served in the military. *Red Badge* was composed and

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[311] Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Tom Sawyer's Comrade* (London: T.Nelson & Sons, 1900): 12.

published during a time of unusual peace in the United States, after the Civil War and before the 1898 Spanish-Cuban-American War. Although Crane's novel is considered an example of realism, it is not realistic. As judged by their letters, reports, and memoirs, actual Civil War soldiers cared a great deal about food, while Crane's soldiers do not. In one sense, Crane's soldiers are *true* but not real. Although they suffered the fears and pains that Civil War soldiers endured, Crane's fictional infantrymen do not speak in the coded language of food. Meals are occasionally mentioned in the book, but not emphasized, described in any degree of detail, nor laden with metaphoric burdens. Essentials such as bread and meat are consumed in *Red Badge*, but men do not linger over it, discuss it, dream of it, or fight for it.

Growing up in the decades after the Civil War, the young Crane must have heard older men recount war stories. However, old soldier's tales tend to focus on the action elements, such as battles. Little wonder, then, that no mention of quiet but significant mess times appear in his fictional account of the war. It may be that Crane could not imagine the prioritization of food to fighting men. Another explanation for Crane's decision not to use food much in his novel could be that the post-war generation that saw so much rapid industrialization and economic depression preferred efficiency, and literary coyness fell out of favor. Perhaps, also, the author did not have the training to communicate volumes about a character's fears, hopes, and dreams by describing a few meals. Since symbolism is front-and-center in the book's title, we must assume Crane understood the utility of color symbolism at least. Or we can simply choose Occam's Razor to explain the lack of these kinds of descriptors — maybe Crane did not like them. Whatever the explanation, the lack of food as metaphor in *Red Badge* provides a fascinating contradiction to its consistent use by real-life warriors of the North and South who penned letters home. Emotionally

reserved even to the point of stoicism, the bravery of Civil War soldiers was displayed in the field, not on paper. Rather than baring their hearts, they used food to talk about their feelings.

In examining the thousands of letters and diaries of nineteenth-century New Englanders, Ronald and Mary Zboray found that antebellum readers took literature to heart, discussing it with family and friends, and making it a centerpiece of their daily lives. "Literature allusions flitted through popular songs, and fictional characters appeared on bed hangings, wallpapers, and other consumer goods throughout the home."[312] Where literacy rates were highest in the South, culture was also important. Famously, Twain joked that the codes of chivalry in Sir Walter Scott's novels contributed to the South's desire to go to war, while Abraham Lincoln supposedly teased Harriet Beecher Stowe that her book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, started the war. Of course the Civil War was sparked by more than cultural influences, but music, poetry, and prose were prevalent and important to people's senses of identity. Symbolism in food, color, flowers, and animals, were recognized even by common men and women of the day.

The American reliance on food metaphors was noted by Michael Owen Jones, president of the American Folklore Society in 2007. "Human beings feed on metaphors as ways of talking about something else: we hunger for, cannibalize, spice it up, sugar coat, hash things out, sink our teeth into, and find something difficult to swallow or hard to digest so we cough it up and then have a bone to pick with someone, which is their just desserts..."[313] Edible gifts represents

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[312] Ronald Zboray, Mary Zboray, *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience Among Antebellum New Englanders* (University of Tennessee Press, 2006): xviii.

[313] Michael Owen Jones, "Food Choice, Symbolism, and Identity: Bread-and-Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 120, No. 476 (Spring, 2007): 132.

sympathy and nurturing when given to a sick person, or a grieving family; they also express love when bestowed on a romantic interest, as with a box of chocolate or a fine dining experience.[314]

Thus when Albert Whitley writes to his sister in December 1863 to tell her about a battle "near Mishionary Ridge," and includes his dream about cake, we can feel confident the letter is about many things besides pastry.[315] "The roar of Cannon Was awfull. & the Musketry firing was Very heavy but our men carried evry point & captured 10,000 prisoners & sixty pieces of artillery." Later in this same letter he brings up the issue of food. "The other night I dreamed of home & even thought I Was theare first I Went through mothers house & saw piles of Cake." After describing his mixed reception by family and how changed everything seemed, he adds: "in the morning I found it was all a Dream but I Should have felt better over it if I Could have Succeeded in bringing away Some of that nice Cake I saw in Mothers House." Even without modern dream analysis, Whitley's longing for home as represented by sweet and plentiful cake is blatant. His recollection of the dream is also reflective of his emotional state following an episode of tremendous violence in a strange place, the name of which he cannot even spell.[316]

Why all this matters is the focus of this study. What soldiers felt, even if it was not expressed openly in all their letters, lies at the heart of why they fought. Whether it was anger, fear, patriotism, pride (false or otherwise), love, hate, or greed, the Civil War was a conflict of emotions running high. Perhaps what made some twentieth-century scholars so determined to

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[314] Michael Owen Jones, "Food Choice, Symbolism, and Identity: Bread-and-Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 120, No. 476 (Spring, 2007): 135.

[315] Albert Whitley to his sister, Dec. 5, 1863, Lookout Valley, Tenn. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2007.096.

[316] The primary Battle of Missionary Ridge near Chattanooga, Tenn., Nov. 25, 1863, resulted in over 1,000 men dead, and another 6,000 wounded, although skirmishes went on for several days in that region.

investigate motives was a desire to find logic and reason in the madness. By analyzing references to a common source of comfort and sensuality — food — we can break through nineteenth-century stoicism and recognize the emotional upheavals the war caused in the lives of everyday soldiers.

MISLEADING NARRATIVES

In the twentieth century, Civil War students faced a persistent false explanation of the war called the Lost Cause. Proponents of the Lost Cause narrative held that Southerners fought for "state's rights" and to preserve their homeland against an intrusive Union empire.[317] This narrative ignores that slavery (and the attendant rapacious greed which perpetuated it) was itself a betrayal of the principles of democracy, and one which divided the country more effectively than any other factor. In an attempt to dispel that fiction with logical evidence, scholars such as Eugene Genovese promoted alternate logical theories, such as the Marxian impetus for the war, that is, that the war was waged to satisfy financial interests of cotton growers and slave holders.[318] More recently, scholars have emphasized the many and diverse reasons common soldiers fought on either side.[319] For example, Ira Berlin and Gary Gallagher have proven the

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[317] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in Memory,* Cambridge: Mass.: Belknap Press (2001); also, Gary Gallagher and Alan Nolan, eds., *Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press (2000).

[318] Classic examples include Eugene Genovese, *Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968); and Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[319] A small sample of the modern studies on the complexity of the war's causes include (in alphabetical order): Gary W. Gallagher, *Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA:Harvard University Press, 1997); Gary W. Gallagher, and Elizabeth R. Varon, eds. *New Perspectives on the Union War* (New York: Fordham University, 2019); Gary W. Gallagher, *Union War (*Cumberland: Harvard University Press, 2011); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War was Over* (New York: Random House, 2007); James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

centrality of slavery at the heart of secession itself, both from a financial standpoint, and as a racial/social strategy that kept poor whites from siding with poor blacks against white elites. Financial matters were paramount for some Southerners, certainly, but most Southerners had no slaves. For poorer whites near the bottom of a strict, almost aristocratic social hierarchy, maintaining the fiction of racial superiority was crucial for their sense of identity. Many of those men fought to maintain their precarious social status, just as they claimed to be defending home and country. In their minds, the two issues were the same.[320] This is not to say that all Southerners held identical views. The Confederacy included Jeffersonians, who really did oppose federal authoritarianism; just as there were those who defended rights of free blacks, but their voices were drowned out in the cacophony of war.[321]

Union motivations have also been reexamined in recent decades. The simplistic explanation of the Union cause was that they fought to free the slaves. While it is true that a vocal minority of Union soldiers were abolitionists, many more went to war to preserve the nation and stayed in the fight to defend their military brethren, or as James McPherson has termed it, "Cause and Comrades."[322] More than 150 years later, the United States is still struggling to explain the Civil War.

What current Civil War scholars reveal through their continuing efforts is that emotions were paramount to why men joined and remained in the struggle. By recognizing their motives, we also realize a more complex understanding of this war, and by extension, of our nation, our

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[320] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); also Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War was Over* (New York: Random House, 2007).
[321] Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
[322] James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)

regional histories, and the social/societal struggles that arose in the war's aftermath. To do that, however, we must find a way to comprehend the everyday feelings of common soldiers, not just the rare emotive letter hastily scribbled down the night before a major battle. An example of a supposed "last letter," is from Cornelius Cain to his father in May 1861. "When I shall return I cannot tell whether even or not but if God spairs my life through the parilous dangers I will come back again."[323] The last letter from a soldier going into battle may reveal his secret passions as regards to his family, his ambitions, or his regrets; but it might also be a premature epitaph, meant to aggrandize him in case he fell the next day in battle. These letters are valuable for their revelation of the fear of death before a fight, but they also reflect duress, which can be misleading.

Food is not discussed in Cain's letter, but he asks his father to come retrieve his clothes if he is killed. Ironically, the most emotionally vulnerable part of the letter is his admission that he shied away from revealing his emotions: "You must not think hard of me for leaving that day and not telling you all farewell for I could not have told you all farewell to have saved my life." In a society where even saying goodbye is too painful to be braved, finding open and honest emotional content is rare.

It is crucial to keep in mind that Civil War soldiers did not typically write separate letters to everyone in their social circle. Instead, one letter sufficed for all, and was passed around in the family and wider community. They were literally open letters. For example, Cornelius Cain inserts a direct comment to a different person within the letter to his father. "Rose you can tell

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[323] Cornelius Cain to his father, May 26, 1861, Dobson, N.C. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.081.01.

Sally and Toll and Silvie all farewell for me for I never expect to see their faces no more in this wourld but If never return I hope to have a resting place where I shall neve see anymore trubbles."[324] Equally, if something is meant to be confidential, that had to be made explicit, as in a letter written from Albert Woodcock to his wife where he states: "You will not read this part of my letter to anyone."[325]

Although requiring more work to tease out the meaning, emotional expression found in references to food may be the most honest type. These food-conveyed messages are certainly more plentiful because they were written on normal days without the heightened pressure of potential death and for a larger audience. Codified expressions found in ephemera such as food should be added as a worthwhile tool as we continue our efforts to understand why Civil War soldiers acted as they did to preserve the nation — or to tear it apart.

So, when Seth Evans wrote to his sisters in January 1862 to enjoin them not to send him frequent boxes of delicacies, he effectively drives home his point in the language of food: "I am not a cake and pie soldier I came to live on salt junk and raw coffee and stand up for my country and my God."[326] In this one colorful sentence, we can gather that he sees his masculinity, his patriotism, and his Christianity are reflected in his choice of foods. In his study of Victorian masculinity, John Tosh notes that nineteenth-century manliness was defined by a series of

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[324] Cornelius Cain to his father, May 26, 1861, Dobson, N.C. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.081.01.

[325] Albert Woodcock to his wife Lucie Woodcock, January 31, 1864, Huntsville, Ala. Woodcock (Albert) Papers. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas, Accession No. 1996.043.

[326] Salt junk, also called salt horse, is salt-preserved meat of any kind, but typically pork.
Seth Gilbert Evans to his sisters January 23, 1862, from Camp California near Alexandria, VA. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1998.111.21.

attributes, including "courage, self-control, (and) stoical endurance."[327] Evans also alludes to his masculinity when he implies that sugary treats are for lesser men who must be coddled, while upstanding Godly patriots thrive on unroasted coffee and salt-preserved meat. His emotional state at this early point of the war is that of a Christian American martyr, eschewing the delights of civilization in favor of the barest necessities. Taken alone, his codified message is one of determination unto death, and pragmatism over comfort.

However, historians seek to examine change over time, not just one point in time. So it is helpful that we can also examine Evans' letters written later in the war, to see how his attitude toward civilization changes. Again food is a useful handle for getting a grasp on his feelings. In December of 1863, almost a year into his service, he writes his sisters asking them to convey a message to a neighbor: "Thank Mrs. Mackie for her pickles tell her I expect they are nice and have no doubt they would help US rations a long nicely."[328] Although he has evidently not received the pickles yet, he still expresses gratitude for Mrs. Mackie's gift, and for anything that will make his rations more palatable. Four months later, he reiterates his gratitude for the pickles, possibly in response to a prompt from one of the sisters. "I think if you look back you will find I did say some thing about Mrs. Mackies pickles ... please present her my most grateful thanks at once None but a soldier knows how good any thing from home is."[329] While this hardly makes

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[327] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 189.

[328] Seth Gilbert Evans to his sisters Nell and Jennie written from camp near Brandy Station, Va. December 21, 1863. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1998.111.104.

[329] Seth Gilbert Evans to his sisters, written from camp near Brandy Station, Va. April 16, 1864. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1998.111.126.

Evans a "cake and pie soldier," these subsequent letters demonstrate that his extremist attitude has softened toward food gifts, making him more appreciative for what home offered.

This sense of self-sacrifice expressed in food terms can also be seen in other letters of the era. Confederate Sgt. Major A.D. Craver of Tennessee wrote at the end of 1864 that they were running out of food in the northeast corner of Mississippi, near the Alabama state line, and that the "yankees have bin all over this country & cleand it out."[330] After explaining his own mission to repair the railroads, he adds: "We cant by any thing here to Eat We onily Get Poor Beef & Corne Bread & not too much at that But if it Will Put a Stop to this Cruel War I am Willing to Live on dry bread but it looks lik We all Will die & Get kild up before the War Will End." Craver's letter is revealing in two ways: First, he recognizes the futility of the situation for the South, although he expresses it as a dire supply situation in "poor beef & corne bread." Craver can only be seen as prescient, since Lee surrenders about five months after this letter was penned. At that point in the war, the South was already enduring what General William T. Sherman termed "hard war," on multiple fronts. For most of 1864, Sherman and his army of 60,000 battle-hardened Union soldiers cut a 60-mile-wide swath through Georgia.[331] What Craver did not know was that Sherman's army had arrived at the sea in Savannah, Georgia, three days before this letter was written. Secondly, Craver's statement that he is willing to live on dry bread if it will end the war shows his exhaustion with the struggle. Through the metaphor of food, Craver is expressing his willingness to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to see its

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[330] A.D. Craver to James M. Robertson, December 5, 1864, from a camp near Luka, Miss. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2007.151.

[331] Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

end. By the time Sherman and Grant complete their pincer movement across the deep south in April 1865, millions more Southern loyalists will come to accept if not welcome “dry bread” to end the death and destruction.

CHAPTER 5

COOKING

Union private Edward Kendall wrote to his father in February 1863: "You would laugh could you see me cooking, &c. I can darn stockings wash clothes, bake cakes."[332] For most nineteenth-century men, food preparation was seen as a lowly task, "women's work," unworthy of the attention of warriors and deserving of mockery.[333] However, as the monotony of army rations palled, cooking gained esteem among men forced to the fire. As respect for cooking grew, esteem grew also for cooks who could prepare edible meals for others, earning them unofficial elevation within the army's social (if not military) hierarchy. This upward mobility applied to people of color, the formerly enslaved, and white privates with no other military skills or knowledge. If they could make a pie or a biscuit, they had value to their fellows.

This chapter examines the social status of cooking and cooks. It looks at how food preparation helped enlisted men escape the front lines and improve their immediate situations. This chapter also looks at how cooking advanced the causes of African Americans, giving them status and respect they were otherwise denied.

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[332] E. Kendall, February 5, 1863, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.041.36.

[333] Although much of the history of food preparation involves women's history, the trend of Republican Motherhood is believed to have influenced the nineteenth-century middle-class domestic ethos that women cook and care for children exclusively, while men work outside the home. National acceptance of this division was achieved by the middle of the nineteenth century in America, according to Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003): 15. For more on the gendered division of labor, see Caroline Davidson, *A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles 1650-1980* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2005); Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteen-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Christine Williams, ed., *Doing 'Women's Work': Men in Nontraditional Occupations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1993).

For nineteenth-century Americans "becoming a man" was not something that happened naturally at age 13, 18, or 21, but was a social position to be sought and attained, and once acquired, it had to be guarded and renewed through labor, competition and dominance.[334] For many men in pursuit of that goal, the Civil War offered new opportunities for proving themselves. In his study of Southern manliness, John Mayfield argues that fighting was simply part of the ethos. "Violence supposedly had its regenerative qualities for lost manhood. As such, the gentleman laid claim to the ultimate expressions of violence: mastery over lesser men, over animals, and over nature itself."[335] In other words, the definition of manhood required sometimes violent competition, but it allowed for greater range of emotional honesty, as well. Consequently, men were allowed to cry, to grieve or celebrate openly, and have close platonic friendships with other men.

Of course, much like voting or other civic work, this definition of manhood applied primarily to white men, leaving out women and "other" men deemed socially inferior. Depending on geography and ethnicity, those could include American Indians, African Americans, Asians, Irish, Jews, Germans or Italians.[336] The hierarchy of work in nineteenth-

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[334] Joseph Beilein argues that it involves labor, skill, and relationships of men with nature, which includes animals; and people, both female and enslaved. Joseph Beilein, Jr. *Bushwhackers: Guerrilla Warfare, Manhood, and the Household in Civil War Missouri* (Kent: Kent State Univ. Press, 2016.): 18.

[335] John Mayfield, *Counterfeit Gentlemen: Manhood and Humor in the Old South*, (Gainesville, FL.: University Press of Florida, 2009): xxvi.

[336] These regional prejudices were determined by which minority group had a large enough population in the area to be considered a threat to the Anglo-Saxon hierarchy and was often influenced by economic status. Germany and Italy were not yet united countries, but people from those regions were grouped together, just as vastly disparate people from Asia and the Middle East were often collectively dubbed "Orientals." For more on the changes to racial perception and regional prejudices, see Ronald H. Bayor, ed. *Race and Ethnicity in America: A Concise History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Nicholas Leman, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Vintage, 1991).

century American society relegated most cooking, laundry, and childcare to women or servants. In the South and border states, servants were generally racial minorities, enslaved or free.[337] In the North, female immigrants were cheap and plentiful, willing to work long hours cleaning and cooking for little pay. Chefs and butlers in the north and northeast could be white, but those rare men were respected and well-compensated household staff for the wealthy and powerful.[338]

As a result of this division of labor, and what it indicated about a person's social status, soldiers on both sides of the conflict saw food preparation as unworthy of them and even emasculating.[339] In his study of Civil War cooking, William Davis suggests this attitude created many bad army cooks. "Men were not taught to cook, and few would have been willing to demean themselves by handling pots and pans."[340] George Washington Williams, a Union soldier, writes home that men in the hospital are suffering from wounds and substandard food. "Poore felows they hav a hard time for they Cant get eney thing to eat that is very palatable to a sick man. We have plenty of hard Crackers and Coffee and fresh beef but We have poore Cooks."[341] In addition, very few men marched away from home with the equipment or skills necessary to make their own meals. "Overwhelmingly, the young men who went off to become soldiers in 1861-65 were culinary virgins," Davis explains. Another reason why Civil War

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[337] Southern boys were taught from an early age that they should not be expected to clean or do women's work. See Lorri Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007): 25, 27. For the universality of these ideas of manliness, see also John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2005): 37.

[338] The preference, of course, was for French male chefs.

[339] William C. Davis. *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and the Gray*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books (2003): 3, 13.

[340] William C. Davis. *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and the Gray*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books (2003): 3

[341] G.W. Williams to Mrs. H.J.Williams, December 25, 1862, Fayetteville, Arkansas. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.024.

soldiers did not bother to learn to cook before leaving home was the common assumption that the war would end quickly.[342] However, skills can be learned, and survivors of that first year eventually grasped the long-term nature of the war. In the first year, letters reflect these insecurities often, but deep into the second year of the war the stigma is virtually unmentioned as soldiers admit their ignorance and ask for help. For example, J.H. Conley relates a disastrous peach cobbler experiment. "We Rolled out a large cake of Doe placed it in the Bottom of the oven and put the fruit in than placed another cake on top after putting in Sugar & water then put the oven on a hot fire and in Ten minutes you never saw such a mess in you life." They ate it anyway, of course. "We all became so angrey that we sat down and ate it Raw. You must write me word how to cook such things."[343]

Of course, that some men were willing to learn hardly dispels the question of whether the social stigma of cooking was a factor in the high rates of disease and death, as Davis suggests. While it would be reasonable to assume that survival would outweigh social status in their minds, we cannot immediately disregard the notion that masculinity inhibited soldiers as regards to cooking. After all, most scholars now accept that the U.S. Civil War itself, an undertaking that cost more than half a million lives and the destruction of vast swathes of the nation, was launched from the question of social status — that of slavery as a pillar of white supremacy. Acknowledging this, the significance of pride cannot be dismissed without examination.

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[342] William C. Davis. *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and the Gray*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books (2003): 3

[343] J.H. (John) Conley to his cousin Mollie, September 22, 1863, from Camp near Chaffins Bluff (near Richmond). *Pearce Civil War Collection,* Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.042.

Logically, it seems that pragmatism and survival would push men to undertake cooking during their time away at war. To evaluate how seriously pride can be seen in relation to survival, I weighed these seemingly conflicting priorities on three scales: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Clayton Alderfer's 1969 ERG (Existence, Relatedness, Growth) Theory, and Manfred Max-Neef Fundamental Human Needs system. While all three theories allow for different values, the need for healthy meals still seems to demand soldiers learn to cook at least enough to feed themselves.[344]

The most recent of these theories, that of economist Manfred Max-Neef, posits thirty-six Fundamental Human Needs, and boldly states that "fundamental human needs are finite, few, and classifiable," and "are the same in all cultures and in all historical periods." Thus, requirements such as eating remain consistent, and the only change is how humans satisfy those needs. For example, all people must consume calories, but how they acquire and prepare their food is dependent on their circumstances. Max-Neef developed his theory in relation to the early 1990s crisis in Latin America, but his paraphrasing of the French Marquis de Sade, that the scale of a crisis steals individualism, also applies to the American Civil War.

Every soldier in the conflict had the same problem — hunger and how to best satisfy it — and each addressed it in the same general manner. Max-Neef's theory differs from Maslow's or Aldefer's in that there is no hierarchy of needs except for the primacy of physical demands.

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[344] My logic on Maslow and Alderfer is as follows:
Maslow: Eating is among the most basic of needs, so food would fall into the physiological category on his hierarchy. Poorly prepared meals present a risk to safety, just as unhealthy or bad-tasting cooking threatens approval or acceptance by the rest of the group.
Alderfer: Although it brings in more factors such as self esteem, Alderfer's theory also prioritizes learning to cook over personal pride.

While food does superficially fit into that category, one basic tenet of this study is that food fulfills more than caloric requirements. Under his premise, food should also be included in categories involving community, culture, and esteem. Max-Neef claims all emotional and social needs are interactive and simultaneous.[345] Thus, a soldier's need for self-esteem ("Men do not cook") is equal to his need for acceptance from the group ("I also cook to win approval and provide for my friends."). Max-Neef's theory holds that feeding another person can simultaneously fulfill the desires for subsistence, protection, affection, and identity.[346]

Many soldiers' letters home show clear evidence for the prioritization of eating over gender assumptions. While the soldiers acknowledge the general social stigma of performing domestic tasks, they also write proudly of their acquisition of new skills. Confederate private J.H. Conley of the 11th Virginia Regiment, wrote to his cousin Mollie: "I have gotten So I can make Splendid light rolls and have them for breakfast each morning. And if fate should degree that I be denied a wife and have to live the life of an old Batchelor I can be perfectly independent Satisfied to do my own cooking & washing &c."[347] For Conley, cooking equated to self-sufficiency, proof of independence and masculinity. Although these ideas seem to throw new complications into the notion that cooking was more important to Civil War soldiers than personal pride, in reality it only adds new dimensions. We need not say one motivation is more important, only that all are significant at different moments and under different circumstances.

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[345] Manfred A. Max-Neef, with contributions from Antonio Elizalde, and Martin Hopenhayn. *Human Scale Development: Conception, Application and Further Reflections* (New York: Apex Press, 1991): 18, 15, 17.
[346] Manfred A. Max-Neef, with contributions from Antonio Elizalde, and Martin Hopenhayn. *Human Scale Development: Conception, Application and Further Reflections* (New York: Apex Press, 1991): *17-18.*
[347] J.H. Conley. November 10, 1863, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.042.

No matter how the needs are evaluated, we can recognize that an antebellum man of any race or region would be reluctant, and might even refuse to cook while safe at home where women or servants were available to do those chores. However, a typical mess consisted of four to ten men, and duties rotated among them. Every soldier had to take up work they sometimes disliked, including cooking, cleaning, digging ditches and latrines, and fighting. Davis argues that although army rules dictated that each soldier in a squad must take a turn at cooking, the chore was infrequent and as a result a soldier might not have a chance to become proficient.[348] Regardless of frequency, disdaining or dodging cooking duty was implausible because every man in the mess took his turn eventually. Those who refused the job would have suffered condemnation, and possibly even official military charges for dereliction of duty. Lack of skill or unwillingness to do the job well might force his comrades to substitute another duty, but no man escaped it because of pride.

It is also possible that the camps themselves helped convince the men that cooking was sufficiently manly. This spatial theory holds that duties like cooking or cleaning that were strictly feminine when contained within four walls might be acceptably masculine under an open sky. While it is possible the site did make a difference to some men, their letters do not reflect the distinction. In Civil War missives, the place where the cooking happens seems irrelevant. Occasionally, the writer mentions having a cabin, a tent, or an open fire, but none of the locations are singled out as more gendered (either way) than any other. The stigma seems to cling to the activity, not its geography. The reason for this may be that in the mid-nineteenth

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[348] William C. Davis. *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and the Gray*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books (2003): 4

century much of daily life was done outdoors, including laundry and large-scale food preparation like hog-boilings or beef slaughterings, which would have been familiar to rural residents.[349] Except for the upper classes, even urban residents were not so far removed from these activities as to make an important distinction between indoor and outdoor cooking. For these soldiers, the act of preparing meals for their fellows and themselves is seen as a domestic activity, regardless of where it is accomplished.

In his memoirs, Sherman recalled his early military days serving with a fellow lieutenant named Ord, who used grass to wipe their mess's plates instead of soap and hot water. "Ord was deposed as scullion," Warner was "promoted" to scullion, and Ord assigned the work of hostler.[350] Significant to the story is that Ord's behavior was attributed to his clinging to the "custom of the country," of using grass, not on his unwillingness to do the work because of a sense of male privilege. Consequently, Sherman and his colleagues judged Ord as unworthy of the duty and removed him from their collective danger zone. Regardless of any perceived stigma, Sherman did not denigrate the position of cook in his account of those early days.

The letters of common soldiers also reflect a pragmatic acceptance of the duty. Private Calvin H. Hill of Co. A, 52nd Ohio, reported that he was mess cook every five days, and cooked for two days at a time.[351] U.S. soldier Lewis Deems wrote in his 1864 diary that he cooked for

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[349] Prior to refrigeration, slaughtering hogs or cattle was a labor-intensive process that called for every person on the farm to participate. Women were involved, but often took the backseat in these productions. Common jobs for women were washing intestines for sausage, in the case of hogs, or scraping the hide of cows, while men did the butchery and preserving.

[350] *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 202-203.

[351] Calvin H. Hill, January-February 1861 diary, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2000.227.

the other men in his mess when he was off duty, and they cooked for him when he was on duty.[352] Confederate William H. Ellis kept an account book listing his mess's shared inventory of tools, such as their frying pan and a biscuit oven, as well as their roles, which included cook, assistant cook, fire starter, and water hauler.[353] In his letters to his wife, Jacob Bartmess writes: "I have just cooked a pot of beans for supper, which would not eat so bad even at home. This war is makeing a great many good cooks. quite a number of the boys can bake just as good biscuit as any one would wish to eat."[354] Cooking was simply one of many jobs for a soldier, as unfamiliar as marching or drilling in the beginning, but eventually accepted and sometimes even welcomed.

Civil War soldiers held duty and honor as powerful motivators, and those values were inextricably tied to concepts of masculinity, according to James McPherson who analyzed Civil War soldiers' reasons for going to war — and staying in the war.[355] Peer and social pressures, self-described as duty, honor, and manhood, pushed men to enlist and fight on both sides, according to McPherson.[356]

Manhood was "made" while proving oneself through physical exertions, sport, and sexual prowess, according to John Tosh, who studies masculinity in the nineteenth-century.[357] In that era, men held close non-sexual friendships, but they were also called upon to demonstrate

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[352] Lewis Deems. January 19, 1864, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2002.330.

[353] Ellis (William H.) Papers, Mss. 2274, *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection*, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.

[354] J.W. Bartmess to wife Amanda, March 9, 1864 from Tyner Station, Tenn., see Nova M. Mertens and Donald F. Carmony, "Jacob W. Bartmess Civil War Letters," *Indiana Magazine of History* 52, No. 2 (June 1956): 158.

[355] James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 5, 25.

[356] James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 28.

[357] John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd., 2005): 14.

their manhood in overt ways. Tosh argues that in Western societies, masculinity was exhibited in three arenas: home, that is, by heading up a well-appointed household and providing for dependents; in work, where one made a good living as the boss, or at least as an independent agent; and in all-men's societies, like taverns or clubs. The military both confirms and confounds these expectations. Lacking a home, soldiers made their messmates and officers into family. Their work positions were determined by rank, and every single man in both armies, including the commanding generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, had superiors to whom they answered. And finally, their society, while not all male, was as exclusively male as the armies could make it. Thus, competitiveness, manly behavior, and dedication to one another went hand-in-hand.

Admittedly, a profound difference exists between the need to take up arms, and the willingness to take up a skillet for one's messmates, but both can result in harm or death. It is also true that by refusing to take up any duty, from cooking to fighting, the consequences of that refusal could be worse. Since every man took an equal turn with the pan, it may have been seen as merely another job and a way of proving oneself more skilled, more capable, and more independent. In his examinations of manliness in Southern culture John Mayfield argues that manhood's driving force is dominance, outwardly exhibited through competition.[358] In many camps, cooking became another of those competitive efforts. Without any sense of shame, a soldier could retain his pride, and fulfill physiological, social, and emotional needs at the same time.

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[358] John Mayfield, *Counterfeit Gentlemen: Manhood and Humor in the Old South*, (Gainesville, FL.: University Press of Florida, 2009): xv.

Civil War diaries and long series of letters are invaluable for examining this issue, since through them we can study the changes in attitude over time. Edward Kendall wrote to his father in February 1863: "You would laugh could you see me cooking, &c. I can darn stockings wash clothes, bake cakes."[359] However, a mere month later food preparation was an accepted fact of life, and he boasts about his domestic skills in a letter home. "I am writing and watching a pan of meat, Fresh Beef, which is boiling on the fire, when boiled I shall let the water boile down and then stew the meat a spell and partially roast it I am cook, part of the time I can fry meat roast meat & boil meat and eat meat. I can wash dishes, Wash clothes, &c. I can make beds and sweep houses In fact I am becoming efficient in housekeeping."[360]

This change in attitude was not limited to Union soldiers, of course. Charles F. McCay, Jr., of the Confederate States, also displayed pride in his newfound skills. "It would do you good to see me sweating over a pone of cornbread or a pan of meat fat I can cook tolerably well & do a good deal of it."[361] W.P. McCollum, also Confederate, wrote to his parents about what he missed most — coffee and a clean shirt every Sunday. If he could not obtain coffee, he could at least get the clean shirt. "I get one by washing it myself once every week or two and a very good washer too. I can wash with the least soap you ever saw I reckon...I can beat them all Cooking. Ma you would be amused to see us all around the first cooking. It has become a natural thing to

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[359] Edward Kendall, February 5, 1863, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.041.36

[360] Edward Kendall to his father, March 20, 1863. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.941.42.

