The Irony of Emancipation
in the Civil War South

Clark Scott Nesbit, Jr.
Richmond, Virginia

B.A., Swarthmore College, 2001
M.A., University of Virginia, 2005

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Corcoran Department of History

University of Virginia
December, 2013

ABSTRACT

Nearly everyone in the Civil War South had opportunity to feel the irony of emancipation. This irony arose from the wartime difference between ending slavery as a regime and freeing slaves, as individuals. This dissertation explores the ways in which white southerners sacrificed, or refused to sacrifice, their interest in the enslavement of particular southern blacks for the sake of a regime that would safeguard slavery. It argues that African Americans at times sought their own freedom even if it meant aiding the Confederate regime, and at other times sought to avoid warzones even if it meant remaining legally enslaved. It argues that the Union's war to defeat the Confederacy was also a war waged against the Confederates' main source of labor. Such a war meant, for most who became free in the Civil War, emancipation through displacement and integration into a new system for managing former slaves, the refugee camp/plantation/recruitment complex. For those who remained in the wake of Sherman's marches and other U.S. raids, it meant living in a land with little food.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Ed Ayers, Gary Gallagher, Peter Onuf, and Maurie McInnis for their patience and thoughtful critiques. I owe gratitude to a much larger group of the faculty at the University of Virginia, including Brian Balogh, Valerie Cooper, Grace Hale, Michael Holt, James Hunter, Charles Marsh, Louis Nelson, and Daphne Spain. Good friends, such as Allison Elias, Julian Hayter, Chris Hearn, Chris Loomis, Calvin Schermerhorn, Peter Slade, and Megan Stubbendeck gave much needed cheer through a lengthy graduate career. My colleagues at the University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab, Rob Nelson, Nate Ayers, and Justin Madron have been essential allies as I finished the dissertation. I would like to acknowledge the generous support of numerous institutions during my graduate study: at the University of Virginia I have benefitted from the program in southern history, the Corcoran Department of History, the Carter G. Woodson Institute, the William R. Kenan summer fellowship program, and especially the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture. Outside UVA, I owe thanks to the Virginia Historical Society, Duke University Library, and the Presbyterian Historical Society for their support. Though the project was not initially built for this purpose, my dissertation made extensive use of *Visualizing Emancipation*, a project supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Richmond. I would like to thank my family; Clark and Patsy Nesbit for their continuous encouragement; Liz Caritj for not tiring of her brother; Faith, Glenn, John, and Colin, for enduring childhood with a father who was still in school. Most of all I would like to thank Erin, for everything.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Nearly everyone in the Civil War South had opportunity to feel the irony of

emancipation. The tension they experienced, the absurdity visited on them by the

juxtaposition of war and freedom, might be put this way: in the Civil War, ending

slavery was not the same as freeing slaves. To admit a difference between the two is

to open a puzzle often passed over, but one powerfully experienced by those bound

together in the conflict. Enslaved people saw a war they knew *could* end in their

liberation destroying their homes, devouring their food, and taking what little

stability they had carved out of their enslavement. Slaveholders could not help but

grimace at the choices they faced, in which the regime they built to safeguard

slavery in turn demanded the sacrifice of their slaves to ensure its survival.

Northern generals "made Georgia howl" and devised strategies to dismantle the

Confederacy by simultaneously destroying slavery and bringing war, with all its

destruction, to black southerners' doors.

Slavery and the American Civil War have always been at the center of ironic

interpretations of American history. Reinhold Neibuhr's *Irony of American History*

closed with a meditation on Abraham Lincoln and his ability both to act in history

and stand detached from "the partiality of all historic commitments." C. Vann

Woodward saw in the South's experiences of slavery and defeat, of learning "the taste left in the mouth by the swallowing of one's words," a possibility that it might similarly be "set apart," given a vantage from which to consider myths of national innocence. Robert Penn Warren, who skewered postwar myths of northern and southern whites alike, found little enough to admire in those who found comfort in the outcome of the war.[1]

For these writers, an ironic stance toward the past derives from a deep skepticism about human action in the world. Such a stance creates and leaves unresolved tension by juxtaposing our highest ideals with the terrible uses of power often necessary to recreate the world as it should be. An ironic history points out the gaps between the ideologies to which historical actors adhere and the conditions in which they find themselves, conditions that seem to make it impossible to act consistently, that break down radical and reactionary politics alike. Such an approach finds vice hidden in the highest virtues and sordid results coming from the most noble purposes. The simple fact that Americans often have not lived up to the better angels of our nature—that American history is full of racism, greed, violence, and bad faith—is not ironic, but life. In those situations, however, in which historical actors looking to protect slavery destroy it, in which they liberate at the expense of those hoping to become free, and in which deferred hopes for freedom

---

[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribners, 1952), 171-4; Niebuhr, "The Religion of Abraham Lincoln," in Allan Nevins, ed., *Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address: Commemorative Papers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 76; C. Vann Woodward, "The Irony of Southern History" in *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 190; Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War* (New York: Random House, 1961); Warren, "Uses of the Past," in *New and Selected Essays* (New York: Random House, 1989), 29-54.

turn out to be preferable to emancipation in the midst of hunger and fire, historians

can find irony, a combination of sympathy and detachment for those acting in a

terrible war that ended slavery.

These earlier, ironic accounts of the Civil War placed slavery at the center of

their narratives but did not consider the wartime experience of enslaved men and

women themselves. Niebuhr found Abraham Lincoln to be wise because he was

able to assign blame for slavery "to both North and South" and tell a grieving nation

that God had visited "this terrible war" on them both. Niebuhr approvingly

summarized the president, "Sin and punishment, virtue and reward are never

precisely proportioned." Yet Lincoln's moral accounting of the war treated African

Americans as entirely marginal to the contest itself, as though God did not visit war

on them, too. Their lives, in such a story, were implicated only in the war's outcome,

in "giving freedom to the slave."[2]

Ira Berlin and, recently, scholars of all stripes working on the end of slavery

have countered the assumption that blacks were marginal to the conflict. Historians

at the Freedmen and Southern Society Project have made nuanced arguments for

the centrality of enslaved people as agents in their own emancipation: that enslaved

men and women were primary actors in bringing about their own freedom; that

black southern men were eager to take up arms for the United States and their own

freedom; and that plantations during and immediately after the war were sites of

severe labor conflict, pitting the diametrically opposed economic and political

desires of the formerly enslaved against landowners and proprietors. There is much

[2] Niebuhr, "Religion of Lincoln," 74, 85.

in these arguments with which I heartily agree. Enslaved people certainly played a pivotal role in the end both of their own enslavement and in the United States' decision to consider the destruction of slavery a worthy means to win the war. Many ran to U.S. lines without regret and suffered little once there, though perhaps not as many did so, and they did with more ambivalence than some scholars have suggested.

In both of these arguments, the pivotal moments arrive when the progressive forces of black southerners and their allies come into conflict with the forces of racist and reactionary politics and either achieve victory, as in the case of the destruction of slavery and the black military experience, or a barely concealed détente, in the case of the volumes on labor relations. Likewise, James Oakes' useful *Freedom National* tells a tightly organized story with a foregone conclusion, tracing the ideological origins and political triumph of the antislavery movement in the United States. Such histories have very clear winners and losers, those with virtue and those without, depending on the beliefs they carried into the struggle for freedom.[3]

---

[3] Ira Berlin, et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985-2005); James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013); Bruce Levine, *Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South* (New York: Random House, 2013). See also Steven Hahn, "Did We Miss the Greatest Slave Rebellion in Modern History?" in *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 55-114; Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). Yael A. Sternhell and others have described writing within this framework as "neoabolitionist." Sternhell, "Revisionism Revisited? The Antiwar Turn in Civil War Scholarship," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 2 (2013): 239-256.

Such works are helpful correctives to scholarship from the 1930s that either described slavery as innocuous or marginal to the onset and outcome of the Civil War. They also counter arguments from more recent scholars who question whether the Civil War was worth the cost. One historian, writing in the late 1960s, went so far as to suggest that "the limited improvement in the status of the Negro in this country was not worth the expenditure in lives required to make that improvement possible." Others have suggested that black life between the Civil War and Civil Rights movement was "slavery by another name." Such statements are hyperbole. The end of legal corporal punishment and the internal slave trade are not to be taken lightly, and would not have occurred quickly without United States victory in the Civil War. Those who have argued or implied that the Civil War was unnecessary or not worth the cost have not convincingly accounted for the differences between slavery and freedom.[4]

Yet for all the ways in which recent, prominent histories of emancipation have deepened our knowledge of the end of slavery in the Civil War, they imagine a world in which black and white southerners were far too predictable in their responses to war and their strategies for winning, surviving, or avoiding it. Those seeking to foil emancipation, in such narratives, were thwarted as often by the

---

[4] Avery O. Craven, *The Repressible Conflict, 1830-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939); James D. Randall, "The Blundering Generation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27 (June 1940): 3-28 John S. Rosenberg, "Toward a New Civil War Revisionism," *The American Scholar* 38, no. 2 (1969): 261; David R. Goldfield, *America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2012); David M. Oshinsky, *"Worse than Slavery:" Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008); Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008).

contradictions in their own society as by more tangible forces, such as defeat on the battlefield or a lack of food and ammunition. Union officers, in these histories, were most problematic for the onset of freedom when they were insufficiently radical in their politics, not when they were beset by incompetence in battle. Black southerners may have had difficulty reaching Union lines, but the barriers were solely physical and military.

This dissertation is concerned, above all, with the strategies and tactics that brought about the end of slavery. It links the wartime experience of black men and women to specific strategies employed by the United States as part of its effort to win the war and those employed by Confederates to maintain their nascent state with slavery intact. In doing so, it connects questions about *why* the war was fought to *how* it was fought.[5]

The United States government fought a war for reunion, from beginning to the end. Pursuing emancipation as a means for defeating the Confederacy and not as an end in itself had far-reaching implications for the survival and health of African Americans in the war. So did the elision among high-ranking United States officials of the difference between "South" and "Confederacy." This verbal slippage was employed purposefully to link attacks on the southern home front to the Confederate armies in the field. It was a deathly linguistic conflation for black southerners at least as much as for white. Confederates often turned to strategies that set the protection of individual slaves against the survival of slavery more broadly, and made enslaved men, women, and children's lives miserable as they

---

[5] See Sternhell, "Revisionism Revisited?" 249-250.

turned to forced migration, re-enslavement, and finally murder as ways of forestalling the doom of their nation and the cornerstone on which it was built. Some black southerners, faced with crumbling Confederacy and a bureaucratized-yet-inefficient federal system for deploying black labor, found that they had more choices and tactics available to negotiate the terms of their labor outside U.S. lines than within them. Enslaved Americans who, because they were far from armies, did not taste freedom until the war was over were fortunate survivors of the war.

My argument for an ironic interpretation of emancipation is consonant with a number of recent works on the Civil War, part of what Yael Sternhell has called a "new revisionism" in Civil War history. Lisa M. Brady and Kate Megan Nelson have written biting accounts of the war's destroyed and "ruined" landscapes and Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering* is a haunting depiction of the war's toll, though none of these works set out to shed new light on questions about slavery and the lives of enslaved people in the war.[6] Jim Downs has written a piercing account of sickness and death among freedpeople, Carole Emberton has cautioned scholars against a hopeful framing of black soldiers, and Thavolia Glymph is doing important work on the Civil War experiences of black women and children.[7]

[6] Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Lisa M. Brady, *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes during the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008) See also Andrew F. Lang, "The Garrison War: Culture, Race, and the Problem of Military Occupation during the American Civil War Era," Ph.D. thesis, Rice University (2013).
[7] Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Carole Emberton, "'Only Murder Makes Men': Reconsidering Black Military Experience,"

The strategies and tactics employed by black southerners, white southerners, and the U.S. military were not the same everywhere. Complexity was a feature of emancipation, a fact we have known since at least Leon Litwack's beautiful treatment of the varieties of black experience, *Been in the Storm So Long.* Yet complexity and variety are starting points, not revelatory of meaning. Interactions on the war-torn landscape created patterns in space and time that, to quote the theologian Niebuhr, grew "more quickly than the strength of even the most powerful man or nation." No one group could completely control the patterns of emancipation.[8]

Evidence for these patterns and for the dissertation as a whole is drawn largely from *Visualizing Emancipation*, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation, an online database and digital map of the end of slavery I created with Edward L. Ayers and colleagues at the University of Richmond. *Visualizing Emancipation* used a full survey of the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* and less capacious research in a number of newspapers, regimental histories, and other sources to map the documentary evidence about the end of slavery. From these sources we gleaned 3400 of what we called "emancipation events," excerpts that described the actions of black southerners during the Civil War. Whenever possible, in my citations below I have provided the URL to the emancipation events used in that database. I and our student researchers categorized these events according to nine event types, ranging from African Americans aiding the Union and running away from plantations to

Journal of the Civil War Era 3, no. 2 (2012): 369-393; Thavolia Glymph's forthcoming work is on the lives of black women and children as refugees in the Civil War South.
[8] Niebuhr, *Irony of American History*, 3; Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm so Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Knopf, 1979).

events describing their re-enslavement and abuse. For a description of our methods and our typology for emancipation events, see Appendix I.

In analyzing the events gathered from the *Official Records*, I found a process of emancipation sharply divided between East and West in time and space. Black southerners were far more likely to enter into mutually beneficial exchanges of information and freedom in Virginia than anywhere else throughout the war. The Atlantic coast and Mississippi River were more chaotic than other places. And after 1862, the border states sharply diverged from other regions as they became recruiting stations and the only large spaces where the United States army actively preserved the enslavement of black southerners. The statistical tables describing the patterns I found for six regions before the Emancipation Proclamation and after it are in Appendix II.

The patterns I found were rooted in the difference between actions taken in defense of or in opposition to slavery, and actions taken with the enslavement of particular individuals in mind. The difference between acting with respect to slavery as a regime and enslaved people as individuals has a long history. It was present in antebellum northern worries over the enslavement of black southerners "as a moral issue," as Eric Foner put it, and the more widespread concern about the "Slave Power," a worry less concerned with enslavement per se than the regime that used its control of slaves to gain political and economic power. In the South, the irony of enslavement was rich. Slaveholders in the upper South allowed the closure of the slave trade, only to benefit from the rising value of those they owned in a suddenly

booming southwest. The contradictions and ironies inherent in declaring men and women property piled high.[9]

Enslaved people at times saw their own enslavement bound up with the enslavement of widely dispersed communities of black southerners, and they prepared to bring down the entire system. Yet at other times, the frequent attempts to undermine the conditions of their enslavement had less to do with crippling the regime than with the everyday negotiations of southern life that would make their lives a little more bearable, perhaps even offering a chance for freedom for themselves and those they loved. Such local negotiations may have led to systemic weakness, but they just as easily could have built additional flexibility into the system, making the oppressive regime more frighteningly supple. Freedom was always a goal for enslaved southerners before the war, but sometimes more proximate goals of being with kin loomed larger. Tactics leading them toward the one could make the other more distant.[10]

---

[9] Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 110-111; David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978), 151-154; On contradictions and ironies in enslavement in the United States, see Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Carl N. Degler, "The Irony of American Negro Slavery" in Harry P. Owens, ed., *Perspectives and Irony in American Slavery* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1976), 3-26.
[10] On slave resistance and the slave regime, see James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 613-621; Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Calvin

The stakes for realizing the end of slavery for both individuals and for the regime in the war were highest, of course, for enslaved men and women. They felt the tension between the two goods most acutely when they saw the kinds of freedom envisioned for them by Union troops, or when weighing the costs and benefits of individual and collective acts of resistance and flight. Sometimes acts that brought individual freedom also, in ways large and small, contributed to the end of slavery. At other times, joining with the Union Army looked more like suicide.

In many times and places, this tension dissipated. Enslaved men and women saw just how easily their own interests could, in the right circumstances, align with those of the invading Union forces. By working to find common ground with these soldiers, positioning their personal quests for freedom with the goals of defeating the Confederacy they transformed the outcome of the war, from one in which the right to own slaves would remain in place to one in which the United States government that had for so long protected slavery sought its utter destruction. They leveraged their particular freedom for a general defeat of slavery. In this they found encouragement from allies of good will throughout the North, who broadcast the slaves' intelligence and usefulness, admired their desire for freedom, and praised their heroism in arms. Without these movements, black southerners' drive for freedom and civil rights would have looked far different.[11]

Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

[11] This has been the main thrust of much recent literature, and I don't dispute that such alliances were widespread and had transformative power. Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1953); James McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted during the War for the Union* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965); Ira Berlin, Joseph Reidy, and Leslie

Yet the tension between individual goals and those of enslaved people more generally, to say nothing of the friction between the goals of enslaved people and the U.S. government, remained. In weighing a potential alliance with the United States, many, perhaps most, enslaved people were wary. Though some rushed to Union lines, most enslaved people did not. For some, the choice seemed obvious, for to leave home was to court death at the hands of Confederates. Thousands, perhaps millions of others judged that, even if they could reach distant U.S. lines, their interests were not best served by leaving their homes and friends to live among unknown, armed white men known to abuse blacks. Even when it became clear that aiding the United States army was aiding the end of slavery more broadly, many enslaved people judged that whatever help they could personally give might be of only little gain to the Union yet cost all they had. For many enslaved men and women, their own safety and the well-being of those they loved trumped the risk of aiding even an army that had slaves' best interests at heart, much less the army in

---

Rowland, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867,* ser. I, vol. 2*, The Destruction of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Ira Berlin, "Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and its Meaning," in David W. Blight and Brooks D. Simpson, eds., *Union & Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997); Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Harvard University Press, 2003); Glenn David Brasher, *The Necessity of Emancipation: African Americans and the Fight for Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

blue they observed. From the distance of one hundred fifty years, it seems plain that those able to avoid armies of either side were the fortunate ones.[12]

The tension between individual and collective freedom, between one man or woman's relative safety within a well-known, but enslaved place and the chance of immediate, risky flight to freedom was not a new one in the lives of enslaved southerners. Throughout the antebellum period, men and women had been constantly weighing and re-evaluating their options, deciding when the right moment would be to leave the plantation, what their odds of success might be, for how long they would go, and whom they would leave behind. War transformed these tensions and added new ones. With the Union army near, the chance of safe escape rose considerably. The possibility of mass escapes emerged. The cost of remaining on the plantation in many cases plummeted. As escape became a lower-risk endeavor, life in slavery often became more lax. Yet underlying these changes was the anxiety that freedom under Union arms might turn out to be fleeting. Most enslaved people experienced this tension as a choice without an obvious answer. While all enslaved southerners preferred freedom to slavery, all things being equal, all things, slavery had taught them, were rarely equal.

---

[12] Hanging back is a minor theme in the literature on black participation in the Civil War, but one far more common than its place in the literature would suggest. Its role in the literature is more often as the background against which stories of individual or collective action on behalf of the U.S. government take place. See David Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway & the Slaves' Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), xiii-xiv; David Blight, *Slave No More: Two Men who Escaped to Freedom, Including Their Own Narratives of Emancipation* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 193-194. Historians are more likely to treat the avoidance of Union armies as a tragedy for enslaved people. No doubt in some circumstances it was, but for many slaves avoiding warzones was a reasonable goal.

What gave some pause was the concern that wartime freedom, in its immediate circumstances, at times looked not unlike antebellum slavery. Labor behind Union lines was poorly compensated, and often not at all. Freedmen experienced racist acts as a quotidian reality. Theft of goods was more likely among strange soldiers than anywhere else. No former slave would be surprised to see these aspects of life, though they were certainly disappointed by them. Life behind Union lines, however, conferred two immediate benefits nearly everywhere, distinguishing the worst experiences in freedom from the most lenient enslaved lives. Black southerners under Union control were neither to be beaten nor threatened with the whip; and neither they nor their families were sold. These were the first fruits of freedom.[13]

Yet far more disturbing than the labor relations of the Union-occupied South was the trouble integral to the war itself. War and the mass dislocation it sparked introduced new dangers into the South. The spaces available to freed refugees were perhaps as dangerous as most plantations. Rarely would a slaveowner kill those enslaved to him, though torture was not uncommon on some farms. Smallpox, diarrhea, and dysentery had no financial interest in those they struck. The risk of running away and the uncertain future of even a successful attempt led large

---

[13] Peter C. Ripley, *Slaves and Freedmen in Civil War Louisiana*; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); Dylan Penningroth, *Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 1-5; Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*.

numbers of enslaved people to determine the costs of flight were too high. Still,

many came, judging the costs of remaining enslaved intolerable.[14]

They came, in part, for the reasons enslaved men and women had always run

from slavery. Their immediate circumstances had changed decidedly for the worst.

Sometimes this occurred when their masters let slip the news that they would be

sent far away from their home and Union lines. In more cases, especially in the

second half of the war, they ran because marauding armies had taken all available

food. In such circumstances, staying meant starving.

Because so many people of color were surely headed for Union lines,

Confederates were placed in a quandary. Confederates depended heavily on

enslaved workers to sustain its military effort. Enslaved people forced military and

civilian authorities to pit the short-term survival of the right of particular owners to

own particular slaves in the immediate future against the ability of the regime to

defend slavery in the future. Whether in Virginia or Texas, slaveholders and the

state came into conflict over the disposition of enslaved men and women. When

war turned against both slaveholding citizens and their regime, some white

southerners lashed out in violence, destroying slaves rather than allow them to aid

---

[14] Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008); Downs, *Sick from Freedom*; Margaret Geneva Long, *Doctoring Freedom: the Politics of African American Medical Care in Slavery and Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

the Yankees, while others gave them weapons and freedom, that they might uphold the Confederate regime. Some Confederates surely did both.[15]

The U.S. Army fought a war for the Union, in which they early and often found enslaved people useful allies. Where they made the most promising contacts with enslaved people were the places they were least worried about white unionists—at Hampton, where most slaveholders had fled, and at coastal fortresses far removed from large political communities of any race. U.S. armies moved in order to destroy the rebellion. As they did so, enslaved people entered their lines, sometimes in very large numbers. Yet the armies' movements were usually not taken in order to make black southerners' lives any easier. Enslaved Americans and U.S. troops used each other in the war. But the soldiers, with nearly all the power in such interactions, exacted a fearful toll on nearly all black southerners they encountered.

---

[15] McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*; Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Arm Slaves during the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

CHAPTER ONE

FIRST CONTACTS

Historians have long pointed to Hampton and the initial movement of enslaved people toward Fortress Monroe as a pivotal moment in the war's earliest hours. The encounter turned Fort Monroe into a haven for fugitive slaves and opened the possibility that a war to suppress rebellion could also be a war that ended slavery. Enslaved men at Hampton and elsewhere pressed on the levers of the state through their very presence, forcing the hands of officials such as Benjamin Butler and other, even more reluctant officers to consider emancipation as a viable policy.[1]

Historian James Oakes has suggested that this pressure has been overstated, because politicians in Washington had all but predetermined the course of the war and of freedom. No real pressure on Congress was necessary, in this view, because

---

[1] Ira Berlin, et al., *Freedom,* I.1, 12, 59-63.

Republican politicians, by now in control of Congress, had already accounted for the

"self-emancipation" of slaves and were simply awaiting the inevitable escapes to

implement such a policy. The Civil War, though for appearances and for the sake of

the Constitution was designated as a war for Union, was always also a war to end

slavery.[2]

Many more historians have described how over the course of war,

northerners came to accept the end of slavery as an essential part of American

national purpose. Historians at the Freedom Project have described how slaves

gradually convinced northern soldiers and much of the public that "a war for the

Union must necessarily be a war for freedom." More recently, Chandra Manning has

suggested that soldiers forged the "crucial link" between slaves and policymakers in

transforming the goals of the war for many northern soldiers, arguing that by 1864

and even earlier, soldiers had begun longing not for the restoration of the Union, but

its "redemption," the purification of the nation's sin of slavery through a baptism in

blood.[3]

When we turn from the best intentions of politicians and soldiers to the

strategies for Union victory and how those strategies affected the way in which

emancipation came about, we come to more sober conclusions about how slavery

ended in the United States. While enslaved Americans no doubt changed the hearts

and minds of many white soldiers, these interventions did not ultimately rearrange

---

[2] Oakes, *Freedom National*.

[3] Ira Berlin, et al., *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 75; Chandra Manning, *What this Cruel War was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 2007), 12-13, 188; for an opposing view, see Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

the priorities of the United States military in the Civil War. Even late in the war,

emancipation was always a subordinate goal, a means to end the rebellion. The

strategies employed by federal officials were meant to dismantle the Confederacy,

the emancipation of individual slaves a byproduct to be deployed in that effort.

The priorities, strategies, and objectives of the U.S. military mattered for

enslaved people. The consistent subordination of any limited emancipatory goals to

the destruction of the Confederacy meant that enslaved people found coercion and

disease throughout the war. When the army targeted Confederate land and crops,

enslaved men, women, and children were as dependent on the food U.S. officers

destroyed as Confederates were. In much of the southern interior, caravans of

enslaved men, women, and children walked behind William Sherman and others

because the war for the Union had left little to eat in areas claimed by Confederates.

If emancipation was a process, it was one whose outcomes on the ground were

driven less by the political desires, much less the moral rectitude or failings of those

soldiers and politicians working to end slavery, than by the strategic demands of a

war to end the Confederacy and its slave regime.

In the spring and early summer of 1861, the admission of enslaved people

into U.S. lines was an exception, not the rule. Hampton Roads was only one of

several southern sites where freed slaves attempted to escape in the early months of

war. A few miles from Fort Monroe and just two weeks earlier, U.S. naval officers at

the mouth of the James returned enslaved fugitives they found to their counterparts

in the Confederacy. A week after President Abraham Lincoln's inauguration, Maj.

Robert Anderson, commanding the garrison at Fort Sumter, sent a young enslaved

boy who had rowed to the island fortress back across the harbor to secessionist-

controlled Charleston. At most of the earliest opportunities, in other words,

enslaved people were unceremoniously turned away from Union lines.

Early sites of refuge from slavery emerged in some places and not others, not

according to a pre-determined plan for self-emancipation developed by Republican

officials in Washington, but through the interaction between the movement of

armies, driven by U.S. military strategy, and the tactics of enslaved men and women.

Black southerners pursued what we might think of as spatial tactics, probing at

whatever fissures they found in the boundaries of slavery, testing the places where

the power of one hostile regime ended and another, unknown regime began. These

were the actions of those who had no base of operations from which they might plan

raids. They were unable to keep to their own space, because the law recognized no

space as their own. These opportunistic tactics seemed undifferentiated from the

perspective of U.S. officials, because everywhere the army went *someone* ran to their

lines. Yet at the earliest moments of occupation in any given place, only a handful

out of thousands of potential fugitives did so. These tactics, before proven effective,

were not the obvious, immediate responses of large numbers of enslaved people to

U.S. military occupation of southern forts, even after shooting began. They were the

chances taken by people accustomed to taking risks, perhaps because they had so

little, materially, to lose. Once a tactic was proven effective, however, enslaved

people rushed in larger numbers to take advantage of the cracks revealed in slavery.[4]

      U.S. officers created spaces of refuge because doing so furthered the Army's immediate strategic objectives. The creation of these sites was a military, strategic response to the tactics of enslaved people in certain conditions at forts and on ships. Only after an initial admission of fugitives into U.S. lines were these havens given approval by administration officials and the highest levels of military authority. They were occasional and, at first, few in number. Some times and places, military officials judged, had no need of the particular skill sets refugees offered. In these cases, they turned away enslaved men and women. Yet in other places and points in the war, officers believed that the cooperation of enslaved people would be valuable for short-term military success. They judged, too, that the cost of admitting enslaved people into the lines was less than the potential, immediate gain the U.S. military would receive. From the beginning, the patterns of emancipation were driven by a combination of military strategy and risk-taking by black southerners. These early movements toward emancipation were seldom created out of an ideological commitment to the end of slavery but by the exigencies of the moment and the strategic demands of officers in particular places.

      Explaining where and why commanders accepted slaves into their lines and where and why they did not gives specificity to arguments about the "choice"

---

[4] Michel de Certeau, trans. Steven Rendall, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 36-37. Stephanie Camp and Anthony Kaye have shown how enslaved people used interstitial spaces in parts of the slave south before the Civil War. Camp, *Closer to Freedom*; Anthony Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

enslaved people "forced" on U.S. officials that, in Ira Berlin's words, "made it possible and necessary for citizens, legislators, military officers, and the president to act."[5] Early in the war, soldiers confronted choices whether to accept fugitive slaves into their lines. These choices looked very different depending on the local demands of military strategy. Especially early in the war, commanders faced pressures other than the presence of enslaved people. The places where they arguably felt the most pressure, where U.S. soldiers had the greatest opportunity to destroy slavery, were precisely the places they declined to do so. Tens of thousands of black Louisianans remained in legal purgatory long after federal troops arrived on the scene. Thousands of these remained legally bound in slavery long after the Emancipation Proclamation, while the government bound most of the rest to compulsory service growing cash crops.

Officers were willing to create opportunities for escape from slavery only under a few conditions. First, in these places the refugees promised more than just their labor. In the earliest cases, fugitives offered either geographic information U.S. commanders lacked, significant skillsets, or had worked on fortifications commanders soon hoped to attack. Second, forts that accepted fugitives had adequate space to house the refugees. Whether havens for one or two people would become a refuge for many depended on sufficient space in an area the U.S. army already planned to defend. Lastly, and most importantly, these fugitives ran while in territory where, from the perspective of U.S. troops and politicians, the great, twin

---

[5] Ira Berlin, "Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and its Meaning," in *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era*, ed. David W. Blight and Brooks D. Simpson (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), 114, 112.

evils of slaveholding and secession aligned. Here, slavery could easily be considered a moral evil with an obvious political outcome. Destroying slavery in these places was destroying the Confederacy, and therefore fair game for local commanders. So early on, commanders only considered accepting slaves in places within states already seceded, in parts of those states with little significant unionist presence, and there only after any hope of political compromise over slavery to avoid armed conflict in the area had been dashed.

The places that, for decades, had been the best from which to escape suddenly became those sites that were most closed off from fugitive slaves. Everywhere Unionists lived, officers in the spring of 1861 refused to accept the services offered by fugitive slaves and either turned them away or returned them to their owners. The sites of earliest interactions between U.S. soldiers and enslaved men and women surrounded the Confederacy, from the Ohio River to the Gulf of Mexico. Only in the spaces where white southerners had largely abandoned their holdings and unionists held little sway did these early interactions turn into sites welcoming those formerly enslaved. The emergence of a unionist band closing the fissures enslaved men and women sought to exploit came with perverse consequences. Union armies and the new regime they brought were most common around the borderlands separating Union from Confederacy, the precise places that had strong unionist presence. Most armies, because of their strategic locations, refused to create havens for fugitives.

At the same time, robust, antebellum opposition to Democrats in many of the places where the most enslaved people lived made these sites, too, less likely to

yield a political environment conducive to havens from slavery. Deep South sites

that created opportunities for escape were often inaccessible, fortresses built for

guarding harbors, not for welcoming slaves. The lack of easy entrée to the forts that

made them desirable as military installations made them inconvenient for fugitives.

Fort Sumter, no easy trek for a fugitive from Charleston, turned away refugees

because of the precarious politics there. Defenders at Tortugas and Fort Pickens

accepted the few enslaved people who rowed or swam to their walls. The earliest

U.S. forces did not arrive at the first, tiny sliver of plantation districts along the

South Carolina coast until November 1861, and did not arrive in Louisiana until

early 1862.

Once federal troops and ships arrived at these densely populated plantation

districts, they quickly became overwhelmed by the number of refugees there.

Federal troops realized that the lessons learned in the upper South and at coastal

forts, where a small or modest number of enslaved people might arrive, had little

applicability when larger numbers of impoverished men and women were involved.

Outcomes and the local policies implemented sharply diverged in the two earliest

sites of the Deep South invasion: in South Carolina the United States eventually

oversaw the disbursement of land to former slaves, while in Louisiana, the labor

regime survived national dislocation nearly unchanged.[6] Commanders in the two

sites employed identical orders from Washington, assumed control of areas of

similar wealth in land and slaves, and seized hold of agricultural areas of similar

productive capacity. The sites differed, however, in strategic position. Coastal

[6] Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment*
(Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Company, 1964).

South Carolina had little strategic value to the United States army. The bombardment and capture of Charleston, though a symbolic victory, came late in the war and mattered little to its outcome. Yet the capture of New Orleans, and with it control of the mouth of the Mississippi, seemed at the time essential for the destruction of the Confederacy. With New Orleans came nearly 150,000 whites who submitted to Union control. Politically, Louisiana looked like Kentucky. In strategic importance, it was without peer.

If a rationale that emphasizes geography and strategy and that places less emphasis on political ideology makes explicable why Benjamin Butler, no abolitionist, would seek to protect fugitives in Hampton, it explains darker events elsewhere. Enslaved Missourians were routinely shuttled from U.S. lines and black Tennesseans at Forts Donelson and Henry were admitted under only the most stringent conditions. More consequentially for the course of the war and process of emancipation, Butler himself displayed marked ambivalence toward refugees in the Mississippi River Delta just a few months after coining the term "contraband" in Virginia. Understanding why United States officers turned so many people of color away makes it clear why so many contemporary observers were surprised by emancipation. Making clear the conditions under which army installations would likely become opportunities for escape from slavery allows us to understand why a successfully prosecuted war very likely would cripple slavery and what kind of world former slaves might expect afterward. The fate of Reconstruction, like wartime emancipation, would not depend upon the goodwill of the northern public

but on the geographic patterns emerging in the South as a byproduct of the war to defeat the rebellion.

Though they offered few material comforts but many dangers, the early spaces offering escape from slavery changed the policies governing U.S. military interactions with enslaved people everywhere, for the remainder of the war. New policies, formulated in Washington as a response to the early refuges, had vastly different effects when implemented in different areas of the South. In putting these policies into operation, military commanders adjusted to the spatial tactics of enslaved men and women in densely and sparsely populated areas, in places where local, unionist officials upheld slavery in law and places altogether abandoned by white civilians, in heavily fortified cities and on plantations scarcely defended. The contours of freedom were etched in these initial encounters. They took shape with tactics of enslaved people and the military strategy of commanders in the field. Emancipation was a legal framework established by law in Washington D.C. as much for ideological reasons as military ones. Yet commanders implemented it largely according to local military needs. As the local terrain changed, so did the shape and scope of freedom that might be experienced there.

African Americans did not wait for the firing on Fort Sumter before seeking refuge at the U.S. enclave or attempting to carry information to U.S. forces there. One week after Lincoln's inauguration, an unnamed boy escaped from Charleston and approached the island fortress in a canoe. When he pulled up to the dock, troops

under Maj. Robert Anderson's command immediately sent him back across the harbor. He found the few U.S. soldiers stationed there anxious, alert to trouble, and uninterested in provoking Confederates more than their refusal to abandon the fort already did.

Despite Major Anderson's caution and his own pro-slavery inclinations, normal operation of the institution within Charleston and the actions of enslaved people there made provocation over slavery more likely. As in other southern cities, enslaved people were accustomed to hiring themselves out, passing along a portion of their earnings and keeping the remainder. Anderson's personal servant was hired in this way, though Anderson had no knowledge of the servant's enslavement and believed he was contracting with a free person of color. As tensions began to rise, the enslaved man was found in the city and detained, for two reasons. First, because his owner feared a loss of property should war erupt. Authorities in Charleston also believed that Major Anderson's servant had received information from Charleston slaves regarding "operations in this city," preparations for war "which were not proper to be communicated to any one" in the garrison at Fort Sumter. Before Fort Sumter, African Americans had already demonstrated that they were a potential liability to Confederates because of the information they might broker.[7]

National boundaries became boundaries for slaves, even if both national powers were committed to enforcing slavery. The water separating Charleston from Sumter worked just this way. The local functioning of slavery depended on

---

[7] Maj. Robert Anderson to D. F. Jamison, Fort Sumter, S.C., March 16, 1861, *OR* I.1, 220, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26401; D.F. Jamison to Major Robert Anderson, Charleston, S.C., March 15, 1861, *OR* I.1, 219-220.

easy interactions between the fort and the mainland, between areas under federal and state control before the war began. Despite being an institution to which local U.S. commanders and white Charlestonians were committed, the passage of slaves between the two was impossible because slaves were believed to carry knowledge, skills, and information, not just labor, with them. It was plain to black and white southerners alike that slavery was vulnerable along the coast because of the threat of black action. Some Confederates were able to locate this threat at the intersection of the probing tactics of enslaved men and women with which they were long familiar and a new military power. Civilian leaders in St. Marys and Camden County, Georgia, warned that the area was "utterly unprotected by any military or naval force" in case of a slave uprising "should an enemy land and arouse them to hostilities."[8] The problem was not just in Charleston or the Georgia coastline. Throughout the South, white slaveholders' preparations for war included warnings about the subversive activity of enslaved men and women.

Nearly as soon as delegates in Richmond declared Virginia to have seceded from the United States, African Americans living near U.S. military installations in the state began running away, perhaps in larger numbers than before. Some succeeded, many more did not. Slaveholders in King George County were alarmed to discover that at least eighteen enslaved men from six plantations at Hampstead, on the Potomac River, coordinated their escape the night of May 6. This group included a relatively large number of conspirators coordinating their escape across

---

[8] F. Adams et al. to His Excellency Jefferson Davis, Saint Mary's, Camden County, Ga., April 25, 1861, *OR* I.53, 156, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27836.

plantation boundaries.[9] Confederate authorities quickly joined the civilian search

for the refugees. Though they were not immediately found and though they were

less than a mile from United States territory, these men had no straightforward way

of arriving in an area where they would be harbored from slavery or recognized as

free men. These tactics for escape, breaking away without immediate access to U.S.

forces, held slimmer chances for success than those employed in an environment

already transformed by U.S. military presence.[10]

At about the same time, enslaved men were contemplating similar escapes

along rivers to the south. Three large bodies of water ran into the Chesapeake Bay

south of the Potomac River, and the U.S. quickly began patrolling each. Of particular

concern to both United States and Confederate officials was the James River, which

fed into the Bay from Richmond, the newly christened Confederate capital.

Secessionists had acted quickly to capture Norfolk harbor, on the south side of the

James' mouth. United States troops had been stationed at Fortress Monroe and,

unlike at Charleston and Fort Sumter, had relatively secure supply lines to the

fortress from further up the Bay. Six men planned a water-borne escape from

slavery in Confederate-controlled Norfolk. They successfully slipped through the

[9] Though the question of group runaways needs greater attention, the contemporary and later, scholarly literature on antebellum fugitives from slavery has emphasized individual escapes over ones attempted en masse. See Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 241-242; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 648-657; John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).
[10] Statement of Mr. John T. Washington, of Hampstead P.O., King George County, Virginia, Fredericksburg, Va., May 7, 1861, *OR* I.2, 820, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27374.

surveillance measures Confederates had taken and reached the *U.S.S. Quaker City*, part of the U.S. Navy's Home Squadron, by May 11, 1861, only two weeks after the steamer entered U.S. service.

Upon reaching the sidewheel steamship, they were greeted by naval officers who had no use for them. Though the fugitives were certainly resourceful, having evaded Confederate watches in Norfolk, we have no record of any significant offers of aid they might have made to federal officers. The captain relayed their discovery to Adm. Garrett Pendergrast and detained the men. Pendergrast, on board the *U.S.S. Flagship Cumberland* and stationed just off Fortress Monroe, worked quickly to arrange with the commander of Confederate forces at Norfolk for their re-enslavement. U.S. naval officers in the home squadron there were under orders "not to have anything to do with fugitive slaves." Officers interpreted this command to mean that they were to return the fugitives to the custody of their original owners.[11]

Clear orders forbidding intervention in slavery left some ambiguity, leaving officers with options. The first, and perhaps easiest for U.S. naval captains, was to refuse to admit to their ships enslaved men they encountered. This occurred along the Potomac River not long after the interaction between slaves, the *Quaker City*, and Confederate officers at Hampton Roads. Capt. William R. Palmer of the army's topographical engineering division declined allowing fugitives on board his mapping expedition, though the enslaved people he encountered "expressed a strong desire that I should take them with me." His job was mapping, not taking refugees. The second option, pursued in the *Quaker City* case, was to coordinate the

---

[11] G. J. Pendergrast to Brigadier General Gwynn, Off Fortress Monroe, Va., May 11, 1861, *OR Navy* I.4, 387-388, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27705.

recapture of enslaved people under "the flag of truce," allowing enslaved men to be

returned to Confederates with a guarantee that the U.S. forces would not come

under fire. Such an arrangement, though not impossible after war began, could fray

as tensions and casualty counts rose. Lastly, U.S. naval officers might interpret non-

interference as allowing fugitives protection, but only if they asked for it. This was

the interpretation of non-interference anti-slavery activists had preferred. Yet given

these interpretive options naval officers rarely deemed it prudent to take on the risk

of adding fugitives to their crew unless the stowaways had something significant to

offer.[12]

In the right circumstances, enslaved men could offer significant resources to

naval officers. Some military personnel seemed taken aback at the local knowledge

of those who had worked long days around the water. In June 1861 Col. Harvey

Brown, the commander of the combined army and navy forces in the Department of

Florida, learned "from a negro deserter" about the efforts of Confederates to prevent

U.S. forces from taking Pensacola harbor. Like many Union officers at the beginning

of the war, he doubted the information he received. Brown reported to his

commander in Washington that despite the man's intelligence, his experience as a

pilot in the harbor, and the "considerable information" he divulged, the colonel "of

course" received the information "with large qualification."[13]

---

[12] W.R. Palmer to Professor A.D. Bache, Superintendent, U.S. Coast Survey, Coast Survey Office, June 8, 1861, *OR Navy* I.4, 505-6; G. J. Pendergrast to Brigadier General Gwynn, Off Fortress Monroe, Va., May 11, 1861, *OR Navy* I.4, 387-388, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27705.
[13] Harvey Brown to Lieut. Col. E. D. Townsend, Fort Pickens, June 22, 1861, *OR* I.1, 433, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26912.

Brown's hesitation with the intelligence gathered from an enslaved man belied the detail with which he relayed the man's information to the adjutant general's office in Washington. Brown was persuaded to retain the man, both for his usefulness and because, as Brown put it, he would not "voluntarily" return "a poor wretch to slavery." Brown, in fact, already had experience employing useful, enslaved men for the purposes of the U.S. army. The day Fort Sumter fell, twenty enslaved men at Tortugas, "skillful with oar and rope," went off with Brown and the federal troops under his command. In the Florida Keys, Brown permitted local unionists to maintain the right to enslave, though the situation surely seemed unstable for them there. Loyal slave-owners, perhaps fearing that Brown would eventually impress their property as well, left the Keys, forcing those they owned to travel with them. After the fall of Fort Sumter, slave-owners in Key West were left "in a state of perfect suspense and uncertainty."[14]

In Florida, Col. Harvey Brown pursued a strategy of stabilizing the Keys and holding the well-positioned forts at Tortugas and Pensacola. His objectives dovetailed with his distaste for slavery, creating a strategic environment in which tactics of enslaved people searching for a way to erode the institution might find success. By June 1861, enslaved people had shown their worth to Brown. Fort

[14] Ibid.; M.C. Meigs to Hon. William H. Seward, Washington, May 6, 1861, *OR* I.52.1, 139, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26376; F. Watlington to His Excellency M.S. Perry, Governor of Florida, Key West, April 17, 1861, I.52.2, 52, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26672; Harvey Brown to Lieut. Col. E.D. Keyes, Transport Steamship Atlantic, April 15, 1861, *OR* I.1, 376-377, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26375; Wm. H. French to Capt. Geo. L. Hartstuff, Key West, Fl., May 20, 1861, *OR* I.I, 426, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27731; F. Watlington to His Excellency M.S. Perry, Governor of Florida, Key West, April 17, 1861, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26672.

Pickens [Figure 1] quickly became a refuge for at least a few enslaved people. The

fact that it was situated on the tip of an island off the coast of Pensacola made it

convenient for housing enslaved people who might reach it, too. But the same

qualities that made it easy to defend also made the site exceedingly difficult for
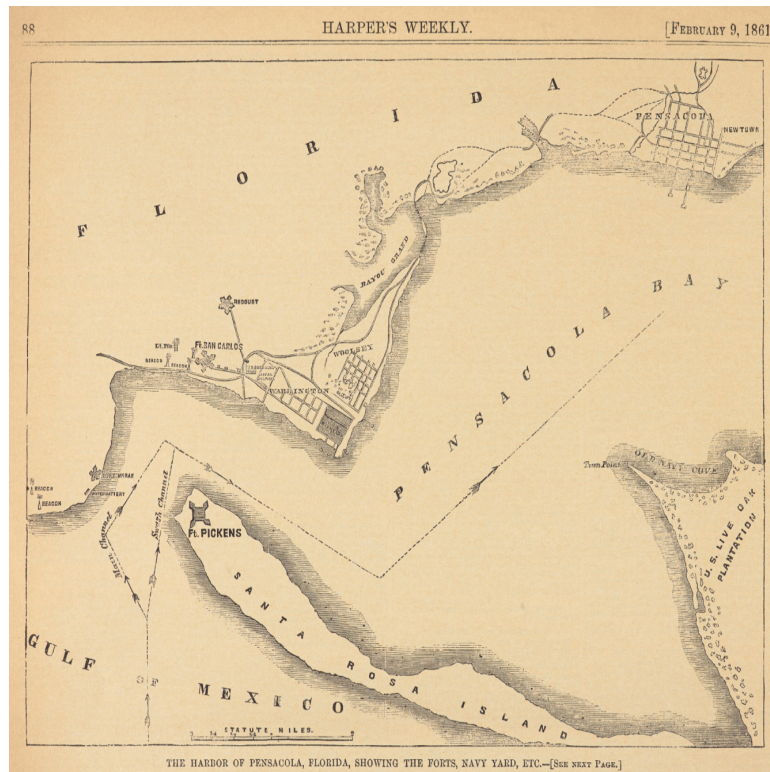
enslaved Floridians to reach.

