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The Collapse of the Confederacy: Class Dissent, Unionism, and Desertion

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The Collapse of the Confederacy: Class Dissent, Unionism, and Desertion

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of History of the State University of New York at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts
The Collapse of the Confederacy: Class Dissent, Unionism, and Desertion

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For Mom & Dad
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Abstract

The following is a study of the collapse of the Confederacy during the American Civil War. This study focuses on class dissent, unionism, and desertion in the Confederate Army as the major contributing factors to the collapse of the Confederacy. The South during the American Civil War was a deeply divided region with poor whites fighting against the planter elites. These deep social tensions caused many within the South to abandon the Confederate cause. Throughout the South before and during the Civil War there were large pockets of people who never supported the Confederacy. In East Tennessee, Arkansas, and West Virginia Unionist waged a violent and brutal guerrilla war in an attempt to destroy the Confederacy. In addition to Unionists, many Southerners who supported the Confederacy at the start of the war carried these social tensions from the home front into the army. By the second year of the war desertion in the Confederate Army was becoming a major problem. The common Confederate soldier quickly realized that they were fighting a rich man’s war. The wealthy planters were not willing to do their part by either fighting or support the families of those soldiers who were blooding the battlefields. In the end, the Confederacy sealed its fate even before the first shots of the war were fired since they were never able to get all Southerners to back their cause.
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Introduction

Many historians have looked at the collapse of the Confederacy from a military or political perspective. It is only recently that historians have begun to look at the collapse from a social perspective. The Confederacy from the beginning was divided and there were deep social tensions that would only grow deeper as the American Civil War continued. The antebellum South was a very rigidly controlled society and those at the top of the hierarchy would do anything to remain there even sacrifice those beneath them to protect their status. Planters understood that their claims to power were contingent on their keeping all those under them subjected. Since the first settlements had been established in America there was tension between those wealthy planters and the poor whites. Many poor whites came to realize that they were pawns in the planter elite's game of political and economic control. During the secession crisis and the first year of the war, poor whites realized that they were fighting a war that in the end would only benefit those in power. The following study will examine how class tensions, unionism, and desertion all played an important role in the collapse of the Confederacy.

The first chapter of this study will examine the social tensions between the planter elite and poor whites in the South. By the fall of 1861 the enthusiasm for the war throughout the poor communities had significantly dropped off. The war, enlistment, taxes, and slavery were all topics on the minds of most Southerners. As the fall election approached the poor people of the South wanted to know how the politicians were going to help them survive without their men. In a open letter the people of Georgia expressed their discontent, "... Is it right that the poor man should be taxed for the support of the war, when the war was brought about on the slave
question, and the slave at home accumulating for the benefit of his master, and the poor man’s farm left uncultivated, and a chance for his wife to be a widow and his children orphans?”¹ The war had only brought to the surface the resentment the poor had for the rich, but until now these feeling had been deeply repressed. When Fort Sumter had been captured one Southern stated, “there has been a withdrawing from the volunteer companies of men who have done their best work destroying this Union.”² An Arkansas man added to these sentiments by writing the following in his diary, “Most of those who were so willing to shed the last drop of blood in the contest for a separate Government are entirely unwilling to shed the first.” The poor and yeoman farmer classes quickly realized that they would do the brunt of the fighting. These men would fight and die, defending the lifestyle of the wealthy. Most Confederate soldiers believed that if those responsible for this war did not take part in the fighting that the army would soon fall apart. In the winter of 1861 - 1862 a Southern soldier wrote in his diary, “The troops wieldy feel the unjust oppression and partial hand that is laid upon them, and in my opinion the spirit of the army is dying.”³ Confederate soldiers continually worried about the well-being of their families while they were away at the front. Most soldiers when they left home knew that their families had enough food to last for about a year and with the passing of the conscription act they realized that unless they were able to get home their families faced starvation. Adding to these fears was anger over the fact that while their families faced starvation the wealthy were still living as though there was no war going on at all. Southern elites could get exemption from military service for themselves and their sons by paying a fee or owning a certain number of slaves.

¹ David Williams, Bitterly Divided: The South’s Inner Civil War (New York: The New Press, 2008), 54.
² Williams, Bitterly Divided, 54.
³ Williams, Bitterly Divided, 55.
These elite families were the ones who wanted war and now that they had it they needed to fight for the Southern cause. The conscription acts that the Confederacy passed only made the situation worse. The Conscription Act of 1862, gave Jefferson Davis the authority to force all young men into the army. Many Southern men to avoid being “drafted” reluctantly volunteered to enter the Confederate Army. To many the Conscription Act was a slight on the “honor” of Southern men. By being forced into military service it was almost as if the Confederate government was calling all those who did not volunteer in 1861 cowards, and in Southern “honor” culture these men had to go and fight even if by doing so they were placing incredible hardships on their families. Conscription, basically left most small farming families without any men to help with the harvest and the planting of the new crops which was the lifeblood of most Southern families. These trials and tribulations caused many Southern families to abandon the cause of the Confederacy and join those people who remained loyal to the Union from the beginning of the war.

The second chapter will examine the effects of Unionism and Unionist movement on the Confederacy. In 1861, when the Confederate government made the decision to secede from the Union they did not expect a large majority of the Southern population to oppose their decision. The majority of those people who opposed secession were old-line Whigs, people from the up-country, the foreign element (mainly Germans and Irish), and many others who believed that the conflict could have been resolved peacefully instead of risking open warfare with the Federal government. The opposition to secession largely had to do with the social and economic differences arising from the large geographical differences within the South. A vast majority of the people within the South lived in rural agrarian communities and there were not many slave
owners within these communities. These rural communities had a hard time relating to the large plantation owners, who owned many slaves, who did most of the work on their plantations. Those who opposed secession also resented the fact that a relatively small group of slave owners held the political power and made decisions for everyone in their states. In the key states of Virginia, West Virginia, East Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Arkansas there were large numbers of Unionists who would become a thorn in the side of the Confederate government. In these states, Unionists groups formed guerrilla units whose hit and run style of attack opened a second front and forced the Confederate government to take troops from the frontlines where they were needed in order to hunt down these guerrillas. When Union troops moved into Confederate territory these Unionists provided valuable intelligence, served as guides, and formed new regiments. In East Tennessee and West Virginia, Unionists actually set up their own functioning governments within the Confederacy. These governments encouraged people to rebel against the Confederacy and help them to destroy it. These Unionists controlled regions also became a haven for those men who deserted from the Confederate Army.

The third chapter will examine desertion in the Confederate Army. Desertion in the Confederate Army was a major problem from the beginning of the war. Many Southern soldiers enlisted believing that the war would only last six months to a year, which proved to be a false belief. The conditions in the Confederate Army were harsh from the start with the lack for food, clothing, shelter, and money to pay the troops. As the war dragged soldiers continually received letters from home describing how there was no food, no clothing, no money, and that family members were dying of disease and starvation. The Confederate government did not have the necessary resources to feed and cloth both soldiers and civilians. Making the situation worse
were the actions of the planter elite at home, who seemed content to let the poor die while they continued to live very comfortably. The common Confederate soldier came to the realization that they were fighting a “rich man’s war” and that the wealthy were not going to help fight the war or take care of the soldiers families while they were away at the front. By the second year of the war many soldiers decided that they were no longer going to fight while their families were starving at home.
Chapter One: Plain Folk vs. The Planter Class

On the eve of the American Civil War, throughout the South politicians and the elite attempted to rally support to the Confederate cause. Those men who belonged to the exclusive rank of planter attempted to win over the white lower classes by using the racial arguments that although the poor were poor at least they were white. Planters told the poor that if Lincoln had his way all whites and blacks would be equal. For most poor whites in the Confederacy this argument was enough to win over their support and they flocked to the recruiting stations to enlist in the Confederate Army. These men quickly found out that in reality the planter elite expected the poor whites to carry the load on the battlefield to protect an institution and way of life foreign to them. The appeal of army life quickly faded away soon after the Battle of First Manasas.

Class tensions had always been a looming problem throughout the South from the very first colonial settlements. The ruling elite had always managed to keep these tensions from spilling over into a bloody conflict. In the 1830's, the planters launched a campaign to educate their fellow southerners and the world about the virtues of slavery. The planters told the world that they could not do without southern cotton. The elites then told the poor whites that if slavery ended, they would no longer be in a position of social superiority but would be on the same social level as free blacks. In 1860 the top ten percent of the population in the cotton states held fifty-three precent of the regions agricultural wealth, while the bottom half of the population owned only five percent. In Georgia's lower Chattahoochee Valley the poor whites and yeoman
farmers were stuck in their economic situations with no real hopes of ever moving up the social ladder. In all of the southern states twenty-five percent of the farmers were tenants and that number continued to rise everyday. In Georgia the planter elite feared that the poor whites and yeoman farmers might join forces with the slaves and revolt against the planter class. Poor whites and yeoman farmers joined the Confederate Army for the following reasons: the fear of Yankee invasion, regional identity, the desire for upward mobility, peer pressure, and lastly a sense of adventure. In 1861, the state of Georgia furnished the Confederacy with 18,000 troops, a vast majority of which were from the poor and yeoman classes. Many of these soldiers believed that the war would be short, one large battle in which the South would be victorious, after which the North would ask for peace terms. It became apparent to the “plain folks” that their personal sacrifices were likely to be much greater than those of the Southern elite. To poor whites it became apparent during the first year of the war that they were fighting to protect the institution of slavery, a lifestyle they would never be able to achieve. To many poor whites slavery was the symbol of everything they hated about the planter class. For yeoman and landless whites the hardships of the war were felt from the beginning and became more intense as the war continued. Few Southerners understood the cost of the war in the beginning, but by the war's second year, inflation, hunger, conscription, and government confiscation were beginning to erode the Southern resolve. While the lower classes were on the verge of starvation, the planters and other wealthy were throwing lavish parties with more food than they knew what to do with. As the war went on the price of everything in the South skyrocketed and


living conditions worsened for all the lower classes. It was not only the Union blockade that contributed to the high prices, more damage was done by profiteering and speculation by the planters, merchants, and industrialists.\textsuperscript{7} One Southerners’ solution to the problem of rapid inflation was the following:

> There is one mode that would work most successfully in bringing down the prices of everything, and that is for the wealthier classes to practice, for awhile, the rigid self denial that the poor are compelled to practice.\textsuperscript{8}

Even the Confederate War Department was caught up in the speculation “game” when they were caught selling army rations to different Southern speculators. The Confederate and state governments attempted to end speculation, but they had no real power or the necessary resources to stop these men. By the middle of the war many yeoman families were cutting back to two meals a day. Some only had one meal a day and they were lucky to get it. In Southern cities the lower classes attempted to exchange gun powder and iron for food stuffs.\textsuperscript{9} Diseases and destructive weather patterns only made things worse in the South. In 1862, cholera epidemic wiped out so many hogs that ham and bacon were so scare in the lower chattahoochee valley that the markets rarely had either of those two meats.\textsuperscript{10} The planter classes only made the situation worse. They were so firmly fixed on the promise of future wealth, southern planters failed to heed the warning signs that their shortsightedness was undermining the Confederate cause.

Planter classes were so fixated on the rising prices in the cotton market that they did not listen to the

\textsuperscript{7} David Williams, \textit{Rich Man's War}, 82 - 83.
\textsuperscript{8} David Williams, \textit{Rich Man's War}, 84.
\textsuperscript{9} David Williams, \textit{Rich Man's War}, 84.
\textsuperscript{10} David Williams, \textit{Rich Man's War}, 96.
government when they told them to stop planting cotton and start planting corn and other grains. John Harvey Dent agreed that cotton production needed to be scaled back, but in the end greed got the better of Dent and he produced 40,000 pounds of cotton in 1861. The Confederate government understood that they needed large amounts of food in order to keep an army in the field, but since the planters were not going to help out, the government started looking for what they needed in other places. The next most logical place to secure food stuff were the poor whites and yeoman farmers.

The Confederate government instituted a policy of impressment to get the food stuffs they needed, what they did not realize was the corruption and destructiveness of this policy. The ability to grow enough food to feed the family, make a small profit, and give the Confederate government their tenth was the biggest challenge facing most Southerners. Impressment officers normally would collect the governments’ tenth from the very poor first. The reason for collecting from the poor first was the simple fact that they presented the least amount of resistance, due to the fact that most of the males were in the army. The impressment officers probably were the most corrupt officials in the Confederacy. They would always take more than a tenth of the poor’s goods and they would sell the excess and make a profit for themselves. These impressment officers after they had ravaged the poor then made their way to the large plantations. The wealthy normally bribed the impressment officers to leave their property untouched further demonstrating their corruption. James Henry Hammond, a wealthy plantation owner in South Carolina, hated impressment officers who he considered no better than common criminals. He wrote in his diary on July 20, 1864 the following:

11 David Williams, Rich Man’s War, 99.
Yesterday seven corn raids [by the Confederate officials] two of them by letter . . .

Hamilton left on my desk last night a notice of impressment which this morning I tore up & threw out the window in his presence saying I paid no respect to the order of Hanckel . . . & simply defied him - not meant to offend and not offending I hope. They want to take my Corn at much less than half the price I can sell it & have sold it to Consumers. I will sooner Consume it with fire if my poor neighbors wont make way with it.12

On August 2, 1864, Hammond was again visited by the impressment officers:

. . . threw some 5,000 bus. [of corn?] into the hands of the [Confederate] Impressors . . . They had a Steam boat prepared to carry the corn & a sufficient force to seize it. They made the issue to have the corn conceded or they would take it, thus branding upon my forehead 'slave.' They [got] it at just half the price it was sold for.13

These statements made by James Henry Hammond demonstrate the absolute selfishness and greed of the planter class throughout the South. Many other wealthy planters shared similar sentiments and opinions of the poor and impressment officers. In the end, the Confederacy's impressment policy only made a stressful situation worse and the corruption of the impressment officers turned many poor families against the Confederate cause. When Confederate officials showed up and actually paid for the goods they took they always paid way below the market price. For example they paid half-price for flour and a third the price for corn. Local impressment agents occasionally used their impressment powers to victimize their political and

12 James Henry Hammond, Excerpts from Wartime Diary and Letters of Senator of James Henry Hammond of South Carolina, 4.

13 James Henry Hammond, Excerpts from Wartime Diary and Letters of Senator of James Henry Hammond of South Carolina, 5.
personal enemies. Soldiers wives and widows were the most frequent targets of impressment agents since their husbands or sons were not their to provide protection. Another problem was that when confiscated food actually made it to the government depots, it frequently went to waste through incompetence or neglect. The produce often rotted in the government warehouses or the quartermasters’ department delivered inedible food to the troops. In March 1863, the “Columbus Times”, reported that while thousands faced hunger everyday that half a million bushels of corn were rotting in government depots throughout southwest Georgia.\(^\text{14}\)

Food production in the South proved to be another problem. For example, in Georgia the livestock production was in decline, the corn crop was stagnant, and in ten years the oat crop had dropped by more than half.\(^\text{15}\) The South did not have the means to produce enough food, clothing, or military materials to fight a long war with the North. The most frequent complaint of Southern civilians was that there was either not enough food or that they could not afford the food that was available. David Milling, who had a son in the Confederate Army, frequently mentioned in his letters the growing hardships on the home front. In June 1861, David Milling wrote his son a letter describing how much the basic necessities cost. Milling writes, “Sugar is $1.25 per pound, the meanest kind. Molasses $6 per Gal. Coffee is out of the question. [Tea] $10 per pound. Salt $30 per bush . . . Those are just some of the current prices.”\(^\text{16}\) Milling then told his son about the continual poor weather that made planting the new crops incredibly difficult or impossible. He also repeated how the state government attempted to convince the large plantations to cut down on their cotton production and to start planting wheat and other food

\(^{14}\) David Williams, *Rich Man’s War*, 105.

\(^{15}\) David Williams, *Rich Man’s War*, 32.

\(^{16}\) *Milling Papers, Personal Correspondence, 1861 - 1864*, 6.
stuffs. Most of the planters were resistant to this idea, seeing as how, the cotton market had recovered and there was enormous profit to be had. These planters stated that they had no intentions of cutting back on their cotton production. David Milling tells his son that if the government cannot improve the living conditions at home that the Southern cause will be lost. James Milling's wife wrote him a letter in January of 1863 in which she talked about how the conscription act brought nothing but more hardship to the Southern people. She states, "Hundreds of families are left helpless and desolate by this terrible war - I cannot but fell more anxiety concerning you if you are called to the battlefield, but the same over-ruuling Providence is there as well in more peaceful abodes." She goes on to describe how disease ravaged the community, as well as, the surrounding areas. For people on the home front the war was becoming a nightmare, and if this war was not ended soon their might not be much of a South to return to.

In her diary, Julie Johnson Fisher describes in detail the hardships faced by most families on the Confederate homefront. January 1, 1864, she wrote an entry describing the lack of basic food stuffs at home. She writes the following:

How often we talk of the good things we once enjoyed and wonder if we shall ever enjoy them again. A slice of bread and butter and a sweetened cup of tea would be a treat indeed, such a treat as we have not enjoyed for more than a year.

Besides the lack of basic food stuffs, there was also a lack of materials to make clothing for family members. Fisher writes on January 3rd, "There is no cloth to be had and no thread, no

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17 Milling Papers, 7.
18 Milling Papers, 10.
19 Julia Johnson Fisher's Diary, 1.
yarn - nor anything to do with... I have used bedticking - sheets - curtains and the linings of my dresses to clothe him and now we know not where to get anything more." Most of the people in the South were forced to use whatever they had on hand to make replacement clothing for themselves and those family members in the army. However, by 1864, most had used up all the materials available and there was no money to buy cloth -- if there was even any cloth available to purchase. Fisher believed that the worst was still to come and there was nothing the Confederate army or government could do to stop the suffering. She stated that, "Extortion is carried on at a high rate. We fear that we have not seen the worst." The conditions did get worse and the simple things in life brought the greatest amount of joy. One night after dinner, the ability to serve a corn meal pudding for dessert was a luxury for the Fisher's and their friends. Julia wrote in her diary,

> Our dessert was a corn meal pudding wet with water, enriched with bottled huckleberries and pork fat; sauce made of borrowed syrup and flour - it was excellent, how we did relish it! but we talked of the good pies and bread and cakes that linger in remembrance.

Other portions of the South were facing the same circumstances and these conditions were only going to get worse as the war progressed. Before the war even began many in the South were warning that "king cotton" needed to be dethroned or the South would not have a chance to win the coming war. Many argued that the people could not eat cotton, but they could eat corn, oats, and the byproducts of growing those crops. The "Southern Cultivator" stated that persons who

20 Julia Johnson Fisher, Diary, 2 - 3.
21 Julie Johnson Fisher, Diary, 3.
22 Julie Johnson Fisher, Diary, 4.
planted cotton “deserves to be destroyed, or to have all his plantations and negroes ravaged and
desolated, and himself fed corn cobs as long as he lives.”23 An editor of a Alabama newspaper
declared that the planter who raised cotton should be hanged “as high as Hayman for treason.
Talk about Lincolnites among us! The man who can deliberately resolve to do such a thing as
this, is meaner than the meanest Yankee than was ever born.”24 In Augusta the local newspaper
editors begged the planters not to plant over a fourth of the usual crop, and insisted that they
plant a double portion of provision crops. These people understood that the fate of their nation
depended on whether the planters would listen and make the necessary changes or if they would
just plant their usual cotton crop. One Alabama man stated, “In the next few days, our planter
friends must decide whether they choose, on the one hand, cotton and subjugation, or corn and
triumph.”25 Some planters and their communities listened to these pleas, but there were always
those who cared only for themselves and planted their cotton crops as usual. For those planters
who only thought of themselves had to deal with their communities mocking and ridiculing them
for their lack of understanding and commitment to the Confederate cause.