[361] Charles F. McCay, Jr., CSA, May 28, 1864, in camp 14 miles from Marreta or 6 miles from Dallas. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.283.

us all to get a meals victuals."[362] Charles Geiger wrote his sweetheart from a boarding house in Roswell, Georgia. "I can beat the world making corn-bread. It should be named corn-cake—this I make. I will not send you the recipe for fear you will not succeed as well on account of not giving the chemical part of the process the necessary attention."[363] For Kendall, McCay, McCollum, and thousands of their fellows, necessity and pragmatism eliminated the stigma, replacing it with pride in a job well done.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, cooking or at least knowledge of food preparation was part of a well-rounded education for men. But, according to Katharina Vester, that changed over the course of the century, giving way to the ideal of women in the household, men in the public sphere. "Kitchens came to be understood as gendered spaces producing normative femininity, where devoted wives and mothers nourished their families."[364] It was acceptable for men to cook professionally as chefs, but not as home cooks.

In his study of Civil War masculinity, James Broomall argues that it is within the camps that we see a shifting of gender norms caused by the men's need to do these domestic duties. Suddenly, the common Southern soldier was being asked to cook, sew, and fend for themselves. This led to new appreciation for the talents and skills of "women's work."[365] Indeed, Broomall argues the camp life created a kind of soldier's culture, independent of women, where they

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[362] W.P. McCollum to his father, August 30, 1862 from Tupelo, Miss. Arnold-McCollum family papers, 1853-1903, MS.000022, Arkansas State Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas.

[363] Charles A. Geiger to his sweetheart, January 14, 1864, from Roswell, Georgia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.266.42.

[364] Katharina Vester, *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015): 69.

[365] James J. Broomall, "'We Are a Band of Brothers': Manhood and Community in Confederate Camps and Beyond," *Civil War History*, 60:3 (Sept. 2014): 299.

developed their "own rituals and domestic relations."[366] Forcing the men to take turns cooking and cleaning also helped forge them into a unit.

Their new awareness of how difficult cooking was seems to have led to new respect for men who had those skills. For a few fortunate soldiers, these new domestic skills may have also prolonged their lives. Teen-aged Union soldier Hiram Tilley, 17, originally went to a Washington D.C. hospital as a patient, but remained in that secure location as an army cook. In 1862, he wrote to his mother about his experiments with custard pies. The rolling pin for his biscuits and pie crusts was borrowed from some secessionist women across the street who teased him about his efforts. "The sesesh girls on the opposite side of the street — whome I get the rolling pin from: seem to have lots of fun watching us do house work. Yet they are very friendly: they will be unionists before long."[367] Tilley's thoughts about the secessionist maids indicates he believes people can change even long-held beliefs. If these soldiers' pride in their new-found skills is sufficient for them to boast of it to family and friends back home, then we must accept that the social stigma was not insurmountable, that Tilley is right, and that men in this era could adapt to changing circumstances. James Wright reported home that one of his friends, William Jackson, had taken a job as a cook for the unit's officers, and expected to stay with them the rest of the war. The benefits were enormous, according to Wright, since the regular enlisted men

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[366] James J. Broomall, "'We Are a Band of Brothers': Manhood and Community in Confederate Camps and Beyond," *Civil War History*, 60:3 (Sept. 2014): 272.
[367] Hiram Tilley. July 16, 1862, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1997.050.

were on partial rations and unable to leave camp to buy supplies. "The officers buy their provisions so they have plenty and of the best."[368]

Another unpublished cook's diary helps illustrate this logic. Henry J. Durgin was a former whaler from New Hampshire who enlisted in the Union army, becoming a bugler with the First NH Volunteers cavalry unit during the war. He was captured on April 9, 1864, and sent to a Confederate prisoner-of-war camp in East Texas with about 4,000 other Union prisoners.[369] Durgin shared a mess with sixty fellow prisoners, and cooking appears in his diary about every tenth day, a duty he apparently excelled at, because in July he was chosen to become the personal cook for a small band of imprisoned Union officers. "I have only five to cook for besides myself, & only two meals a day, & so shall have a good time of it. I have a stove and set of cooking tools to match, & have a fine bunk in the cabin with plenty of blankets so am very well contented."[370] While also working as the officers' cook, Durgin started a pie-making business, producing four dozen small apple pies per day and selling them to fellow prisoners. His third job was covert baker of hard-tack and travel bread for escaping prisoners. In October 1864, several hundred of the prisoners were paroled or exchanged (his diary does not make it clear which), and he was included as the officers' cook. The enlisted men were marched more than 150 miles from East Texas to the Union lines in Louisiana, but the wounded men and officers were transported by steamship. As their cook, Durgin traveled with the officers. Despite a few

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[368] James M. Wright to his sister, August 29, 1863 from Crab Orchard, Kentucky (near London). *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.203.

[369] Henry J. Durgin 1864 diary, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2002.307. In his diary, Durgin writes that the sum total of his previous experience with cooking had been to make sure the cavalry camp's cook, "David," had a good steed.

[370] Henry J. Durgin, (July 10, 1864) 1864 diary, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2002.307.

delays on the river, they arrived about four days ahead of the rest of the prisoners, who "had a hard march to Granticoe."[371] Durgin's experience as a prisoner of war was cushioned considerably by his ability to cook.

What stands out in Durgin's account is his pragmatic attitude. For this New Hampshirite, the skill of cooking was comparable to bugling or whaling, his previous occupations. Cooking allowed Durgin stay busy in prison, which helped stave off the depression or "ennui" to which he was inclined. After his appointment as cook in July he writes: "Am pretty busy now, most of the time, and the days pass off much quicker & pleasanter than when I lay idle."[372] In August, he states: "Find plenty to employ my hands about now, which relieves the 'ennui' that at times oppresses me."[373] For Durgin, cooking provided for his physical, emotional, psychological, and financial needs while he was trapped behind prison walls. Men who turned their hands to cooking, whether for hospital patients or imprisoned officers, found pride in their positions and skills, as well as status within the insular military society. That social status clearly outweighed the stigma of seemingly gendered duties.

THE THIRD FRONT

For men outside the accepted white man's masculine ethos, the work of cooking provided an entrée into social acceptance and allowed them to participate in the war. African Americans,

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[371] Henry J. Durgin 1864 diary, Oct. 10-18, 1862. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2002.307. What Durgin calls Granticoe is most likely Grand Ecore, located four miles north of Natchitoches, Louisiana, on the Red River. It now hosts a visitor's center where the former Confederate observation post once stood.

[372] Henry J. Durgin (July 29, 1864) 1864 diary, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2002.307.

[373] Henry J. Durgin (August 8, 1864) 1864 diary, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2002.307.

male and female, those born free and enslaved, were able to wield cooking skills like weapons in their fight for freedom and respect.

In 1862, a determined African American slave named Sam escaped from his owner's farm in Kentucky and fled to the advancing Union lines where he went to work for Union Captain Albert Woodcock of Company K in the Illinois 92nd Infantry. Thousands of men like Sam joined the Union army, relying only such protections as the Union officers chose to impart. Sam provides one example of how they lived, and how they worked their way toward respect. Fortunately, Woodcock was a prolific letter writer, sending multiple missives each week to his wife Lucy or "Lute" Woodcock in Oregon, Illinois. From this record, we know that Sam's duties included cooking, laundry, and foraging for food.

Although Woodcock mentions half a dozen contrabands who worked for him at different times during the war, Sam stands out for his ingenuity and ambition.[374] Woodcock writes: "We fare well. Sam has courted some ladies of color. He sold pies for them yesterday to the amt of $6; the result was that we were beautifully supplied with milk & Sam with a feather bed in a palatial mansion; the owner of those colored fair ones being in the rebel army."[375] A year later, Sam's entrepreneurial spirit comes to the fore again: "Sam borrowed $2 & invested it in ginger bread, he has sold the bread for $3.15, making $1.15 in about one hour. He intends to put in his spare time to morrow peddling ginger bread which he buys from a baker who bakes for

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[374] In 1862, Gen. Benjamin F. Butler issued an order that declared the escaped slaves to be "contraband of war," and as such subject to confiscation. It actually took congressional action and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, followed by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution to make all enslaved people legally free. During the interim, hundreds of thousands of escapees were put to work in Union camps and forts.

[375] Albert Woodcock to Lucy Woodcock, May 15, 1863. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.50.

government."[376] In addition to his side business, Sam provided for Woodcock and least one other officer. "Had a bully supper. New potatoes served up in Sams best style; boiled cabbage, home-made light bread cut from a loaf as big as a half-bushel, onions fried & onions raw cut in vinegar; butter & sow belly."[377] Numerous other letters praise Sam's ability to find and prepare food, nurse the sick, and take care of clothing, depending on the officers' needs.

Sam and men like him are critical to our understanding of how food acted as a social mechanism during the Civil War. Sam came into the Union lines with no status except as property, but he parlayed his skills of cooking and negotiating to elevate himself within the limited social sphere of the camp. Both white and black men who prepared food used these abilities to acquire social influence and operate small businesses that enriched them above and beyond their meager army pay. However, this approach is particularly interesting to see as it benefitted contrabands and free people of color who would normally struggle for social recognition.

On the social and professional caste system of a Union Civil War camp, contrabands were near the bottom. According to military hierarchy, officers are at the top according to their rank, followed by enlisted men, with camp followers at the bottom. From the start of the war, escapees struggled for recognition and protection, but after 1862 general orders allowed Union officers to treat those fleeing slavery as a war resource, to refer to them as contrabands, and legally utilize their labor in the war effort. These refugees held a curious twilight status. Black

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[376] Albert Woodcock to Lucy Woodcock, May 4, 1864. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.41.

[377] Albert Woodcock to Lucy Woodcock, Aug. 7, 1863. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.103.

women often acted as domestic workers in stationary forts and bases, while African Americans who traveled with the army were primarily men and boys.[378] However, unlike the colored troops enlisted after 1863, these men were not soldiers, sutlers or typical camp followers. They rode in the army carts and wagons, meaning they had some importance as necessary workers, but they were paid a small wage for long hours of sometimes demeaning work. They were also vulnerable to humiliation and injury, such as beatings for minor infractions. It should be noted that corporal punishments like beatings were also levied on white enlisted men who violated military orders.[379]

According to Woodcock's letters, Sam contributed more than cooking and acquiring food, he also nursed the captain through sicknesses, took care of their laundry and performed lice eradication.[380] Although we do not know Sam's ultimate fate after the war, his dedication to the captain paid off in the short term. In 1864, Woodcock had another officer escort Sam to Woodcock's own home in Illinois. He wrote to Lute, asking her to help Sam find a job and a home.[381] We know from subsequent letters that Sam lived in the captain's home at least temporarily, and dined with Woodcock's wife and children. Unless Sam changed his first name,

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[378] Although useful for laundering and cooking, women were generally seen as less valuable contraband workers. A year after the Emancipation Proclamation, and two years after the contraband policy that called for not returning slaves to bondage, on February 7, 1864, First Lt. Marshal A. Kempinsky asks his superior what to do about the women fleeing to Union lines. The response from S.S. Burdett, acting provost-marshal for St. Louis was: "Let the masters take the women. You will not give passes to colored women to come to this city." OR, Vol. XXXIV, part II, page 268.

[379] Desertion and treason were punishable by firing squad or hanging, but minor infractions like negligence of duty were more often addressed with corporal punishment, including whippings or being suspended by the thumbs.

[380] Lice eradication consisted of picking off the adult vermin and boiling clothing and blankets to kill the nits and eggs. It was a time-consuming process and often a wasted one, since most soldiers had lice, and infestations spread easily in camps.

[381] Albert Woodcock to Lucy Woodcock, May 1, 1864. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.157.

he does not appear in the 1870 census for that part of Illinois. It is possible that he returned to Kentucky after the war to find his family. However, Woodcock's effort to save Sam by sending him away from the action at the height of the war, to Woodcock's own home, a place of security and relative comfort, speaks to the trust, emotional connection, and respect that Woodcock held for his former servant.

Other lessons can be learned from cooks like Sam and Hiram, however, and that is not only how they elevated themselves socially, but what kinds of power they were able to wield. Ironically, it was Sam from Kentucky who illustrates this most effectively. Sam not only cooked for Albert Woodcock, he also foraged, acquiring much of their food either by theft, purchasing, or bargaining.[382] What is unstated but patently clear is that Sam was also expressing his power over the white Southern slave owners from whom he took the food.

Woodcock wrote in August of 1863, praising Sam's foraging skills: "Sam is a brick he is constantly on the alert for something to eat; he is out in the country now in quest of food. This morning we had good light home-made bread, milk and fresh butter."[383] Because fresh bread, milk and butter do not grow on trees, Sam's strategy involved bargaining with the enslaved people on nearby farms, particularly the women. That spring, Woodcock writes that Sam boasted about using the former slaveholder's possessions and stealing his livestock to feed the Union army. "At night Sam having received an invitation went to spend the night with the negroes in a fine brick mansion near by the master having run away. Sam pictured to the boys in glowing

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[382] Aug. 7, 1863, Woodcock writes that Sam "swiped" tomatoes; May 28, 1863, he writes "the little luxuries Sam gets from his colored lady friends." Woodcock (Albert) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.103.

[383] Albert Woodcock to Lucy Woodcock, Aug. 5, 1863. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.101.

terms the bed he was to occupy; being a large feather bed, snowy white sheets, and counter-pane bed stead mahogany, etc." Upon coming back to camp in the dark early morning hours, Sam was loaded down with a stolen pig, although Sam told the sentry on duty that it was a "possum," since stealing livestock was against Union rules. Woodcock estimates the hog weighed about 150 pounds. "Corp Bass & he went down the to the River & skinned & dressed the possum & he was soon stowen away in basket and haversacks... Yesterday we had peas and possum for dinner. The peas were from Sam's ladies."[384] Sam's porcine theft not only benefited the captain, but it evidently fed a good portion of the camp. These incidents of creative food acquisition are written in a humorous light, but Sam's craftiness is stunning to contemplate. If captured by the Confederates, Sam would be returned to his former enslaver, if not killed. Despite this danger, he not only stole livestock from the Southerners, he uses the stolen goods to ingratiate himself with his new benefactors. Just days later, Woodcock writes in another letter, "Sam, yesterday got from his lady friends new potatoes, onions, peas, beets, pail milk, etc. We live finely; no danger of scrofula."[385] In all these examples, Sam made good use of contacts, foraging, and culinary skills to advantageously position himself with his supervisor, as well as the rest of the company.

Woodcock's accounts of Sam are meant to amuse his wife, to lend the impression that the captain is happy and healthy and enjoying himself with Sam as willing court jester. What can be read between the lines, however, is that Sam was wielding his new-found freedom against slave owners with the eager cooperation of the enslaved women, and the captain is turning a blind eye

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[384] Albert Woodcock to Lucy Woodcock, May 26, 1863. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.57.

[385] Scrofula was then another term for tuberculosis, but Woodcock may mean scurvy in this reference. Albert Woodcock to Lucy Woodcock, May 30, 1863. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.61.

to any crimes. While it is possible that Sam paid the women for the goods, Woodcock never writes to Lute about money exchanging hands. One likely explanation is that the women were performing their own acts of rebellion against the white slaveholder. Regardless, Sam's skills in persuading the women to donate or sell him food raises his esteem in the eyes of the captain, even while his work for the Union Army elevates his status among the local slave population. The material significance of that lies in the quality and quantity of food Sam acquires while enjoying luxurious temporary accommodations in the absent master's bed. In addition, it hardly requires much analysis to imagine the joy the slaves and Sam must have shared as they took those small victories against their oppressors.

In her book *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, Stephanie McCurry notes that the Civil War began on the plantations as slaves waged war against their masters.[386] Of the four million enslaved people living in the Southern states at the war's start, three million never escaped. More than 150,000 became Union soldiers, and another 500,000 escaped to Union lines.[387] Like Sam, those who escaped fought on a third front by becoming contrabands, soldiers, or factory workers to support the cause and economy of the Union. In his essay "Who Freed the Slaves?" James McPherson refers to these as "active" participants in their own liberation. "By coming into Union lines, by withdrawing their labor from Confederate owners, by working for the Union Army and fighting as soldiers in it, enslaved peoples did play an active part in achieving their own freedom, and for that matter, in preserving

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[386] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010): 7.
[387] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010): 4.

the Union."[388] These men of action are praised by writers ranging from W.E.B. Du Bois to Chandra Manning.

Those who did not or could not flee, many of them women burdened by dependent children or the elderly, are often discounted as powerless, assumed to be frozen by fear or too cowed to take positive action. However, from Woodcock's accounts, these people also fought, contributing to the defeat of tyranny and its stakeholders when and where they could. These women referenced in Woodcock's letters did more than slow their work or break tools. These were house servants, the most trusted of all, actively lending aid and support to the enemy. Ira Berlin theorizes that freed blacks were an inspiration for the enslaved people of the South, encouraging them to break their chains and rebel. Regardless of whether Sam inspired it, the women's acts of defiance showed courage and determination and were not a one-time incident, according to Woodcock.[389]

The sharing of the master's food with his enemies and his enemy's servants can easily be taken as a form of carnival, the upending of social mores and nothing more.[390] However, by giving away the slaveowner's food and bed, the servants defy their master in a way that is both personal and risky. This domestic rebellion involves much more than petty theft. In the midst of war, food is power. It is a war material as important as bullets and guns. The women knew the

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[388] James M. McPherson, "Who Freed the Slaves?" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 139, No. 1 (March 1995): 2-3.

[389] Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United State*s (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015): 41.

[390] It is unclear if this act of carnival was limited to slumber or if they made full use of the plantation owner's bed. Woodcock writes in a May 15th letter: "We joked Sam considerably but he declared that he is virtuous, that he would never leave any little Sams in slavery." Albert Woodcock to Lucy Woodcock, May 15, 1863. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.50.

value of the food they were giving Sam and Sam's Union allies. As early as 1862, there were food shortages in the South.[391] Confederate J.B. Griffin wrote to his wife on April 2, 1862, that a half bushel of sweet potatoes is selling for $1.75, and a male turkey for $2.50, which was half a week's wages for an average soldier.[392] In 1863, when Sam and the enslaved women took food from the absent plantation owner and gave it to the Union, they actively assisted the enemy, the army which sought to strip the owners of their property, pride, and position. The enslaved people took that power for themselves and redistributed it. "Emancipation was fought for on many levels and in many places. It wasn't just the few men who fought in the Union army. It was also the many black men and all the women."[393] Plantation and gender historian Stephanie M. Camp argues that enslaved women took back power from their enslavers by exactly this kind of behavior, by stealing and giving away food and other resources, but also by using their own bodies and sexuality to express independence through everything from truancy to assignations.[394] Food was a useful and subversive weapon, and they did not shy away from using it to strike at the heart of their enemies.

Two early American examples of enslaved cooks earning their freedom by means of kitchen skills are Hercules Posey and James Hemings, the personal cooks for founding fathers George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, respectively. George Washington brought Posey,

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[391] William Davis and Teresa Crisp Williams. *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002): 4, 82-88.
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[392] James.B. Griffin, April 2, 1862 *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
[393] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2010): 8.
[394] Stephanie M. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

also known as "Uncle" Harkless, to Philadelphia to cook for the first family when the nation's capital moved there in 1790. Posey was described as a "celebrated artiste" by Washington's step-grandson, George Washington Parke Custis.[395] Posey ruled the kitchen and its staff like a king, regardless of his legal status, according to Custis. "The steward, and indeed the whole household, treated the chief cook with much respect, as well for his valuable services as for his general good character and pleasing manners."[396] However, Pennsylvania did not allow slavery, having passed a Gradual Abolition Act in 1780. The law required that those in bondage be freed if they lived in the state for longer than six months. Consequently, on the advice of the attorney general Washington rotated enslaved servants back to his Virginia plantation every six months. Having tasted freedom in Philadelphia, Posey ran away from Mount Vernon in 1797. Recent research by Westport Historical Society genealogist Sara Krasne indicates that Posey likely died in 1812 in New York, having spent his last years working as a Manhattan chef.[397]

James Hemings worked as Thomas Jefferson's Paris-trained personal chef, until he finally persuaded the third president to grant him his freedom. The half-brother of Jefferson's wife, James Hemings served as a war-time attendant to Jefferson but was taken to Paris in 1784 for the express purpose of being trained in French cooking techniques.[398] Under a 1793 manumission agreement with Jefferson, Hemings was freed only after training his replacement at

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[395] George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of the Life and Character of Washington*, ed. Benson J. Lossing (New York, 1860): 422-423.

[396] George Washington Parke Custis*, Recollections and Private Memoirs of the Life and Character of Washington,* ed. Benson J. Lossing (New York, 1860): 422-423.

[397] Chelsea Lenhart. "Hercules," Washington Library, *Center for Digital History*. Accessed Feb. 13, 2019; see also Liana Teixeira, "Centuries-old mystery solved by Westport Historical Society," *Associated Press*, May 16, 2009 https://apnews.com/article/cda1df8694ad406eaed22e4cd19ce2fc.

[398] To clarify the relationship, James Hemings and Jefferson's wife had the same father. Annette Gordon-Reed*, The Hemingses of Monticello* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008): 132-33.

Monticello.[399] Both Hercules Posey and Hemings knew their value within their respective households and used it to leverage a degree of control and seize their freedom. During the Civil War, an estimated 900,000 people took similar gambles to obtain their own independence, and many of them parlayed their cooking skills as the means to support themselves, gaining freedom and status along the way.

Despite their contributions, not all contraband workers were treated well by the Union soldiers. Frederick Sherwood of the Illinois 50th Regiment, Company C, wrote to his sister about the shameful treatment of some cooks in Tennessee in 1863. "They had been caught stealing rations we had a sham court marshall and the sentences were the negroes to be shot tomorrow at eight o'clock, had some one to stand guard over them at night. The guards were loaded up with corn, the negroes got away in the night. the boys fired there guns and let them have the corn."[400] Since his anecdote is meant to be amusing to his sister, we cannot know if the cooks were stealing for themselves, to sell the food, or to feed friends and families. We know from other letters that the Union camps and some cities were inundated with people fleeing slavery. Sherwood's cousin Sallie wrote on Nov. 13, 1862: "They say Cairo and Chicago is completely overrun. They don't know what to do with them."[401] Unfortunately, the desperate refugees did not always find a comfortable shelter behind the Union Army's lines. The hardest, dirtiest work was often forced onto their shoulders. Frederick Sherwood related to his sister: "Contraband's

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[399] Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008), 132-33.

[400] Frederick M. Sherwood to his sister, December 7, 1863. Sherwood (Emily D. and family) Papers, MSS.# 2566, *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

[401] Sallie to cousin Frederick Sherwood, November 13, 1862. *Sherwood (Emily D. and family) Papers*, *MSS.# 2566*, *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

coming in all the while, glad to see us, they have all the hard work to do."[402] The unfree fled oppression and brutal labor only to find themselves relegated to more hard labor. In his study of the gradual emancipation of African Americans during the Civil War, James Paradis calls them "human entrenching tools seized from the enemy."[403] In such situations, where enslaved people fled oppression only to find their situations virtually unchanged, stealing food can be seen as merely the continuation of a pattern of quiet food-related retribution begun years, decades, or centuries earlier.

The most famous Civil War-era cook was not known for her cooking at all, although the skill frequently allowed her greater freedom to act. Harriet Tubman, also known as Araminta Ross (her birth name), Araminta Tubman (her first married name), Harriet Garrison (the name she used when giving abolitionist speeches), Harriet Davis (her second married name), and Moses (her code name), was an abductor on the Underground Railroad, having successfully led dozens of family and friends to freedom prior to the war.[404] In 1849, Tubman fled to Philadelphia, where she took up domestic work, both to provide for herself in this new city, and to fund her return trips South.[405] Throughout the next decade, Tubman traveled into slave

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[402] Frederick M. Sherwood to his sister, August 12, 1862. *Sherwood (Emily D. and family) Papers*, *MSS.# 2566*, *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

[403] James Paradis, "Flexing the Sable Arm: Emancipation, Black Troops, and Hard War," in *Beyond Combat: Essays in Military History in Honor of Russell F. Weigley*, Edward C. Longacre and Theodore J. Zeman, eds. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2007): 8.

[404] An abductor is the term for a person who led enslaved people out of bondage. Estimates of the numbers of people Tubman personally led to freedom before the war differ, with figures ranging from 70 to several hundred. See Kerry Walters, *Harriet Tubman: A Life in American History*. Black History Lives (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2020): 76; and Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004): 84.

[405] Kerry Walters. *Harriet Tubman: A Life in American History*. Black History Lives (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2020): 74.

territory thirteen separate times in order lead escapees to northern U.S. states and Canada, frequently returning to Philadelphia and Cape May, New Jersey, where she worked as a domestic servant to earn more money. Cape May was a popular summer resort for Philadelphia's middle and upper classes. "It was in this pleasure cove that Tubman cooked for families and hotel kitchens to build up her war chest."[406] Cooking was hardly Tubman's calling, but it funded her real purpose — saving lives.

After the Civil War broke out, Tubman worked for a New England missionary society teaching life skills, such as laundering and cooking, to the refugees from slavery.[407] Tubman voluntarily nursed Union soldiers during the day, supporting herself by making ginger bread, root beer, and baking pies in the evenings.[408] Repeatedly in her life, Tubman fell back on the basic skills of food preparation to fund her crusade.

Arguably, Tubman's greatest value to the war effort was as a go-between for the Union Army and the local enslaved people who lived in the Lowlands but whom were suspicious of the white soldiers. Abolitionist and novelist Sarah Bradford recorded some of Tubman's recollections after the war: "To Harriet they would tell anything; so it became quite important

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[406] Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004): 86.

[407] The goal of the Port Royal Experiment sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, was to make the previously enslaved workers self-sufficient by bringing in missionary groups (such as the NEFAS) to teach literacy and work skills. Kerry Walters. *Harriet Tubman: A Life in American History*. Black History Lives (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2020): 128; see also Sarah Elizabeth Hopkins Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W.J. Moses, Printer, 1869): 35.

[408] Sarah Elizabeth Hopkins Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W.J. Moses, Printer, 1869): 37-38. Electronic version courtesy of the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Harvard University, Microfilm Reel 313, No. 2120.

It is important to note that Tubman's desire to support herself while volunteering was not unusual. A number of women, both black and white, provided for themselves by sewing, cooking, and cleaning to allow them to volunteer for the war effort, according to accounts written shortly after the war's end. For further examples, see L.P. Brockett and Mary Vaughn, *Woman's Work in the Civil War: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism and Patience* (Philadelphia: Zeigler, McCurdy & Co., 1867): 80.

that she should accompany expeditions going up the rivers, or into unexplored parts of the country, to control and get information from those whom they took with them as guides."[409] On one of these expeditions down the Combahee River, the Union forces freed an estimated 750 people, set fire to plantation buildings, and destroyed railroads, bridges, and Confederate-laid torpedoes.[410] Tubman "was often sent into the rebel lines as a spy, and brought back valuable information as to the position of armies and batteries; she has been in battle when the shot was falling like hail, and the bodies of dead and wounded men were dropping around her like leaves in autumn."[411] Because she was not on the army's official payroll, Tubman was most likely counted as a cook or nurse on these expeditions, which would have allowed her to go with them as a civilian. She was both cook and nurse to the men of the famous Massachusetts 54th Colored Troops led by Robert Gould Shaw. On the morning of the Battle of Fort Wagner, July 18, 1863, Tubman claims she served Shaw his last breakfast before he and 271 of the soldiers in his unit were killed. That evening, she helped nurse the African American survivors of the battle.[412]

For Tubman, as for hundreds of other African Americans in the conflict, their manual labor allowed them to improve their personal circumstances and support themselves, while also contributing to the monumental effort to free four million of their fellow African Americans.

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409 Sarah Elizabeth Hopkins Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W.J. Moses, Printer, 1869): 39. Electronic version courtesy of the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Harvard University, Microfilm Reel 313, No. 2120.

410 Possibly the best account of the expedition is found in Catherine Clinton, Harriet *Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004): 167. It is also featured in Sarah Elizabeth Hopkins Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W.J. Moses, Printer, 1869): 86.

411 Sarah Elizabeth Hopkins Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W.J. Moses, Printer, 1869): 41-42. Electronic version courtesy of the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Harvard University, Microfilm Reel 313, No. 2120.

412 The wounded were segregated, with white wounded soldiers of the battle taken to Hilton Head. Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004): 178.

Recognition for her service did not extend into the post-war era, sadly. Repeated efforts to reward her with a pension on her own merits were thwarted by her gender and skin color. She did receive a government pension, but it was because of her husband's service to the war effort, not her own contributions as cook, nurse and spy.[413]

Ironically, while Tubman was a cook who became known for everything except cooking, two men became famous cooks even though they were more likely scam artists. William Mack Lee wrote a small book asserting he served as General Robert E. Lee's personal cook throughout the Civil War, and Jefferson Shields claimed he was the cook for Stonewall Jackson, although there is no evidence that either man ever worked for those respective Confederate generals.

William Mack Lee asserted that he served as General Robert E. Lee's personal cook from 1861 through 1865, and near the end of the nineteenth century W.M. Lee traveled around the South conducting interviews with newspapers and speaking to civic groups, asking for "donations for his church."[414] While it is unclear if W.M. Lee ever met General Robert E. Lee, he was probably not a member of the general's personal staff during the war. In General Lee's wartime letters to his wife, Mary, the commander of the Confederate Army often refers to his personal cooks and body servants, none of whom were named William, Billy, Bill, Mack or any variation thereof. General Lee's first cook was Philip Meredith, an enslaved man whom Lee freed in early 1863. Lee then hired "George" for $8.20 per month as a temporary replacement,

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[413] In 1895, she began receiving a small widow's pay of $8 per month. In 1899, she received an increase in her widow's pension to $20 per month. Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004): 206 and 208-209

[414] William Mack Lee, *History of the Life of Rev. Wm. Mack Lee, Body Servant of General Robert E. Lee Through the Civil War: Cook from 1861 to 1865*. Published 1918 by Rev. Wm. Mack Lee. Electronic version: docsouth.unc.edu. Academic Affairs Library, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

and finally Bryan Lynch served Lee starting from about February 1863.[415] While it is possible that W.M. Lee worked as a cook in the Army of Northern Virginia, which typically numbered about 50,000 uniformed men and included thousands of servants, cooks, and hostlers, W.M. Lee's memoir claims a much more personal relationship with the Confederate general. W.M. Lee's short booklet includes vague tales of R.E. Lee's genteel manners and one account of the general's anger when the cook slaughtered and served up a favorite egg-laying hen.[416]

Another example of someone who may have borrowed a chef's toque is Jefferson Shields, allegedly the personal cook for Stonewall Jackson.[417] Shields attended Confederate veteran's reunions in the early twentieth century with some regularity.[418] One article about his appearance in a Mobile, Alabama Confederate parade states: "…Jefferson Shields, who claims to have been Stonewall Jackson's cook. Jeff was covered with reunion badges and carried a live chicken under his arm. When asked what he was doing with the chicken, he replied that he was just carrying his lunch."[419] Clearly, Shields was a showman, regardless of whether or not he was a cook.

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[415] Robert E. Lee (Captain), *Wartime Letters of (General) Robert E. Lee (*New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1904): 412, 632, 879.

[416] William Mack Lee, *History of the Life of Rev. Wm. Mack Lee, Body Servant of General Robert E. Lee Through the Civil War: Cook from 1861 to 1865*. Published 1918 by Rev. Wm. Mack Lee. Electronic version: docsouth.unc.edu. Academic Affairs Library (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999).