Figure 1: Fort Pickens disconnected from Pensacola, Florida, Harper's Weekly, February 9, 1861
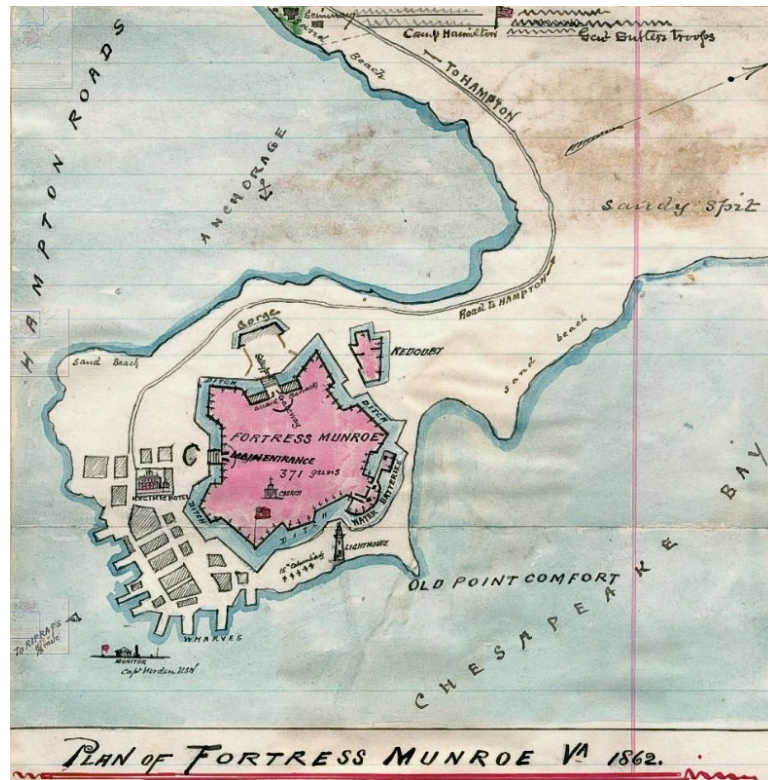
Fort Monroe, completed the same year as Fort Pickens, 1834, was likewise situated to guard a significant southern harbor, but unlike Fort Pickens was accessible by land. A wide road led from the fort to the village of Hampton, which U.S. forces began to visit as early as May 1861. On Thursday, May 23, African Americans in Hampton encountered a Vermont regiment commanded by Col. John W. Phelps. Under orders from Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler not "as yet" to disturb them, Phelps, an abolitionist before the war who would become more radical as it progressed, returned to Fort Monroe after a brief survey of the village. A larger number of white residents, Phelps reported, had already fled and compelled those they owned to do so as well. Remaining were "a few citizens, who professed to be

watching their negroes." The enslaved men and women at Hampton had no recourse under current law, and not even an abolitionist captain saw fit to intervene and invite them to walk the mile or two to Fort Monroe that day.[15]

While enslaved people in Hampton remained without obvious recourse, those who approached Fort Monroe found a different response. The night Phelps returned, three men, Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory, and James Townsend, approached the Union installation seeking refuge from Col. Charles K. Mallory and service to the Confederacy. Butler famously refused to return them to Mallory, instead leaving the frustrated Confederate officer with a receipt, "as I would," he reported, "for any other property of a private citizen which the exigencies of the service seemed to require." The detainment of Baker, Mallory, and Townsend and his use of them, Butler argued, illustrated a larger point. Enslaved people, he wrote Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott, were that moment "being employed in the erection of batteries and other works by the rebels, which it would be nearly or quite impossible to construct without their labor." Depriving the Confederacy of labor was a valid military tool.[16]

A Democrat who endorsed the *Dred Scott* decision and had voted for Jefferson Davis at the stalled Democratic National Convention of 1860, General Benjamin Butler was no abolitionist. He responded, however, in much the same vein as Henry Brown, whose sympathy for enslaved men and women was more palpable, and whose immediate circumstances in many ways ran parallel. Both encountered

---

[15] Benjamin Butler to Winfield Scott, Fort Monroe, Virginia, May 24-25, 1861, *OR* I.2, 649, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26838.
[16] Benjamin Butler to Winfield Scott, Fort Monroe, Virginia, May 24-25, 1861, *OR* I.2, 648-651, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27416.

enslaved people offering information. In Butler's case, the Confederate fortifications currently under construction across Hampton Roads and the report that Shepard, Mallory, and Townsend were to be sent to work on such fortifications elsewhere added reasons to refuse their return. [17]

Fort Monroe, a strategically valuable installation with defensible space for refugees and easy access for individuals and families by the Hampton road, was well situated to become a magnet for people of color seeking refuge. Unlike on solitary ships nearby, there was enough room at the fort and its environs to house large numbers of refugees and plenty of work to employ them. Access from the Virginia Peninsula (home to more than 12,000 slaves in 1860) to the fortress was secure and made convenient by the road to Hampton. Enslaved people, looking for gaps in the power of slaveholders, found one at the mouth of the James. Four days after the first three fugitives arrived, men, women, and children "amounting…to what in good times would be of the value of $60,000" had entered the lines there.[18]

The influx of refugees to Hampton yielded benefits to the United States military almost immediately. As enslaved people entered U.S. lines, they began to pass along information to officers stationed there, just as Townsend, Mallory, and Shepard had given information on the progress of the fortifications opposite Fort Monroe. A robust intelligence-gathering system was soon in place. The exchange of information for freedom became a hallmark of interactions between federal officers and enslaved Americans in Virginia—the *Official Record*'s documentation of Virginia

---

[17] Adam Goodheart, *1861: The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 201-303.

[18] Census 1860; B.F. Butler to Lieutenant-General Scott, Fort Monroe, May 27, 1861, *OR* 2.1, 754.

contains far more examples of this interaction than would be expected if these events had been evenly distributed throughout the American South.[19]

Among those bringing needed skills was George Scott. Scott, among the first enslaved men to cross the James River in the days after Townsend, Shepard, and Mallory, had been a perennial runaway. Born in Hampton, Scott had been sold to A. M. Graves, son-in-law of his former master and a notoriously brutal man, who beat his wife and slaves alike. Scott had no interest in spending time with Graves and slipped into the rugged, swampy terrain nearby before the transaction had taken place. He lived in a cave for two years, moving between farms and forest while occasionally trading with nearby, sympathetic whites. When war broke out, Scott quickly arrived at Fort Monroe and warranted Gen. Butler's attention on account of his intimate knowledge of the area's relatively flat, marshy terrain. [20]

Scott's knowledge soon proved useful. Butler decided to push Confederates westward, up the Peninsula, since the newly formed Confederate military had been relying on slave labor from the Virginia Peninsula to build fortifications at Williamsburg. Col. John Bankhead Magruder and other officials employed enslaved men in the area with their masters' permission, then returned them to their homes after their agreed-upon service to the state was finished. By pushing Confederates back to their entrenchments at Williamsburg, Butler believed he could discourage Confederates, bolster local unionists, and halt the nearby construction of heavy

---

[19] Edwin C. Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 113-115; for geographic analysis of emancipation events, see Appendix II.
[20] Robert Engs, *Freedom's First Generation: Black Hampton, Virginia, 1861-1890* (1979) 19; Goodheart, *1861*, 332-3.

batteries by depriving Confederates of a convenient source of labor. Butler planned

the assault at Bethel Church and ordered that George Scott accompany the troops as

a guide. The fugitive was "to have a revolver." Scott's early services augured what

would become a decisive advantage for U.S. troops, if one that did not yield

immediate results for the United States Army. [21]

United States military responses to enslaved men, women, and children in

northern and especially western Virginia were more mixed. These were politically

sensitive areas, and whatever tactics enslaved men and women might employ, they

would find that, initially at least, national boundaries could be redrawn without

significantly altering the geography of enslavement. As he ordered troops over the

Ohio river, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan promised the "union men" of western

Virginia that "not only will we abstain" from interfering with the enslavement of

black Virginians, "but we will on the contrary with an iron hand crush any attempt

at insurrection on their part." Without vigilance on the part of the U.S. Army and

local whites alike, enslaved men may have been able to destabilize the Ohio River as

a boundary separating slave territory from the states that had been nominally free.

Such a shift could jeopardize the fragile unionism in what became West Virginia, a

unionism that despised secession but whose leaders attempted to enter the United

---

[21] J. Magruder to R.S. Garnett, Yorktown, Va., May 25, 1861, *OR* I.2, 878, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26815; Benjamin Butler to Winfield Scott, Fort Monroe, Va., June 10, 1861, *OR* I.2, 76, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26839; Ebenezer Pierce to Benjamin Butler, Camp Hamilton, June 12, 1861, *OR* I.2, 83.

States as a slave state in 1863, pledging only a partial and gradual emancipation even after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. [22]

Military strategy demanded that the rights to enslave people of color not be abridged among unionists living along the border between the Confederacy and the United States. In the summer of 1861, some who had been enslaved in Maryland made their way to U.S. lines and were ordered returned to slavery there. Brig. Gen. Robert C. Schenck promised that his camp outside Washington, DC, would not "be made a harbor for escaping fugitives," and that the slaves of "loyal citizens of loyal States" would "always" be returned. Yet by mid-July 1861, enslaved Americans voluntarily finding their way to the former slave market depot of Alexandria, Virginia, were allowed to remain within U.S. lines and not prevented "from volunteering to do team duty" for the units stationed there. After slaves began entering Fort Monroe in large numbers, the line dividing seceded states from union ones very quickly hardened into a line dividing space where United States military units would efface slavery and a space where they would work actively to uphold it.[23]

It is not clear whether people of color were encouraging whites in the area to fear their participation in the war, but men in both Union and Confederate armies suspected each other of employing enslaved soldiers. In the earliest months of the war, U.S. and Confederate officers in northern and western Virginia anticipated that

---

[22] Geo. B. McClellan to the Union Men of Western Virginia, Cincinnati, May 26, 1861, *OR* II.1, 753.

[23] Robt. C. Schenck to Capt. James B. Fry, Camp Upton, Va., July 6, 1861, *OR* II.1, 755-756, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27684; Thos. A. Davies to Colonel Miles, Alexandria, Va., July 14, 1861, *OR* I.2, 299, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26479.

African Americans would play a central role in the war's violence. Each side claimed

that the other had rapidly organized relatively large units of black soldiers. In June

1861 rumors of nearby regiments of "negroes, armed and uniformed," swirled

among Confederates in Appalachia, rumors George McClellan's broadcast sought to

anticipate and quell. Such rumors circulated among U.S. troops in northern Virginia.

Union troops put to flight at Vienna claimed that a force of 2,000 troops had been

supplemented by "150 armed picked negroes" laying flat in a nearby grain field.

Unsubstantiated fears of widespread black violence were accentuated by specific,

small-scale instances where enslaved men participated directly in the early violence

of war. Two enslaved men attached to Col. James Ewell Brown Stuart's command

killed a member of the 15th Pennsylvania Infantry. Despite the fears of unionists,

secessionists, and military authorities, black violence in the early months of war was

at most sporadic.[24]

     Fears of widespread black participation in the war occluded from some U.S.

officers more propitious developments, as enslaved men began to offer information

to units in the field in northern and northwestern Virginia. Brig. Gen. Irvin

McDowell was suspicious of black information early on in Virginia even after the

events at Fort Monroe. On the eve of the First Battle of Bull Run, McDowell

dismissed the reports and the "active" imagination of a slave whose master had

been a colonel in the Confederate army until killed in action the night before.

---

[24] George Porterfield to Col. H.S. Garnett, Huttonsville, Va., June 9, 1861, *OR* I.2, 71, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26394; Report of Robt. C. Schenck, June 18, 1861, *OR* I.2, 127, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26796; Col. T.J. Jackson to Lieut. Col. E. K. Smith, Darkesville, Va., July 3, 1861, *OR* I.2, 185, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26746.

Enslaved people were often rebuffed in the first months of the war but continued to look for ways to offer U.S. officers information and labor as they sought tactics that would work in the places they found themselves.[25]

Some officers in the region found the accounts of refugees compelling. A naval officer regarded the report of two fugitives "of so much importance, if their statement can be relied upon," that he immediately sent the men to his superior officers. By late summer and early fall, U.S. authorities along the Potomac had actively begun interrogating fugitives, finding where Confederate pickets were stationed, how secessionists coordinated their crossings of the river, and how many armed Confederates were stationed nearby. By mid-September 1861, U.S. authorities began relying in earnest on actionable black intelligence. Brig. Gen. William S. Rosecrans, commanding the U.S. forces in western Virginia, had pressed Confederate troops to the Gauley River, where he found them entrenched. A refugee from the Confederate forces slipped away during the night as Confederates crossed the river in silence. As day broke the next morning, the refugee reported the Confederate movements, prompting Rosecrans immediately to order the capture of the abandoned enemy camp. Carnifex Ferry became the first of many significant, successful Union actions premised upon the intelligence they received from enslaved men in the state.[26]

[25] Irvin McDowell to Lieut. Col. E. D. Townsend, Centerville, Va., July 19, 1861, *OR* I.2, 307, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27364.
[26] Benj. M. Dove to John A. Dahlgren, Off Aquia Creek, August 3, 1861, *OR Navy* I.4, 598, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27923; Daniel Ruggles to Brigadier-General A. Porter, Washington, DC, October 26, 1861, *OR* II.2, 863-4, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25545; C.S. Norton to T.T. Craven, U.S. Steam Sloop Seminole, Potomac Flotilla, September 23, 1861, *OR Navy* I.4, 687,

In all parts of Virginia, enslaved people had begun poaching, obtaining

freedoms, and demanding rights nowhere explicitly granted them, in the

unsupervised gaps between Confederate authority and that of the United States

military. In areas dominated by unionists, they found little political space in which

to maneuver. Encountering U.S. troops there in the earliest months conferred no

benefit. In areas where pre-war unionism was weak, they found that the U.S.

military could become an ally. These interactions quickly moved up the chain of

command and entered politics in Washington. By August 6, 1861, Congress passed

the First Confiscation Act, declaring that all claims to the labor of enslaved people

used to further the rebellion would be "forfeit."[27]

Within two days, Secretary of War Simon Cameron had translated

congressional act into military directives. Cameron wrote Butler (and distributed

the letter to commanders across the South) that "if persons held to service shall be

employed in hostility to the United States the right to their services shall be

forfeited." Cameron further specified that, despite the "inconveniences,

embarrassments, and injuries" attending the exercise of military enforcement of the

law, officers should ensure all potential fugitives aiding the Confederacy are allowed

into military lines, meaning that the distinction between loyal and disloyal masters

would be suspended in practice. All fugitives were to be welcomed from the

http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27365; Report of Brig. Gen. William S. Rosecrans, Camp Scott, September 11, 1861, *OR* I.5, 128-129, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25077; Hugh Ewing to Colonel E.P. Scammon, Camp Scott, Virginia, n.d., *OR* I.5, 145-146, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25079.
[27] *U.S. Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, vol. 12 (Boston, 1863), 319.

seceded states, none turned away. Loyal masters would be given "just compensation" after the fact, "upon the return of peace."[28]

These orders expanding the authority of commanders to assault slavery came with three significant limitations. First, Cameron exempted all states "in which the authority of the Union is fully acknowledged," forbidding the implementation of the First Confiscation Act in Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland, despite the fact that Congress placed no such limitations in the text of the law Cameron was purporting to implement. Second, Cameron insisted that Butler and other commanders "neither authorize nor permit any interference by the troops" they commanded "with the servants of peaceful citizens" on plantations, nor were they "in any way" to "encourage such servants to leave the lawful service of their masters." The chance for freedom remained with the ingenuity and tactical movements of enslaved people themselves.[29]

Lastly, Cameron confirmed the objective of the war, in case there was any confusion. "The war now prosecuted on the part of the Federal Government is a war for the Union." The strategy governing military interactions with enslaved people was in this respect left unchanged. However much the army adjusted to their attempts to traverse national boundaries, whatever rights it granted those who passed through its lines, for the remainder of the war the United States would seek, as its only primary objective, to destroy the Confederacy and rebuild the Union.[30]

---

[28] Simon Cameron to Benjamin Butler, Washington, D.C., August 8, 1861, *OR* II.1, 761-2.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

Emancipation, the protection of refugees, the harnessing of labor, the granting of rights and the recruitment of soldiers were all in service to this war aim. The subordination of emancipation to the defeat of the Confederate army, a logical hierarchy unquestioned at the time, would prove to have important consequences for the geographic patterns emerging from the end of slavery and the disparate opportunities open to people throughout the course of the war.

A military strategy that valued unionist slaveholders left little room for fugitives. North of the Confederacy, military interactions with people of color were marked by a legal regime left untouched by the First Confiscation Act. Until March 1862, officers working in the Union borderlands were forbidden from harboring enslaved refugees and were commanded to return the enslaved men and women upon the request of their owners, except in cases where the enslaved people had been employed in support of the Confederacy.

Most federal officers in loyal slave states, early in the war, wanted their troops to avoid contact with enslaved people if at all possible. Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, who later in the war had no scruples against using as many people of color as he could for the war effort, demanded that his officers follow the letter of the state law and a strict reading of the First Confiscation Act in the fall of 1861, surrendering all fugitives to their loyal owners. In order to avoid the complications of determining the status of enslaved people or cooperating with slaveholders, Sherman advised the Russian-born Col. John Basil Turchin, who had harbored fugitive slaves outside Louisville, that it was better to "keep the negroes out of your camp altogether, unless you brought them along with your regiment." Col. John Cook

was clear with his troops at Fort Holt, Kentucky: "No officer or soldier shall be allowed to arrest, secret, or harbor or in any way interfere with persons held to service (negroes), property of citizens of slaveholding States." In the borderlands, it was often easier to exclude people of color from camps altogether than to enter the legal and moral morass of harboring and returning fugitives. [31]

For United States officers, the disruption of slavery along the southern Atlantic coast posed no moral or legal quandaries after the War Department's clarifications of August 8. Enslaved Carolinians, whether they had heard of the "freedom fort" on the Virginia Peninsula or had overheard the deprecations of Yankees by slaveowners they knew to be untrustworthy, sought refuge from slavery behind Union lines. Confederates along the Atlantic seaboard recognized that this constellation of strategies and tactics would remap slavery. As the Union blockade of the southern coast began in earnest, they quickly began to doubt that they would be able to patrol their shores with any success. In August 1861 Confederates in Wilmington confirmed that four slaves, including at least one "good pilot," left the southern extremity of the Outer Banks for a blockading steamship. Even with their "boats so arranged at night" as to "prevent them from being used by unauthorized persons," Confederate patrols in Wilmington doubted that they could "prevent a recurrence of these desertions." The defense of Roanoke Island at Weir Point was "crippled for want of men," even though Confederates were able to employ two

---

[31] Gen. William T. Sherman to Col. John Basil Turchin, Louisville, KY, October 15, 1861, *OR* I.4, 307, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26921. See also Gen. William T. Sherman to Gen. Alexander McDowell McCook, Louisville, KY, November 8, 1861, *OR* I.4, 347, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27618; L.R. Waller, General Orders No. 17, Fort Holt, Ky., November 23, 1861 *OR* II.1, 779.

hundred enslaved laborers to build fortifications there. Forces around Charleston mobilized what white men they could for the defense of the coast, though they were limited in pulling men from the countryside since, they argued, "it would be bad policy to take too many men from the vicinity of these plantations, drawn from localities thickly settled with black population." Around Charleston, as in every productive agricultural region of the South, whites cautioned each other to be as vigilant against their black workers and neighbors as against the devil they didn't know.[32]

Confederate defense of the coast was based on a careful balancing act between two conflicting goals: conscription of laborers for defense and moving the most valuable laborers far from U.S. incursions. Often, this meant that free blacks faced the most urgent labor demands. The Confederate "Mosquito Fleet" and allied regiments in charge of the protection of the Outer Banks called up "250 free negroes for service in the engineers department" in the weeks leading up to the failed defense of Roanoke Island. The defense of Elizabeth City found itself without adequate labor, and midnight impressments only yielded a fifth of the needed number of enslaved workers. Calls for the Confederate protection of New Berne first produced "a small party of free negroes" without tools; upon the failure of his initial recruitment, Brig. Gen. Lawrence O'Bryan Branch's calls to hire slaves for the doomed defense fared even worse, yielding "but a single negro." Confederates put

---

[32] R.C. Gatlin to Henry T. Clark, Wilmington, N.C., August 8, 1861, *OR* I.51.2, 217-218, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27072; A.R. Wright to Brig. Gen. B. Huger, Camp Georgia, Roanoke Island, September 11, 1861, *OR* I.4, 647, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26844; R.S. Ripley to General, Charleston, September 1, 1861, *OR* I.6, 269, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27639.

up only token resistance to the U.S. Navy along the Outer Banks and much of the

North Carolina coastline.[33]

Defenses of the coast, except the urban centers of Charleston and Savannah,

which were able to obtain adequate resources for their defense, rarely lasted long.

Confederates captured a few U.S. steamships (along with their crews, including

people of color) along the Outer Banks, though the U.S. took control of most of these

barrier islands by early 1862. The invasion of the Sea Islands south of Charleston

began in November 1861 and met with some resistance from batteries, though the

naval bombardment quickly fell into a rout. Confederate defense of Fort Fernandina

and Jacksonville hardly lasted longer. Nearly all whites abandoned the coastal

countryside, their plantations, and the people they claimed to own, judging

themselves too outnumbered to force an evacuation of the enslaved men and

women who lived there.[34]

People of color had mixed expectations from the U.S. incursion. Along the

Beaufort River, they met the U.S. gunboat with what seemed to the ship's captain as

a mix of "curiosity and fear." Rumors intended to scare them from U.S. troops had

little effect. When asked whether he feared Yankees would sell "them off to Cuba,"

one enslaved man replied to the credulous officer, "'you don't suppose we would

[33] H.M. Shaw to Brigadier General Henry A. Wise, Roanoke Island, N.C., January 8, 1862, *OR* I.9, 127, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26845; G.H. Hill to Colonel H.M. Shaw, Roanoke Island, N.C., February 14, 1862, *OR* I.9, 181-182, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26847; Report of Col. C.F. Henningsen, Winton, N.C., February 12, 1862, *OR* I.9, 191, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26842; Brig. Gen. L. O'B. Branch to Major-General T.H. Holmes, In the Field, March 26, 1862, *OR* I.9, 241-247, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26800.
[34] R.S. Ripley to Captain, Charleston, December 25, 1861, *OR* I.6, 352-354, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28149.

have been here had we believed such things.'" Some believed the arriving U.S. troops were a way to get off the plantations where they had lived. "As the boats passed," reported one naval commander, people of color "came down to the shore with bundles in their hands," expecting to be "taken off." They were not, at least not immediately.[35]

Other Lowcountry natives took the flight of whites as an opportunity to vent frustrations with the *ancien régime*. In Beaufort, U.S. forces encountered a vandalized town evocative to one U.S. soldier of the biblical "abomination of desolation." Upon entering the town, the wary federal soldiers began driving off people of color they found on their arrival, shooting two. Violence at the hands of the U.S. advance guard ended quickly, and people of color began to approach U.S. forces. Shortly after the troops arrived, black Carolinians limped to the Union headquarters at Hilton Head injured, evidently "shot by their masters," and expecting that "all of the blacks would come in to avoid being murdered." After landing at Beaufort, "300 contrabands" approached, and within two days of landing at Port Royal, 150 men had found their way into U.S. lines. The quartermaster began to provision them with "coarse clothing."[36]

[35] Report of Lieut. Ammen, Hilton Head, November 9, 1861, *OR* Navy I.12, 336-337, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25721; Unofficial Report of Commander Drayton, Port Royal, November 30, 1861, *OR* Navy I.12, 272-273, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25539; C.C. Fulton to Secretary of the Navy, Fortress Monroe, November 12, 1861, *OR* Navy I.12, 292-293, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24719.
[36] S.F. DuPont to Lieut. N. Collins, Port Royal, S.C., November 10, 1861, *OR* Navy I.12, 338, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27545; J.P. Gillis to S.F. DuPont, Beaufort, S.C., November 19, 1861, *OR* Navy I.12, 353, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27546; Danl. Ammen to Saml. F. DuPont, Hilton Head, November 9, 1861, *OR* Navy I.12, 336-337,

U.S. forces commanding the invasion of the North Carolina Coast were met three months later with a more evenly enthusiastic response from enslaved men and women. As in Beaufort, enslaved men and women appropriated a large number of goods and structures left behind by the Confederate evacuation and vandalized a good many others. Once Union soldiers arrived, refugees rushed into New Berne from the surrounding towns and plantations, joined by fugitives from slavery who had been living in the swamps for years. People of color completely overwhelmed whatever plans Brig. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside and his forces might have had for a more limited policy of emancipation and admission of "contraband" men and women into their lines. Even those who remained on their farms refused "to acknowledge any debt of servitude."[37]

Americans enslaved in Florida appeared at Fort Marion in St. Augustine as soon as U.S. forces took the fortress. The approach of enslaved people in the earliest days of occupation caught the heavily armed U.S. soldiers off-guard. Soldiers on picket duty outside Jacksonville shot and killed one enslaved man, wounding another before realizing that they were part of a group escaping their enslavement at Lake City, a remarkable sixty miles inland.[38]

---

http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25721; R. Saxton to W.T. Sherman, Port Royal, S.C., November 9, 1861, *OR* I.6, 186, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28121.
[37] A.E. Burnside to Hon. E.M. Stanton, March 21, 1862, *OR* I.9, 199-201, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27511.
[38] J.W.A. Nicholson to S.F. DuPont, St. Augustine, Fl., March 18, 1862, *OR Navy* I.12, 643-644, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25710; H.G. Wright to Capt. Louis H. Pelouze, Jacksonville, Fl., March 28, 1862, *OR* I.6, 256, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28143.

The disruption brought by war was felt in the bayous of Louisiana beginning in late 1861, and in many ways these early disruptions fit the patterns of Confederate anxiety over local security and foreign defense seen elsewhere in the South. The terrain built by the antebellum cotton boom had been fashioned for maximum productivity, not for defense against military incursions. Confederate troops at the mouth of the Mississippi, cognizant of the disturbances war preparation had already made elsewhere, deployed troops not only for tactical advantage against U.S. forces but "for moral effect" in the "densely slave-populated section" of St. Mary's parish and elsewhere. As U.S. forces pressed southern Louisiana, Pierre Soule articulated widespread Confederate disquiet that "servile insurrection," would follow the Confederate military's abandonment of white southerners in the region.[39]

Confederates swept through plantation districts, mobilizing enslaved workers for nearby defense. Like other cities and likely sites of conflict along the coasts, New Orleans became a hub for enslaved laborers brought from neighboring fields, forced to work on fortifications and other defense operations. In the fall of 1861, "between 200 and 300" enslaved men were forced to cast iron for the rushed (and ultimately unsuccessful) production of the *C.S.S. Mississippi*. At the same time,

---

[39] M. Lovell to J.P. Benjamin, New Orleans, November 8, 1861, *OR* I.6, 766; M. Lovell to J.P. Benjamin, New Orleans, La., December 5, 1861, *OR* I.6, 774-776, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27790; Pierre Soule to J.P. Benjamin, New Orleans, La., May 8, 1862, *OR* I.6, 887-888, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27788.

civilian authorities and commanders conscripted thousands of enslaved men to

improve fortifications around the city and at Vicksburg.[40]

When Federal troops first arrived in early 1862, they were met with

welcome. Enslaved men took extraordinary steps to enter Union lines. The recently

promoted Brig. Gen. John W. Phelps, a Vermont veteran of the U.S. army and a

vociferous critic of slavery whose previous post had been at Fort Monroe,

immediately employed "at an unfixed rate of pay" people of color who came to his

camp upon his arrival at Ship Island. These men had preferred the "thunder-gust" in

which they crossed the ten-mile stretch of water to "the sympathies" of their

owners; he admired their forcefulness for having "snapped" ties to white

southerners by "leaving home." Of the commanders in the Western theater early in

the war, Phelps was the earliest and most outspoken supporter for the end of

slavery and the humane treatment of the men, women, and children he

encountered.[41]

Phelps found that his welcoming policy toward Louisiana blacks led to

conflict with other officers in his chain of command. Scarcely a week after arriving

in New Orleans, Phelps began receiving orders to allow local whites to re-enslave

men and women who had found refuge at Camp Parapet and to create lists of all

non-military personnel within his lines. By his third week on the mainland, the

orders he received from Gen. Benjamin Butler, with whom he had worked since

---

[40] Examination of Nelson Tift, Richmond, Virginia, June 12, 1863, *OR* I.6, 626 Edwd. Fontaine, December 1861, *OR* I.6, 784; A.R. Chisolm to Lieut. Col. R.B. Lee, Corinth, Miss., April 21, 1862, *OR* I.10.2, 431, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26599.

[41] J.W. Phelps to General Lorenzo Thomas, Ship Island, Miss., February 3, 1862, *OR* I.6, 679-680, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27803.

their initial foray at Fortress Monroe, had become increasingly curt: "You will cause all unemployed persons, black and white, to be excluded from your lines." If they had valuable information, they were to be questioned and sent away. When prompted, Butler could be quite specific in his orders, which sounded like those issued in places untouched by the First Confiscation Act.[42]

> Mr. J.B.G. Armand says that a boy by name of Irwin Pardon, whose services he claims, has come within your lines. The course which I have adopted in such cases is this: If I have any use for the services of such a boy I employ him without any scruple; if I have not I do not harbor him, as my subsistence would by no means serve for so many extra men that I do not need. If you have any use for him use him; if not, is he not like any other vagrant about the camp.[43]

Phelps acted as he had in Virginia, expanding the number of those freed by U.S. military presence and according them steadily increasing freedoms, as far as practicable. To Butler, Louisiana presented problems far different than those he had faced a year earlier.

The conditions in Louisiana demanded changes to existing policies and practices by the United States government. U.S. forces encountered orders of magnitude larger numbers of enslaved people than those they encountered on the Virginia Peninsula and along the Carolina seaboard earlier in the war. The occupied region included seven times more enslaved people than had lived in Virginia. Gov. Thomas O. Moore of Louisiana admitted in late 1862 that more than 50,000 slaves in

---

[42] Benjamin Butler to J.W. Phelps, New Orleans, May 9, 1862, *OR* I.15, 442; Benjamin Butler to J.W. Phelps, New Orleans, May 10, 1862, *OR* I.15, 442; Benjamin Butler to J.W. Phelps, New Orleans, May 23, 1862, *OR* I.15, 443.
[43] Benj. F. Butler to General Phelps, New Orleans, May 9, 1862, *OR* I.15, 442.

the state had been captured by U.S. troops along the Mississippi. In January 1863, Abraham Lincoln excluded from the Emancipation Proclamation the occupied, coastal Louisiana counties that, according to the U.S. census in 1860, had been home to 85,000 enslaved people, more than four times the federal invading force. The real number of those under U.S. control along the river in the early years of the war could have been as many as 150,000.[44] The number of men, women, and children involved determined the ways in which each of their lives became disrupted.

Far from being seen as useful allies, as their numbers increased men, women, and children in Louisiana left commanders bewildered as they increasingly asked what could be done with so many dislocated people. Under slavery, it was quite clear what was to be done—people on plantations would be put to work, as they had been. Under the U.S. government and the War Department's August 8 instructions, however, the question of how to defend, feed, clothe, and house as many as 85,000 men, women, and children after slavery had no easy answers. As Benjamin Butler put it three weeks into the occupation of New Orleans, the question of how to respond to people of color came to him there "in a different form" than it had come "to any other military commander."[45]

The tone of Butler's letter to Simon Cameron from New Orleans stands in contrast to the one he wrote exactly one year earlier, from Fortress Monroe. Where the earlier letter was brazen, suggesting new policy far beyond what had been

---

[44] Thomas O. Moore to Jefferson Davis, Alexandria, La., December 1, 1862, *OR* I.53, 837, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25901; Joseph G. Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction: Louisiana, 1862-1877* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 6; Oakes, *Freedom National*, 219.
[45] Benjamin Butler to E.M. Stanton, New Orleans, May 25, 1862, *OR* I.15, 439, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26246.

anticipated, this missive conveyed a chastened awe for the future he had helped shape. His questions about "the state of negro property" and "the condition of negroes as men" were grave, "appalling as the mind follows out the logical necessities of different lines of action." In a fit of self-reflection, thinking of his novel use of an old term, Butler avowed that the question how slavery was to end there could not simply be answered "by a phrase."[46]

Yet more troubling to Butler than the demonstrably larger enslaved community was the remaining white population. Though many planters along the Mississippi River had fled, others did not. Louisiana was similar to Lowcountry South Carolina in the value of its crops and character of its plantation and export-driven economy, in the political environment it fostered, and the scale of enslaved labor and agricultural production it harnessed. Yet the United States military strategy demanded that they occupy far more of Louisiana, at the mouth of the Mississippi, than of South Carolina. This meant occupying more than 100,000 white southerners in place, men and women who had given up all but the most symbolic resistance to federal control. To Butler, these "peaceful, if not loyal" citizens rendered the occupied area akin not to occupied Virginia or South Carolina, but to unionist Kentucky, Missouri, and West Virginia.

Butler's decision to turn fugitives from his lines and impose labor discipline on the plantations emerged from his hesitation to confiscate "all personal property of all rebels," particularly those who had since his arrival submitted to federal authority. After confiscating property, he would then be required to feed whites,

---

[46] Ibid.

too, "a physical impossibility," since women and children, he admitted to the Secretary, were already "actually starving in spite of all that I do." Caring for all enslaved people who might come in if not forced to remain in place, laboring, was "not to be conceived by the imagination."[47]

The first, fragile points of contact between military officers and enslaved men and women played out in scattered sites across the South. In these, enslaved people attempted to decipher which tactics they might employ to take advantage of the new, fluctuating national boundaries. In these first encounters, it was unclear whether national boundaries and those governing enslaved property rose and fell together, or whether other, invisible lines cut across the South, determining who would have a chance for freedom and who would remain enslaved. Quickly, though, the contours of wartime slavery emerged. Before the War Department had time to hand down orders regarding the future of slavery and freedom, the tactics of black southerners and Union officers determined, at least in the short term, where enslavement would end and where it would not. The military strategy guiding emancipation was one that sought to reunite the country as quickly as possible. Wherever white southerners were likely to submit to United States control, slavery would be reinforced, the tactics of enslaved men and women proven ineffective. This principle preceded Congressional and Administrative input and lasted despite Congressional law to the contrary. And it would prove decisive for the prospects of black southerners.

---

[47] Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

RUNNING AWAY

By early 1862, it had become clear that the end of slavery as a regime was different than the end of the enslavement of individuals. Confederates, black southerners, and U.S. troops saw that actions in support of slavery could jeopardize the enslavement of individuals; actions to end the regime of slavery and the Confederacy could leave countless black southerners enslaved or leave them dead. The tension between individual actions and the larger social structure was apparent to all. A similar set of interactions among black southerners, Confederates, and Union Army officials emerged independently wherever they were in close proximity to each other, bringing these tensions into relief. African Americans attempted to escape, and Confederates attempted to keep them from doing so. United States officials either received the fugitives or turned them away. In each of these interactions, men and womens' hopes for their own lives and their goals for the future of their society could come into conflict.

This dynamic created new asymmetries of power, strategy, and tactics everywhere it took hold. Black southerners, possessing by far the least power, were

by far the most motivated to transform the local geography of slavery in the most immediate terms. Confederate civilians were similarly motivated to restrain them, but were at odds with their own government that sought to balance the long-term health of the state with the short-term health of slavery as a locally flourishing institution. The United States had a mission to destroy the Confederacy but, at first, no specific mandate to transform local conditions of slavery on the ground. The imbalance in strength and priorities between black, Confederate, and Union powers left emancipation an open question everywhere. The hope of black southerners, that the United States army's proximity would quickly result in wide-ranging extension of freedom to formerly enslaved men and women, was frequently disappointed.

Black southerners had few resources with which to plan movements for freedom and to Union lines, though they possessed more in war than under slavery. Throughout the antebellum South, running away had been built on a tension between the individual good of the able, mobile slave and the larger network of enslaved people of which he or she was a part. Escaping slavery was often an individual act, undertaken when communal ties were strained or broken by the sale of a loved one. Running from slavery alone deprived those left behind of the most resourceful members in the local, enslaved network. At the same time, by escaping, runaways expanded the horizon of imagined experience available to those they knew. Running away acted simultaneously to sharpen desires for freedom and remove valuable skills from communities in bondage. This tension did not

disappear, but took on new dimensions as war expanded and transformed the

inventory of potentially effective tactics for escaping slavery.[1]

Historians have written of the goals of enslaved people to become free as

unproblematic expressions of basic human dignity and their support of the Union

war effort as equally unproblematic, or at least easily resolved. That enslaved men

and women would desire freedom over slavery is obvious. Yet these goals, and the

tactics they employed to achieve them, were hardly free from conflict. Some

enslaved men and women saw a tension between their own freedom and the

freedom of black southerners more generally, if ending slavery meant risking their

lives for the United States army. Self-sacrifice for the sake of a nation-state, even

one committed to ending slavery as a regime, was not an obvious route to freedom.

Others used unconventional tactics to achieve freedom for themselves, even aiding

the Confederacy for a time in order to place themselves in a position closer to

freedom.[2]

The tactics enslaved men and women used to reach Union lines or, at the

very least, to create space between themselves and slaveholders placed

Confederates in a difficult circumstance. By assuring Confederates, both civilians

and military officials, that many would run for U.S. lines at their first opportunity,

black southerners pitted the short-term survival of rights in individual slaves

---

[1] Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom*; Max Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom: Free and Slave Labor along the Mason-Dixon Line, 1790-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

[2] The historiography of black soldiers has emphasized soldiers' commitment to the cause of ending the Confederacy and enslaved people's identical commitment. The implications of the fact that such a commitment would require self-sacrifice and, in the short term, material loss by slaves is left largely unexplored in the literature. For an exception, see Emberton, "Murder Makes Men."

against the survival of slavery as a system. Civilians and Confederate officials

entered into a protracted struggle over the deployment of black labor and the rights

of the state to appropriate the property of its citizens, a drama identical to the one

playing out simultaneously between federal officials and the slaveholders under its

domain, with stakes just as high.

The United States had the luxury of involving enslaved people according to

its own dictates, and Congress granted considerable latitude to senior officers to

prosecute the war as they believed the circumstances demanded. For southern

blacks, this meant that they were welcomed in spaces abandoned by Confederate-

leaning, civilian authorities. They were pursued in places where U.S. authorities

believed pro-slavery and pro-secession forces were aligned. And they were left in

the cold where pro-slavery unionists lived, despite Congressional acts forbidding

their expulsion from U.S. lines. Union forces sought to destroy the slave power of

the Confederacy, but the chances for freedom for individual slaves would depend

upon the strategic demands of commanders on the ground.

The war for the Union created a South in which the rights of slaveholders

were protected everywhere but for its eastern edge, despite laws that were

specifically non-geographic in their formulation. Slavery, by Congressional dictate,

was weakened everywhere. In practice, enslaved southerners could only find

respite along a few rivers in the Atlantic coastal plain. In Virginia, even an officer like

George B. McClellan could substantially weaken slavery in a region simply by

building up a large number of troops there in his attempt to take Richmond. The

U.S. Navy could and did catalyze the breakup of slavery along rivers and creeks. Yet

the First Confiscation Act mattered little in much of Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana, or the border states, anywhere that submitted to U.S. rule. A thin band stretching intermittently along the Atlantic Coast, from the Virginia Chesapeake to the Sea Islands offered the only places enslaved people could run and reliably be welcomed until passage of the Second Confiscation Act, more than a year into the war. Even these spaces occasionally came with qualification, since law and strategy limited U.S. authority to destroy slavery even in the occupied Virginia Tidewater. Officers could change policy rapidly along with Congressional law, but did not always do so. A war for the Union meant that enslaved people worked at the margins of U.S. military objectives, despite the goodwill and ideological commitment of many individual, common soldiers and officers to ending slavery.

U.S. arrival along the Atlantic coast destroyed slavery because it utterly remade the market for labor and changed the short and long term interests of everyone living there. Some enslaved men and women, at the first opportunity, rushed to U.S. lines. Slaveowners, realizing the threat to their property, began to pack up plantations where they could and moved as many people as possible inland, away from the invading armies. As masters rushed to move their most valuable property away from U.S. forces, many enslaved people, faced with looming, forced migration, responded by fleeing. The first flights of masters and slaves set up a chain reaction resulting in frantic activity by Confederates and enslaved people alike, looking to keep their future options open in a rapidly changing environment.

U.S. arrival was the mirror opposite of the other, prior great destructive force along the coast, the late antebellum boom in cotton and interstate slave trade. Both

altered the price of enslaved property along the coast dramatically, the cotton expansion by dramatically increasing distant prices, U.S. warships by lowering the proximate prices to zero. Both led to masters scrambling to send property west, to make or retain profits by reallocating labor. Runaways in such a circumstance were responding to similar conditions as those who fled slavery earlier on account of the slave trade, attempting to keep one step ahead of those maximizing profits by moving them. Crucially for enslaved people hoping to avoid leaving their homes, contested migrations ahead of the U.S. army and navy were more difficult to keep secret than the visit of a slave trader, who might more easily catch enslaved men and women unawares.

The tactics of enslaved men and women looking to respond to the new world of war took shape around a number of factors, but none more immediate than their varied relationships to their network of kin and neighbors. In the antebellum South, many potential fugitives only considered running away after the slave trade enforced separation between loved ones. Not until his wife Nancy and their children had been sold South did Henry Brown begin his famed journey from Richmond to Philadelphia, a sequence replicated thousands of times in the upper South in the years between the boom of the interstate slave trade around 1830 and war in 1861. The same situation continued into the war, so long as the slave trade was still active. Gilbert was in his forties when sold in the Richmond market after being taken from his home in North Carolina. Within a week of the sale in late 1861, Gilbert had absconded and his new owner was advertising for his recovery as Gilbert sought a way home. This rationale for flight, tied to an immediate, long-range sale, became

less common among fugitives as the war dragged on. The coastal slave trade, the

most active slave trading route from the upper Tidewater and Piedmont to the

cotton fields of the Mississippi, fell apart altogether in the first months of war as the

Union army implemented its blockade of the Atlantic seaboard.[3]

Forced separation from kin was more likely to spring from larger scale

movements of entire farms out of the way of the armies, or movements in which

planters only grudgingly allowed those they had enslaved to be used elsewhere, for

public purposes. These movements occurred in places near U.S. forces, often in

order to remove the most valuable slaves from the chance of capture. Information

regarding such major changes to everyday life were exceedingly difficult to keep

quiet. Enslaved people in these situations often fled, seeing a window of opportunity

closing, which would have made an otherwise tolerable situation under slavery

unbearable. The first refugees to Fort Monroe from Norfolk had gotten word that

Col. Mallory meant to send them away from their families to South Carolina to work

on fortifications there.[4]

Some would-be fugitives scrambled for time to figure out how to escape

together with their families. Within weeks of the U.S. invasion of the South Carolina

coast, two enslaved men, William and Paddy were sent by Confederates to

[3] Henry Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown* (Manchester: Lee and Glynn, 1851), in *Documenting the American South*, http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brownbox/menu.html, accessed August 1, 2013; Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom*, 137-143; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, January 2, 1862; Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).
[4] Benjamin Butler to Winfield Scott, Fort Monroe, Virginia, May 24-25, 1861, *OR* I.2, 648-651, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27416.

"reconnoiter" an island near U.S. control and their own former homes. As they did so, they also "returned stealthily" to their homes and "enticed off portions of their families." When William returned to help remaining family members get away, he was caught in the act by Confederates and placed in custody. Aiding the Confederates and then seeking freedom from slavery within Union lines was a dangerous game, but not a rare one.[5]

Some black southerners already lived outside the regime of slavery, according to a law of their own design formed at the margins of slaveholder power. U.S. military presence changed their calculus; a new power might constrain the freedom they had known, but might more reliably provide food than the forest. Those whose families had already been dismantled by the antebellum slave trade, who had escaped slaveholders' control already in response but had chosen marronage rather than flight North, often came out of hiding upon U.S. arrival. William Kinnegy had grown up in Jones County, in the North Carolina coastal plain. Though in delicate health as a child, he was able to marry a woman from another plantation and raise a family there; their first two children were born around 1840. They had two more children in the 1850s, though by 1857 Kinnegy had been sent to the great market in Richmond, where he was purchased to work as a field hand, to be bound for Alabama. Tracing a route walked by many others to be shipped South—probably including his daughter, who had by this time also been sold to Alabama—Kinnegy marched in a coffle of about one hundred men, women, and children along Main Street in Richmond to the Petersburg line at 9th Street, where he

---

[5] C.J. Colcock to Brigadier-General Drayton, Bluffton, S.C., November 26, 1861, *OR* I.6, 330, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28147.

was forced onto a train headed southward. The rail route favored by many high-volume traders of slaves, Kinnegy may have known already, ran from Richmond southward through Petersburg along the Weldon/Goldsborough line, within fifteen miles of Jones County, to Wilmington, and from there by sea to the Gulf Coast. Kinnegy knew enough of these routes to recognize when he had passed the junction at Goldsboro and Strickland's depot, he was then as close to his wife and children as he "ever would be," and "while the train was in full motion passing through a wood," he jumped.[6]

Within four days of escaping en route to Alabama, after recovering from his fall, Kinnegy made his way to his wife and three remaining children before making a home deep in the nearby woods, "a close jungle, so thick that you could not penetrate it, except with an axe." During his time in the wet, sandy pine forests of eastern North Carolina, Kinnegy developed remarkable skills in eluding whites and all but the most trusted enslaved companions. He built a modest home out of an old fence and a few trees and forged a blind barter system with one white farmer through which he obtained food and a rifle without risking meeting the man in person. Using his scythe, gun, and the swamp, he defended his adopted wilderness from incursions from local slaveowners eager to find the fugitive. He killed their wandering animals, and hid from patrols with their dogs, and from his wife's owner, who was certainly perplexed that she continued to bear children sharing Kinnegy's features. Kinnegy escaped to New Berne shortly after the U.S. invasion in early

[6] Vincent Colyer, *Brief Report of the Services Rendered by the Freed People to the United States Army, in North Carolina, In the Spring of 1862, After the Battle of New Bern* (New York: Vincent Colyer, 1864), 16-19.

spring, 1862, and quickly used his knowledge of "every inch of the road" between New Berne and Kingston to bring back both intelligence of the Confederate units stationed there and his formerly enslaved wife and children. The tall, wiry, introspective spy had won detailed knowledge of eastern North Carolina's terrain, knowledge of both the throughways pivotal to the exercise of the slave regime and the marginal forest that became his home after his escape. He turned each to his advantage in war.[7]

William Kinnegy, though he had no way of knowing it, was following in George Scott's footsteps. Before Scott became one of the first refugees at Fort Monroe, he had led a rather a lonely existence in caves, which he preferred to life with his deceased master's infamously cruel son-in-law. At the first opportunity, Scott looked for ways to put his skills earned by living at the utter margins of Tidewater society to work for the United States army. His first task was to guide U.S. forces to a hidden Confederate encampment outside Hampton, at Big Bethel.[8]

The Union defeat at Bethel was owed to confusion between ill-coordinated regiments of U.S. troops, not George Scott's efforts. The defeat, however, had grave implications for slavery in the area. It meant that the dynamics of Civil War escape—in which enslaved people sought U.S. lines, Confederates halted them, and U.S. troops welcomed them—remained geographically in place. What was so unstable about this constellation was not its geographic basis, though this, too, proved more malleable than Confederates would have wished. It was rather the instability of black labor owned by civilians in military space.