When war came, it would take more than slavery to bind the poor to the cause. Keeping
an army in the field meant keeping the Union out of the South. This posed a problem for the
Confederacy since they had a large amount of land to protect with a fairly small military force,
whereas the Union could field large armies and insert them into different parts of the South
whenever they pleased. Southern soldiers could lose their attachment to the Confederacy if they
began to believe the Confederacy could not repel the invaders and individual soldiers believed

23 Stanley Lebergott, “Why the South Lost: Commercial Purpose in the Confederacy, 1861 - 1865,” The Journal of


25 Williams, Bitterly Divided, 10.
that they could do a better job of defending their families if they were back home. Once the
government proved to be unable to keep the Union out, the resolve of the Confederate soldiers
began to weaken. The hardships of army life, poor food, disease, and other factors started to
weigh on the minds of the men. However, the biggest threat came from the Confederate
governments inability to protect civilians from starvation, from each other, and from the
Confederate army itself. One of the basic goals of the Confederate government was to provide
protection of the soldiers family and property, and if they could not provide that basic protection
soldiers started wondering if they were willing to risk their life for the Confederacy. Home
brought men into the service, but in order for it to sustain them, to keep them fighting, the
government needed to demonstrate that it could repel the invaders and protect the man's soil.
Protection of the home front would prove to be a difficult task for the Confederate government.
The Confederacy did not have enough men to defend the vast amounts of land that made up the
Confederacy. Another part of protecting the soldiers “soil” was the protection of his family.
Southern soldiers needed to believe that the government could and would take care of their
families while they were away at the front. The government needed to have the backing of the
planter class since they were among the only people with the wealth and resources available to
provide aid if necessary to the soldiers families. The planters, who had the most to gain and
everything to lose, would have to demonstrate a collective will at home that matched the
commitment of the soldiers in the field. To prevent these soldiers families from starving, two
things would be required of the planter class: a shift from cotton-based agriculture to a grain-
based farming and a willingness to share their wealth and the fruit of their harvest.
One of the major obstacles facing the Confederacy was that of impressment and speculation. Ever since the beginning of the secession crisis many throughout the South knew that if war broke out they would be facing a food crisis, since the South had to import most of their food stuff from either the North or Europe. State and government leaders understood they would need to convince the planters to cut back on cotton and tobacco production in order to assure there would be enough food for both the army and the home front. The cut backs in cotton and tobacco production would prove to be a difficult task to achieve. From the beginning planters were not very open to the idea of cutting back on the crops that made them all their money. Cotton especially was becoming valuable again and all of the planters wanted to make all the money that they possibly could. Planter also grew enough food to provide for their families and slaves and so in their minds they believed that they should not be forced to take care of their less fortunate neighbors.

In 1861, after the election of Abraham Lincoln to the White House, the planter class of the South decided that the time was right for them to dissolve the Union. In their minds Lincoln was a direct threat to their continued reign as “absolute rulers” of the South. However, the planters made up only a small minority of the Southern population and they understood that if they were to breakaway from the United States they needed to win over the rest of the white population. Planters launched a campaign to educate the poor and lower class whites of the dangers of remaining in the Union. Their most successful argument was that with Lincoln as president he would end slavery and give slaves equal rights, which would in turn give former slaves the opportunity to compete with whites for jobs. Even more of a threat was the possibility of former slaves interacting with white men and women, white southerners could not imagine
allowing this to happen. All poor and lower class whites had was their racial superiority to slaves and they could not allow that be taken away from them. Still, this argument did not win over all people in the South, there were those people who believed that it would be more dangerous to leave the Union than the remain in it. There were pockets of strong anti-secession movements in Western Virginia, East Tennessee, Northern Alabama, Georgia, and communities in the Appalachian mountains. These communities were determined to remain loyal to the Union and do all in their power to fight any Confederate forces that invaded their borders. When the vote for secession came before these communities’ legislatures, it was in most cases successfully voted down. The planter class was not about to allow these dissenters to stop them from establishing their own country. They were determined to pull their states out of the Union whether they had the full support of the people or not. The planters believed that if they waited for the poor whites to make a decision about secession that the war would already be over and the Southern cause lost. Planters also believed that they knew what was best for the people of the South and that all final decisions should ultimately be left up to them. Many leading members of anti-secession movements believed these actions to be just another in a long line of actions intended to keep poor whites in their proper place in society. In his book, *The Impending Crisis of the South*, Hinton Rowan Helper stated, “The lords of the lash are not only absolute masters of the blacks, who are bought and sold and driven about like so many cattle, but they are also the oracles and arbiters of all non-slaveholding whites, whose freedom is merely nominal, and whose unparalleled illiteracy and degradation is purposely and fiendishly perpetuated.”

Helper and other Unionists were not the only people who realized what the planter class was

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doing, J.C. Keysaer said, “slaveholders always acted as if they were of a better class and there
was always an unpleasant feeling between slave holders and those working themselves.”27 One
Southerner, William Johnson, summed up the situation perfectly when he said, “Those that did
not own slaves hated those that did,” and the war itself would only make the situation worse.28
Poor whites and yeoman farmers knew that the planters believed themselves superior even
though publicly they stated that all whites in the South were equal. Plain folk had a growing
awareness among plain folks that their personal sacrifices were likely to be much greater than
those of the planter elites. Class disparity became clear early on when the Confederate
government, lacking enough weapons for all those who volunteered allowed those who could
provide their own to enlist for one year instead of three. Many poor whites did have their own
weapons, which they used for hunting and protection, however when they arrived at camp they
were told that their weapons could not be used since they all had different types of guns which
were not military standard. Of course wealthy planters had the money to buy guns in large
numbers and therefore could secure their one year enlistments.29 These actions infuriated lower
class whites who viewed this as another form of special treatment for the planter elite. Planters
who entered the army believed that they could continue treating poor whites just as they had
before the war. However, they quickly found out that soldiers would not put up with
mistreatment for very long. In the Confederate Army the soldiers had the power to elect their
officers, as well as, vote them out if they felt they were not serving the best interests of the men.

Another major problem in the Confederate Army was that it appeared to many as though the

27 Williams, Bitterly Divided, 21.
28 Williams, Bitterly Divided, 21.
29 David Williams, Rich Man's War, 60.
wealthy planters received special treatment when they joined the army. Many times members of the planter class requested and waited for commands that were to their liking. One such planter was William Elzey Harrison, who feared that he was going to be given a position that was beneath him. Harrison wrote a friend stating, “I would not have him [General Evans] think me an applicant for any thing he could give me, for I would certainly refuse if he were to grant. I would not have the captaincy of the company I was assigned to, as the greater part of it was composed of the offscourings of Richmond, Norfolk, etc., I would have nothing to do with such a lot of men.”

Harrison did not want to be assigned to a command with men in it who he believed were of a lower social status and not worth associating with. In many instances wealthy planters resigned their commissions and either waited for a command more to their liking or in many instances they would return home and get permission to raise their own company where they could pick and choose who joined. The Southern planter class wanted to fight the war on their own terms and if they could not get their way then they would just not take part in the fighting.

Many poor whites in the South believed that the planter elite were no better than the politicians in the Federal government so why should they trade one oppressive government for another? The planter elite while publicly stating that all whites in the South were equal, in reality saw poor whites as no better than slaves. The elite used their position to bully the rest of the Southern population into passing legislation and policies that benefited the large landowners and no one else. In the months leading up to the secession crisis the planter elite launched a series of propaganda campaigns designed to united all whites in the South against the Northern

30 Aaron Sheehan-Dean, “Justice has something to do with it: class relations and the Confederate Army,” Virginia Magazine of History and Biography Vol. 113 no. 4 (2005): 5.
aggressor. While these propaganda campaigns were initially successful it was not long before the poor came to realize that the elite again were just looking out for their own interests. Before the outbreak of violence in many rural regions and communities there was no real strong support for secession in fact most people in these isolated areas just wanted to be left alone so they could continue their lives in peace. When the votes for secession came up most of these rural communities favored remaining in the Union. These poor whites did not trust the planter elite and understood that the elite were only looking to preserve their way of life, as well as, their political and economic status. The abuse that many poor whites suffered at the hands of the elite lead many to join Unionist groups who wanted to remain loyal to the Federal government. Other people throughout the South joined these Unionists groups believing that after the war the old hierarchy would be destroyed and there would be a new place for them at the top. Poor whites held out hope that they would be rewarded for their loyalty and that their reward would be social mobility and a better place in the new social order of the South. It was not long before every state within the Confederacy had some from of Unionists movement operating within its borders.
Chapter Two: Unionists Movements Within the Confederacy 1861 - 1865

In 1861, when the Confederate government made the decision to secede from the Union they did not expect a large majority of the Southern population to oppose their decision. The majority of those people who opposed secession were old-line Whigs, people from the up-country, ethnic communities (mainly Germans and Irish), and many others who believed that the conflict could have been resolved peacefully instead of risking open warfare with the Federal government. The opposition to secession largely arose from the social and economic differences arising from the wide geographical differences within the South. A vast majority of the people within the South lived in rural agrarian communities with few slave owners. These rural communities had a hard time relating to the large plantation owners, who owned many slaves, who did most of the work on their plantations. Those who opposed secession also resented the fact that a relatively small group of slave owners held the political power and made decisions for everyone in their states. The following chapter will look at Unionists movements like the Peace and Constitutional Society, the Peace Society, and the Order of the Heroes of America in East Tennessee, Arkansas, and West Virginia. In all of these states there were organized military units that took part in a violent and brutal guerrilla war which destroyed many southern communities. These Unionists forces did everything in their power to destroy the Confederacy from the inside in hope that the Union could be restored.