[417] None of the reporters seems to have made much effort to ascertain Shields's credentials, instead preferring to focus on the fact that an African American supported the Confederacy. One *Gazette* article describes him this way: "Uncle Jeff is a 'good old negro.' He is a figure of a fast fading type, the kind that made the South so dear to those who lived in it long before the war." *The Gazette* (Lexington, Va.), June 23, 1909. Another headline states "Stonewall Jackson's Cook Still Loyal to the Lost Cause." *The Times* (Richmond, Va.), November 3, 1901. Almost all the articles mention the many souvenir badges and ribbons he acquired at the various reunions. One titled "Uncle Jeff Attend Reunion," states: "(Shields) reports having a pleasant time, and returned with numerous other badges with which to adorn himself on state occasions. Uncle Jeff is one of the few colored men who delights to wear a Confederate uniform." *The Gazette* (Lexington, Va.) June 17, 1908.

[418] New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, 29 April 1910.

[419] "Take One More March: Veterans March in Mobile Under Battle-Scarred Banners," *The Herald and News* (Newberry, S.C.) May 3, 1910.

Cavalry general Stonewall Jackson was killed in battle, and R.E. Lee died in 1870. Neither was alive when William Mack Lee and Jefferson Shields made their claims. Lee and Shields apparently enjoyed the attention, and Lee at least was paid for his appearances.

The examples of W.M. Lee and Shields are useful because they reveal how society perceives the position of cook. W.M. Lee and Shields could have claimed almost any connection to the generals, since Confederate commanders were surrounded by men available to care for the tents, food, clothing, horses, and errands. Why then, would Lee and Shields own the position of cook? The answer lies in the peculiar social status of the food preparer as someone trusted, artistic, and life-sustaining, but not subservient.

Like Harriet Tubman, hundreds of free Northern Blacks picked up their cooking knives and volunteered to serve as cooks to get into the war, according to James McPherson, author of *The Negro's Civil War*.[420] African Americans were not subject to conscription and could not even enlist to fight until almost two years into the war, so those who did step up early should be recognized as particularly noble. In addition, by undertaking the role of food preparers and providers, they wittingly or unwittingly acquired the emotional position of nurturers. As Katharina Vester explained it: "Being able to cook has traditionally stood for a mother's love."[421] The combination of their selflessness and connections to food preparation gave them respect others were denied because of the color of their skin.

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[420] James McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted During the War for the Union*, New York: Ballantine Books (1991):35.

[421] Katharina Vester, *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015):66.

William Henry Johnson offers an illustrative incident in his autobiography. Johnson, who became a New York state legislator after the war, first served as a cook in the Connecticut Second Regiment. Johnson volunteered almost with the start of the war in 1861, but was not accepted as a soldier because of his skin color.[422] "This was a white regiment, and the mustering officer refused to muster Mr. Johnson. Notwithstanding this fact, he went out anyway, and did faithful duty."[423] In June 1861, while the regiment was stationed at Camp Mansfield near Washington D.C., a group of six fugitives came into the camp. "They were one-half of a dozen who had escaped from Elliott Mills, Md., believing, as they did, that if they could gain the Union lines they would be free."[424] Early in the war many Union officers returned any escapees to the slave hunters rather than deal with the legal complications they represented.[425] Taking the initiative, Johnson and some of the other free blacks in camp chose to shelter the escapees. Slave hunters subsequently arrived, and all the African Americans in the camp were ordered to turn out for inspection by the camp's colonel. Remaining in his cooking tent, Johnson refused the order, even pulling a gun on a captain to emphasize his point. After the officer left to find reinforcements against the defiant cook, Johnson went to the parade grounds and appealed for help. "I was not sure but that my personal liberty was in jeopardy, and in a loud voice entreated

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[422] William H. Johnson, *Autobiography of Dr. William Henry Johnson* (Albany: New York, 1900): 162.

[423] Johnson wrote his autobiography in third-person tense. Later, when it became possible, Johnson was accepted as a soldier in the Connecticut Eighth. William H. Johnson, *Autobiography of Dr. William Henry Johnson* (Albany: New York, 1900): 162.

[424] William H. Johnson, *Autobiography of Dr. William Henry Johnson* (Albany: New York, 1900): 163.

[425] It was not until March 13, 1862, that Congress passed the article of war forbidding military officers from returning fugitives to rebel slave holders, under penalty of court martial. For more information on the incremental acceptance of African Americans in the military during the Civil War, see James Paradis, "Flexing the Sable Arm: Emancipation, Black Troops, and Hard War," in *Beyond Combat: Essays in Military History* in *Honor of Russell F. Weigley*. (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society) Edward C. Longacre and Theodore J. Zeman, eds. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2007): 6.

protection for myself and for the slaves."[426] Backed by widespread support within the regiment, Johnson faced down the slave hunters during a confrontation in the colonel's tent, and the southerners were ejected, empty-handed, from the camp. "We had the satisfaction of being able to carry to Connecticut with us on our return north, not only these six fugitives from Elliot Mills, but nine others taken from Falls Church and Upton Hill, Virginia."

It is impossible to know from this barebones sketch why Johnson's appeal worked, but it may have been because of the colonel's sympathy for the escapees, Johnson's cooking skills, or because of his eloquence as a public speaker. Regardless, Johnson was clearly recognized within the camp, and respected well enough that the men of the regiment were willing to support him over the Southern slave catchers, and one of their own officers.

Of course, a cook's duties do not define the man, but the emotional content of the work, what the meal or work represents, can transfer significance to the person preparing it. The symbolic importance of those duties includes those of life-giver, health-preserver, and nurturer, all symbols tied into memories of home, family, and security. In Roland Barthes' now classic *Mythologies*, he explains that there lies a distinction between denotation, which can be seen as a scientific description; and connotation, the social, cultural and value-laden description of a thing.[427] Human emotions attach meanings to objects or practices that may seem irrational, but some of the most profound feelings originate in memories of food and cooking.

It may be that William Johnson's duties as cook gave him sufficient social status among the men in the camp to demand and receive their support in opposing the slave catchers. Johnson,

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[426] William H. Johnson, *Autobiography of Dr. William Henry Johnson* (Albany: New York, 1900): 164-165.
[427] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Annette Laver and Richard Howard, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012).

like Sam, Hercules Posey, and even William Mack Lee, benefitted from the positive association with food. Although it is possible that Sam, Johnson, Tubman, and men and women like them would have succeeded without their culinary expertise, it was their cooking that earned them the attention and respect they deserved, putting them in the position to make a positive impact on the war.

Not all African American cooks served Union meals, of course. Bell Irvin Wiley estimates he read 4,000 letters from Confederate soldiers to create his seminal study *The Life of Johnny Reb*. In it, he notes the frequent mention of body servants, both those who were owned by the family, and those hired to take care of the Southern soldiers. "The usual practice was for a single slave to minister to his own master or to a mess of from four to eight men; in the latter case all members 'chipped in' to bear the cost of his maintenance."[428] The work consisted of cooking, cleaning, and washing. If the owner was in the cavalry, it would also include taking care of the horses. Foraging to supplement supplies became part of the body servants' skill sets, as well.[429] Philip Meredith, mentioned earlier, was bought by the Lee family, but he went to war with R.E. Lee and finally manumitted in 1863.

Captain Ezekiel John Ellis took an enslaved man named Stewart or Stuart with him when he became an officer with the Louisiana 16th Volunteers.[430] In his diary, Ellis praises Stewart for taking care of him during illnesses, and for finding food when it was scarce. "I was sick at this place with fever but my faithful old negro servant Stewart supplied me with many delicacies and

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[428] Bell Irvin Wiley. *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press): 327.
[429] Bell Irvin Wiley. *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press): 328.
[430] The spelling of Stuart/Stewart's name is inconsistent in the E. John Ellis Diary, February-March, 1865., Vol. I, Mss. 2795, *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library (Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana).

though weak I was able to cross the river about the 20th of Aug. and march 8 miles to Mocassin Gap in Waldron's Ridge where our division was concentrated prior to our march for Kentucky."[431] While in Tennessee, Stewart found the food they needed, sometimes by obtaining it from local women. "Lt. McFeely and myself messed together while Stuart, while foraging and by the favor which he found in the eyes of a certain sable divinity... we had plenty of the very best of good things. I do not not desire to live on better fare than we had while we remained at Eagleville."[432] Like his Northern counterpart Woodcock, Ellis benefited from his servant's skills at foraging and forging relationships with the local enslaved population.

Also like Woodcock's relationship with Sam, Ellis did care for Stewart, at least enough to see to his physical needs. Ellis was stricken with pneumonia around April 1863, and tended by Stewart and an old farmer and his wife in a shack in the hills of Tennessee. Stewart then contracted the illness himself. "I could get no assistance for him, I gave a neighboring woman $1 per pod for a doze of two dozen red pepper pods. I gave Stewart terrible and frequent draughts of pepper tea and whiskey — the only medicine at hand. The disease succumbed to the treatment and Stewart gradually recovered. A negro man of Lt. Williams was seized with pneumonia in camp, was brought out to 'my house' where he died."[433] Ellis successfully reciprocated Stewart's nursing to the best of his abilities, an action Williams was not willing to do.

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[431] E. John Ellis Diary, Feb-March, 1865., Vol. I, Mss. 2795, *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library (Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana): 25.
[432] E. John Ellis Diary, Feb-March, 1865., Vol. I, Mss. 2795, *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library (Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana): 30.
[433] E. John Ellis Diary, Feb-March, 1865., Vol. I, Mss. 2795, *Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections*, Hill Memorial Library (Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana): 38.

This fits with what Wiley also found in his research. "The relation between master and body servant was usually marked by genuine affection... When Confederate masters were ill, they were nursed by their black companions, and when the latter were stricken, they sometimes were attended by their owners with the tenderest solicitude."[434] Enslaved body servants also had the opportunity to earn money doing jobs for other men in the camps, and generally stayed at the rear, away from enemy fire. Only officers like Ellis were allowed to keep their servants after the second or third years of the war because of food shortages. When merely feeding soldiers became a challenge, the additional resources necessary for servants became an untenable luxury.[435]

Sherman claims it was two young black cooks who influenced his attitudes about people of color and their potential as citizens. Isaac and Aaron were the servants of General A.J. Smith and Colonel R.B. Mason, two southern U.S. Army officers who took their African American enslaved servants with them to California during the Gold Rush of 1849.[436] Then-Lieutenant William T. Sherman and his fellow junior officers were forced to do their own domestic work because of the lack of servants available.[437] Although slavery was illegal in California, Isaac and Aaron remained with the Smith and Mason families when the other servants fled, a fact which Sherman found admirable. "Isaac was cook, chambermaid, and every thing, thoughtless of

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[434] Bell Irvin Wiley. *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press): 328.
[435] Bell Irvin Wiley. *The Life of Johnny Reb* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press): 328.
[436] Sherman, William T., and Charles Royster. *William Tecumseh Sherman: Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman*. (New York: *Library of America*, 1990). Of course, this is the same William T. Sherman who achieved the rank of Major-General in the Union Army, and became famous for his March to the Sea through Georgia in 1864, and his subsequent march through the Carolinas in 1865. Originally published shortly after the end of the Civil War, the memoirs were updated in 1875, and again in 1885.
[437] Sherman, William T., and Charles Royster. *William Tecumseh Sherman: Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman*. (New York: *Library of America*, 1990): 59. Sherman was the cook for the mess of four junior officers.

himself, and struggling, out of the slimmest means to compound a breakfast for a large and hungry family," he recalled.[438] Sherman claimed it was their steadfastness in the face of tremendous temptation to seize for themselves freedom and riches in the gold fields that influenced him later in the Civil War, when he had the power to improve the lives of millions of African Americans. "I confess that the fidelity of Colonel Mason's boy 'Aaron,' and of General Smith's boy 'Isaac,' at a time when every white man laughed at promises as something to be broken, has given me a kindly feeling of respect for the negroes, and makes me hope that they will find an honorable 'status' in the jumble of affairs in which we now live."[439] Sherman's behavior toward people of color is best described as patronizing and at worst inhumane, and no one would argue that he saw the former enslaved as his social equals. However, whether that latter point was a product of pure racism or Sherman's ego remains a valid question, since Sherman saw few white men as his equals, either.

Regardless of the degree of his prejudices, Sherman spoke out against slavery in the 1850s while serving as the superintendent of a military academy in Louisiana, and urged compassion for freedmen in the 1860s during the war.[440] If we choose to take Sherman at his word, the legacy of Aaron and Isaac towers over that of normal cooks because the respect they garnered in Sherman's eyes influenced his later orders as regards the freedom, autonomy, and reparations for newly freed African Americans. Again, his actions speak clearer than his words.

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[438] Sherman, William T., and Charles Royster. William Tecumseh Sherman: Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman. (New York: Library of America, 1990): 66.
[439] Sherman, William T., and Charles Royster. *William Tecumseh Sherman: Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman*. (New York: *Library of America*, 1990): 66.
[440] Sherman, William T., and Charles Royster. William Tecumseh Sherman: Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman. (New York: Library of America, 1990): 149.

We know that as Sherman made his famous marches through Georgia and the Carolinas he reacted toward freedmen with a degree of patronizing tolerance, telling them of their freedom, and reasoning with them to a certain degree.[441] Indeed, it may have been that prior relationship that prompted him to enter into discussions with the local ministers in Savannah, which resulted in Special Field Order No. 15, the famous "Forty Acres" allotment of formerly held plantation property given over to freedmen. Like the food seizures, giving land to the formerly enslaved served multiple purposes for Sherman: It punished Confederate land owners and sympathizers, encouraged the freedmen to join the Union Army, and perhaps most importantly, it relieved the Union Army of the burden of providing for thousands of refugees, many of whom were following his army and eating their supplies.[442] According to historian Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the decision to meet with local African American leaders was proposed by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who came to Savannah to see Sherman after his march to Savannah. The two Union representatives met with twenty Methodist and Baptist ministers of black congregations. It was these preachers, not Sherman, who asked for land, the means with which to provide for themselves, according to Gates.[443] However, like much of what took place in the war, the Union army made the wish reality when Sherman issued the order. If Sherman really was inspired by

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[441] Sherman, William T., and Charles Royster. *William Tecumseh Sherman: Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman*. (New York: Library of America, 1990). Examples of Sherman dealing with new freedmen can be found in his account of his taking over Memphis (285); when he asked them to remain on their plantations and let his men move more quickly without being burdened by refugees (657-8); and his reception by freedmen (1050). His behavior seems patronizing now, but at the time it was likely seen as liberal compared with the overwhelming racism and classism in both the Union and Confederacy.

[442] Barton Myers, "Sherman's Field Order No. 15," *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (29 September 2020).

[443] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "The Truth Behind '40 Acres and a Mule,'" https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/the-truth-behind-40-acres-and-a-mule/

Although Lincoln approved the order, his successor Andrew Johnson rescinded the land grant in the fall, about ten months after it was issued, and returned the land to the former owners.

the examples of Isaac and Aaron as men worthy of respect, then their historical impact may overwhelm that of any other cooks of that era. Like Tubman, they stand apart not because of the food they prepared, but because of the example they set as people of honor and courage who happened to be cooks.

CHAPTER 6

PREPARING

Two days after the Civil War shifted in favor of the Union, Larkin Byron wrote this uncle the Major about his experiences at Vicksburg. Although the men had to float their cannons through the low, wet territory along the river they never left their supply wagons behind. "The commpany wagons must go along as we can't do much down here without we get a little bread, bacon and a plenty of coffee. The latter is the sine qua non of a soldiers existence, they will part with anything before their coffee."[444] Larkin is exaggerating about the coffee, but he knew as well as any officer that soldiers forced to go long without rations were less capable, less disciplined, and more likely to desert.

In this interlude chapter, I hope to explain some logistics that made food and food-related hygiene substantially more challenging in the Civil War. The purpose is not only to expose the difficulties but also to reveal why food preparation and the preparers garnered so much attention during the conflict.

In the twenty-first century, military field rations are delivered in pre-packaged shelf-stable parcels, easy to heat up and eat. Considerable efforts go into offering variety and taste, even if the meals often fall short of that goal. On modern military bases, the provisions are prepared by specialists trained in food safety with good equipment and instructions. Men and

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[444] Byron A. Larkin to Major James McNeill, July 5, 1863, from Camp Kegwin, near Big Black River bridge, Mississippi. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2003.348.

women in uniform seldom cook for themselves except as a form of entertainment, and they eat together in shelters at tables.

On average, a well-maintained fighting man in the American Civil War consumed three pounds of protein and carbohydrates per day, according to U. S. Major-General William T. Sherman.[445] The men were issued rations by the pound or bushel in a raw or preserved form weekly or semi-weekly. Amounts and exact types of rations could vary by army, year, locale, and season. Standard army rations consisted of carbohydrates (corn meal, wheat flour, crackers or hard tack, bread, potatoes, sweet potatoes, or rice), proteins (salt pork, salt beef, and beans), salt, and coffee. Confederates had a shortage of coffee, but often offered tea or chicory instead. Supplements might be dried or fresh vegetables and fruit. It was not out of a desire to provide variety that the army operated on the equivalency system, but out of necessity. Thus, the official ration might call for three-fourths of a pound of pork, but substituted with bacon, or one and quarter pounds of fresh beef in lieu of salt beef. Supplies also depended on the seasons. For example, summertime offered more fresh vegetables and fruit like squash, new potatoes, corn, peaches, and berries. However, because the higher temperatures in Southern summers took their toll on all ingredients, fresh meat, dairy and grains were rare in warm months. Cooler temperatures meant soldiers could sometimes obtain butter, milk, fresh beef and pork, as well as "soft" breads that relied on dairy and white flour.

When supplies were low, they also stole chickens, ate raw corn off the stalks, or dug up sweet potatoes. The more fortunate or resourceful men had a stool or stump on which to sit while

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[445] William T. Sherman, "Conclusions: Military Lessons of the War," from *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 2167

eating, but most sat on the ground, and unless it was raining they ate outdoors next to an open campfire, which is where their food was cooked. In the early part of the war, the army experimented with training soldiers how to cook food safely, but it was a short-lived effort.

At the outset of the war, the standard day's "camp" ration for both Confederate and Union soldiers was the same, that is, twelve ounces of pork or bacon, or 20 ounce of fresh or salt beef; about one and a half pounds of soft bread or flour, one pound of hard bread or one and 1/4 pounds of cornmeal. Each soldier got one share of beans, rice or hominy, green coffee, tea, sugar, candles, soap, and molasses. They would also be issued desiccated (dried) vegetables, dried fruit, pickles, pickled cabbage, or vinegar. Marching rations were one pound of hard bread, three-quarters of a pound of salt pork or one and a quarter pounds of fresh meat, plus coffee, sugar, and salt. Marching rations featured more dried or preserved foods, hard bread instead of soft bread or flour, for example, and dried beef or pork rather than fresh. For the most part, Union soldiers ate better than their Southern counterparts, not necessarily because the North had more food, but because of poor transportation and logistical issues in the South.[446]

In the spring of 1862, the Confederacy cut the average soldier's rations, and then cut them further in 1863. The reductions in Confederate sustenance were controversial because the men wrote home about being hungry. Confederate generals P.T. Beauregard and Robert E. Lee

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[446] Transportation issues have been blamed for Confederate shortfalls since the war ended. Some modern studies on how it affected the food supplies include Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011); William G. Thomas *The Iron Way:Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2011); Thomas F. Army, Jr. *Engineering Victory: How Technology Won the Civil War* (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016); and R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

defied the commissary general's orders regarding cuts and continued with the regular rations.[447] Beauregard cited scurvy as his reasoning, and Lee asserted that hungry men made for straggling in the ranks.[448] The generals argued against reducing calories from the standpoint of military effectiveness, stating that it would impact the physical strength or fighting abilities of the troops. Unspoken but certainly recognized by savvy leaders was the fact that hungry men who felt weakness after marching or fighting also suffered more from low morale and had higher desertion rates.

Experienced generals recognized that men who felt unsupported and thus betrayed would quickly lose their enthusiasm to offer up their lives for the cause. The Civil War soldier's unwritten social contract states that a man is offering up his loyalty, risking bodily and mental health, and even sacrificing his life, for the nation. In exchange, the government provides him with food, clothing, shelter, weapons, and takes care of his family if he cannot do so. These disappointed expectations led to massive desertions within the Confederate Army. One-third of the Confederate army was listed as absent in November 1863, while two-thirds were absent by the end of the war. In the four months after October 1864, the Confederate War Department estimated that 72,000 soldiers had deserted.[449] Despite an escalating blockade, and an advancing Union army that targeted the South's fragile industrial efforts, the Confederacy never ran out of

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[447] Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Confederate Commissary General: Lucius Bellinger Northrop and the Subsistence Bureau of the Southern Army* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Co., 1996): 145, 169.

[448] Amusingly, although that was his excuse for giving his men better food supplies, Beauregard's official reports do not mention a scurvy outbreak. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Confederate Commissary General: Lucius Bellinger Northrop and the Subsistence Bureau of the Southern Army* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Co., 1996): 139.

[449] Paul D. Escott, *Rethinking the Civil War Era: Directions for Research* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2018): 26.

bullets, cannons, or guns. And technically, the Confederacy never ran out of food, either. However, train transportation was poorly managed, and coordination never got the level where it provided consistent and reliable supplies to the fighting fronts. Roads were mostly dirt, so any rain affected their ability to handle supply transport, and ports were negatively impacted by the Union blockade. Southern soldiers too often had to rely on foraged green corn or wormy hardtack for their next meals. These efforts by generals Beauregard and Lee to satisfy the men's hunger demonstrated support for the fighting men and aided limited retention of their loyalty.

Supplies were not the only logistical nightmare, of course. Cooking out of doors, with no refrigeration, no training, and no knowledge of germ theory meant campsites rife with disease. All they could do was try to keep clean, whatever that meant to them. Union Cavalry Captain Albert Woodcock wrote to his wife in 1863 about their efforts to stop disease. "All the boys are now busy cleaning up camp. The Col. says that we shall keep clean that cholera shall not enter his camp by reason of filth or dirt in camp or among the men."[450]

Most officers, and many soldiers understood the common-sense advantages of hygiene practices. Unfortunately, cleaning, like cooking, was not seen as a plum duty. Outside of the military, domestic chores were typically performed by servants or women.[451] In the army, however, personal servants were normally reserved for officers.[452] The average private or non-

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[450] Albert Woodcock to his wife, August 1, 1863. Woodcock (Albert) Papers, 1863-1865. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.043.97.

[451] Jessamyn Neuhaus explains that domestic help was common by the late 1700s, with enslaved African Americans doing this kind of work in the South, and native-born or immigrant poor doing the work in Northern households, which is how the Irish "biddy" became a common stereotype. Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003):8.

[452] The notable exception being Confederate soldiers from wealthy families who took enslaved servants with them into the army.

commissioned officer making between $13 and $22 per month lacked the ready cash to regularly hire out laundering and food preparation. Faced with the alternatives of hunger and filth, soldiers learned these necessary skills, even if they had mixed feelings about the process. While it is impossible to know how many men experienced social anxiety about the potential for ridicule for doing this kind of work, it does pose an interesting challenge for historians of both the military and food studies: Did social stigma prevent men from learning to cook, and could that have contributed to illnesses or death from food poisoning?

The physical question — whether they sickened themselves inadvertently — has received the most attention from medical historians.[453] We know the American Civil War preceded germ theory, modern notions of hygiene, and medical diagnostics. Unfortunately, that same lack of reliable pathology presents a significant barrier to answering underlying questions about sickness and health, and how notions of gender might play into the issues. For example, records show that hundreds of thousands of Civil War soldiers went to the medical tents and hospitals for "diarrhea," but doctors lacked the scientific knowledge to determine the exact cause or how to treat it effectively. That disconnect, of not being able to pin down exactly what caused the illness, makes it difficult to also assign blame. In a review of Union medical records, Jeffrey Sartin argues that one major cause was the lack of hygiene in food preparation along with poor

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[453] Examples include Shauna Devine, *Learning from the Wounded: The Civil War and the Rise of American Medical Science* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Ira Rutkow, *Bleeding Blue and Gray: Civil War Surgery and the Evolution of American Medicine* (New York: Random House, 2005); Jeffrey S. Sartin. "Infectious Diseases during the Civil War: The Triumph of the 'Third Army,'" *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 16, No. 4 (April, 1993); Paul Steiner, *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865,* (Springfield, Ill.:Charles C. Thomas, 1968).

camp sanitary practices.[454] Sartin agrees with pathologist Paul Steiner, who argues that microorganisms waged biological warfare against both sides in the conflict, and neither army had any defenses.[455]

Including infected wounds, an estimated 275,000 Union men died from infections out of 2.2 million who served in the Union Army; and among Confederates, the fatalities from infections added up to 164,000 out of 750,000, according to Steiner. "Moreover, the morbidity was immense: 6.4 million separate medical diagnoses — mostly infections — were reported among Union forces, and 220,000 men were discharged for reasons of chronic disability."[456] Dysentery and diarrhea were the chief causes of death, and were devastatingly successful in bringing down soldiers during the Civil War in comparison to later wars, including the Franco-Prussian War, Spanish-American War, and World War I. "The admission rate for the specific fevers and diseases of the intestine (including dysentery and diarrhea) was twenty-nine times as high in 1861-1862 as in 1917-18 and the death rate was 258 times as high."[457] Calling disease the "Third Army" in the war, Sartin claims that illnesses extended the war by at least two years.[458]

Dirty water, not necessarily bad food, was likely the chief instigator of medical problems, he theorizes. "The tough, stoic Johnny Rebs and Billy Yanks learned to put up with rancid meat,

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[454] Jeffrey S. Sartin. "Infectious Diseases during the Civil War: The Triumph of the 'Third Army,'" *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 16, No. 4 (April, 1993): 580.
[455] Paul Steiner. *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865* (Springfield, Ill.:Charles C. Thomas, 1968): 4.
[456] Jeffrey S. Sartin. "Infectious Diseases during the Civil War: The Triumph of the 'Third Army,'" *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 16, No. 4 (April, 1993): 580
[457] Paul Steiner. Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865, Springfield, Ill.:Charles C. Thomas (1968): 4.
[458] Jeffrey S. Sartin. "Infectious Diseases during the Civil War: The Triumph of the 'Third Army,'" Clinical Infectious Diseases, 16, No. 4 (April, 1993): 580.

polluted water, and latrine filth... (But) Of all the adversities that Union and Confederate soldiers confronted, none was more deadly or more prevalent than contaminated water."[459] Clean water for troops in the field is foundational. They used it to drink, of course, but soldiers also washed their faces, hands, and bodies in the water. Salt pork, their primary meat, was often soaked in water before cooking. Beans and dessicated vegetables were rehydrated with water and Stews and soups were water-based. Finally, all their utensils, pans, plates, forks, knives and spoons, were washed in that same water source. If the pond, stream, or lake was bacteria-laden, it would infect everything. Contamination arose from feces getting into the drinking water, either from poorly-situated latrines, or soldiers who relieved themselves too close to camp — afraid of being shot with their pants literally around their ankles — or those who could not manage a long trek because of diarrhea. Regardless of ignorance, laziness, fear, or accident, fecal matter easily transmitted dysentery, cholera, and typhoid to unsuspecting victims.[460] Dirty water was hardly a mystery to the men. Union Officer Lewis Crandell writes in his 1863 journal: "Sick all night & all day on acct of drinking the miserable water."[461] He remains in his tent for two more days, passing the time by reading Tennyson and playing chess.

In a Civil War fatality study, historian Michael R. Gilchrist found that diseases killed twice as many Union soldiers as all other causes, including battles, wounds, accidents,

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[459] Jeffrey S. Sartin. "Infectious Diseases during the Civil War: The Triumph of the 'Third Army,'" Clinical Infectious Diseases, 16, No. 4 (April, 1993): 581.
[460] Jeffrey S. Sartin. "Infectious Diseases during the Civil War: The Triumph of the 'Third Army,'" Clinical Infectious Diseases, 16, No. 4 (April, 1993): 581.
[461] Lewis H. Crandell diary, August 18, 1863, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1997.049.

drownings, murders, suicides, and executions.[462] In some cases, a specific illness, like typhoid, yellow fever, measles or smallpox, is listed in the medical records, but the reliability of a nineteenth-century medical diagnosis remains dubious. For example, the unhelpfully vague symptom "diarrhea" was a widespread and fatal problem, and death records listed that as the cause. However, modern doctors would call that a symptom of another underlying problem, like dysentery or typhoid. For example, Jimmy Kelly wrote home that sixteen of his fellows had died in Camp Butterfield, Halls Hill, Virginia. "I can never forget those who had drilled with me daily. One especialy with whom I was very intimate his name was Addy J. Fellows. He died with the brain fever in Great Pain… he was sick only seven days he was not sensible only a few moments at a time. he recognized me only once or twice."[463] The vague diagnosis "brain fever" could have been anything from meningitis to encephalitis.

Experts generally assume that statistics were similar if not worse for men in the Confederate army. The lack of records from the Confederacy makes examining those deaths frustratingly elusive because Confederate records were often lost or destroyed before they could be preserved. Fortunately, some individual doctors kept their wartime papers. The records of Confederate hospital administrator Dr. Samuel Hollingsworth Stout, now housed at the University of Texas-Austin's Center for American History, confirms that rebels suffered the same types of illnesses as Union soldiers. One of Stout's hospital ledgers tracks individual cases of soldiers as they gradually waste away from diarrhea while being "treated" with chicken soup,

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[462] Michael R. Gilchrist. "Disease & Infection in the American Civil War." *The American Biology Teacher* 60, no. 4 (1998): 258.

[463] Jimmy H. Kelly to "dear friend Jennie," January 8, 1862, from Camp Butterfield, Halls Hill, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection,* Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.281.16.

toast, flax-seed tea, rice custard, and coffee.[464] Unfortunately, the diarrhea could have been caused or exacerbated by diet, water contamination, living conditions, human contagion, or insect-borne infections. But which of these posed the greater threat remains a mystery.

The death of nine-year-old Willie Sherman highlights the helplessness of medical science at the time. The son of Union Major-General William T. Sherman, Willie traveled with his father on campaign in the summer and fall of 1863, becoming the little mascot of the corps, indulged and watched over by 60,000 over-protective guardians. In a letter to General Phil Sheridan, Sherman recalled how quickly his son picked up the details of army life.

> It was wonderful the avidity with which he gathered all the details of my army. Every division Brigade, Regmt, battery. Everything belonging to my corps became as well known to him as to me, and he seemed to inherit an instinct I have of going across the country direct to the object regardless of beaten roads or paths. Alone and with the full confidence of a man, seemingly without fear would he ride everywhere, & engage in manly conversation with anybody...his mind followed every scout or picket that came to my tent for orders or to make reports.[465]

However, that autumn Willie began complaining of diarrhea then quickly developed a high fever and died within a week of falling ill, even with three doctors attending him. Sherman wrote to Grant of his devastation. "Falling as it has so suddenly & unexpectedly on the one I most prised on earth has affected me more than any other misfortune could."[466] Willie likely succumbed to typhoid caused by unsanitary camp practices, although Sherman attributed it to the

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[464] Samuel Hollingsworth Stout. *Prescription and diet register*, Aug.7-Oct.1, 1864, Center for American History, University of Texas-Austin, Folder 65, Box 409.

[465] William Sherman to Phillip Sheridan, October 26, 1863, from headquarters near Iuka, Mississippi. *Pearce Civil War Collection,* Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No.2005.118.03. In that same letter, Sherman reveals his regrets for having his family come visit him in camp that season. "At times a feeling of reproach creeps over me for want of judgement or proper feeling in calling for my family to go to that country in that dread season, yet again it was the only lull I could forsee in the long bloody future before me. Now I would recall the act, but it is too late."