[7] Ibid., 19-22.
[8] Goodheart, *1861*, 332-3.

Everywhere Confederates sought to deploy black labor to oppose nearby U.S. incursions, enslaved people shaped a system of instability, one in which they first created, then exploited tensions between slaveowners and the Confederate regime. This happened most strikingly on the Virginia Peninsula, ahead of the Army of the Potomac's Peninsula Campaign. First, black southerners ran toward U.S. lines, offering their labor, skills, and information. In response both to black runaways and to the anticipated march of Union soldiers, Confederate authorities began looking for ways to appropriate black laborers, first through the hiring market, then through impressment. Impressment created sharp antagonism between military and civilian officials over the deployment of black laborers. Enslaved Virginians exploited this antagonism and attempted to use the Confederate army to their own advantage, running away from civilian plantations and volunteering to labor with Confederates in order to move closer to Union lines. Aid to an army committed to a regime of enslavement became a route to freedom for at least some Virginians.

In spots where Confederates were unable to defend their coastlines and were unable or unwilling to evacuate, African Americans had a relatively simple path of escape. Gunships patrolled Virginia's major rivers, and though under orders not "to encourage the emigration of this class of persons," were permitted to "employ the slaves" and allow free blacks to remain on board. Beginning in early summer 1861, schooners patrolling the Potomac consistently picked up men, both those who claimed they had been enslaved and those who claimed they were free, from the southern shore. "Athletic young men," in particular, living along the Rappahannock coast of the northern neck, ran to Union ships, in numbers that disturbed civilian

authorities. The effect, according to whites living on the northern neck, was a

"restless and discontented" slave population. Forays up Virginia's rivers became a

way for U.S. forces and enslaved Virginians to work in concert, stretching

Confederate military resources thinly across a completely unmanageable coastline.[9]

Those enslaved along the Chickahominy identified and manipulated

Confederate shortage of patrols. They told Confederate troops stationed along the

river that "the enemy would come up again" soon and would "afford an opportunity

to all negroes who wished to avail themselves of the chance to return with them."

Confederate officers were split on how to respond. They were incredulous because

they habitually disbelieved the testimony of enslaved men and women, but "when

the negroes have announced" the arrival of U.S. forces, as one Confederate officer

put it, "they have actually come." Based on these considerations, officers in the area

waited for U.S. schooners that never arrived, and soon abandoned the plan after

realizing that "there is no certainty" that Union ships might come "at any particular

time." Confederates after the failure of the Peninsula Campaign had "no doubt the

negroes are in constant and regular communication" with U.S. troops and would

coordinate the flow of information to Confederate forces to the advantage of the

---

[9] Gideon Welles to Commander S.C. Rowan, Navy Department, July 26, 1861, *OR Navy* I.4, 584, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27696; James Gray to Commodore Craven, U.S. Schooner Bailey, Potomac River, July 18, 1861, *OR Navy* I.4, 576-577, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27957; Samuel Gresham et al. to L. P. Walker, September 7, 1861, *OR* I.51.2, 278, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26090.

slaves. Confederates were left guessing at whether the information their slaves

passed along was reliable.[10]

Some finding their way to U.S. ships were comfortable moving between

putative slavery and freedom. The tactics of enslaved people were unpredictable,

unsettling Confederates, giving themselves greater flexibility, and providing

opportunities for espionage for federal officials. One refugee, after escaping to the

U.S. naval steamer *Freeborn*, "visited the neighborhood of Aquia" to rescue his wife

and children. He reported to U.S. authorities that he was "ready and willing to visit

that district any night" to aid the war effort.[11] Harriett had been working at the

Confederate hospital at West Point, at the confluence of the Pamunkey and

Mattaponi rivers, when the place was abandoned to the U.S. army during the

Confederate retreat up the Peninsula. Harriett seemingly had a chance to cross into

Union lines then, but instead "made her escape to Richmond" with Confederate

soldiers in order to meet up with her nineteen-year-old son, Washington. Upon

meeting in the crowded city they each eluded their captors and began "lurking" near

the city's crowded docks together while looking for ways out of the Confederate

capital.[12]

No sooner had African Americans begun running away than Confederates

sought to stop all obvious routes to the United States lines. Confederate

---

[10] J. Calvin Councill to Brig. Gen. Henry A. Wise, Sherman's Farm, Va., December 12, 1862, *OR* I.18, 797, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26802; Brig. Gen. Henry A. Wise to Lieut. Col. [J.C.] Councill, Chaffin's Farm, Va., December 12, 1862, *OR* I.18, 798.

[11] Joseph Hooker to Brigadier General S. Williams, Camp Baker, Maryland, January 11, 1862, *OR* 1.5, 697, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25298.

[12] Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, September 26, 1862.

impressment of black Virginians on the Lower Peninsula had already begun by the time of the failed assault on Big Bethel, and the window for easy escape to U.S. lines closed quickly afterward. Perhaps five hundred men, women, and children had come into the camp in the month after the first fugitives were admitted. Col. John Bankhead Magruder, the veteran Confederate general and native of Virginia's Northern Neck, soon led a detachment of troops to Newport News, within three miles of Fort Monroe itself and led away all the enslaved people he found there, who had not already entered federal protection at Hampton.[13]

Magruder's impressment of local blacks only increased during as the summer of 1861 dragged on. Confederates made continuous sweeps of the area around Fort Monroe until, as Magruder ordered in late July, the Lower Peninsula was a place of "no negroes, except those attached to the army." In large swaths of the Tidewater, Confederates made similar requisitions, demanding half the male slaves residing in Gloucester, Middlesex, and Matthews counties. One thousand free blacks on the peninsula were likewise given little choice by Confederate authorities, though they were paid for their services. Most black men on the Virginia and Middle Peninsulas who did not voluntarily flee to Fort Monroe before late June 1861 found themselves forced into the Confederate war effort.[14]

---

[13] "The 'Contraband Goods' at Fortress Monroe," *Douglass' Monthly*, July 1861, Accessible Archives; Report of J. Bankhead Magruder, Loring's Mill, Warwick Road, Va., June 30, 1861, *OR* I.2, 960-961, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26093.

[14] J. Bankhead Magruder to Colonel Robert Johnston, Williamsburg, Va., July 22, 1861, *OR* I.2, 991, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27697; Robert Johnston to Maj. G.B. Cosby, Cockletown, Va., July 25, 1861, *OR* I.2, 576, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26827; Robert Johnston to Maj. G.B. Cosby, Yorktown, Va., July 27, 1861, *OR* I.2, 1003-1004,

In a few instances, it was clear that the Confederate citizens were just as discontented with the military buildup as enslaved people themselves were. Dangerfield Lewis, apparently disgusted with the appropriation of his property by Confederate authorities, advised his enslaved workers to "get off" the plantation near Aquia Creek and provided them with the means to evade Confederate scouts. More often, frustration with Confederate conscription in northern and eastern Virginia led slaveowners to send property of all kinds as far as they could from U.S. and Confederate military operations alike.[15]

Black life in the Tidewater was governed by the labor demands of the Confederate army. By winter, Magruder's defense of the Peninsula could no longer be sustained through the efforts of those he had captured and conscripted from around Fort Monroe and surrounding, peninsular counties. Union forces, primarily on the offensive in the summer of 1862, had sufficient labor. They were able to deploy labor originally stationed at Fort Monroe for other southern operations, and sent 1,000 laborers from the Virginia fort with Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Sherman to South Carolina, to aid in the assault of the southern Atlantic coast there. The Confederate Magruder had no such luxury. He faced severe political limits to his ability to obtain slave labor for working on fortifications. In order to enlist a sufficient number of workers, he was required to work within the existing political

http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26089; G.B. Cosby to Col. Crump, Williamsburg, Va., July 28, 1861, *OR* I.2, 1007, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27700; J. Bankhead Magruder to George Deas, Bethel, Va., August 9, 1861, *OR* I.4, 570, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26837.
[15] Benj. M. Dove to Captain John Dahlgren, Off Aquia Creek, August 3, 1861, *OR Navy* I.4, 598, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27923.

economy of slavery. In eastern Virginia, Confederate authorities believed this meant

working within the hiring system, using civilian experts in the market for slave

labor, such as the renowned trader Hector Davis.

In a system one historian has called "divided mastery," the annual services of

a large number of enslaved men and women were offered up to the highest bidder

at the beginning of each year. Magruder planned to hire six hundred enslaved men

on the January 1st hiring date from Virginia counties west of the peninsulas,

advertising in Richmond newspapers and working through the established slave

market in that city, bringing them to labor on the fortifications at Gloucester Point

and the peninsula. Magruder quickly found, though, that the seasonal flexibility to

the labor pool that marked hiring season did not provide the kind of fluidity he

needed, and he failed to purchase the services of more than ninety slaves at a rate of

$100 per year plus allowances for clothing, food, quarters, and medical treatment. [16]

The sticking point was the likelihood of escape. Controversially, Magruder

had claimed that "the Government will be responsible for the value of these negroes

if captured by the enemy or allowed to escape from them or killed in action." His

advertisement caught the notice of the quartermaster's office, which ordered him to

withdraw the promise, since funds had never been appropriated for the

replacement of escaped slaves. To promise this was tantamount to insuring at full

value the single most valuable assets in the state, a prospect completely out of

---

[16] Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South*
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); J. Bankhead Magruder to General S.
Cooper, Yorktown, December 28, 1861, *OR* I.4, 715,
http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26829; S. Cooper to J. Bankhead
Magruder, Richmond, Va., December 29, 1861, *OR* I.4, 716,
http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26830.

proportion to the Confederate government's financial capacity. Yet without these assurances, Virginia slave-owners refused to hire their slaves and Magruder's agent in Richmond returned with disappointment.[17]

Magruder's efforts had immediate effects on the labor market. In the antebellum period each hiring season, around January 1, Richmond papers were flooded with notices demanding and offering the services of enslaved laborers for the customary one-year term. In December 1860, notices such as "SERVANTS FOR HIRE," appeared throughout the newspaper, offering the services of "a number of good MALE and FEMALE SERVANTS for hire the ensuing year. A good COOK, HOUSE SERVANTS, FACTORY HANDS, NURSE, CHAMBERMAID, AND SEAMSTRESS." In "FOR HIRE—A PORTER," Dr. Robert B. Lyne offered the services of "a very trusty and healthy man" to work as a laborer for the right price. John J. Werth demanded

---

[17] B. Bloomfield to Maj. Gen. J. Bankhead Magruder, Yorktown, Va., January 30, 1861, *OR* I.51.2, 458. Stephanie McCurry has suggested that Magruder had encountered an "existential" contradiction in the political status of enslaved labor, that Magruder required a direct relationship between slaves and the state, one not mediated by the master-slave relationship. I find this a dubious claim. The problem Magruder encountered was not so much a problem of political identity, much less ontology, but a problem that bedeviled Union officers, Confederate officers, and enslaved men and women alike: what was the relationship between the enslavement of individuals and slavery as a regime? Magruder was concerned with the ultimate survival of the Confederacy and with it the regime of slavery; civilian slave-owners were interested in the short-term protection of their property, without which the survival of slavery as an institution would yield few benefits to them. The problem was one of the interests of the individual versus the state. The economic interest in the enslavement of particular people was set against the necessity of saving the regime that would safeguard slavery for all slaveholders. McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 270.

"able-bodied NEGRO MEN" to work as "pit hands, surface laborers, wagoners and mechanics" at the Carbon Hill Mines outside the city.[18]

Such advertisements appeared, predictably, in middle and late December and fell away precipitously after the first of the year. Robert K. Nelson, in *Mining the Dispatch* (http://dsl.richmond.edu/dispatch), has used a technique called topic modeling to identify such notices and arrange their frequency over time. The signature of such advertisements follows a seasonal pattern of peaks and valleys.

FOR HIRE AND WANTED ADS

In one season, the winter of 1861-1862, the signature of hiring ads evident in every other January fails to repeat its pattern. It picked up again afterward, extending throughout the war. In December 1861 and January 1862, hiring notices did not fill the papers as they did in every other year. John Magruder's efforts to acquire laborers suppressed the market for enslaved workers. There were fewer notices of laborers for hire because there simply weren't any available. The army's

---

[18] Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, December 31, 1860; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, December 29, 1860; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, December 24, 1860.

demand for labor and its use of enslaved men to uphold the regime even at the risk

of those men escaping, disrupted the labor market altogether.[19]

Though many historians have noted that slavery crumbled internally as

armies prepared for war, the mechanisms by which enslaved people used the

Confederate army is little understood. Historians have pointed to the desire to

escape slavery as evidence both of enslaved people's agency and their personhood.

The tactics they employed, though well understood by slaveholders at the time, are

largely ignored today. Black southerners were eager to serve the Confederate army.

Many left plantations, giving their service to the Confederate state for a number of

reasons, but none more important than the mobility this service purchased for

them. They took what tactics were available to them in pursuit of their own ends,

even if that meant supporting a regime committed to their enslavement.[20]

The Confederate Army, headed toward battle instead of away from it, could

provide significant cover to enslaved men seeking U.S. lines. Enslaved men running

to Confederate camps found an army of enablers, with every reason to accept offers

of help and few reasons to turn in suspected fugitives. Confederate soldiers and

officers walking through cities and the countryside were looking for servants. Labor

needs for fortification work increased dramatically. Senior military staff suddenly

had every incentive to trust that people of color offering their service were free,

instead of runaways from Confederate civilians.

---

[19] Robert K. Nelson, *Mining the Dispatch*, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation.
See also Edward L. Ayers and Scott Nesbit, "Seeing Emancipation: Scale and
Freedom in the American South," *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 1, no. 1 (2011):2-24.
[20] Cf. McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 268; Berlin, et al., *Slaves No More*, 12-13.

War brought the chance of freedom to men and women on unequal terms. Even as the labor market for men tightened, crowded by the military's insatiable demand for black labor, women saw no such surge in demand. In fact, they found that the army made escape much more difficult than before. Opportunities for male laborers in the Confederate army were closed to women, for whom camp life, even if possible, could easily bring new terrors.

Slaveholders were certain that the Confederate army was male slaves' most convenient avenue for escape. Evard Brown left Richmond "with some of the officers," his owner supposed, "in a military company on the Peninsula, and perhaps passed himself off as a free negro." At the age of fifteen, William escaped from the brickyard to which he had been hired out, and his owner judged it "very probable" that he was "in the employment of the soldiers, passing himself off for a free boy." Job was suspected to have been "attending in some of the military camps" near Richmond by day while staying in "Screamerville," a black neighborhood south of the capital by night. When Jordan ran away from a farm in Dinwiddie, his owner, H.C. Worsham, immediately recognized his tactics in running off with the Confederate Army, "probably representing himself to be free." Worsham knew why Jordan would go to the Confederates, even if he doubted the enslaved man was "sufficiently intelligent" to have "passed the lines" to reach safety and an area of U.S. control. Other masters were sure their slaves did exactly this. Edmund left his job building fortifications in Chesterfield in April 1863, and countless others did the same elsewhere. Slaves in the Virginia Piedmont realized quickly that the forces

attempting to bolster slavery in the long term was their best opportunity in the

short term to reach a place of freedom.[21]

Accordingly, the proportion of enslaved men advertised as having run away

in the Richmond *Daily Dispatch* expanded dramatically with the military buildup.

Between November 1860 and May 1861, when Virginia formally voted for

secession, slaveholders advertised for the return of men slightly more often than for

women in Richmond's most widely circulated newspaper, the Richmond *Daily*

Dispatch. With war, this gender imbalance increased, spiking during campaign

seasons in which the U.S. army drew close to the Confederate capital. For the

remainder of 1861, nine out of ten notices of fugitive slaves were for enslaved men.

Men continued to be far more heavily represented in the newspaper as fugitives

than women through the end of the campaign season of 1862.[22] From the beginning

---

[21] Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, January 17, 1862; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, January 20, 1862; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, February 1, 1862; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, September 16, 1862; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, April 16, 1863.
[22] Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, 1860-1865. Runaway advertisements in this dataset were culled from those initially identified in *Mining the Dispatch*, an algorithmic, topic modeling project published by Robert K. Nelson, 2011, http://dsl.richmond.edu/dispatch. The dataset I use is based on a random sample of one out of ten fugitive slave advertisements identified by Nelson in the newspaper. Only unique advertisements are counted. I exclude advertisements for the return of adults of both genders and the few cases where the gender of the slave cannot be ascertained from the advertisement. Advertisements for women with children are coded as advertisements for the mother. Advertisements for multiple people of the same gender, often taken out by Civil War-era railroads for escaped workers, are counted as one advertisement, so this figure undercounts the proportion of men to women represented in the fugitive slave advertisement corpus for the war years, but not the period before June 1861, when such ads are rare.

Date	Percent Male	n
November 1860-May 1861	57%	30

of 1863 to early 1864, the proportion of women whose escape was advertised grew again, to one out of four notices. But once the Overland Campaign began, women nearly disappeared from runaway ads. Women again appeared in the advertisements as the war came to a close; more than a third of all advertisements were for women between September 1864 and the war's close.

The best opportunity for slaves to make their escape, the presence of nearby armies, only improved the chances of fit men. With the approach of U.S. troops, women and children were suddenly left with fewer options, not more, as the number of hostile armed white men abroad increased dramatically. Confederate and Union soldiers on the march had far more use for black men as laborers than women. The military buildup that splintered the slave market for men battened down controls on women's movement, leaving them with fewer effective tactics for sneaking away. Their best option in Central Virginia was "lurking" in the swollen Confederate capital.

A smaller number of enslaved men and women sought a way out of military camps and into Richmond. They found that the anonymity of the Confederate capital, a city that tripled in size within the first year of war, provided its own spaces for movement. Martha, a "remarkably shrewd" fugitive, slipped in among the thousands of refugees pouring into the city. Joe, enslaved by a Confederate surgeon,

June 1861-December 1861	90%	51
January 1862-October 1862	82%	106
November 1862-April 1864	76%	144
May 1864-August 1864	91%	44
September 1864-March 1865	63%	52
Total:	78%	427

escaped during the second battle at Manassas and told those he met near

Gordonsville that he intended to reach Richmond, too.[23]

The actions of enslaved people gummed up the hiring market and

Confederate conscription. They first ran away to the Confederate army. From there,

they fled away from it to Union lines. This flight ruined both the hiring market and

Confederate attempts to acquire labor, greatly foreclosing the options available to

the Confederate military for obtaining labor and driving up the annual hiring costs.

As General Magruder explained to senior officials, "most men in Virginia would

rather have their slaves impressed than hired, as in the former case they expect to

hold the Government responsible for the loss of the slave as well as for the value of

his labor, and in the latter case is not responsible for his loss."[24] Less than a year

after secession, it had become common knowledge to Confederate slave-owners in

Richmond and elsewhere that enslaved men and women allowed near Union lines

would run away.[25]

When the Confederate military was unable to satisfy its labor needs through

market mechanisms in early January 1862, Magruder turned to more geographically

dispersed impressment, shifting the range of possibilities for black men living far

from U.S. forces. Enslaved Americans living in Chesterfield and Dinwiddie Counties,

in the eastern Piedmont of the state, were rushed, mostly with their owners'

approbation, to the area around Williamsburg, Yorktown, and Gloucester Point.

---

[23] Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, October 9, 1862; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, October 18, 1862.

[24] J. Bankhead Magruder to S. Cooper, Yorktown, Va., January 30, 1861, *OR* I.51.2, 457.

[25] B. Bloomfield to Maj. Gen. J. Bankhead Magruder, Yorktown, Va., January 30, 1861, *OR* I.51.2, 458.

Their chances of finding their way to Union lines were likely improved by the seventy-mile move, though their living and work conditions were not.[26]

Magruder's attempts to gather workers ultimately halted. In February, his orders to impress Chesterfield slaves was stopped by the secretary of war, due to political pressure generated by civilian complaints. Though he was able to make significant headway on his planned earthworks through March 1862, Magruder found his final requests for 1,000 enslaved labors interrupted by authorities in Richmond, who believed the risk to slave property too great. Authorities there believed it "unadvisable under present circumstances," that enslaved men "should be placed in such near proximity to the enemy."[27]

Enslaved people were thrust into danger, exposure, and terrible living conditions that simultaneously positioned them closer to Union lines and, in theory, freedom. As the defense of the peninsula began, the presence of enslaved laborers close to Union lines created havoc among officers, who perceived the protection of enslaved property to be at odds with tactical considerations and fairness to white soldiers working in the field. Magruder admitted that "much hardship" had "been endured by the negroes" during their labor, "owing to the constant and long-continued wet weather." One officer refused a command to move a company of his troops on a difficult march to ensure enslaved laborers were not lost, when his

---

[26] J. Bankhead Magruder to General S. Cooper, Yorktown, January 23, 1862, *OR* I.9, 33-34, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26762.

[27] J. Bankhead Magruder to General R. E. Lee, Halfway House, near Bethel, Va., March 21, 1862, *OR* I.11.3, 390; http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26814; J. Bankhead Magruder to General R.E. Lee, Lee's Farm, Yorktown, Va., April 8, 1862, *OR* I.11.3, 430, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26817; W.H. Taylor to Maj. Gen. J. B. Magruder, Richmond, Va., April 9, 1862, *OR* I.11.3, 434, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26818.

soldiers had been "working hard in throwing up entrenchments." Even when

Confederate officers were able to obtain permission to command enslaved labor,

they found the prospect increasingly difficult as U.S. forces drew near. "It is

impossible," an officer wryly noted to Brig. Gen. Cadmus M. Wilcox, as McClellan's

army approached, to get enslaved men "to work where firing is going on."[28]

Enslaved men found that slavery, labor, and freedom in eastern Virginia were

all changing with the pull of Confederate slaveholders, military commanders, and

the senior military and political leadership that balanced the interests of each. Their

own actions made the situation in the Tidewater unstable. They fled to the

Confederate army and endured terrible conditions there, working on fortifications

even during battle. They abandoned the army committed to their enslavement

when they could. Confederates were certain that people of color allowed near U.S.

troops would run for what freedom they could find there. These chances came, and

when they did, fugitives from slavery did what they could to ensure they would be

welcomed inside Federal lines.

Enslaved people looking for the most they could make out of a warzone

controlled a large-scale exchange of information. They provided U.S. officials with

knowledge about Confederate territory, movements, strength, fortifications, and

occasionally plans. They asked for freedom in exchange. What they did not ask for,

---

[28] J. Bankhead Magruder, Hon. George W. Randolph, Secretary of War, Lee's Farm, April 29, 1862, *OR* I.11.3, 475, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26779; Col. E.C. Brabble to Capt. W.L. Riddick, Richardson's Farm, Va., April 18, 1862, *OR* I.11.3, 473, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26729; A.G. Dickinson to Brigadier-General Wilcox, Lee's Farm, April 16, 1862, *OR* I.11.3, 445, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26831.

but what they took anyway, was information about the Union army. An array of more than 100,000 heavily armed men was a spectacle about which enslaved people needed to know a great deal. Black fugitives became brokers of information, passing along intelligence to U.S. commanders and bringing back to their communities intelligence about the intentions and conditions of the military camps they encountered. The fluidity of Union lines was necessary for black individuals and communities. The escape of individual slaves depended on the ability of others to reenter Confederate territory and provide information about what they would find on the other side.

The most effective tactic enslaved men used in their attempt to gain a respite from slavery was to become pivotal to U.S. information-gathering efforts. In every major campaign from spring 1862 until the end of the war, Union soldiers learned about their surroundings and their enemy from those who had been enslaved only recently. They ignored this information at their peril. People of color shared what they knew about the South and in doing so, transformed both the geography of control exerted by slaveholders and their spaces of refuge from oppression.

This free flow of information regarding the Peninsula campaign began in early March in Alexandria, before U.S. troops began their movements, and more than one-hundred-fifty miles from the Union buildup around Fort Monroe. There, according to local commanders, "eight contraband slaves came in from Manassas," reporting the evacuation of Confederate troops and artillery down to Gordonsville and the rail junction there. Three days later formerly enslaved men and women in northern Virginia reported to Brig. Gen. Joseph Hooker in "every hour in the day" of

Confederate abandonment of their positions along the Potomac, as they fell to the

defense of the Rappahannock River to the south. Hooker sent "negro spies," who

confirmed that "large bodies of troops" at the Rappahannock near Fredericksburg

were building entrenchments. Confederate forces throughout the state shifted

south and east, preparing for the defense of Richmond and the Peninsula. As they

did so, they were wary: "There are so many negroes to inform against me," worried

one Confederate commander during his withdrawal from Caroline County, "that I

shall have to move with the utmost precaution."[29]

Joseph Hooker and the Confederates arrayed against him both recognized

that U.S. information-gathering depended upon sustained contact between enslaved

men and women and the U.S. army. Such contact was not simply driven by a desire

to aid U.S. troops. It also emerged from a need for enslaved men and women to find

out whether these troops were trustworthy. The Superintendent of Contrabands at

Fort Monroe was certain that there was "communication between refugees and the

black men still in slavery." Some had returned 200 miles into the Confederacy to

retrieve their families after confirming that they U.S. soldiers were not as brutal as

they had been told. "Colored men will help colored men," as Capt. Charles B. Wilder

put it, and would pass along information to each other. After seeing for themselves

---

[29] Report of Col. James H. Simpson, Camp Seminary, Va., March 16, 1862, *OR* I.5, 543-4, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25227; Brigadier General Joseph Hooker to Brigadier General Marcy, Budd's Ferry, March 11, 1862, *OR* I.5, 744, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25332 ; Joseph Hooker to Brigadier General S. Williams, Budd's Ferry, March 14, 1862, *OR* I.5, 756, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25301; W.W.D. to Colonel Johnson, Near Port Royal, Caroline County, Va., April 20, 1862, *OR* I.12.1, 437, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25354.

that the U.S. was not selling refugees to Cuba or beating them, he had "no doubt their friends will hear of it." Information passed both ways.[30]

The Peninsula campaign, in spring 1862, marked a dramatic shift in the relationship between U.S. troops and southern blacks. Officers came to conflicting conclusions regarding the usefulness of slaves' intelligence. Some welcomed informants into their lines. At the battle of Yorktown, the Fourth Corps commander Brig. Gen. Erasmus D. Keyes depended on the accounts of three runaway slaves when placing his units before Confederate earthworks. Keyes' superior officer, William F. Smith, commanded the Corps' second division and likewise acted quickly when, at daylight on May 4, he heard from two contrabands that Confederates had abandoned their positions.[31]

African Americans kept up a steady stream of information to U.S. troops throughout the Peninsula Campaign. Correspondents from the Philadelphia *Press* were sufficiently impressed with the quantity and quality of black testimony on the Peninsula to conclude in late April 1862 that "There is not a general officer in the Union service who will not testify that his best intelligence of the movements of the enemy, and of the topography of the seceded country has come from blacks."[32]

The Philadelphia *Press* had not conferred closely enough with the commander of the U.S. forces in Virginia. As these words appeared in print, Gen.

---

[30] Testimony of Capt. C.B. Wilder before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, May 9, 1863, in Berlin, et al., *Freedom* I.1, 88-90.
[31] Brasher, *Necessity of Emancipation*, 120; William F. Smith, Camp at Lee's Mill, Va., May 10, 1862, *OR* I.11, 526.
[32] Quoted in Brasher, *Necessity of Emancipation*, 119-120.

George B. McClellan complained of his difficulty in launching the Peninsula

Campaign on account of a lack of geographic knowledge. "Correct local maps were

not to be found, and the country, though known in its general features, we found to

be inaccurately described in essential particulars" in their only maps. At the time he

needed a particular kind of geographic information. McClellan, perhaps with early

setbacks on the Peninsula in mind, complained that "erroneous courses to streams

and roads were frequently given" in these local maps and papers, and "no

dependence could be placed" on them. "Negroes," he wrote, "however truthful their

reports, possessed or were able to communicate very little accurate and no

comprehensive topographical information." Given McClellan's baseline ignorance of

the local terrain, he found that black geographic intelligence amounted to relatively

little. African Americans had contributed information of tremendous value to the

United States war effort, but not enough to overcome the sluggish actions of its

commanding general. Their final service of the Peninsula campaign was as

scapegoats for its failure. McClellan's doubts of the usefulness of black reports

yielded disastrous results. Runaways in late April warned him continually that

Confederate forces were prepared to retreat from entrenchments at Yorktown. The

reports fell on deaf ears, and McClellan was caught by surprise May 4 when he

awoke to find that the time-consuming fortifications he had built for an assault on

rebel entrenchments would no longer be needed.[33]

      While more than 100,000 troops under McClellan's command plodded up the

Peninsula, alternately acting on and rebuffing black intelligence reports, African

---

[33] George B. McClellan, "Report on the Peninsular Campaign, Chapter Second," *OR*
1.11, 8.

Americans in other parts of the state purveyed information to any U.S. troops who would listen. Lieut. Col. Rutherford B. Hayes of the 23rd Ohio Infantry had pressed from New Bern deep up the Roanoke River into southwest Virginia, determining enemy strength the entire way by consulting fugitive slaves. They reported and he independently confirmed the strength of the 700-man militia unit protecting Wythe, Grayson, and Carroll counties from their base in Wytheville, the thousand infantrymen protecting Abingdon, the poorly provisioned forces in Russell County and the complete lack of force guarding the nearby salt-works and furnaces. Down the Valley a week earlier, Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks entertained "a negro employed in Jackson's tent," indicating the Confederate General's impending retreat from near Harrisonburg. It was not the informant's fault that Banks, based on this information and other reports, incorrectly assumed that he was on the verge of clearing "the enemy out permanently" from the Valley.[34]

By the end of the Peninsula Campaign, it had become clear that enslaved Americans would help U.S. forces in ways that they were unwilling to aid Confederates, that Confederate forces needed more enslaved labor than the United States, and that the United States was at a significant advantage in commanding the willing labor of enslaved Americans when they could find it. The United States, unlike the Confederacy, recognized no private claims to the labor of men enslaved in Virginia.

---

[34] R. B. Hayes to Colonel Scammon, Princeton, May 5, 1862, *OR* I.51, 603; N.P. Banks to Honorable E.M. Stanton, Harrisonburg, April 28, 1862, *OR* I.12.3, 111-112, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25105.

The United States was not committed to ending the regime of slavery in the first half of 1862, not as a means to ending the war and certainly not as an objective in and of itself. The federal government was committed, however, to ensuring that those who entered its lines would not be carried back into slavery. It sharply distinguished between ending the regime of slavery, something only contemplated in mid-1862, and ending individual slaveholders' rights to the labor of individual enslaved people. U.S. appropriation of black labor, then, was a much simpler prospect in Virginia, recognized as territory in rebellion, than it was for Confederates. As the labor requirements of the United States forces in the tidewater—particularly the quartermaster's department—increased, officers began to deploy ships not simply for patrol, but to use "all fair means to increase the number" of available laborers. Fair means, under orders from the War Department, did not include "enticing" or forcing slaves away from their homes. Yet U.S. commanders found that simply presenting the opportunity for escape from slavery was enough. "Where the army actually is," an officer in the quartermaster's office wrote from Fort Monroe after the Peninsula Campaign had come to a close, "the negroes come in to a man almost." Obtaining more laborers was nearly as simple as sending ships up and down Virginia and North Carolina's hundreds of miles of coast.[35]

Obtaining laborers seemed simple in theory, but turned out not to be in practice. The U.S. army's welcome of fugitive slaves at Fort Monroe began with tremendous fanfare, and naval officers reported success attracting enslaved people

---

[35] Rufus Ingalls to M.C. Meigs, Harrison's Landing, Va., July 18, 1862, *OR* I.11.3, 327, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26418.

during their cruises up Virginia's waterways. It would be easy to assume that the

haven established there and in the surrounding occupied areas after the Peninsula

campaign had turned the region into a magnet for the formerly enslaved.

A census from the middle of 1863 tells a different story: emancipation had

little demographic effect on the area. A full year after the Peninsula campaign, after

Benjamin Butler's return and aggressive campaign to bring in the enslaved from all

parts of the state, the black population of the Union-occupied region stood at just

over 26,000 men, women and children. This total was 3,000 *less* than the number

inhabiting the same area before war began. Moreover, of the 26,000 listed in the

census report, 5,000 had been free before the war began and another 5,000 were

still enslaved, since the Union-occupied area was omitted from the Emancipation

Proclamation. There were 7,390 fewer freedpeople (contraband, in the terminology

of the census) living in the region than there had been slaves there before the war.[36]

	Black Population		
	1860	1863	Difference
York/Yorktown	2,607	2316	-291
Elizabeth City and Warwick	3,696	4811	1,115
Nansemond, Norfolk, and Princess Anne	23,149	18983	-4,166
Total	29,452	26,110	-3,342

The war introduced gender imbalances that had not existed in the area

before the war. Since it was so much more difficult for women to escape slavery in a

---

[36] Ira Berlin, et al., *Freedom,* I, vol. 1, 91. For comparison totals, see 1860 Census.

wartime environment, they made up a smaller portion of the population under U.S. control than they had before the war. Whereas the black population in 1860 had been majority female, women and girls accounted for just over 45% of African Americans in U.S.-controlled Tidewater in 1863.[37]

Though the number of people changed little over the three years, the people themselves did. More than 8,400 black residents there were described as "transient." Significant, though not unsupportable, numbers of formerly enslaved men and women were coming into Fortress Monroe and the surrounding Union lines. Assuming that all those coming in were designated as contraband, they made up more than half of those freed by entry behind U.S. lines. Noticing this, of course, is bittersweet. It means that Virginia slaveholders were able to remove this number and more from the region, likely carrying them deeper into slavery as they retreated.

The freed black population of Fort Monroe and surrounding counties by the middle of 1863 was two thirds what the enslaved population had been at its start. Though Union officers might have lamented that they were unable to free more from bondage, no commander would have called the limited number of black southerners coming into their lines a failure. Their purpose on the Peninsula was to ensure the defeat of the Confederacy. The extension of freedom to enslaved people, while a change in condition that many white northerners and even white Union soldiers and commanders desired, was not their principal objective in itself, but a useful means of bringing about Confederate defeat.

---

[37] In 1860, the black female population of the surveyed counties was 14,904. In 1863, it was 11,949.

The First Confiscation Act allowed any enslaved man, woman, or child come into U.S. lines and, if they had been used in the Confederate war effort, they were to be harbored by the Army. In Missouri, Kentucky, and much of Tennessee, this was usually interpreted according to the strictest hermeneutic principles, allowing loyal slaveowners to approach U.S. lines and retrieve those who had run away. The benefit of the doubt went to slaveowners, trusting their word that they had been loyal, as opposed to the word of the enslaved captive. Countless exceptions, however, showed that a wide range of Union soldiers and home guard troops minded this rule in the breach. Gen. John C. Frémont's short-lived command of forces in Missouri attempted to reverse the most common practice of returning men to slavery by ending the regime by military fiat. Without a demonstrable military reason why such an order was a necessary for the destruction of the Confederacy, however, the order, like Hunter's the following spring, was rendered null.

Union officers walked a fine line between capturing enslaved people to cripple the Confederate war effort and upholding property rights of unionist slaveholders. General Halleck extended permission to capture people of color in special cases of particular military need, such as when he ordered Gen. John Pope to "impress all the negroes you can find" in order to build a canal diverting water on the Mississippi near New Madrid, Missouri. Halleck also instituted military directives that would tightly constrain the application of Congressional law, leaving enslaved people without many places of refuge in the border states.[38]

---

[38] H.W. Halleck to Major-General John Pope, Saint Louis, March 21, 1862, *OR* I.8, 629, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26608.

U.S. military officials in the Border States faced problems parallel to those faced by Confederates in Virginia. The United States sought to carry out a wartime strategy in a space where civilians claimed enslaved men and women as property under the laws of the day. The United States Army in Missouri, like the Confederacy in Virginia, hoped to employ black labor, or at the very least, to take advantage of the information African Americans provided. Both knew that doing so could create space between slaveholders and slaves, room for enslaved people to maneuver and find ways to escape from their enslavement. Both created this space out of the necessity of war, despite being committed to the maintenance of slavery as a labor regime in the region.

Officers along the border and in Tennessee did what they could to welcome enslaved people who could help the cause. They were limited in their efforts, however, by the prevailing interpretation of the First Confiscation Act in the border South, which allowed even useful slaves in the region to be turned over to their masters. The re-enslavement of helpful fugitives harmed the war effort, no commander doubted. They did what they could to frustrate the efforts of local slaveholders, both for the sake of the success of the war effort and, in many cases, because they could not imagine disloyalty to those who had freely given them help. Meanwhile, they pressed the highest levels of the military for clarification, so that they would not be required to betray those who aided them.

In early October 1861 a number of enslaved men made their way to the nearby U.S. home guard outpost at Boonville with news of a pending surprise attack. Maj. Joseph A. Eppstein, the commander of the unit, credited the enslaved men with

saving his force but quickly realized that he could do little to help once their owners

began to search for them. He sent them to Jefferson City, farther downriver from

their homes and with a larger force of Union officers he hoped would have work for

the men and the power to reject slaveowners' claims. Removing the men to

Jefferson City seemed to have done little to deter their owners. In November a

slaveholding resident of Saline County, a "Mr. Marr," approached the Boonville

authorities to recover Jim, perhaps one of the men who had come forward with

information. Marr spoke with three officers, including Major Eppstein, before being

told "to look for his negro" in the camp. When he did so, Marr found himself

followed and badgered by home guards until he fled the camp, empty-handed.

Though Jim seems to have escaped by traveling quickly from his home, countless

others in Missouri were re-enslaved according to the law.[39]

The offer of freedom in exchange for information was an unparalleled

negotiating tactic for Union regiments elsewhere, one denied in the border states.

During the incursion from Missouri into northern Arkansas later in 1862, Brig. Gen.

James G. Blunt found "an intelligent contraband, whose master was in the rebel

camp." He asked the man to lead his troops to the rebel position near Maysville,

Arkansas. "I had no difficulty," Blunt wrote Brig. Gen. John M. Schofield, "by

promising him his freedom, in engaging his services as a guide." Such offers were

identical to the dynamics that developed between troops and enslaved men in

Virginia. Everywhere they were permitted, such exchanges worked. Blunt soon

---

[39] John C. Kelton to Assistant Adjutant-General, Boonville, Mo., October 6, 1861, *OR* II.1, 772; Isaac P. Jones to Gen. Halleck, Boonville, Mo., November 30, 1861, *OR* II.1, 780, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27749.

found enslaved people more than willing to come behind his lines with reports of

Confederate movements.[40]

As U.S. troops along the Missouri River attempted, with limited success, to

harbor those whose help they had required, officers in other parts of Missouri found

new uses for emancipation: as punishment for disloyalty. One hundred miles

southwest, Col. Grenville M. Dodge was urging his subordinate commanders to

search diligently for potential disloyal slaveholders, so that they might confiscate as

much property as possible. Dodge ordered them to "be sure they are aiding the

enemy and then take all they have got." Dodge followed his own advice while

commanding the post at Rolla. Upon assuming control he set to work 150 prisoners

and requested orders on what to do with the forty slaves captured along with

members of the Confederate Army.[41]

Dodge's work operated according to a different logic than the orders

promulgated for use in the seceded states, issued by the War Department to

Benjamin Butler in late May 1861. In those orders, Secretary of War Simon

Cameron described a passive approach to expropriation of slaveholders' property.

While Butler was not to release any persons held to service who came voluntarily

into his lines, his troops were otherwise to refrain from active "interference" with

slavery as it existed in Virginia. Cameron proscribed precisely the actions Dodge

---

[40] Brigadier-General James Blunt to Gen. John M. Schofield, Old Fort Wayne, near Maysville, Arkansas, October 26, 1862, *OR* I.13.1, 326, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24840; James G. Blunt to Samuel R. Curtis, Cane Hill, Ark., Dec. 2, 1862, *OR* I.22.1, 42, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24851.

[41] Grenville M. Dodge to Col. Greusel, Rolla, Mo., November 4, 1861, *OR* II.1, 775; Grenville M. Dodge to William McMichael, Rolla, Mo., November 23, 1861, *OR* II.1, 136, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25874.

undertook. Dodge's aggressive policy, however, was performed in the same spirit as that of Butler in the earliest days of the war. Dodge sought the destruction of the economic power of disloyal men, who had engulfed the state with increasingly frequent, small-scale warfare. Using emancipation to destroy the ability of these men to harm the government was a shift from the prevailing practice in the state and were taken in contravention to regulations given in other parts of the South.[42]

Dodge's actions against slave property in Missouri, though, made some officials nervous that he would end up harboring fugitives, bringing down displeasure from loyal slaveholders. Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck was especially desirous to avoid complications arising from slavery. In November 1861 the Commander of the Department of the Missouri promulgated General Orders No. 3. Halleck had recently heard disturbing reports of people of color reporting "important information respecting the numbers and condition" of Union forces to Confederates and their sympathizers in the state. In response, he forbade any "fugitive slaves" from being admitted into any Union camp or into the lines of any force on the march. Though the order, on its face, was neutral on questions of emancipation, its immediate effect was to stifle attempts at encouraging the escape of people of color. Grenville Dodge, who earlier in the month had pursued a strategy of pressing into Confederate-sympathizing territory in order to capture any people of color he could find who belonged to secessionists, quickly reversed course. By November 23 he had asked for further instruction on the treatment of fugitive slaves he found at Rolla, and by the 29th had ordered all fugitive slaves brought to

---

[42] Simon Cameron to Benjamin F. Butler, Washington, D.C., May 30, 1861, *OR* II.1, 754-755. See Oakes, *Freedom National,* 100, 182.

headquarters and ordered them expelled from the lines of troops under his command. This expulsion did not immediately occur, nor did it keep Dodge from capturing fugitive slaves from the Cherokee allies of the Confederates. But Rolla-based raiding parties no longer sought the capture of people of color in central Missouri, and commanders throughout the state had expelled fugitive slaves by the time winter, with its temperatures "far down into the zeroes," set in.[43]

Despite Halleck's strictures against harboring escaped slaves, even those willing to help U.S. forces, borderland blacks continued looking for any gap that might open up along the national fault lines. Though aiding U.S. forces seemed to do little to guarantee refuge from slavery, aiding the Confederacy, in the right circumstances, could lead to offers of freedom. While the First Confiscation Act did not guarantee slaves their freedom for their actions against the Confederacy, it committed federal protection to those who had been forced to aid the southern rebellion. Ironically, this meant that the most reliable tactic for escaping slavery in the borderlands, as in parts of Virginia, was working on behalf of the government most committed to the long-term flourishing of human bondage. This irony emerged precisely because the United States government was fully committed to

---

[43] William McMichael, by orders of Major-General Halleck, Saint Louis, November 20, 1861, *OR* II.1 778; Grenville M. Dodge to William McMichael, Rolla, Mo., November 23, 1861, *OR* II.1, 136, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25874; Berlin, et al., *Freedom* I.1, 419n; John S. Phelps to Grenville M. Dodge, Rolla, Mo., December 2, 1861, *OR* II.1, 781, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26864; G. M. Dodge, to J. C. Kelton, Rolla, Mo., December 1, 1861, *OR* I.8, 398, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25910; Aide-de-Camp to Colonel Raith, Otterville, Mo., December 30, 1861, *OR* II.1, 797; "Affairs in Illinois; Winter Weather a Defaulting Marshall Effects of the War in Missouri, &c." New York *Times*, December 8, 1861.

destroying the Confederacy, depriving it of every means of sustenance, while remaining ambivalent about the persistence of slavery *per se*.

Confederates in Tennessee were more than eager to enlist the aid of African Americans in the defense of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. From the perspective of Confederate civilian and military officials, the movement of enslaved people would complement the mobilization of a fighting force made of citizens. Civilian leaders in the Confederate interior participated fully in this early, coordinated movement. By the fall of 1861, Tuscumbia natives S. D. Weakly and James Saunders formed a committee of civilian officials in support of the war effort, proposing to organize a company of "gray-headed men" who would march northward to aid in the defense of Forts Donelson and Henry, since "very many of these old men will have their negro men laboring" on the works as well, allowing continued proximity between slaveholders and impressed slaves. Maj. Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, the commanding general of the Western Department, agreed with the citizens' assessment, requesting that "the slave laborers…be sent forward from the same points with the troops" en masse. The movement of old men in northern Alabama met the same goals of Confederate officials who deployed cavalry in the Mississippi Delta, to simultaneously provide for military defense and as a check on African Americans who might find opportunities for freedom in the disruption of war. [44]

---

[44] S. D. Weakley and James E. Saunders to Hon. J. P. Benjamin, Tuscumbia, Ala., November 22, 1861, *OR* I.7, 692-693, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26649; S. D. Weakley, et al. to Fellow-Citizens of North Alabama and North Mississippi, November 23, 1861, *OR* I.7, 695, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26650; Lloyd Tilghman to

The slave hiring system complicated Confederate deployment of labor in Tennessee as it had in Virginia. Black men laboring around Tuscumbia found themselves uprooted and sent to work on the fortifications at Forts Donelson and Henry with relatively few logistical challenges. They were connected by navigable waterways to sites of military conflict and were directly bound to owners whose commitment to the war effort in the early months of the war was unquestioned. In Nashville, however, officials could find few laborers for the defense of Fort Donelson up the Cumberland River or for the defense of the city itself.