In Virginia most of the state was opposed to secession and the government did not gain enough support to pass an ordinance of secession until President Lincoln ordered the formation

31 Georgia Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (University of Nebraska, 2000), 4.
of an army to invade and crush the rebellious states. West Virginia, provides a telling example of these rural communities that provided no support for the Confederacy at all. The northwestern section of Virginia actually made the decision to secede from Virginia and setup their own separate state, which eventually became West Virginia. These rural communities were also primed for unionist sentiment, since from their ranks would come a majority of the men who fought and died for the Union.

There were three main Unionists movements inside the states of the deep South. These groups were: the Peace and Constitutional Society, the Peace Society, and the Order of the Heroes of America. The first of these secret peace organizations within the Confederacy formed in Van Buren county, Arkansas in the fall of 1861. They called their organization the Peace and Constitutional Society and stated that their organization was formed by men who did not favor leaving the Union in 1861 and who also refused to support the Confederacy in any way. The order created signs, passwords, and oaths all of which were a means of keeping the organization from being infiltrated by Confederate spies. Each member of the society was required to aid any member in distress, to encourage desertion from the Confederate army, to advocate joining the Federal army, and to support the Federal army when it came to retake Arkansas. Any member who revealed any of the secrets of the society were to be put to death.

The Peace and Constitutional society was centered in Van Buren, Newton, and Izard counties and most of the members came from the northwestern part of the state, an area which from the start fully opposed secession.

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33 Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy*, 25.
A more successful and powerful Unionists movement centered in Alabama was the Peace Society. This society also existed in East Tennessee, Georgia, Mississippi, and in certain parts of Florida. Like the Peace and Constitutional society, the Peace Society had passwords, grips, and signs that were designed to keep spies out of their meetings.\(^{34}\) The Peace Society originated in 1862 in Northern Alabama or East Tennessee within Federal lines and possibly at the suggestion of the Federals. The objectives of the Peace Society were: to organize a political party opposed to the Davis administration, to get a majority of the people at home and as many soldiers as possible committed to their political party, to overturn the existing state government by beginning hostilities against the home guard and secessionists or by refusing to support the existing state government and compel it to make peace, and finally to break down the Confederate government in any way possible.\(^{35}\) In Alabama members of the Peace society were openly defiant toward the Confederate government and its officials, they also threatened loyal (Confederate) citizens, bought and sold cotton to the enemy, acted as spies and informants for the Federal army and signed petitions to have meetings to attempt peace negotiations with the Federal government.\(^{36}\) The Federal army also used these Unionists to help them destroy the infrastructure of their homes states. In Alabama members of the Peace society conducted raids on the local population, destroyed railroads, telegraph lines, and bridges.\(^{37}\) All of this was done in hopes of opening the eyes of Confederate government officials that it was pointless to continue this bloody war and that they would be wise to try and seek terms of peace from the

\(^{34}\) Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy*, 25.

\(^{35}\) Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy*, 28.

\(^{36}\) Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy*, 57.

\(^{37}\) Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy*, 59.
Federal government. Many of the members of the Peace society in Alabama joined to ensure the protection of their families. When the Union army moved into the area, being a member of this society would ensure the members would receive special treatment from the Federals. The Confederate government could not properly provide protection or food for the majority of the Southern population, so it was just a wise decision to ally with the Federal government who could provide them with what they needed to survive.

A third well developed Unionists movement within the Confederacy was the Order of the Heroes of America. The Order of Heroes of America developed in North Carolina, southwestern Virginia, and East Tennessee. Much of the organization of the Order of Heroes of America is still unknown but it is likely that it was organized in the same manner as the other peace societies that operated within the South. However, one of the key factors in drawing in members to the Order of Heroes must have been the offer by the Federal government. The Federal government offered those people who joined the Order of Heroes, "exemption from military services; protection to their persons and property during the war; and, at the conclusion thereof, participation in the division of the real estate of the loyal (Confederate) citizens."38 It also helped that both General Grant and President Lincoln were members of the society. But for those people who were suffering at the hands of the Confederates the Order of Heroes looked very appealing. The goals of the Order of Heroes of American were similar to the other peace societies as well. These goals included the following: to encourage and facilitate desertion from the Confederate army, to protect and pass all deserters, escaped prisoners, or spies; to report the positions, movements, numbers, and conditions of the Confederate troops in the area. In short,

38 Tatum, Disloyalty in the Confederacy, 33.
the Order of Heroes of American were to assist the Federal army in any way to ensure the defeat of the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{39}

East Tennessee proved to be one of the strongest areas of Unionist sentiment within the Confederacy. President Lincoln decided to use the strong Unionist feelings to his advantage. There were three contributing factors to why East Tennessee was so important to the Union. The main railroad line connecting Virginia to the Gulf states ran right through the East Tennessee Valley. Second, East Tennessee was the home of a large Unionists population whose defiant rejection of secession was already well known in the North. Third, Lincoln as well as several Union officers believed that the loyalists population could considerably ease the task of retaking this portion of the South and add to Federal strength.\textsuperscript{40} The people of East Tennessee fought a successful war against both secessionist forces and the occupying Confederate Army. They also sent thousands of troops to aid the Federal Army. One of the contributing factors to the strong Unionists sentiment in East Tennessee was that from the time of the first settlements in East Tennessee it occupants were involved in a border dispute between Virginia and North Carolina. Each of these states did not want to provide military or political support to the region, this left the people of East Tennessee to create their own government and military. In 1772 and 1784, the people of East Tennessee believed that they should be allowed to create their own state since neither Virginia or North Carolina desired to lay claim to their region.\textsuperscript{41}

Another contributing factor to the Unionists feelings in East Tennessee was that the region was geographically cut off from the rest of the surrounding area. East Tennessee was

\textsuperscript{39} Tatum, \textit{Disloyalty in the Confederacy}, 34.

\textsuperscript{40} Noel Fisher, "Definitions of Victory: East Tennessee Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction," in \textit{Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front} (The University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 89.

\textsuperscript{41} Fisher, "Definitions of Victory," 90.
surrounded on all sides by mountain ranges and the rivers were too shallow and obstructed to allow transportation, and the railroads that run through the region were not completed until the mid-1850's. All of these factors made East Tennessee predominantly the home of small farmers, tenants, and laborers. This created a disconnect between the people of East Tennessee and the rest of the Southern population, since the rest of the South was largely tied to cotton and tobacco production whereas East Tennessee concentrated on subsistence farming. Overall, East Tennessee was less productive and developed, and considerably poorer than most other regions in the South. This relative poverty also led to there being less of a slave presence within East Tennessee. Only ten percent of East Tennessee families owned one slave and only 33 percent of these qualified as planters. This does not mean that the people of East Tennessee were anti-slavery or member of abolitionists groups. East Tennesseans had strong animosity against African-Americans and many people believed that slavery was essential for maintaining the social order. There were pockets of abolitionists within East Tennessee, but on the whole their attitude towards slavery was indifference and most people were not concerned with the fate of African slaves. On the other hand, the people of East Tennessee did not have strong feelings about defending slavery, which was the central motivating factor for other southerners loyal to the Confederacy.

The intensity of Unionists sentiment early on did not reach wartime levels for the simple fact the people of East Tennessee did consider themselves Southerners and they did not want to fight their neighbors, but several events that occurred in 1860 made this option no longer feasible. The first of these events occurred on January 7, when governor Isham Harris called the

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42 Fisher, "Definitions of Victory," 91.

43 Fisher, "Definitions of Victory," 92.
state legislature into a special session, delivered a speech in support of secession and urged the legislature to authorize elections for a convention to take these steps. The legislature agreed to give voters the right to choose whether a convention should be held or not. For the Unionists in East Tennessee this was going to force them to choose between the Federal and Confederate government. They had to make a decision and chose sides. At the same time this was occurring, men like J.G.M. Ramsey and C.W. Charleton were stirring up sentiment and support to remain loyal to the Federal government. The final event that pushed East Tennessee Unionists over the edge was the actions of Senator Andrew Johnson, William G. Brownlow, and other local leaders who put forward arguments against secession and rallied Unionists to vote down the proposed convention. On February 9th, 80 percent of East Tennessee voters and a small majority of Middle Tennessee voted down the proposed convention, as well as, electing a large number of anti-secessionists delegates.44 However, this did not stop the state of Tennessee from passing ordinances of secession on April 30th. Although the state of Tennessee was now part of the Confederacy, East Tennessee refused to back down and still proclaimed that they were part of the United States. These action ensured that there would be conflict with the Confederate officials now in control of the government of Tennessee. New fears began to emerge within the ranks of the East Tennessee Unionists. First, among these fears was the nature of the Confederate political system. The people of East Tennessee feared that the new government would place all of the power in the hands of the wealthy and landed classes, thereby forcing all of the farmers into a position of submission and inequality. William Brownlow stated, "Let Tennessee once go into this Empire of Cotton States, and all poor men will at once become the free negroes of the

Empire.45 A second fear was the belief that the Confederate government would enact economic policies detrimental to East Tennessee’s interests. For the people of East Tennessee this meant that the Confederacy would put all their energies into the cotton economy, and this would put an end to the industrial improvements that were taking place within East Tennessee. Finally, Unionists had a sense of independent government and a strong sense of regional identity which would be weakened by the fact that they remained loyal to the Union while other areas decided to join the Confederacy.46