[466] William Tecumseh Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, October 4, 1863. *Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, Vol. 9: July 7 - December 31, 1863*, John Y. Simon, ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979): 274.

"dread season," and says he and his wife Ellen did all that could be done to save the boy, including the full resources of medical science at the time. Common soldiers who could not count on that same level of personalized medical attention died in the tens of thousands. Beyond the personal suffering, these wasting diseases sorely impacted military effectiveness. Nearly half of Grant's men reported incapacitating diarrhea or dysentery during the Siege of Vicksburg, the longest protracted engagement of the war, which stretched from May 19 to July 4, 1863.[467] It is impossible to know how quickly the campaign might have been with a full and healthy Union force in the field.

Unfortunately the Civil War preceded germ theory, the cornerstone of modern medicine. The findings of Louis Pasteur regarding bacterium and their dangers did not become well known until the 1870s, and Joseph Lister published his breakthrough study of how to prevent post-surgical infection in 1867, two years after the war's end.[468] Sadly, practical knowledge of hygiene did exist, but it was not always heeded. In his book on Civil War cookery, William C. Davis points to an experiment by patriotic hotelier James M. Sanderson to teach soldiers of the 15th New York Infantry Volunteers how to prepare healthy meals in the field. The results were phenomenal, with a "consequent reduction in the cases of diarrhea from twenty a day to just five."[469] Unfortunately, the experiment was not carried out large-scale. It would take the Spanish-American War, wherein 94 percent of the 5,462 casualties came from disease, for the

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[467] Jeffrey S. Sartin. "Infectious Diseases during the Civil War: The Triumph of the 'Third Army,'" *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 16, No. 4 (April, 1993): 581

[468] Lindsey Fitzharris. *The Butchering Art: Joseph Lister's Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2017).

[469] William C. Davis. *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and the Gray*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books (2003): 8.

U.S. Army to make hygiene and safe food preparation a priority. Following that brief 1897 war, Congress ordered an investigation of the health threats during conflict. The Dodge Commission, led by Majors Walter Reed, Edward Shakespeare, and Victor C. Vaughn, recommended a new curriculum on hygiene at West Point to make officers more responsible and knowledgeable of sanitation in camps.[470] Their recommendations also included substantive changes to food preparation and water cleanliness. The effectiveness of the Dodge Commission shows adaptability and willingness to change, and it also demonstrates an ability to address military health issues in a scientific manner. Of course, these lessons came thirty years after the Civil War, but they had a strong impact during World War I, when fewer men died of simple, preventable illnesses. The rate of deaths by disease was about 6 percent during World War I, compared to nearly 30 percent during the Civil War.[471] Bacteriology had a firm foothold by 1914.[472]

Only a handful of American doctors trained abroad prior to the Civil War, according to Kathryn Shively Meier's environmental study. Those few physicians attempted to introduce scientific principles of modern medicine, but to little avail. "Despite the fact that a growing

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[470] Charles F. Howlett, "Indian Wars and the Spanish American War," in *Health Under Fire: Medical Care During America's Wars*, James Arnold, ed. (Westport: ABC-CLIO, 2014): 113. That same Dodge Commission also looked into allegations of foul canned or tinned meat and found that while it tasted terrible it was not defective or illness-causing

[471] Although the fatalities were lower during the Spanish American War, the rate of infections was actually higher due to outbreaks of typhus in the training camps caused by criminally poor sanitation practices. Of the 108,000 volunteers, about 21,000 came down with typhoid, and 1,590 died. Of the 22,000 who went overseas, malaria, yellow fever, and dysentery ravaged their ranks, rendering an estimated 75 percent unable to fight. Vincent Cirillo, *Bullets and Bacilli: The Spanish American War and Military Medicine* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

[472] Hugh Pennington, "The Impact of Infectious Diseases in War Time: A Look Back at WW1," *Future Microbiology* (Vol. 14, Issue 3): 165.

number of American doctors attended medical school abroad, these discoveries were in their early stages and would have limited impacts on treatment during the Civil War."[473]

This is not to say that Civil War-era military leaders ignored proven science. One scientific advance that found widespread acceptance in the Civil War armies, both North and South, was the smallpox vaccine. Army commanders who had witnessed its effectiveness, even if they did not understand why it worked, ordered soldiers to submit to the procedure.[474] Medical historian Michael Gilchrist asserts that better discipline would have saved lives, even without bacteriology. "Many of the disease cases could have been prevented had either side established meaningful sanitation practices from the onset." Unlike microbiology, sanitation was not an unknown science. Examples of practical nineteenth-century solutions include digging latrines farther from drinking water sources, and moving slaughter pens away from food preparation sites.[475] Cleanliness in the home regarding bedding, water, and food, were all well-documented as disease preventatives in the Victorian era, and promoted as effective by famous reformers such as Edwin Chadwick, Harriett Martineau, Charles Dickens, and Florence Nightingale.[476] Among the middle classes, cleanliness was believed to be crucial to health of the body and

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[473] Kathryn Shively Meier. *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013): 29.

[474] Paul Steiner. *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 161-1865*, Springfield, Ill.:Charles C. Thomas (1968): 4-5

[475] Michael R. Gilchrist. "Disease & Infection in the American Civil War." *The American Biology Teacher* 60, no. 4 (1998): 259.

[476] Meegan Kennedy. "Cleanliness and Medicinal Cheer: Harriet Martineau, the 'People of Bleaburn' and the Sanitary Work of *Household Words*,' in *Victorian Medicine and Popular Culture*, Louise Penner and Tabitha Sparks, eds. (London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015): 42-43.

soul.[477] Nor can we dismiss the spiritual aspect of the equation, since disease was seen as a spiritual and physical evil.

In her study of sanitation in nineteenth-century London, Michelle Allen asserts that sanitary reform was a movement grounded in natural theology from early nineteenth century as a way to address urban life. Diseases and pollution were problems that had to be addressed to restore the divine order, and God's favor.[478] Lemuel Shattuck's 1850 *Report of the Massachusetts Sanitary Commission* blames disease and mortality on unclean and immoral conditions, which threatened the population at large. Reformers in Boston, New York, and other American cities conducted their own studies with similar results.[479] In the decades before the war, some urban centers, including Washington D.C. and New York, undertook large-scale civic projects to provide clean water free of human and animal waste. Sanitary practices were in use, although the scientific principles remained elusive.

Their impact on the war came through some educated military leaders on both sides who connected dirty water to poor health, and recognized it as a transmitter of diarrhea and typhoid fever. Water contamination sources included mineral deposits, offal (including that from food

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[477] Meier's *Nature's Civil War* attributes this phenomena to the reforms of the Second Great Awakening of the 1820s and 1830s, which linked health to positive thinking, ethical behavior, natural remedies, diet and exercise (2013):29-30. The link is certainly clear in Edwin Chadwick's *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1843).

[478] Michelle Allen, *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008): 16. Here, Allen is echoing assertions of the link between cleanliness and morality by Graeme Davison and Christopher Hamlin. For more on these connections, see G. Davison, "The City as a Natural System: Theories of Urban Society in Early Nineteenth Century Britain" in *Pursuit of Urban History*, Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe, eds. (London: Edward Arnold, 1983); and C. Hamlin, "Providence and Putrefaction: Victorian Sanitarians and the Natural Theology of Health and Disease," *Victorian Studies* 28 (1985): 390-391.

[479] Institute of Medicine (U.S.), Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health. *The Future of Public Health*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 1988): 5, 3.

preparation), and human and animal waste.[480] Without any knowledge of germs, troops relied on what their senses could tell them. The miasma theory, which was popular until the early part of the twentieth century, linked disease to bad smells or vapors (miasmas). Based on this theory, a common preventative for sicknesses like tuberculosis was fresh air. Military medical historian James Arnold explains: "Most physicians thought sanitation important, but, because microorganisms as a source of disease were as yet unknown, it was with the mistaken rationale that bad air (miasma) was responsible for most illnesses."[481] The smell test was so widely accepted that Edwin Chadwick cites miasmas as a cause of human deaths in his 1842 report to Parliament on illnesses in London.[482] The delayed burial of dead bodies, slaughterhouse run-offs, and open sewage created harmful miasmas, he explained in his report, and Chadwick theorized that elimination of the "noxious influences," could stop epidemics of typhoid, cholera, and other diseases.[483] His recommendation to clean up these sites and stop runoff into drinking water was correct, even if his underlying assumptions were wrong.

However, even uneducated soldiers in the field grasped that water that smelled and tasted like sewage was not healthy. In a letter reflecting the miasmic beliefs of the era, Union soldier Thomas H. Capern described the conditions in Confederate-run Libby Prison near Richmond: "Our privy sink and wash trough adjoined the other. In the same room where we were congregated. The stench was fearful. Everything was handy but too handy for our comfort or

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[480] Kathryn Shively Meier. *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (2013): 53.
[481] James R. Arnold. *Health Under Fire: Medical Care During America's Wars* (Westport: ABC-CLI, 2014): 59-60.
[482] Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1843): 10.
[483] Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1843): 10-12.

health. For the air being constantly loaded with the noxious gases arising from the sink was rendered thereby highly pestilential in its character."[484] Modern science tells us that it was the germs in the water, not the smell, that threatened their health, but Capern's concerns were valid. Unfortunately, because soldiers based their cleaning efforts on the miasma principles, they incorrectly focused on what their senses could tell them, not the microbial sources of disease. "The chief reliance for protection was on field sanitation and hygiene," which was "ineffective because they were based on physical and chemical concepts of cleanliness rather than on microbiological ones."[485] In other words, they addressed the smell rather than correcting the underlying problem.

Treatment for illnesses, regardless of cause, were often equally ineffective. Ill soldiers benefited most from getting out of crowded camps for their recoveries, which could be difficult. Environmental historian Meier argues that Civil War soldiers allowed to seek their own treatments fared better than those receiving professional medical attention. "Self-care was more effective in keeping soldiers fit than the official army systems, particularly in 1862, the first full calendar year of the war."[486] Self-care meant leaving camp with or without permission, finding healthier quarters, cleaner water sources, and better food. Fortunately, being absent without leave did not mean the same for Civil War soldiers as it does for modern troops. The lack of military hospitals meant men with the financial means would seek out their private homes where they

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[484] Thomas H. Capern, Fourth Regt., N.J. Vols. 1868 manuscript. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2008.005.

[485] Paul E. Steiner, PhD, MD. *Disease in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1968): 5.

[486] Kathryn Shively Meier. *Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013): 2

could expect fresh air (free from miasmas), and to be waited on by a dedicated coterie of amateur nurses, cooks, and stewards. Because these homes were private enterprises dependent on results and reputation for their continued success, the food and cleanliness had to be superior. Since they were geographically closer to home, some Confederate soldiers returned to their mothers and wives for nursing. Even if a soldier could not afford top-tier aid, Meier asserts that removal from the crowd was sometimes enough to allow a soldier the chance to recover. As with disease prevention, where the science lagged in terms of explanations, common sense suggested practical imperfect solutions. Diet made a difference, of course, in the recovery process. Confederate Elijah Jessup wrote home to relate that he had "dispepsy and a camp life dont soot that disease I can tell you." However, he was doing better in Chimrazo Hospital, near Richmond. "I feel better than I did when I come here I hav got milk evry day and some fowl evry day and some corn bredd my bowels is a heap better and my stomach donte burn near as bad as it did."[487]

Common sense and discipline helped some regiments avoid some of the more common illnesses. Then-Lieutenant Austin Wiswall, who commanded the Ninth U.S. Colored Troops, Third Division (10th Corp), praised his men, most of whom had been formerly enslaved, for their self-discipline and cleanliness in camp. "(Never) have I seen since I have been in the Army a more orderly or well behaved lot of men. There is no drinking no gambling and very little profanity among them. And for Cleanliness in Camp and their persons they cannot be

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[487] Elijah S. Jessup to wife Delilah P. Jessup, March 1, 1863, Richmond, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2004.506. That he was feeling better is evident in his wish list of foods that he hoped to enjoy during his impending furlough: "I want some vegetables of all sorts butter and milk and corn bred and cabbage and terneps and Irish potatoes and apples and sider and brandy and soon some spar ribs and back bons and buck wheat bred and some rye bread and honey."

excelled."[488] The primary illnesses in camp seemed to be respiratory, which Wiswall calls "congestive chills."[489]

A few months before the death of his son, Sherman wrote to Grant about the need for the men to share their knowledge of camp sanitation and disease prevention. In this letter to his commander, Sherman explains that he intends to distribute the newest raw recruits among the more established units. He believed that new regiments had massive outbreaks of measles, mumps, diarrhea, and the whole catalogue of diseases because they lacked the experience of older heads.[490] Sherman was operating off real-world experience, and his deductions did have a positive effect, although not for the reasons he thought. The older units did have slightly better knowledge of sanitation, but more importantly, they had already been exposed to measles, mumps, and other common diseases, which meant they were immune to reinfection. The most vulnerable army camps were those crowded full of raw recruits, according to medical scholar James Arnold. "Men from rural areas who had not developed immunities were particularly at risk for such diseases as measles, tonsillar abscesses, and upper respiratory infections. As conditions in camps deteriorated, sanitary shortcomings led to dysentery, typhoid, lice-borne typhus, erysipelas, and scabies."[491] A raw recruit who carried to war a transmittable disease was less of a danger to a camp of veterans who had already been exposed and survived. Sadly, the

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[488] Austin Wiswall to H.L. Hammond, 19 January 1864, Austin Wiswall Papers, 1863-1912, *Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library*, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.
[489] Austin Wiswall to his mother, 4 December 1863, Austin Wiswall Papers, 1863-1912, *Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library*, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.
[490] William T. Sherman to Ulysses S. Grant, June 2, 1863, *Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, Vol. 8: April 1 - July 6, 1863*, John Y. Simon, ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979): 395-396.
[491] James R. Arnold. "American Civil War," in *Health Under Fire: Medical Care During America's Wars*, James Arnold, ed. (Westport: ABC-CLIO, 2014): 64.

incomplete records and lack of microbiological diagnostics make it impossible to know what factors caused the most illnesses and deaths, and whether food poisonings led to those failures.

Although men were initially reluctant to cook because of the gender stigma, they overcame it to develop skills and pride in those skills. Inadequate sanitation, underdeveloped immune systems, badly preserved ingredients, and lack of scientific knowledge all contributed to the problems of disease in the Civil War, as did the initial lack of expertise regarding proper meal preparation. However, it is questionable how much gender-related stigma against cooking caused men to poison themselves and their comrades, at least not in the long term. Cooking became an essential and valued skill and a crucial part of the bonding experience, creating relationships through both the preparation and consumption of each meal. Occasional episodes of overcooking or undercooking a dish are recorded as accidents, but do not seem to have been done out of malice or misplaced superiority. Finally, we must acknowledge that the most obvious reason why amateur cooks took care while preparing food: Because they were equally subject to the outcome. Dishes that smelled bad, tasted bad, or proved inedible were their suppers, too.

CHAPTER 7

BLOCKADING

Master's Mate Charles Tillinghast of the gunboat *Tahoma* wrote to his sweetheart Jennie about the capture of a blockade-runner off the coast of Florida in May 1862. "She was loaded with general cargo, such as Medicines, Powder, Saltpeter, Soap, Brooms &so. Our Tender made three trips to her and brought away her anchor, Cables, Rigging, one hundred corn Brooms, twenty boxes of imported soap, large quantity of French Medicines &so &so."[492] During the pursuit, the vessel got stranded on a sandbar, so the Confederate sailors set fire to it and fled to shore in rowboats. They left behind the ship, its cargo, and a small dog, which was adopted by the tender's captain. What is interesting in the tale is that Tillinghast does not mention any foodstuffs in the cargo, although prices were already climbing in Confederate states for edible supplies. This chapter examines the impact the blockade had on food supplies in the South, as well as other key explanations for food shortages, such as agriculture, train transport, and salt shortages, with an eye toward effectiveness and contributory impact.

Almost from the first day of the Civil War, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln's advisors, led by Winfield Scott, recommended a plan to surround the Confederate states with a naval blockade. The plan called for controlling the Mississippi River, which would divide the Southern states, cutting off the east from the west ones, and preventing Confederate armies and populations from accessing abundant Texas beef and wheat, and Arkansas corn and pork. This

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[492] Charles H. Tillinghast to "Friend Jennie" Kochler, May 4, 1862, off Cedar Key (Florida), *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.084.01. A tender is a transport ship with a shallower draft than a gunboat or steamer such as the *Tahoma*.

so-called Anaconda or Boa Constrictor Strategy raises one of those long-debated Civil War questions, akin to whether the war would have ended in 1861 had General Joseph Johnston been allowed to advance on Washington after Bull Run. Economic historians Brem Bonner and Peter McCord assert that it is a rite of passage for the field. "Historians of the American Civil War are practically obligated to select an interpretation of the blockade and discuss whether or not the cordon of Union ships effectively diminished southern imports and assisted the final collapse of the Confederacy."[493] Rather than rehashing the full argument, it must suffice to say that there were fewer ships coming into Southern ports during the war; less cotton exported to northern and European mills; and imports were more rare and expensive. In 1860, one year before the war, Southern ports hosted 6,000 ships, but in 1861, the first year of the blockade, that number was down to 800.[494] Estimates on how much cotton was smuggled out through the blockade vary widely, ranging from 350,000 bales to about a million.[495] However, by comparing any of these four-year estimates to the 3.8 million bales exported to Europe in 1860, the blockade's impact is evident.[496] Since cotton was the South's primary source of wealth, the negative effect by the blockade on the Confederacy's economy must be acknowledged.[497]

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[493] M. Brem Bonner and Peter McCord. "Reassessment of the Union Blockade's Effectiveness in the Civil War," North Carolina Historical Review, 88, No. 4 (Oct 2011): 375.

[494] Samuel Negus. "A Notorious Nest of Offense: Neutrals, Belligerents, and Union Jails in Civil War Blockade Running, *Civil War History*, 56, No. 4 (Dec. 2010): 355.

[495] Stanley Lebergott, "Through the Blockade: The Profitability and Extent of Cotton Smuggling, 1861-1865," *Journal of Economic History*, 41, No. 4 (Dec. 1981): 883; Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931): 250; Stephen R. Wise. *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989): 221.

[496] Sven Beckert. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014): 246.

[497] Although Frank L. Owsley's *King Cotton Diplomacy* (1931) was the gold standard of blockade scholarship for decades, it has come under some criticism by modern economists and historians for his methodology and assumptions. Owsley's final analysis is that the blockade was ineffective, a veritable sieve through which any runner could paddle his way to security and riches. In 1947, Frank E. Vandiver argued much the same. The

However, the focus here is on food so the standard blockade query must be slightly finessed to ask not just was it effective, but was it capable of "starving the south," as Andrew F. Smith puts it. Its effect was less trade. But was the blockade's inhibition on trade sufficient to inhibit the country's ability to nutritionally survive and wage war? To address this question, at least a partial historiography as regards the blockade and food supplies must be undertaken. Smith is a good place to start, since he addresses the question in his 2011 book *Starving the South*. His answer is a qualified yes. That is, Smith agrees that the blockade was "not entirely successful," but he asserts that it did reduce the importation of bulky items like food, railroad equipment (necessary to transport food), and raw materials. "Over time, the blockade contributed to the South's demoralization and its ultimate defeat. No one can seriously believe that the North would have won the war without the blockade," Smith states.[498] Sharing Smith's stance is David Surdam, who argues the blockade may not have won or lost the war, but it contributed to the overall misery and health of soldiers and citizens by cutting off important supplies, raising inflation, destroying morale, and making transportation more difficult.[499]

One of the modern masters of blockade history, Stephen R. Wise, whose *Lifeline of the Confederacy* is considered one of the most comprehensive accounts in the genre, disagrees with the contributory theory. After analyzing ships, shipping companies, and ports, Wise concludes

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issue of effective versus ineffectiveness is important because international sea laws at the time ruled that a blockade was illegal unless the blockading country announced it, maintained it, and could enforce it. If the U.S. Navy could not hold ships back, then the Union, not the Confederacy, was in the wrong. The legal argument mattered to the Confederacy's efforts to win international support for its bid for independence.

[498] Smith, Andrew F. *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011): 26.

[499] David G. Surdam. *Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

that the blockade was tested 1,300 times and 1,000 trips were successful, enough to meet the material needs of the Confederacy. "The Confederate soldiers had the equipment and food needed to meet their adversaries. Defeat did not come from the lack of material; instead the Confederacy simply no longer had the manpower to resist, and the nation collapsed."[500] Wise does not go so far as to say that the blockade was useless, only that it was not a major factor in the nation's failure.

Perhaps complicating the issue is the undeniable fact that the food supply was impacted by the overall economy and the standing of the region's wealthiest planters, and the blockade was detrimental to both. Economic historian Stanley Lebergott examines a variety of aspects of the blockade, mostly focusing on the finances of the Confederacy. The Union effort made shipping much more expensive, according to his studies. Lebergott disagrees with earlier studies asserting that runners and plantation owners could earn as much as a 300 percent profit on smuggled cotton. He calculates that planters lost about one bale for every two they grew. "Investments in blockade running appear to have yielded something like 40 percent," he states.[501] Economically, the blockade was not a success, although it did reduce the finances of the South's wealthiest denizens, and this indirectly impacted how much food was smuggled into the new country.

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[500] Stephen R. Wise. *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Runners During the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988): 226.

[501] Lebergott, Stanley. "Through the Blockade: The Profitability and Extent of Cotton Smuggling, 1861-1865," *Journal of Economic History*, 41, No. 4 (Dec. 1981): 884.

Southern businessman Charles Geiger wrote to "Helen" that he lost important factory equipment three different times to blockaders. The third time was in October of 1863 when Union ships took the *Cornubia* near the mouth of the river at Wilmington.

> You can readily believe I was sorry to hear of the loss of the vessel, but I was not surprised, She has run the blockade about fifteen times [&] paid for herself every trip. The Robt. E Lee, a better vessel formerly named the Giraffe, the Ellay Annie, [&] the Ella were lost about the same time. I don't like this evidence of increased vigilance of the blockaders as most of my machinery is still due .[502]

Despite his personal losses, Geiger notes the successes of the blockade-runners, even if the Union ships were becoming more vigilant.

Brem Bonner and Peter McCord argue there are three stances that blockade scholars may adopt: contributory effectiveness, with subscribers Smith and Lebergott among them; psychological effectiveness, which tends to rely on diaries and letters bemoaning shortages and suggesting the blockade was a psychological deterrent, if not a physical one, which is the position of Surdam; and finally, cost/benefit analyses arguments. As economists, Bonner and McCord are firmly in the economic analysis argument camp. In their 2011 study they use the figures collected by Wise and Marcus Price, who analyzed Confederate shipping in the 1940s and 1950s to show that rapidly improving technology by British shipbuilders allowed the smugglers to become *more* effective, not less, during the course of the war, a common assumption by Civil War scholars.[503] The steamships running the blockade proved successful in

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[502] Charles Geiger to Helen, November 20, 1863, from Macon, Georgia. Geiger (Charles A.) Papers, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.266.39.

[503] The assumption that the blockade was more effective after 1863 is partly based on the sheer volume of resources thrown at the effort by the Union. The number of U.S. Navy ships in the blockade rose from 135 vessels in 1861 to 671 vessels by 1864, according to Samuel Negus, "A Notorious Nest of Offense: Neutrals, Belligerents, and Union Jails in Civil War Blockade Running, *Civil War History*, 56, No. 4 (Dec. 2010): 355.

four out of five attempts, and their captains and pilots were smoother at evasions in 1863 and 1864. "These statistics contradict previous historical interpretations that conclude that the blockade's effectiveness increased over time. In fact, with regard to blockade-running steamers, statistical evidence reveals that the blockade's effectiveness decreased over time... and was not a major factor in Confederate collapse and defeat."[504] However, these conclusions depend on eliminating the first and last six months of the war as statistical outliers. The last six months were crucial in the war's outcome because it was then that the Union captured the last large Southern port, condemning all but the smallest or shallowest of Confederate blockade runners from docking.[505] The large ports were a critical part of the overall Anaconda strategy and must be considered hand and glove with the blockade, even if technically separate.

Given the most recent scholarship, it seems clear that the blockade was central to the food crisis in the Confederacy, although not directly responsible for it. The reasons most frequently cited for the South's food shortages include transportation, agriculture, food preservation, governmental policies, and labor. The blockade negatively impacted all these factors, and this next section examines each in more detail.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

When scholars ask why the South lost the war, a common answer is transportation breakdowns. Certainly lack of transport hampered the South, but the tendency toward easy answers hampers objective views of how much of the transportation breakdown originated with

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[504] M. Brem Bonner and Peter McCord. "Reassessment of the Union Blockade's Effectiveness in the Civil War," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 88, No. 4 (Oct 2011): 397-398.
[505] Wilmington was the last deep port to fall, in January 1864. Charleston fell in Sept. 1863.

the Confederacy and how much was due to the Union. A broader view of the South's transportation picture begins with water since historically transportation in the South depended on the wealth of tributaries that made hauling bulky items, such as bales of cotton, particularly practicable. The blockade made even local water transportation problematic. Roads and wagon or livestock trails were typically dirt, and subject to muddy messes for up to half a year at a time, and only in sun-baked summertime were rural roads reliable in the south. In the 1830s and afterward, railroads became an important link for regions where water transport was not possible, and as a supplement to rivers and ports. Central to the debate is how seriously the Confederacy took rail transport, a question posed by the post-war claims that Southerners were too backward to adopt new technology.

Andrew Smith argues the South underestimated the importance of rails, and that attitude persisted even into the war. His evidence lies in the fact that almost all the Confederate railroad equipment was purchased from other regions and nations. As well, the South did not have sufficient factories or equipment to maintain the rails and rolling stock, and during the course of the war, the government never centralized or nationalized its system to make operations more efficient. "The railroad slowly deteriorated, making food distribution increasingly difficult," Smith concludes.[506] Two classic studies of Civil War railroad scholarship are George Edgar Turner's *Victory Rode the Rails: Strategic Placement of Railroads in the Civil War*, and Robert C. Black III's *Railroads of the Confederacy*. Both scholars agree that the lack of railroads to carry food and materiel harmed the Confederacy, but they follow tracks laid in 1917 by Charles

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[506] Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press , 2011): 24.

W. Ramsdell, who subscribed to the aforementioned contributory effect theory, which asserts lack of rail transport was a contributing factor in the Confederacy's loss. More recent scholarship has taken up different perspectives of the rail question to try and determine what kind of contribution technology or the lack thereof contributed to the Confederate losses. In *Engineering Victory: How Technology Won the Civil War,* Thomas F. Army Jr. argues that advanced Union engineering, and especially transportation technology won the war for the Union. As regards Confederate railroads, he blames Confederate congressional weakness in the face of states' rights opposition to nationalize or at least put under federal control, the rail system. He also cites the lack of educated engineers (and a concurrent lack of Southern respect for education) and little bureaucratic support for technical experts, as well as an inability to access resources such as steel, and manufacturing capabilities to make necessary repairs. He points to one example of how this mismanagement led to food shortages: In September 1862, as Confederate General Robert E. Lee was attempting to enter Maryland, his troops were hampered by a lack of every resource, including food, clothing, and ammunition. "So, as the Army of Northern Virginia, dirty and starving, crossed into Maryland, on a steady diet of green corn and apples, large quantities of provisions often sat rotting on railroad station platforms."[507] Army compares the Southern and Northern efforts at modernization prior to the war and finds the South sorely lacking.

William G. Thomas's *The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America*, uses trains as the vehicle for his theories on modernity in the nineteenth century. In it, Thomas disagrees with Army on the South's approach to modernity, and states that

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[507] Thomas F.Army, Jr. *Engineering Victory: How Technology Won the Civil War* (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016): 149-150.

Southerners avidly pursued modern technology and railroad construction, albeit with slave labor instead of free. Railroads were well on their way toward being a unifying technology in the South.[508] Thomas argues that the South was dangerous because of its willingness to combine the brutality of slavery with the efficiency of modern technology like the railroads and telegraph. Enslaved men built railroads, strung telegraph lines, and were shipped from point to point on those same rails.[509] Just as defeated loyalists later waged a propagandistic campaign reframing the South's defeat as a noble Lost Cause, Northerners sought to portray the Confederacy as backward for rejecting progress in favor of anachronistic slavery. Under this narrative, the Civil War was the Union forcing the South to accept progress. The strategy to focus Union destructiveness on railroads was led by Gen. William T. Sherman and coordinated with Gen. Phillip Sheridan and Gen. Ulysses Grant to further the idea in southern backwardness. "In large measure they also denied the Confederacy its claims to progress, civilization, and modernity. Dominating the Confederacy's railroad systems, indeed turning them against the Confederacy, was not only a military objective, it was also a social and political one, because it erased the history of modern slave society built around these technologies."[510] This morality of progress, so effective in justifying any degradations on the Western Frontier under the banner of Manifest Destiny in the 1840s and 1850s, was just as effective during Civil War in the 1860s. The South

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[508] William G. Thomas, *The Iron Way: Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011): 6.

[509] The success of the post-war propaganda efforts can be seen in the persistent theory that the South was critically limited by different railroad line gauges, symbolic of its states' rights philosophy. Thomas points out that the North was similarly hampered, since there was no unified gauge in the U.S. prior to the war. Pennsylvania, for example, had four separate gauge widths. William G. Thomas *The Iron Way:Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011): 27.

[510] William G. Thomas, *The Iron Way : Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011): 149.

had to be demonstrably seen as obstructive to the nation's future. By eliminating or downscaling the South's railroad lines, the Union was portrayed as morally, militarily and technologically superior. By that same token, Thomas argues the blockade's effectiveness was psychological more than physical:

> The blockade worked not only to damage the southern economy but also to endanger the Confederate claim to nationhood and jeopardize its modern system of information, trade, and reciprocal relationships in the world. The combined naval-land assaults on the Confederate ports and the railroad networks that extended from them eventually clamped the South's communications arteries, captured key points on its vaunted railroad network,and did what the naval blockade alone could not effectively accomplish. Together, these actions rendered the South a nation cut off from the world and led white Southerners to reconsider their nation's viability.[511]

The price of gaining that superiority was to doom hundreds of thousands of Southern civilians to long-term hunger. The blockade's part in this effort was in cutting off shipping, communications, and international commerce, as well as material needs for the rest of the transportation system, such as railroad parts, supplies, and rolling stock. Hunger was the physical manifestation of the transportation failure.

AGRICULTURE AND THE BLOCKADE

The business of the South was agriculture, both for cash and food, and so it seems unlikely that the South would have allowed itself to starve by neglect or ignorance. R. Douglas Hurt's *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South* comes to the not-surprising conclusion that poor management of agricultural resources and transportation damned the Southern effort of independence. Hurt agrees with Smith that since the

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[511] William G. Thomas, *The Iron Way : Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011): 134-135.

Confederacy was confounded by both internal mismanagement and external Union pressures the South was indeed starved out. "The surprise is that its farmers fed the population as well as they did for as long as they did under rapidly deteriorating conditions."[512] The strength of the Southern economy — her agricultural might — was not enough, and the blockade prevented the South from freely trading to make up for the losses.