In Nashville, the hiring system predominated. Though it made the regime of slavery more flexible in many cases, hiring proved much less accommodating to the war effort. Widespread hiring contracts meant that slave labor could not be reallocated swiftly, at the whim of the slaveowner. Mobilization of slave labor instead often relied on long-distance negotiations between owners, lessors, the state, and enslaved workers themselves. These negotiations frequently stalled. Confederate engineer J. F. Gilmer admitted that he and others attempting to recruit laborers for Nashville's fortifications "failed to procure a force at all adequate" to the work initially planned, "as the negroes in the vicinity of this city are hired out until the end of this year and not now under the control of their masters." Gen. Johnston's continued prodding from afar produced "some 200 men" by the new year, a number local officers found to be less "flattering" than they "had wanted and expected." In the Cumberland River Valley, Confederates did not encounter the problem of finding

Sidney Johnston, Fort Donelson, Tenn., November 29, 1861, *OR* I.7, 723-724, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26648; A.S. Johnston to Governor of Alabama A.B. Moore, Bowling Green, Ky., December 2, 1861, *OR* I.7, 733, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26651.

too few masters willing to let their slaves aid the war effort, as commanders in Virginia had. They found instead that the mechanisms built into slavery to make it more adaptable got in the way of negotiations between Confederate military officials and slaveowners. Alienation of slaves from the state was no problem. Alienation of slaves from their masters, through the hiring market, was.[45]

Hiring made slavery less, not more flexible during mobilization, and presented enslaved Americans in the Confederate interior, ironically, with fewer, not more chances for immediate escape from slavery. While about one hundred of those working on the fortifications at Donelson and Henry found themselves nominally free by February 1862, those who had not been working there were excluded from U.S. lines. Immediately after the battle of Fort Donelson, Ulysses S. Grant became concerned about pressure on his lines to become dangerously porous as his subordinate officers received application after application from citizens hoping to "pass through the camps to look for their fugitive slaves." In response to this wave of requests, Grant appealed to Halleck's General Order No. 3, denying all applications and evicting slaves who were not "within the lines at the time of the capture" or which had not "been used by the enemy." [46]   Those hired around Nashville could not be conscripted for these works and thus found themselves

---

[45] J. F. Gilmer to Lieut. Col. W. W. Mackall, Nashville, Tenn., December 7, 1861, *OR* I.7, 741, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26658; Isham G. Harris to A. Sydney Johnston, Nashville, Tenn., December 31, 1861, *OR* I.7, 812, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26660.
[46] R. Jones, Assistant Inspector General, U.S. Army to Brig. Gen. L. Thomas, Washington, D.C., April 6, 1862, *OR* II.3, 427, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25643; Jno. A. Rawlins, by order of Brig. Gen. U.S. Grant, General Orders No. 14, Fort Donelson, February 26, 1862, *OR* I.7, 668, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27609;

outside the legal protection of the 1st Confiscation Act when Maj. Gen. Don Carlos

Buell's troops marched through Nashville on February 24. Eviction of enslaved

people running to U.S. lines was the simplest response to the political problem of

unionist slaveholders even in seceded states.

On account of the differences in the labor regimes around Nashville and the

vagaries of US army policy and its particular implementation in the Tennessee and

Cumberland River watersheds, enslaved Americans who entered Union lines under

Buell's control were left unprotected and handed over to their owners. By mid-

March Buell ordered that "in future no fugitive slave will be allowed to enter or

remain in" the camps around Nashville. Enslaved people living along the Tennessee

and Cumberland rivers not captured during the assault on Forts Donelson and

Henry were likewise forbidden from U.S. lines.[47]

Identifying who had worked for the Confederacy was the linchpin of Grant's

strategy toward enslaved southerners in early 1862, following the letter of the First

Confiscation Act. In the days following the victory on the Cumberland River, Grant

also ordered troops under his command to "apprehend several hundred negroes"

said to be along the Tennessee-Kentucky border, on their way to work on the

Confederate fortifications around Nashville. When Capt. Moses Klein, in carrying

out these orders, also burned personal property, captured two white citizens and

took twenty-five enslaved people from their homes, Grant was outraged. The

---

[47] Don Carlos Buell to O. M. Mitchell, Nashville, Tenn., March 11, 1862, *OR* I.10.1, 31, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27985; Jno. A. Rawlins to Col. Richard J. Oglesby, Fort Henry, March 15, 1862, *OR* I.10.2, 40, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27986.

General immediately ordered the slaves sent back to their homes along with the captured white civilians and had Klein arrested.[48]

Though soldiers in Tennessee sought to draw strict lines between those who had aided the Confederacy and those who had not, such lines left out enslaved people who had become vital conduits of information. U.S. officers quickly began to see the benefits of cooperating with enslaved Americans and altered their policies to account for the help they were receiving. Three months after the fall of Forts Donelson and Henry, senior officers in Tennessee had come to the conclusion that the "negroes are our only friends." Despite Halleck's orders the previous November, Brig. Gen. Ormsby M. Mitchell "promised the protection" of the federal government to "all who communicate to me valuable information." In large part because of the experience of U.S. troops along the Tennessee River, Asst. Adj. Gen. John C. Kelton clarified U.S. policy to commanders there in mid-June that though enslaved Americans were to be turned out from Union lines, those "who have given you important information concerning the enemy will be protected."[49]

By July 14, 1862, three days before the Second Confiscation Act became law, officers at Corinth, Mississippi, again expanded the circumstances in which enslaved men and women could find refuge in their lines. "The slaves of our enemies," Brig. Gen. Washington L. Elliott wrote for Brig. Gen. William S. Rosecrans, "may come or

---

[48] Ulysses S. Grant to Capt. J. C. Kelton, Fort Donelson, Tenn., February 22, 1862, *OR* II.3, 300, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25666;
[49] O.M. Mitchell to Hon. E. M. Stanton, Huntsville, Ala., May 4, 1862, I.10.2, 162, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28165; J. C. Kelton to W. W. Lowe, Corinth, Miss., June 21, 1862, I.17.2, 21, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24950; see also George M. Reeder, General Orders No. 11, Trenton, Tenn., July 26, 1862, II.4, 291, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27600.

go wherever they please." At the same time that black informants in the Peninsula Campaign in Virginia were demonstrating their usefulness to the Union war effort, along the Tennessee River enslaved Americans came to be indispensible to reconnaissance and intelligence gathering efforts. U.S. policy there adapted to recognize their service.[50]

General Orders No. 3, the directive to expel fugitive slaves from Union lines, had its intended political effect, assuaging the fears of slaveholding Unionists in the border states and beyond. It ensured that no slaves of Unionists would be mistakenly taken, because no fugitives would be allowed protection. Despite their best attempts to adjudicate between Confederate and Union-sympathizing slaveholders, military officers rarely believed they were competent to make these decisions, which is why Sherman, Halleck, and others preferred to exclude slaves from the lines rather than decide whether slaves had escaped from unionist or secessionist control. Such actions were impracticable, however, when enslaved people proved of true value to the destruction of the Confederacy, often more immediately valuable than border state white Unionists had been. By offering their services toward the objectives of U.S. troops, black southerners demonstrated that the uneasy balance sought by the First Confiscation Act and Halleck's General Orders No. 3 was untenable.

Federal policy, issued at the highest levels of the military and civilian government, increasingly clashed with the needs of military commanders, who demanded the ability to protect those who gave them aid. Congress' solution to the

---

[50] W. L. Elliott, General Orders, No. 92, Headquarters, Army of the Mississippi, July 14, 1862, *OR* II.4, 211, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27605.

growing tension between the needs of field commanders and the policy framework in which they acted was the Second Confiscation Act. The Act extended freedom to all enslaved men, women, and children who had been owned by those in rebellion, not simply those used on fortifications, and forbade military officers from judging whether the supposed master had been loyal or disloyal.

The Act's emancipatory provisions were at once incremental and revolutionary. It was incremental, in that it barely extended beyond the limitations of the First Confiscation Act. Slaves owned by supporters of the Confederacy, in Secretary of War Simon Cameron's reading of the First Confiscation Act, could already be set free on that basis. The Second Confiscation Act marked a sea-change for many commanders, however. Freed completely from the burden of making determinations about the loyalty or disloyalty of slaveowners, commanders along the Mississippi, in Tennessee, and much of the rest of the South began welcoming enslaved men, women, and children in much larger numbers than they had before, declaring them free in the process. Benjamin Butler, previously unsure of the status of those who had been enslaved in Louisiana, began considering at least some of them free "by the Act of Congress."

The Second Confiscation Act transformed much of the Confederacy into an area in which enslaved men and women coming into U.S. lines were accepted without hesitation. The policy of the U.S. military became geographically more homogenous, as principles long employed in Virginia and along the Atlantic Coast were finally implemented in the west. This change was a response to the tensions brought forward from commanders in the field, ranging from the concerns of

officers accepting help in Tennessee to the disagreements between Butler and

Phelps in Louisiana.

The Act resolved questions about the protection of enslaved men and women

who aided the U.S. military, authorizing the United States to employ as many as

were needed. In resolving these questions, and in simultaneously throwing open

U.S. lines to enslaved men, women, and children who found their way there,

Congress provoked new, pressing concerns that would become even more urgent

with the implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation. As Ulysses S. Grant

wrote, five days after the president's proclamation, "What will I do with the surplus

negroes?"[51]

---

[51] Ulysses S. Grant to General H.W. Halleck, Holly Springs, Miss., January 6, 1863, *OR* I.17.1, 481, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26904.

CHAPTER THREE

OCCUPATION

The terrible conditions formerly enslaved people met behind U.S. lines were

a direct, predictable result of the Emancipation Proclamation. The Proclamation

established the freedom of black southerners by arguing that their labor and service

to the United States was a military necessity, and it confirmed their freedom

through contact with the U.S. army and navy. By encouraging mass flight into U.S.

lines, the Emancipation Proclamation created widespread health hazards. By

ending slavery in service to the war, it ensured that the logistical priorities of freed

slaves would be determined by their usefulness to the destruction of the

Confederacy. This left most freedmen vulnerable to sickness and to attacks from

Confederates. The answer to both these problems was the creation of black

regiments, which reduced the number of refugees at hand by turning them into

soldiers specifically designated to garrison occupied spaces.

War taught many Union officers that they needed enslaved people, especially

men, for their war effort. The intelligence they gathered and the labor they

performed were invaluable to the war effort and bolstered enslaved people's claims on northern whites' conscience. The United States responded to the actions of enslaved men and women with two large-scale expansions of current policy, aimed both at enabling more men, women, and children to claim freedom immediately and at destroying the institution of slavery altogether. These were widely believed to be overlapping, mutually reinforcing objectives. They invited enslaved southerners, especially enslaved men, into U.S. lines, sure that this movement would strengthen the army. As the army moved into new territories, enslavement as a local practice would be curtailed and the momentum for the institution's ultimate collapse would build.

Some politicians and commanders had hoped and even had begun to believe that, when in enemy territory, every enslaved person moving into Union lines was another taken away from the Confederacy. This was rather simple arithmetic for a complex situation. In reality, the U.S. military needed enslaved people in some places and not others, completing some kinds of work and not others. Some people were not needed at all, but still they came.

Taking a cue from the obvious desire of enslaved people to become free and the stated policy of the U.S. government, beginning as early as the summer of 1861 in some places, that those who reached U.S. lines were in fact free, it would seem as though the movement of enslaved people into U.S. protection as a rather obvious, unalloyed good for all involved. The situation on the ground in most places was not nearly so simple. There were significant costs to moving into U.S. lines. Some of these costs were borne by the migrants, others were borne by those already living in

Union-occupied territory, who suddenly found themselves crowded. Enslaved men

and women may not have been driven by a desire to end slavery *per se*, but were

interested in improving their own conditions and those of their loved ones. A

number of scholars have argued that escape from slavery hastened the former while

assuming that it fulfilled the latter. Sometimes it certainly did, exchanging the

beatings and sales of loved ones with a labor regime in which such abuses were

illegal and rare. But understanding the costs of freedom and the patterns of

occupation shaped by U.S. strategy is essential for understanding why some

enslaved people entered Union lines and why far more did not.[1]

The United States developed three main strategies for dealing with the

uprooted, each governed by the strategic needs of particular stretches of occupied

territory: First, along the Mississippi Valley corridor, the

camp/plantation/recruitment complex reigned. Second, freedom settlements

emerged in the protected kernels of Union-held ground at New Bern and Port Royal.

Finally, a new binary emerged along the border, demanding that black men either

remain in slavery or fight. These three modes of occupation were part of a single

wartime system whose goal was the strategic deployment of black bodies in order to

defeat the Confederacy. Enslaved people developed tactics for dealing with each of

these routes out of slavery.[2]

---

[1] On enslaved people moving to freedom, see Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 246-270; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 117-138; Blight, *A Slave No More*; Yael Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 93-154.

[2] Historians have examined the occupation policies of various places in the South, but these are often seen as relatively discrete, perhaps replicable models, demonstrating the various paths out of freedom without shedding much light on

The United States Army, in control of one hundred thousand men, women,

and children in Louisiana, ten thousand each on the Sea Islands and North Carolina

coast, twenty six thousand in eastern Virginia, and fewer thousands of others

scattered elsewhere, initially had no adequate military strategy for their protection

and care. Whether military commanders, petit officers, or common soldiers desired

the end of slavery mattered for the well-being of those recently enslaved, though

these antislavery opinions mattered much less than the plans commanders might

make for enslaved people's survival and flourishing. The sustained defense of a

nearly continuous string of plantations along a one thousand-mile, serpentine river

demanded rigorous planning and execution by the United States Army, as well as

how these sites fit together into a larger system. The differences between them
depended largely on the strategic position of each in a larger system of Union war-
making. For local and state-level case studies of enslaved life in occupied territory,
see John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
University Press, 1963); Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*; Gerald M. Capers,
Occupied City: New Orleans Under the Federals, 1862-1865 (Lexington: University of
Kentucky Press, 1965); Barbara J. Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground:
Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985);
Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South
Carolina, 1860-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Daniel E.
Sutherland, *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community, 1861-1865*
(New York: Free Press, 1995), 153-180; Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We:
Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University
of Illinois, 1997), 75-146; Brian Steel Wills, *The War Hits Home: The Civil War in
Southeastern Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Judkin
Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina*
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 81-104; Joseph W.
Danielson, *War's Desolating Scourge: The Union's Occupation of North Alabama*
(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 93-116. See also Ira Berlin, et al., eds.
Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, ser. 1, 3 vols. (New York:
Cambridge University Press, 1985-1993); Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came:
Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press, 1995), 149-169; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The
Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press,
2008), 97-136; Downs, *Sick from Freedom*; Lang, "The Garrison War," 188-247.

resources often not readily at hand. Providing sufficient housing for freedpeople around Fort Monroe and elsewhere took foresight and planning. Feeding those in its care demanded additional effort. Commanders, however, were not accustomed to think about the details of garrison work and protection with the level of exactitude they gave offensive or defensive operations and strategy, nor were they interested in doing so. Those on the cusp of freedom suffered because the task of providing for them was subordinate to the army's principal objective: defeating the Confederacy.

Destroying the Confederacy would secure the freedom of slaves. Resources and personnel diverted from aggressive military operations would prolong their enslavement and their experience of war. Such a situation caught even the most well-meaning, anti-slavery officers in a bind, choosing between properly garrisoning captured territory and former slaves or allocating men to prosecute a war aggressively to end the Confederacy and the slave regime. It placed enslaved and formerly enslaved people in much more acute difficulties. They cheered the progress of Union arms while knowing that every soldier sent to fight was one less to protect the occupied territory; every ration that went with the white Union enlisted men was another morsel black southerners would not eat. Light garrisons seemed to mean a quicker end to slavery; it certainly meant less protection against Confederate raids.

Behind Union lines, in areas along the Atlantic coast that saw little Confederate raiding and from which major military campaigns were not dispatched, people of color had considerable autonomy. They lived at the margins of U.S.

military strategy. Their marginality could be a blessing, giving them room to develop settlements with far less direct coercion than most other places in the South, other than that which was imposed by military officers, auxiliary teachers, treasury department officials, and reformers. The same dynamics, however, slowed to a crawl compensation for work completed, gave freed blacks few opportunities to vent grievances, and gave northern whites nearly complete authority to cheat workers out of even their few, promised wages.[3]

At first commanders impressed coastal African Americans as laborers. Upon arrival, U.S. forces made plans to put to work those people of color who were willing and able. Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside employed refugees from slavery "to the best possible advantage," working to fortify the town of New Bern so that it might be held with only a small force. By March 1862, black men on Roanoke Island were employed at $10 per month plus clothing and rations, while women and children over twelve were paid, but less than half that amount. Fugitives from slavery constructed forts around New Bern, both for their own defense and, in the words of Ambrose Burnside, "to give occupation to the hundreds of negroes that are flocking to us."[4]

New Bern, like the 200 plantations scattered across the Sea Islands, was widely regarded as something of a social experiment. One week after Federal troops

---

[3] Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*, 68.

[4] A.E. Burnside to E.M. Stanton, New Berne, N.C., March 27, 1862, *OR* I.9, 373-374, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25382; General Orders No. 2, John E. Shepard, Headquarters, Roanoke Island, N.C., March 12, 1862, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26541; A.E. Burnside to E.M. Stanton, New Berne, N.C., May 3, 1862, *OR* I.9, 383-384, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25384.

took the city, refugees had "overrun" New Bern, coming in from all surrounding areas. "It would be utterly impossible," Burnside informed the secretary of war, "to keep them outside of our lines, as they find their way to us through woods and swamps from every side." New Bern drew more than simply local slaves. Two entered the lines, walking "through woods and bye-paths" from northern Alabama in June 1862 and two others from South Carolina. Soldiers certainly appreciated having, in the words of one Massachusetts volunteer stationed there, "some one to wash your tin plate or dipper, or polish your boots, instead of having to perform these menial duties for yourself." By the middle of the year, 10,000 men, women, and children had entered Union lines along North Carolina's coast.[5]

The first challenge for Union troops was in ensuring adequate food for those they found in occupied space. In early months of the occupation, starvation seemed a likely future for many along the Atlantic. Those gathered at Botany Bay Island, off South Carolina, had only a "limited extent of country" over which to gather and produce food and not enough in reserve. Those left behind by the Confederate evacuation at Fernandina, Florida, were impoverished and hungry. They could not profitably be used to work on U.S. military projects, even if funding were available for more defense works outside Jacksonville. Upholding the rights of slaveholders within Union lines there was at least a way to avoid the bureaucratic and moral

---

[5] Ambrose Burnside to E.M. Stanton, New Berne, March 21, 1862, *OR* I.9, 199, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27511; Vincent Colyer, *Brief Report of the Services Rendered by the Freed People to the United States Army, in North Carolina, in the Spring of 1862*, (New York: V. Colyer, 1864), 22; James Brown Gardner, *Record of the Service of the Forty-Fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Militia in North Carolina August 1862 to May 1863* (Boston, 1887), 88-89.

responsibility for additional hungry men, women, and children. Slaveholders, in turn, could report "strange negroes" to U.S. authorities. U.S. naval officers captured and impressed for naval duty nine "riotous," formerly enslaved men living on Cumberland Island, just north of the Florida border.[6]

Providing adequate housing proved to be no less a challenge. Fifteen thousand freedpeople, perhaps one-tenth of those who had come under U.S. control and who had been promised something approximating freedom, lived around Fort Monroe along with five thousand still enslaved when the area was excluded from the Emancipation Proclamation. Despite the fact that the black population was lower than it had been before the war, those gathered there found the place over-crowded because of the war's destruction and military buildup. With the increasing numbers of hopeful enslaved Americans coming into Fort Monroe, it became clear that there was no adequate place for them to live. Confederates had burned Hampton in their retreat up the Peninsula, leaving those who had been enslaved in the town without shelter. Fifteen hundred people were established on deserted farms. One in four were without work, while every remaining adult was engaged in compulsory labor, leaving the freedmen, in the words of the *Liberator*, "as restrained in his freedom just as he was on his rebel master's plantation."[7]

---

[6] D. Ammen to S.F. DuPont, Port Royal, S.C., December 29, 1861, *OR Navy* I.12, 430-432, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25728; H.G. Wright to Capt. Louis H. Pelouze, Fernandina, Fl., March 10, 1862, *OR* I.6, 243-244, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26383; H.G. Wright to Capt. Louis H. Pelouze, Fernandina, Fl., March 13, 1862, *OR* I.6, 244-245; W.T. Truxtun to S.F. DuPont, St. Andrew's Sound, Ga., September 6, 1862, *OR Navy* I.13, 298-300, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27542.
[7] Goodheart, *1861*, 346-347; Berlin, et al., *Freedom* I.1, 91; *Liberator*, February 21, 1862; Downs, *Sick from Freedom*, 46.

By November 1862, military officials began looking for more distant sites of refuge, but to no avail. Governor John Andrew rebuffed Maj. Gen. John Dix's request that formerly enslaved families be brought temporarily to Massachusetts.[8] With the numbers overwhelming the substantial grounds around Fort Monroe, Dix resorted to a shell game. To deal with overcrowding around Hampton, he evacuated the hospital at Newport News, where enslaved people "were dying rapidly" and made preparations to house "over a thousand of the colored fugitives" there. When the new fugitives arrived at the former hospital at Newport News, they learned that they would be moved again to Craney Island, where the quartermaster would soon erect new barracks to house them. While waiting, they lived at the wharf "without shelter and without food," with the predictable results of death, further sickness, and exposure to theft and abuse by bored soldiers. It is unclear where Fort Monroe's displaced contraband, sick and dying, were housed during the winter of 1862.[9]

Nowhere along the coast did the problems of provision, housing, and labor receive more attention from the northern public than at Port Royal. Here shortages of provision and housing were less acute, since the area faced few of the challenges of displaced people that plagued sites such as Fort Monroe. Largely isolated from the effects of war, federal officials worked to implement policies that would demonstrate the economic and moral virtues of emancipation as a labor policy. The

---

[8] John A. Dix to Hon. E.M. Stanton, Headquarters, Department of Virginia, November 22, 1862, *OR* I.18, 461, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27427.
[9] John A. Dix to Hon. E.M. Stanton, Headquarters, Department of Virginia, November 22, 1862, *OR* I.18, 461, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27427; John A. Dix to Brig. Gen. M. Corcoran, Fort Monroe, Va., November 26, 1862, *OR* I.18, 464, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24832.

situation would not be copied elsewhere, if only because the war was so pervasive. The rehearsal for reconstruction depended on peace, of which there was precious little between 1862 and 1865.

There had always been multiple military and political rationales for seizing the small stretch of land. As the largest deep-water harbor along the South Carolina and Georgia coasts, it was a nearly ideal base from which to carry out the blockade of Savannah and the South Atlantic. It would cut communications between the city and its coordinate Atlantic port, Charleston. In the fall of 1861, the Lincoln administration also sought a military victory to buy fading political capital after summertime defeats at Bethel and Manassas. Last, there was the cotton. The Treasury Department was deeply into debt only a few months into the war, and expenses continued to rise. It fell to the most radical anti-slavery member of Lincoln's cabinet to manage the property abandoned by fleeing Confederates. Even within a single man, there were conflicting goals and strategies for what would be left behind. The Sea Islands represented both a much-needed stream of income and space for testing whether, to adapt the slogan he coined, former slaves could employ free labor as free men on free soil.[10]

Initially, from the perspective of the army, work did not go well on the Sea Islands. Within weeks of the invasion of the South Carolina Lowcountry, Adj. Gen. Lorenzo Thomas ordered that enslaved people be set to work "picking, collecting, and packing cotton," as well as "constructing defensive works." One month after the

[10] Richard Franklin Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 178-181, 238-247; Rose, *Rehearsal*, 4-6.

occupation began, Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Sherman, commander of the expedition, reported that only sixty "able-bodied male hands" had come in, with four times that number of "decrepit [men], women, and children." The unbalanced ratio was almost certainly attributable to Confederate efforts to ensure that U.S. forces were able to draw precisely those people into their lines. Moreover, officers hesitated to commit the enslaved people to work in the fields, because Confederates raids meant that such work "exposed the unfortunate negroes" to the "peril" of re-enslavement or murder.[11]

What officers saw in enslaved Americans seemed to confirm their prejudices. Some found industrious laborers, ready to aid the conquering liberators. Others were less sanguine in their estimations of black cooperation. Sherman reported that "the negro labor expected to be obtained here" was "a failure" without "the lash," the transition to freedom "more than their intellects can stand." He believed this result required a complete rethinking of "what is to be done with the negroes who will hereafter be found on conquered soil."[12]

Sherman's assessment was not only prejudiced, but premature. By February he reported "at least 9,000" men, women, and children "in possession of our

---

[11] Lorenzo Thomas to Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Sherman, Washington, D.C., November 27, 1861, *OR* I.6, 192, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28138; T.W. Sherman to Lorenzo Thomas, Port Royal, S.C., December 14, 1861, *OR* I.6, 203-205, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28164; S.F. DuPont to Gideon Welles, Port Royal, S.C., December 13, 1861, *OR* I.12, 400, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25503.
[12] T.W. Sherman to Lorenzo Thomas, Port Royal, S.C., December 14, 1861, *OR* I.6, 203-205, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28164.

forces."[13] The number of enslaved men and women seeking shelter under U.S. arms

continued to rise, as U.S. patrol boats expanded their routes along the coast. Naval

officers sailing up the Waccamaw River from Georgetown, South Carolina, received

many, including twenty-eight ill-fed and ill-clothed fugitives from the farm of a

"violent secessionist," the local doctor.[14]

By mid-January 1862, Gen. Thomas W. Sherman had come to see African

Americans around Port Royal as able to "sustain themselves" under the right

"system." Under the supervision of "agents, properly qualified," Sherman believed

that the formerly enslaved there ought to work the land, "enroll…into working

parties," "receive wages," with the profits of the plantations going to the U.S.

Government. Under Sherman's plan, the approximately 9,000 formerly enslaved

men and women firmly ensconced within U.S. military protection would also receive

teaching in "the rudiments of civilization and Christianity," so that they might

"sustain themselves in social and business pursuits."[15]

Sherman's plan, and those that followed under the Treasury Department's

supervision, left little autonomy to African Americans under U.S. control and elided

a number of questions critical to the transition out of slavery. Sherman's

counterpart in the Navy, in unofficial correspondence, suggested a few of the

questions left open by the emerging U.S. plan for formerly enslaved men and women

---

[13] T.W. Sherman to Adjutant-General, Port Royal, S.C., February 9, 1862, *OR* II.1, 807, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26391.

[14] G.B. Balch to Admiral S.F. DuPont, Georgetown, S.C., August 9, 1862, *OR Navy* I.13, 213-215, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25744.

[15] T.W. Sherman to the Adjutant-General U.S. Army, Port Royal, S.C., January 15, 1862, *OR* I.6, 218, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26946; L.H. Pelouze, General Orders No. 9, Hilton Head, S.C., February 6, 1862, *OR* II.1, 805,

120

on abandoned plantations in 1862: "How to employ them, who is to control, what

positions are they to have, what authority to be given those who work them?" On

these and other questions, Adm. Samuel Francis Du Pont pointed out, "collectors of

cotton, collectors of negro statistics, the people of God" and other interested parties

"do not all agree." Du Pont was certain, however, that whatever might be said about

the evils and degradation of slavery, "the transition state has not improved it."[16]

The "transition state," as Du Pont called it, was governed by a mess of

officials with conflicting directives and strategies. Military operations in the area

were minimal after the invasion. Occasionally, soldiers, sailors, or a combined force

of the two would force their way among the marshes, rivers, and islands to battle

smaller Confederate pickets, raiding to destroy Confederate property and release

slaves. In November 1862, Col. Oliver Beard commended "the astonishing coolness

and bravery" with which the black troops he commanded fought as they destroyed

"nine large salt-works" and $20,000 in property, not counting the "156 fighting

men" and the 61 women and children they freed. Such raids, though, were

infrequent and did not alarmingly enlarge the number of men, women, and children

already crowded onto Port Royal. Perhaps 12,000 were under federal protection by

the summer of 1862, when the number of new refugees coming in slowed

substantially but did not stop. By early 1864, 15,000 lived on the South Carolina

coastline.[17]

---

[16] S.F. Du Pont to G.V. Fox, Unofficial Correspondence, Port Royal, S.C., February 10, 1862, *OR Navy* I.12, 540-542, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24714.
[17] Oliver T. Beard to Brigadier-General Rufus Saxton, Beaufort, S.C., November 7, 1862, *OR* I.14, 192, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28199; Saville,

Multiple Treasury Department officials arrived shortly after the military had taken possession of the islands. They were a mixed bag, including abolitionists and cotton manufacturers, each with their own miniature armies of agents or philanthropists. They put flesh on the conflicting goals within Salmon Chase's Treasury Department, even setting aside any inter-departmental rivalries. The cotton agents had few qualms about exploiting bound labor. Missionaries had few notions of how to plant saleable crops. Despite this mixture of paternalistic and exploitive governance, the Sea Islanders, over time, were able to scrape out a living and some autonomy. At least under Treasury governance, they mostly avoided mass conscription and forced labor on fortifications.

The result of Treasury management most obvious to enslaved men and women, though, was the sheer deprivation Union control of the Sea Islands meant in the short term. Edward Philbrick, a northern investor in the experiment, recorded the reaction to his warning that he would report those not working on Saturday "to Massa Lincoln as too lazy to be free." They trudged into the fields, "grumbling about 'no clothes, no tobacco, no molasses, no salt, no shoes, no medicine." Every complaint, Philbrick confessed, was "true and unanswerable." They were paid their first wages in April 1862, a few months after they began work, though deductions for food, clothing, and a deposit securing the future care of the crop likely did not end the grumbling.[18]

Work of Reconstruction, 37; Rufus Saxton to Hon. E.M. Stanton, Beaufort, S.C., February 7, 1864, *OR* III.4, 118-119.
[18] Rose, *Rehearsal*, 81.

The best outcome for any significant number of formerly enslaved men and women anywhere in the South was found in the confused experiments at Port Royal. There, marginality to U.S. military operations provided space. Without major Union incursions leaving from the island, few were impressed into fatigue duty. Military recruitment was brief and only piecemeal, rarely devolving into the violent confrontations between freedmen, Treasury officials, and recruiting parties seen elsewhere. And at least until Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman arrived at Christmas 1864, the formerly enslaved were free from the massive, forced dislocations, disease, and death that, late in the war, became the hallmark of military emancipation.

As early as October 1862, William T. Sherman pushed Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to focus his attention on the Mississippi as a base of operations and, for the present, "leave the interior alone." Sherman's strategy for operations in the fall of 1862 anticipated what Grant, Lincoln, and large swaths of the North came to believe soon afterward. Giving comfort to the unionist South was a fool's errand, both impossible and dangerous. Troops sent inland before taking the river, far from bolstering unionist sentiment, would be "at great hazard," since men under arms "do not convert the people." Nor were there many white southerners on the anxious bench waiting their arrival. Inspiring fear, even fear intermixed with hate, would be preferable to coaxing love of the Union out of Confederates because, unlike convincing southerners to rejoin the union through a misguided suasion, fear was possible. "They cannot be made to love us," he argued, "but may be made to fear us, and dread the passage of troops through their country." Holding the Mississippi was

the key to such dread in the western theater, because from it U.S. troops could land at any point and, "by a quick march," teach Confederates "by the loss of negroes and other property" that secession and war had been a grave mistake.[19] Sherman's flair with the pen gave his ideas an immediacy they might have lacked if conveyed by another. Whether the general understood the southern political terrain and the nature of white, Confederate political loyalty is still in doubt.[20] But hidden between the lines of Sherman's argument was a guarantee that would indeed come true: by waging a "dreaded" war, in which white southerners lost all property, black southerners would not fare well.

The problem with the Union invasion and occupation of the Mississippi River Valley was not simply that the lives of black southerners resembled, in many respects, their lives under slavery. A greater problem, for the well-being of enslaved men and women, was the particular way in which their lives *changed* on account of the Union strategy for carrying out the war. These changes occurred not on account of any particularly exploitive practice, though there were plenty of these, but because of the process by which Union officials decided to carry out military emancipation. Mass dislocation placed tremendous strain on black southerners. Formerly enslaved men, women and children were removed from familiar

---

[19] William T. Sherman to U.S. Grant, Memphis, October 4, 1862, *OR* 17.2, 260-1,
[20] Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Bradley Clampitt, *The Confederate Heartland: Military and the Civilian Morale in the Western Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2011).

environments, from shelter, from reliable food and water sources. Many suffered,

many died.[21]

Mass dislocation created the need for the more rigid, hierarchical system of

labor and provision for freedpeople along the Mississippi and, to a lesser extent,

elsewhere. It developed both out of the existing labor regime and as a direct result

of the Emancipation Proclamation, the sudden rush of slaves it sparked, and raids

into the countryside bringing black people from their homes and away from Union

lines. The bureaucratic system that emerged as an answer to the question, "what

shall we do with the negro," had three components: the refugee camp, the

plantation, and the army recruitment center. These locations performed

complementary functions for the United States government and its operations in the

area. All were highly coercive, each dangerous in its own way.

Refugee camps held the dislocated, most vulnerable, and least profitable

former slaves. Here men, women, and children (though mostly women and

children) were provided a modicum of food and shelter at the Government's

expense. As historian Jim Downs has suggested, the camps served as a "holding

ground" for enslaved people, not so dissimilar from the function of antebellum slave

---

[21] Historians of the U.S. occupation of Louisiana have long pointed out the extent to which the repressive policies resembled slavery. Yet for those living in Louisiana with few options, the question was not how closely freedom under the U.S. resembled slavery, but how much it differed, since those were the two options available. The absence of the lash and sale was significant in this respect. What has received relatively less attention until recently is the humanitarian crisis sparked not by an oppressive labor regime, but by displacement. See Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*; John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 33-57; on hunger and disease from displacement, see Downs, *Sick from Freedom*, 21-28.

pens, where they might wait until they could be transferred to plantations or

military camps for compulsory labor.[22]

Once they were chosen and had signed contracts, they were transported to

plantations, though in 1862, black Louisianans working in military installations and

on levees received only rations, not wages. "Contraband camps were visited and

negroes selected," wrote one professor-turned planter, recounting the process of

acquiring laborers for his leased plantation. Alexander Winchell, who taught zoology

at the University of Michigan, took leave with the school president's blessing (he and

other professors invested in Winchell's corporation, the Ann Arbor Cotton Co.) to

attempt plantation management in order, he wrote in his diary, "to clear such a sum"

as would allow him to continue his "scientific projects." Lorenzo Thomas had made

direct appeals to northern businessmen, suggesting that "with an investment of only

$2,000 can clear from 100 acres of land $14,500 in one year." We do not yet know

the extent of the profits recurring to the Treasury Department from the lands

worked by the forced labor of the recently enslaved. Judging from the return on

investment advertised by the Adjutant General, it may have been considerable. The

abject failure of most lessees to recover their initial investment, however, suggests

otherwise.[23]

Whatever else they were, the plantations were a major drain of U.S. military

resources. Because of this, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman was highly critical of the

---

[22] Downs, *Sick from Freedom*, 47. Steven Hahn has seen refugee camps primarily as sites fostering political radicalism, the war's "first great cultural and political meeting grounds." Hahn, *Nation under Our Feet*, 73.
[23] Martha M. Bigelow, "Plantation Lessee Problems in 1864," *Journal of Southern History* 27, no. 3 (Aug. 1961): 354-367.

plantations and their role in the war. "I fear you think I do not protect the lessees of

plantations," he wrote Brig. Gen. Lorenzo Thomas. "Every pound of cotton raised

will cost the United States $500, and so far as effect is concerned it will not have one

particle of effect on the main war." Sherman proposed a massive raid into Louisiana

to secure the west bank of the river, as he raided Mississippi. Such an incursion, he

believed, would allow 7,000 men to protect an area than now required seven times

that many. As it stood, each U.S. brigade stationed along the river "may have

protected a radius each of, say, 10 or 15 miles, but no more." Twenty guerrillas "will

break up any plantation you established." For Sherman, the decision was simple.

Either more destruction was needed or more men. Fortunately, the Emancipation

Proclamation made acquiring more men easier.[24]

The camp/plantation/recruitment complex was created gradually over the

course of 1862 and early 1863, piece by piece, and took its final form during the

Vicksburg campaign. By the beginning of 1863, Vicksburg remained as a strategic

prize along the Mississippi, a city that, if properly fortified and garrisoned, could

control river traffic. The siege itself introduced new twists into African American

life in the Civil War. Confederates and United States armies in such close quarters,

with limited food, had less need for enslaved people than the food they consumed.

Vicksburg was an anomaly for established patterns of military conduct for both the

United States and the Confederacy. Despite decisive turns toward emancipation in

U.S. policy and relatively consistent Confederate practices of seeking to capture and

---

[24] W.T. Sherman to Brig. Gen. Lorenzo Thomas, Memphis, March 11, 1864, *OR* I.33, 56-57.

retain as many enslaved men as possible, neither army desired the presence of many enslaved people during the siege itself.

Grant had become concerned about the dislocating effects of emancipation. In early 1863, he demanded enslaved labor for the construction of canals along the Mississippi. Engineers requisitioned black men in large numbers as they came into plantations and refugee camps along the river. Frederick Prime put five hundred fifty men to work digging "Grant's Canal" opposite Vicksburg in February 1863. At the same time, Grant reported that though he was "using a few hundred contraband" for earthworks, he was "compelled to prohibit any more coming in" by the dictates of "humanity." The planters, he explained to Gen. Halleck, had "mostly deserted their plantations, taking with them all their able-bodied negroes," leaving only "the old and very young." There was too little food and too few strong workers, he believed, to both free individual enslaved people, raise funds and logistical support for their relief, and take Vicksburg in a timely manner.[25]

The following month, however, Gen. Henry W. Halleck ordered Grant to do more to link emancipation with the war effort around Vicksburg, demanding that he "withdraw from the enemy as much productive labor as possible." Such a policy forbade Grant's attempts to push African Americans, even relatively unproductive ones, from his lines. The logic of Halleck's orders, that "every slave withdrawn from the enemy is equivalent to a white man put *hors de combat*," was flawed in this

---

[25] Frederick E. Prime to Brigadier General Joseph G. Totten, Opposite Vicksburg, Miss., February 9, 1863, *OR* I.24.1, 199, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26215; Ulysses S. Grant to General H.W. Halleck, Before Vicksburg, Miss., February 18, 1863, *OR* I.24.1, 18, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26216.

particular time and place, and Grant knew it. An overwhelming majority of the enslaved people available to be conscripted and who desired to come into U.S. lines around Vicksburg had little utility. Yet they needed to be fed and given shelter according to the dictates of decency and U.S. policy. Among nearly all refugee camps along the river in spring 1863, death from disease was palpable, "especially among the children," Gen. Lorenzo Thomas noted, "measles, diarrhea, and pneumonia being the prevailing diseases."[26]

Confederates in Vicksburg realized how planters' evacuation of select slaves, combined with the effects of the siege, had changed the local calculus of military emancipation. One week into Grant's siege of the city, after U.S. troops' attempts to take the city had been repelled, Confederates began not bringing slaves in, as had been their wont, but kicking them out of the starving city. They expelled from the city "all negroes not absolutely necessary for labor in the trenches." Enslaved people unfit for military duty or hard labor were a significant liability to a besieged city, as they were to the besieging army.[27]

Halleck was eager to do what he could to implement the president's plans for the military emancipation of enslaved people, using them directly for the war effort. The general-in-chief sought to accomplish several tasks simultaneously. He looked to deprive Confederates in the Louisiana and Mississippi countryside of labor, and in doing so, force them to cut back their recruitment of white soldiers. He sought, too,

---

[26] H.W. Halleck to Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant, Washington, March 31, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 156, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24750; Lorenzo Thomas to Edwin M. Stanton, Washington, D.C., October 5, 1865, *OR* III.5, 118-121, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26202.
[27] Assistant Adjutant-General W.H. McCardle to Major-General Stevenson, Vicksburg, June 1, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 941, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26601.

to acquire laborers and, potentially, recruits for the U.S. army under the terms of the Emancipation Proclamation, which made provisions for former slaves "of suitable condition" to be "received into the armed service of the United States." All of this depended, however, on the health and well-being of enslaved people. Those under siege were rarely hale, and Grant's army had no place to house, much less feed, the fugitives they found.[28]

Moreover, refugees on plantations or in camps required protection. Unlike the experience of Gen. Nathaniel Banks in Louisiana or even McClellan in the Penninsula Campaign, formerly enslaved men and women produced a net drain on Grant's resources before Vicksburg. Upon receiving Halleck's orders, Grant instructed his commanders in the field to "weaken the enemy" by destroying or carrying away their food, by capturing "their means of cultivating their fields," and by "every other way possible." Still, he tempered Halleck's enthusiasm for military emancipation with the realization that some people of color would not be useful to his campaign. "You will…encourage all negroes," he wrote his subordinates, "particularly middle-aged males," to come within U.S. lines. Middle-aged males were eligible for combat and, according to the president's proclamation, were intended specifically for duties defending "forts, positions, stations, and other places," including, presumably refugee camps.[29]

---

[28] Abraham Lincoln, "A Proclamation," January 1, 1863. National Archives. http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/transcript.html.
[29] U.S. Grant to Maj. Gen. Fred. Steele, Milliken's Bend, La., April 11, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 186-187, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26197.

Black troops were the answer to the problem of defending the new labor and camp system for refugees, and were also the answer to the overcrowding that had already become evident. After Grant's orders to bring in "middle-aged men" went out in April 1863, conscription proceeded rapidly along the Mississippi. Lorenzo Thomas, the Adjutant-General, visited Grant's headquarters at Milliken's Bend and made arrangements for 20,000 men to be enlisted into regiments along the river. Thomas was convinced that his recruitment of the United States Colored Troops would "at least do something to alleviate the condition of the numerous thousands who would come within our military lines for protection." By mustering tens of thousands of men into service in the spring, summer, and fall of 1863, the U.S. removed the healthiest men from disease-ridden camps, which undoubtedly did these black southerners along the river some good. The recruitment alleviated some of the overcrowding in refugee camps and the raw recruits could offer at least some protection to the women and children still "huddled together in insufficient quarters."[30]

This was precisely the role president Abraham Lincoln had envisioned for the United States Colored Troops. The Emancipation Proclamation authorized the creation of black regiments, but did so in specific ways: according to the document, "such persons" would be "received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places." A solution to problem of

---

[30] Walter B. Scates to John A. Rawlins, Vicksburg, Miss., June 2, 1863, *OR* I.24.2, 430, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26211; L. Thomas to Edwin M. Stanton, Memphis, Tenn., May 20, 1863, *OR* III.3, 214, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26265; Lorenzo Thomas to Edwin M. Stanton, Washington, D.C., October 5, 1865, *OR* III.5, 118-121, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26202.

occupation, protecting black laborers and refugees along the river, was built into the Emancipation Proclamation. The stated rationale for accepting black soldiers into the United States Army was to protect, among other things, freedpeople because the U.S. military could not both protect them and wage an aggressive war.

The camp/plantation/recruitment complex was locked into place. The army sought black soldiers to garrison refugee camps and plantations. They conscripted them from plantations or found them in the southern interior and brought them back for recruitment. As the army did so, black women and children followed in their wake, sparking the need for more soldiers. It was a cycle in which the acquisition of displaced, female laborers and male soldiers continued to escalate, each sparking the flight of the other in a spiral, as thousands of men, women, and children entered the warzone, destitute and with only the sparest protection.

After Vicksburg and the Mississippi came under control of the United States, officers impressed thousands into arms to meet the increasing manpower needs of the U.S., particularly the demands of holding onto both banks of the 1,000-mile lower Mississippi. Most conscripts seemed to have had little choice in the matter, a significant shift from practices earlier in the war and in the east, where such compulsion had been a mark only of Confederate interactions with enslaved men and women, not an attribute of their exchanges with Federal troops. Though they were to avoid confiscating property in Tennessee, Brig. Gen. James C. Veatch ordered his subordinate officers near Hernando, Mississippi, in mid-1863 to "seize all the horses and mules and able bodied male negroes you can find." Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson ordered his officers up the Yazoo River from the Mississippi to

"gather up what colored men you can" for enlistment, so long as they were not living

on farms of those "well disposed toward the U.S. Government." Maj. Gen. William B.

Franklin ordered the country between the Mississippi and the Teche "swept...of

negroes." [31]

As historian Carole Emberton has recently pointed out, at times the forced

removal of people of color from plantations created conflict. Loyal slaveholders

were sometimes protected from U.S. recruiting agents. Shortly after the fall of

Vicksburg, U.S. Grant ordered members of "the press-gang, or recruiting parties" in

Northeastern Louisiana arrested for "carrying off" former slaves on a Unionist's

plantation. Yet black men already laboring for the government were fair game. The

quartermaster's department soon found itself with too few teamsters, cooks, and

laborers. "All negroes have been converted into soldiers," complained the chief

quartermaster for the Department of the Gulf, "and I am deprived of labor for my

department."[32]

In part in order to bolster the defenses of plantations, in September 1863

Nathaniel Banks ordered men working on leased plantations but able to fight

enrolled into the Corps d'Afrique. Recruiting agents quickly descended on the

---

[31] James C. Veatch to Major Henry, Memphis, June 17, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 416, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27592; James B. McPherson to Major E.D. Osband, Vicksburg, November 10, 1863, *OR* I.31.3, 104-105, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26213; W.B. Franklin to Brig. Gen. A.L. Lee, In the Field, October 25, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 775, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26177.
[32] Emberton, "Only Murder Makes Men," 369-393; U.S. Grant to Brigadier-General B.S. Dennis, Vicksburg, July 11, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 500, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25627; S.B. Holabird to Brigadier-General C.P. Stone, New Orleans, La., January 20, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 115-116, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26249.

plantations along the Mississippi taken earlier in the war. Within days, men living on some Louisiana plantations managed by the Treasury Department were "forced at the point of the bayonet from the plantations," reportedly by drunk recruiters. Treasury Department officials immediately objected, both out of their desire to increase revenues from the leased plantations, and out of concern that people of color were being unduly coerced. Benjamin Flanders, of the Treasury department, was indignant at what he saw along the Mississippi during Nathaniel Banks' recruitment of U.S.C.T. regiments, and feared losing "the confidence of the negro." "They have lost," he objected, "not gained, by the proclamation of the President. They are nominally free, but, in reality, the most unprotected serfs." The irony that the United States was granting men their freedom by forcing them from their homes and impressing them into armed service was not lost on some observers. Those in a position to comment officially on this coercion, however, seemed often to have their own agendas and their own forms of coercion in mind for recently freed people. [33]

In part because of the force exerted on them by U.S. troops, able-bodied black men continued to come into the U.S. army in large numbers. James McPherson ordered his officers "to arrest and bring in" all men of fighting age who were "found floating around doing nothing" for work in the army and on fortifications. By mid-

---

[33] H.W. Halleck, Memoranda to Generals Banks, Grant, and Steele, Washington, September 28, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 738-739; General Orders 70, G. Norman Lieber, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General, New Orleans, September 28, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 739-740; G.W. Cozzens, Superintendent of Plantations, to Hon. B.F. Flanders, New Orleans, September 26, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 737, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26255; P. Flanigan to Capt. G.W. Cozzens, Taylor Plantation, Parish Saint Charles, La., September 25, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 738; Benjamin F. Flanders to Nathaniel P. Banks, New Orleans, September 26, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 737, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26255.