The primary Unionist military units were the home guard and guerrilla units, and both of these groups were decentralized and based in the country, village, or district. The home guard were basically militia units and were in charge of maintaining order and protecting communities from Confederate troops. The also served as scouts, guides, and foragers for the Union army. They guarded prisoners, skirmished with Confederate troops, and fought with secessionists partisans. The guerrilla units were drawn from the same communities as the home guard, and they were organized around local leaders, officials, or men who demonstrated outstanding leadership skills. They had many of the same tasks as the home guard, but they also took part in raids that destroyed secessionists property and stole anything they could use. However, unlike the home guard, guerrilla units occasionally took part in raids across state lines. Unionist activity in East Tennessee could be divided into three broad categories: service with the Federal army, intimidation of secessionists and Confederate officials, and the harassment of the occupying Confederate troops. Many Unionists decided that service in the Federal army would be more productive to bringing the war to an end than taking part in the home guard or guerrilla


East Tennessee provided thirty thousand to thirty-five thousand troops who at one time or another served in the Federal army. This not only helped out the war effort for the North, but it also deprived the Confederacy of thirty to thirty-five thousand men, and these were men that the Confederacy desperately needed to replenish the ranks of their armies. These Unionists also forced Southern commanders to divert several hundred more men to chase down draft evaders, patrol known routes of escape, and skirmish with Unionists partisans. All of these actions placed more stress on a governmental system that was already at the breaking point. Those men who did not enlist in the Union Army, joined either the home guard or guerrilla units. The Unionist guerrilla units, if pushed, could become just as ruthless, cruel, and destructive as their Confederate counterparts. These guerrilla units engaged in theft and destruction of secessionists property as a means of punishment, as well as, a way to acquire supplies to sustain their activities. In early 1862, Unionist guerrilla's mounted a coordinated raid that killed six secessionists, wounded many others, and burned several homes. Similar raids were carried out throughout the war and many times these raids were in retaliation for raids carried out by Confederate guerrillas. In addition to conducting raids against secessionists, Unionist guerrillas waged campaigns of sabotage and harassment against Confederate troops. They cut telegraph lines, captured or destroyed supplies, derailed trains, burned rail cars, and attempted to burn bridges. The Union army also stationed guerrilla units on the outskirts of the Confederate camps where they would ambush troops coming in and out of the camp, cut down trees to block roads used by troops, and bushwhack Confederate couriers, foragers, recruiting officers, provost

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marshals, and scouts. These guerrilla units did not seriously hamper the Confederate military order, but they did force the Confederate army to divert manpower to secure their supply lines. The Union army also used these guerrilla units as scouts to provide detailed information about the roads and terrain, report on the secessionists population, and sometimes they would be used by the regular army in attacks. The final task given to the Unionists of East Tennessee was that of enforcing Federal occupation policies. They were responsible for maintaining order, administering the loyalty oath, and punishing dissenters. The occupying Federal army basically put the East Tennessee Unionists in a position of power and for them the outcome of the Civil War was nothing more than a total victory.

In 1862, when the confederate government passed the first conscription act they did not fully comprehend the consequences of their actions. The conscription act only helped to bolster unionists feelings, as well as, deplete the confederate army of vital manpower. A majority of the confederate army was made up of the poor, rural farmers. These men were the first to volunteer to fight for the South. Most of these men signed twelve month enlistments, but when the government tired to force these men to re-enlist for three more years problems arose. Most of these volunteers felt as though they had done their part in fighting for the South and that new men should be brought in to relieve them. However, the confederate government only made things worse by enacting “substitute” laws. When Jefferson Davis enacted these laws they were intended to keep men unfit for service out of the army, but the reality was that the “substitute” laws allowed wealthy men who were unwilling to fight to remain home. Since the wealthy could

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50 Fisher, "Definitions of Victory," 100.
52 Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 14.
afford to pay for men to take their place, the army was filled with men who had no loyalty to the confederate cause. Many times as soon as they received their payment the substitutes would desert from the army. These wealthy men had been the leading proponents of the secessionist movement, but they were unwilling to make sacrifices for the fight that they had started. These wealthy plantation owners would place ads in newspapers offering money and land to men willing to take their place in the army. This enraged many confederate soldiers since again it seemed to the rank and file that those who started the war were not willing to take their part in it. If the wealthy landowners were not willing to sacrifice for the Southern cause then why should the poor, rural farmer spill his blood? Many of the men who volunteered in 1861, simply deserted from the army and fled into the ranks of Unionists groups or they went into hiding in the mountains. These men believed that by returning home and swearing loyalty to the Federal government, they would at least have a choice in whether they enlisted or not. Many of these men when they returned home were appalled by the suffering of their families and neighbors. The confederate government left many of these local communities to fend for themselves, as well as, provide supplies for the confederate army. By joining unionists movements southerners could help to defend their land and relieve the suffering of their families. Many of these poor rural farmers were enraged that while their families were suffering the wealthy were living in luxury. The planter class continued to extort and take advantage of the poor. These wealthy southerners were basically acting like “war profiteers” and charging extremely high prices for the basic food stuffs many locals needed to survive. The actions of the confederate army,

53 Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy*, 27.
government, and wealthy only increased the bitterness felt by the vast majority of the poor, rural population. Many ex-confederates joined the ranks of the unionists because of these grievances.

In November 1861, only months after the outbreak of the Civil War, the governor of Arkansas, Henry M. Rector, strongly believed that if the Union Army entered his state that most of the people would leave the Confederacy and enlist as Union soldiers. Rector attempted to crack down and arrest as many pro-Union men as he could find, but he quickly realized the futility of trying to find every Unionists within his state. The several hundred men that he had arrested were only a small portion of the Unionists within Arkansas. Governor Rector's fears were soon realized when in the winter of 1861 the Union Army entered the Northwestern corner of Arkansas. On March 7 - 8 1862, the Union Army defeated the Confederates at the Battle of Pea Ridge. The defeat at Pea Ridge caused the main body of the Confederate Army to withdraw from the Northern section of the state. Union General Samuel R. Curtis, was assigned to lead the Union thrust to capture the capitol in Little Rock. Curtis when he reached the Ozark Hills decided to take advantage of the opportunity to try and recruit men from within the Unionists ranks. Curtis stated that, "I find the Union sentiment in the country strong and in the town considerable . . . the people of Arkansas are much more ready to abandon a desperate and despicable cause." However, Curtis missed an excellent opportunity to mobilize a massive force of Unionists into guerrilla units. These Unionists were ready and willing to fight, but the Union Army did not take immediate action and destroy the remains of the Confederate Army within Arkansas. This inactivity led many men to either not enlist or leave the Army shortly after

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55 *Lincoln's Loyalists*, 74.
joining. Another problem was that Curtis imposed his own officers on these Unionists units instead of allowing them to elect their own officers from among their ranks.

Despite the recruiting problems, many men in Arkansas were willing to enlist and fight from the Union. In 1862, there were 887 Arkansans in calvary units and 380 others in infantry regiments. Groups of Unionists from Arkansas joined Northern units in Missouri and others in home guard militias. The commanding officers of the Union Army in Arkansas believed that they would recruit larger numbers of men if they allowed them to form local militia units that would be in charge of protecting their local communities. Colonel Harrison the Union commander at Fayetteville, believed that these home guard units might eventually be transformed into three year enlisted regiments. James M. Johnson, a native of Arkansas, stated that there were fifteen home guard units seeking permission to be organized into local militia units. One of the major advantages of these militia units is that they could be used as auxiliary forces until enlisted men could be found to fill the ranks. These militia units required no pay, and only a small amount of sugar, salt, and coffee. These men would be willing to fight for Union Army for little to nothing in return. In 1863, when Generals Steele and Burnside’s made their push to take Little Rock they received much needed support from the local Unionists troops. Colonel William F. Cloud, of the second Kansas calvary, also received support from six companies of Union men, as well as, three officers and one hundred men from a Confederate unit who deserted and were still in their grey uniforms. Colonel Cloud used these Confederate deserters as a guerrilla unit to hunt down other Confederates who were raiding the near by Unionists communities. After the Union Army took control of Little Rock, General Steele told

56 Current, *Lincoln’s Loyalists*, 76.

these Unionists they could create home guard units to protect their towns and families, enlist in the Union Army, or form new regiments on their own. Most Arkansas Unionists either formed home guard units or created their own Arkansas regiments to fight for the Union.

These militia units would prove to be the most successful groups for counterguerrilla operations within Arkansas. As the Civil War moved east and most of the Union Army was shifted to the new battlefront, the bulk of the military operations in Arkansas were left to these local militia units. The Unionists in Arkansas rapidly filled the ranks of these militia units and soon there were close to ten thousand men ready to fight the Confederacy.58 The commanders of the Union Army realized that Unionists knowledge of Arkansas’s terrain and their numbers would prove invaluable to the counterguerrilla operations which were to come in the following weeks and months. The First Arkansas Calvary, commanded by Colonel M. LaRue Harrison, would become the primary counterguerrilla unit in the Northern part of the state. Its military record was the best among all the Unionists units that were formed and many believe this could be credited to the immense hatred that the men of the First Arkansas had for their Confederate counterparts.59 From mid-1864 to April 1865, the First Arkansas fought confederate guerillas on a daily basis and distinguished themselves in many of these engagements. The most notable of these occurred in the fall of 1864 on the Sterling Price Missouri expedition. While most of the other units that took part in the Price expedition began to retreat believing the mission a total failure, the men of the First Arkansas stood their ground and refused to give in. Colonel Harrison increased the calvary patrols between the cities of Yellville and Fayetteville, fortified


59 Sutherland, 181.
Fayetteville, recruited and armed more men, and continued to setup ambushes of both the regular Confederate army, as well as, Confederate guerrilla bands. Harrison and his men waged a brutal campaign against both the Confederate guerrillas, as well as, the communities which provided them with safety. The First Arkansas destroyed anything that could be used to feed or supply these Confederate guerrillas. Besides the destruction of many Confederate guerrilla bands, the men of the First Arkansas also setup “fortified colonies” which were settlements of Unionists that were under the protection of Harrison and his men. The men of the First Arkansas would enter these communities and help to train and equip the men of the home guard so that they could protect themselves in the event that the first Arkansas was not in the immediate area. By Christmas 1864, Harrison has setup six colonies with eight more in the process of being established. In the end, the Confederate could not make any headway in Arkansas between the Union army and Unionist militia units most of the state was safely in the hands of the Federal government.