The South's agricultural economy *should* have made it impervious to threats of starvation. At the outset of the war, Confederate leaders assumed agricultural power made the country invincible and indispensable to cotton mills around the world. Hurt explains that the South's optimism was justified. Although it had a third fewer people to feed, the South produced slightly more grain, and only a fraction less meat than the North, according to the 1850 census. The antebellum North bought southern-produced flour, corn, and rice, along with millions of bales of cotton from her southern cousins. In fact, some in the South thought they could starve out the North, not the other way around, according to Hurt. Initially, in 1861, the blockade's biggest impact was disrupting Mississippi River traffic that delivered northern commodities to southern consumers. By 1863, the blockade proved effective enough to interfere with internal food resources. "As the blockade became increasingly effective, and as armies disrupted farming in various areas, both consumers and the military began to feel the pinch of inadequate food supplies."[513] Shortages appeared throughout the Confederacy, even west of the Mississippi

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[512] R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 5.

[513] R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 4,19,125.

River, where supplies were more plentiful. But even in a land of plenty, the problems remained the same: inadequate transportation, poor coordination, and the blockade.

SALT AND FOOD PRESERVATION

One prominent argument in Civil War scholarship is that the lack of salt doomed the Confederacy, leading to illnesses, a shortage of horses and cattle, and food poisoning. Although modern Americans tend to consume too much sodium chloride, too little salt can also result in hyponatremia, an imbalance of too much fluid in the body that results in swelling at the cellular level. Symptoms can include vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, confusion, fatigue, cramps, seizures, coma and potentially death. Salt is an electrolyte that helps maintain that balance.[514] Even in the nineteenth century, the mineral was recognized as essential to life and included in rations for both Union and Confederate soldiers. A typical ration in 1862 was one and a half pounds per soldier per month. As the war waged on, Confederate soldiers' rations were reduced.[515] If that seems excessive, it should be remembered that the men did most of their own cooking and were given bulk raw ingredients with which to work. Comparatively, the modern American diet includes a large amount salt concealed in processed or prepared foods as both a preservative and flavor enhancer. Because of that hidden sodium, the modern army's recommendation of added

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[514] Sandhya Pruthi, M.D., ed. "Hyponatremia: Symptoms and Causes," Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (Mayo Clinic.org;: Rochester, Minn., 2020).

[515] In his studies of Union and Confederate soldiers, Bell Wiley writes that both armies had about the same ration standards at the start of the war: 3/4 lb. of meat, 18 oz. bread, flour, and 1 1/4 lbs. cornmeal or cornbread. Each man also received 1/100th of a share of peas, rice, coffee, tea, sugar, vinegar, and salt (bulk rations were distributed to 100-man companies). However, Confederate rations were cut in Spring 1862, Spring 1863, Fall 1863, and then again in 1864. In 1863, Lee reported that his men received daily rations of only 18 oz. flour and 4 oz. of bacon, with occasional rice, sugar, and molasses. Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press , 1943, 1989 reprint): 89-91.

salt for soldiers working in hot climates is between one-fifth and one-half pound per month, or less than a third of the ration for his nineteenth-century predecessor.[516] Of course, Civil War-era meat included copious amounts of salt as a preservative, but medical science was not the nineteenth-century army's strong suit. As a result of that scientific paucity, we also cannot know how many Civil War soldiers actually suffered from salt depletion, since the symptoms of hyponatremia — diarrhea, cramps, etc. — are common. What is better documented is the shortage of salt for preserving meat.

Prior to refrigeration, salt was a mainstay in the struggle to hold off the decomposition of food. Industrially preserved food in metal cans and jars was available but expensive. Most industrial-level canning facilities were in the north, and consequently "tinned" or "canned" goods in steel, tin, or aluminum packages were an unfamiliar item to most Southern consumers. In her diary of Confederate Richmond, Phoebe Pember recounts how itinerate canned goods peddlers were the second invaders of the defeated Confederate capital, in the wake of the Union Army. "They inundated Richmond with pictorial canisters at exorbitant prices, which no one had money to buy. Whether the supply of greenbacks was scant, or the people were not disposed to trade with the newcomers, they had no customers."[517] Even Union soldiers seldom indulged themselves with canned goods because of the expense. In his memoirs of the Civil War, John Billings recalled that sutlers sold canned fruit, vegetables, and milk for 75 cents per item, well

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[516] The recommendation is for added salt, since modern U.S. Army rations/MREs already include so much sodium. The advised added amount is no more than 3-8 grams per day, which comes out to .198-.529 pounds per month. Bernadette M. Marriott, ed. *Nutritional Needs in Hot Environments: Applications for Military Personnel in Field Operations* (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1993): 324.

[517] Phoebe Pember. *A Southern Woman's Story: Life in Confederate Richmond* (New York: G.W. Carleton & Co., 1879): 137.

beyond the reach of a common soldier making $13 per month, adding they were "mostly for use in officers' messes."[518] Home cooks preserved foods such as fruit and vegetables in glass jars or crockery. Home "canning" using both pressure cookers or hot-water baths is still common in the twenty-first century for preserving fruit, jams, vegetables, and some meats. Fruit, meat and vegetables could also be dried, an ancient method of food preservation, but which also had limitations. Dried items that retain moisture will mold and decompose unless combined with an antibacterial or preserving agent such as salt. Meat that is liberally salted and then brined, dried or smoked (sometimes preparers use a combination of all three methods) will hold both its nutritional value and flavor for weeks or months instead of days. None of these solutions were free of bacterial complications, of course, but in an era when disease was believed to be carried by bad smells, these methods were considered safe.[519]

In his popular history of the ingredient, Mark Kurlansky writes that New Orleans dockworkers unloaded 350 tons of British salt per day in 1860, about 25 percent of the total sent over to the United States as ballast for cotton ships.[520] Of course, imported salt was not the only source of the ingredient for the Confederacy, which is surrounded by the sea. About 3,500 miles of beaches and natural harbors ring the southern states, a perpetual problem for the beleaguered blockaders trying to catch any ships approaching that long coastline. Florida, with the ocean on

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[518] Sutlers were salesmen with contracts with the army to sell items such as food, personal hygiene products and clothing prior to the modern PX. They were much maligned because of their high prices or unappealing offerings, but they took soldier's promisory notes, which made them indispensable for soldiers without ready cash.
John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee or The Unwritten Story of Army Life* (Boston: George M. Smith and Company, 1887), 224-225.

[519] Prior to germ theory, the miasma theory was one of the predominant medical positions in the nineteenth century and it held that people became ill from bad smells or gases.

[520] Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York:Penguin Books, 2002): 258.

three sides, had multiple saltworks, particularly on the Gulf of Mexico side between Tampa and Choctawhatchee Bay, or what is now Fort Walton.[521] However, manufacturing salt is not as simple as merely allowing it to dehydrate in the sun. Distilling crystals from sea water means pumping it from salty water wells and boiling it over wood fires. More importantly, everything, from cutting the wood to tending the vats, must be done by hand at a time when manpower in the Confederacy was woefully inadequate. The process of turning saline-heavy water into crystals is time-consuming, fuel-hungry, and labor-intensive, and as salt became more valuable it cost the lives of hundreds of malarial-infected and overworked African Americans.[522]

The fact that the South resorted to manufacturing salt is a telling indicator of how effective the blockade was to everyday life. It was a simple ingredient that was nonetheless able to sap the Confederacy's energy significantly. In *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy* Ella Noll theorizes that the inability to acquire enough of the mineral was an indication of the industrial backwardness of the South. "In a very real sense, it may be claimed that by diverting men, materials, and capital from the first objective of war, winning battles, the lack of salt was a contributing factor to the outcome of the War between the States."[523] Union troops took extraordinary efforts to destroy saltworks by smashing the pumps, plugging pipes, and filling in the wells. Tons of salt were thrown into the ocean or mixed with sand to keep it out of Confederate hands. That civilians suffered along with the military was a price of war. It was,

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[521] Fort Walton, formerly known as Camp Walton, was a Confederate base for local militia. It was named after the son of one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. George Walton Jr. was secretary of the Florida Territory in the 1820s.
[522] Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York:Penguin Books, 2002): 265.
[523] Ella Noll, *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy,* (University, Ala: University of Alabama Press, 1965, reprint): 230.

according to Noll, "one of the most tragic aspects of the war — the dreadful, futile waste."[524] However, unless the Union forces remained to guard the damaged saltworks, loyalists would restore the facility within days or weeks and carry on as before.

Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, famous for his destructive march through the South toward the end of the war, was vehement in keeping salt out of the hands of his enemies because he recognized its strategic importance. In July 1862, Sherman wrote to Col. Rawlins that Memphis was crawling with speculators trading cotton for gold, which would pay for guns, ammunition, and salt. "Salt is as much contraband of war as powder. All the boards of trade above are trading salt south...if we permit money and salt to go into the interior it will not take long for (CSA Generals Braxton) Bragg and (Earl) Van Dorn to supply their armies with all they need to move."[525] Without money, the Confederates could not buy arms, and without salt they could not make bacon or salt beef, Sherman explained. "We cannot carry on war and trade with a people at the same time."[526] He wrote to Secretary of the Treasury S.P. Chase in August 1862 that he disagreed with the proposal to allow Southerners to sell cotton to the North for gold or cash because it could be used to buy necessities for waging war. "I declare it impossible to keep such articles, be they salt, powder, lead, or anything from reaching the South. Also, gold will purchase arms and ammunition at Nassau, in the Bahamas, and you know that one vessel out of

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[524] Ella Noll, *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy (*University, Ala: University of Alabama Press, 1965, reprint): 226.

[525] It may seem surprising that trade would be allowed between sides during the war, but typically these were boards of trade established with businessmen in parts of the South that had already been conquered and were trying to establish new business avenues. Sherman's concern was that they would then re-sell the salt and other goods to the unconquered areas, which he refers to as "the interior." William T. Sherman to John A. Rawlins, July 30, 1862, *OR* Series I, Vol. 17, part II (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1887):140-141.

[526] William T. Sherman to Salmon Chase, Aug. 11, 1862, *OR*, Series III, Vol. II (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1899): 349.

three can run the blockade." That same month, he writes to General Halleck: "Salt is eminently contraband, because (of) its use in curing meats, without which armies cannot be subsisted." If Sherman's superiors would not be convinced, he could at least enforce his views to those under his command. In a letter to Gen. U.S. Grant, he explains that he had a captain brought up on charges for trading salt for cotton. "I will have the captain tried by a military commission for aiding and abetting the enemy by furnishing them with salt wherewith to cure bacon, a contraband article...What use in carrying on war while our people are supplying arms and the sinews of war?"[527] Sherman recognized the devastating loss of one key component in the army's diet.

Interestingly, Sherman's quartermaster, L.C. Easton, wrote in his final report of the war that on the famous March to the Sea across Georgia, the Union army of 62,000 men carried twenty days worth of bread, five days worth of salted meat, thirty-days worth of sugar and coffee and eighty days worth of salt. He then added: "The quantity of salt taken proved unnecessary, as we found it in great abundance in the country passed through."[528] So, although some portions of the South may have felt the pinch of too little sodium, central Georgia was evidently not suffering from that lack.

Another factor in the salt shortage was the reliance on horses, which must have salt to live. Horses carried men into battle, hauled bodies and wounded away again, pulled provision wagons as well as military equipment such as cannons. Like humans, working equines sweat out

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[527] William T. Sherman to William Halleck, Aug. 18, 1862, *OR*, Series III, Vol. II (1899): 402; William T. Sherman to General Ulysses S. Grant, Aug. 17, 1862, *OR*, Series I, Vol. 17, part II, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1887): 178.

[528] L.C. Easton, Brigadier-General and Quartermaster for Major-General W.T. Sherman, in his report to Union Quartermaster M.C. Meigs, August 18, 1865 (*OR, Ser. I, Vol. LII, Part 1*): 702.

minerals that must be replenished. On average, a riding horse consumes about 30 pounds of salts and minerals per year, and horses working under extreme conditions need even more.[529] However, given the lack of salt for Southern humans, there was even less available for animals. Writing about the suffering of his cavalry's mounts, Col. Thomas Munford reported that the command was in the "most deplorable conditions," and the horses forced to live "on young grass without salt."[530] Young grass or spring grass is heavy in water but light on nutrients, and causes diarrhea in grazers. The lack of salt resulted in animals without the strength and speed necessary to fighting or working, and that inevitably sickened and died, leaving soldiers and equipment stranded.

During the Civil War, salt was a necessary mineral for fighting men and their horses, as well as for preservation of food. Without it, men and their animals were sick unto death. Without salt, food supplies rotted or were not available in sufficient amounts. The blockade's contribution to the issue of salt supplies was to substantially restrict the amount of sodium chloride brought into the Confederacy, weakening her ability to fight effectively.

POLICIES

Scholars Robert B. Ekelund, John D. Jackson, and Mark Thornton have examined governmental policies and the blockade and they conclude that the Confederate congress was partially to blame for food shortages. When the Confederate congress tried to regulate or stop the importation of luxury goods such as brandy, silk, and billiard tables for the wealthy planters in

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[529] Erin Harty, *Humane Society of the United States Complete Guide to Horse Care* (Washington D.C.: Humane Society Press, 2008): 68.
[530] Gervase Phillips, "Writing Horses into American Civil War History," *War in History*, April 2013, 20 (2): 168.

1864, they simultaneously eliminated much of the runners' profits and the incentive to take risks. Fewer runners meant fewer ships bringing in necessities such as food, steel, and saltpeter. Citing blockade-running attempts into Charleston, they point out that runs dropped nearly 45 percent between 1863 and 1864, from 1,453 to 806.[531] They attribute a significant degree of that drop to the legislation passed in February 1864.

However, food supply problems were experienced long before the Confederate Congress became involved in regulating blockade running. As early as December 1861, there were shortages of some supplies including sugar. Felicia Loughridge wrote her husband on Christmas Day 1861 and described the holiday with their children, Mary and Ella. When the children found no candy in their stockings Felicia told them it was because Santa Claus had gone to war. "(Mary) said that she was willing to do with out his candy and raisons if he would help to whip the Yankees so her Pa could come home I made her and Ella a very nice doll I could buy them none.[532] Widespread shortages included coffee, salt, and sugar in the winter of 1861-1862.

When New Orleans was overwhelmed by Union forces in April 1862, the city was reported to be full of starving civilians. Confederate army rations were cut several times during the war in order to spread out the supplies, and military and civilian shortages were a persistent problem. In October 1862, William Silsby wrote that the rebel enemy were desperate to win

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[531] Robert B. Ekelund, Jr., John D. Jackson and Mark Thornton. "The 'Unintended Consequences,' of Confederate Trade Legislation," *Eastern Economic Journal*, 30, No. 2 (Spring 2004): 200.

[532] Felicia Loughridge to her husband J.R. (James Roger), December 25, 1861 from Falls County, Texas. (The county seat of Falls is Marlin, roughly halfway between Temple and Waco.) *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2004.421.039. There is no reason to assume she did not have the money to buy the sweets (candy and raisins), because she went shopping for them. As well, JR's return letter he writes that he will send "more money."(J.R. Loughridge to Ella and Mary Loughridge, January 14, 1862. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2004.421.011.) The empty stockings seem to stem to a lack of candy's availability to consumers.

because of food shortages. "The rebels seemed determined to take the place as therein they could be supplied with rations and clothing they so much needed."[533] Thus, while Ekelund et al argue that the legislation may be blamed for de-incentivizing smuggled food supplies — and it may have exacerbated the problem — the 1864 legislation did not cause the 1861-1863 shortages.

On the other hand, a *lack* of policies might be considered an equally contributing factor. Hurt, Wise, and Thomas point to the Confederate hesitation to nationalize agriculture and the train systems, to regulate trade better, and to demand a more egalitarian conscription policy. Founded on principles of states' rights, a weak federal government, and strict social hierarchy, the Confederacy never really arrived at a unified reaction to warfare issues like managing manpower, land usage, transportation, and money. As a result, the internal chaos left the nation vulnerable to the self-admitted leaky Union naval blockade.

One example of that tardiness and its cost to the Confederacy can be seen in the impressment of food. Initially, agricultural product impressment was informal, on an as-needed basis by army quartermasters or impressment agents working for the federal government. As the war progressed, however, farmers became less willing to cooperate. Impressment agents used tactics such as waiting along well-traveled roads to seize any goods meant for market. They took more than a farmer could spare or paid less than market rates. Resentment led to farmers hiding or hoarding their produce, which meant less food in the market, and higher prices — as well as redoubled efforts by impressment agents — a vicious cycle.

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[533] William H. Silsby to his wife Helen, October 17, 1862, from a camp near Corinth, Mississippi. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2004.373.48.

In March 1863, the Confederate Congress passed rules about impressment, establishing state price lists, mediation systems, and limits for the impressment agents. However, the bimonthly price lists were still lagging behind market increases, leading to discontent by farmers who considered the agents akin to thieves, and consumers unable to buy goods they needed.[534] In February 1864, congress amended the impressment law to allow local boards to fix the prices, with appeals to state commissioners, according to Hurt. The underlying problems remained: Impressment agents continued to take what they wanted and pay whatever they wanted. In June 1864, congress set up an investigatory system run by the Treasury Department to look at claims of unfair impressment.[535] The policies never satisfied farmers or consumers. However, the underlying problem was that the Confederacy was a closed system, bottled up by the Union blockade. Policies regarding inadequate supplies — whether poorly conceived, executed, or ignored — would not have been necessary without the blockade, which was effective in stoppering transportation of imports, exports, and internal movement of supplies.

The South had the food required for most of the war, but it could not keep or move that food where was most needed. Leaky or not, the blockade's secondary impact on railroads, distribution, salt supplies, and equipment did serve to make food scarcer in the Confederacy. The scarcity led to higher prices, and the combination of all those factors led to violence and uprisings among the dissatisfied poor whose lives were treated as dispensable, both on and off the battlefields. The closed economic and supply system created by the blockade meant desperate

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[534] R. Douglas Hurt. Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 144.

[535] R. Douglas Hurt. *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 202-203.

Confederates turned on their neighbors, and selfishness, distrust of government, and greed at the expense of other human beings, became the most prominent values. Slavery, the ultimate disregard for other people's lives in favor of money and privilege, was symptomatic of the distorted underlying values of the Confederacy. While that code of behavior might not doom a nation, it does not inspire people to sacrifice their lives, homes, and families.

CHAPTER 8

TRADING

In the summer of 1864, Union soldier Edward Kendall wrote to his father that he had nearly traded some coffee for scarce Southern tobacco. He explained that the distance between the enemy line and Union line was only about 300 yards, close enough to talk freely. "The boys, alternately talk and shoot at each other. They tried to strike up a trade to day. the Johnnys wanted to Change tobacco for Coffee."[536] Unfortunately, fresh soldiers entered the fray who preferred fighting to trading, so no one got the articles they sought that day. More successful in his trading efforts, S.G. Evans wrote to his parents that the soldiers traded coffee and bacon for milk, sweet potatoes, and other fresh foods with local Southerners. "Yesterday, 'my mess' traded ten days rations of bacon and got something like 1 ½ bushel sweet potatoes for them. We have lacked for vegetables, but as long as we can trade rations for them scurvy will keep away."[537] Confederate Hamon Godwin wrote his parents that trade was keeping them well-fed in the spring of 1864. "We traid Papers with the yankees most every day and tobacco & coffee and several little articles the(y) have become very friendly and peaceable we have plenty to eat here and are doing well now."[538]

This type of trade across lines was not formal, and sometimes involved something as simple as a shared meal and conversation. Food worked as a social lubricant in these encounters,

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[536] Edward Kendall of the 107th New York Volunteers to his father, June 7, 1864, from a bivouac near Marietta, Georgia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.041.

[537] S.G. Evans to his parents, Nov. 25, 1862, "near Fredricksburg, Va but not in it." *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1998.111.49.

[538] R. Hamon Godwin to father, mother, and brothers, March 31, 1864, from Co. K 31st. Virginia Volunteers. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001-270.17.

offering an excuse to get together without hostility. In this chapter, I explore how large-scale trade across lines aided Confederates, while undermining Union forces; creating millionaires, but at the cost of moral bankruptcy. This chapter also look at the work of sutlers, those traders whose relationships with soldiers were complicated and prickly in the extreme. Food, once again, served to bridge many of those obstacles between people, sometimes to the detriment of their military goals.

Union soldier John E. (no last name) writes home that he was meeting with Confederate secessionists around Obion County, Tennessee, in his spare time. In one of these ventures out of the city he came upon the home of a woman whose husband was in the Confederate army. He described her as 'intelligent, accomplished, and handsome (by Southern Standard)." The woman invited him to dinner and offered to introduce him to a table of Secessionists. "I found myself surrounded by half a dozen ladies - Rebels to the core - and then for the fun! We talked more than we ate and I was vain enough to think that I lodged some new ideas with them.[539]

This kind of exchanges arose frequently between two sides that shared a common language, history, and in many cases, family ties. Both civilians and military personnel traded for cotton, coffee, tobacco, sugar, liquor, fabrics, pork, beef, salt, corn, iron, tin, and secrets, all of which passed through the quasi-permeable battle lines. Whether done on the wholesale scale of speculators who filled riverboats full of cotton bound for British and Massachusetts textile factories, or two sentries wearing quietly meeting in the woods to swap addictive substances like tobacco and caffeine, goods passed hands and relationships formed.

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[539] John E to "Dear Parents," May 15, 1862, from Camp of the 47th Reg. Ind. Vols. Col. James R. Slack, Tiptonville, Tennessee. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.003.

In 1861, at the start of the war, Lincoln quickly instituted Winfield Scott's blockade intended to surround and cut off the Southern ports from external trade. The blockade, generally called the Anaconda or Boa Constrictor Strategy, was loosely enforced at first because the U.S. Navy was too poorly equipped to patrol more than 3,000 miles of Southern coastlines.[540] In the interior, only after the fall of Vicksburg in July 1863 did the Union gain full access to the upper Mississippi, key to transporting food and cotton. For four years, Southern ports fell, slowly and painfully, and the Union army seized one river-bound city after another, tightening the grip on the South's supply lines. The blockade grew as the war progressed, becoming more efficient as the Union added ships to its line.

Technology, as it does in all wars, also advanced quickly to respond to the war's needs. On the Confederate side, blockade runners mutually benefited from technological advances, purchasing nimble steamers from Scottish shipwrights in order to outrun Union captains. For Confederate blockade-runners, the cost of being caught by Union patrol boats was the forfeiture of both ship and cargo, as well as the imprisonment of any American sailors.[541] Defiant and motivated by fantastic profits for even one successful journey, the cat-and-mouse game continued throughout the war.

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[540] Dozens of books, and hundreds of articles examine the blockade and analyze its effectiveness. For some classic examples of the field, see M. Brem Bonner and Peter McCord. "Reassessment of the Union Blockade's Effectiveness in the Civil War," North Carolina Historical Review, 88, No. 4 (Oct 2011); Stanley Lebergott, "Through the Blockade: The Profitability and Extent of Cotton Smuggling, 1861-1865," *Journal of Economic History*, 41, No. 4 (Dec. 1981); Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931): and Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989). A more in-depth approach to the blockade and its effect on food is found in Chapter 6 of this study.

[541] Foreign sailors could not be held prisoner because it would risk foreign intervention in the war, something the Union was anxious to avoid. So long as the British and French could receive some cotton, the Union believed they would be less likely to interfere in the American war on behalf of Southern cotton producers.

Regardless of his own blockade, Lincoln almost immediately began signing authorizations allowing Northern agents to purchase Southern cotton. The cotton trade offered domestic and foreign economic benefits to the Union. Northern textile mills paid handsomely for cotton, and Lincoln was considering both their lobbyists and their employees when signing the trade licenses. British textile mills were also dependent on Southern cotton, so Lincoln reasoned that supplying the resource might keep Britain neutral during the war. Selling cotton abroad for gold also helped the Union shore up its currency, which was sagging under new war-driven debt.

The Confederacy had its own reasons to trade cotton with their enemy. Union gold went to pay armies, and buy food and war materiel, everything from guns and ammunition to uniforms and boots. On this topic, the Union and Confederacy agreed: Trading cotton provided an economic and strategic advantage. The solution they arrived at independently called for the Confederate government buying Southern cotton from the planters, and reselling it to middle-men, who either then resold it abroad or in northern markets. Where the two sides differed was in the legislation they conceived. The North could only allow legal trade overland, while the South would only allow legal trade by sea.[542]

The malicious effect of the trade was to prolong the war, allowing the death and destruction to escalate. In his 1864 testimony before the congressional Joint Committee Major General C.C. Washburn said it damaged more than morale, it hurt the Union by pushing troops into taking dangerous risks for little military gain, giving the Confederacy supplies they needed, allowing spies and outsiders into camps, and profiting a "class of people" who escaped

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[542] Texas was the exception to overland trade in the South. The long wagon haul through South Texas to Matomoros kept that avenue from gaining too much popularity.

conscription only to become speculators "and who, of all others, are least entitled to favor."[543] The U.S. treasury department received little profit, he testified.

Although the Confederacy benefitted from the trade, the rebel nation initially resisted the impulse to trade, and worked hard to shut down trade by enacting formal and informal embargoes to withhold cotton from her prior clientele. In the run-up to the war, South Carolina politician James H. Hammond predicted that cutting off cotton for three years would topple England and carry the civilized world with her — all except the Southern United States. "No, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares to make war upon it. Cotton is king."[544] Proponents of the "King Cotton" theory asserted that a tight lid on sales would end the war quickly. However, the embargoes put into place were localized and hardly comprehensive. For example, exporting cotton from Mississippi and Louisiana ports was illegal, but not from South Carolina, Alabama or Texas. Amongst themselves, planters sought to withhold cotton through a gentlemen's agreement, but it lacked the force of law and dissolved in the face of individual needs. Complicating matters, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Congress disagreed with the embargoes, reasoning that trade maintained open lines of communication and cotton was an important resource for obtaining arms and supplies. By the middle of 1862, the already weak embargoes fractured as shortages began to be felt in food and armaments and New Orleans fell to the Union.[545] Trade of cotton for food and supplies resumed

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[543] C.C. Washburn, Trade Regulations, April 1864 (Misc.) *Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 38th Congress, second session (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office, 1865): 42.

[544] James H. Hammond. *"Cotton is King," Selections from the Letters and Speeches of the Hon. James H. Hammond of South Carolina* (New York: John F. Trow, 1866): 317.

[545] New Orleans was a prime export site for the Confederacy in the first year, as East Coast ports were beleaguered by Union blockade ships. U.S. Admiral David G. Farragut took New Orleans in late April 1862. U.S. Major-General Benjamin Butler became the military commander of the city on May 1.

where it could, despite transportation issues created by the war and the Union blockade.[546] In testimony before congress, Rear Admiral David D. Porter said that in the spring of 1864 trade was brisk between Alexandria and New Orleans, with Confederates swapping cotton for food. "There is a surprising abundance of every kind of food in this country, and no suffering among the people, except for luxuries. It would be folly to suppose they could all be starved out."[547]

The theory that Europe would intervene to reinstate the flow of cotton proved erroneous for a variety of reasons, but not because the embargoes weakened. Frank Owsley, who studied cotton and the Union blockade in the mid twentieth century, argues the embargoes created a "cotton famine," devastating England's textile manufacturing sector, putting thousands of Englishmen out of work.[548] Taking a more nuanced stance, Niels Eichhorn argues that other factors, including trade with the Union, held greater sway than cotton for the English and other European powers, preventing their intervention on behalf of the South. These other factors include the steady supply of wheat and corn coming from Midwestern farmers; the market glut of cotton during 1859 and 1860; London's political power in parliament, as opposed to those representing the textile districts like Liverpool; new alternative sources for cotton, including India and Egypt; as well as an overall reluctance to engage in a messy foreign war.[549] Even had

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[546] R. Douglas Hurt. *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 9-10.

[547] David Porter, Red River Expedition, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War,* Second Session, 38th Congress. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865) :231.

[548] Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931): 43, 148-151.

[549] Niels Eichhorn, "North Atlantic Trade in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: A Case for Peace during the American Civil War," *Civil War History* 61, No. 2 (June 2015): 172; see also, Amos Khasigian, "Economic Factors and British Neutrality, 1861-1865," *Historian* 25 (Aug. 1963): 459-62; Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century 1815–1915: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014): 242-273.

Southern cotton been cut off completely, Eichhorn argues Europe would have remained neutral. However, trade across lines meant Southern cotton continued to trickle out.

The South had reason to be proud of its agricultural might, but it took less than a year of fighting for the Confederacy to begin experiencing problems with its food supplies. Initially optimistic that its agricultural factory system could supply everything the fledgling nation needed, shortages in items like coffee, sugar, and salt became apparent by 1862. The pinch arose from the confluence of the Union's blockade, labor shortages, farmers pursuing the higher profits from cotton, as opposed to food crops; and the Confederacy's poor transportation system.[550] Coffee and sugar were luxury items for which substitutions could be found, but salt was a vital ingredient for preserving food and restoring minerals to both humans and animals.[551] The Confederacy had to trade for salt, if nothing else.

Trading with a war enemy strengthens an opponent. So how Civil War military leaders approached the business helps us understand their motivations. The evidence of a well-supplied enemy lay in the rows of bodies, piled thousands deep after some battles, even tens of thousands deep after major fights. So it seems logical that generals would see strangling the enemy's supply lines as a top priority. However, some military leaders used the opportunity of command to expand trade, enriching themselves while also extending the war and its attendant suffering.

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[550] For more details on these weaknesses, see R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and the Confederacy: Policy, Productivity, and Power in the Civil War South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011); David G. Surdam. *Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War.* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); Thomas F. Army, Jr., *Engineering Victory: How Technology Won the Civil War* (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016); William G. Thomas,*The Iron Way : Railroads, the Civil War, and the Making of Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[551] Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002): 258.

The amount of money at stake is staggering. Major General Nathaniel P. Banks who took over New Orleans in mid-December 1862, testified before congress about the cotton seized by the army and navy during the Red River Expedition. When his troops got to Alexandria, he began trading with the locals to buy cotton, sugar, and animals, such as horses and mules, he told the congressional committee. In ten days he acquired an estimated $3 million worth of goods, $2 million in cotton alone, which he says was turned over to the treasury agents and sold, with the money going to the U.S. government. He estimated, however, that if he could have continued the policy of buying from the locals that the potential profit was much, much higher. "I believe that if the policy had been pursued, I could have paid from $60,000,000 to $100,000,000 into the treasury in the year 1863, which would have paid all the expenses of that department for five years."[552] He also denied making any profit himself. If Banks did not engage in trade, he was a rare bird. Many generals did take advantage of their positions, and while it affected morale, for some officers and men the temptation to get rich off the war was impossible to resist.

A study in contrasts may help illustrate the different attitudes of United States generals toward trade across lines. In May 1862, U.S. Major-General Benjamin F. Butler was assigned to command New Orleans, Louisiana. In July 1862, U.S. Major-General William T. Sherman was given command of the newly-captured Memphis, Tennessee. Both men were forceful commanders with creative approaches to subduing insurrectionists, keeping peace, and restoring normalcy to their respective domains. Both were given negative nicknames in the press — "Beast Butler," and "Scourge of the South" for Sherman — and both spent decades trying to

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[552] Nathaniel Banks, Red River Expedition, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War,* Second Session, 38th Congress. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865) :27.

restore their reputations. However, they differed significantly in how their approaches to trading with the enemy.[553]

Any reconstruction plan relied on getting people back to work, making money, and restoring trade, according to officials in Washington. With economics in mind, Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase and U.S. President Abraham Lincoln urged the resumption of trade in New Orleans and Memphis, crucial bookends on the Southern portion of the Mississippi River. It took another year of fighting, along with the surrender of Vicksburg, for the Union to control the entire length of the great river. However, restoring business in Memphis and New Orleans advanced the Union's goals for improving communications between those two cities and the Union's Midwest and Northeast regions.