1863, troops along the Mississippi and into Arkansas had begun relying on the

newly trained regiments, drawn from those healthiest among the contraband camps

and plantations, for protection. After taking Little Rock and pushing Confederate

forces out of much of northern Arkansas, "a force of 1,000" formerly enslaved men

began fortifying the city, consolidating U.S. gains in the region. By September

Nathaniel P. Banks reported that he had armed "12,000 blacks," one thousand more

than he had in mid-August, and he hoped to increase the force to 25,000 or 30,000

"at once." A month later, he reported happily that the number of black troops under

his command was "steadily increasing," and that he expected to add between five

and ten thousand more by the beginning of December. Maj. Gen. Edward R.S. Canby

likewise opened up the leased plantations for recruitment in his district beginning

in mid-1864, continuing the policies begun by Banks in the district.[34]

Women and children followed this influx of men. On the west bank of the

river, one recruiting station "enlisted 257 soldiers" but had three times that many

[34] Jas. B. McPherson to E.D. Osband, Vicksburg, Miss., September 9, 1863, *OR* I.30.3, 476-477, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25604; James B. McPherson to Commanding Officer, Second Wisconsin Cavalry, Vicksburg, Miss., August 14, 1863, *OR* I.30.3, 26, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27568; E. Kirby Smith to Richard Taylor, Camden, Ark., December 23, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 1110, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26145; Richard B. Irwin to Nathaniel P. Banks, New Orleans, August 15, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 684, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26257; Nathaniel P. Banks to Major-General Halleck, New Orleans, September 13, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 288-290, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26256; Nathaniel P. Banks to Edwin M. Stanton, On Board the Steamship McClellan, Mississippi River, La., October 26, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 776, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26196; E.R.S. Canby to H.W. Halleck, New Orleans, La., July 22, 1864, *OR* I.41.2, 326, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26251; C.T. Christiansen, General Orders, New Orleans, La., June 28, 1864, *OR* I.41.2, 429, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27590.

come into the refugee camp nearby, most of these women and children. At Natchez,

they came in "by the thousands," only one out of six a man. U.S. forces scrambled,

but failed to find them food or shelter. "Say to them that they are free," General

James McPherson wrote from Vicksburg, "and that it will be better for them,

especially the women and children, old and infirm, to remain quietly where they are,

as we have no means of providing for them at present." Given the poor conditions in

Natchez at the time, it was good advice.[35]

The Emancipation Proclamation offered freedom to enslaved people and

worked toward the end of slavery simultaneously. In the Mississippi River Valley,

starting with the Vicksburg campaign, these two related ends were implemented

through a policy of aggressive foraging and recruitment. Union soldiers would no

longer wait for enslaved men, women, and children to come into their lines. Instead,

they would actively pursue laborers for fortifications and other duties, both out of a

lack of labor and, even when their troops had a surplus of labor, in order to deprive

the Confederacy of workers. Women and children often followed, creating a

massive dislocation of the men, women, and children not living along the plantations

first captured by U.S. forces under General Benjamin Butler.

The plantation/camp/recruitment complex changed life along the

Mississippi. It sparked a cycle in which the desire of enslaved people to be free

---

[35] Robert Townsend to Rear-Admiral David D. Porter, Off Fort de Russy, Louisiana, March 25, 1864, *OR Navy* I.26, 35-36, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26154; T.E.G. Ransom to Lieut. Col. W.T. Clark, Natchez, Miss., July 16, 1863, *OR* I.24.2, 681, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27761; J. McPherson to Brig. Gen. T. Ransom, Natchez, Miss., July 17, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 521, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27565.

aligned with the labor needs of the U.S. military. Bringing in black men yielded

many black women and children, who in turn needed troops to protect them, again

and again. The system took on momentum with the new strategy of hard forage. In

the Vicksburg campaign, Grant became more accustomed to cutting his men off from

supply lines, demanding that they pick the land dry. Devastation of crops and

property may not have had a lasting impact on the South, but it was felt at the time

by black southerners more than any. They followed ravaging armies back to the

river and found themselves in contraband camps, full and overflowing, waiting to be

assigned to labor.

Just as the Emancipation Proclamation's provisions regarding military

service transformed the texture of life for black southerners along the lower

Mississippi, the Proclamation's geography had important ramifications for life along

the border. The presumption that loyal slaveholders along the border retained the

rights to those they enslaved was not altered until June 1864, and even then it still

remained for all those not enlisting into the military until the border states ended

slavery through state and, in Kentucky's case, federal constitutional amendment.

The precarious nature of freedom there meant that far fewer tried to run from

slavery to local U.S. outposts and fewer were accepted within Union lines, even as

hundreds, perhaps thousands made their way into free states.[36]

---

[36] For recent examinations of the end of slavery in the border states, see Mark W. Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence in Missouri's Civil War, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's small-slaveholding households, 1815-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012).

Those who were set free in Kentucky were impressed into several kinds of service, in keeping with the mixed economy of much of the border South. Some served fatigue duty in military camps. Far more were leased in loosely regulated public/private partnerships, either onto plantations confiscated in Missouri or for work along the rail lines. Federal troops implemented contraband camps, but these mostly held men and women transported from the Mississippi Valley. Because Confederates were largely driven from the states by 1863, those enslaved in Kentucky and Missouri did not also suffer the mass dislocations at the hands of the Union armies felt by men and women living along the great river.

The legal geography of enslavement under the Emancipation Proclamation impeded the U.S. military's need to move enslaved women and children quickly to keep them safe despite the ebb and flow of battle lines. The Proclamation excluded the Border States, Tennessee, and parts of Virginia and Louisiana on account of their demonstrated loyalty to the Union. Yet forces under Ulysses S. Grant were inundated with refugees from slavery in states nearby, along the lower Mississippi River, as the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. In order to move many of these men, women, and children (the "surplus negroes," in Grant's phrase) to places that might be protected from Confederates, Grant and other officers along the Mississippi sought to relocate them upriver. In Saint Louis, a "boat-load" of African Americans recently transported from Arkansas concerned Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis. "I have more of these," he wrote to his counterpart at Helena, "than I know what to do with." Missouri, he objected, offered no safety for people of color, since "the laws of this State are such as to endanger the freedom of persons of African

descent." Moving people of color to more defensible places only "transferred" the "troublesome and perplexing" subject of emancipation, not solved it. Curtis promised to refuse entry to any men, women, or children transferred to his department in the future. Officers in Kentucky occasionally reported the attempted auction of those set free under Congressional law.[37]

Grant gathered former slaves near the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers at Columbus, Kentucky. Yet here, people who had been enslaved in Mississippi and Louisiana and who were therefore free under the proclamation lived alongside men and women enslaved in Kentucky, a proximity that likely made nervous both those recently declared free and the slaveowners living near their camp. Those declared free certainly eyed slaveowners in the area warily, while those who continued to hold black Kentuckians in bondage fretted about their servants' "demoralization." Grant's solution was to move some of those set free under the proclamation to Ohio, funding the transportation and authorizing a philanthropist there to sponsor the migration. The border states had become a new belt of unfreedom, significantly complicating efforts to find places where the formerly enslaved might housed, fed, and defended from recapture. [38]

Refugee camps in the Border South were judged unfit for reasons other than the prevailing laws. Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams urged commanders in Tennessee to "send no more" women and children to join the "considerable number" gathered

[37] Major-General Samuel R. Curtis to Brig. Gen. B.M. Prentiss, Saint Louis, March 9, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 147, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26881; A.E. Burnside to General Boyle, Louisville, Ky., April 26, 1863, *OR* I.23.2, 280, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24774.
[38] Ulysses S. Grant to General H.W. Halleck, Holly Springs, Miss., January 6, 1863, *OR* I.17.1, 481, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26904.

at Smithfield, Kentucky, who were "without food and very destitute." He

recommended that, if they must be sent away from fighting, Nashville would be a

more suitable stop along the Cumberland River. General Lorenzo Thomas visited

the camp at Cairo, Illinois, and found there "over 1,500 men, women, and children

huddled together in insufficient quarters." Sickness had ravaged the camp,

"especially among the children—measles, diarrhea, and pneumonia" had become

prevalent. The camp at Cairo was closed soon after, and those stationed there were

soon housed at Island No. 10, in the Mississippi.[39]

At Island No. 10, Union officials were plagued with the same problem of

defense that they had sought to avoid by moving refugees upriver. Brig. Gen.

Alexander Asboth wrote to John Schofield, as the refugees from Cairo joined the

"colony of 1,000 souls already there," pointing out that only 86 men were stationed

on the island to protect the formerly enslaved families from attack. Spread thin

already, Schofield assured the general that the gunboat stationed nearby would

provide adequate protection to the refugees.[40]

As U.S. officers sought places to house formerly enslaved families, they found

many eager to take advantage of the labor of those recently enslaved. Some were

offered to private individuals as laborers, with the understanding that the recently

enslaved men and women would be provided for, though without guaranteeing

---

[39] Brig. Gen. A.S. Williams to Lieut. Col. T.S. Bowers, Nashville, Tenn., November 12, 1863, *OR* I.31.3, 134-7, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27607; L. Thomas to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, Washington, D.C., October 5, 1865, *OR* III.5, 118, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25632.
[40] Asboth to Major-General Schofield, Columbus, Ky., June 20, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 331, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26889; J.M. Schofield to Brigadier-General Asboth, Columbus, Ky., Saint Louis, Mo., June 20, 1863, *OR* II.22.2, 331.

sawmill, and received wages working there until they enlisted together in a local

United States Colored Troop regiment in March 1864.[42]

The Bryants' smooth entry into free labor did not go unchallenged. Their

owner, James Hickman, sued the owner of the Jefferson City sawmill by which Henry

and Henderson Bryant were employed for their combined wages and value, a total

of more than $1200. Hickman claimed that the brief period in which they found

employment at the quartermaster's office and the certificates of freedom they

received there were void. More broadly, Hickman and those like him sought to

interrupt the transition to free labor, opening up questions about the legality of

emancipation and the ownership of labor performed outside the constraints of

military necessity. Military officials intervened in the civil and criminal cases

against the Bryants' employer, suspending the decision of civilian courts and

upholding a legal transition to the private labor market, despite border state laws to

the contrary.

Border state military officials, too, jockeyed to obtain laborers to work on

infrastructure projects. Three hundred men worked on roads connecting Somerset,

Kentucky, to the Cumberland River in the winter of 1863. Often the military worked

in concert with railroad corporations. A.E. Burnside ordered 8,000 laborers

impressed to build a rail line between Danville, Kentucky, and Knoxville. In

Missouri, Brig. Gen. Egbert Brown suggested that "idle negroes" in the camps be

impressed on behalf of the rail corporations to connect his post in Warrensburg,

---

[42] Brigadier-General Clinton B. Fisk to Major-General Rosecrans, Saint Joseph, Mo., May 31, 1864, *OR* I.34.4, 193-194, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26120.

Missouri, with the larger rail network. By late 1863, officers in Kentucky were

passing along complaints from Kentucky slaveholders, that their enslaved men were

running away to Tennessee, impressed by the U.S. military, and put to work there on

rail lines. The Kentuckians were "exceedingly anxious" that instead of losing their

slaves and the infrastructure those enslaved men built, "they would gladly have

their negroes taken" by military authorities in Kentucky, to build the "unfinished

railroad in their own State."[43]

At first, enlistment of black troops proceeded only slowly in Border States.

John Schofield was careful not to overstep his authority, urging his subordinates in

December 1863, as recruitment began, that they had no authority to conscript

people of color into the army by force, except in cases of military necessity, and that

the administration desired "voluntary enlistment only" from the areas under his

control. Recruiting agents weren't all effective. In Brookfield, Missouri, black men

had gathered and heard a particularly unpersuasive provost-marshal's offer of

enlistment. His efforts yielded "but two recruits," and the remainder instead

"started for home." In the few circumstances where people of color had been

---

[43] Edward E. Potter to Brig. Gen. Ammen, Knoxville, Tenn., December 16, 1863, *OR* I.31.3, 427, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26356; A.E. Burnside to Abraham Lincoln, Danville, Ky., August 17, 1863, *OR* I.30.3, 64, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26349; W.P. Anderson, Special Orders No. 321, Hdqrs., Department of the Ohio, August 20, 1863, I.30.3, 92-93, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26351; Brigadier-General E.B. Brown to Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield, Warrensburg, Mo., October 4, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 601, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26138; Col. Cicero Maxwell to Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant, Bowling Green, Ky., October 28, 1863, *OR* I.31.1, 773, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26915.

conscripted by force, the potential recruits were allowed to "go home and hoe corn"

if they so wished.[44]

Still, reliance on voluntary enlistment in Missouri worked in most places.

39% of all black men of military age enrolled in the army, the second highest

proportion in the United States. The proportion of men enrolled, in all likelihood,

was in fact far higher since the total includes neither those enlisted in neighboring

states, such as Kansas, who were likely of Missourian origin, nor does it subtract

from the total black population of the state those forced from their homes by

Confederates marching to Texas, perhaps as many as fifty thousand men, women,

and children.[45]

While white officers in Missouri waited for orders to take a more active role

in conscription, African Americans eager to participate in the war effort left the

state, offering their services to troops stationed across the border. Of the one

hundred men escaping to a Union camp on the Kansas-Missouri border one night in

December 1863, the commanding officer judged that "most of the men will enlist."[46]

Others looked for ways to enlist, but the nearest post was too dangerous a journey.

Men living in Calloway County, just south of the Missouri River, told U.S. officers

[44] J.M. Schofield to General Fred. Steele, Saint Louis, Mo., December 7, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 733, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27740; Astor, *Rebels on the Border*, 125; E.J. Crandall to General C.B. Fisk, Brookfield, Mo., June 17, 1864, *OR* I.34.4, 434, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26143; Brigadier-General Clinton B. Fisk to Capt. E.J. Crandall, Saint Joseph, Mo., June 17, 1864, *OR* I.34.4, 434, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26144.
[45] Ira Berlin, et al., *Slaves No More*, 203; Astor, *Rebels on the Border*, 126.
[46] E. Lynde to J.M. Hadley, Trading Post, Kans., December 5, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 732, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26124;

they would enlist "if they had an opportunity offered them," but feared being followed to the military post "and driven back by their rebel masters."[47]

The slow recruitment of African Americans in Missouri gradually picked up pace in early 1864, as military officials sought to make alliances with unionist slaveholders in order to force more former slaves into the army. In January, U.S. officers ordered that any man in Missouri who had escaped slavery and found civilian employment was to be identified by his former master and "delivered to the assistant provost-marshal" for recruitment. Some recruiting officers in central Missouri confirmed that their efforts to enlist black troops was, at best, a paternalistic enterprise. "The best place for idle, dissolute negroes is the army," the region's assistant adjutant general wrote to officers along the border between Missouri and Kansas. Any necessary "exertions" to force them into the army were to be permitted so long as they did not run afoul of the War Department.[48]

Even the closure of the interstate slave trade in Missouri, announced in General Orders No. 35 in March 1864, followed twisted logic and was premised upon the continued coercion of black labor. The order outlawing the interstate slave trade began, "Missouri, for the coming year, needs all the slave and other labor she has within her border." This need required the end of the transportation of

[47] Capt. Will. T. Hunter to Colonel J.H. Baker, Hermann, Mo., August 4, 1864, *OR* I.41.2, 559, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26163.
[48] J.H. Steger, Jefferson City, Mo., January 26, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 160-161, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27561; R.J. Leaming to Col. J.H. Ford, Jefferson City, Mo., February 14, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 327, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26151.

slaves from the state. The end of Missouri's legal interstate slave trade came about

not with moral grandeur, but with local labor shortage.[49]

      White Kentuckians became enraged at the thought of enrolling African

Americans in the army. In June 1863, Brigadier-General J.T. Boyle predicted

"infinite and inconceivable harm" to the war effort there if enrollment of even free

blacks in the state began. By late November, Boyle's labor needs led him to

moderate his opposition to policies that would lead to at least limited, compensated

emancipation. Lacking sufficient teamsters, Boyle requested permission to

conscript between 2,000 and 3,000 enslaved men from Louisville to drive wagons

under a three-year term, paying willing masters $300 for the hire and setting the

teamsters free subject to their enlistment. Though the administration considered

the plan and Boyle immediately began hiring drivers, the fraught scheme never

came to fruition. Officers in need of labor in Kentucky did not hesitate to impress

those enslaved in the state, but even as late as May 1864 orders for impressment

compensated slave owners without demanding oaths of allegiance to the United

States.[50] The modest enrolment of former slaves in the Army early on is not

surprising. In the first year after the emancipation proclamation, Union authorities

estimated that around 6,000 African Americans had left Kentucky and were

---

[49] O.D. Greene, General Orders No. 35, Saint Louis, Mo., March 1, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 477, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27576.
[50] J.T. Boyle to Col. J.B. Fry, Camp Nelson, Ky., June 25, 1863, *OR* III.3, 416, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27822; J.T. Boyle to Hon. E.M. Stanton, Louisville, Ky., November 14, 1863, *OR* I.31.3, 150, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26337; J.T. Boyle to Hon. E.M. Stanton, Louisville, Ky., November 30, 1863, *OR* I.31.3, 284, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26336; J. Bates Dickson to Capt. T.E. Hall, Lexington, Ky., May 18, 1864, *OR* I.39.2, 36, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26354.

conscripted into the U.S. army at recruiting stations across state lines in Indiana,

Illinois, Ohio, and Tennessee.[51]

Recruitment of black soldiers in Kentucky began with a single station at

Paducah, in February 1864. In June, U.S. recruitment efforts exploded. General

Lorenzo Thomas's General Orders No. 20 dictated that recruiting officers be

stationed in every county in order to enroll men "as rapidly as possible," and to

"collect" as many women and children in nearby camps as they could. Black men in

Kentucky began "quitting the plow and taking up the musket by the thousands,"

according to one Confederate-leaning observer. By June 6, authorities judged that it

had "become generally known" that enslaved men could enlist without their owners'

permission. They began "flocking in by hundreds," according to the adjutant-

general's office, "far beyond" the capacity of recruiting agents to enlist them. Over

the following year, they enrolled 13,000 men in Kentucky in addition to the 6,000 to

8,000 Kentuckians enrolled in other states.[52]

Such rapid enrollment of men into the military meant that some who desired

enlistment would be turned away for reasons of health. Military officials did what

---

[51] L. Thomas to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, Washington, D.C., October 5, 1865, *OR* III.5, 121.

[52] Lorenzo Thomas, General Orders No. 20, Louisville, Ky., June 13, 1864, *OR* III.4, 429-30; Lorenzo Thomas to Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 5, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 441, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26359; Edward F. Hoffman to Colonel J.P. Sanderson, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 1, 1864, *OR* II.7, 301, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26361; J. Bates Dickson to Brig. Gen. S.G. Burbridge, Headquarters District of Kentucky, June 6, 1864, *OR* I.39.2, 81, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26363; L. Thomas to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, Washington, D.C., October 5, 1865, *OR* III.5. [see also *OR* III.5, 138]

they could to ensure these recruits would not be punished upon their return home. The army issued return passes which, Kentucky military authorities optimistically believed, "shall secure their immunity from harsh treatment or punishment on account of their attempt to enlist."[53]

Slaveholders in Kentucky protested the abuses they saw in Federal conscription. Before mass recruitment began, citizens in Cadiz complained bitterly about soldiers crossing into Kentucky from Tennessee, stealing money, watches, and other property and "running off negroes." Others, before the June law allowing all male slaves to come in for recruitment, complained of individual slaves enlisting without permission. James Finney hired himself to a major in the Twelfth Ohio Cavalry without his owner's permission, while "a number of negroes" on the McAllister and Crockett plantations near Lexington likewise ran away with the army illegally. When recruiting began in earnest, some unionist slaveowners claimed that "great numbers" of men left for Canada instead of heading to military posts in the state, in order "to escape military service." Some Kentuckians, near the Tennessee state line, not content with complaining, began "banding together" in order to resist black enlistment, murdering a number of men outside Somerset, while others "were waylaid, beaten, maimed."[54]

---

[53] J. Bates Dickinson, General Orders No. 45, Lexington, June 2, 1864, *OR* I.39.2, 77, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26364.

[54] J.T. Boyle to Major-General Ambrose Burnside, Louisville, Kentucky, May 2, 1863, *OR* I.23.2, 307, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27462; Captain W.W. Woodward to Col. C.J. True, Lexington, Ky., April 27, 1864, *OR* I.32.3, 513, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26360; W.W. Woodward to Col. S.B. Brown, Lexington, Ky., April 27, 1864, *OR* I.32.3, 513; Major W.H. Sidell to Col. J.B. Fry, Louisville, Kentucky, February 29, 1864, *OR* III.4, 210, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26365; Thomas L.W. Sawyers to

Even as officers in Missouri and Kentucky stepped up efforts to bring black men into the army, they were ambivalent about extending to women the right to escape slavery. Politicians from early 1864 had begun formulating a law that would free the wives and children of soldiers. "Will the families of these men be made free?" asked Brig. Gen. Rosecrans at St. Louis. "It is important and just that they should be so." Yet some officers doubted claims that the blacks under slavery had marriage relations that ought to be honored by the military. "In most cases," wrote Brigadier-General Egbert Brown, enslaved Missourians "have new wives and husbands with every change of the seasons," and would recognize "no binding marital relations." Women who had escaped slavery gathered inside Union lines at Wellsville, Missouri, but were handed over to their former masters, despite the women's objections. At times, even freedom seemed to come about under coercion. In Macon, Missouri, officers were reportedly entering the homes of unionist and secessionist whites and removing the wives and children of any black man who had enlisted or attempted to enlist in the army.[55]

Brigadier-General Burbridge, Somerset, June 25, 1864, *OR* I.39.2, 145, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27471; J. Holt to Hon. E.M. Stanton, Saint Louis, July 31, 1861, *OR* I.39.2, 214, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27472.

[55] Amy Dru Stanley, "Instead of Waiting for the Thirteenth Amendment: The War Power, Slave Marriage, and Inviolate Human Rights," *American Historical Review*, 115, no. 3 (2010): 732-765; W.S. Rosecrans to The President, St. Louis, February 20, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 381, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26241; Brig. Gen. E.B. Brown to Maj. O.D. Greene, Warrensburg, Mo., March 19, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 660-661, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26139 ; A. Kampinski to Colonel Marsh, Wellsville, Mo., February 7, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 268, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26865; S.S. Burdett to Provost Marshal Lieutenant Kempinsky, Saint Louis, Mo., February 7, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 268, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27773; Brig. Gen. O. Guitar to Maj. O.D. Greene, Macon, Mo., March 10, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 551-552,

Confusion arose in many parts of the state about the rights of families of enlisted men, leading to explosive encounters, particularly along the Kansas-Missouri border. Samuel Marshall had escaped slavery in Platte City, Missouri, with his son, who upon entering Kansas promptly enlisted in the U.S. army. After having been given assurances that his other children would be set free, Marshall set off toward Platte City to retrieve them. On the road he encountered a Missouri militia unit, "dressed in Federal uniform" and armed with revolvers. Twelve members of the group, some of whom he had known previously, "escorted" Marshall from the town, tied him to a tree and beat him. Though the men who accosted Marshall claimed he had been "a jayhawker," the real crime for which he had been punished, in the opinion of General Samuel Curtis, was that Marshall had escaped slavery.[56]

Specific guarantees to family members were unnecessary in the Confederate South, where slavery had been abolished by proclamation, but in the border states women and children of recruits could be legally kept in bondage by state law, leaving women and children subject to reprisal for the actions of husbands and fathers. Women at the Harrison plantation near Mexico, Missouri, were forced into the field to do the work of their husbands, who had enlisted. General Rosecrans saw a promise of protection for women and children as an essential component of recruitment in the Border States. By the spring of 1864, requests for clarification on

http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26146; Lieut. Col. A. Jacobson to Brig. Gen. O. Guitar, Saint Louis, Mo., March 13, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 552-553, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26147.
[56] Major-General S.R. Curtis to Maj. Gen. W.S. Rosecrans, Fort Leavenworth, Kans., March 13, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 587, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27440.

the treatment of women and children flooded officers in Missouri, coming in "by every mail, and from all parts of the department."[57]

Protecting women was not as simple as merely enforcing their freedom from slavery. In part because of U.S. efforts to obtain their release from slavery, women and children entered refugee camps in increasing numbers by late spring, 1864. An influx of women recently released from bondage created new problems for military officials. Officials at Sedalia were concerned enough, both by the crowding and "vagrancy" of the formerly enslaved, that they evicted those "without any visible means of support" in order to "thin out" the number of people at the refugee camp without work. At Warrensburg, families were "crowded together" in a way seemingly "calculated to ensure sickness." Elsewhere, officers feared that black women, without gainful employment, would regress morally. Noticing the proximity of military and refugee camps, one official noted grimly, "Prostitution is worse than slavery." Officers at Macon hurried to assign them to work on "the farms" outside town, "where their labor is so much needed." In Macon, military

[57] A.A. Rice to Col. J.P. Sanderson, Mexico, Mo., March 31, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 799, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26158; Robt. P. Richardson to E.B. Brown, Warrensburg, Missouri, May 18, 1864, Freedom 1.2, 605-606, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27745; Major-General W.S. Rosecrans to The President, Saint Louis, Mo., February 20, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 381, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26241; Major-General W.S. Rosecrans to Brig. Gen. J.A. Garfield, Saint Louis, Mo., February 20, 1864, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26242; J.P. Sanderson, Saint Louis, Mo., April 4, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 800, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27752.

officials sought to solve two problems, overcrowding in camps and rural labor

scarcity, at once.[58]

The Emancipation Proclamation declared slavery, as an institution in the

seceded states, at an end. In order to claim the benefits of the presidential

proclamation, enslaved people needed to move behind U.S. lines. They did this in

large numbers, though many decided not to enter U.S.-occupied space, or entered

and left, moving back and forth between putative freedom and slavery to make the

best of their situation in a warzone. The movement of men, women, and children

behind U.S. lines left them as refugees.

The United States military developed two new strategies for implementing

the proclamation. The first new strategy, raiding against the Confederate

countryside, aimed to weaken the institution of slavery—and the ability of

southerners to produce food altogether—in specific places. The second strategy

emerged without nearly as much forethought, as a reaction to the first. As massive

armies devastated the southern countryside, they, along with the promise of

freedom, sparked a large-scale migration of agricultural laborers. The United States

government brought into being a new system for dealing with these migrants and

black southerners already working on captured plantations. The third strategy, the

camp/plantation/recruitment system, quickly took on momentum of its own, as

raiding parties seeking new recruits created more displacement, which created a

---

[58] Jno. F. Phillips to Captain James H. Steger, Sedalia, Mo., May 19, 1864, *OR* I.34.3, 707, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25576; Capt. Albert Brockman to Brigadier-General Fisk, Macon, Mo., May 28, 1864, *OR* I.34.4, 92-93; Brig. Gen. Clinton B. Fisk to Capt. Albert Brockman, Saint Joseph, Mo., May 28, 1864, *OR* I.34.4, 93, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26148.

need for more black recruits to protect the refugees from Confederate harassment.

The destruction of local enslavement quickly became a military objective because

northern politicians and military officials alike linked it to the ultimate destruction

of the Confederacy. By linking the two logically, U.S. officials were able to create

strategies that simultaneously devastated specific southern places, freed enslaved

people, and crippled the ability of the Confederate state to sustain itself or its

defense of slavery more generally. By subordinating the goal of ending enslavement

locally to the goal of the destruction of the Confederacy more generally, they

ensured that enslaved people living in the South would bear the brunt of the

destruction and that freedom would become nearly synonymous with displacement.

CHAPTER FOUR

REFUGEES AND RAIDERS

Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor was sensitive both to the army's need for labor and

slaveholders' desires to control their property, a much more cautious fellow than

some in his department. John Magruder had demonstrated first in Virginia, and now

in Texas, that he had no qualms with impressment. For Taylor, the labor question

had to be handled with great care. Better to "do without the negroes," he thought,

than to impress them. If he turned to impressment in southern Louisiana, he feared

"a general stampede" of slaveholders and slaves. Such a migration would not be a

sign of loyalty to the Confederacy, people looking to remain in a shrinking nation in

the face of the oncoming enemy. It would be instead a movement out of

dissatisfaction with the regime, and "we will be held to be the cause of it." [1]

---

[1] Major General Richard Taylor to Major General Walker, Alexandria, La., February 3, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 939-40, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27559.

So Taylor and other Confederates turned to other ways of acquiring black labor in the Trans-Mississippi. First, he proposed small-scale raids on plantations worked on behalf of the United States government. It was easier, politically, to conscript black laborers along the Mississippi, whose value "as property" was "worthless" because of U.S. control there and the difficulty of reuniting such slaves with their far-off masters. Recapture and use of these men, while a practical difficulty, would strengthen, not weaken the support of local white slaveholders.

Second, Taylor took note of the troubles between United States Colored Troop recruits and their white federal officers along the Mississippi, and that some had thought of deserting the U.S. army. "They are restrained," Taylor wrote his division commander, "by a belief that we will shoot or hang all who may fall into our hands." Black soldiers had good reason to fear Confederate troops, and in fact, Taylor admitted, Confederate cavalry had shot "a number" of deserters near Port Hudson, ending desertions in the area. Instead of retribution, Taylor urged, "our policy" should be "to treat these negroes kindly, and rather encourage them to come to us than frighten them by harshness." Such a policy never emerged and likely never had a chance. Far too many Confederates believed that armed freedmen were no longer fit for enslavement and therefore deserved no quarter.[2]

Taylor's quandary, how to simultaneously maintain morale and labor, was an acute one for Confederates, especially after 1863. Their attempts to sustain both led them to double down on enslavement as a strategy for national renewal. Expanding slavery, even within a straitened Confederacy, could hearten those accustomed to

[2] Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor to Maj. Gen. Walker, Alexandria, La., February 8, 1864, *OR* I.34.2, 950, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26587.

distressing news from the battlefront and certainly would bring in more laborers for

the Confederacy. Before long, however, war and their commitment to slavery placed

greater demands on slaveholders and the regime alike. A policy supporting slavery

soon gave rise to strategies in which Confederates murdered some freedmen and

put others in arms, sacrificing some slaves to give slavery a bit more life in its war

against a United States committed to its destruction.[3]

The Emancipation Proclamation turned what had already been considered a

good thing, the enslavement of black Americans, into a patriotic duty for

Confederates. The continued enslavement of black southerners, especially in the

West, became a proof that despite news on the battlefield that so frequently

disappointed, the Confederacy was still strong. Unable to marshal sufficient

weapons or armies to confront U.S. power on the battlefield, western Confederates

began a strategy of national survival premised upon the success of enslavement

through the displacement of slaves, their recapture from U.S. invaders, and, if these

failed, of reprisal against former slaves ruined by freedom. White southerners had

long assured themselves and all who would listen that enslavement was the best

possible situation for black southerners. With the emergence of the Confederacy,

white southerners built a nation out of their moral certainty, arguing that no other

---

[3] On Richard Taylor and the leadership of the Trans-Mississippi District, see T. Michael Parrish, *Richard Taylor: Soldier Prince of Dixie* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Robert Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy: The TransMississippi South, 1863-1865* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991); Jeffery S. Prushankin, *A Crisis in Confederate Command: Edmund Kirby Smith, Richard Taylor, and the Army of the Trans-Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

people would so safeguard the divinely ordained institution as they. They planned

an expansionist state, safeguarding racial slavery for generations.[4]

With the Emancipation Proclamation and U.S. incursions deep into

Confederate territory, Confederates put their bromides into practice. If maintaining

slavery was demanding for slaveholders in the antebellum period, its survival

demanded much greater activity during the Civil War. Before the war, constant

vigilance was necessary. War disrupted the carefully orchestrated system of slave

patrols, interrupted plantation discipline, and implanted a Federal regime that

denied slaveholder authority nearer than most of them could have imagined a few

years before. After two years of war, not only was their national enemy unflinching

in its opposition to slavery in the Confederacy, but Confederates' own slaves were

abandoning them, seemingly at every opportunity.

An active approach to enslavement, in such circumstances, was resistance,

the weapon of a weaker state. Finding more people to enslave and retaining those

already in bondage became a way that Confederates could both extend the life of the

regime and reassure themselves that, despite setbacks on western battlefields, they

were able to stay the Yankee's emancipatory designs. Forced migrations and raids

on Union-controlled plantations served both practical and ideological ends. The

coordinated removal and recapture of slaves, they hoped, would help to solve the

---

[4] Confederate nationalism, scholars agree, was built on slavery. See Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Gallagher, *Confederate War*, 46-49; Edward L. Ayers, "What Caused the Civil War?" in *What Caused the Civil War?* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 131-144; Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 100-102.

army's labor shortages, give evidence of the regime's commitment to slavery, and confirm slaveholders' commitment to the regime even in exile.

Yet even this commitment to slavery was not enough. As war dragged on, it became clear that many freedmen could not be re-enslaved, either on account of their military service to the Union, their resistance to Confederates, or, for some, their high transportation costs. These might even be killed for the good of the regime. For the same reasons, Confederates chose to sacrifice some of their "most courageous" slaves, offering them freedom if they would fight for a regime whose unrelenting commitment to slavery diminished the offer's appeal. Some politicians, military officials and even a few individual slaveholders believed that the survival of slavery demanded the freedom of some slaves.[5]

Displacement to Texas started slowly. Yet by early 1863, the United States began seriously threatening plantations in Arkansas and Louisiana beyond the banks of the Mississippi. Confederate civilians responded vigorously to this threat by sending many of their enslaved men into exile, in Texas. Though firm numbers are difficult to come by, they range from contemporary historians suggesting that at least 50,000 enslaved people were taken as refugees to Texas, to contemporary observers, whose estimates placed the number at five or six times that conservative figure. Regardless of the exact numbers, it was among of the largest forced migrations in American history.[6]

---

[5] P.R. Cleburne, et al., to Commanding General, et al., January 2, 1864, *OR* I.52.2, 589.
[6] Dale Baum, "Slaves Taken to Texas for Safekeeping during the Civil War," in Charles D. Grear, ed., *The Fate of Texas: The Civil War and the Lone Star State* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 83-104; Major-General J.B. Magruder to W.R. Boggs, Washington, Ark., December 4, 1864, *OR* I.41.4, 1097,

These exiles were victims of a Confederacy unable to defend its boundaries. Theirs was a salvage operation, a movement to save what they could of their new, shrinking nation. Yet they could still save what was important about their new experiment: slaves. If, as Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens suggested, slavery was the cornerstone of the Confederacy, then the forced removal of slaves was a patriotic act as well as one motivated by personal gain. Protecting small pieces of the Confederacy's foundation in human chattel was an everyday act of support for the regime. If black southerners remained slaves there was still hope for even the straitened Confederacy.

Historian Gary W. Gallagher has argued that General Robert E. Lee's movements inspired Confederates far and wide to maintain their hope in the Confederacy. Victories on the battlefield in Virginia encouraged men and women to trust that their nation might endure, no matter their immediate circumstances. Hope in a distant general was important for western slaveholders. Yet the few scattered, ill-clad armies nearby often gave little succor. Those looking to put their support of the Confederacy into practice could do so while also seeking to preserve their wealth, by moving their enslaved property far from the invaders, keeping it safe by looking to the west, which had always been the slavery's great hope. Confederate officials, seeing both a silver lining in a disastrous strategic position and a way to obtain more laborers for its efforts, gladly encouraged the evacuation.[7]

---

http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26553; Berlin, *Freedom*, I.1, 675-676.

[7] Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Parrish, *Soldier Prince*, 294, 403.

Some of the first Confederate exiles had already suffered a forced removal. Because of early-war fighting in the Indian Territory, those enslaved people who did not make their way to the nominal protection of Union-allied Indian troops found themselves at the mercy of Indian slave-owners. These slaveholders' situation was likewise precarious. By June 1862, the Creek judge George Stidham, a Confederate ally and slave-owner, was torn between moving his slaves to Texas and remaining in the Indian territories. Threats against his life by other Creeks, who feared abandonment in light of probable attacks from Union-allied Indian nations, temporarily kept Stidham's slaves from a forced march South, even as other slaves from the Indian Territory were forced to leave their homes for the deeper Southwest.[8]

As enslaved people in the Indian Territory were moved or threatened with marches to Texas, Transmississippi whites also began to force enslaved men, women, and children to move in large numbers south and west, into central Arkansas, northern Louisiana, and Texas, anywhere their masters could find refuge from United States soldiers. One farmer from Saline County, Missouri, like many others fled, taking "his male slaves and the youngest and strongest women South." When his house was used as a base of operations for guerrilla attacks on United States troops, they burned the farm. The Missouri slaveowner was anticipated by some and soon followed by thousands of others. As early as June 1861, Missourians were camping outside Dallas, bringing word that "thousands" would be leaving the state by the end of the year. Travellers confirmed the rumors, that the roads were

---

[8] Albert Pike to Major-General T. C. Hindman, Fort McCulloch, July 3, 1862, *OR* I.13.1, 957, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27717.

clogged with exiled slaves and those who claimed them. "It seems there are too many coming away," the Dallas *Herald* reported, for them all to be Missourians as they claimed. By 1863, as many as 50,000 Missourians made their way to Texas, according to one contemporary witness. Their flight from Missouri was one from which the planter class there never recovered.[9]

Union advances set in motion massive, forced migrations westward into places slave-owners hoped their property in slavery would be safe. What had been a modest migration of enslaved men forced to leave the Mississippi River Delta region for Texas in 1862 became a more widespread flight soon afterward. Beginning in January 1863, U.S. officers began remarking on how few enslaved people they encountered in Arkansas and parts of Louisiana. United States incursions up the Arkansas River yielded territory but, other than those that gathered at Pine Bluff, they found few civilians or slaves there, since slaveowners had begun "running their stock and negroes toward Texas."[10]

The forced migration of enslaved people was anything but orderly. As U.S. officers remarked on the flight of slaveholders, their Confederate counterparts wondered how to manage the mass exodus. Planters, overseers, and enslaved

---

[9] Benjamin Loan to Samuel Curtis, Jefferson City, Miss., November 14, 1862, *OR* I.13.1, 791, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25903; Dallas *Herald*, June 12, 1861, p.3, c.2; Dallas *Herald*, October 30, 1861, p.2, c.1; Major-General J.B. Magruder to W.R. Boggs, Washington, Ark., December 4, 1864, *OR* I.41.4, 1097, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26553; Magruder estimated that between 100,000 and 150,000 arrived in Texas from Missouri and Arkansas. I arrived at 50,000 by simply taking half of the lower number. These are very crude estimates. Mark W. Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerrilla Violence in Missouri's Civil War, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 122-138.
[10] W.A. Gorman to Maj. Gen. McClernand, Devall's Bluff, Ark., January 18, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 54, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27721.

people walked through territory "infested with lawless bands" of robbers and murderers preying on unprotected wagon trains. U.S. cavalry units "penetrated at will" into northern Arkansas, "stealing horses and slaves" alike. Officers in the Trans-Mississippi Army in early 1863 were especially concerned about interracial gangs of deserters and slaves "in communication" with "Abolition sympathizers" in Texas. By the summer of 1863, rumors of plots to "murder indiscriminately all the whites" (except for young women, reserved as wives for the black insurrectionists) cropped up in North Texas, leading to more than twenty arrests of black and white suspects.[11]

Raids on migration parties perhaps gave even the most risk-tolerant enslaved men and women few chances to escape far from U.S. lines. Occasionally, United States cavalry units would scout out the lines of transportation linking those in Arkansas and Louisiana to those in Texas, though for the most part U.S. cavalry units did not interfere with those leaving. Confederate officers were certain that "renegades" and Union sympathizers were interfering with the movement a great deal, murdering migrants along the Doaksville Road. Confederates doubted the marauders had any intention of freeing people of color they found. They suspected instead that renegade parties would attempt to smuggle them to Texas under false pretenses, not shuttle them to U.S. lines. Smith Austin, forced to walk that way from

[11] Wm. Steele to General D. H. Cooper, Fort Smith, Ark., January 18, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 775, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25884; Report of Maj. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman, Richmond, Va., June 19, 1863, *OR* I.13, 30, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25579; Wm. Steele to John R. Baylor, Fort Smith, Ark., January 18, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 774; Lieut. Col. Samuel A. Roberts to Edmund P. Turner, August 29, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 187, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27439.

Tennessee, thought running away in such a rough, "strange country" unwise at best. Instead, he and thousands of others "marched behind the wagons like soldiers." If moving southwest was difficult for white southerners, it was much worse for those who had no choice in the matter.[12]

For all the dangers of moving so many slaves, Confederate officials encouraged the migration. By the close of the summer of 1863, as U.S. efforts to enlist black soldiers picked up speed, Confederate officials became increasingly worried about their loss of slaves. After witnessing "more than 1,000 recruits" organized on plantations and "forced into the ranks" after a Union raid on Monroe, Louisiana, Kirby Smith ordered his commanders and civilians in the district to "remove to safe localities" all "able-bodied" male slaves. There was no need to wait for military accompaniment or approval. "Every sound male black left for the enemy," he warned, "becomes a soldier, whom we have afterward to fight."[13]

Among Kirby Smith's problems was finding "the touchstone" to his constituents' "patriotism," as he put it, how to motivate them to support his regime, though isolated from the political center of the Confederacy. Smith was under intense political pressure from civilian authorities to defend as much territory as possible, even if he would have preferred, as a military matter, to give up some areas

---

[12] Report of Col. Abraham H. Ryan, Lewisburg, August 11, 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 131, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25896; Wm. Steele to General D. H. Cooper, Fort Smith, Ark., January 18, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 775, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25884; Quoted in Randolph B. Campbell, *Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 243-244, 246; .
[13] Kirby Smith to Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, Shreveport, La., September 4, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 990, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27556; Prushankin, *Crisis in Command*, xviii.

in order to concentrate his forces and attack the threatening U.S. troops. Evacuation was a partial solution. Removal of slaveholders and their slaves allowed Smith to receive territorial losses without allowing the collapse of the department altogether. Giving up space was one thing, giving up citizens and slaves another. Displacement allowed Smith a bit of room to maneuver, giving up territory while saving its slaves, the department's most important economic and ideological assets. [14]

Removal also provided Smith with a practical benefit, a larger population capable of being impressed. Once in Texas, enslaved people found themselves alternately put to work by civilian slaveholders and by the Confederate army. There was a "furor" for the displaced slave hands in Texas, as civilians lined up to bid on workers on their way from neighboring states, even if some of these lacked proper equipment. Slaves could walk but plows could not; the latter were left behind. After the Confederate recapture of Galveston, engineers there set enslaved men to work, requisitioning as many as 1,000 men to complete the defenses of the harbor. "As many negroes as may be necessary" were to be stopped while passing through Niblett's Bluff on the Sabine River to work there, 200 in all in the summer of 1863. When questioned by civilian authorities, Gen. Magruder pointed to Richmond. According to the Confederate Congress, he told Texas Governor Francis R. Lubbock, "impressment, when necessary, is the law of the land."[15]

---

[14] Kirby Smith to Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor, Shreveport, La., September 3, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 988-989.

[15] John Q. Anderson, ed., *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), 242; Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 170; V. Sulakowski to Capt. Edmund P. Turner, Pelican Island, Tex., April 30, 1863, *OR* I.15.1, 1064, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26563; J.

Confederates impressed enslaved men taken into Texas throughout 1863.

Smith's impressment agents reached to the far western counties and brought them

eastward to aid in the war effort. Engineers worked with local planters to obtain

200 enslaved men to work on fortifications at the mouth of the Brazos River in late

September. By October, after turning U.S. gunboats away from the mouth of the

river in the Second Battle of the Sabine Pass, Confederates began impressing half the

black men crossing the Sabine in order to build "a thorny entrance" to Texas if the

Union attempted again to use it. Despite orders to impress large but unspecified

numbers of enslaved men, Confederate engineers had difficulty putting these orders

into practice. Delays piled up as engineers sought to bring enslaved workers from

deeper in Texas for a defense of the Sabine River. Confederates at San Antonio and

Austin, fearing cavalry incursions from a small U.S. force newly arrived at the border

towns of Brownsville and Matamoros, began employing enslaved men to strengthen

the defenses there as well, pressing the state's conscription well beyond East

Texas.[16]

Bankhead Magruder to Gov. F.R. Lubbock, June 4, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 33-36, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26558.

[16] V. Sulakowski to Edmund P. Turner, Galveston, Tex., July 20, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 135, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26578; Edmund P. Turner to Brig. Gen. W.R. Scurry, Headquarters, District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, July 29, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 125, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26581; Edmund P. Turner to Maj. J. C. Stafford, Sabine Pass, September 29, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 271, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26582; Stephen D. Yancey to Lieut. Gen. E. Kirby Smith, Sabine Pass, September 22, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 247-8, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26567; Th. Kosse to Col. A. Buchel, Niblett's Bluff, La., October 21, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 345, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26583; A. Buchel to Edmund P. Turner, Niblett's Bluff, La., October 24, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 351, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26584; Edmund P. Turner to Maj. A. G. Dickenson, Houston, Tex., November 23, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 440; J. Bankhead

Smith's powers of impressment even temporarily seemed to shift the direction of traffic. At times the movement of black men ran eastward, instead of west, into Texas. By the end of 1863, after the United States had taken much of northern and central Arkansas and southern Louisiana, Confederates sought to fortify the headquarters of the Trans-Mississippi district at Shreveport. United States officers stationed along the Mississippi began hearing of "large numbers" of enslaved men "being sent from Texas and Louisiana to Shreveport." Texas was no haven for slaveholders from the demands of war. Though the forced migration removed many enslaved men from a place where they might escape slavery, it did so only imperfectly. There was no spatial fix to the conflict between slaveholders and the Confederacy—slaveholders, requiring a state to uphold their claims to property, could not escape the claims of the state, even when the state placed their property in danger of emancipation. Even if Kirby Smith had trouble inspiring as much patriotism as he believed he ought to command, he could use state power to conscript labor.[17]

If it was a necessary and legal tool, impressment was also a dangerous one. By far the greatest need in the Department of Trans-Mississippi was more soldiers in the field—the department never had more than 30,000 men at any time during its more than two years of existence. If more men could not easily be conscripted in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, then they might be freed for more frequent combat so long as their laborious, non-combat duties could be performed by enslaved

Magruder to Pendleton Murrah, Houston, Tex., November 23, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 441, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26555.
[17] John P. Hawkins to Maj. Gen. J.B. McPherson, Goodrich's Landing, La., November 15, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 800, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26575.

workers. In the summer of 1863, with few soldiers at its disposal, the Trans-Mississippi Department began making special appeals "to the patriotism" of Louisiana Confederates, to "hire negro men for teamsters." Making these appeals, military officials knew, was sensitive work in a restive district. Enslaved people were to be impressed only as a last resort, and "done with great precaution" so that the military would "wound the sensibilities of the people as little as possible."[18]

The labor of enslaved people was the great resource of the West, one demanded for both civil and military purposes. The Confederate government's difficult task was extracting enough enslaved labor to allow "full strength in the field" while keeping slaveholders "loyal and zealous." The balancing act was precarious enough for Confederate officials to advise their officers that "it would be advisable not to use the impressment law" prior to the upcoming elections.[19]

State-authorized displacement was a form of triage, losing territory while retaining citizens and slaves. It had two purposes, a play for manpower and a related, ideological pitch that linked the retention of slaves to the Confederate war effort. Unfortunately for southwestern Confederates, these purposes worked against each other. The removal of slaves from the danger of the United States was

---

[18] Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, 324; S. S. Anderson to Lieut. Gen. T.H. Holmes, Shreveport, La., July 7, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 907, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26571.