In West Virginia, like East Tennessee and Arkansas, there was a strong pre-existing belief loyalty to the Union was important. In Virginia most of the state was opposed to secession and the government did not gain enough support to pass an ordinance of secession until President Lincoln ordered the formation of a army to invade and crush the rebellious states. West Virginia, provides a telling example of these rural communities who provided no support for the Confederacy at all. The northwestern section of Virginia actually made the decision to secede from Virginia and setup their own separate state, which eventually became West Virginia. Early Unionists action in West Virginia was political. There was a strong old Whig population in the

60 Sutherland, 182.
61 Sutherland, 183.
Northern and West sections of the state and from out of these areas came the most active Unionists supporters. The political leaders of what would become West Virginia began publishing pro-Union pamphlets that attempted to crush the secessionists movement in the rest of Virginia. Many Unionists in West Virginia used these political pamphlets because they did not want to see the people of Virginia become engaged in a violent and brutal guerrilla war, which was a very real possibility. Within these pamphlets Unionists focused on threats of physical violence against individuals, their home, and families. Unionists believed that by describing the horrors of a guerrilla war they could encourage their fellow Virginians to side with them and stop all talks of seceding from the Union.

Unionists in Virginia distributed their pamphlets through the mail or hand delivered them to the people. They designed these pamphlets to be small enough that they could fit into peoples pockets. This was a way to transport their materials without drawing attention to themselves or the people that they handed them out to. Virginia Unionists also used the newspapers to get their anti-secessionists views out to the public. They would usually have newspaper editors reprint their pamphlets in their papers or they would have them print debates between anti-secessionists and secessionists. The use of all available media outlets allowed these Unionists to get their message out to all the people of Virginia not matter where the lived in the state. Within these pamphlets Unionists argued that the people of Virginia had little in common with the people of the Lower South since there was very little slavery in Virginia seeing as how Virginia was not good cotton country. Unionists attempted to show the people of Virginia that they had more in common with the North and that secession would stunt the industrial growth that was on the

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62 Sutherland, Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front, 59.

63 Sutherland, Guerrillas, Unionist, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front, 61.
horizon. These Unionists also used the argument that the people of the backcountry would be the backbone of the army of Virginia and that these backcountry people would be fighting a "rich mans war" and that they would reap none of the benefits of a Confederate victory. However, the number one fear of Virginia Unionists as stated before was the possibility of a destructive internal guerrilla war. Many Virginians remembered the stories of the guerrilla war that was fought during the Revolutionary War and the devastating effects that it had on the people of the South and no one if at all possible wanted a repeat of that type of violence. But when President Lincoln in 1861, called for all Southern states to provide soldiers to help crush the rebellion the possibility of a peaceful solution to this crisis was gone. In the years to come the worst fears of Unionists would become reality, since there would be a bloody and violent guerrilla war inside of Virginia.

In 1861, when Virginia finally seceded from the Union the people of Northwestern Virginia seceded from the Confederacy and established a "restored" government in Wheeling, Virginia. These Unionists, in what would later become West Virginia, vowed to do all in their power to assist the Union Army in retaking the state of Virginia. By the summer of 1861, the Union army had gained control of much of the territory in Northwestern Virginia and the presence of the Army allowed for more Unionists to come out in public without the fear of retaliation by Confederate forces. One of the most active Unionists units during the Civil War was the Loudoun Rangers or Independent Virginia Rangers. The task of the Loudoun Rangers was to help protect the capital of West Virginia by hunting down rebel guerrilla’s in Loudoun County to the west of Washington and on the other side of the Potomac. Their commanding officer was Captain Samuel Means who reported directly to the secretary of war, Edwin Stanton,
who gave Means the authorization to form his band of rangers. Captain Means, already had a poor reputation among the Confederates of Virginia when he took command of his rangers. Means had previously guided a group of Yankee troops on raids into Loudoun County. The Confederates already believed him to be a renegade and there was rumor that the government of Virginia had a large reward out for his capture. The Loudoun Rangers did not achieve much success on the battlefield, but what they did achieve was to force the Confederate Army to divert much needed resources to chase them around the state. In the battles of Antietam, Gettysburg, and a series of smaller battles, the Confederate Army had to send groups of calvary and infantry into Loudoun County to try and capture Means and his men. So in a way, Means and his Rangers achieved their goal of disrupting Confederate operations inside and outside of Virginia. However, by 1864 Means was removed from command because he could not get along with his superior officers in the Union Army. Means was replaced by Daniel M. Keyes, who was charged with clearing Loudoun County of all Confederate guerrilla's. This proved to be a very difficult task to achieve since Keyes was going up against Mosby and his rangers. Keyes and Mosby fought a vicious war, but neither side could claim victory. The Loudoun Rangers and Mosby's Rangers made the lives of the civilians harder by destroying the infrastructure of Virginia. This guerrilla war was exactly what Unionists at the beginning of the crisis feared. The people of Virginia suffered most during this partisan violence. There were also long lasting effects of this partisan violence when after the war had ended in 1865 the violence did not stop in the backcounty of Virginia where people were still seeking revenge for the war time raids of these partisan groups.

64 Current, Lincoln's Loyalists, 179.

65 Current, Lincoln's Loyalists, 185 - 186.
Conscription also created conflict between the state government and the Confederate government. Many local governments viewed conscription as taking away valuable manpower needed for local defense. Governors also viewed this as the confederate government overstepping their boundaries and usurping power from the state. In the minds of many local leaders it was more important for men to fill the ranks of the local militia then to be drafted into the confederate army. With the Union Army advancing into Southern territory many of these local governments needed men for the defense of their communities and they could not count on the Confederate Army to stop the advancing Northerners. Many state leaders had joined the confederacy in hopes that state’s rights would not be violated by Jefferson Davis or his government. However, the conscription acts violated state’s rights and authority. State governors especially did not like the fact that the government sent conscription officers, members of the confederate army, to enforce the conscription laws and round up all those men who were not willing to obey the conscription laws.

In the end, the Unionist organizations that operated in East Tennessee, Arkansas, and West Virginia were just the beginning of a larger movement. As the war continued more and more Unionist groups formed throughout the South. These organization waged a bloody and brutal guerrilla war throughout the South in an attempt to destroy the Confederacy from the inside. The guerrilla war had the desired effect of both opening a second front and forcing the Confederacy to commit valuable military resources to hunt down and destroy these Unionist guerrillas. While many Unionist groups choose to use violence there were others who wanted to use politics as a means to end the war. Organizations like the Peace and Constitutional Society,
the Peace Society, and the Order of the Heroes of America all believed that there was a peaceful and non-violent way to end the war.

These Unionists groups had long reaching effects throughout the South. The news of Union occupation in many regions along, with stories of abuses by Unionists, reached the Confederate soldiers at the front. Roaming Unionists guerrilla units were wreaking havoc on many regions in the South. These guerrillas were attempting to destroy the infrastructure of the Confederacy and in many cases soldiers’ families were caught up in these raids and their property was destroyed. The conditions at home were made worse by the presence of outlaws and gangs that continually robbed the people of the South. The Lenoir family in their correspondences talked about the growing problems with outlaws and lay-out gangs. In a letter dated August 13, 1863, the following statements were made about lay-out gangs, “they have a terrible state of things upon the Tennessee line particularly in Watauga [county]. There is a band of robbers & villains who are constantly plundering the people in the night . . .” The problems with roaming gangs of robbers only got worse as time went on. In another letter to Rufus Lenoir, a friend tells him the problems with these gangs, “I hope you are not in such tribulation about robbers & tories as we are down here - We do not know sometimes whether to go to bed or not, for they are committing robberies on some one nearly every night & we are expecting them upon us constantly . . .”

William King in his diary talked about the roaming outlaws throughout the South, “the whole country in a lawless condition, citizens and soldiers of both armies all alike availing

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66 Lenoir Family Papers, Personal Correspondence 1861 - 1865, 20.
67 Lenoir Family Papers, Personal Correspondence 1861 - 1865, 40.
themselves of the distracted state of the country, committing all depredations of plundering and
murdering - these are the unavoidable results of war, which I had foreseen and foretold before
this sad and needless war was commenced by Politicians.” 68 King believed that all of the
hardships the people of the South were now facing could be blamed on politicians who went to
war without thinking about all the consequences. In the mind of William King the South was
descending into anarchy. He observed soldiers on both sides committing atrocities, “Soldiers just
riding up with their Horses loaded with bundles of corn Stalks all in tassels, a daily sight, and a
sad one to see the corn crops almost ripe cut down and destroyed, to leave the poor farmers in
want another year, but the Horses must have provender. Our army did the same in cutting Oat,
Wheat & Corn crops - Famine or Want the attendant of a Army.” 69 The army which had no
rations was forced to steal from the poor farmers who also did not have enough food for their
families. King believed that the South was destroying itself by allowing these things to happen.
The condition of the poor whites in the South was constantly on the mind of William King. In
1864, with the approach of winter King wrote the following about the poor whites, “The
suffering of the poor here must be very great, the approaching winter, how sorely they are made
to feel the horrors of this War... What is to become of the poor race among us - this sad war I
apprehend is to end in their destruction like the Indians.” 70 He was not going to let the poor of
the South be destroyed by the war; he attempted to help out the poor in any way that he could. In
the winter of 1864, he helped the poor barter for the supplies that they needed to survive, but
those he helped obtain supplies then became the targets of their neighbors who had nothing.