New Orleans was a rich prize. In 1860-1861, the city's harbor exported twenty-five million dollar's worth of sugar, and ninety-two million dollar's worth of cotton.[554] The order to restore commerce to the city was no hardship to its new master, Benjamin Butler when he arrived in mid-1862. The general made it a priority and had his own involvement in the trade. Butler backed his speculator brother, Andrew, in efforts to buy up Southern cotton and sugar from Louisiana planters. Andrew Butler traded salt, medicine, and other supplies to the Confederates for cotton or cash, making enormous profits from both sides. Although General

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[553] One explanation for the philosophical differences may be in their backgrounds: Sherman was a West Point-trained professional soldier, while Butler was a lawyer, businessman, and politician with no real training as an officer. Sherman's priority was winning the war. Butler spent much more time and attention on civilian and commercial interests, disregarding the larger military picture. One argument for Butler's removal from New Orleans was his inability to extend the Union control over the rest of Louisiana, including Baton Rouge.

[554] Rossiter Johnson, John Clark Ridpath, Gen. J.T. Morgan, Gen. O.O. Howard, Gen. Selden Connor, Henry W.B. Howard, and Gen. John B. Gordon, *An Illustrated History of the Campaigns and Conflicts of the Great Civil War*, Project Gutenberg e-book prepared by Ron Swanson. (New York: Bryan, Taylor & Co., 1894.): 332.

Butler denied doing anything illegal and never faced formal prosecution, he began the war solidly middle-class, and shortly after its end was a multi-millionaire.[555] Why he was not prosecuted or even investigated, as were many other military leaders, is partly because he was popular with the Radical Republicans in congress who looked the other way when it came to Butler, Joseph Hooker and John Fremont.

Regardless of whether Butler was crooked, his problem-solving skills resonated nationally and internationally. One of his first creative moves involved what to do with fleeing enslaved peoples. This was a persistent issue for Union commanders, as enslaved people naturally believed their salvation lay behind Union lines. As thousands of men, women, and children fled to Union camps, the challenge became how to provide for the freedmen, and how to deal with the local planters who were losing their workforces. Planters and slavecatchers came to the camps demanding the return of escapees as if they were loose cattle. Caught between a hostile local population, federal laws which required the return of fugitives, and lack of incentive to fight the system, many Union officers returned them to their oppressors. The re-enslaved men and women were then used to aid the Confederacy through enforced labor in fields and factories. In May 1861, Butler issued an order which declared slaves to be contraband of war, and subject to seizure by the Union just like a ship, canon, or other useful. From then on, "contrabands" were allowed to remain under the protection of Union forces and assigned work, typically manual labor such as cooking, tending livestock, laundering, or fortifying positions. Individual

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[555] Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997): 233.

commanders had challenged the authority of slave owners in the past, just as some had returned escapees to slavery, but Butler's order gave cover for all Union forces to defy the Southern elites.

Butler's reputation as a scoundrel came about because of his method of dealing with recalcitrant New Orleans women who defied the occupying Union forces. New Orleans men were restricted from resisting Union forces by martial law and a draconian system of labor enforcement enacted by Butler. Men who resisted often found their businesses fined, goods confiscated, or themselves sentenced to hard labor on a prison island. The women, however, feeling secure in their privilege as Southern ladies, waged a stinging harassment campaign. Officers and enlisted men complained of secesh women insulting them, spitting at them, flashing their legs or bottoms, and emptying chamber pots on their heads from the ornate iron balconies of the French Quarter.[556] To rein in the feisty belles of the Big Easy, Butler issued General Orders No. 28, stating that any woman insulting or assaulting a Union soldier would be treated as a prostitute.[557] Although the order does not list any actual penalty, the implied threat was rape, physical punishment, and public humiliation. The harassment stopped nearly overnight.

Despite its effectiveness, the order was condemned both in America and abroad, earning the general the moniker "Beast Butler."[558] An editorial in the London (England) *Saturday*

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[556] A "secesh" is the Union term for a person who agrees with secession. Typically used for a female Southerner. Males were often labeled with the more derogatory "rebel," or "reb."

[557] General Orders No. 28 states: "As officers and soldiers of the United States have been subjected to repeated insults from women calling themselves ladies of New Orleans in part for the most scrupulous noninterference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered hereafter that when any female shall, by mere gesture or movement, insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be regarded as a woman of the town plying her vocation." Headquarters Department of the Gulf, New Orleans, May 15, 1862, signed Maj.Gen. B.F. Butler. O.R. ser. 1, vol. 15, 426.

[558] The order was "openly supported" by Sec. of State William Seward, Asst. Sec. of the Navy Gustavus Fox, and never repudiated by Lincoln. Crystal N. Feimster, "General Benjamin Butler and the Threat of Sexual Violence During the Civil War," *Daedalus*, Spring 2009 Vol. 138, No. 2 (Spring 2009): 130.

Review called him "by far the most ruffianly commander the world ever saw or dreamed of," and questions both the intelligence and masculinity of Union soldiers, who "appear to be thin-skinned — in the war of words they find it unequal combat" against the "quick-witted Frenchwomen" of New Orleans.[559] The civilian mayor of New Orleans, the governor of Louisiana, and Jefferson Davis all condemned the order, while the Jackson *Mississippian* offered $10,000 for Butler's head.[560] Northern newspapers also criticized the order as ungentlemanly, but Lincoln and his administration never disavowed or retracted it. An aide reading the draft orders warned the general beforehand that the vague wording could be interpreted as permission to sexually assault the middle-class and elite women of the city. Butler retorted: "Let us, then, have one case of aggression on our side. I shall know how to deal with that case so that it will never be repeated."[561] He apparently never got the chance.

Displaying both moral flexibility and pragmatism, Butler embraced trading across lines. Butler allowed his brother Andrew to make use of his position as the city's commander to buy cotton and sugar at reduced prices from nearby plantations.[562] Armed with a Union permit,

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[559] "Yankee Chivalry," London (England) *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, Vol. 13, Iss. 346 (June 14, 1862): 671-2.

[560] Crystal N. Feimster, "General Benjamin Butler and the Threat of Sexual Violence During the Civil War," *Daedalus*, Spring 2009 Vol. 138, No. 2 (Spring 2009): 130.

[561] Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997): 103.

[562] For more on the history of the Butler brothers in New Orleans, see Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997). A.J. Butler was denied an officer's commission in the war, but he served as an unofficial quartermaster in New Orleans during Benjamin's command of the city, and preferred the title "Colonel Butler," as an indication of his authority there. The scheme apparently worked this way: Agents would circulate the rumor that General Butler was going to seize cotton and sugar from plantations as rebel contraband. (Adding strength to the story, General Benjamin Butler did perform seizures of this type.) Andrew would then offer to buy the crops at discounted rates to "save" them from seizure (Hearn, 184). In another scheme, rigged auctions of seized cotton and sugar were set up where Andrew was the guaranteed buyer (Hearn, 192). The end results were the same: Cotton and sugar were supplied to the Union by Andrew Butler as much-inflated prices. In some cases, Andrew is believed to have made three or four times the amount he paid the planters.

Andrew then shipped the cotton through the blockade to New York for generous profits, only a fraction of which he shared with the planters, agents, or the U.S. Government. Civil War economics scholar Ludwell Johnson dryly summarizes: "Wherever Butler was, whether New Orleans or Norfolk, business boomed, and much of it was in the hands of his friends and relatives."[563] Chester Hearn examined the various schemes of the Butler brothers and argues that millions changed hands that could not be accounted for during those months while Benjamin Butler was in New Orleans. Benjamin Butler's net worth was about $150,000 in real estate and stocks when he left Massachusetts in 1861. However, by 1868 he was estimated to be worth $3 million. During those six years, Butler served as a soldier for three years, and then as a lawyer and politician in the U.S. House of Representatives for three years, where his official salary was never higher than $7,500 per year.[564] "It had to have come from New Orleans," Hearn concludes.[565]

The real impact of Butler's activities was to demoralize the Union soldiers, who saw it as the betrayal of the ethos of honorable warriors fighting for right, not lucre, according to historian Andrew Lang. "The brusque Massachusetts general fed his rapacious appetite for financial

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[563] Ludwell H. Johnson, "Contraband Trade During the Last Year of the Civil War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49, no. 4 (March 1963): 641.

[564] From the end of the war until 1871, congressmen received an annual salary of $5,000. In 1871, they gave themselves a 50% raise ($7,500 per year) for three years. Savvy politicians lowered their salaries back to $5,000 in 1874, where it stayed for thirty-three more years. In 1907, congressmen gave themselves a raise to $7,500 per year (again). See Ida A. Brudnick, Salaries of Members of Congress: Recent Actions and Historical Tables, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, April 2018)

[565] Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997):223.

rewards on the plentiful cotton in his Department of the Gulf…And the men in the ranks looked with scorn at Butler's efforts, some wanting to abandon the effort altogether."[566]

Both sides knew of Butler's activities. Secretary of State William Seward and blockade commander David Farragut sent the general notes cautioning him about the blatancy of his behavior, which he apparently disregarded. But the Confederates were also keeping an eye on the Union general's commercial interests. J.B. Jones, whose war diaries are considered classics for his perspective within the CSA administration, noted on November 13, 1862: "It will mortify Republicans, hereafter, when the smoke clears away, to learn that Gen.Butler was trading supplies for our army during this November, 1862 — and it will surprise our secessionists to learn that our government was trading him cotton!"[567] Butler's financial wranglings were more easily overlooked than his military failings, however. He was finally removed from his Norfolk command in 1864. Even regular soldiers had opinions on the issue. In a chatty letter to "Emma," Charlie writes: "I see by the papers that Old Ben Butler has been sent home at last his falure to take Wilmington has at last convinced the Government and Gen Grant in peticular that he is not fit to have command of an Army, if this had been done long ago it would have been a blessing to the Country."[568]

Although Benjamin Butler is a unique case study, he was by no means alone in his efforts to profit from the war by dealing with the enemy. Thousands of men, military and civilian, also

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[566] Andrew F. Lang, *In the Wake of War: Military Occupation, Emancipation, and Civil War America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017):100.

[567] J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866): 189.

[568] Charlie (unknown last name) to Emma Leach, January 12, 1864, from camp near Washington D.C. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.023.

pursued profits in this tumultuous time, according to Ludwell Johnson. Civilian-military rings included Assistant Treasury Secretary George Harrington, Tom Corwin, Edwin D. Morgan, the business consortium of E. Parkman, Brooks and Co., which worked tightly with General Kirby Smith, and of course Lincoln confidant Thurlow Weed, and Hanson Risley, who also worked in the Treasury. Citing Lincoln's Attorney General Edward Bates, Johnson concludes that the corrupting effects of war profiteering rubbed both ways. "Edward Bates thought the war corrupted the men. It was, in fact, a reciprocal process. The men also corrupted the war."[569] Butler merely stands out because of his brashness as a well-connected politician and military commander taking advantage of a unique situation.

In his study of the process, historian Andrew Lang attributes the problem to the disillusionment soldiers felt during the occupation efforts when they were assigned to captured cities like New Orleans or Memphis. "When northern males selflessly left their private lives to serve and defend the nation, they imagined grand campaigns and heroic battlefield exploits. When they instead found themselves assigned to garrisons, soldiers realized the mundane, inglorious duties of occupation did not conform to their imagined vision of military service."[570] Bored, embittered, and witnessing the incredible profits being made all around them, soldiers and officers turned to trade across lines.

Butler critic Marcus Pomeroy penned *Life and Public Services of Benjamin F. Butler,* almost immediately after the war, probably in an attempt to quash any post-war political

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[569] Ludwell H. Johnson, "Northern Profit and Profiteers: The Cotton Rings of 1864-1865," *Civil War History* 12, no. 2 (June 1966): 115.

[570] Andrew F. Lang, *In the Wake of War: Military Occupation, Emancipation, and Civil War America*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017):103.

aspirations of Butler's. Pomeroy hardly needed to exaggerate what was by then public record. In regards to the cotton trade Butler did control the port of New Orleans and seized incoming wares and auctioned them off to profit himself, his family, and friends. Pomeroy summarized Butler's part in the venture as blatantly dishonest: "The money thus obtained would be divided between General Butler and the other thieves, and in this way his fortune rose as if by magic. The occupation of New Orleans by the United States troops with General Butler in command, gave the villain ample fields for his labors."[571] Although damning, Pomeroy's efforts to expose Butler made little impact on the general's post-war career. Butler served five non-consecutive terms in congress, and was elected governor of Massachusetts. A failed bid for president ended his political career in the 1880s.

In examining the rationale of men like Butler, business historian David Surdam summarizes: "the lure of spectacular profits proved too much for even patriotic men." These men likely believed obtaining much-needed cotton was worthwhile for Northern society, and "each individual trader probably thought that his 'mite' of trade did not particularly injure the Union cause while making him wealthy," according to Surdam[572] As rumors and reports of the Butler brothers' various schemes made their way back to Washington, Lincoln debated removing Butler from New Orleans. However, wary of the general's political influence in New England, Lincoln waited until after the mid-term election to send replacement General Nathaniel Banks to Louisiana. Lincoln did not forewarn Butler. Angry and bitter, Butler reluctantly left New Orleans

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[571] Marcus Mills Pomeroy, *The Life and Public Services of Benjamin F. Butler: Major-General in the Army and Leader of the Republican Party* (New York: s.n., 1868): 21.
[572] David Surdam, "Traders or Traitors: Northern Cotton Trading During the Civil War," *Business and Economic History* 28, No. 2 (Winter 1999): 306.

at the end of 1862, after a prolonged departure. In early 1863, he spent several weeks lobbying cabinet and legislative offices in an effort to regain his former command. During one meeting with the president, Lincoln offered control over Grant's armies as a salve to Butler's wounded pride, but the general refused.[573] Butler insisted that only New Orleans could make him happy. After a short stint back in New England, he was reassigned to Virginia. Regardless of where he went, however, traders on both sides of the battle lines got rich. "There can be no doubt that a very extensive trade with the Confederacy was carried on in the Department of Virginia and North Carolina during Butler's tenure of command. This trade was extremely profitable for northern merchants and their coadjutors, and was of significant help to the Confederate Bureau of Subsistence."[574] Despite his aid, Southerners continued to harbor ill-will toward Butler.

At the southernmost point of the Mississippi River — and the opposite end of the philosophical spectrum regarding the issue of trade — William T. Sherman assumed command of the former Confederate city of Memphis, Tennessee in July 1862, two months after Butler first arrived in New Orleans. To illustrate the difference in command styles, shortly after his arrival Sherman issued General Orders No. 72 with an eye toward reining in friction between the military and the former rebels in the city. The first article deals with houses permitting "noise, drunkenness, and fighting," which Sherman terms a "military nuisance." The order states that the first method of mitigation will be seizing the contents of the house and giving all the liquor to the army hospitals. "If the nuisance cannot thus be suppressed the house will be burned or pulled

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[573] Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997):227.

[574] Ludwell H. Johnson, "Contraband Trade During the Last Year of the Civil War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49, no. 4 (March 1963): 646.

down." Any rioting, "will be promptly suppressed by blows, the bayonet, or firing when necessary."[575] Unlike Butler, Sherman did not dally with subtle or vague wording.

Memphis residents generally sympathized with the Confederacy so the Union sought to win the populace over by encouraging business and normalcy, albeit under Union control. Sherman acceded to the orders, but grumbled about the policy in letters to his superiors, and later in his memoirs.

> The Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Chase, was extremely anxious at that particular time to promote the purchase of cotton, because each bale was worth, in gold, about three hundred dollars, and answered the purpose of coin in our foreign exchanges. He therefore encouraged the trade, so that hundreds of greedy speculators flocked down the Mississippi, and resorted to all sorts of measures to obtain cotton from the interior.[576]

In 1864, Lincoln tried to explain the reasoning behind these decisions, stating it was better for the U.S. government to try to reduce the rebel planter's profits by trading for his cotton directly, rather than letting profits escalate on the open markets in New York or Boston: "Better give him guns for it, than let him, as now, get both guns and ammunition for it."[577] Sherman the soldier rigidly preferred the option of giving the enemy nothing whatsoever.

Responding to direct orders from Washington, Sherman reopened trade on Memphis's Mississippi River docks. Since cotton was selling for $300 per bale in New York, or about seven times the pre-war price, a veritable cotton boom broke out in the city.[578] Sherman wrote

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[575] General Orders No. 72, Headquarters, Fifth Division, Memphis, Aug. 14, 1862, signed Maj. Gen. W.T. Sherman. O.R. Ser. I, Vol. 17 pt. II, p. 173.

[576] William T. Sherman, *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 715.

[577] Abraham Lincoln to Edward R.S. Canby, Washington D.C., Dec. 12, 1864. Abraham Lincoln, Roy P. Basler, ed. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, vol. 8* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953): 165.

[578] This price, cited in Sherman's letters to his superiors, comes out to about 75 cents per pound for a bale weighing 400 pounds. Prior to the war, cotton sold for about 10 cents per pound. To put this into perspective, one bale of cotton sold for twice the *annual* pay of a Union private.

numerous letters to Treasury Secretary Chase and military commanders regarding his dislike of the trade, which he felt "complicated" matters by allowing enemies to be treated as friends. "When one nation is at war with another, all the people of the one are enemies of the other: then the rules are plain and easy of understanding," Sherman wrote.[579] Sherman's logic was clear-cut and simple. His priority was winning the war, not hearts and minds.

One of Sherman's concerns was furnishing the enemy with gold and treasury notes, which he believed helped supply resistance. The money went to guerrillas, who used it to purchase salt, bacon, powder, firearms, percussion-caps, etc. "worth as much as gold," for the Confederates, Sherman argued.[580] In another letter, Sherman complained to Chase: "We cannot carry on war and trade with a people at the same time."[581] In that same missive, he points out the usefulness of gold to the Confederates: "I declare it impossible to keep such articles, be they salt, powder, lead, or anything from reaching the South. Also, gold will purchase arms and ammunition at Nassau, in the Bahamas, and you know that one vessel out of three can run the blockade." Sherman's protests changed nothing in Washington, where attention was more frequently focused on the economy and international relations, including the specter of British or French involvement in the war.

Another complaint of Sherman's dealt with supplying salt to the Confederates. In a letter to Grant, Sherman explains that he had a captain brought up on charges for trading salt for

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[579] William T. Sherman, *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 715

[580] William T. Sherman, *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 718

[581] William T. Sherman to Salmon Chase, Aug. 11, 1862, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records*, Series III, Vol. II (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899): 349.

cotton. "I will have the captain tried by a military commission for aiding and abetting the enemy by furnishing them with salt wherewith to cure bacon, a contraband article...What use is carrying on war while our people are supplying arms and the sinews of war?"[582] Sherman was a West Point graduate, but he worked in Louisiana before the war as the superintendent of a boy's academy. He understood how important salt was for both armies and civilians in temperate climes. "Thousands of barrels of salt and millions of dollars had been dispersed; and I have no doubt that Bragg's Army at Tupelo, and Van Dorn's at Vicksburg, received enough salt to make bacon, without which they could not have moved their armies in mass; and a due supply of cartridges, have also been got, I am equally satisfied," he complained.[583] Sherman never succeeded in stopping the cotton trade while in Memphis, but he declared cash a form of contraband and restricted it from going beyond the Union-controlled banks of the Mississippi River in an effort to mitigate the benefit to the enemy.[584]

Confederates also cursed the cotton speculation in Memphis, where the lure of easy money proved too much of a temptation for some Southerners. A few months after Sherman reopened the cotton trade in Memphis, Robert Read wrote to Confederate States Secretary of

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[582] William T. Sherman to General Ulysses S. Grant, Aug. 17, 1862, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 17, pt II, pg. 178. See also, William T. Sherman to William Halleck, Aug. 18, 1862, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records*, Series III, Vol. 2, p. 402.

[583] William T. Sherman, *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co. 1890; Ebook version, Project Gutenberg, 2006): 719. Sherman is referring to Braxton Bragg, who was then Confederate commander of the Army of Mississippi; and Earl Van Dorn, commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, C.S.A.

[584] A brief explanation may be in order: In 1862 Memphis, currencies included gold, Confederate and state notes, Union notes, specie (coins), and cotton, which could be traded as if it were a currency. Confederate money was nominally illegal after Union occupation, although still used for smaller purchases, limiting Southern transactions to Union dollars (which many did not have), gold or specie (hard to get), cotton or bartering. By restricting Union cash from moving into the interior, Sherman was attempting to limit the ways Confederates could obtain goods from Northern farmers or foreign traders other than exchanging cotton.

War George W. Randolph that Southerners were offering up information to Union officers for permits to trade cotton across the lines. "Sherman, who commands at Memphis, could not desire a more potent agency in our midst for the benefit of the Federal cause... The worst features of this illicit trade develop themselves in first giving constant and prompt information of all our army movements in the department to the enemy."[585] Read believed that trading cotton with the enemy rewarded bad behavior and seduced farmers into complicity with the Union. He also warned that Sherman allowed the use of counterfeit Confederate notes, undermining the value of Southern currency by half, and leading Union merchants to only accept silver or Tennessee currency for food and supplies. The result of that system put Confederate loyalists at a disadvantage.[586] Purists on both sides agreed that trading with the enemy was an evil to be expunged.

Estimates on how much cotton was smuggled out through the blockade vary widely among economics historians, with Stanley Lebergott estimating 446,000 bales during the four years of the war, Frank Owsley figuring a million, and Stephen Wise asserting 350,000.[587] However, by comparing these four-year estimates to the 3.8 million bales exported to Europe in 1860 alone, the blockade's impact is evident.[588] Lebergott reasons that Southern planters lost about half of every crop to the war's destruction. Although the war interrupted farming, he

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[585] Robert H. Read to George W. Randolph, Oct. 7, 1862, O.R. Ser. I, Vol. 52, pt. II, pg. 371-2.
[586] Robert H. Read to George W. Randolph, Oct. 7, 1862, O.R. Ser. I, Vol. 52, pt. II, pg. 372.
[587] Lebergott, Stanley. "Through the Blockade: The Profitability and Extent of Cotton Smuggling, 1861-1865," *Journal of Economic History*, 41, No. 4 (Dec. 1981): 883; Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931): 250; Stephen R. Wise. *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989): 221.
[588] Sven Beckert. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014): 246.

argues that Southern states still managed to produce about 6.8 million bales of cotton during those four years. He believes just under one million bales were traded to the north, with another 3.3 million destroyed by burning, hidden in swamps, or lost at sea.[589] Of the cotton smuggled out, he concludes about 500,000 bales went to Britain, and about one-fourth of the production, or 1.8 million bales, was held by planters and sold after the war.[590]

Another unknown factor is how much cotton passed through Texas into the Gulf of Mexico and thence to Northern and European mills. According to international treaty, the border between Texas and Mexico sits in the middle of the Rio Grande River. In 1861, the Confederate government passed a law restricting cotton trading to seaports in an effort to control overland smuggling, which would undermine tax revenues. The exception to the rule was Texas, where pressure from Texas representatives kept the trade door ajar. Cotton dealers desperate to avoid the blockade formed long mule-drawn caravans to haul cotton to the southern tip of Texas. From there, the bales were loaded onto steamers bearing international flags and safely sailed past Union blockade ships at Boca Chica, the mouth of the river.

Both British and French warships anchored nearby ensured the peaceful progression of goods in and out of the mouth of the river, according to Walter E. Wilson, a scholar of Texas commerce during the Civil War. "These foreign warships and international diplomatic pressures forced the U.S. fleet and its Army garrison at Boca Chica (after November 1863) into a more passive role. They had to sit and watch as hundreds of thousands of cotton bales sailed away to

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[589] Stanley Lebergott, "Through the Blockade: The Profitability and Extent of Cotton Smuggling, 1861-1865," *Journal of Economic History* 41, No. 4 (Dec. 1981): 883.
[590] Stanley Lebergott, "Through the Blockade: The Profitability and Extent of Cotton Smuggling, 1861-1865," *Journal of Economic History* 41, No. 4 (Dec. 1981): 884.

ports in Europe and the United States."[591] Since Matamoros did not keep records, it is unclear how much was shipped through the Texas route. According to Wilson, while other areas were slowly being squeezed to death by the Anaconda strategy, cotton running through Texas escalated as the war progressed.[592] Colonel Spruce Baird recognized the importance of the Texas route to the Confederacy's economy, and recommended reinforcing the route, even at the cost of suspending efforts to retake Fort Brown.

> I further suggest that a portion of the forces designed for that expedition be concentrated, on the line between here and Eagle Pass, that being the shortest line from here to the Rio Grande from which, as a base, you can protect the trade to Mexico — hold the country as low down as Laredo, at least, and by means of the forces you are now raising from exempts, home-guards, and minute-men, keep a strong front towards and threatening Brownsville so as to force the enemy to retain a large force at that place-and, protect this city and intermediate and surrounding country, against raids, giving confidence, and security to the planters and stock raisers at a season when they need it.[593]

A variety of issues prevented Texas from becoming a truly competitive trading port. Obstacles included the shallowness of the river preventing large ships sailing to Matamoros/Brownsville, the lack of railroad lines connecting either of these cities to points north, the long difficult wagon haul through South Texas, and shortages of mule teams, teamsters, and wagons, all of which were needed in the war effort.[594]

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[591] Walter E. Wilson, *Civil War Scoundrels and the Texas Cotton Trade* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2020): 17.

[592] The Union's Anaconda or Boa Constrictor strategy was designed to squeeze the Confederacy, restricting it from trading with the outside. The Texas/Mexico border was one of the loopholes in the plan. Walter E. Wilson, *Civil War Scoundrels and the Texas Cotton Trade* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2020): 16.

[593] Spruce M. Baird "suggesting plan of campaign," January 18, 1864, from Fourth Regiment Headquarters Arizona Brigade, San Antonio, Texas. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No.2002.342.

[594] Walter E. Wilson, *Civil War Scoundrels and the Texas Cotton Trade* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2020): 24.

Even if a trader managed to carry the cotton overland through the South Texas dry lands, across the Mexican border, onto an international ship, and through the twists and turns of the river into the Gulf of Mexico, there was no guarantee it would arrive at its destination. Master's Mate Charles Tillinghast described the capture of a shipload of cotton off the coast of the Yucatan. The steamship U.S. *Tahoma* was off the coast of Mexico getting supplies (and trying to capture three deserters, who had jumped ship), when they came across such a prize.

> Early in the afternoon a sail was reported by the lookout, coming down the Coast. At first we took but little notice of her, as she resembled the vessel we spoke the day previous, but as she neared us, we could see the loom of Cotton Bales on her decks. On she came not dreaming of runing into the hands of an enemy. When she was about a mile off, we fired a shot across her bow, brought her to the wind, sent a boat to her and set the "Stars and Stripes" at her Main. We put a prize crew on board of her, and took her officers and crew on board the St'm'r. She cleared under Confederate colors and papers, from "Matagordo Bay", Texas, bound to some port in the "Bay of Honduras." She is a center board Schooner, registers sixty one tons, and has a cargo of one hundred and fifteen bales good staple cotton.[595]

Regardless of the exact amount of cotton shipped out, we know that trade took place, that cotton's glamour persisted, and that supplies were provided to the rebels as a result. Food, including the essential ingredient salt, arms, clothing, even luxuries like Persian rugs, came in as a result of this trade by sea, river, and land. Trade allowed the Confederacy to resist Union forces for an estimated two years. Given that the war cost an estimated 750,000 lives, it is not unreasonable to assume that cutting off the Confederate suppliers and refusing to trade in cotton for any price might have saved as many as 400,000 lives, and untold billions in infrastructure and destruction. Sadly, we can only speculate about how that might have also impacted the

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[595] Charles Tillinghast to Jennie Kochler, from the gunboat *Tahoma*, July 29, 1862, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.187.10. Cargo of captured ships was auctioned off, with the money being split among the crew according to rank or position.

difficulties and failures of Reconstruction and the ensuing social oppression of freedmen and their descendants. The short-term financial benefits to a few thousand speculators had long-term ramifications for generations of Americans.

Doggedly, Sherman and Grant continued to try to control the trade across lines, which they saw as detrimental to the larger goal of quelling the rebellion and ending the war. Regardless, it was only in the waning days of the war that Lincoln allowed Grant to sever the supply lines to the enemy, according to Johnson. "It was not necessary to feed Lee's army to keep the United States solvent. Yet the trade continued unhampered until March 8, 1865, when Grant protested against the sale of food to the Confederates under cover of the Treasury permits. Lincoln then authorized Grant to suspend all operations of the Treasury trade permits in all places South Eastward of the Alleghenies."[596] Unable to feed his men, and virtually out of humane options, Lee surrendered four weeks later on April 9, 1865.

General Benjamin Butler left New Orleans at the end of 1862, and after extensive lobbying was assigned a command at Norfolk, Virginia, where he ensured the cotton trade for pork, salt and other goods was brisk. In an effort to polish his tarnished war record, Butler concocted a plan to invade Richmond by going up the James River. Unfortunately, his ineptitude proved to be the plan's worst stumbling block and Beauregard easily brushed the Union back from the capital. Another cockamamie scheme to blow up Fort Fisher with a ship full of black powder also proved comically disastrous when the ship blew up almost unnoticed far from the fort's walls. After that, Butler never again served in active duty, and was relieved of command

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[596] Ludwell H. Johnson, "Contraband Trade During the Last Year of the Civil War," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49, no. 4 (March 1963): 640.

after Lincoln's 1864 reelection.[597] Unlike other generals, Butler was never investigated because he had close ties to the Radical Republicans.

Butler's post-war career involved serving in the House of Representatives for five divided terms. During his tenure there, he led the effort to impeach President Andrew Johnson, and was embroiled in many of the scandals plaguing President Ulysses Grant's administration. Among his positive accomplishments, he authored a ground-breaking piece of anti-KKK legislation. He also served a short stint as governor of Massachusetts. Throughout it all, he invested his wealth in a variety of different industrial enterprises and expanded his private law practice with several lucrative branches.[598] When Butler died in 1893 his estate was worth $7 million.[599]

In his post-war years, Sherman continued as a professional soldier until retiring in 1884. When Grant became president, Sherman was appointed Commanding General of the U.S. Army. Much of that period, from 1869-1883, meant suppression of Native American through the various Indian Wars.[600] After retirement, Sherman worked to shore up his legacy by writing a folksy memoir, and delivering humorous anecdote-laden speeches at veteran's reunions. Although Southerners insisted Sherman became rich by pillaging Georgia and the Carolinas, he lived a middle-class retirement in New York City, pursuing his interests in art and theater. He died in 1891 at the age of 71. Sherman memorials include large-scale equestrian monuments in

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[597] Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997):230-234.
[598] Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997):238.
[599] In early twenty-first century terms, it would be the equivalent of $200 million.
[600] As commander, Sherman helped prosecute the Modoc War, Great Souix War, and Nez Perce War, which resulted in these groups being forced onto reservations and losing their lands.

New York and Washington. The M4, or Medium Tank, a common armored vehicle used in World War II, was nicknamed the "Sherman Tank" by British allies.[601] A giant Sequoia tree in California is named the General Sherman. Like Butler, Sherman's name remains reviled in the South.