[19] S. S. Anderson to Lieut. Gen. T.H. Holmes, Shreveport, La., July 7, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 907, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26571; J. Bankhead Magruder to Lieut. Gen. E. Kirby Smith, Houston, Tex., July 3, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 102, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26557; S.S. Anderson to J.B. Magruder, Shreveport, La., June 26, 1863, *OR* I.26.2, 85, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26577.

an act of defiance in the face of the Union's "fanatic hordes."[20] The Trans-Mississippi

was sorely in need of additional troops and laborers, and the black and white men

moving southwest could help, if they wanted to. Unfortunately, the burdens of

removal made migrants singularly uninterested in being conscripted for military

service, nor for allowing their slaves to be used for military labor. Impressment

followed. The need for manpower worked directly against the goal of touching the

hearts and minds of Confederates in the southwest, many of whom had already

become refugees.

As Confederates began a policy of impressment and encouraged migrations

of slaveowners and those they enslaved, they also sought more politically palatable,

military options for gaining slaves and encouraging western civilians. By attacking

plantations along the Mississippi, Kirby Smith's troops could forestall the

conversion of their healthiest male slaves into U.S. soldiers while avoiding the

pitfalls of migration and impressment. The same attacks, at the right time, could

also serve as a distraction to U.S. troops that could be substantial enough to

dissuade them from taking what Confederates considered to be key strategic

positions. If Confederates could not withstand concentrated attack from

numerically superior foes, they could make the United States pay for its

concentration of troops by raiding the nearby plantations, assaulting the garrisons

there in detail.

Confederates in the Trans-Mississippi had few good options once Grant and

Banks began their simultaneous investments of Vicksburg and Port Hudson in April

[20] Austin *State Gazette*, June 29, 1861, p.3, c.2,
http://www.uttyler.edu/vbetts/austin_state_gazette.htm.

1863. Kirby Smith's leadership was ineffectual, at best, in preventing the loss of the river, and Confederate movements did little to affect the outcome of either siege. They offered few tactical advantages even if successful, and they weren't. But, these actions served to accelerate the one act of resistance to U.S. control seemingly still available to Confederates in the region, the re-enslavement and removal of African Americans.

No army capable of dislodging U.S. forces along the Mississippi was left to Confederates in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas, and the closest one, Pemberton's army of 20,000, had been bottled up on the banks of the Mississippi and would soon be surrendered. Hopes for the sustenance of civilization, then, made little sense if pinned on the force of Confederate arms to wrest control of territory from the United States, whether those were seemingly strong and distant, as Lee's, or near and feeble, as Taylor's seemed to be after the loss of the lower Red River Valley.[21] A strategy of raiding U.S. plantations along the Mississippi began to crystalize.

This policy was made feasible because of the U.S. commitment to hold the Mississippi, even as it moved toward a strategy predicated on raids in much of the Confederate interior. The military power the United States marshaled to meet the strategic objectives of controlling the river was decisive against the relatively limited Confederate forces in either the Department of the Trans-Mississippi or the forces under Johnston's control in the interior. This concentration, especially after the fall of Vicksburg, mostly dissuaded Confederates from engaging in direct, large-scale military conflict. But for all its advantages in manpower, the United States was

---

[21] Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, 105-115.

frighteningly underpowered for its secondary goal, of occupying without fundamentally reshaping the geography of the plantation districts along the river.

This occupation never achieved the levels of force necessary to defend the plantations and refugee camps themselves from attack, in large part because these plantations and camps had relatively little strategic value, in and of themselves, for the United States. The strategic and hoped-for monetary value of these targets for Confederates made raids on plantations and refugee camps a predictable, if shocking, result of the geographic asymmetries of the war along the Mississippi. Confederates who could not attack Grant's or Sherman's garrisons or forces in the field with success could take advantage of the Union's thin riverine defense to re-enslave or, in at least a few cases, kill freedmen, women, and children.

Outnumbering his opponents with more than 70,000 troops, enlisting formerly enslaved men, and cutting off westward movement from Vicksburg by U.S. gunboats, Grant had enough soldiers to invest the city. Yet the simultaneous actions at Vicksburg and Port Hudson demanded concentration of forces that placed significant pressure on the remainder of the U.S.-occupied territory along the Mississippi. Orders to defend plantations, accept all enslaved people who would come into U.S. lines, and simultaneously encircle a small city required more resources than even the overwhelming force of Grant's Army of the Tennessee commanded.[22]

---

[22] William L. Shea and Terrence J. Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 162-169; Donald Stoker, *The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 261-275.

The Army of the Tennessee far outgunned any force Confederates could produce, especially since the largest Confederate force, Pendleton's, was trapped within the lines at Vicksburg and Joseph Johnston's army east of the river was plagued by its commander's inaction. The Union's overwhelming show of force had its advantages. After defeating all but the most securely entrenched opponents during the Vicksburg campaign, U.S. forces had little reason to fear a battle in the open field. Johnston's troops, despite the hopes and expectations of civilian and military officials within Vicksburg, never came to break the siege.[23]

Confederates instead took advantage of the untenable geographic situation U.S. military policy had demanded. The goal of saving the Union by breaking Confederate hold on the Mississippi left too few troops to implement a full-scale emancipation policy safely. Enslaved men and women were often left with the flimsiest protection when Confederates attacked.

Confederates recaptured and enslaved more than 10,000 men, women, and children during the American Civil War in more than 140 discrete, documented instances of recapture documented in the *Official Records*.[24] These reenslavements

---

[23] Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 150-155.

[24] Re-enslavements were derived from *Visualizing Emancipation*. This number is an undercount of the total number of re-enslavements, many of which are not recorded in the volumes. See Appendix 1 for information on the event types recorded in *Visualizing Emancipation*.

Table 1.
Confederate Re-enslavements

	Events		Individuals	
	number	percent	number	percent
West:	63	44%	8067	76%
East:	80	56%	2510	24%
Total	143		10577	

served a different function in the East and West, taking on different patterns in the two regions. In the East, reenslavement was part of Robert E. Lee's offensive-defensive strategy. Lee's vanguard captured dozens, perhaps hundreds of women and children from the southern border of Pennsylvania, pursuing them into houses and wheat fields alike. Rachel Cormany, of Chambersburg, fumed to her diary, "O! How it grated on our hearts to have to sit quietly & look at such brutal deeds....Some of the colored people who were raised here were taken along." She shuddered at the thought of "what they want with those little babies." A few Confederates wondered, too. "We took a lot of negroes yesterday," wrote one Virginia colonel. "I was offered my choice but as I could not get them back home I would not take them." Such sentiments were rare among Confederates anywhere, but were more likely in dealing with African Americans in Pennsylvania than they would be in Mississippi, where a more brutal calculus seemed more common and the road to reenslavement more obvious.[25]

In the East, the kidnapping of men and women under U.S. control was frequent but usually yielded few slaves at a time, the product of action taken against small groups of Union raiders. With greater Confederate activity came more frequent recaptures of slaves, though Confederates in the east often only kidnapped

---

[25] Rachel Cormany Diary, June 16, 1863, *Valley of the Shadow*, http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/papers/FD1006; William Christian quoted in Margaret S. Creighton, "Living on the Fault Line: African American Civilians and the Gettysburg Campaign" in Joan E. Cashin, ed., *The War was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Ayers, *Presence of Mine Enemies*, 405.

a handful of black southerners at a time.[26] In the first two weeks of March 1864, for

example, raiders at Gibson's Mill, Virginia, caught thirteen fugitives at a U.S. camp;

the failure of Ulrich Dahlgren's raid on Richmond yielded thirty-five people of color;

and Hendly Mitchel, Junius Mangrain, and Joe Havley, free black Virginians, were

enslaved along with James, George, and Renty, who had escaped from three different

Virginia counties when they were caught together with federal troops along the

Chickahominy River. With small groups of federal troops, those escaping slavery or

aiding the United States were vulnerable. Once people of color were attached to

larger armies, where they gathered in larger numbers, they were mostly safe from

recapture.[27]

In the West, the number of enslaved people captured at any given raid was

far greater, and became a point of pride for commanders as they re-enslaved

hundreds, even thousands of men, women, and children at a time. Though the

number of episodes was far fewer, three out of four African Americans captured by

Confederates were re-enslaved in the Western theater. Mass re-enslavements there

were the results of Confederate policies intending to attack superior numbers of

Union soldiers at their weakest points, the plantations along the Mississippi, in

order to deflect large armies from their strategic goals. Unlike in the East, there

were no safe spaces in the West, where even after the large incursions along the

Mississippi, Confederate cavalry units looked to raid plantations and refugee camps

---

[26] The median number of enslaved people captured at a recapture event in the East
was 6.
[27] Report of Brig. Gen. W.E. Jones, Lee County, Va., March 14, 1864, *OR* I.32.1, 413; *OR*
I.33, 219; Richmond *Whig*, March 3, 1864.

or attack the rearguards of enormous Union raiding parties that prompted the migration, in turn, of thousands of enslaved people.

Concerted efforts at re-enslavement produced logistical challenges for Confederates, just as the mass migrations did for Union generals, since title to escaped slaves was still held by masters presumably far removed from the recaptured fugitives. Confederate troops could not simply deploy re-enslaved men as laborers without provoking complaint among slaveholders. As a solution, military authorities established "recapture" camps at intervals of fifty miles, each set back between fifty and one hundred miles from the river alongside the "Camps of Instruction" established for training new recruits. According to Confederate regulations, names of enslaved people captured were initially published, but "if claim is not promptly made" by the owners, officers would deposit there the enslaved men, women, and children they recaptured from federally owned or operated plantations along the lower Mississippi. Once at the depot, Confederate authorities were to hold the slaves on site for one month, after which time the army was free to deploy the re-enslaved fugitives for fortifications or other public works. The congressional act developing the plan attempted to meet two needs: clarify the process by which civilian slaveowners might retrieve those they had owned, while also removing civilian authorities from the process, making it much more convenient for military officials to control the movement of black laborers for the regime.[28]

---

[28] General Orders No. 51, R. W. Memminger, Jackson, Miss., March 23, 1863, *OR* II.5, 855; General Orders No. 25, Adjt. And Insp. General's Office, Richmond, Va., March 6, 1863, *OR* II.5, 844.

The Vicksburg campaign sparked the most brutal, large-scale re-enslavement campaign in the Civil War. Attacks seemingly began by happenstance, in ways similar to encounters that might have been seen elsewhere in the South. In April 1863, as the call went out to organize U.S.C.T. regiments, Col. Samuel W. Ferguson, C.S.A. hanged an escaped slave when the man, mistaking Ferguson's troops for "Abolitionists," offered to "conduct them to the rebel camp, so as to surprise it…asked for a gun to kill his master, and said he would knock down and rape any white woman." Two weeks later, at Grand Gulf, Mississippi, Confederate troops re-enslaved 100 former slaves abandoned during a skirmish.[29]

In mid-April, Confederates began a series of raids on United States-leased plantations and refugee camps near Vicksburg. On May 2 they kidnapped "15 or 20 negroes" from near Lake Providence, Louisiana, sending them "and much property west of the bayou" to Texas. They captured seventy more (including fifty U.S.C.T. recruits) from Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, a month later, from which raiding officers could claim their favorite as a slave, "as long as the negro lives." Milliken's Bend was a victory for the United States and an instance of singular bravery by United States Colored Troops, who, in the words of Confederates on the scene, "resisted" with "considerable obstinancy" unlike the white soldiers, who "ran like whipped curs" before their advance. Yet Confederates took an additional lesson from the assault. It was the beginning of intensive Confederate raiding, whose goal, aside from

---

[29] Col. S.W. Ferguson to Maj. J.J. Reeve, Assistant Adjutant-General, Deer Creek, Captain Willis' Plantation, April 8, 1863, *OR* I.24.1, 508, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24743; John S. Bowen to Lieut.-Gen. John C. Pemberton, Grand Gulf, April 15, 1863, *OR* I.24.1, 497, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25921.

distracting Grant from his assault on Vicksburg, was the re-enslavement of escaped

slaves, black soldiers, and their families. Confederates in the West, who could no

longer defeat large forces in the field, could at least wage war on the freedom of

their former slaves. They hoped that by adding slaves, they might bolster the

Confederacy and with it, preserve slavery more broadly.[30]

These raids intensified until the late June attacks on leased plantations,

attacks intended to disrupt the Vicksburg campaign and especially to destroy

anything of value and re-enslave those living along the Mississippi while Union

forces were spread thin along the river. On June 20, Brig. Gen. James P. Major's

cavalry began raiding at Bayou Goula, destroying plantations there and

"recapturing" 1,000 starving men. They "left the women and children." Four days

later, Major's cavalry, in combination with troops under Brig. Gen. J. J. Alfred A.

Mouton's command re-enslaved at least 2,000 more with the surrender of a small

U.S. force at Brashear City. June 29, at the Goodrich plantation nearer Vicksburg,

Confederate troops captured "some 2,000 negroes" and "restored" them to their

owners "with the exception of those captured in arms." Many of those, and others,

were killed. [31]

---

[30] H.T. Reid to J.B. McPerson, Providence, La., May 12, 1863, *OR* I.24.1, 694, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25920; H.E. McCulloch to Inspector General R.P. Maclay, Richmond, La., June 8, 1863, *OR* I.24.2, 468, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26099.
[31] Jas. P. Major to Maj. Louis Bush, Near Napoleonville, June 30, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 217, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25915; Report of Maj. Sherod Hunter, Brashear City, June 26, 1863, *OR* I.26.1, 223-224, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25918; J.G. Walker to Maj. E. Surget, Dehli, July 10, 1863, *OR* I.24.2, 466, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25586.

Lightly held refugee camps made for especially appealing targets for Confederates, who kept up their raiding along the Mississippi after the Vicksburg campaign had ended. From his new stronghold at Vicksburg, U.S. Grant noted that they had gathered "a small force" on the Silver Creek and had begun "collecting cattle and negroes and burning cotton." At the same time, a closer Confederate cavalry group had become, as General McPherson noticed, "somewhat troublesome of late in running off negroes." Those re-enslaved by the Confederates found the raiders more than troublesome.[32]

Brig. Gen. John S. Marmaduke and about 2,500 troops assaulted the Union forces at Pine Bluff after falling back from Little Rock in the fall of 1863. Hundreds of enslaved people had been living there since its establishment earlier that year under the protection of two regiments of cavalry. Formerly enslaved men built last minute fortifications, rolling cotton bales into key intersections in the embattled town and hauling water from the river even as Confederate artillery set the town's buildings aflame. Their work saved the town, but at significant cost—three hundred men, women and children were captured by Marmaduke's troops at the encampment just outside the town, presumably re-enslaved by the troops who attacked them.[33]

---

[32] U.S. Grant to General Sherman, Vicksburg, Miss., September 26, 1863, *OR* I.30.3, 866, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25949; Jas. B. McPherson to Lieutenant Colonel Fairchild, Vicksburg, Miss., September 27, 1863, *OR* I.30.3, 887, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25924.
[33] Col. Powell Clayton to Major-General Frederick Steele, Pine Bluff, Ark., October 27, 1863, *OR* I.22.1, 723, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26155; Brigadier-General J.S. Marmaduke to Lieut. Col. J.F. Belton, Princeton, Ark., October 26, 1863, *OR* I.22.1, 730, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25905; Col. G.W. Thompson to Maj. Henry Ewing, Camp on Ouachita River, October 30,

Western Confederate troops were engaged in the bolstering of slavery at every turn—securing a haven for slavery in Texas, protecting pathways by which slaveholders might reach it, and supplying them with enslaved men and women who had previously escaped bondage. General Kirby Smith, commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department from 1863 onward, ordered his subordinates not to be concerned with moving outside their delineated territory in their mission to re-enslave. The important point, Smith's adjutant general wrote to an Arkansas-based cavalry commander, was that "all" the plantations being cultivated "for the Federals" should "be destroyed and the negroes captured."[34]

While the widespread devastation for which Smith hoped never happened, more localized destruction did, in large part because federal troops could not adequately defend plantations made, not for fortified defense, but for the production of crops. By April, officers in Memphis planned to cover "that wretched speculation, Government leased plantations," east of the Mississippi with three infantry and one cavalry regiment, temporarily halting raids on cotton and people of color near Yazoo City. Yet raids continued downriver and to the west. By the summer, a report from the Military Division of West Mississippi was "satisfied" that future raids would soon leave leased plantations near Vidalia "devastated." "The pledges of military

---

1863, *OR* I.22.1, 733, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25906; Col. R.C. Newton to Maj. Henry Ewing, Near Washington, Ark., December 4, 1863, *OR* I.22.1, 736, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25907.
[34] S.S. Anderson to T.H. Holmes, Shreveport, La., June 4, 1863, *OR* I.22.2, 856, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24858.

protection made" to men leasing the plantations, the officer feared, were certain to "create embarrassment."[35]

Union officers around Helena, Arkansas, admitted that "the lakes, swamps, bayous, and canebrakes" made guarding the one-hundred square mile district "impossible." Confederates made five successful midnight raids there in the last two weeks of March 1864. In August, Brig. Gen. Joseph O. Shelby's men descended on the plantations established near Helena "with a fury greater than a hurricane," the commander boasted, capturing 300 formerly enslaved southerners and killing seventy-five "mongrel soldiers, negroes, and Yankee schoolmasters," teaching them "the secrets of Confederate raiding." Union officers garrisoning the forts there confirmed that the raiders captured "the people and movables from two-thirds" of the area's plantations. Confederates continued to make occasional, small-scale raids along both sides of the river for the remainder of the war.[36]

Raiding along the border between the Union and Confederacy had already been common and frequent, but before late 1864 had rarely been perpetrated against black southerners alone or as a policy directed at the acquisition of enslaved men and women. This changed as borderland recruitment of black troops began to

---

[35] Major-General S.A. Hurlbut to Maj. Gen. J.B. McPherson, Memphis, Tenn., April 10, 1864, *OR* I.32.3, 317-318, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26263; Major C.T. Christensen, Asst. Adjt. General, Mil. Div. of West Miss. To M. Brayman, New Orleans, August 16, 1864, *OR* I.41.3, 726.

[36] N.B. Buford to Brigadier General L. Thomas, Helena, Ark., April 1, 1864, *OR* I.34.3, 8-9, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27455; Joseph O. Shelby to Lieut. Col. J.F. Belton, August 9, 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 191, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25930; Report of Joseph O. Shelby, December 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 649, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26277; N.B. Buford to Lieut. Col. W.D. Green, Helena, Ark., August 1, 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 190.

pick up steam. In August 1864, U.S. troops around Kansas City began urgent

communications about a raiding party of about 150 men crossing the Missouri

River, "encumbered" with "horses and negroes." By September, guerrilla bands, both

large and small were executing independent raids in much of the state, attempting

to divide U.S. forces in the area. Nine men kidnapped Hickman and Painter

McCullough along with their horses just outside Warrensburg, September 26, as two

additional guerrilla parties of one hundred men marched ten miles south and

southwest of the town. The same day, Confederates under General Shelby attacked

U.S. forces at Potosi and sent out a scouting party nearby that put a United States

unit to run, capturing twenty-three people of color in the chaos. The following day,

Shelby's men came upon a U.S. wagon train along the rail line to Irondale, yielding

another hundred men, many of them teamsters. Union officers chasing down

guerrillas in southwest Missouri two weeks later recovered a black woman and

child recently captured. As Maj. Gen. Sterling Price and his group made their way

through the state, they kidnapped increasing numbers of black Missourians to bring

south.[37]

---

[37] Col. E.C. Catherwood to Major J.N. Smith, Kansas City, Mo., August 24, 1864, *OR* I.41.2, 839, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26564. Cf. John T. Burris to Brig. Gen. Thomas Ewing, Jr., Cape Girardeau, Mo., August 8, 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 79, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25630; Lieut. Col. T.T. Crittenden to Capt. J.H. Steger, Warrensburg, September 26, 1864, *OR* I.41.3, 390, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25893; J.H. Steger to Lieutenant Colonel T.T. Crittenden, Sedalia, September 26, 1864, *OR* I.41.3, 390; Report of Brigadier-General Jo. O. Shelby, Headquarters Shelby's Division, December --, 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 653, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25926; Jo. O. Shelby to Colonel L.A. MacLean, Potosi, Mo., October 2, 1864, *OR* I.41.3, 978, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25925; Col. J.D. Allen to Lieutenant Colonel J.D. Brutsche, Mount Vernon, Mo., October 9, 1864, *OR* I.41.3, 731, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25568; W.N. Norville to Captain

White Missourians were outliers in the Civil War for the violence that they

dealt and faced in contravention of "civilized warfare." Black Missourians faced

similar or greater levels of irregular violence, though this experience made them

similar to people of color in other parts of the South, particularly along the lower

Mississippi. People of color in the state faced widespread harassment and reprisals

for emancipation, harassment that increased in August of 1864, just before Price's

invasion of the state. On August 2, a group of fifteen guerrillas killed three black

men in Bluffington, near Jefferson City and robbed a number of houses in the area.

On August 5, an even smaller party of guerrillas shot nine African Americans near

Marshall and another two days after that, just before encountering the militia group

dispatched to attack them. On September 19, Confederate and Creek troops

attacked U.S. forces at Cabin Creek, Indian Territory, killing all but five of the nearly

forty black soldiers they found in the camp while accepting the surrender of whites.

Incursions into the Indian Territory, Kansas and Missouri gave Confederates the

opportunity to attack armed, uniformed African Americans with the same

ruthlessness they were already practicing on black civilians there, and which they

had practiced against and armed and unarmed men of color in the southwest. [38]

Bennett, Lexington, Mo., November 11, 1864, *OR* I.41.4, 526, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25889.

[38] Col. Jno. S. Wolfe to Captain James H. Steger, Jefferson City, August 3, 1864, *OR* I.41.2, 540, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24742; Lieut. Col. B.F. Lazear to Capt. Steger, Marshall, Mo., August 10, 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 220, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24736; Capt. Curtis Johnson to Lieut. Col. George H. Hoyt, Osage Catholic Mission, Kansas, September 25, 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 776, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26118; R.M. Gano to D.H. Cooper, Camp Bragg, September 29, 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 789, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26127.

Yet, for all this violence in the run-up to Price's invasion of Missouri, officers' reports from Price's raid itself omit mention of atrocities against people of color, whether in or out of uniform. Confederates under Price were more interested in exacting vengeance on white unionists than they were on African Americans, at least in 1864. Heightened levels of violence against white citizens made violence against blacks seem more ordinary. Though some irregular violence against people of color surely occurred during Price's expedition, the *Official Records* are silent on the matter.

Re-enslavement could only provide so much buoyancy to Confederates in need of labor and hope.   Increasingly, as the war dragged on, slavery itself seemed to fall apart, as more and more black southerners demonstrated that they would no longer be enslaved. Though more than 10,000 enslaved people were recaptured by Confederates, this was only a fraction of those taken away from slaveholders, as many as 475,000 across the Confederacy during the war.[39]

Confronted with a disastrous collapse of the institution, slaveholders and Confederate soldiers took two, seemingly contradictory measures, each taken from the same point of despair as they saw slavery fall apart. First, they resorted to killing at least small black southerners they believed had been ruined for future service, those who were literally worth more to Confederates dead than alive. Second, they considered, in increasingly urgent if hushed tones, arming their slaves, even granting some slaves their freedom if it meant the survival of the institution. They began sacrificing slaves to keep slavery.

---

[39] Berlin, et al., *Freedom* I.3, 77-80.

The problem presented by "those captured in arms" was a significant one for the department of the Trans-Mississippi in particular and for the Confederacy more broadly. Confederate officers, enlisted men, and civilians were in widespread agreement after the Emancipation Proclamation that armed black men waging war against the Confederate States of America were not legitimate combatants and could not be treated as prisoners of war. Yet according to many, these men could not be retaken as slaves, either. Their service to the United States and their armed resistance to the Confederacy had ruined their capacity for obedience under the slave regime. The survival of slavery required, in such circumstances, the execution of some who had been enslaved, after their potential for future enslavement had been spoiled by military service.

A death sentence for captured Union soldiers seemed, to some Confederates, like the easiest route. Historian George Burkhardt has argued that the execution of "wounded, surrendered, or trapped" black soldiers became the "de facto policy" of the Confederate government because it was one usually condoned, never punished, and "always denied." The killings were certainly pervasive. They clustered especially along the Mississippi River, where black soldiers served most frequently, guarding refugee camps and garrisoning towns. Atrocities (or, in the nomenclature of the day, "outrages") became more frequent in 1864, as larger numbers of black troops began to be employed in offensive operations. [40]

---

[40] George S. Burkhardt, *Confederate Rage, Yankee Wrath: No Quarter in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007); Gregory J.W. Urwin, *Black Flag over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004); John Cimprich*, Fort Pillow, A Civil War Massacre, and Public Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Richard L.

The most infamous executions occurred at places such as Fort Pillow, and Petersburg's Battle of the Crater, but such actions were widespread. During Sherman's march across Mississippi, Confederates rounded up wounded U.S. soldiers, rarely giving black men in uniform quarter. One citizen in Jackson reported seeing a Confederate cavalry officer "dismount and deliberately shoot dead a wounded U.S. colored soldier," and heard the officer report that he had killed a dozen others in similar fashion. During Joseph Shelby's raid at Big Creek bridge near Helena in August 1864, he "brought 200 negroes safely off" for re-enslavement but killed all black soldiers he found, burning their cabins and quarters. In April 1864, Confederates stormed the lightly held Fort Pillow, capturing half of the two hundred white soldiers guarding the fort, killing the others in battle. None of the three hundred black troops guarding the fort were taken prisoner, even after surrendering. The report to Major-General William T. Sherman described "the whole affair" as "a scene of murder."[41]

Most captured black soldiers were not summarily killed. The Confederate Government's actual policy was not murder, but re-enslavement. Such a policy certainly made sense insofar as it assuaged, in a small way, Confederate labor problems. Logically, it reinforced the Confederate commitment to bolstering slavery through adding slaves. It also made sense from the perspective of international

Fuchs, *An Unerring Fire: The Massacre at Fort Pillow* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994).

[41] G.L. Andrews to Wirt Adams, Port Hudson, La., February 16, 1864, *OR* II.6, 960-961, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24747; Joseph O. Shelby to L.A. Maclean, December 1864, *OR* I.41.1, 649, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26277; M. Brayman to Major-General W.T. Sherman, Cairo, Ill., April 14, 1864, *OR* I.32.2, 361, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24760.

politics. Though the policy of re-enslavement caused tremendous suffering, sabotaging what had been a relatively well-functioning if short-lived prisoner exchange system, a stated policy of murder would likely have inspired a sterner response from Washington.[42]

In some instances, officers observed the policy of Confederate government, taking men prisoner and enslaving them rather than executing them on the spot. Maj. Gen. Kirby Smith could scarcely believe that Richard Taylor took black troops captive at Milliken's Bend, not understanding how Taylor did not recognize "the propriety of giving no quarter to armed negroes and their officers." William Crooks, of the 6th Minnesota, reported that the Confederate cavalry officer Archibald Dobbins re-enslaved those he captured during his raids, "but," he reported with some relief, "killed none." The day the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, soldiers under John Magruder successfully pushed U.S. naval and land forces out of Galveston, enslaving and selling people of color they found along the way. He did not hesitate to enslave black sailors along with the others he found at Galveston. The inability of the United States to protect northern, free-born people of color brought family members "intense, heartrending" distress and galled their neighbors and fellow church members back home. Charles G. Amos, of Boston and the 42nd Massachusetts, was lost at Galveston. So was his free-born cousin, who was

---

[42] Lonnie R. Speer, *Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War* (Lioncoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Roger Pickenpaugh, *Camp Chase and the Evolution of Union Prison Policy* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007); Fred R. Ruhlman, *Captain Henry Wirz and Andersonville Prison: A Reappraisal* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006).

supporting his mother while employed at Harvard. Both were captured and sold in

Houston, reportedly for $47 each.[43]

The capture of people of color, in those times when they were taken as

prisoners of war, created consternation among Confederate civilians in Texas.

William Anders, the city's mayor, objected to General Magruder that the thirty

members of the United States Colored Troops he held as prisoners of war had begun

"going at large within the city of Houston, mixing and associating with our slave

population." Kirby Smith disgustedly told Richard Taylor to turn the black troops

over "to the states to which they belong." Killing black soldiers seemed like a good

idea to many Confederates precisely because they feared interaction between slaves

and people of color who had taken up arms against slave-owners.[44]

Confederates who captured black troops sometimes regretted what they

regarded as a political mistake, in hindsight preferring execution to passing along

armed freedmen. Maj. Gen. John George Walker considered it "an unfortunate

circumstance that any armed negroes were captured" on his raiding expedition

along the western banks of the Mississippi. He blamed his subordinate, Col. W. H.

Parsons, for accepting their surrender, while also excusing the decision since taking

the fortified black troops by force instead of accepting their surrender "would have

---

[43] Kirby Smith quoted in Prushankin, *Crisis in Command*, 38-39; William Crooks to W.D. Green, Helena, Ark., August 26, 1864, *OR* I.41.2, 873, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26234; John L. Barbour to Abraham Lincoln, Cambridgeport, Mass., April 11, 1863, *OR* II.5, 469-70, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25882; E. A. Hitchcock to Major-General S.A. Meredith, Washington, D.C., November 23, 1863, *OR* II.6, 552-554, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25883.
[44] Prushankin, *Crisis in Command*, 39; William Anders to Major-General J.B. Magruder, Houston, Tex., June 8, 1864, *OR* II.7, 214, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25879.

cost many lives and much precious time." Parsons did not, it seems, have the

stomach for first accepting their surrender and then slaughtering them. [45]

The execution of U.S. troops occurred in the context of murders that have

received much less attention at the time and since, but which presented some of the

same moral, if not political, strains on the Confederacy. In a number of cases,

enslaved women and children had either come under the control of U.S. troops or

Confederate military officials and local slaveholders believed they soon would. The

first instinct for most Confederates was to recapture these women and children or, if

they thought them more trouble than they were worth, to leave them with U.S.

troops while absconding with able-bodied males. In a smaller number of cases,

Confederates decided to kill the former slaves rather than allow them to work under

the auspices of the federal government. Confederates destroyed workers they might

have enslaved because the crops they could produce in place, under federal control,

would likely be greater than whatever they could contribute to the Confederacy.

From the perspective of Confederates, they were better dead than enslaved or freed.

The murder of unarmed black southerners, especially women and children,

was not as widely discussed among Confederate or Union troops, but it occurred at

two particular points in the war. Confederates killed black civilians first as U.S.

troops began laying claim to poorly defended plantations along the South Carolina

Coast, and second, attending the siege of Vicksburg. In each case, the United States

had far more powerful armies in the field than could be mustered by Confederates.

Yet in each case, the demand that U.S. forces implement military emancipation was

---

[45] Report of J.G. Walker, Dehli, July 10, 1863, *OR* I.24.2, 466,
http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25586.

far beyond the strength of the government's military power at hand. In South

Carolina in late 1861 and early 1862, this meant that core plantations were able to

function safely as experiments in freehold agriculture, while peripheral plantations

were subject to widespread terror. Along the Mississippi in the late spring and early

summer of 1863, this meant that the protection of far-flung plantations from

Confederate raids was sacrificed in order that Grant's forces might achieve

important strategic objectives securing control over the Mississippi.

As soon as U.S. forces took the rich cotton fields of the Sea Islands, enslaved

people resisted their masters' attempts to force them away. Shortly after the troops

arrived, black Carolinians limped to the Union headquarters at Hilton Head injured,

evidently "shot by their masters," and expecting that "all of the blacks would come in

to avoid being murdered." Local slaveholders, however, were not content with their

initial attempt to deprive the Yankees of labor and their fugitive slaves of freedom.

African Americans living along the South Carolina coast were not altogether safe

even after the United States landed on the Sea Islands. Confederates responded to

the initial shock of losing the coast by attempting to secure abandoned property and

blocking movement inland in whatever way they could. They mobilized troops and

black laborers to block the Coosawatchie, Tulifiny, and other rivers within a week of

the U.S. disembarkation. At the same time, Brig. Gen. Roswell S. Ripley planned raids

of combined Confederate and civilian forces to carry off all the enslaved and

movable property they could, and to destroy whatever cotton they could not carry

away. While the expedition made the destruction of cotton its priority, the raiders

"took every negro who was passing into custody," to ensure that their movements were not given away. Other raids along the Ashepoo River and throughout the Lowcountry between Charleston and Savannah attempted to "drive off" the enslaved people living on plantations there, burned their houses, shot the young who attempted to escape, and left "the aged and infirm" without shelter. Confederates ordered that the enslaved men captured during these raids were to be "placed inside of our lines and in a place of safety."[46]

General orders for the Lowcountry soon went out, that if it became apparent that U.S. forces would take "any portion of this coast," rice planters were to destroy both cash and provision crops, and that enslaved workers were to be evacuated, "by force, if necessary." Confederate raids spread with U.S. military incursions, especially since the U.S. naval forces were unable to garrison the entire country. In mid-June 1862, Confederates raided Hutchinson's Island and "murdered in cold blood the poor unfortunates," having learned that the island was left without garrison "through information given by a negro who had been employed" by the U.S. army. Southern troops captured and hanged the formerly enslaved man who had piloted U.S. gunboats into Smyrna during the naval assault of that town. The loss of

---

[46] Danl. Ammen to Saml. F. DuPont, Hilton Head, November 9, 1861, *OR* Navy I.12, 336-337, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25721; R.S. Ripley to Col. William E. Martin, Tulafinny, November 16, 1861, *OR* I.6, 34, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28114; Wm. E. Martin to Major General Lee, Pocotaligo, S.C., December 9, 1861, *OR* I.6, 36, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28127; S.F. DuPont to Gideon Welles, Port Royal, S.C., December 12, 1861, *OR* Navy I.12, 388, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24704; C.J. Colcock to Brigadier-General Drayton, Bluffton, S.C., November 26, 1861, *OR* I.6, 330-331, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28147.

the most valuable property led Confederates to plan raids to retake it if possible,

destroy it if necessary in raids of otherwise doubtful strategic importance.[47]

Two years later, General William T. Sherman was disgusted by the relish

Confederates in Mississippi seemed to take in the death of the formerly enslaved.

The day Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest took Fort Pillow, Sherman wrote to Adjutant

General Lorenzo Thomas of "a young lady in Canton," whom he heard "thank her

God that her negroes, who had attempted to escape into our lines at Big Black," had

been overtaken by Mississippi-based Confederate cavalry and killed. If nothing else,

Sherman thought, Confederates were united in their desire to kill anyone attempting

to free their slaves and any of the "ungrateful slaves" attempting to become free.[48]

Perhaps the worst atrocity, however, occurred as Confederates attempted to

dislodge the federal investment of Vicksburg. The raid at Goodrich Landing,

Louisiana, was "of a character never before witnessed in a civilized country,"

according to U.S. troops who arrived on the scene the next day.

> They spared neither age, sex, nor condition. In some instances
> the negroes were shut up in their quarters, and literally roasted alive.
> The charred remains found in numerous instances testified to a
> degree of fiendish atrocity such as has no parallel either in civilized or
> savage warfare. Young children, only five or six years of age, were

[47] A.M. Manigault to T.A. Washington, Georgetown, S.C., December 6, 1861, *OR* I.6, 338, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/28148; W.T. Truxton to S.F. DuPont, Port Royal, S.C., June 13, 1862, *OR* Navy I.13, 96-98, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24706; Report of S.F. DuPont, Port Royal, S.C., June 16, 1862, *OR* Navy I.13, 95-96, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26694; W.S. Dilworth to Major T.A. Washington, Tallahassee, Fl., April 4, 1862, *OR* Navy I.12, 651, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26101.
[48] W.T. Sherman to Adjutant-General Lorenzo Thomas, Nashville, TN, April 12, 1864, *OR* III.4, 225-226, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27793; M.F. Force to J.C. Douglass, Big Black, MS, January 20, 1864, *OR* I.32.2, 159, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24752.

found skulking in the canebreak pierced with wounds, while helpless women were found shot down in the most inhuman manner. The whole country was destroyed, and every sign of civilization was given to flames.

Union soldiers were shocked at the atrocities, which barely registered in Confederate correspondence. The women and children were killed by Confederate Col. William Parson's cavalry, the day before Parsons elected to accept the surrender of U.S. colored troops at Lake Providence. The slaughter of women and children the day before may even explain why Parsons decided to accept the surrender of black soldiers under the U.S. flag. Perhaps he judged that he had murdered enough.[49]

Former slaves murdered by Confederates seem to have been regarded as traitors to their own enslavement. By abandoning their owners and finding freedom, they rejected the relations of slavery so valued by their masters and by the Confederate state. Yet the appropriate punishment for such a "crime" as freedom was at play in the rural south. Soldiers and citizens did not always agree about who had been ruined for slavery, whose life was forfeit.

The murder of slaves and former slaves could bring distress to Confederate civilians and conflict between them and the Confederate military, particularly in spaces where state sovereignty was fluid and food scarce. By December 1863, much of southwestern Mississippi was "in utter waste." Food stores were exhausted, and the areas that armies had left alone were down to the bare necessities, with no surplus to trade. Even Confederate authorities understood that there was "no

---

[49] Report of Samuel J. Nasmith, Snyder's Bluff, Miss., July 1, 1863, *OR* I.24.2, 516-517, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24700.; Report of J.G. Walker, Delhi, July 10, 1863, *OR* I.24.2, 466, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25586.

alternative" to trafficking in food with nearby Port Hudson. White southerners in the area were by late 1863 thoroughly "dissatisfied" with the Confederate military. Horse theft was rampant; some companies, organized during the Vicksburg campaign to prevent the escape of slaves, seemed to spend much of their time plundering civilians. Confederate authorities visiting from General Johnston's command came away disgusted with what they saw, recommending that the whole cavalry battalion "be taken away" from the area, where they harassed Yankees little and civilians a great deal, and moved to Georgia, where they might not do good, but would at least do less harm.[50]

On December 6th, J.T. Netterville, the captain of one of the obnoxious companies, visited John De Loach's plantation and others near Woodville, in the far southwest corner of the state. De Loach had considerable holdings, $70,000 in private property in 1860, but the planter almost certainly been trading with U.S. troops at Port Hudson. There was little enough food in the previously wealthy plantation district that he could scarcely have done otherwise. Black southerners he still called his own were able to obtain their food this way too, sometimes by walking to the nearby city themselves. Ulysses S. Grant, in service to the president's Proclamation, had declared these men and women free four months earlier, but no military authority was nearby to enforce such an order.

De Loach had worked out a tentative truce with those he had enslaved. The fifty-three year-old Tennessee native had been forced to loosen whatever plantation discipline had existed before the U.S. occupation of nearby Port Hudson in order to

[50] J.D. Bradford to Lieutenant-Colonel Sevier, Meridian, Miss., January 17, 1864, *OR* I.32.2, 568-569.

give them a reason to remain. He and his neighbors could not keep his workers there by force and they had learned enough of the local cavalry company not to entrust the forces with any of their property, enslaved or not.

Harkas, one of De Loach's "valuable men," especially tested the planter. Just as the war began, Harklas had gone to J.A. Row's plantation nearby and married one of the women enslaved there. When he heard of the union, De Loach was upset. He did not allow abroad marriages, Row knew it, and gave the enslaved couple his permission anyway. With tension smoldering between the laborer and landowner, it was no wonder that Harklas left during General Nathaniel Banks' siege of Port Hudson with a number of other men from the neighborhood.[51]

Then Harklas came back. Perhaps the flight to Union lines was a way to gain leverage, to ensure that he would be able to visit his wife on the Row plantation when he wished. Perhaps he had never planned to stay at Port Hudson, and it was all a tactic in ongoing labor negotiations. Given Banks' eagerness to conscript everyone in the department he could, Harklas, at age 45, may have been just young enough to be conscripted for an unwanted tour of duty. He may simply have been trying to escape the conditions he saw there, which were likely better than most places but still crowded with less food than would be ideal. Since, as Banks put it, "every negro" within U.S. lines there "without distinction of age, sex, or condition" was laboring in the service of the U.S. government, Harklas may have decided to return to a place he had friends, family, and leverage over work arrangements

---

[51] ibid.

instead of remaining where he certainly had none. Whatever the reason, Harklas

returned after two months.[52]

Upon his return home, De Loach became resigned and Row anxious. De

Loach, bitter about the marriage but powerless now to stop it, no longer complained

about "his" man's visits with his wife across the way. Harklas spent time at the Row

place without incident. Row worried that any man who left might leave again, this

time taking Row's property—Harklas' wife—with him. De Loach saw it differently,

and "saw nothing to justify his fears" when his neighbor urged him to "do something

with him." As far as De Loach was concerned, Harklas "was conducting himself very

well" and had not "heard any complaint of him from any one." Whatever truce they

had worked out, whatever they decided to call the transition state between slavery

and freedom in which they found themselves, seemed to work for both.[53]

But their truce did not work for everyone. Sunday, December 6th,

Confederate cavalry under J.T. Netterville rode to the Row farm and hanged Harklas.

Imbued with the power of the state to ensure that slaves would not flee to the

United States, they visited judgment on a man they believed had been ruined for

slavery, perhaps as a warning to others who would leave the area for Port Hudson.

The hanging had the opposite effect. De Loach was furious with the company's

violence, carried out against "my negro man" without "proper authority or any just

cause." Harklas was not the only slave he had owned who had run to the Yankees

and come back. De Loach had worked out a truce with his laborers, and more than

one man had decided to attempt to avoid the war by leaving the garrisoned town. In

---

[52] ibid.
[53] ibid.

an instant, the agreements between De Loach and his workers that made them comfortable remaining fell apart. Believing that "the cavalry were going to hang all of the negroes that had returned from the Yankees," two of De Loach's other "valuable men" who had done so left that very night, this time for good.

In a desperate attempt to ensure that enslaved people would not abandon Confederates for the Union, Confederate patrols upset the delicate balance landowners and laborers had worked out in a world where the power of the state was fluid. In its attempt to enforce plantation discipline, sacrificing a slave for the good of the Confederacy and slavery, Confederates drove away more enslaved people and alienated landowners in the process.

The collapse of slavery led to extraordinary violence in the Border States as well. The conclusion of Price's campaign and the tapering of guerrilla violence coincided with the legal end of slavery in Missouri. In November 1864, Missourians elected a newly invigorated Republican slate to a constitutional convention. At the January convention, the radical majority abolished slavery in the state without compensation to owners, carrying the vote 60-4.[54]

Even before convention met, people of color in the most heavily enslaved section of the state became subject to acts of intimidation and seemingly senseless violence. Though reporting little guerrilla activity in general and few suspected "brushmen" in the area, citizens in Monroe County reported to military officials that a local "squad" had "hung a negro man who had formerly been a slave" of a notorious guerrilla captain. The informants could not guess at a rationale for the

---

[54] Astor, *Rebels on the Border*, 176.

hanging. Hangings became numerous immediately following the end of slavery. In a single week in February 1864, one man was hanged in Allendale along the northern border, two at Glasgow, and three outside Columbia. Another three men were hanged in central Missouri a month later, a fourth in April, nearer the Mississippi River at Farmington, and a family on the road near Hermitage robbed and threatened to be killed. The hangings and threats, while mainly concentrated in central Missouri, still occurred throughout the state.[55]

Some observers guessed that multiple hangings around Columbia and elsewhere were a result of blacks' failure to comply with a demand by Confederate sympathizers to evacuate the area. Jim Jackson, a Confederate guerrilla, and three accomplices hanged an "old negro man" outside Columbia and pinned a note to his coat: "Killed for not going into the Federal Army. By order of Jim Jackson." Federal officials had trouble interpreting the violence against an unarmed man too old to be a threat. "I can't tell the object of this move," reported one militia commander. On its face, the murder of an old man for failing to join the army is perverse. Yet lack of a straightforward meaning to the violence was its own point—after the failure of

---

[55] F.C. Fox, et al. to General C.B. Fisk, Paris, Mo., December 19, 1864, *OR* I.41.4, 890, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24741; Captain H.S. Glaze to Lieutenant W.T. Clarke, Allendale, Mo., February 27, 1864, *OR* I.48.1, 999, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24693; Colonel Ed. A. Kutzner to Brigadier-General Fisk, Glasgow, Mo., February 24, 1864, *OR* I.48.1, 125, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24695; F.T. Russell to [General Fisk], Columbia, Mo., February 21, 1864, *OR* I.48.1, 934, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24707; Captain H.N. Cook to Lieut. W.T. Clarke, Columbia, Mo., February 22, 1865, *OR* I.48.1, 949, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24696; Brigadier-General Clinton B. Fisk to Major J.W. Barnes, Macon, Mo., March 22, 1865, *OR* I.48.1, 1239, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24697; William Q. Paxton to Brigadier-General Sanborn, Hermitage, Mo., March 14, 1865, *OR* I.48.1, page 1273, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24694.

Price's attempt to retake the state and forestall the end of slavery, acts of violence against blacks became symbols signifying white Confederates' demands to control affairs even after political setbacks. The violent acts were strategic in their seeming randomness, ushering in a new era across the South in which assassinations of black southerners would become far more widespread than they had been before the war.[56]

Murder marked the end of slavery. So did Confederate attempts to free and arm their slaves, an idea that derived its power from the same source as the murders of black men and women, despairing attempts to forestall the end of the regime. The idea of arming slaves for battle was an old one, tied to slaveholders' unfounded early-war boasts of the supposed advantages of slaveholding in war. Proposals to arm slaves came early from civilians eager to aid in the war effort, including one offer to furnish and arm 100 slaves from a plantation at Helena, Arkansas. The offer was rebuffed. Though he went out of his way to demonstrate his trust in the loyalty of black soldiers, the Chief of the Confederate Bureau of War was "not prepared to accept the negro regiment," since in August 1861 there was "a superabundance of our own color tendering their services to the Government." To enroll slaves was far too politically sensitive a matter for official consideration in the war's earliest years, particularly for a department flush with recruits.[57]

---

[56] F.T. Russell to [General Fisk], Columbia, Mo., February 21, 1864, *OR* I.48.1, 934, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24707; Captain H.N. Cook to Lieut. W.T. Clarke, Columbia, Mo., February 22, 1865, *OR* I.48.1, 949, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24696.

[57] McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 223-224; Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation* (New York: Oxford, 2006); W.S. Turner to Hon. L.P. Walker, Helena,

The superabundance of white recruits did not last long. The drive to arm

slaves received its boldest articulation in early 1864. "Slavery," in the words of Maj.