68 William King, Diary of William King; Cobb County, Georgia 1864, 20 - 21.
69 William King, Diary of William King, 70.
70 William King, Diary of William King, 81.
Several women from Cobb county told King that their neighbors were getting to be as bad as the soldiers and were stealing from each other. He concluded, “what a crop of thieves this war has produced.”\(^{71}\) The major problem facing these Southern communities was that there were not enough men left to defend against these outlaws, and as soon as King left the area he feared that all of the good he did would be undone by these gangs of outlaws.

There is no protecting anything out of doors from the thieves, and I fear after I leave there will be but little safety for the food for the servants left within the house. The whole country is overrun with robbers, blue coats, grey coats, citizen’s coats & no coats, blessed are the poor who have nothing to lose.\(^{72}\)

Southern soldiers from the beginning of the war had received letters from family members describing the harsh conditions that they were facing everyday. These hardships combined with news that their communities were now under the control of Union forces in many cases were too much for these soldiers to handle. Southern soldiers had to decide if their loyalty to family trumped their loyalty to the Confederacy. In many cases Southern soldiers decided that their families well being was more important than fighting for the Confederacy. From the start, for most Confederate soldiers it was incredibly hard if not impossible to get permission to go home and make sure their families had enough food, clothing, money or whatever else they needed.

The inability of these soldiers to get permission to go home combined with the perceived threats from Unionists and Union soldiers led many Southern soldiers to desert from the army. From mid-1862 to the end of the war large numbers of Confederate soldiers deserted from the army,

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\(^{71}\) William King, *The Diary of William King*, 88 - 89.

\(^{72}\) William King, *The Diary of William King*, 92.
which significantly hampered the Confederacy’s ability to conduct successful military campaigns.
Chapter Three: Desertion in the Confederate Army

Confederate soldiers enthusiasm for the war effort was short lived. By the second year of the war many soldiers had enough of army life and bloody battles. Most Southern men believed that the war would be over in six months to a year if it lasted that long. In the minds of most Southerners there would be one large battle and when the North saw how committed the South was to its independence they would negotiate a peaceful solution. However, the reality that the war was going to be a long drawn out conflict was a serious blow to the Confederate morale. The majority of the soldiers in the Confederate Army had volunteered to fight for a year and in 1862 they were being told that their enlistments had to be extended until the war was over. Soldiers became very concerned about the welfare of their families, since when they volunteered they had left enough food for about a year and now that their enlistments had been extended there was a very real possibility that unless the government helped out their families that they would starve.

The states of Georgia and Alabama provide excellent case studies of how conditions both at home and in the Confederate Army played an important role in the rising number of deserters. The conditions in the Confederate Army by the second year of the war was not much better than the conditions on the home front. In the Confederate Army soldiers were lucky to get a meal once a day. One Confederate soldier summed up the situation in the following statement,

Two days fasting, marching, and fighting was not uncommon; . . . no rations were issued to Cutshaw’s battalion of artillery for one entire week, and the men subsisted on the corn
intended for the battery horses, raw bacon captured from the enemy, and the water of springs, creeks, and rivers.73

Confederate soldiers had to live on whatever rations they could get their hand on. The reality was that the Confederate government did not have enough supplies to feed both the soldiers and the civilians. Another soldier stated, “Our army is ... almost starved. Our rations has been Beef and flour since we left Richmond and not more than half enough ...”74 When the Confederate government did send rations there was not enough food to feed all of the men; and the army was forced to cut the rations of men who were slowly starving to death. It was not only the lack of food that was plaguing the Confederate Army, for like those living at home, the army did not have the necessary materials to replace the rags most of their soldiers were wearing. In the winter of 1863 - 1864, one soldier from Alabama described the appearance of the soldiers reporting for morning duty, “The weather is as cold as the world’s clarity. I counted out on inspection yesterday, thirty-one men in Battle’s Brigade who did not have a sign of a shoe on their feet, yet they are compelled to preform as much duty as those who are well-shod.”75

The Confederate Army expected men in rags and no shoes in harsh conditions to fight and defeat a well equipped Union Army. Private Edgar Warfield in his memoirs described the poor conditions of the soldiers in his unit,

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73 Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia* (Richmond 1882), 57.

74 Diary of T. J. Ford, entry of September 22, 1862.

75 Thomas Caffey to his mother, November 12, 1863.
In all these days we had no change of clothing and we were literally devoured by vermin. We had no tents and we slept on the open ground - and slept soundly, even though the rain was pouring in torrents . . . the men were skin, bone, and muscle. 76

In such harsh living conditions the soldiers of the Confederate Army could not last long. The commanding officers realized that they needed clothing, food, and other basic necessities in order to keep an effective force in the field. If the soldiers had no food and were in rags they could only fight for so long before exhaustion, disease, and death over took them. Warfield described his own appearance, “My costume consisted of a par of ragged trousers, a stained, dirty jacket, and an old hat, the brim pinned up with a thorn. A begrimed blanket over my shoulder, a greased, smeared cotton haversack full of apples and corn . . . I was bare-footed and had stone bruises on each foot.” 77 He went on to comment upon the appearance of the 17th Virginia, “My, my, what a set of ragamuffins they looked! It seemed as if every cornfield in Maryland had been robbed of its scarecrows and popped up against that fence.” 78 These soldiers continually wrote home asking for more clothing and shoes. Little did they know that the conditions at home were just as bad. Their families read these letters but could do nothing to help out the soldiers. In 1864, the London Times described to condition of the Confederate Army to its readers,

Exhausted men, worn-out mules and horses . . . lying down side by side, gaunt famine glaring hopelessly from sunken, lack-luster eyes . . . who can wonder if many hearts tried


78 Edgar Warfield, Manassas to Appomattox, 108.
in the fiery furnace of four unparalleled years never hitherto found wanting should have quailed in the presence of starvation, fatigue, sleeplessness, misery...79

The *London Times*, like most people in the South, believed the Confederate cause was lost. The soldiers could not continue fighting unless they were completely resupplied and there was not evidence that this was going to happen.

Georgia’s desertion story reveals diverse ideas of honor between social classes. Most of the people in Georgia were self-sufficient farmers who relied on the labor of all family members for survival. From the ranks of these people most of soldiers from Georgia were drawn, and their families would suffer the most during the war. Georgia’s importance to the Confederacy sprung from its economy. It boasted more people, voters, slaves, and slaveholders than any other state in the lower South. Georgia was the one state that could unify the lower South, and without it there would be no unified South and therefore no Confederacy.80 In order to make sure that Georgia joined the Confederacy the wealthy slaveholders needed to get the non-slaveholding whites behind them during the votes for secession. To win over these voters the elites needed to convince the poor voters that if they remained in the Union that their jobs would be threatened by the emancipation of the slaves. The elites in Georgia were successful in convincing the rest of the population that life would become worse if they did not secede from the Union.

The economies and cultures that developed from the different physical environments of Georgia enabled some regions to cope with the hardships of war, while others lacked the resources to withstand the deprivation caused by the conflict.81 As the war dragged on into the


third year the loyalty of the people from north Georgia to the Confederate cause snapped under severe pressure. They saw the Confederacy and their state government demonstrate that they could not protect the soldiers' homes or their families. Salt and food shortages, the presence of vigilantes and irregular bands of men who preyed on the region, and eventually the presence of General Sherman affected soldiers from north Georgia much differently than those soldiers from the plantation belt. North Georgians could not endure the rigors of war and the long-term absence of their male population from the farms upon which their survival depended. Plain folks in the upcountry region lived in a world where community constituted a vital support network. Subsistence agriculture in Northern Georgia required continuous physical labor, with the crop cycle setting the patterns of life with all else being secondary. For example children only went to school after the crops had been harvested and the new ones planted. The war broke the rhythm that farms worked to. Economic collapse rapidly over took the region.

As the war continued, the realities of the home front across Georgia altered notions of honor in north Georgia more than in the plantation belt. In the belief that the individual must yield to community and family, north Georgia's leaders eventually disallowed military duty that adversely affecting the home front. At the center of this world was the family unit, which overall prized its own independence. Husbands took charge of the fields, supported by their sons when they reached an age where they could work, to clear, plow, and plant the farm. The familial economic unit depended on each person to perform his or her essential functions and the family only survived if they had all of these family members. Many of these family units were

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destroyed by the war with the deaths of husbands, sons, or both. The farmers, merchants, and craftsmen in north Georgia living within a culture of familial relationships and kinship ties were content with a level of existence that provided enough to feed and clothe their families without destroying their independence. The war would change all of this and in many cases these families would lose their independence and become dependent on the state to survive. In contrast to the plantation belt economy, the removal of men from the north Georgia Piedmont and Upcountry communities struck at the very core of the family economy. Unlike the plantation regions where the underlying labor force remained intact, albeit more difficult to manage, the departure of the father and his adult sons stripped the labor force. No one could have foreseen that economic destruction might follow in the heels of mass military enlistment even under ideal circumstances. If weather, embargo, fire, or other acts of God intervened, the situation might quickly have become unlivable. The loyalty of those people living in the Upcountry relied on the government-citizen relationship that saw the individual relinquish his right to govern himself in exchange for the government’s obligation to protect his life, liberty, and property. The state of Georgia would find it almost impossible to keep their end of this bargain, since they did not have the resources or manpower necessary to protect these soldiers’ families. However, the failure of the state to provide adequate protection for soldier’s families was only one of the many factors that caused large numbers of Georgians to desert from the Confederate Army.