No picture of food in the Civil War would be complete without a discussion of the significance of sutlers in the soldiers' lives. Although they were accused of trading across lines, most of the trade done by sutlers was within camps on each side. Sutlers were civilian suppliers or authorized peddlers who sold goods to soldiers in camp. They traveled either with the army's own supply wagons or at the rear of the company, but they were last in receiving protection. Unlike other mercantile aspects of the Civil War, sutlers have not received the same levels of scrutiny as gun suppliers, blockade runners, or large-scale traders who worked across lines. Presumably, itinerant grocers simply are not that interesting. Or perhaps this is because the subject is moot, since the position of official sutler ended soon after the war. It may also be due to the lack of famous or notable sutlers, although two sutlers went on to become somewhat famous businessmen. Finally, it is also possible that in the immediate post-war years there was a conscious effort to wipe sutlers from history, since they had a reputation for taking advantage of soldiers. In a collection of blowsy essays on army life, Henry A. Castle wrote "The Sutler had no status on parade, review or inspection… he was totally ignored. He was out of date like the hot biscuit of our ancestors with its yellow saleratus pungency — an auriferous bichloride of alkali.

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[601] Earlier tank models were named the "General Lee," and "General Grant," depending on their turret configurations, but both types were eventually replaced with Sherman tanks. Ironically, considering Sherman's reputation after the burning of Columbia, Sherman-model tanks were susceptible to catching fire.

He was forgotten; full satisfaction guaranteed."[602] The satisfaction, of course, lay in the sutlers being lost to history.

Regardless of the disdain they earned, sutlers remain in the records. *Civil War Sutlers and their Wares*, by Francis A. Lord, gives a general overview of sutlers and their duties. Unfortunately, Lord seldom cites sources, and the greatest contribution is probably his compilation of the names of sutlers who served in the Union regiments. This unique appendix is one third of the entire book.[603] A more recent contribution is that of John E. Tobey and Nicolas H. Ellis, *U.S. Army Sutler, 1861-1865*. Unusual in appearance — it is oversized, soft-bound, and full of illustrations — it is also well-researched with solid sources. It neatly and simply answers the basic questions of sutling, that is, who these people were, what they did, and what they sold.[604] Like Lord's effort, it also features a list of Civil War sutlers. Adding to the preservation of their legacy, several small books focus on sutler coins and tokens, the collecting of which is evidently similar to stamp or coin collecting. Periodically, articles appear on sutlers, most of which repeat the same refrains of the books previously mentioned, that is, what sutlers did and their reputations.

Sutlers only merit a few pages in John D. Billings' classic memoir of camp life *Hardtack and Coffee*, and he recalls them as purveyors of dry goods and "goods that answered the

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[602] Henry A. Castle, *The Army Mule and Other War Sketches* (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill Company, 1897): 112. Accessed through the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, April 2021.

[603] Francis A. Lord, *Civil War Sutlers and their Wares*, (Cranberry, N.J.: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1969).

[604] John E. Tobey and Nicolas H. Ellis, *U.S. Army Sutler, 1861-1865* (Wellsboro, PA: Milatus Publications, 2012). The book is unfortunately not easily obtained. Ellis sometimes offers copies on on-line auction sites.

demands of the stomach."[605] In 1970, Donald Spear wrote a nice overview on sutlers for *Civil War History*, and he also mentions this dearth of scholarly attention. "Moving literally in the shadow of the army, the sutler has remained figuratively in the shadows of history."[606] Spear's metaphor may be more useful than he realized at the time, since the feelings for sutlers also parallel that of army corruption in both the minds of regular soldiers and congress. Congressional investigations looked into accusations that sutlers were involved in spying, trading across lines, providing goods to the enemy, particularly food, and putting profits above patriotism. Possibly as a result of those kinds of allegations, the sutler position was eliminated in 1867, two years after the war's end. The vacuum led to the creation of post exchanges or the PX, still an institution on most military bases where soldiers can obtain hygiene products and groceries for fair prices.

According to laws written during the War of 1812 (and altered only slightly for the Civil War), sutlers were the only merchants allowed in camp, but that unfettered access meant they were regulated, forbidden from overcharging for their goods or providing alcohol at any price to enlisted men.[607] The law also states that sutlers would be appointed by an uninterested committee, one per regiment. In reality, sutlers often overcharged the men, bribed or bought their appointments, and supplied alcohol in various forms. Men who went into debt with the regimental sutler saw their small paychecks greatly diminished when payday finally rolled

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[605] John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life* (Boston: George M. Smith & Co., 1887): 224.

[606] Donald P. Spear, "Sutler in the Union Army," *Civil War History*16, No. 2 (June 1970): 121.

[607] They could sell alcohol to officers, which allowed sutlers license to bring it into camp. From there, bottles often met with accidents, thefts, or detours on the way to the officers' tents.

around, since soldiers only received the leftovers after the sutler was paid.[608] Billings recalled it left a bad taste in many mouths. "Hundreds of soldiers when the paymaster came round had the pleasure of signing away the entire amount due them, whether two, three, or four months' pay, to settle claims of the sutler upon them."[609] In return, soldiers shoplifted, dodged the bills, and sometimes even rioted against sutlers. From the troop's perspective, these acts of petty and major theft were just retribution for being overcharged and underfed. They could hardly take their anger out on the government, but a sutler was a handy target, and relatively powerless.

Sadly, in many instances the sutler was the only alternative to a strict diet of hard tack bread and salted pork, sometimes for weeks or months on end. Men who were restricted to camp, unable to venture into surrounding enemy towns or cities, became a sutler's captive market. In a letter to his father, Stacy T. Manley of New Hampshire wrote "If our Sutler comes up, we talk of having, an Oyster Dinner, Christmas, only $1.00 Per Can."[610] Small luxuries, such as fresh fruit, vegetables, pies, sugar, molasses, bread, dairy, razors, paper or ink either came through the mail from home or were purchased from a sutler. The significance of these merchants in the soldiers' lives is complicated, varying almost from person to person. Soldiers loved them, hated them, relied on them, and despised that dependence. The sutlers and the soldiers also preyed upon one another mercilessly.

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[608] Through most of the war, an average Union soldier only made $13 per month, and pay came infrequently. It was not unusual for "payday" to come once in four or six months.

[609] John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life* (Boston: George M. Smith & Co., 1887): 225.

[610] Stacy T. Manley to his father, Dec. 22, 1863, Camp on Dumpling Mountain, (Bedford County, VA), *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1997.048.

A typical attitude is that of Union soldier Gilbert Sullivan who wrote to his mother in 1862 from a camp near Alexandria that he paid "some old women" do his laundry rather than giving his money to the sutlers "as more than ¾ of this regt does (the sutlers are a curse to the army)."[611] In a subsequent letter when referring to the sutler, he adds parenthetically "I would like to hang the lot."[612] While it is unclear how Sullivan's personal grievance with the sutler originated, typical sutler-related complaints revolved around prices, the dubious quality of goods/food, and lack of specific items. Sutlers were even accused of poisoning soldiers by using rancid lard to fry hand pies, in addition to overcharging them. Billings saves extra ink for writing about the sutler's pies.[613] "Who can forget them? 'Moist and indigestible below, tough and indestructible above, with untold horrors within.'" Billings recalled that the pies cost twenty-five cents and had too little filling at that low price.[614] Despite their substandard quality, the soldiers devoured them by the thousands. McDonald Smith wrote to his wife in 1861 that "our Sutler has just arrived with a wagon load of Pies &c & there is a great crowd around him & from appearances he will soon be sold out."[615]

The attractions of sutler's wares were the same as those of modern fast food: variety and convenience. In his composite portrait of *Billy Yank*, Bell Wiley writes that sutlers were

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[611] Gilbert Sullivan to his mother, January 23, 1862, from Camp California near Alexandria, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. Accession No. 1998.111.20.

[612] Gilbert Sullivan to his mother, March 16, 1862, from Camp California near Alexandria, Virginia. Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1998.111.31.

[613] According to letters, the pies were a pastry four to six inches across, containing either a sweet or savory filling and then fried. The prices ranged from 25 cents to two dollars, depending on the situation and location.

614 John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life* (Boston: George M. Smith & Co., 1887): 227.

615 J. McDonald Smith to his wife, Oct. 20, 1861, "one &1/4 miles from Great Falls," Leesburg Pike, Fairfax, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 1996.066.01.

welcomed in Union camps, although he also notes the complicated relationship. "Sutlers also helped relieve the scantiness and monotony of camp fare, but their cakes, pies, butter, cheese, apples, and other delicacies were offered at prices which frequently placed them beyond the reach of the common soldier."[616] In his testimony to Congress, General Benjamin Butler urged a ban on sutlers selling anything but notions, tobacco, and basic ingredients.

> Preserved meats, dessicated vegetables, solidified milk; those things are all well enough, for the soldiers will not eat them without some preparation. They generally want something they can take in their hands and eat standing. If you restrict your sutlers in that way, they would be a good institution. It is true, a soldier may use tobacco to excess, but he will not buy too much thread, needles, pins, tape, buttons &c. But if you let him, he will continue to buy too much to eat and drink. If you impose this restriction you will not have your sutlers make too much money out of the men.[617]

It is ironic that Butler criticizes the business of sutlers, since within a year, Butler would find himself accused of taking advantage of his position to trade across lines and make millions in personal profits as commander of the captured city of New Orleans.

In addition to high prices, the sutlers frustrated their customers because of lack of stock. E.S. Watts writes in his diary about the lack of tobacco. "We have been out of smoking tobacco several days – and there is none to be had. All the sutlers are out. It is very strange. Here we have an army of at least 80,000 men, and out of that number – 79,500 are constant smokers – and there is no tobacco to be had."[618] Castle observed the same problem in his essay written thirty years after the war's end. "When he (the sutler) was wanted he was seldom there, and when he

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616 Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991): 232.

617 Benjamin Butler testimony taken January 15, 1862. United States Congress, Report of the Joint Committee, B.F. Wade, chairman. From the *Making of America Books*, University of Michigan, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/.

618 Diary of E.S. Watts, Nov. 16, 1863, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas, Accession No.2000.230.01.

was there he seldom had what was wanted," concluding: "Do what he could, the Sutler was ever fated to get himself disliked."[619]

Confederate regiments also had designated sutlers, and the rebels' complaints echoed those of Union troops. In the same letter in which he advises his wife to purchase a young boy to help around the house, Confederate officer John Weidemeyer writes that he must buy two pair of pants, two shirts and underwear and expects the total to cost about $50. "Everything in the way of clothing here when it can be had (which is only from the sutlers) is extremely high."[620] Since prices throughout the Confederacy were consistently higher than in the North, it is unclear if the costs he quotes are because of chronic shortages, or because the clothes came through the hands of a sutler.

Occasionally the men's grievances spilled over into violence. Attacking a sutler was perceived as fair game in some camps. T.O. Webster wrote home in autumn 1862, complaining about the prices of food from the sutlers, stating apples cost as much as 50 cents per fruit, and a pound of butter as high as 40 cents to a dollar. "These sutlers and pedlars are fair famed robbers but they get robed once in awhile. some times the soaldiers gets mad and a lot of them gather around their wagon and all pitch in and tip it over and then help their selvs to all he has got without pay or regard to law."[621] In another account, Edward Henry of the 96th Pennsylvania Volunteers describes his regiment's treatment of sutler Daniel Larer of Pottsville. "He came here

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[619] Henry A. Castle, *The Army Mule and Other War Sketches* (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill Company, 1897): 102, 110. Accessed through the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, April 2021.

[620] John Weidemeyer to Helen Weidemeyer, July 16, 1862, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas, Accession No. 2004.379.

[621] T.O. Webster to his wife and children, October 31, 1862, Camp Henry near Buslin, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas, Accession No. 1999.160.115.

some weeks ago with a schooner load of goods, thinking he could charge any price and get it, but the Regt had been gulled to much."[622] Even by sutler standards, Larer's demands were very high. He asked nine dollars a pound for butter, a dollar for a dozen eggs, and five dollars for a hat that would sell for one dollar back in Pennsylvania, according to an outraged Henry. Considering an average infantryman made $13 per month, and many of them needed to send money home to support their families, the prices were outrageous, and the men meted out their own justice:

> On tuesday night the boys to the number of about fifty surrounded his cribb and commenced shelling it with bricks stones, clubs &c which so scared our worthy sutler that he took to his heels and never stopped until he got two or three miles from camp, leaving his coat with a hundred dollars in it in his tent. when he came back he found he had been completely gutted out of five hundred Dollars worth of goods besides the money in his coat he tried to find out who done it but nobody knew.[623]

Larer evidently complained to the regiment's general but was told collection of the debt was the sutler's problem and he should "collect it the best way he could and learn a lesson in the future." The sutler returned to Pennsylvania rather than stay with the regiment, according to Henry.

It is unclear how often this kind of thing took place, since sutlers were not official members of the army, and in many cases the officers ignored complaints and raids. Billings saw it as a common risk for sutlers, although he calls it being "cleaned out." In those raids, a group of men would simply throw up the sides of a sutler's tent and take what they wanted in the dark of night, hiding it for later consumption. "Sometimes this raiding was done in the spirit of mischief, by unprincipled men, sometimes to get satisfaction for what they considered his exorbitant

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[622] Edward Henry, of Company D, 96th Penn. Vols, May 29, 1863, in camp near White Oak Church, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.121.

[623] Edward Henry, of Company D, 96th Penn. Vols, May 29, 1863, in camp near White Oak Church, Virginia. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.121.

charges. Sometimes the officers of a regiment sympathized in such a movement."[624] If the officers secretly agreed with the enlisted men, then the official search for the stolen articles was conducted by allegedly "blind and stupid" officers, unwilling to put forth any effort in finding the stolen items.

Attacks and thefts seem like a hefty toll for small merchants, but the risks were worth it for many. In his study of Union sutlers, Spear found some sutlers made profits of forty to sixty percent. One or two years of following a regiment could net a merchant thousands of dollars, more than a scrupulous businessman could make in ten years running a small grocery. The challenges included gaining the position, which often meant bribery; funding the start-up; sourcing the goods, which was not always easy in the South and West; keeping the men's goodwill; and finally, there was the fact that sutlers, like all camp followers, were often in the line of fire. Sutlers captured in war ended up in prisoner-of-war camps but lacked the same protections as officers and enlisted men.

Billings notes that for all the hatred and vitriol directed their way, the sutlers did serve a useful purpose. "I am of the opinion that the sutlers did not always receive the consideration that they deserved…Such a personage was considered a convenience if not a necessity at military posts and in campaigns, and certain privileges were accorded him."[625] Those privileges included the ability to move freely without hindrance, and to maintain a virtual monopoly in his small marketplace with little oversight over pricing and quality of merchandise.

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[624] John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life* (Boston: George M. Smith & Co., 1887): 229.
[625] John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life* (Boston: George M. Smith & Co., 1887): 227.

Although few sutlers achieved any fame during the war, two sutlers became notable businessmen after the war: James A. Bailey, a circus entrepreneur who partnered with P.T. Barnum to form the Barnum and Bailey Circus, worked briefly as a sutler's clerk during the war; and Joseph Spiegel went on to establish the Spiegel Catalogue Company.[626] Joseph Spiegel's work as a sutler is described in the letters written by his brother, Union Colonel Marcus Spiegel, commander of the Ohio 120th Volunteers. Born in Germany, both Marcus and Joseph Spiegel moved to the United States and became peddlers and shopkeepers. The brothers were also reasonably well-educated, as befitted a rabbi's sons. When the war broke out, Marcus was stirred by patriotism for his new-found country and joined the army as a second lieutenant in 1861. After attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel, Marcus helped his younger brother Joseph, nicknamed "Josey," obtain the appointment as regimental sutler. To understand the money involved, Marcus made $167 a month as a lieutenant colonel, while "Josey" made $150-$200 per *day* as a sutler.[627] Marcus estimates his brother had made $4,000 in his first two months with the regiment. As an officer, Marcus could not overtly participate in the business, but he reassured his wife: "You need not be alarmed; I mean to get my share in due time."[628] In early 1864, Marcus and Joseph made plans to start a dry-goods business after the war, using the profits from the sutling operation, but Marcus never saw that dream become reality. Mortally wounded during a

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[626] "James A. Bailey, King of Circus Men, Is Dead," *(New York Times*, April 12, 1906):1-2; and Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman, eds. *Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel*, (Columbus: Kent State University Press, 1985): 339.

[627] For comparison's sake, enlisted men made $13 per month. Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman, eds. *Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel,* (Columbus: Kent State University Press, 1985): 263.

628 Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman, eds. *Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel*, (Columbus: Kent State University Press, 1985): 275.

river ambush by rebel forces, he died May 4, 1864.[629] Joseph was captured in the same attack and remained a Confederate prisoner until the end of the war, ineligible for a prisoner exchange because of his civilian status.

After the war, Joseph Spiegel returned home to Chicago and started a small dry goods store, which he turned into a national catalogue company around the turn of the century.[630] It is impossible to know if Joseph Spiegel's work as a sutler incurred the same kind of resentment of typical sutlers, but it is likely. His business never attracted any violence, but it is difficult to believe that handsome profits by the colonel's brother escaped criticism from the troops.

Sutlers were also implicated in a number of bad-faith schemes beyond high prices and low-quality products. Sutler's wagons were frequently captured by the enemy in the natural course of the war, but some of the peddlers were accused of selling the entire wagon to the Confederates in illicit trades across lines, and then claiming a second profit from the government for their losses. Occasionally, sutlers were accused of spying or conspiring, and some arrests appear in the Official Records. Because they were frequently gone from camp on resupplying trips, sutlers remained suspicious characters to the men who already resented them. More common was the practice of working with quartermasters to steal federal supplies and resell them through a sutler's tent for exorbitant profits. In these schemes, sutlers received low-priced goods without having to leave camp, while the quartermasters profited handsomely from their

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629 Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman, eds. *Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel,* (Columbus: Kent State University Press, 1985): 336.

630 Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman, eds. *Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel,* (Columbus: Kent State University Press, 1985): 339.

positions.[631] Sutlers were also known to bribe army wagon masters to haul their goods for them, saving them the freight costs and ensuring their goods arrived safely.

Although historians are urged to resist the temptation to judge historical figures, people of the day had no such restrictions. Just as General Butler objected to the sutlers' profits when he testified before congress, Marcus Spiegel complained to his wife about the corruption of General Banks. Banks replaced Butler as commander of New Orleans, and, like his predecessor, he was also accused of trading food for cotton with the enemy to make extravagant profits off his position. "Our Army is demoralized and disheartened up there (on the Red River Campaign) & if Banks is not removed I know not what will follow. He pays more attention to Secesh and Cotton Speculators to please them then he does military."[632] From their respective positions, Butler and Spiegel each saw the other as a major problem for the Union's morale and well-being, and both were right.

Corruption, major or minor, remains an ugly smudge on the fabric of the war, and food and money provided twin energy sources for it. On the macro level, Confederates traded cotton to obtain food, tempting Union civilians and military men to betray their country and extending the suffering by hundreds of thousands of casualties. Simultaneously, on the micro level, civilians took advantage of vulnerable and hungry soldiers with overpriced food and drink, in many cases with the cooperation of officers and politicians who sold them their positions. Remarkably, after more than 150 years, the corruption remains somewhat of a niche topic, buried

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[631] Instances of these kinds of schemes are described in the Official Records. For specific examples, see OR, Series I,Vol. 10, Vol. XXV, Vol. XVI, Vol. XXXIX, XVII.

[632] Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman, eds. *Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel*, (Columbus: Kent State University Press, 1985): 334.

beneath the hypocrisy of the post-war years, wherein both sides proclaimed their moral righteousness. Even as the South insisted it was merely defending Southern homes and "state's rights," and the Union claimed to be upholding the Founders' promise of equality by freeing the enslaved, the thieves quietly tiptoed away.

CHAPTER 9

RESISTING

A full year after Benjamin Butler supposedly stomped out resistance among the feisty belles of New Orleans, a Union soldier named Lyman writes to his sister Martha that the women were resisting Union authority by singing, waving their rebel-embroidered handkerchiefs, and taking food to Confederate prisoners.

> The Ladies (if you can call them so) wore secesh badges on thare Bonets and sing the Boni blue Flag quite often there is one now in the City who waved a secesh Hankerchief in the face of one of the Officers in the City thare was a little Reb Flag in one corner of it he took her to the Provost-Marshals and he ordered he to come to his Office every day for Thirty days and report herself… the Wimen make most of the trouble in the City…at the Custom House in the City they keep the Reb Prisners and these she-things go every day with all the best the Markets affords for them to Eat.[633]

The letter is notable for a variety of reasons, including the fact that the New Orleans women were not deterred by occupation or threats from Union generals or provosts. More interesting perhaps is that they used food to support the imprisoned Confederate prisoners and waged their own propaganda campaign using music and fashion statements as their weapons, much to the annoyance of the soldiers.

Food was a weapon often wielded by women during the war as a means of resisting both Union and Confederate authority. This section seeks to parse out how food became a means for resistance as well as an excuse for domination. It also looks at how women were the victims of food policies. Throughout this section is the persistent question of how women were affected,

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[633] Lyman (unknown last name) to Martha, March 31, 1863, Camp Farr, New Orleans, Louisiana. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.068.

how they withstood, and how food was tied inextricably to their positions as the default bread-winners during the war. As part of this proposition, it also explores the Southern bread riots, positing additional theories on why they happened when and where they did.

When Sherman's foragers came through Georgia and the Carolinas in 1864, the advice from Richmond was for civilians to destroy supplies in front of them. Women were naturally reluctant to burn their food, but they did use a different method of preserving it from the enemy — they ate it. In her book about Sherman's troops in the Carolinas, Jacqueline Glass Campbell wrote that women would consume the best food — sweet sorghum puddings with plenty of butter — when it looked like the Union army was approaching. "If the enemy threat was imminent, her family wished to eat all the delicacies it had...In Richmond, these desserts were named 'Sherman puddings.'"[634] In a more blatant act of defiance, women fed the Confederates who came to their doors, whom they saw as both their defenders and surrogates of their own men in uniform.[635] For example, John Kennedy Coleman wrote in his diary of the women of Richmond who prepared for the men a holiday feast. "The long talked of Christmas dinner has come at last. Three turkeys, two ducks, one chicken and about ninety loaves, for three hundred and fifty soldiers."[636] Although this was not enough to satisfy all the men, according to Coleman, it was the principle of feeding "their" men that mattered. Historian Lorien Foote points out that Spartanburg County provided cover to "bands of deserters from the Confederate army, sustained

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[634] Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003): 31.
[635] James I. Robertson Jr., ed. *Soldier of Southwestern Virginia: The Civil War Letters of Captain John Preston Sheffey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004):121.
[636] John Kennedy Coleman diary, Jan. 1, 1865, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2004.441.01.

and provisioned by a network of households."[637] In his study of guerrillas, Joseph Beilein argues that women were forced into this position because they were the heads of their households. Not only did they have to support their families, but they felt obligated to support the war effort by feeding and clothing soldiers, and providing information about enemy troop movements. It was the women in the middle of the social hierarchy who partnered in the guerrilla work, that is young men and white women.[638] It was this common practice of feeding Confederates that gave Sherman sufficient excuse to take all the resources of a region, leaving women, children, and newly freed people with nothing to eat.

The American rules of war said that fighting should be reserved for warriors, while civilians, particularly women and children, should be left unmolested.[639] However, as the Union progressed South, they found themselves fighting guerrillas without uniforms or allegiance who were being regularly supplied by women. "The concepts of civilization and savagery shaped the Federal military response to guerrillas and to the citizens who supported them."[640] Sherman referred to guerrillas as "wild beasts," and ordered the execution of any who were captured. The food, of course, was seized as a potential energy source for the enemy.

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[637] Lorien Foote. "Rethinking the Confederate Home Front." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 7, no. 3 (2017): 446–65.

[638] Joseph Beilein, *Bushwhackers: Guerrilla Warfare, Manhood, and the Households in Civil War Missouri* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2016): 24-25.

[639] John Fabian Witt, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History*, (New York: Free Press, 2012): 139. The ancient codes of war conduct required protecting women, children, and the elderly. For the most part, the Civil War code drafted by Francis Lieber, one of Abraham Lincoln's military advisors, agreed with that principle. However, while Lieber's 157 rules of war proscribe torture, poison and cruelty, they do authorize starving civilians, and the destruction of civilian property in order to end the conflict faster or more efficiently.

[640] Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003): 26

Civil War scholars differ in how they view Sherman's effect on women's lives. Drew Gilpin Faust posits that the invasion and domination broke the spirit of women already exhausted and overwhelmed by the war. However, Jacqueline Campbell argues that Southern women, like male Confederate loyalists, forged new resolve while witnessing the atrocities of Sherman and his men. She finds agreement with authors William Blair and Gary Gallagher that there is no direct link between disillusionment and disloyalty. Hence, the perception of victimization steeled Confederates to resist. This idea of an innocent put-upon South invaded by rapacious savages sowed the seeds of the Lost Cause ideology, reaping a long harvest of hatred and oppression. As numerous studies have demonstrated, Sherman became the most visible example of Northern evil versus Southern good in the Lost Cause, the post-war myth-building of the war.[641] Briefly put, the Lost Cause is the post-bellum justification of the rebellion as a Southern defense of state's rights, not slavery.[642] Under that noble camouflage, the Confederate rebellion was made out to be the heroic defense of families and homes in the face of jealous and greedy Union troops pillaging the South.[643] Sherman's men's foraging actions unwittingly provided ample evidence to shore up the lie.

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[641] For recent examples, see Anne Sarah Rubin, *Through the Heart of Dixie: Sherman's March and American Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); John Wesley Moody III, *Demon of the Lost Cause: General William Tecumseh Sherman and the Writing of Civil War History* (dissertation, Georgia State University, 2008); Noah Andre Trudeau, *Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008); Edward Caudill and Paul Ashdown, *Sherman's March in Myth and Memory* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008); an older example, although exemplary for its writing, is Francis Kajencki's master's thesis 'Uncle Billy's' War: General William T. Sherman's Changing Concept of Military-Civilian Relations During the Civil War — from Staunch Civilian Protector to 'Cruel Plunderer.' (George Mason University, 1976.)

[642] Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003): 69.

[643] For a succinct repudiation of the myth, see Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001).

As with the myth of the Lost Cause, much of the most stubborn resistance to Northern incursions came after the war as Southerners sought to rewrite history. In a study of how some Georgia cities explain their survival of Sherman's march, Elissa R. Henken collected local urban legends and found common denominators, such as women's resistance and the use of food as a shield against harm. These local legends are still repeated in dozens of places such as Stilesboro, Jenkinsville, Macon, and Augusta. In the natives' post-war explanations of survival, the towns emerged unscathed because of the beauty, charm, or craftiness of its people. "The legends are all endowed with emotion," Henken notes.[644] In LaGrange, the local legend is that the women took up arms and the Union troops turned away rather face the shame of fighting women. Some towns claim the women offered up fried chicken, breakfast, or other gustatory sacrifices. "The shared meal is in itself traditionally a means of controlling the enemy. Both breaking bread with the townspeople and accepting hospitality would prevent Sherman from harming them."[645] These food-related legends, with women as the great civilizers, exist also for Savannah, Madison, and Monticello. Whether apocryphal or not, the stories themselves are forms of resistance against Southern defeat. The Lost Cause myth allowed the South to lose the war but win the peace. All of these legends — local and national — exist as a long-lasting form of resistance.

Of course, women knew that all foraging soldiers could pose a threat, not just northern men. Ernestine Weiss Faudie recounted her memories of the war to the WPA Federal Writers Project in 1939. In their German settlement in Texas, both Confederate and Union soldiers

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[644] Elissa R. Henken, "Taming the Enemy: Georgian Narrative about the Civil War," *Journal of Folklore Research* 40, No. 3 (Sept-Dec. 2003): 295-300.

[645] Elissa R. Henken, "Taming the Enemy: Georgian Narrative about the Civil War," *Journal of Folklore Research* 40, No. 3 (Sept-Dec. 2003): 298.

constituted the enemy when it came to their supplies. "When any of the soldiers on either side came through our place they took anything they could find, the rebels felt that they had a right to it for they were fighting for us. They took our horses and killed our hogs and cows to eat, and took our corn."[646] When one of her neighbors tried to hide the family pig in her bedroom by tying it to the bed post, soldiers heard the grunting, took the pig, barbecued it in the woman's yard, "and ate it before the neighbor's very eyes."[647] Confederate Frances Fulkerson wrote to his sister that Terry's Rangers were camped at the house of a Union sympathizer near Bowling Green, Kentucky, in early December 1861, and "lived very well," on the family's supply of produce, dairy and meat.[648] "The Union people there are afraid of the rangers, and feed them well when they go out to scout. They are very generous from fear, as they seem to think the Rangers are a set of man eaters. They think they are doing very well to get off with their lives."[649] In this way, all soldiers waged war through the medium of food on the civilian population.

This behavior was also effective in turning loyalties. Walter Kempster wrote of one campaign through Maryland in mid-1863, close on the tail of a group of Confederates who were indiscriminate in pillaging the town of Westminster. "They broke open stores taking everything they could lay their hands on, changing their own filthy garments for citizens attire, entering

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[646] Mrs. Ernestine Weiss Faudie, Library of Congress, Works Progress Administration, *Federal Writers 'Project, Folklore Project, life histories (1936-39)*. File No. 240 (MSS55715:Box A733): 2. https://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh3.33011607/?sp=2&st=text

[647] Mrs. Ernestine Weiss Faudie, Library of Congress, Works Progress Administration, *Federal Writers 'Project, Folklore Project, life histories (1936-39)*. File No. 240 (MSS55715:Box A733): 3. https://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh3.33011607/?sp=2&st=text

[648] Terry's Rangers, also known as Terry's Texas Rangers, were officially the 8th Texas Cavalry under Col. Benjamin Franklin Terry, and often acted as shock troops during the war.

[649] Frances M. Fulkerson to his sister Kate, December 11, 1861 from Rogersville, Kentucky. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2005.139.

private dwellings and demanding food and clothing and in many instances money and valuables." After the rebels were routed by the Union cavalry, the Union soldiers were met with heartfelt gratitude in the form of food and praise from the beleaguered locals. "The ladies almost worshiped us." "They cooked and baked as long as we remained which was about 4 hours. nor would they take a cent for their trouble. Never were people more lavish on strangers than were these."[650] For the women of the town, rewarding the Union soldiers meant giving them food voluntarily, rather than having it taken by force.

Confederate women also rose up against their own government in a series of famous "bread riots," which protested prices, supply levels, and the government's inaction to address the needs of poor women. In the spring of 1863, women across the Confederacy armed themselves and took food and other goods from military supplies and private stores. These so-called Bread Riots took place in small towns and big cities, including the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. In that notable April 2, 1863, incident, a crowd estimated at between 1,000 and 5,000 stole food, shoes, and other commodities before dispersing at gunpoint. Women leaders were arrested and prosecuted in court as agitators and thieves. J.P. Hawkins, a messenger for the Virginia Confederate Railroad, wrote in his diary of the riots in Petersburg and Richmond: "Last week 3 or 400 a perfect mob — breaking open stores & taking what they want — one in P Bg also — but quelled by city council with a promise of $1500 — it looks bad — God deliver us from them things still going on...The North jubilant over idea of starving us out."[651] War refugee

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[650] Walter Kempster to "my ever dear beloved one," July 10, 1863, Middletown, Maryland, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2006.158.
[651] James P. Hawkins, April 6, 1863. Diary 2, *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas.

and upper-class Southern matron Judith McGuire recorded in her diary a second-hand account of the incident from men who supposedly witnessed it: "Others were there, of the very worst class of women, and a great many who were in in want at all, which they proved by only supplying themselves with jewelry and other finery... I fear that the poor suffer very much; meal was selling to-day at $16 per bushel. It has been bought up by speculators."[652] Although accounts vary of the riots, perhaps what fascinates scholars is the juxtaposition of Southern women, supposedly gentle, submissive creatures, violently rising up to challenge the men in charge of society.