Gen. Patrick Cleburne, commanding general of the Army of Tennessee, was no

longer the Confederacy's greatest strength, but "our most vulnerable point" and "an

insidious weakness." Cleburne's solution was to "commence training a large reserve

of the most courageous of our slaves, and further guarantee freedom within a

reasonable time to every slave in the South who shall remain true to the

Confederacy in this war." Cleburne's proposal, that slavery end and all slaves

become free so that the state might survive, was met with official silence.[58]

Just more than year later, in a far different political environment, a sharply

limited version of a similar plan obtained official sanction. By March 1865, the

Confederacy had few hopes of victory. Sherman had taken Atlanta and devastated

much of the deep South, Lincoln had won reelection, and Petersburg was besieged.

Confederate legislators finally agreed to a call for voluntary slaveholder provision of

enslaved soldiers and, if that failed, authorized the states to come up with their

share of a 300,000 man black army in whatever way they saw fit. Orders quickly

went out authorizing the recruitment of willing slaves who had already been given

manumission papers by their masters.[59]

With these orders, Jefferson Davis sought to thread a needle. To arm slaves

without offering freedom would be far too dangerous a plan. To abridge slavery, the

Ark., July 17, 1861, *OR* IV.1, 482; A.T. Bledsoe to W.S. Turner, Richmond, August 2, 1861, *OR* IV.1, 529.
[58] P.R. Cleburne, et al., to Commanding General, et al., January 2, 1864, *OR* I.52.2, 586-589.
[59] Levine, *Confederate Emancipation*, 118-120.

individual's right to enslave, was unthinkable for the Confederate president. This plan did neither. It safeguarded slavery as an institution while opening the door to freedom for slaves through military service. As historian Bruce Levine has pointed out, the Confederate "emancipation" augured no change in racial ideology. Neither did the policy demonstrate anything but a defense of slavery. It was far from Cleburne's more bombastic proposal, because it sought not to preserve the state at the expense of slavery, but to preserve both through the slaveholder's offer of freedom to certain slaves.

Arming freed slaves and killing them were acts taken from the same situation of desperation. They were measures taken in support of the slave regime by ending the enslavement—or potential enslavement—of individuals. In the case of battlefield murders, armed freedmen had demonstrated that they would no longer be enslaved; Confederates denied that black southerners such as these could not be trusted, and lacked had any legitimate existence. Confederates killing women and children on Union plantations believed they were not worth the logistical problems of recapture and transportation to the designated depots. To leave them alone, however, would be to give the United States their labor. Murder was a strategic, military calculation, killing those who could not be enslaved at the cost of their capture for the good of the slave regime. A similar strategy lurked behind the offer of freedom and arms to slaves. Their freedom was a loss of enslaved men, but a loss that strengthened, not undermined a regime just as firmly committed to slavery in 1865 as in 1861.

Attempts to bolster slavery and the western Confederacy ultimately failed. Morale problems constantly plagued civilians and soldiers alike in the Trans-Mississippi. Civilians who ran from the approaching enemy, hoping that their migration and that of their slaves might give the Confederacy new life, gave up once it became clear that Confederate arms had failed them. Reenslavement was never aggressive enough to dent the much larger number of black southerners willing to remain within U.S. lines. Impressment exacerbated morale problems while hardly solving the Confederacy's acute labor needs. And killing enslaved people was likely to provoke greater instability and flights from Confederate territory, not fewer. Confederates attempted to maintain slavery and their nation by squeezing as much out of enslaved people as they could, through forced migrations, raids, murders, and even manumission. They were defeated by an army much more effective than they were at bringing enslaved people into the war and bringing the war to enslaved people.

CHAPTER FIVE

"A HUNGRY BELLY AND FREEDOM"

By late 1862, United States commanders, particularly in the West, had come

to the conclusion that white southerners could not be conciliated and could only, in

the words of William T. Sherman, be made to "dread the passage of troops through

their country." Scholars have characterized this shift in the actions of federal troops

in a number of ways. In Charles Royster's telling, the move to a "destructive war"

emerged from the momentum of war itself, as violence begat violence and formed

hard men driven to "wreak vengeance" on the South, building a new, exalted nation

in the process. Earlier historians, particularly John Bennett Walters, saw in

Sherman's wreckage a modern, "total war," though, as Mark Neely later pointed out,

few civilians in Sherman's wake were murdered in cold blood. If the violence of

northern troops in 1863, 1864, and 1865 was restrained, pulling back from actions

meant to annihilate unarmed men, women, and children, it was also strategic, an

attack intended to cripple the military capability of the Confederacy. Whether

historians judge Sherman's march to be restrained, since his soldiers attacked only

property, or excessive, since they did so with such exuberance, they agree that

Sherman's strategy was to destroy Confederate real and private property, and that they did so with gusto.[1]

More recently, historians Kate Megan Nelson and Lisa M. Brady have looked into this destruction, not as a psychological impulse or a question of restraint but as an effect of war on the material world, which then reverberated among soldiers, citizens, and the environment alike. Megan Kate Nelson's *Ruin Nation* sees in the destroyed landscape, destroyed towns, and destroyed bodies a series of "unsettling" artifacts that conjured space for "interplay between the whole past and the fragmented present," one that Civil War Americans found evocative, tragic, sobering. The creation of such ruins, for Sherman, was purposeful. Lisa Brady and others have shown how Sherman, late in the war, turned the devastation of the landscape "from a regrettable, haphazard consequence into a deliberate weapon of war." The

---

[1] William T. Sherman to U.S. Grant, Memphis, October 4, 1862, *OR* 17.2, 260-1; Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (Vintage: New York, 1991), 5; Harry S. Stout has given a religious cast to Royster's insight, arguing that in Sherman's brutality "America (North and South)…was incarnating a millennial nationalism as the primal religious faith." Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the American Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006), 405; John Bennett Walters, "General William T. Sherman and Total War," *Journal of Southern History* 14 (1948): 447-480; Walters, *Merchant of Terror: General Sherman and Total War* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1973); Mark E. Neely, Jr., "Was the Civil War a Total War?" *Civil War History* 37, no. 1 (1991): 434-458; Mark Grimsley has called this restrained, directed attack on Confederate property and materiel "hard war,"Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War* (New York: Cambridge, 1995), 205-225; Less restraint is seen in 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, 1985); Burke Davis, *Sherman's March* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980); and Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North*; Though Paul F. Paskoff has suggested that the destructiveness of war was not so lasting as former Confederates would have liked to believe, his findings are more likely attributable to a rapid postwar recovery than an insufficiently violent war on the landscape; Paskoff, "Measures of War: A Quantitative Evaluation of the Civil War's Destructiveness in the Confederacy," *Civil War History* 54, no. 1 (2008): 35-62.

general intended to destroy the "agroecological system" that fed Confederate soldiers and citizens alike.[2]

Slavery and the lives of enslaved people were altogether caught up in this world of destruction. As the United States army led raids through the Confederacy, it crippled slavery as a functioning institution and labor regime everywhere it went. If the scarred physical landscape was a reminder of a past that had been intact in 1861 but was now left broken, seemingly beyond repair, it was an outward reminder of a deeper reality. The labor regime for which the Confederacy was born was as ruined as the fencelines and crops that delineated the plantation regime. Sherman's and other armies broke slavery, leaving little in its place.

Sherman's armies broke slavery by waging war on slaves. Sherman fought the Confederacy by bringing war on the South. His armies consumed two types of property above all: transportation infrastructure and food. Food was not simply the property of whites; it was provision for all civilian inhabitants. Sherman's march through Georgia attacked the most productive agricultural zones in the state. This productivity was due to fertile ground and enslaved labor. More than half the population of the counties through which he marched was enslaved. When historians write that on his march Sherman attacked the South, they should be more specific: more than anything other than railroads, he attacked the food of slaves.

Freedom worth its name was not to be found in the ruins Union raids made of slavery. As Sherman's army and several large forces before it marched through various parts of the South they dismantled a system that had oppressed black

---

[2] Nelson, *Ruin Nation*, 2-3; Brady, *War Upon the Land*, 93.

southerners for generations by destroying its food, its transportation network, and its shelter. Such destruction left enslaved people—like other noncombatants— worse off than they had been before armies arrived. The Union war upon the landscape took its toll on slavery and on enslaved people alike. In Sherman's march, the distinction between ending slavery and ending the enslavement of black southerners collapsed. The Union war strategy destroyed the Confederacy by destroying slavery. As it destroyed slavery it left those who had formerly been enslaved either *in situ* without food or turned them into refugees.

The destruction of enslaved people's food, environment, and neighborhoods was not a product of individual racist acts but rather of a military strategy for winning the war. Enslaved people suffered all kinds of abuses on account of the racism of Sherman and his men, who had little respect for black southerners. Yet these episodes of racism were not the main source of most black southerners' suffering. A strategy to crush the rebellion by destroying its economic and agricultural resources could not help but be a strategy directed mostly against black southerners.[3]

---

[3] When the destruction of Sherman's march and other acts of devastation by Union soldiers have been considered as negatively affecting enslaved people, they have most often been considered in light of the racism of Sherman and many of his soldiers. I do not dispute this characterization of the General. But focusing on the virtues of vices of soldiers misses the larger point, that warzones were bad places for enslaved people to find themselves, particularly warzones in which widespread destruction was the most immediate objective. For racism in Sherman's army, see Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*, 50-59; Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North*, 45-49; Davis, *Sherman's March*, 91-94, 131, 135-6. Cf. Lee Kennett, *Marching through Georgia: The Story of Soldiers and Civilians during Sherman's Campaign* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995) 288-289.

The strategy of destructive raids began long before the marches through Mississippi or Georgia. Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman first hatched raiding as a strategy in considering the benefits of Ulysses S. Grant's Vicksburg campaign in October 1862. By capturing the Mississippi, Sherman believed, the United States would have a firm base from which to launch attacks eastward far into Mississippi along any latitude it wished, leaving southern civilians and farmers on edge. The United States military, Sherman argued, ought to abandon hope of occupying the southern interior, instead raiding it and prizing destruction above all else. Sherman believed that the Union army used as an occupying force was at best misspent, at worst placed its men "at great hazard." Spread out in the countryside defending farms, U.S. forces and those they protected were vulnerable to Confederate attack.[4]

Significant raids against the Confederate interior began in early April and continued through the end of the war. In April 1863, Ulysses S. Grant had increasingly looked to damage the logistical capabilities of the defenders at Vicksburg, as Confederates had damaged his the previous year. Maj. Gen. Kirby Smith and the Confederates no longer resupplied Vicksburg from Trans-Mississippi, leaving the Mississippi interior as city's only hinterland. Grant coordinated raids deep into the interior of Mississippi and into northern Alabama, destroying the

---

[4] William T. Sherman to U.S. Grant, Memphis, October 4, 1862, *OR* 17.2, 260-1; on the United States Army as an occupying force, see Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Joseph W. Danielson, *War's Desolating Scourge: The Union's Occupation of North Alabama* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012); Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: the Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Sherman's arguments against occupation are reflected in Lang, "The Garrison War."

Confederate ability to feed itself, in the process implementing General Henry

Halleck's orders to bring in "as much productive labor as possible."[5]

Before sending out such raiders, Grant began with demonstrations intended

to distract Confederates under Pendleton with raids up the great river itself. Maj.

Gen. Frederick Steele left Milliken's Bend two days after Halleck ordered Grant to

expand his initiatives against Confederate economic and labor power. Steele arrived

at Greenville, capturing as many enslaved people there as he could, more than one

thousand, while destroying enough property to ensure that civilians there would in

the future "dread the Yankees' visit." "War is at best barbarism," William T.

Sherman cautioned his colleague Steele, upon reports that he had gathered in a

thousand farm animals and burned half a million bushels of corn, "but to involve

all—children, women, old, and helpless—is more than can be justified." Sherman

sought to walk a fine line between "the destruction of corn or forage and

provisions," which was "well-established law of war," and the plunder of "stores

necessary for a family." While Sherman urged that his fellow commanders and his

own troops guard against "indiscriminate" plunder, it was clear from early April,

1863 that the same act could accord with the destruction of food as a military

necessity, avoid "indiscriminate" plunder, and still leave noncombatants, enslaved

---

[5] Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*, 216-218, 365-367; Stoker, *Grand Design*, 263; Jeffery S. Prushankin, *A Crisis in Command: Edmund Kirby Smith, Richard Taylor, and the Army of the Trans-Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 29; H.W. Halleck to Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant, Washington, March 31, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 156, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24750.

or free, without a way to feed themselves. War on the southern land and economy

without involving all was a figment of Sherman's active pen.[6]

Excess violence emerged from the raiding strategy from the beginning. "We

burnt every thing & took all the Horses Mules & Niggars that we coame acrost,"

wrote one active participant. A correspondent to the *New York Times* admitted that

"the ardor of our soldiers carried them away," leading them to burn first and ask

questions later. Steele was embarrassed at the behavior of his own troops,

eventually returning some of the wagons he had confiscated to their owners, who

surely accepted their goods with a mix of thanks and hate.[7]

As Steele worked to provide recompense for articles his men took without

warrant, and as Abraham Lincoln prepared to release the Lieber Code, troops

reporting to Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks downriver carried their exuberance into

violence against those set free under the Emancipation Proclamation. At New Iberia

the newly promoted Brig. Gen. William Dwight led troops against small detachments

of Confederates who were attempting to prevent the loss of southern Louisiana and

Port Hudson. On April 14 Dwight found "disgusting scenes" of "disorder and

pillage…disgraceful to civilized war." U.S. troops on the march ransacked homes "in

the most wanton manner," they stole jewelry from the "ladies" in the area,

threatening violence against their husbands. They raped enslaved women on the

way to New Iberia "in the presence of white women and children." Confederate

---

[6] Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 151-152; Shea and Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 91-92; W.T. Sherman to Lieut. Col. John A. Rawlins, Camp near Vicksburg, April 19, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 208-209; W.T. Sherman to Maj. Gen. Fred. Steele, Camp before Vicksburg, April 19, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 209-210.
[7] Quoted in Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 152.

women, the soldiers seemed to imply, were helpless to keep the United States from

taking and destroying all they had, up to and including their real property and the

sexuality of those they held in bondage.[8]

U.S. raids into the interior began small. Two raiding parties, one cavalry

brigade of 1,700 men and horses led by Col. Benjamin Grierson and a second,

similarly composed one commanded by Col. Abel D. Streight left simultaneously

from Tennessee.   Grierson headed south through Mississippi. Streight, "destroying

the railroads and other rebel property," moved through northern Alabama,

stretching Confederate defenses of the area thin, using the kinds of simultaneous

actions that had increasingly become a part of the Union's wartime strategy. A third,

led by Brig. Gen. Grenville Dodge comprised of 6,000 infantry and at least 1,500

cavalry moved east from Corinth, through northern Mississippi and Alabama. This

coordinated raid intended to devastate Confederate logistical and communication

support in the region, destroying Confederate rail support in northern Alabama and,

if possible, disrupting the rail link between Chattanooga and Atlanta. Meanwhile

Grierson would move through areas completely untouched by U.S. presence,

[8] Brig. Gen. William Dwight, Jr. to Lt. Col. Irwin, Washington, La., April 15, 1863, *OR* I.15.1, 373, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/24699O. On rape and the Civil War, see Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); while some have emphasized how rare rapes were in the Civil War, I am persuaded by scholars who see sexual violence in enemy territory as an attempt to merge in the most acute ways the battlefront and homefront, enforcing hierarchies on noncombatants and enemies alike in order to extend the power of the government into enemy households. U.S. Military Courts prosecuted at least 450 cases involving sexual crimes. Crystal N. Feimster, "Rape and Justice in the Civil War," April 25, 2013, New York *Times Disunion Blog*, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/25/rape-and-justice-in-the-civil-war/.

destroying Confederate logistical support in order to hasten the fall of the Mississippi River.[9]

Grenville Dodge and Abel Streight's commands met at Tuscumbia, Alabama, after breaking up rail lines in northern Alabama and Mississippi. Dodge attempted to keep Maj. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest's men in check by moving to Courtland, Alabama, allowing Streight's swifter cavalry to move quickly across the state and, they hoped, into Georgia. The ruse failed. Streight battled his way through Alabama, wrecking as many C.S.A. provisions as he could, while attracting 150 enslaved people along the way and fending off the Confederate cavalry with his rearguard. By the time he arrived near the Georgia border, his troops were exhausted, poorly provisioned, and outgunned. Streight surrendered and those who followed him were reenslaved.[10]

Streight's movement into western Georgia opened up space for more effective, simultaneous raids. When Forrest's Confederate cavalry division gave chase to Streight's hobbled command, Dodge's larger, combined infantry and mounted force began destroying what they could. Their punishing attack on northern Alabama left the railroad and telegraph between Courtland and Tuscumbia

---

[9] Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, 89, 310-311, 366-367; Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 184-185; Shea and Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 92-93; Report of Col. Abel Streight, Chattanooga, Tenn., August 22, 1864, *OR* I.23.1, 285-293; Report of Major-General R.J. Oglesby, Jackson, Tenn., May 3, 1863, *OR* I.23.1, 245, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27625.
[10] Report of Col. Abel Streight, Chattanooga, Tenn., August 22, 1864, *OR* I.23.1, 285-293; S. Cooper to General Braxton Bragg, Richmond, Va., May 8, 1863, *OR* I.23.1, 294, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25961; Reports of General Braxton Bragg, Tullahoma, May 5, 1863, *OR* I.23.1, 294, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25960.

in tatters, destroyed 60 flatboats on the Tennessee River and every ferry they encountered. Cows, sheep, and hogs were "captured and used by the thousands," while 900 horses and mules were taken for military use. 1.5 million bushels of corn were burned on top of "large quantities" of other grains, and 500,000 pounds of bacon. The "garden spot of Alabama" was desolate and would be, Dodge assured his superiors, for the coming year. It was no wonder that 1,500 formerly enslaved people joined Dodge on his return to Corinth, to be placed in refugee camps. Leaving was an easy decision when there was not much left.[11]

Such destruction had human consequences. If his estimates were correct, Dodge's troops' raid through Franklin and Lawrence counties, Alabama, destroyed as much corn as those counties harvested in the entire crop of 1859, close to five percent of Alabama's total. The amount of corn consumed by fire was enough to feed the entire enslaved population of northern Alabama, northern Mississippi, and north Georgia, over 100,000 men, women, and children, for a year. The thousands who did not accompany Dodge to U.S. lines were assured a difficult year.[12]

---

[11] Report of Major-General R.J. Oglesby, Jackson, Tenn., May 3, 1863, *OR* I.23.1, 245, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/27625; Reports of Brig. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge, Corinth, Miss., May 5, 1863, *OR* I.23.1, 249, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25645.

[12] Franklin County produced 764967 bushels of corn in 1859 and Lawrence county produced 659666. Alabama produced 33 million bushels of corn that year. I count northern Alabama as all counties bordering the Tennessee River, and those in northern Mississippi and Georgia as those counties touching the northern border of those states, with a combined population of 103,846 slaves. My estimates assume a ration of one peck per week, following Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 178-179. This weekly corn ration was often supplemented with one to three pounds of meat. The corn component of such a ration would provide about 2000 calories per day. Historians debate whether the food allocated to slaves was adequate, but whether it was or was not, the destruction of such quantities did not ease the local or regional food shortage. See also Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time*

As Dodge destroyed much of northwest Alabama, Col. Benjamin Grierson, in Mississippi, according to Ulysses S. Grant, "knocked the heart out of the State." Yet though his raid was described in the press in terms similar to those of Dodge's (Grant's summary of the raid was published by the *New York Times*), the expedition provided stark contrast to the other raids through the Southern interior happening concurrently. Grierson pillaged the transportation infrastructure as he went, "destroying railroads, trestle-works, bridges, burning locomotives and railway stock." His swift cavalry ate their way south through eastern Mississippi. Unlike troops to his North, though, Grierson's cavalry left crops standing in the field, focusing their energy on public property. Moving too quickly and carefully for widespread destruction while also outmaneuvering Pendleton's Confederate cavalry Grierson's cavalry demonstrated that fast-moving raids inland could work, just as Sherman predicted they might.[13]

Sherman had little use, however, for the goodwill Grierson intended to generate as part of his raid. Grierson went out of his way to avoid harming crops or,

---

on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), vol. 1, 109-115, vol. 2, 97; though Herbert Gutman disputes many things in Fogel and Engerman's account, he does not discuss in detail their discussion of food, other than to note that they have more evidence in support of their claims about diet than about other topics. Gutman, *Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of* Time on the Cross (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 12; while Fogel and Engerman believed slaves' diet did not reflect measurable material exploitation, Johnson and other historians doubt this, pointing out the extremely high caloric intake necessary for field work and the benefits of a varied diet, Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams* 463-464 n.7, "Malnutrition, Ecological Risks, and Slave Mortality," in Wilma Dunaway, *The African-American Family in Slavery and Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge, 2003), 84-113; U.S. Census of 1860, courtesy of http://nhgis.org

[13] U.S. Grant to Maj. Gen. H.W. Halleck, Grand Gulf, Miss., May 6, 1863, Via Cairo, Ill., May 8, *OR* I.24.1, 34; Report of Col. B. Grierson, Baton Rouge, La., May 5, 1863, *OR* I.24.1, 521-529; New York *Times*, "Col. Grierson's Cavalry Raid: Official Dispatch from Gen. Grant," Washington, Saturday, May 9.

for that matter, freeing enslaved people in the state. He disarmed and released

civilians who resisted, and without irony, reported that "we showed them the folly

of their actions," at which point they "acknowledged their mistake, and declared that

they had been grossly deceived as to our real character." One Mississippian

Grierson encountered went so far as to offer that "hereafter his prayers should be

for the Union Army," while others "kindly welcomed and fed" the enemy cavalry.

Grierson believed that their raid "produced" a "good effect" on the Mississippian

public, whom he believed was only waiting for the "presence of our arms to sustain

them." The public explanation of Grierson's raid was that he had devastated

Confederate infrastructure and the state more generally, and had completely

demoralized its people. In Grierson's reports, however, he vigorously distinguished

between the destruction of public property, which he believed to be fair game, and

that of private property, which he treated as beyond the rules of war. Though most

of the area had not seen a single Union soldier before Grierson's cavalry rode

through the 600-mile stretch, he closed his report by explaining that "much of the

country through which we passed was almost entirely destitute of forage and

provisions," leading him and his men to ride on a single meal most days. "Many of

the inhabitants of eastern Mississippi," he wrote, "must undoubtedly suffer for want

of the necessaries of life." Though undoubtedly Johnston's Confederates had

marched through some of the area Grierson saw, the Union colonel also seemed to

underestimate how much food could be squeezed out of an area already hungry.[14]

---

[14] Report of Col. B. Grierson, Baton Rouge, La., May 5, 1863, *OR* I.24.1, 525, 527.

William T. Sherman would demonstrate the following winter that eastern Mississippi was not as yet as empty as it could become.

April 1863 marked a turn in the activity of U.S. troops in the West. When Halleck demanded that Grant wage war upon the economic capacity of the Confederacy and specifically to begin to acquire enslaved populations, raids immediately went up the river and into what Thomas Connelly has called "the Confederate heartland." Brig. Gen. Steele, Col. Streight, Brig. Gen. Dodge, and Col. Grierson all commanded nearly simultaneous offensive maneuvers without any intention of holding the territory into which they were marching and riding. They were joined by other, similar raids in Tennessee: that month nearly two hundred refugees accompanied Col. J.T. Wilder (whose "hands" were "full of animals, prisoners, and negroes") back to Murfreesborough from his expedition to Carthage, northeast of Nashville. Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut ordered Brig. Gen. William S. Smith to "bring in all able bodied negroes that choose to come" on his raid south from Memphis into Mississippi after he had burned any "forage and provisions" that he could not use and shoot any horses that tired out, to ensure that Confederates could use neither. "It is hard warfare," Hurlbut wrote, but he had orders to do "as the enemy has done in West Virginia," where hungry Confederates had recently destroyed supplies and transportation infrastructure.[15]

---

[15] Mark Grimsley argues that hard war was not implemented until "at least 1863," Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 3; Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), Bradley R. Clampitt, *The Confederate Heartland: Military and Civilian Morale in the Western Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Report of John I. Wilder, Murfreesborough, April 9, 1863, *OR* I.23.1, 201, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25670; S.A. Hurlbut to Brig. Gen.

U.S. officers in the month after Halleck's missive followed two distinct strategies for raiding. The first took on some but not all of the characteristics of what Mark Grimsley has called "hard war." For Grimsley, hard war was characterized by attacks on "civilians and their property" intended to demoralize them and ruin the Confederate economy, "particularly its industries and transportation infrastructure." It also involved "substantial military resources" to accomplish the work. Though one might debate whether Dodge's or Steele's raids involved "substantial" resources, they certainly did what they could to devastate the economic capabilities of the Confederacy.[16]

This was warfare in excess. Soldiers went beyond the scruples of their commanders, entering into private houses, plundering widely, and ensuring that the terror of war was impressed on the households, women, and children of the Confederacy. Their commanders, though sometimes castigating such actions and in the worst abuses prosecuting them, were just as enamored of the raw power on display. The careful tabulations of bushels of corn destroyed, miles of rail disrupted, and quantity of bacon gobbled up are not the words required by a quartermaster's ledger. The phrasing of exact totals, combined with hyperbolic descriptions of the landscape, was a rhetorical device intended to press upon other military readers the terrible power of the United States military. As the army attacked the Confederate landscape, its devastation—"the desolation," and "barbarism," in the officers'

W.S. Smith, Memphis, Tenn., May 19, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 330, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26280. On the Jones-Imboden raid into West Virginia, April and May 1863, see Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York, Norton, 2003), 392.
[16] Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 3.

words—stamped the lively prose of those who described it. Soldiers and officers alike were in awe of their actions and the strategy they had decided to pursue.[17]

Destructive strategies yielded devastated landscapes, which in turn marked the writing of the commanders who ordered them. Megan Kate Nelson, reflecting on exchanges between soldiers and southern civilians, has suggested that "verbal aggression was...an important component of their hard-war strategy." Charles Royster has paid considerable attention to the ways in which "large numbers of veterans" made "prodigious, sometimes almost obsessive, efforts to convey their experiences to others." Military correspondence and official reports reveal a corresponding pattern. The actions of United States troops causing the most havoc were related in the most energetic prose.[18]

These assaults on the Confederate landscape were often attacks both on slavery as an institution and on the enslavement of particular individuals. They emerged with Halleck's orders implementing the Emancipation Proclamation not simply as a fact of war but as a prompt for a new military strategy. Beginning in April 1863 and then especially in 1864 and 1865, it became incumbent upon officers to use raids to attack the regime of slavery and also to remove enslaved individuals from Confederate power. Such raids would, over time, Halleck and others believed,

---

[17] Reports of Brig. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge, Corinth, Miss., May 5, 1863, *OR* I.23.1, 249, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25645; W.T. Sherman to Maj. Gen. Fred. Steele, Camp before Vicksburg, April 19, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 209-210.
[18] Nelson, *Ruin Nation*, 51; Royster, *Destructive War*, 232; see also Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 36; Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004), 79-102; George Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 79-97; Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1962).

cause the failure of the Confederacy and with it the collapse of all laws that held

slavery in place. Halleck believed that the United States military could accomplish

its goal, the destruction of the Confederacy, by both devastating the landscape and

bringing enslaved men into Union lines, depriving the Confederacy of manpower

and adding male workers and soldiers to their own power. No longer would the

United States be passive in encouraging enslaved people to come into its lines. It

would seek them out and, sometimes, compel them to come away from Confederate

control. And it would ensure that there would be little to eat when they left.[19]

Yet the drive to obtain large numbers of enslaved people for the war effort

was an analytically and practically distinct military project from the drive to end

slavery. The destruction of slavery, as a regime, would come about simply through

victory, since the legality of the institution had already been thrown into question

through presidential proclamation. After the Emancipation Proclamation, slavery

would likely fall with the Confederacy, no matter how many enslaved people came

---

[19] On the turn to hard war and Union victory, see Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, 358-359; Stoker, *Grand Design*, 374; Steven E. Woodworth, *Decision in the Heartland: The Civil War in the West* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 97-99; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 162-164. These and other historians have argued persuasively that the war was won through the military destruction of Confederate war-making capabilities, particularly through the series of Union raids in the western theater that became increasingly destructive in 1864 and 1865. On Confederate defeat because of military, not internal causes, see Gallagher, *The Confederate War*. Other historians, have argued instead that the Confederacy foundered on various internal contradictions, especially along lines of race, class, and gender. See Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*; Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," *Journal of American History* 76 (March 1990): 1200-1228; Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Bell I. Wiley, *The Road to Appomattox* (Memphis: Memphis State College Press, 1956). On compulsion in recruitment, see Emberton, "Only Murder Makes Men."

into Union lines. The number of people uprooted from their homes through the actions of Grenville Dodge, Frederick Steele, or, more impressively, William Tecumseh Sherman, had no intrinsic relation to the end of slavery as a labor or property regime. One of the concurrent raids, in fact, demonstrated that these logically distinct strategies were also practically distinct. One might do significant damage to slavery without waging a war of displacement.[20]

Grierson's raid pointed out a second possibility for future military expeditions. His cavalry raid was restrained in its approach to Confederate private property, long after most commanders had done away with such niceties. Though Grierson relied on foraging, his relatively small cavalry brigade rode with a light touch. Despite laying waste to Confederate transportation infrastructure in the region, Grierson and his soldiers largely left food in Mississippi alone. Future Mississippians could perhaps eat what was in the fields, just not move it easily to places where it would be most useful for Confederate troops.

Grierson's raid was an attack on slavery. His brigade raided deep into Confederate territory, disabling the ability to wage war effectively in much of the

---

[20] After 1862, slavery's fate in the area covered by the Emancipation Proclamation was tied in large measure to the fate of the Confederacy. Yet the end of slavery with Union victory was not altogether a *fait accompli*, since scenarios still existed in which the United States could defeat the Confederacy and leave slavery intact. See Michael Vorenburg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-2. On contingency and the end of slavery with Union victory, see Oakes, *Freedom National*, 421-437 and James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 858-859. Edward L. Ayers, in *In the Presence of Mine Enemies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003) and "Worrying about the Civil War" in *What Caused the Civil War?: Reflections on the South and Southern History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 103-131 has suggested that such accounts are actually layered with only a thin veneer of contingency, but proceed from profoundly teleological assumptions about modernity and liberal democracy.

state of Mississippi after the Emancipation Proclamation. By virtue of its timing and

its geography, it was by definition an assault on the slave regime. In May 1863,

Nathaniel Banks called it "the most brilliant expedition of the war," and Sherman's

praise of Grierson was as high as well, recommending him later to Winfield Scott

Hancock as responsible for "some of the prettiest work in the war." Grierson's

attack dismantled the rail lines by which Pendleton's 20,000 men were fed. By tying

up Pendleton's cavalry for weeks, it purchased time for Grant to make landing on

the eastern shore of the river below Vicksburg unopposed and by Confederate

infantry or cavalry. The befuddled Confederate commander, focused on catching

Grierson, telegraphed the day of the crossing, "Is anything going on at Vicksburg or

Grand Gulf?"[21]

It freed no slaves, however, and Grierson neither sought nor permitted any

enslaved men, women, or children to accompany his rapid, fast-paced, destructive

maneuvers. Grierson's raid created no refugees, leaving black Mississippians

enslaved until war's end. In this, it is not at all clear that the colonel (soon to be

promoted to brigadier-general) did them a disservice. Enslavement in Mississippi

during the Civil War was likely as violent as ever, if not more. Grierson's seeming

---

[21] N.P. Banks to Henry Halleck, May 31, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 367; the Banks quotation has often been attributed to William T. Sherman. See Dee Brown, Grierson's Raid 252 n.4. Sherman quoted in Neil Longley York, *Fiction as Fact: The Horse Soldiers and Popular Memory* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2001), 165 n.16. Pendleton quoted in Shea and Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 104. Numerous historians have called Vicksburg a "turning point" in the war, in which the United States demonstrated that it could soundly defeat Confederate armies in the field, given enough time. See Woodward, *Decision in the Heartland*, 66-67; and Hess, *Civil War in the West*, 157-159. But see Stoker, *Grand Design*, 275. Whether the United States would have maintained the will to win the war was still an open question, only settled with the reelection of Abraham Lincoln in 1864, which had more to do with Sherman's capture of Atlanta than the earlier, successful siege of Vicksburg.

ambivalence to the plight of those enslaved in Mississippi, in this respect, galls the

modern reader. Yet by raiding lightly, attacking infrastructure but not farms,

Grierson at least ensured that the U.S. army was not the agent of their displacement,

lowering their risk of disease or death in battle. He left their material conditions

unscathed, and no black southerners starved on account of his appearance. The war

for the Union often did much worse.

Sherman admired Grierson's deft maneuvers, but did not take the raid to be a

replicable model. Sherman, for good reason, had no faith in the latent unionism of

Confederates. Grant had written to Frederick Steele immediately after his raid on

Greenville, encouraging his subordinate officer: "Rebellion has assumed that shape

now that it can only terminate by the complete subjugation of the South or the

overthrow of the Government. It is our duty therefore to use every means to

weaken the enemy by destroying their means of cultivating their field, and in every

other way possible." Grant believed that an assault on Confederate agriculture—

and, implicitly, the massive dislocation of black southerners—was the only path to

victory. Grierson's combination of destructive raids on infrastructure most

commonly associated with late, "hard war" strategy and his light touch on civilian

property and hopes for conciliation, increasingly uncommon by 1863 left him an

outlier.[22]

Grierson's raid had an outsized impact on Confederates in Mississippi.

Where the cavalry commander saw a light touch, Confederates in the area saw a

---

[22] William T. Sherman to U.S. Grant, Memphis, October 4, 1862, *OR* 17.2, 260-1; Clampitt, *Confederate Heartland*, 7; Grant to Frederick Steele, April 11, 1863, quoted in Stokes, *Grand Design*, 265.

"thieving, plundering" expedition, giving "striking illustrations of Yankee meanness and rascality." There could be no reunion with "a people who war upon women, and plunder unoffending private citizens" as Grierson's raiders did. Slaveowning Mississippians, whose property was left untouched by the raid, took the opportunity to ensure they would not be touched by another. Within weeks of Grierson's exit from the state, Union scouts reported that "everybody in Mississippi" is leaving, fearing what would come next. Confederate civilians, fearing that Grant would push to Okolona and points east, were leaving with as many slaves as they could. "Negroes," an informant reported, were pressed as far from suspected scenes of battle as their owners could force them, "going east by the drove."[23]

Confederates were correct to fear that U.S. troops would spare neither fields nor fieldhands. Col. Florence Cornyn, with a small cavalry force hit Florence, Alabama, as Grant moved on Jackson, taking 500 horses and 200 enslaved men, burning cotton factories along the way. Closer to Vicksburg, Union troops under Grant east of Grand Gulf quickly began "pressing negroes, horses, mules, and provisions," to strengthen the force whose lines of communication were unstable at best. The fertile countryside helped. The secretary of war learned that the countryside around Deer Creek south of Vicksburg, like "everywhere else" in the vicinity, was "rich in corn and cattle," 400 of which made their way to U.S. lines with 300 formerly enslaved men and "a large number of horses and mules." In Jackson, before settling into the siege of Vicksburg, U.S. troops mainly destroyed

---

[23] Macon *Daily Telegraph* May 7, 1863, quoted in York, *Fiction as Fact*, 19; R.J. Oglesby to Lieut. Col. Henry Binmore, Jackson, May 21, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 336, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26900.

transportation and communication infrastructure and were sure to seize all the provisions they could find.[24]

When Sherman revisited the city immediately after the fall of Vicksburg, he implemented harder measures, testing out the strategies employed by Dodge on a larger target. Tasked to "leave nothing of value for the enemy to carry on the war with," Sherman complied. In some ways, this was little different from Sherman and Grant's previous visit, which targeted mainly the communications and transportation network of the junction town. On account of the destruction of the railroad for miles in every direction, the former railroad junction would "cease to be a place for the enemy to collect stores." Yet Sherman's men this time wrecked Jackson with abandon. "In spite of guards," Sherman wrote, his men had "widened the circle of fires" set by retreating Confederates, leaving the place "a ruined town." Despite possessing plenty of food, Sherman began devastating the provisions of the area, "absolutely stripping" the countryside of "corn, hogs, sheep, poultry, everything." Even the shoots of corn not yet ready for harvest were taken as forage for animals. Still, Sherman was careful in his orders to retain rations to guard against the starvation of civilians in the town. [25]

---

[24] W.W. Loring to Lieut. Gen. J.C. Pemberton, Whittaker's, May 12, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 863, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26604; S.A. Hurlbut to H.W. Halleck, Memphis, June 2, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 377, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25618; C.A. Dana to Hon. E.M. Stanton, Behind Vicksburg, June 20, 1863, *OR* I.24.1, 104, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25628; Shea and Winschel, *Vicksburg is Key*, 126.

[25] U.S. Grant to W.T. Sherman, Vicksburg, Miss., July 18, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 528; W.T. Sherman to Admiral David D. Porter, Jackson, Miss., July 19, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 531; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 159; Buck T. Foster, *Sherman's Mississippi Campaign* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 10; R.M. Sawyer, General Orders

After unleashing destruction on Jackson, Sherman and Grant each paused, and for a while at least, seemed to take Grierson's judgments on the readiness of Mississippians to rejoin the Union as their own. By early August, Sherman wrote that he was "ashamed" of "the amount of burning, stealing, and plundering" his troops engaged in, fearful that "we are drifting to the worst sort of vandalism." He was especially infuriated by the destruction of property that "in no way aided our military plans." Finding a scapegoat, he attempted to drum out of the service a major who commanded the burning of a cotton-gin during the return from Vicksburg. The major had been acquitted in his court-martial proceeding because he did not light the match himself. Those who did were acquitted because they did so under orders. Sherman was irate. He urged Grant to "stamp" the unlawful burning or command to burn private property as a crime. "The inhabitants," he told the commanding general, "are subjugated. They cry aloud for mercy."[26]

Sherman believed Confederates in the state to be defeated for about a week that August. Reunion was his goal, and he impressed this upon the civilians with whom he came into contact. "I do not believe we will again have occasion to visit Hinds County," he informed two men from the area who very much wished him to leave. Those who had wives and children in the area were advised "to reorganize a government capable of protecting them" as soon as possible from Confederate

No. 59, Camp, July 17, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 524; W.T. Sherman to Lieut. Col. John A. Rawlins, Camp on Big Black River, August 4, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 574.
[26] W.T. Sherman to Lieut. Col. John A. Rawlins, Camp on Big Black River, August 4, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 574-575; Sherman to Grant quoted in Charles Edmund Vetter, *Sherman: Merchant of Terror, Advocate of Peace* (Gretna, La.: Pelican Pub. Co., 1992), 166; See also W.T. Sherman to Messrs. Jesse Reed, W.B. Anderson, Hinds County Committee, Black River, August 3, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 571-572, "

222

guerrillas, so that the Union soldiers might leave. Sherman had no interest in

remaining in Jackson, believing that armies and civilians did not mix well—soldiers

are intent on "overcoming their opponents," and the "poor people receive very little

consideration at their hands."[27]

Sherman sought to provide safety for civilians by staying away. Given the

choice between Natchez and Big Black for a headquarters, the general chose the

devastated Big Black, near Jackson. "Were we to go to Natchez," he wrote his

brother-in-law, "it would be one endless strife about run away Negros, plundering

and pillaging soldiers and I am sick and tired of it." His men were "all Expert

thieves." Sherman could "have peace here," on the Big Black. "This is beautiful

country, handsome dwellings and plantations, but the negros are gone, houses

vacant fields of corn open to the cattle," everything was consumed after what his

troops did to Jackson. Sherman was more at home in the desolation he had already

created than in a place he had actively to preserve from destruction.[28]

The same first week of August, Grant took remarkable steps toward

guaranteeing the safety and subsistence of civilian populations, going even farther

than Sherman suggested. In General Orders 50, the commanding general

implemented tight controls on appropriation of private property of Mississippians,

ordering that only property "necessary for the Government" would be taken, and

[27] W.T. Sherman to Messrs. Jesse Reed, W.B. Anderson, Black River, August 3, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 571.
[28] W.T. Sherman to Philemon B. Ewing, Camp on Black River, July 28, 1863, Brooks D. Simpson and Jean V. Berlin, eds., *Sherman's Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 507-508; W.T. Sherman to Ellen Ewing Sherman, Army before Jackson, Miss., July 15, 1863, *Sherman's Civil War*, 503.

then only under the direction of a corps commander, under charge of a commissioned officer, and only "with specific instructions to seize certain property and no other. He issued rules "to prevent suffering" in Warren County, surrounding Vicksburg, issuing rations to the destitute there. "Summary punishment" would be inflicted on any soldier or officer "apprehended in acts of violence or lawlessness." Grant's new orders protected civilians caught up in war to a greater extent than had been the case anywhere in the Western theater up to that time.[29]

The second provision in General Orders 50 was a striking implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation. Grant urged Mississippians to "pursue their peaceful avocations," and promised that while they did so, "all United States forces" would be "prohibited from molesting them in any way." Grant's prohibition seemed to include freeing slaves in the area. "It is earnestly recommended," he wrote, "that the freedom of negroes be acknowledged, and that, instead of compulsory labor, contracts upon fair terms be entered into between the former masters and servants," or between former slaves and other potential employers. "Such a system as this," the commander promised, "honestly followed, will result in substantial advantages to all parties."[30]

Grant's offer of freedom to black Mississippians was, on its face, without teeth, yet it held potential benefits. Grant had little interest in replicating Nathaniel Banks' system of leased plantations in Louisiana. Neither he nor Sherman had any affection for the system of refugee camps that served as holding sites for potential laborers. At least under such a regime, former slaves in Mississippi would avoid the

---

[29] General Orders No. 50, Vicksburg, Miss., August 1, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 570.
[30] ibid.

dislocation that was so tightly linked to emancipation as a raiding objective. Grant

offered freedom to slaves without enforcing it. With victory over the Confederacy,

such enforcement would be encoded in law without the coercion and destruction

that seemed to accompany military raids intent on achieving more immediate

emancipation.

Grant's light enforcement of emancipation came with his hope that

Mississippians would begin reconstruction. "In this part of Mississippi," he wrote to

Major-General Stephen Hurlbut, "the people acknowledge themselves subjugated,

the Southern Cause lost." He had seen evidence that they had begun holding

meetings to discuss reentry into the Union. Grant proposed that in addition to

giving rations to civilians, they should send an "expedition" to find laborers to

rebuild the railroad between Grenada and Memphis in order to reopen trade to

much of the state. The soldiers marching through the state, acquiring laborers for

the road would be troops "who will respect the property of people" and would

"advise them what is being done about Jackson and Natchez." "The effect" of such an

expedition, if handled correctly, "might be good." Grant hoped that white

Mississippians would be glad enough to see that the United States had restricted its

foraging parties in devastated places, and enamored enough of the possibility of

trade with Memphis, that they would receive soldiers gladly who were coming to

deploy those they had enslaved on reconstructing railroads.[31]

In the wake of the sack of Jackson, Grant and Sherman seemed to have agreed

that Mississippi had nearly been pacified, that the state had seen enough destruction

---

[31] U.S. Grant to Maj. Gen. Stephen A. Hurlbut, Vicksburg, Miss., August 4, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 575.

of private property, and that wartime emancipation would be implemented by

urging slaveholders and freedmen to come to terms on labor agreements. This

tentative agreement, however, did not last. U.S. restraint had, from the beginning,

been premised upon Confederates ending small-scale and guerrilla warfare in the

region. They did not. Irregular Confederate forces continued to shoot at steamboats

on the great river and continued to raid federal installations. On July 7 a Louisiana

artillery officer fired at a boat. August 4, the day Sherman raged about illicit

destruction and Grant wrote so hopefully of peace in the state, the *Ruth*, a civilian

steamship, was set ablaze at Columbus, Kentucky, burning with it the bills that were

to pay Grant's Army of the Tennessee. More attacks followed.[32]

By September, Sherman had changed his mind. He wrote to general-in-chief

Henry W. Halleck that a quick reconstruction, in which civilians in Louisiana and

Mississippi had a say in their own affairs would be foolish, a civil government now,

"ridiculous." The only government "needed or deserved" in the states of the lower

Mississippi "now exists in Grant's army." This government and its officers must be

able to "penetrate into the innermost recesses of their land," otherwise southerners

will not submit. If any resist the government, "they do so at their peril," and those

who merely look on at the resistance "have no right to immunity" from war. War

must be brought upon the entire South, because "the army of the Confederacy is the

South," as he wrote his brother later that year. If the army and the South were

identical, then waging war on the land would yield victory over the Confederacy.[33]

---

[32] Foster, *Mississippi Campaign*, 11; Hess, *War in the West*, 163;
[33] William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of William T. Sherman* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1875), vol. 1, 335-343; Foster, *Mississippi Campaign*, 10-11. Sherman was

Sherman was wrong, of course. The South was not the army. The counties of Mississippi he would soon devastate had more than 50,000 slaves in 1860, more than half the population there. Sherman meant to see that the South was held responsible for the actions of Confederates in arms, and in doing so would wage war on the material conditions of southern blacks most of all.[34]

As Sherman ruminated on whether and how to hold civilians responsible for the actions of a force under arms, Grant began to see that if nothing else, civilian targets and military targets were strategically related. He accelerated a change in policy long in the making. Seizing enslaved people became essential to the Union's turn from a war premised upon the annihilation of armies in the field to a war of exhaustion. Annihilation of enemy armies in open battle had proved difficult, if not impossible in this and other mid-nineteenth century wars. The purposeful deprivation of enslaved laborers from the Confederacy was not a significant factor in such a strategy. Exhaustion, however, seizes as its immediate objectives not the destruction of armies but a destruction of the resources on which those armies depend. Soldiers without food, shoes, and ammunition rarely fight well. The Union blockade had such a goal in mind from the beginning, and Grierson's raid and Grant's movement to Jackson had forced Confederates at Vicksburg into privation.[35]

Exhaustion, though, also posed a problem for U.S. troops. Exhaustion, Grant believed, may need to come about through the capture of territory. With the

likewise incorrect about the effectiveness of warfare aimed at Confederate morale. See Gallagher, *Confederate War*, and Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North*, 69-74.
[34] Census of 1860.
[35] This discussion of raiding follows Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, 489-493. See also Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 162-166;

capture of territory, the United States would be required to deploy increasingly large numbers of soldiers to garrison hostile territory. Effectively defending the Mississippi and its plantations had proven difficult, nearly impossible for U.S. troops. Defending a much larger area would not be possible, even with the recruitment of tens of thousands of black and southern unionist soldiers. The South was too big.

Grant's solution to the size of the South was not to occupy it, but to raid it. Unlike the raids of April 1863, the new attacks would not simply penetrate into the South, they would deal lasting damage. They were to take their cue from Sherman's return to Jackson, which destroyed the Mississippi Central railroad so thoroughly "that the enemy will not even attempt its reconstruction."[36] This kind of devastation would not rely on the movements of a small cavalry brigade, operating in near-secrecy as Grierson's did. It required a large army capable of large-scale destruction. Such a force had the added benefit of being able, not just to wreck Confederate infrastructure, but to devour as it moved along a much wider track and burn what it left behind.

Sherman had an army of such size at his disposal. The operations of the Vicksburg Campaign provided what Sherman had been hoping for since the previous fall, a basis for operations from which to raid the Confederate interior. His assault of Jackson was only prefatory to a larger attack. It began in February 1864, just before planting season.

---

[36] Sherman quoted in Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 159.

Sherman marched, he claimed, through a fifty-mile-wide corridor connecting Vicksburg and Meridian along the Mississippi Central, casting "a swath of desolation" that the "present generation" of the state "will not forget." On this march "nearly all dwellings were burned" and all cotton gins and public property destroyed. The fields were "left fenceless" and foragers returned with plenty. Though they left with some provisions, at least some regiments ran out of provisions early on, leaving them to forage, especially looking for warehouses and granaries in the towns they passed, burning them after ensuring they were empty. "Everything of an edible nature" in Brandon, east of Jackson, was taken, no different than the other small towns dotting the rails leading to Meridian. The troops lived off the land, turning some into connoisseurs of southern ham, others into arsonists, and still others into both. Upon reaching the junction town, Federal troops found twenty thousand bushels of corn, among other supplies, carrying with them what they did not eat. The Union infantry, by the time they left Meridian and began the return march westward, 20 miles north of their eastern track, were too hungry to burn much food.[37]

The cavalry was not so hungry. Men in Brig. Gen. William Sooy Smith's failed expedition into northeast Mississippi burned relatively little of the corn it found in the fields, instead looked for the tenth of corn set aside for public purpose by order

---

[37] W.T. Sherman to Major-General H.W. Halleck, On board Diana, February 29, 1864, *OR* I.32.2, 498, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25636; Hosea Whitford Rood, *Story of the Service of Company E: And the Twelfth Wisconsin Regiment, Veteran Volunteer Infantry, in the War of the Rebellion: Beginning with September 7th, 1861, and ending with July 21st, 1865* (Milwaukee, WI: Swain and Tate Co., 1893), 247; Foster, *Mississippi Campaign*, 68, 116; Woodworth, *Decision in the Heartland*, 97-98.

of the Confederate government. Estimates of the amount found ranged from 200,000 to 2,000,000 bushels, and all they found they lit, until the "sky was red with the flames of burning corn and cotton." Much of this was burned by the enslaved men who "came *en masse* from every plantation" after setting fire to the food stored at home. Maj. George Waring estimated that two thousand joined their cavalry unit in two days alone.[38]

Sherman quantified the number of women and children returning to the banks of the Mississippi with him as "about ten miles of negroes," in lines stretching as long as his brigades.[39] Hundreds came in from the beginning of the raid, 5,000 by the end, few of them laboring men. In the words of a Wisconsin soldier, they "seemed to think that to go with us meant to be free." Leaving at that stage of the journey, with three hundred miles to walk, ensured hardship. "There is no doubt," the enlisted man wrote of the younger slaves, "that they suffered more during their ill-advised escapade than they ever did in bondage."[40] Yet they made the two- to three hundred-mile journey. Even the remnants of General W. S. Smith's ill-fated forces, scattered by a Confederate cavalry charge, returned to the river with 1,500 men, women, and children in their train, dogged throughout by Nathan Bedford

---

[38] Report of Geo. E. Waring, Jr., Camp Grierson, Tenn., March 7, 1864, *OR* I.32.1, 270; Report of Wm. Sooy Smith, Memphis, Tenn., February 26, 1864, *OR* I.32.1, 252; George Edwin Waring, Whip and Spur (Boston, J.R. Osgood, 1875), 112.
[39] W.T. Sherman to Major-General H.W. Halleck, On board Diana, February 29, 1864, *OR* I.32.2, 498, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25636.
[40] Rood, *Story of Company E*, 245.

Forrest's cavalry, though just as many were "unable to keep up" and found themselves left to the mercy of Confederates.[41]

The tactics of enslaved people on these marches varied from farm to farm. Some found it in their best interests to leave, and were very pleased to do so. Those accompanying Smith's cavalry seemed to have little hesitation about following the men on horseback, even burning the corn cribs of food reserved for local use on their former farms, perhaps as a surety that others enslaved on their plantations followed them, perhaps as vengeance for those who had held them as slaves. Enslaved women and children seemed as eager to join Sherman's forces as Smith's cavalry, even if the Major General was less than pleased that they did so. When questioned upon their arrival in the column why they had joined, most seemed to respond with enthusiasm, even "shouts, and careless laughter," while others came into the lines with "tears of thankfulness." Yet this enthusiasm dulled over time, as the miles and skipped meals piled up.[42]

From descriptions of Sherman and enlisted men, those who walked with the infantry column were overwhelmingly women and girls of all ages, though plenty of old men and young boys accompanied the train, too. Between U.S. and Confederate efforts at conscription and impressment in central Mississippi, few men were left to see the Union raid. "You will…encourage all negroes," Grant had written his subordinates during the fast-paced movements of April 1863, "particularly middle-aged males," to come within U.S. lines. Ten months later, 5,000 former slaves

---

[41] Danl. Butterfield to Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant, Memphis, February 26, 1864, *OR* I.32.2, 478, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25621.
[42] Rood, *Story of Company E*, 250; Foster, *Mississippi Campaign*, 152.

returned with the Army of the Tennessee. Before the war, the counties through which Sherman marched had about six times that number of slaves, assuming all males between the ages of eighteen and forty-three had left and a similar number of women, children, and elderly had done the same. If these very rough estimates are correct, Sherman likely encountered a space in which thirty thousand or so black southerners were living.[43]

Assuming such rough figures, one out of six of these went with him. Whether one out of six leaving their homes on a large-scale march when given the chance seems like a great number depends on the historian's perspective and expectations. It was certainly a larger proportion than followed most other movements of U.S. troops. Undoubtedly those who came were glad they did when they made the choice to leave. The possibility of being rid of their masters certainly gave many an impetus to move with Sherman, as did the evident lack of food available to U.S. troops, Confederate sympathizers, or enslaved women in the war-torn area. However glad they were to leave, they also quickly found themselves impoverished, displaced people living in cramped, disease-ridden camps along the great river. The Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, reporting on the northern papers, could barely conceal its glee at the state of the "women and children" coming into Vicksburg, "almost half

---

[43] The black population of the counties through which Sherman and his troops marched was 54,734 in 1860, very few of them free. Of that number, the male population of fighting age was a little more than 12,000 and was highly sought after by both Union and Confederate armies. If we imagine that before February 1864 the same number of women and children left, with little or no encouragement from federal troops or Confederates, a conservative figure for the enslaved population of those counties would be approximately 30,000.

starved and naked….They were free to perish." Few good options were available to

enslaved people living where armies tread.[44]

Sherman followed up his march on Meridian with more famous exploits,

during which he lay down exacting specifications for what was to be taken and what

spared. After laying waste to Atlanta, he ordered his troops to march "about fifteen

miles a day" on the way to Savannah. The Armies of the Tennessee and of Georgia,

comprised of a total of fourteen divisions and 62,000 men would, in his words,

"forage liberally" on their way southeast.   Though the system soon broke down,

each brigade commander would organize "a good and sufficient foraging party"

responsible for acquiring "corn or forage of any kind, meat of any kind, vegetables,

corn-meal" enough for ten days' provisions. Any time a brigade halts, soldiers

would be free to enter nearby (but not distant) fields to gather vegetables and

livestock. Each family was to be left "a reasonable portion for their maintenance."[45]

Sherman could have legally refused them even that. The Lieber Code, issued

by Abraham Lincoln as General Orders 100, specified that "it is lawful to starve the

hostile belligerent, armed or unarmed, so that it leads to the speedier subjection of the

enemy." Though it did not permit the purposeful starvation of unarmed, potential allies,

neither did Francis Leiber's rules of war, the title of which was officially "Instructions

For the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field," give any guidance on

---

[44] U.S. Grant to Maj. Gen. Fred. Steele, Milliken's Bend, La., April 11, 1863, *OR* I.24.3, 186-187, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/26197; W.T. Sherman to Major-General H.W. Halleck, February 29, 1864, *OR* I.32.2, 498-499, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25636; Rood, *Story of Company E*, 245; Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, "The Tender Mercies of the Wicked," page 1, col. 6, June 11, 1864.
[45] Special Field Orders, No. 120, In the Field, Kingston, Ga., November 9, 1864, *OR* I.39.3, 713; Glatthaar, March to the Sea, 121.

how to distinguish between belligerents and the slaves those belligerents held in

bondage.[46]

By abandoning his supply lines and engaging in a sustained raid, Sherman

was fully committed to foraging for his 60,000 men between November 1864 and

the end of his southern raids, which, except for a brief interlude in Savannah, would

last until the end of the war. Before setting out, they filled hundreds of wagons of

food from the Atlanta hinterland with 2,000,000 pounds of corn, costing "nothing a

bushel" for foragers but considerably more to the enslaved and free inhabitants of

the area.[47] After leaving Atlanta, foragers quickly found the land less generous.

Larger plantations devoted fewer crops to foodstuffs. There was less food for

everyone, soldier and civilian alike. The forage parties, usually entire companies of

men designated for the duty once the brigade system broke down, had to work

harder and stretch their power farther from the lines to find enough food to take.

Parties ranged up to fifteen miles from the road along which their corps marched in

either direction, leaving as much as a sixty-mile wake picked clean.[48] Altogether, the

foraging parties scored a tremendous amount of food. The Army of the Tennessee

estimated that it had gathered 4.5 million pounds each of corn and fodder, while the

Army of Georgia procured about five million.[49]

[46] General Orders No. 100, April 24, 1863, *OR* III.3, 150; John Fabian Witt, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History* (New York: The Free Press, 2012).
[47] Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*, 121; W.T. Sherman to General Slocum, In the Field, Gaylesville, Ala., October 23, 1864, *OR* I.39.3, 406; W.T. Sherman to General George H. Thomas, In the Field, Gaylesville, Ala., October 23, 1864, *OR* I.39.3, 408.
[48] Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*, 121-124.
[49] Report of Maj. Gen. O.O. Howard, Savannah, Ga., December 28, 1864, *OR* I.44, 75-76, 159.

We have fewer reports of starving slaves than of Confederate families on Sherman's marches. The confrontations between soldiers and families over food were understood by both as being contests over the edible property of white women and children of the Confederacy. Yet enslaved people who did not accompany the Union troops to Savannah surely suffered as much as white families did, and were implicit targets of showdowns over food. "Us looked for the Yankees…like us look now for de Savior," wrote one former slave along Sherman's march into South Carolina. "Dey come one day in February. Dey took everything carryable off the plantation." "All us had to thank them [the Yankees] for was a hungry belly, and freedom." Amy Perry summed the situation up succinctly, years later. "de white folk hab to live wherebber dey kin', and dey dodn't hab enough to eat…de cullered people dodn't hab nuttin' to eat neider."[50]

Sherman recognized implicitly that black southerners had claims on whatever provisions existed, but there was not enough both for his army and for the enslaved inhabitants of the region. His exchange with one older enslaved man is telling. The man understood that "though we professed to be fighting for the Union, he supposed that slavery was the cause, and that our success was to be his freedom." Sherman confirmed this and told the former slave how he believed black Georgians should act in light of this fact. "I then explained to him that we wanted the slaves to remain where they were, and not to load us down with useless mouths,

---

[50] On white southerners and starvation, see Joan Cashin, "Hungry People in the Wartime South: Civilians, Armies, and the Food Supply," in *Weirding the War: Stories from the Civil War's Ragged Edges*, ed. Stephen Berry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 160-175; enslaved Carolinians quoted in Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North*, 47.

which would eat up the food needed for our fighting-men." He was gratified that the man carried the message to his friends, which "saved us from the great danger" of "famine." Instead, he was able to leave the famine behind and move on. Sherman meant to win the competition between black southerners and the Union army for food on his march. He knew that the best way to accomplish this fact was to leave them in the space he had denuded.[51]

Many African Americans refused to be left behind to starve. More often than not, they greeted the Union soldiers with open arms. The scene was familiar to Sherman's men from their time in Mississippi. They saw those whose enslavement had just ended "frantic with joy." "We went to sleep one night with a plantation full of negroes," one Georgian remembered, "and woke to find not one on the place." For many soldiers, perhaps recalling the Meridian march, the joy Georgia blacks experienced upon encountering the troops was befuddling. "They are all looking for freedom but dont seem to know just what freedom means." Others were moved at the sight of black southerners finding a force stronger than slavery. Seeing the joy with which they were received was "anough to start the tears on a pretty hard fase," one soldier wrote back to Wisconsin. W.E.B. DuBois, no less moved at the dawn of freedom, was less optimistic. Considering the event fifty years later, those following Sherman seemed like a "dark human cloud that clung like remorse" to the rear of the swift columns, "a starved and naked horde."[52]

---

[51] Sherman, *Memoirs*, 181.
[52] Sherman, *Memoirs*, 181; Myrta Lockhart Avary quoted in Kennett, *Marching through Georgia*, 292; soldiers quoted in Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*, 53; W. E. B. Dubois, "Of the Dawn of Freedom" in *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1903]), 11.

Poor treatment by U.S. soldiers was a constant source of annoyance and more for African Americans on the march. Soldiers in Sherman's column jeered them, threatened them, occasionally raped or killed them. At Ebenezer Creek, hundreds were left behind (the Confederates claimed 2,000) and re-enslaved when commander Jefferson C. Davis cut the pontoon bridge, while others braved the deep creek rather than be taken back. Those who were able to make it to Savannah were the worse for wear.[53]

Of course, not all left their Georgia farms and not all who left made it to Savannah. The counties through which Sherman cut his sixty-mile swath contained over 90,000 enslaved men, women, and children. Though no one knew exactly how many ended up following the troops, Maj. Gen. Henry Slocum, commander of the Army of Georgia, guessed that a total of 14,000 men, women, and children fell in behind one of the two U.S. infantry columns "at different points in the march." "More than half" of the 14,000 arrived safely in Savannah. Georgia had never been a recruitment center for enslaved laborers, Union or Confederate, and few Confederates were in position to mount a concerted evacuation ahead of Sherman's column. On his march to the sea, as in the walk through Meridian, it is likely that about one out of six enslaved people in the district seemed to have joined the march.[54]

---

[53] Jeer, threaten, Kennett, *Marching through Georgia*, 291-292; rape, Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North*, 46; murder, Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*, 58; J. Wheeler to Lieut. Col. T.B. Boy, *OR* I.44, 410, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/#event/25977.
[54] Report of H.W. Slocum, Savannah, Ga., January 9, 1864, *OR* I.44, 159; Kennett, *Marching through Georgia*, 293-298.

Some historians have used the numbers of enslaved people coming into U.S. lines as a standard by which we might understand how many enslaved men, women, and children "had taken advantage of the proclamation's promise." The benefit of such numbers, according to James Oakes, is that "they closely track" those whose "emancipations were most legally secure: those who were actually freed by the war." To write of "actual freedom" in this way, though, is more confusing than helpful, because it collapses distinctions between the end of slavery, which was settled for all those enslaved in the Confederacy Union victory in 1865, with the timing and accounting of when enslaved people came under U.S. control. The difference is crucial. By focusing on the status of enslaved people at various points in the war, rooting for the progress of freedom, we shift attention away from important questions about the nature of wartime freedom. Much of the literature has read military emancipation as comedy, the story of the surprising rise in fortune of its protagonists. Emancipation marked by war is better understood in the tragic mode.[55]

These numbers might instead symbolize the destruction of war and the horrors of slavery. Enslaved people had four years to gather intelligence about what wartime "freedom" meant. Some surely did not know what to expect upon reaching Union lines. Many others, we might suspect, knew the hardship they were taking on. That as many as one out of six left their farms and families anyway is a testament to

---

[55] Bruce Levine, "Flight and Fight: The Wartime Destruction of Slavery, 1861-1865" in David Blight, *Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in History and Memory* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 221; Oakes, *Freedom National*, 421.

two troubles: the lifetime of slavery many had already experienced, and the odds they faced if left behind with what food Sherman's soldiers left them.

Some black southerners resisted the appropriation of food they might themselves consume. Some foragers would take them aside to find out whether food was being hid, ask him where the food was. They would "show him a revolver," and if he told them where it was, they would find it. If he still refused, they would let him away. Though enslaved men and women were often jealous of the food, they were more likely to allow U.S. troops to burn cotton on the plantations. When a soldier asked one older enslaved man why he had set the cotton blazing behind him on fire, he responded he hadn't, but was glad the soldiers had, since it would surely have done him little good anyway.[56]

Sherman's strategy for raiding imagined slaves not as people, civilians whose political agency might be taken into account, but as a property of the landscape, perhaps not unlike one of his infantrymen, who marveled at Georgia's "wonderful crops of negroes and yams." He was not interested in an alliance between African Americans and the U.S. army. Sherman fought not simply "hostile armies, but a hostile people," eliding non-belligerents and potential allies among the slaves. It was unclear from his orders whether allowing "each family" a portion of their food for subsistence covered enslaved families as well, but given the large number of enslaved families living on the largest plantations, it is likely that he intended no

---

[56] Fleharty, *Our* Regiment, 112, 139-140; Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*, 126.

provision for them. Regardless, this section of his rules governing the march was observed in the breach, especially as the troops became hungrier.[57]

Some of the men on the march distinguished between the property of rich and poor whites. Wealthier Georgians were widely presumed to have been more ardently secessionist, and so were deemed a fairer target. Enslaved people, as civilians attached to the wealthiest households, were actually the *most* likely targets of such a raiding policy, one meant to destroy both the provisions and the will of the South.[58]

For Sherman, the important characteristics of the landscape were determined by the political sensibilities of the whites who lived there and the amount of food that it might provide the Confederate army. Making "Georgia howl," as he put it, was intended to be an assault most of all on those who supported the Confederacy and, through them, on the armies of the Confederacy. Though Grant showed less enthusiasm for moralizing about war guilt, he agreed with Sherman that the crops in the state, as much as the railroads, were a worthy military target.

---

[57] Stephen Fleharty, *Our Regiment: A History of the 102d Illinois Infantry Volunteers* (Bedford, Mass.: Applewood Books, 1865), 112; W.T. Sherman to Henry W. Halleck, December 24, 1864, in Sherman, *Sherman's Civil War*, 776; Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*, 133.

[58] Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*, 141; Sherman divided Mississippians into four classes before the Meridian campaign, and these thoughts likely are not dissimilar to his thoughts on Georgians a year later. Poor and middling whites "probably numbering three-quarters of the whole" were "hardly worth a thought." He had "little respect" for "the Union men of the South," who "give us no assistance" but whose resources "are in the army against us." The planters and "young bloods," the latter "dangerous subjects in every sense," were the ones to worry about. The planters, he believed, could be convinced to submit with more warfare. Their sons "hate the Yankees *per se*" and needed to be either killed or employed "when the resources of their country are exhausted." [Private and Confidential] W.T. Sherman to H.W. Halleck, Camp on Big Black, September 17, 1863 in Sherman, *Memoir*, 337-338.

The premise for each was that this food would soon find its way to the Confederate army, or at the very least would be consumed by Confederate sympathizers. In discussing northern Georgia, Sherman remarked that the area was nearly devoid of slaves, and reasoned that they had all been sent to the southwestern part of the state. His political reading of the rest of the Georgia landscape seemed to assume that it was similarly devoid of black southerners. This was not the case.[59]

Historians have framed the targets of Sherman's march in a number of ways. Arguments about whether Sherman's warfare was "total" or "hard" or in some way "modern" are perhaps less fruitful than arguments about the objects and targets of his marches, both implicit and explicit. For Joseph Glatthaar, Sherman's particular kind of warfare was both retaliatory and "the most effective means of winning the war." In this destructive warfare, Sherman "concentrated much of his army's destructive strength against what he loosely defined as military targets and contraband of war," anything that could conceivably aid the Confederate war effort. Lee Kennett did not see as much evidence of revenge, but added that "evidence of

---

[59] W.T. Sherman to Lieutenant-General Grant, In the Field, Allatoona, Ga., October 9, 1864, *OR* I.39.3, 162. Historians have long been aware of the differences between the nouns "Confederacy" and "South," and the differences have been the subject of interesting work on divisions in southern political life. They find their most acute expression in William W. Freehling, *The South Vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*. These insights have not been carried to their logical conclusions when thinking about the United States' strategy for winning the war. Instead, scholars interested in the limits of warfare have turned to ideas of just war and proportionality, the sense in which U.S. officials waged unfair war against Confederates. The prospects of enslaved people in war and emancipation itself have been marginal to these discussions. See Royster, *Destructive War*; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*; Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*.

cruelty to slaves" and possessions of leading secessionists marked particular non-

military items for attack—the targets of the march coincided with northerners'

belief about war-guilt. For Charles Royster, Sherman's object was nothing less than

reunification. By "killing and wounding so many soldiers on both sides," and by

"violently intimidating and punishing Southern civilians," Sherman sought to fuse

the sections into a nation through the force of the state. Yet in Royster's telling,

"Southern" means "the proponents of war that would sustain secession."[60]

In each of these narratives, the targeting of devastation, food, public

property, transportation, and so on, is tightly coupled with the intention of either

Sherman or his men. Sherman's actions, in this framework, affected first and

foremost those he intended to act against: first, supporters of the Confederacy;

indirectly, the Confederate army. Slippage and excess in this assault on the

Confederacy, individual assaults on African Americans or theft of their property,

racist acts, even the abandonment of hundreds at Ebenezer Creek are, in this

reading, depressing reminders that white northerners were often racist, but they

are incidental to the campaign. Even more recent histories that emphasize the ill fit

between the goals of emancipation and the treatment of African Americans on

Sherman's campaigns or that emphasize the destruction of the landscape work in a

framework in which black southerners were marginal to both the objectives and the

targets of Sherman's army.[61]

---

[60] Glatthaar, *March to the Sea*; xii, 136; Kennett, *Marching through Georgia*; 277-279; Royster, *Destructive War*, xi-xii, 322.

[61] Jacqueline Glass Campbell's excellent *When Sherman Marched North*, takes pains to demonstrate that enslaved people reacted in complex ways to Sherman's soldiers in South Carolina and shows that many of the interactions between U.S. soldiers and

An interpretive framework that envisions those most affected by the march as marginal to it seems to me to be mistaken. By focusing our attention on property rather than provisions, it is easy to forget that those most immediately touched by Sherman's soldiers, regardless of their intentions, were enslaved, if only because most of the people living in the Georgia through which they marched were held in bondage. Sherman chose his route carefully, "after poring over census reports of farm production county by county," as one scholar put it, perhaps creating his own version of the newly invented choropleth map of statistical data. He sought the richest places, wealth in land built on the labor of slaves. Most of the inhabitants of the counties he entered were enslaved.[62]

Sherman's raid was an attack on the Confederacy. It aligned with Grant's strategy of exhaustion, in which both transportation infrastructure and, for good measure, the produce of the fields were the primary military targets to ensure that

African Americans were unpleasant. Yet by framing the march as "an invasion of geographic and psychological space," she is thinking primarily in terms of the psyches of white southerners and their ability to sustain the Confederacy. I am more interested in the material conditions accompanying the raid, how Sherman implemented a strategy that led directly to an assault on the stomachs of hungry black southerners. *When Sherman Marched North*, 4, 44-50; For Sherman targeting the landscape, see Lisa M. Brady, *War upon the Land*, 93-126; such an interpretation, by focusing on the material conditions of the landscape, something black and white southerners had in common, gets closer to what I see as a proper accounting of his extended raid.

[62] Burke Davis, *Sherman's March*, 27; Abraham Lincoln supposedly used the first such map of slavery in the South to trace the military's maneuvers and judge when U.S. soldiers entered land "where slaves are thickest." "We ought to get a 'heap' of them," the commander-in-chief remarked, upon tracing Kilpatrick's 1864 raid near Richmond. Tellingly, Kilpatrick's raid was a failure, and any enslaved people who went with the brash cavalryman would certainly have been better off had they never encountered him. Susan Schulten, "Cartography of Slavery and the Authority of Statistics" *Civil War History* 56, no. 1 (2010): 5-32. The enslaved population of the counties through which Sherman marched was 91,177, 52% of the total population.

the Confederate army would no longer be able to sustain itself. Despite vague

accounts to the contrary, relatively few private residences in the countryside were

burned, few civilians were murdered, few fields set ablaze, and few if any white

women were raped.

Since this policy developed after the Emancipation Proclamation, it was also

a policy targeting slavery. Neither Grant nor Sherman imagined a postwar world in

which black southerners would be re-enslaved, particularly not by those who had

aligned themselves against the federal government. "Slavery is already gone,"

Sherman wrote his commander in the fall of 1863, and told any enslaved person

who would listen on the Savannah Campaign that "Our success was their assured

freedom." Any policy for victory was a policy against slavery. More to the point, his

devastation of the countryside disrupted completely the labor relations of the

regions through which he marched. The ability of southern whites to maintain a

system of chattel slavery was crippled where there was neither food nor

transportation.[63]

If Sherman's raid was, in this way, warfare waged against the Confederate

state and against slavery, it was also warfare waged against slaves. Strategies that

sought so thoroughly to wreck a society built on slavery could not help but have the

sustenance of enslaved people as its primary targets, if for no other reason than the

fact that in many of the places on which such warfare was waged, they made up

more than half the inhabitants. When Sherman wrote of inflicting harm on "the

South," readers should take him at his word—he meant not certain white

---

[63] W.T. Sherman to H.W. Halleck, Camp on Big Black, Mississippi, September 17, 1863, in Sherman, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, 336-337, vol. 2, 181.

southerners, but them all and their slaves and the landscape, too. In Sherman's

campaign of exhaustion, white and black civilian targets were materially

indistinguishable. The distinction between slavery as a regime and the enslavement

of individuals collapsed with Sherman's attack on both.

Black and white southerners both looked for freedom in the Civil War. Both mainly found that war brought with it coercion and death. White southerners failed to find the kind of national freedom for which they seceded. By the end of the war, black southerners found freedom everywhere and nowhere, all at the same time. Working out one's freedom in the South, it turned out, was most possible in peace. Emancipation would be a process constructed out of the patterns of wartime emancipation. The patterns of war left their imprint on the geography of postwar Reconstruction.

Early Union presence, if the war was otherwise kept at bay, lay the groundwork for decisive, potentially radical black politics in Reconstruction. Beaufort, South Carolina, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Hampton, Virginia, all were occupied early on with little resistance and then were spared fighting for the remainder of the war. These places quickly became among the most important sites of black political activity in the postwar South.

The widespread destruction experienced by many, but not all places in the South had severe short-term consequences and, according to economic historians, rather mixed longer term ones. Crop failure was rampant in 1865. Starvation in Georgia and other states would have been, too, if not for intervention of federal and

state governments. A public food distribution center in Atlanta served as many as

35,000 people that winter. Yet by 1870, Paul Paskoff has argued, counties ravaged

by U.S. troops were no worse off, comparatively, than counties they never passed

through. In the long term, economic historians have suggested that the main

culprits for southern poverty were global commodity markets, not war. Yet the

fluctuations of those markets themselves do not function outside of history. The

interruption of the cotton market sparked by war, burning, and the blockade

sparked lasting changes in the "worldwide web of cotton."[1]

The rapid and frequent movement of black men, women, and children across

the South disrupted plantation neighborhoods and had profound but still unknown

effects for political mobilization afterward. More research is still required to test

whether the presence of armies had an effect on the characteristics of local political

leaders. It is clear, however, that in many places the disruption of war created space

for new, charismatic men and women, who were until after the war unfamiliar to

local communities, to take on roles of leadership in Reconstruction.

The geography of military recruitment worked to curtail the impact of black

military service on Reconstruction politics. The states in which slaves made up the

smallest proportion sent the largest proportions of their slaves into the army.

Missouri and Kentucky contributed far more of their slaves to the war effort than

---

[1] *Annual Cyclopedia*, 1865, 392; Paskoff, "Measures of War;" Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation*, 2d ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 40-45, 50-55; Gavin Wright, "Cotton Competition and the Post-Bellum Recovery of the American South," *Journal of Economic History* 12 (Sept. 1974): 610-35; Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *AHR* 109 (Dec. 2004): 1405-1438.

any other state, yet African Americans played less of a role in postwar politics there than elsewhere, simply because they were far outnumbered by whites. Moreover, these were Union states, which underwent no military reconstruction. Resurgent white conservatives quickly took control of both state governments. In places like South Carolina, the most prominent Union veterans in politics were born in the North. Black troops had tremendous influence at the local level and could serve to radicalize districts where they were serving in early Reconstruction, but black veterans' direct involvement in postwar reconstruction built on unhelpful wartime geographic patterns.

Despite the mixed prospects for Reconstruction black southerners inherited from the sectional conflict, wartime emancipation could have been far more tortuous than it was. U.S. soldiers and plantation managers could have been more coercive and exploitive than they were, perhaps even allowing corporal punishment. The campaigns of greatest devastation took up a great deal of territory but were limited in duration and number. It did not have to be so. William T. Sherman proposed an invasion of Louisiana and Arkansas modeled on his Meridian campaign, a proposal that went nowhere. Sherman could have burned, as Philip Sheridan did in the Shenandoah Valley, a decision that would have disproportionately affected whites but which would not have left enslaved families unscathed. In the upper South, Sheridan's campaigns against the Valley could have been expanded to other regions. While his soldiers ate most of the available food on his trek and abused people of color often enough, this was no campaign of murder. Had his soldiers been free or, worse, commanded to murder and rape southern whites, there is little

doubt that this violence would have been visited at least as much upon southern

blacks. But none of these things happened.[2]

Emancipation, like the war through which it came about, was shot through,

not only with what Rienhold Niebuhr called "moral meaning," but with situations

that confounded expectations at every turn. Southern whites seceding for the sake

of slavery destroyed it. Their government traded their slaves for their continued

right to enslave. United States. Congress, by 1865, declared black southerners set

free whether they had escaped slavery earlier or not. Their freedom, in this sense,

depended upon the success of a war fought for Union. Armies of liberation, by 1865,

gave no advantage. The double irony of the Union army in emancipation was that in

order to set them free, its most destructive movements brought desolation to black

southerners most of all. Black southerners, in turn, found suffering at sites of

liberation. Wartime freedom was a grim phrase.

---

[2] Sherman, *Memoirs*, vol. I, 335-343.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

EMANCIPATION EVENT TYPES IN THE CIVIL WAR SOUTH

As part of *Visualizing Emancipation*, http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/,

research assistants at the University of Richmond worked to collect information

about the actions of enslaved people in a number of sources, none more important

than the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*. *Visualizing Emancipation*, which

I directed with Edward L. Ayers, is an NEH-sponsored project of the Digital

Scholarship Lab at the University of Richmond. This 160-volume set of military

correspondence became the basis for a large dataset of more than 2600 events,

indicating how slavery was being transformed during the war.

Finding and encoding emancipation events required much more nuance than

we could achieve using algorithms alone. Students became involved in recursive,

careful weighing of evidence and refinement of our hypotheses about what emancipation looked like in the Civil War. What we found was more violent than I had suspected, with higher levels of coercion of African Americans throughout. While it was clear to us all that finding evidence of men and women becoming free would be a complicated task, I did not anticipate the difficulty I had in judging who was becoming free and who was not during the war. At the outset, I believed that our data would allow us to come up with new estimates regarding how many enslaved people became free at various points in the war. It did not.

When it became clear that stages in the transition to freedom were not easy to identify and categorize at discrete moments in time for individuals, we began looking for a much more general set of events. I asked students to look for any document in which slavery was changing, or any evidence of African Americans acting (outside their normal course of duty as members of the United States Colored Troops). While giving this broad directive, I asked students to describe what they found. After a few months describing these emancipation events without a controlled vocabulary, we began refining the ways that we discussed emancipation events, combining some categories with large overlap, eliminating others that seemed too vague. Together with the project's student-researchers, I pared our list to nine emancipation event types that described much of what we found in the *Official Records* and other sources:

a. African Americans Helping the Union

Over the course of the Civil War, African Americans helped Union troops in a variety of ways. This event type tags those places where former slaves aided troops in informal capacities, usually outside their conscription as laborers on plantations, as soldiers, or as cooks in military camps. We have especially used this tag to note where people of color gave information to U.S. forces or served as guides for troops navigating the southern terrain. They did so throughout the South, unevenly over the course of the war. Isaac I. Stevens found enslaved men of great help during his navigation of the Sea Islands. Near Coosaw Island he found Cyas, who, he wrote, "subsequently proved of great service from the intimate knowledge he possessed of the country." (*OR* I.6.i, 91-92)

b. Abuse of African Americans

Emancipation caused chaos on the land, and African Americans bore the brunt of this disruption. This category indicates places where whites in either the Union or the Confederacy abused people of color during the war. Documents tagged under this event include incidents of murder, discriminatory pay, beatings, and starvation. Perhaps the most infamous of these were the events at Fort Pillow. Brig. Gen. M. Brayman wrote to his superiors, describing the events there: "Fort Pillow was taken by storm at 3p.m. on the 12th, with six guns. The negroes, about 300, murdered, after surrendering with their officers. Of the 200 white men, 57 have just arrived, and sent to Mound City; about 100 are prisoners, and the rest killed. The whole affair was a scene of murder." (*OR* I.32.ii, 361)

c. Orders or regulations

Emancipation came about not only through the initiative of enslaved people or the actions of individual soldiers, but through official orders, policies, and regulations. Events tagged within this category were policy changes directly affecting the slave regime issued the Union and Confederate governments. Among other events, these include orders declaring enslaved men and women in a territory free, orders requiring commanders to send enslaved men and women to the quartermaster, and Confederate responses to emancipation and the enlistment of black troops. In Louisiana, for example, Confederate authorities struggled with the best approach to captured African American troops. While they saw the benefits of taking a hard line against black troops by enslaving them, they worried that such a policy could backfire. The Assistant Adjutant General in Confederate Louisiana in 1864, Charles Le D. Elgee, proposed treating US Colored Troop soldiers "with all proper leniency," as prisoners of war in order not to dissuade dissatisfied black troops from deserting the enemy. (*OR* I.34.ii, 953-54).

d. Conscription and Recruitment, Union

These events detail the marshaling of enslaved men and women in the fight against the Confederacy. Included in this category are the drafting of contraband men and women to work in military camps, fortifications, as soldiers, or as servants in various capacities. In some places, this was a systematic effort to draw upon black labor to the greatest possible degree. By July 1863, Gen. Nathaniel Banks reported

from Louisiana that "every negro within the present lines of this department, or within reach of them, without distinction of age, sex, or condition, is in the service of the Government, either in the army or in producing food for the army and its dependents." (*OR* I.26.i, 573)

e. Conscription, Confederate

The Confederacy depended upon slave labor on plantations to provide food and the normal operations of its slave society, and near the front lines in direct service to the government. These events describe the ways that Confederates were able to use African American labor for their war effort. It includes orders and reports of impressment of slaves for use in building fortifications, railroads, and other efforts while bypassing most mentions of African Americans working as on privately held farms. Confederate conscription began early in the war. In late July, 1861, Gen. John B. Magruder ordered that half the male slaves and all free men of color in Gloucester, Middlesex, and Matthews Counties muster "to finish the works around Gloucester Point. Magruder promised recompense to the slaveowners: "fifty cents a day and a ration for each negro man during the time he is at work." (*OR* I.2.i, 1007) Magruder sent agents into the county to enforce the order.

f. Irregular fighting

This event category documents African Americans' involvement in irregular fighting and appropriation of property that accompanied the Civil War, either as willing participants or as victims. Within this category we have collected incidents

involving African Americans taking or destroying property claimed by landowners, enslaved men and women killing white civilians or military personnel, and instances where people of color were the objects of irregular fighting or pillaging.

Included among these events are the regrets of Maj. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis in a letter to Colonel N. P. Chipman in Helena, Arkansas the day after the emancipation proclamation went into effect. "I am sorry indeed," Curtis wrote, "to hear of the loss of Mrs. Craig's house by burning." Curtis wrote of their wealthy mutual acquaintance in a mournful tone. Alas, this is war; although it was the negroes who did it, still, it is the result of war." (Samuel R. Curtis to N. P. Chipman, St. Louis, MO, January 2, 1863, *OR* I.22, 10-11.)

g. Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement of African Americans by Confederates

Confederate troops and civilians made concerted efforts to re-enslave African Americans who had escaped their control during the war and to enslave free blacks who lived in northern states. This effort included counterattacks and ambushes on smaller Union regiments travelling with people of color, raids on contraband camps along the Mississippi and Atlantic seaboard, and dragnets at the edges of Confederate-held territory watching for the escape of African Americans from the southern interior.

During Confederate General Sterling Price's series of attacks in Missouri in the autumn of 1864, for example, a Confederate scouting party ran into a train of wagons manned by a small number of federal troops. Brig. Gen. John Shelby reported the results. They "captured 25, 2 caissons, 20 artillery horses with harness, 100 negroes, and 30 prisoners, besides killing and wounding a large portion of the guard." (*OR* I.41.iii, 978) Confederate attacks on African Americans such as this one appear throughout the U.S. South.

h. Fugitive Slaves/Runaways

Men and women ran from slavery to Union lines before any major battles had been fought. Events tagged as "Fugitive Slaves/Runaways" are instances where enslaved people ran away from their owners or turned up before Union units seeking protection. Many of these events are taken from newspaper advertisements seeking the return of escaped slaves. Typical is John Werth's complaint to the Richmond Daily Dispatch, promising a fifty dollar reward "for the apprehension and delivery to me, in Richmond, of Jack Oseen, a slave, who absconded last week from the fortifications in Chesterfield county. Jack is a black negro, about 19 years of age, slightly built, good teeth, but rather far apart, has a scar on the right hand, and another on the left wrist; was lately purchased from near Goldsborough, N.C." ("Fifty Dollars Reward," Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, April 1, 1863)

i. Capture of African Americans by Union troops

If many African Americans eluded slavery by leaving their plantations without outside intervention, others escaped through the direct intervention of United States troops. In many of these cases, military reports leave some ambiguity to the question whether enslaved men and women had any choice about leaving their property, neighbors, and homes. We have assigned instances of direct military intervention on plantations to this category, "Capture of African Americans by Union Troops." Brig. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge reported the results of his unit's expedition in northern Alabama in just this way: "It has rendered desolate one of the best granaries of the South, preventing them from raising another crop this year, and taking away from them some 1,500 negroes." (*OR* I.23.i, 249).

j. Protecting slave property from Union troops

Slave owners in the border South and Confederate states sought to protect their property in human beings from emancipation in any way they could. For slaveholders in the border South, this often meant pressing soldiers to return the men and women they claimed. In the Confederate states, especially after the Emancipation Proclamation, slave owners transported men, women, and children to places they hoped would be "safe" from Union troops and freedom. Events of this type document the efforts of slave owners to retain their property. Before his assault on Atlanta, Gen. William T. Sherman complained that he was encountering very few African Americans in northern Georgia, "because their owners have driven them" to the southwest corner of the state. "Negroes are as scarce in North Georgia as in Ohio. All are at and below Macon and Columbus, Ga." (*OR* I.39.ii, 132)

APPENDIX TWO

DISTRIBUTION OF EMANCIPATION EVENTS IN THE CIVIL WAR SOUTH

I divided the Civil War South into six regions that seemed to me to conform to the ways that historians have understood the course of the war: Virginia; the Border South, including Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware; the Mississippi River region, a stretch of a few miles on either side of the lower mississippi, stretching from Louisiana to the mouth of the Ohio); the Trans-Mississippi West, encompassing most of Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and the Indian Territories; the Atlantic Coast, including a band of territory from the Carolinas to the Florida Keys; and the Confederate Interior, encompassing those sections of Tennessee and Mississippi not adjoining the great river, Alabama, non-coastal Carolinas and Georgia and the Florida panhandle.

I worked with scholars in the University of Oklahoma's Geo-informatics program to begin analyzing the spatial patterns of the emancipation events. We tested whether each event type occurred more or less frequently in each region than a naïve observer, who would assume a random distribution of events throughout all

six regions, would expect. We also divided each region into two temporal segments,

before the Emancipation Proclamation and after it. My collaborators and I

presented early results of this analysis at the Society for Civil War Historians'

biennial meeting in June 2012. The resultant tables are presented below. Events

highlighted in yellow occurred significantly more frequently than expected. Events

highlighted in teal occurred significantly less frequently.

Distribution of Event Types in the Civil War South before the Emancipation Proclamation

A. Distribution of Event Types in the Confederate Interior before the Emancipation Proclamation: 1861-1862

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	48	39.98	2.48
Abuse of African Americans	4	2.29	1.30
Orders or Regulations	9	9.31	0.01
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	14	12.97	0.09
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	17	17.70	0.03
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	0	3.97	4.11
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	4	10.38	4.31
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	18	14.80	0.79
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	16	11.45	2.01
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	2	0.92	1.29
Uncategorized	6	8.70	0.91
Total Events	114		

B. Distribution of Event Types in the Trans-Mississippi before the Emancipation Proclamation: 1861-1862

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	4	8.77	3.99
Abuse of African Americans	1	0.50	0.50
Orders or Regulations	1	2.04	0.58
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	4	2.84	0.53
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	3	3.88	0.24
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	2	0.87	1.52
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	8	2.28	15.84
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	2	3.25	0.55
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	1	2.51	1.01
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	1	0.20	3.21
Uncategorized	2	1.91	0.00
Total Events	25		

C. Distribution of Event Types along the Mississippi River before the Emancipation Proclamation: 1861-1862

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	14	20.69	3.33
Abuse of African Americans	2	1.18	0.57
Orders or Regulations	14	4.82	19.06
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	11	6.71	3.09
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	3	9.16	4.91
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	3	2.05	0.45
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	4	5.37	0.38
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	4	7.66	2.01
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	4	5.92	0.69
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	0	0.47	0.48
Uncategorized	10	4.50	7.27
Total Events	59		

D. Distribution of Event Types along the Atlantic Coast before the Emancipation Proclamation: 1861-1862

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	34	35.42	0.09
Abuse of African Americans	2	2.03	0.00
Orders or Regulations	4	8.25	2.38
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	16	11.49	1.99
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	16	15.68	0.01
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	9	3.52	8.87
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	8	9.19	0.17
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	18	13.12	2.09
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	2	10.14	7.26
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	1	0.81	0.04
Uncategorized	12	7.71	2.59
Total Events	101		

E. Distribution of Event Types in Virginia before the Emancipation Proclamation: 1861-1862

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	132	104.52	11.13
Abuse of African Americans	5	5.98	0.17
Orders or Regulations	23	24.33	0.08
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	29	33.91	0.80
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	52	46.28	0.84
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	8	10.37	0.56
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	25	27.13	0.18
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	34	38.70	0.65
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	24	29.92	1.30
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	0	2.39	2.41
Uncategorized	11	22.74	6.56
Total Events	298		

F. Distribution of Event Types in the Union Borderlands before the Emancipation Proclamation: 1861-1862

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	30	50.86	13.17
Abuse of African Americans	1	2.91	1.28
Orders or Regulations	10	11.84	0.31
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	11	16.50	2.07
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	25	22.52	0.32
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	4	5.05	0.22
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	19	13.20	2.80
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	21	18.83	0.29
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	28	14.56	13.80
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	2	1.16	0.60
Uncategorized	16	11.06	2.38
Total Events	145		

G. Distribution of Event Types in the Confederate Interior after the Emancipation Proclamation: 1863-1865

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	109	104.29	0.29
Abuse of African Americans	13	29.55	10.00
Orders or Regulations	55	45.19	2.40
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	95	91.87	0.14
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	36	45.94	2.43
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	21	20.11	0.04
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	48	41.22	1.24
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	31	34.27	0.34
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	57	44.45	3.98
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	4	6.21	0.80
Uncategorized	26	23.09	0.39
Total Events	404		

H. Distribution of Event Types in the Trans-Mississippi after the Emancipation Proclamation: 1863-1865

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	24	38.72	7.54
Abuse of African Americans	9	10.97	0.38
Orders or Regulations	21	16.78	1.20
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	32	34.11	0.17
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	38	17.06	29.02
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	5	7.47	0.86
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	19	15.30	0.99
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	7	12.72	2.81
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	10	16.50	2.88
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	8	2.30	14.29
Uncategorized	6	8.57	0.82
Total Events	150		

I. Distribution of Event Types along the Mississippi River after the Emancipation Proclamation: 1863-1865

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	49	58.86	2.23
Abuse of African Americans	21	16.68	1.21
Orders or Regulations	20	25.50	1.34
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	90	51.85	36.33
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	11	25.93	9.69
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	12	11.35	0.04
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	18	23.26	1.33
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	13	19.34	2.27
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	26	25.08	0.04
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	2	3.50	0.66
Uncategorized	10	13.03	0.75
Total Events	228		

J. Distribution of Event Types in Virginia after the Emancipation Proclamation: 1863-1865

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	193	113.58	74.85
Abuse of African Americans	30	32.18	0.16
Orders or Regulations	32	49.22	6.78
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	55	100.06	26.27
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	49	50.03	0.02
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	15	21.91	2.29
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	44	44.89	0.02
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	50	37.32	4.71
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	45	48.41	0.27
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	4	6.76	1.15
Uncategorized	21	25.15	0.73
Total Events	440		

K. Distribution of Event Types in the Union Borderlands after the Emancipation Proclamation: 1863-1865

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	16	47.24	27.85
Abuse of African Americans	24	13.38	9.08
Orders or Regulations	29	20.47	4.00
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	70	41.62	25.06
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	9	20.81	7.56
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	13	9.11	1.75
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	15	18.67	0.80
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	25	15.52	6.32
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	16	20.13	0.95
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	6	2.81	3.67
Uncategorized	8	10.46	0.61
Total Events	183		

L. Distribution of Event Types along the Atlantic Coast after the Emancipation Proclamation: 1863-1865

Event Type	Observed Event Type Count	Expected Event Type Count	ChiSquare
African Americans Helping the Union	29	54.21	15.80
Abuse of African Americans	32	15.36	19.45
Orders or Regulations	25	23.49	0.11
Conscription and Recruitment, Union (army or labor)	28	47.76	10.58
Conscription, Confederate (army or labor)	42	23.88	15.52
Irregular fighting (Insurrection, raid)	15	10.45	2.08
Capture/enslavement/re-enslavement	22	21.43	0.02
Fugitive Slaves/Runaways	12	17.81	2.07
Capture of African Americans by Union troops	25	23.10	0.17
Protecting Slave Property from Union Troops	1	3.23	1.56
Uncategorized	22	12.00	8.83
Total Events	210		