When Civil War scholars give attention to the bread riots, their degree of seriousness varies. Bruce Catton, for decades the most prolific of Civil War authors, said the riots "meant nothing," and prior to the 1980s most other writers maintained a similar tone, arguing that in the grand scheme of slaughter and strife of the war, the prosaic demands of women seeking food was insignificant.[653] In recent decades, however, the Bread Riots of the Confederacy have received renewed attention, recognized as a form of expression by lower-class white women. Michael B. Chesson examined the Richmond Bread Riot, arguing that it was a serious and successful attempt by women to get government attention. However, Richmond's was only the largest of the riots of that spring. Other uprisings took place in Atlanta, Ga. (March 16); Salisbury, N.C. (March 18); Mobile, Ala. (March 17 or March 25, depending on the source); Raleigh, N.C.; Petersburg, Va. (either March 17 or April 1); and then an estimated six other riots in smaller

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[652] Judith W. McGuire. *Diary of a Southern Refugee, during the war, By a Lady of Virginia,* Richmond: J.W. Randolph & English (1889): 202-203.
[653] Bruce Catton, The Centennial History of the CM War, III: Never Call Retreat (Garden City, 1965), 100-101.

towns, such as Tice, Savannah, High Point, and Millidgeville. It is not entirely clear how many riots took place, nor on what dates they occurred because the Confederate government often censored newspaper coverage of the incidents. Some of the disturbances were written up in local newspapers, but none garnered the same degree of coverage given to similar events, such as the Draft Riots in New York later that summer. The reason for suppression was two-fold: the negative impact the reports might have on the southern army's morale, and the positive effect it might have on the enemy's morale, as Hawkins notes in his diary. The Confederate administration could not afford for it to be widely known that hungry women were marching in the streets. The protesters' slogan (reported to have been shouted in both Richmond and Mobile) was "Bread or blood."[654] Edna Barber notes, "The women's discontent exacerbated perceptions of a growing schism for Confederate men between the twin goals of defending their new nation and protecting their families, a conflict that led to extremely high rates of military desertions in the closing years of the war."[655] In other words, widespread news that women were risking their lives for food could have been disastrous for the Confederate army.

Still, the bread riots were hardly a Southern anomaly. There is a rich history of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century food riots — predominantly women-led — in both Europe and America. E.P. Thompson explained women's participation in European food riots was an extension of the "moral community" that made women and children dependent, and by extension granted them an expectation of having their needs met regarding nutrition and shelter. If denied

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[654] Stephanie McCurry. "Women Numerous and Armed: The Confederate Food Riots in Historical Perspective," *OAH Magazine of History* 27, No. 2 (April 2013): 38.

[655] Edna Susan Barber, *"Sisters of the Capital": White Women in Richmond, Virginia, 1860-1880.* (PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 1997): 262.

these basic needs, they were within their rights to express their anger through any means necessary.[656] Thompson situated his argument on the French food riots of the eighteenth century, but food riots date as far back as ancient Rome, when hungry mobs would storm the gates of the wealthy and demand food. Food riots were recorded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Ireland, England, Germany, Spain, Italy, and in the North American colonies during the American Revolution. During the twentieth century, hungry women rose up in Western Europe, Russia, and South America.

As historians and social scientists have taken a broader look at these uprisings, their analyses have also become more sophisticated. Beyond noting the obvious and superficial aspects of food riots, for example, that food is in short supply and prices are high, analysts have noticed the predominance of women in these crowds, indicating female frustration with their lack of political influence, and the responsibility of providing for children on women's shoulders as opposed to the men's.

In their 2009 article on the political economy of food riots, Raj Patel and Philip McMichael argue that these kinds of protests usually accompany significant political and economic change.[657] That pattern certainly fits the Confederate States of America. Politically, the Confederacy had declared its independence in 1861, two years prior to the riots, but enormous economic changes were shaking the foundations of the system. Military losses pushed hundreds of thousands of refugees into the cities, straining resources such as food and shelter,

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[656] E.P. Thompson. "Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, 50 (1971): 76-131.
[657] Raj Patel and Philip McMichael. "A Political Economy of the Food Riot," *Review* 32 (2009): 11.

but also employment opportunities, which further threatened the security of poor women already on the edge. In an essay on women workers in the Civil War, Mark Lause states: "In the rural South, the direct devastation of the war destroyed the antebellum stability of this productive capacity. All these changes bore most heavily on women."[658] The frustration of women seeking food for their families and themselves in a time of upheaval is commonly expressed by protest.

Patel and McMichael further posit that food riots may be inspired by one or more of the following motivations: anger about how the economy works or does not work; loss of local control over circumstances; lack of protection from market fluctuations; and perception of injustice.[659] Southern women had little influence as regards the war and their positions within the local, state and federal governments. They also had no economic protections, although many women wrote to the government begging for price controls and an end to exploitation by speculators. William Blair argues that accusations of speculation were a way for beleaguered Southerners to find someone to blame for their woes.[660] The military conscription of 75 percent of the Southern male population left wives, daughters, sisters and mothers rudderless and unsupported in a time of upheaval, according to McCurry. "Poor women had tried to tell their leaders that the conscription policy had destroyed their livelihoods and violated the pledge made to soldiers that their families would be protected."[661] The vacuum left by men in a paternalistic system resulted in women struggling to deal with a variety of issues, including outside

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[658] Mark A. Lause. "Wartime Employment," from *Women in the American Civil War, Vol. I.* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2008): 80.
[659] Raj Patel and Philip McMichael. "A Political Economy of the Food Riot," *Review* 32 (2009): 12.
[660] William A. Blair. *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 39.
[661] Stephanie McCurry. "Women Numerous and Armed: The Confederate Food Riots in Historical Perspective," *OAH Magazine of History*, 27, No. 2 (April 2013): 36-37.

employment, low soldier's wages, escalating prices, devalued Confederate currency, federal taxes, and an inadequacy of relief, all of which McCurry calls the "politics of subsistence." Each of these factors could be perceived as injustices.

Post-World War II food riots involved urbanization, radicalization, and were women-led. Two of those factors — urbanization and female leadership — also applied to these Confederate disturbances a century earlier. Female involvement is significant because of women's lack of voice in the legitimate political and economic process. Confederate women could not vote, and were seen as virtual property of their husbands or fathers. In fact, the dominance of women was part of the paternalistic Southern ethos. Edna Barber cites Richmond newspapers and other Southern publications that highlight the importance of women's subservience in the slave system. "White Richmond women inhabited a gendered and hierarchical society in which Northern expectations about women's particular 'sphere of influence' were deepened and reinforced by a Southern society that relied on the subordination of women by men to provide an object lesson for the subordination of black slaves by their white owners"[662] In other words, properly subservient white women set good examples for the enslaved.

However, it is the centrality of slavery that makes the Confederate food riots different from earlier and later uprisings. McCurry argues that the riots represent a movement by these yeomen and poor white women to forcibly shoulder their way into the political conversation, demanding to be heard and renegotiating the social contract to include their needs alongside those of men's. The food riots, she concluded, were not just about food but about power. "These

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[662] Barber, Edna Susan. *"Sisters of the Capital": White Women in Richmond, Virginia, 1860-1880.* (unpublished dissertation) Order No. 9808578, University of Maryland, College Park (1997): 44.

were manifestly political events."[663] In an earlier book, McCurry cuts to the chase, stating: "Women whose sense of the social contract had been violated were formidable enemies."[664] McCurry, Patel, McMichael, and other modern scholars, are correct in their summation that the riots were political in nature. But a typical lack of power for females in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America was exacerbated in the antebellum South by the social and economic pressures on poor white women in that culture, squeezed as they were betwixt and between a nearly aristocratic paternalistic elite, and unfree people who were themselves valuable property.

Southern society concealed complications beyond those found in England, Ireland, Germany and even Revolutionary War America. The keen stratification of society in the Confederate States took into account every permutation of wealth, race, and gender.[665] A wealthy white male planter held the top position in society, followed by other white men with less money and status, then white women, also in descending order, with poor white women at the bottom. Even war refugees still maintained their hierarchical advantages as women competed for the paying jobs available. Treasury and government jobs were given to formerly elite white women first, to the detriment of their lower and middle-class sisters.[666] Even amongst the enslaved there was a complicated social stratum according to their occupations and relationships to the whites.

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[663] Stephanie McCurry, "Women Numerous and Armed: The Confederate Food Riots in Historical Perspective," *OAH Magazine of History*, 27, No. 2 (April 2013): 36-37.

[664] Stephanie McCurry. *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics In the Civil War South.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press (2012): 171.

[665] In his examination of white Southern society, John Mayfield describes eight distinct classes of Southern men, including gentlemen, cavaliers, cotton snobs, Southern Yankees, white trash, and enslaved. John Mayfield, *Counterfeit Gentlemen: Manhood and Humor in the Old South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009): xvi.

[666] Drew Gilpin Faust. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996): 88.

The class hierarchy among slaves is an issue of some controversy among historians. In 1977, John Blassingame argued that the accepted hierarchy of house slaves at the top and field slaves at the bottom was based on the perspective of white slave owners, who fed their own egos in declaring this to be the accepted caste system, since house slaves were the closest to them. He asserts that amongst themselves slaves actually held conjurers, preachers, midwives and folklorists in the highest esteem. However, that analysis may also be dependent on the perspective of the person being asked. Field workers were reluctant to acknowledge house servants to be superiors, just as house servants may not have held any field hands (conjurers or not) to be their superiors.[667] Formerly enslaved Rosa Starke described a multi-faceted caste system for the Slave Narrative Project. In it, she collapses white society into just two classes: rich and poor, as determined by who owned other human beings and who did not. However, she breaks slave society down into six classes, ranging from house servants at the top to field hands at the bottom. In between, are the quasi-house servants like carriage drivers and gardeners, skilled artisans such as wheelwrights and blacksmiths, then cow men and dog tenders; finally threshers of wheat and oats, and cotton gin feeders. A male house servant might "swoop down," and love a field hand's beautiful daughter, but a privileged female house servant did not "lower herself" by marrying a "common field hand."[668] In a separate hierarchical system were the "town slaves," according to Hannah Austin, who spoke to Minnie B. Ross of the Federal Writer's

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[667] Supporting the notion that a person's perspective on class is determined by his or her standing in that hierarchy, is this quote from former enslaved lady's maid Lucy McCullough: "De house servants hold that dey is a step better den de field niggers. House servants wuz niggah quality folks."
Sarah H. Hall. Federal Writer's Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 3 (Kendricks-Styles. Lucy McCullough, #68, Athens, GA):1.

[668] W.W.Dixon, *Federal Writer's Project: Slave Narrative Project*, Vol. 14, South Carolina, Part 4 (Raines-Young. Rosa Starke, Project # 1655, Winnsboro, S.C.):2.

Project in 1937. Prior to emancipation, Austin's family belonged to George Hall, a wealthy Georgia clothing merchant. Both of Hannah Austin's parents worked for Hall's dry-goods store, Austin's mother as a seamstress, and her father as a porter. The family received clothes out of the store's stock and were apparently well-treated by Hall and his wife Eliza. After the war, Austin's parents continued in their same jobs as paid employees of the Hall's. "We were considered the better class of slaves and did not know the meaning of a hard time," Austin recalled.[669] Austin's determination of slavery classes was based on quality of life, a standard shared by many of the formerly enslaved whose opinions are preserved in the narrative archives. Since material comfort and/or wealth is a common standard among Americans of all ethnicities in determining class — then and now — it would seem churlish if not outright racist, to deny that same definition to any other group of Americans. In general, enslaved people seem to have used the same strata scheme as whites, that is, one based on skills, knowledge, employment, and access to luxury goods.

Regardless of what historians and sociologists decide about the proper caste system in American antebellum slavery, we can acknowledge that some unfree people did hold material advantages over poor white women. The personal servant of a wealthy planter, or a "town slave" such as Austin, often had better quality clothing, food, taste, and manners than a poor white farmer's daughter or wife who had never been exposed to that lifestyle. Those contrasts became apparent as refugees and their servants flooded into the cities during the war. Even field workers, whom Starke deemed the lowliest individuals in slave society, were assured food, shelter, and clothing, albeit it might be of inferior quality than clothes worn by other classes. Ellen Claiborne

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[669] Minnie B. Ross, *Federal Writer's Project: Slave Narrative Project,* Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1 (Adams-Furr. Hannah Austin, Atlanta, GA.):2.

recalled of the plantation owned by Hezzie Boyd in Columbia County: "The house servants' houses were better than the fiel' hands.'" Clothes for house servants were purchased from a factory in Augusta. In contrast, the field hands wore clothes made from home-woven fabric from the mistress's loom. "Sometimes the po' white folks in the neighborhood would come an' ask to make they cloth on mistis' loom, and she always let 'em." In other words, the plantation's enslaved manual laborers wore clothes as good or better than working-class free people in the same area, while the enslaved house servants had *higher* quality clothing than the poor white neighbors.[670]

Enslaved dependents were also better protected, in most cases. While slave owners took pains to preserve their human investments by moving these people inland away from the fighting, poor whites were left on the front lines to defend themselves from the enemy's encroachments. Certainly, the slave owners were less worried about the safety of individuals, and more about keeping their "property" out of the hands of liberators, but the effect was to keep enslaved peoples farther away from danger. Working-class white women and their children had no guarantees of food, clothing, or protection. Their husbands and sons, providers of both shelter and support, were taken by conscription. Exacerbating poor women's resentment was the fact that very wealthy men were allowed to avoid the conscription because they were needed at home to oversee plantations. In the social tumult of the war, rioters had ample reasons for resentment beyond merely the high price of food.

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[670] Margaret Johnson. *Federal Writer's Project: Slave Narrative Project,* Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 1 (Adams-Furr. Ellen Claiborne, Augusta, Ga.):2-3.

In addition to economic and social pressures, poor white women who worked in factories also faced physical danger. On March 13, 1863, an explosion at the Brown's Island munitions plant near Richmond killed forty-three women and girls, and injured nineteen, out of a total workforce of 220. The spring riots began three days later, with the Richmond riot three weeks after the explosion. The common denominator is that the women from the plant and the women in the riots came from the same social class and neighborhoods.[671] Of course, the two incidents are not necessarily related. After all, on Nov. 1862, the Jackson, Mississippi, magazine blew up, killing an estimated thirty workers, including nineteen women.[672] No riots took place in the aftermath of that tragedy.

However, in the six months between the Jackson explosion and the Richmond accident, circumstances in the Confederacy had altered. Aggressive impressment work by the Army, transportation problems and speculation by wealthy businessmen were all aggravating the food supply situation throughout the South, pushing prices beyond the ability of the poor to pay, and leaving them hungry and desperate. In early March, women wrote to the Confederate government, begging for their men to be released from service to attend to business at home. Drew Gilpin Faust argues these women were expressing "their dissent from the ideology of

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[671] The exception might be Michael Chesson, who points out that it may have been a factor in his article "Harlots or Heroines?: A New Look at the Richmond Bread Riot. *Volume 18/2 Women and Politics* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Saur, 2012): 119-163. (Originally printed in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 18 No 2 (April 1984): 123. Also see, Edna Susan Barber, "Cartridge Makers and Myrmidon Viragos" in *Negotiating the Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing with the Powers that Be*, Janet Coryell, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000).

[672] Gary E. Bryant, *Working Women in the Confederate South: White Southern Women in the Paid Labor Force during the Civil War*, (unpublished dissertation, No. 3342758, University of Houston, 2008).

sacrifice and the reality of deprivation."[673] With the explosion on March 13, those sacrifices included the violent deaths of more than three dozen poor girls and women.

Edna Barber explains that the riots of 1863 were marked by the third planting season without Southern men, which would definitely act as a catalyst of desperation. Arguably, the lack of men at their plows would motivate rural women to riot in Salisbury (March 18), and Tice (March 25), but not necessarily inspire the urban poor in Atlanta and Richmond (March 16, and April 2, respectively).[674] However, the Brown's Island explosion was an immediate spark for those women to assert themselves and speak truth to power about their anger and fears. The degree of their need is illustrated by how Richmond's working-class women reacted to the fatal accident. Immediately after the fatal explosion, eighty girls and women quit the arsenal to look for safer work, even for less pay, according to Barber. But desperation and impending starvation led others to take their chances. "When the arsenal opened for work on March 16th, as the bodies of those were killed in the explosion were being laid to rest — at least 53 women were waiting to be hired."[675] Metaphorically, more than fifty women were desperate enough to run into a burning building while eighty of their sisters were fleeing for their lives.

Three weeks after the explosion, Richmond women and children of that same class marched to the city's governmental square to demand an audience with the governor about food prices, but were rejected. Rather than go home, they turned their eyes to the stores and

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[673] Drew Gilpin Faust. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996): 245.

[674] Edna Susan Barber, *"Sisters of the Capital": White Women in Richmond, Virginia, 1860-1880.* (PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 1997): 260.

[675] Edna Susan Barber, *"Sisters of the Capital": White Women in Richmond, Virginia, 1860-1880.* (PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 1997): 155.

warehouses of the business district, their numbers growing as they went. Of the seventeen food riots in the Confederacy during the war years, ten uprisings took place in March and April of 1863, starting three days after the explosion near Richmond and ending around mid-April.[676] Indeed, perhaps the two events have not been previously linked because there was such a long gap between the Richmond explosion and the Richmond riot. What better connects the two actions was testimony during the trials of the riot's leaders in which it was revealed that planning actually began ten days earlier, on March 23, exactly one week after the funerals of the Brown's Island explosion victims. In the meantime, working-class women in other towns had already begun to raid army depots and the warehouses of speculators, taking flour, pork, and other commodities.

The editor of the *Carolina Watchman* makes no reference to the explosion in his article about the riot in Salisbury on March 18. He interviewed the women involved, even describing the aftermath during which the purloined goods were divvied up. He states that the rioters were "aiming a blow at the practice of speculating in provisions... These proceedings were also caused, in part, by pinching want." Families without kitchen gardens, stricken by high prices and shortages, were left to rely on only bread and water, and some could not afford basics such as flour. "Avaricious hoarders of grain and other provisions for high prices must open their eyes to the danger of their selfish and covetous practices. It is impossible for the poor to endure the hardships and privations these two classes have imposed upon them."[677] He also takes to task the

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[676] Stephanie McCurry. "Women Numerous and Armed: The Confederate Food Riots in Historical Perspective, *OAH Magazine of History*, 27, No. 2 (April 2013): 35-39.

[677] J.J. Bruner. "A Female Raid," *Carolina Watchman*, March 23, 1863, *Newspaper Collection, State Archives of North Carolina*, https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p15012coll8/id/11534

women rioters for only focusing on a few of the suspected speculators, and the county commissioners for not stocking up on food to help the soldier's families. Three days after the Richmond riot, a spokeswoman for the rioters wrote to Virginia Governor Zebulon Vance to explain. They were forced into the actions by "cruel and unfeeling Speculators," Mary Moore states. Their husbands and sons were taken away "by this cruel War not only to defend our humble homes but the homes & property of the rich man." Moore explained that women sewed uniforms for little money, and even when combined with their husband's soldier's pay of $11 per month it was not enough to feed their families when flour costs $50 a barrel and meat 75 cents to $1 per pound, prices which she blames on speculators. "How we ask you in the name of God are we to live."[678] Her anger is palpable, but it is clearly not just about food and prices — it is also about injustice toward poor women who were underpaid, vulnerable, and facing hunger both for themselves and their children.

When scholars try explaining the causes of the Confederate food riots the list must certainly highlight the frustrating lack of control women had with regards to political, military, and economic forces; domestic issues including the rapid urbanization caused by refugees; and social upheavals that left poor working white women feeling uncertain and bereft. All these are situational causes, valid on a superficial level, to explain why women rose up.

On a deeper level, however, I propose there are even more profound reasons why women took violently to the streets. Central to their grievances was the breaking of a crucial promise by the Confederate government. McCurry is right to say the social contract was broken. But she

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[678] Mary C. Moore to Zebulon Baird Vance, March 21, 1863. *State Archives of North Carolina*. https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p15012coll8/id/11531/rec/2

asserts these incidents should not be compared with English or French eighteenth-century women-led food riots during the transition to capitalism. The riots came about because of the breakdown of urban and rural household economies and women's assumption of food politics during the war.[679] But on another level, the Southern riots can be compared to the European turmoil. Beyond the social contract, the Confederate riots were about betrayal of the philosophical underpinnings of the Confederacy. When the Southern states split from the Union, the covenant under which these states rallied was resistance to change, the maintenance of the social hierarchy which included chattel slavery. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Northern and coastal states were already experiencing the earliest stages of emancipation, urbanization, egalitarianism, and large-scale immigration. The Confederacy promised to hold the line on slavery and the imposition of male and white superiority, with accompanying female privilege and protection. The war demonstrated that none of those promises could be kept. Certainly women felt betrayed.[680] Enslaved people were running away by the thousands, Southern cities were falling to the barbarous enemy, and women were left alone in the midst of chaos without any power to effect their own rescues. More than resistance to change, the riots were an outpouring of anger toward the men who had promised them stability and safety, that was not delivered.

Throughout the Civil War, women fought for themselves and their families using whatever resources were at their disposals, including feeding the enemy, or taking from their

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[679] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2010): 179

[680] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2010): 1-2.

allies. Like the formerly enslaved, white women's positions were tenuous in the larger scope of the war, and often quite personal and situational. That Southern women appeared to have mixed loyalties denies that their first responsibilities, regardless of the government's position, was always to their families. When circumstances got in the way of that, the women went to war.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUDING

Examining food as a cultural phenomenon in the Civil War era means finding not only its military significance, but also its social and emotional content. On August 1, 1864, Henry Sauer of Chicago, Illinois was captured by Confederates and locked in the infamous Andersonville Prison. In the great prison yard, sutlers set up stands selling pies, biscuits, rice, and potatoes for cash that few of the starving men had. "Whenever I would see these good eatables, I would think back of home; of the pie crusts and bread crumbs which I used to waste, and here in Prison I would gladly except of the bones our little dog at home used to get for his meals. But such is life here we had to take what was given us, or starve to death."[681] Not only was food the arbiter of life and death in the prison, but it also defined their society. Friend or foe depended entirely on whether another man was willing to share food, or kill for it.[682]

Certainly, the sum of trade across lines, the blockade, and foraging add up to a huge impact on the ability of men on both sides to successfully wage war by creating physical benefits and impediments to the warring factions. None of this is news to military strategists. What is surprising, perhaps, is the way these negotiations for power and position were also so effective in

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[681] Henry Sauer diary, 52-53. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.278.

[682] Not surprisingly, the prison most notorious for starving thousands of prisoners to death was also the most vicious. Sauer writes "I never seen so much fighting and quarreling going on in all my life as what I had witnessed here, it seemed to me as if every one hated each other, there was but very little friendship shown to one another every man was for himself. The rebels would enjoy it very much, when they would see some of them fighting together, biting off their ears, or noses." Henry Sauer diary, 57. *Pearce Civil War Collection*, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas. Accession No. 2001.278.

communicating. Without saying a word, the Union's willingness to allow trade signaled the North's intent to not wage "hard war" on the South if it interfered with business. The blockade, on the other hand, was a strategy not intended for domestic or minor insurrections. Consequently, its use signaled the severity of the break the North had with the Confederacy. Its use should be recognized as intent to control the South's economy two years before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Finally, foraging, whether done on the small, personal level or the tornadic scope of Sherman's Army, communicated clearly who held power and who did not. For Civil War scholars most of this was realized long ago, even if not presented in quite this fashion before.

Food as a lens for analyzing history opens up new means for studying the social content of the war. The ties of blood brotherhood forged over meals and struggles bound soldiers to one another within their tight units. Their emotional bonds kept them in the fight rather than deserting when they got tired or depressed or, ironically, hungry. Their written words about meals and eating also revealed their feelings and motivations. The boxes, or "care packages" from home can tell us how food helped strengthen the ties between soldiers and the home front. All are means of sustenancial communication.

One method for improving the way we study the war is by reading more deeply into Civil War letters themselves. The literary technique of parsing out the meaning behind the words tends to get lost in Civil War scholarship, partly because there are so many of them. In the Pearce Collection, the archive primarily used in this study, are more than 4,000 letters and diaries. Some archives have more than 10,000 documents. Bell Wiley, the father of modern Civil War scholarship, estimated he had read 20,000 letters from the war. Thousands of letters constitute a

drop in the bucket of primary documents available. It is not unusual for a Civil War scholar to cite six different letters (all saying the same thing) in one sentence, as proof of a minor point. To take an hour or three to parse out the meaning behind each phrase or sentence would take a hundred lifetimes. But if one is seeking a deeper understanding, it is a valuable tool that is too often overlooked in the rush to compile reams of evidence. If the scholar sees an archive as a mountain to be scaled and conquered, then the hour or more spent on one letter (other than trying to decipher the handwriting) would seem a waste of time. But good evidence is found in literary close readings, interpretation, and contextual findings.

The first section of this study focused on communication. I looked at the messages in the boxes sent from home. I presented evidence that many more boxes were sent than previously estimated, and that the boxes served to cement loyalties with people back home, creating familial and community-based obligations while showing support and reminding soldiers of the people they loved and the comforts they could expect when their duties were finished. Sharing food, including that from the boxes also helped forge the bonds of blood brotherhood within units. That section also examined the unspoken communications involved in foraging. Individual soldiers communicated dominance over the civilians when they took corn or sweet potatoes, and so did Sherman's army when it ravaged the countryside of Georgia on that famous march to Savannah. Finally, the letters themselves were examined, with an eye toward interpreting the underlying communications using symbolism and food metaphor. That chapter argued that the nineteenth-century soldier was sophisticated enough to use codified language in his letters, and why it matters.

The second section looked at cooking and status. Primarily, how cooks, both black and white, were able to elevate their social status within the camp by wielding pans not weapons. It included the proposition that cooking held gender-related stigmas and how that affected the men's willingness to learn the skill. The contributions of African American cooks was part of that study, along with how they made a difference in the war and in history. In short, food is important, so food preparers are important.

The final section looked at the Union blockade, food-related resistance by women, and trade across lines for some notable examples of both communication and relationships. With the blockade, Winfield Scott conveyed the message of "surrender or starve." Meanwhile, Lincoln contradicted that message by allowing the trade of food for cotton. In the South, cynicism is a built-in feature for a society structured around a brutish reality covered merely by a thin façade of heightened civilization, so trade across lines was expected. In the North, where politicians proclaimed their righteousness loudly and often, the excuses for trade across lines and the blockade's failures were less convincing. Although seemingly contradictory, the efforts by the blockade and the interior trade actually dovetailed nicely for both Northern and Southern traders, if not the politicians and generals. The price for cotton skyrocketed, food and luxuries were in high demand, and both sides profited until the military fulfilled its goal of subduing the South. Relationships and understandings were forged and strengthened over cotton and food. So who could be surprised that Reconstruction and the two decades afterward found affluent and influential men on both sides so willing to cooperate in order to quell the ambitions of the newly freed while expanding the nation's imperialist tendencies?

Until well into the twentieth century, America struggled to expand its reach for foodstuffs, including bananas, beef, sugar, coffee, and cocoa, all while asserting that this colonialism was about liberty. We cannot look at the history of the world without keeping its edible resources front and center. Nor can we see the history of the United States without considering the importance and symbolism of food.

Hopefully, this study will open the door to new investigations into other themes, such as the rise of the beef industry in Texas, or the misuse of food supplies in prisoner of war camps. However, other scholars have tackled these subjects, as others have examined Sherman's Marches, bread riots, and the blockade, and upon whose work I relied heavily. My contributions to the conversation are primarily to turn it a little sideways and look at what else might these incidents have been saying. My hope is that these and other topics can now be reexamined with regard to the implied communications and relationships within food and cooking. For example, World War II scholars have long envied Civil War scholars because Civil War letters were not censored. But a focus on food references might allow for new insights within even the most redacted letters.

I am aware that I stand on the shoulders of giants, and have barely scratched the surface of what is yet to be seen in the archives and attics of Civil War primary materials, but I hope I have tweaked the imagination of fellow Civil War and food scholars. Food in the Civil War cannot be properly analyzed without realizing its deeper connotations. Food was never just sustenance, it was home, love, friendship, security, comfort, wealth, language, and power

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Janet K. Jacobs spent twenty years as a newspaper reporter and editor in Texas. As a reporter, she received numerous state-wide awards from the Texas Managing Editors Association. She covered environmental issues, transportation, courts, city, county, and state government, as well as rural affairs and investigative issues.

She has taught political science and history to students in college and universities, high school, and juvenile detention.

She began her pursuit of a PhD in 1991, and did so poorly that she dropped out. Twenty-four years later, she returned to The University of Texas at Dallas and finally graduated, despite the interference of a global pandemic.

Her educational background is primarily at Texas institutions except for one year at the University of Hong Kong as a visiting scholar where she studied constitution writing, Chinese and British politics. Her bachelor's degree is in political science, her master's in political science, criminal justice, and journalism. Her doctorate is in history and literature.

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EXPERIENCE

Adjunct instructor, University of North Texas at Dallas, 2021-2022
Teaching Political Science, U.S. and Texas.

Teaching Assistant, University of Texas-Dallas, 2016 to 2021.
Teaching, grading, testing, classroom management for history and humanities.

Adjunct instructor, Navarro College, 2005-2015; summer courses 2016-2021
U.S. History, since 2017.
U.S. Government and Texas/Local government, 2005-2021.
Dual-credit instructor, Corsicana High School, 2007-2016.
Dual-credit instructor, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, 2012-2015.
On-line instructor, 2006-2015.

City editor/lead writer, *Corsicana Daily Sun*, 2006-2014.
Reporter, editor, columnist, investigative reporting, features.

Metro reporter, *Austin American-Statesman*, 1999-2003.
Williamson County, school finance, state transportation, land issues, state prison system.

East Texas Editor, copy editor, investigative reporter, *Longview News-Journal,* 1992-1999.

Contributing editor/writer, *Minority Business News,* 1992-1994.

Reporter, *Metrocrest News*, 1989-1992.

Education:

PhD, University of Texas-Dallas. (Currently ABD), 2015-Present. Field exams completed April 2018 in U.S. Civil War; U.S. History, 1800-2000; and Nineteenth-Century Literature.

M.A., University of Texas-Tyler, 1988. Interdisciplinary studies, with emphasis in Political Science, Journalism, and Criminal Justice.

B.A., East Texas State University, 1986. Political Science, journalism, philosophy.

Independent foreign study, University of Hong Kong, China, 1988-89, studying political transition, British and Chinese politics, constitution writing.

H.S. Diploma, Corsicana High School, Corsicana, Texas, 1982.

Awards/scholarships:

2016-present, Teaching Assistant, University of Texas-Dallas (Full scholarship)
2015-2021, José Antonio Navarro Chapter, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, scholarship
2013 Associated Press Managing Editors Award, A, first place, columnist.
2013 Associated Press Managing Editors Awards, A, second place, and third place, spot news.
2009 Associated Press Managing Editors Award, A, features.
2007 Associated Press Managing Editors Award, A, columnist, first place.
1998 Associated Press Managing Editors Award, AA, special projects.
1997 Associated Press Managing Editors Award, AA, investigative reporting.
1996 Dallas Press Club, Texas Legacy Award, community service, all categories.
1996 Associated Press Managing Editors Award, AA, Community Service Award.
1995 Associated Press Managing Editors Award, AA, features.
1988, Rotary International Scholarship, University of Hong Kong.

Professional Memberships

National Historical Association, since 2021.
Phi Alpha Theta, National History Honor Society, since 2017.
Sigma Tau Delta, International English Honors Society, since 2018.
Society of Civil War History, since 2020.