Many of the soldiers from Georgia who deserted actually ended up taking oaths of loyalty to the Union. Southern efforts to fight desertion failed to combat Union policies that invited desertion, as well as, the ability of the Union to create safe havens for those who were willing to

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There were three key reasons why these soldiers deserted into Union lines: their safe return might encourage others to desert, they could return and provide for themselves and their families, and last the Union would not have to feed and house them or spend valuable military resources guarding them. The Union’s desertion inducements reached the Confederate soldiers through circulars and notices that were delivered to the pickets. These pamphlets promised indefinite parole and free transportation home. For most Confederate soldiers the promise of transportation home won them over to the idea of desertion to the Union, since the well-being of their families was constantly on the minds of most soldiers. Confederate desertions also benefited the Union, since deserters brought arms, mules, horses, and other property with them and the Union would pay top dollar for these items. Southern civilians who were railroad conductors, engineers, boiler operator, mechanics, or telegraph operator would be given lucrative jobs by the Union Army. Both sides benefited from these arrangements since Confederate soldiers got to go home and the Union Army received supplies vital to the war effort.

Low morale was another key factor in the desertion of Georgian soldiers. Early on the Confederate Army was very successful and time after time defeated a numerically superior Union Army. However, as the war went on, the early success of the Confederate Army could not be repeated. Especially in the Western Theatre, the Confederate Army was continually beaten by Union forces. In these bloody, brutal battles soldiers saw their family members and friends horribly disfigured or killed. As these defeats continued to mount many soldiers started to question why they continued to fight, since it was obvious to them that the Confederacy was

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86 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 38.
87 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 40.
88 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 57.
going to lose the war. Many soldier believed that they were fighting and dying for nothing. In
1863 – 1864, the Confederacy began to lose the veteran soldiers and it was these hardened
soldiers that the Confederacy could not afford to lose. The inability of these Georgian soldiers to
get a furlough to go home and check on their families was another contributing factor to the low
morale of most soldiers. There were Georgian soldiers stationed in the Virginia theatre who had
to watch soldiers from Virginia leave to visit their families. Georgian Samuel Brewer
commented on the unfairness of these policies, “I have as much a right to it as anybody for I
cannot help living so far away and home has as much or as many enticements for me as theirs
have for them, but I am detained on this very ground.”89 All Confederate soldiers believed that
after the campaigning season was over they had the right to go home and check on their families.
However, Confederate military leaders felt that if furloughs were given out to all those soldiers
who wanted them, there was no guarantee that those soldiers would return to the army. Many
soldiers believed that the only way they would ever get home to see their families was if they
deserted, since as the war went on it became nearly impossible for any soldier to receive a
furlough. In the end, letters from home were the number one contributing factor to low morale
and increases in desertion among Georgian soldiers.

The wartime experience of families and communities along with the deteriorating
situation in Georgia compelled many families to call their sons, husbands, and fathers home.
Men from the Upcountry and the upper Piedmont could not and did not ignore these messages
from home.90 Georgia began to feel the brunt of the war in 1862. The first eight to ten months
of the war produced little hardship because shortages occurred after the depletion of the states

89 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 73.
reserves and it took a little while for the people to start feeling the effects of these shortages. The removal of military age men took half of the workforce from north Georgia’s semi-subsistence economy. Letters began pouring into Governor Brown’s office from the women who were left to fend for themselves. Most of these letters requested the return of sons, husbands, and fathers. One woman wrote to the governor, “I am a poor lone women I have two sons in the confederate service and have but one son left with me about twelve years of age and has but one hand therefore he is unable to render me any help.” These women realized that they could not do all of the necessary farming by themselves, and they would need assistance in order to grow enough food to survive. Besides writing to the governor these women also wrote those family members in the army pleading for help. Soldiers wrote home attempting to provide much needed guidance on how to farm the land. Joseph F. Alexander of the Sixtieth Georgia cautioned his wife about the importance of feeding the livestock and he also asked if she had been able to buy any corn; and a month later Alexander wrote his wife again asking her if she had been able to plant the potato crop. Similarly, Lieutenant Joe Barnett of Morgan Country, Georgia wrote his wife in 1862 giving the specific instructions on how to plant corn. He wrote, “Clean up the ditches and ridge of the corn rows and plant about the 1st or 5th of May.” Despite the heroic efforts of these men it was all too obvious that their physical presence was needed at home. Most women found that planting crops and having planting explained to them were two completely different things and despite their willingness to farm without a male labor force it was just not possible. One soldier wrote that if the potato crop failed, his wife and family would

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91 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 91.

92 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 92.

93 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 91 - 93.
not eat and unless he could get home to plant the new potato crop there would be nothing to eat next year. Plainly stated, if families could not put in the crops then they would face increased suffering and possible starvation. Adding to these hardships was the uncooperative weather, throughout Georgia there was a combination unusual heat, cold, wet, and dry conditions that damaged or destroyed the farmers’ crops.

In addition to the fears that the family farms would not survive without their men, the homefront increased fears that many men would not return home alive. The death toll for the Upcountry and upper Piedmont intensified the anxieties of loved ones. The casualty figures for these counties in comparison with the enlistment figures show that many of the region’s men were dead by 1863 and that many more were still at risk. These Georgia soldiers died slow and agonizing deaths, in excessive cold or unbearably hot encampments. As the war dragged on into late 1863, soldiers from Georgia’s Upcountry and upper Piedmont were dying in droves and many of these men were dying from diseases they contracted while in camp.

By late 1863, the conflicts between country and home were resolved; most men choose home over country, as the Confederacy dissolved. The only way a soldier’s family could be cared for was by the soldier himself. Letters from wives and mothers continued to beg sons, husbands, and fathers to return home. The wife of Private John Kulgar, of the Oglethorpe Guards, wrote him a letter asking him to return home. She stated, “There are six girl children and one baby boy that are not able to help themselves, they are out of corn and can’t get any.”

The farm was some forty miles from the nearest store and without her husband there was no

hope of feeding her family. Mrs. C.M. Davis of Taylor County, south of Atlanta, wrote to governor Brown explaining the inability of yeoman families to help one another with all of the men gone. Her husband was in the militia which had been called into active duty and he was now somewhere in the vicinity of Atlanta. She told governor Brown that without the return of her husband the harvest was in danger of failure, since her six daughters could not bring in the harvest by themselves. To make matters worse, Davis not only had his own family living on the farm but there were a number of extended relatives living there as well. In October 1864, Mrs. M.M. Humpheries wrote her husband, “I think if you superior authority knew my necessities and my situation and a house full of children dependent entirely upon me for you are not allowed to come home to our assistance let the consequences be as it may I can help but think that if they knew their hearts would soften and they would let you come home.” However, in many cases Confederate leaders were aware of the conditions at home, but they were not going let soldiers leave since the army was already losing too many men in battle and to disease. Some women even wrote to General Robert E. Lee requesting that their family members be allowed to return home. Lee wrote back to a woman from Athens, Georgia the following, “You have set a noble example in devoting your ten sons to the service of the country and in encouraging them to defend their homes. We need every good soldier we have in the army. If we allowed all to return who are needed at home we would soon have no country and no homes. I sympathize with you in your anxieties and privations, but I trust your kind neighbors in Georgia will not permit you to want, while your brave sons are doing their duty manfully against

the enemy."¹⁰⁰ Faced with the reality that only peace or death could reunite these families, many north Georgian women lost hope in peace. Many wives by the end of 1863 had become widows, and it seemed to them that God had withdrawn his blessing from the Confederacy. In Georgia, there was a growing belief that home came before the Confederacy. Common soldiers from the Upcountry and upper Piedmont carried the fight for rich men who did not have to make the same sacrifice. Georgia was on the verge of extraordinary hardship and unexpected disaster, and as the situation at home got worse the calls to come home increased exponentially.¹⁰¹

The Confederacy was not one unified whole but several parts that attempted to achieve a common goal. Georgia’s common soldiers lost their will to continue long before 1864, not as the result of any great military defeat but from the long, steady grind required of both soldier and civilian. Ultimately, Lee’s continued successes in the field proved little solace to Georgians when the state and Confederate governments proved unable to protect the home front. This crumbling nationalism suffered even more as those who could fight, wealthy planters, did not and their willingness to forsake military service reached the eyes and ears of those who had done most of the fighting. These feelings continued to grow more intense as it became more evident that the planter class stood to benefit most from the war, yet they refused to take part in most of the actual fighting.¹⁰² To many in Georgia and throughout the South it seemed as though the war was becoming a “rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight” with the families of the common soldiers losing all the men. With the absence of their husbands, son, and fathers, those at home still had to fend for themselves. When the soldiers did return home to Georgia, they usually

¹⁰⁰ Weitz, A Higher Duty, 103.
found their families destitute and starving. In the early winter of 1863, the unwillingness of the affluent to share the burdens of war not only deprived Georgia and the Confederacy of badly needed men but also sent a clear signal to soldiers fighting that perhaps their loyalties has been misplaced. Georgia's planter class avoided conscription at a time when their services were desperately needed. Their refusal to step forward and join those who had already been fighting for several years left a bitter taste in the mouths of many north Georgians. Adding insult to injury not only did these planters escape the fight, but they also refused to support the families of these who were fighting. When the Confederacy passed the conscription act in 1862, the planter class made sure they were exempt with the "twenty-slave" rule, which stated that any person who owned twenty or more slaves were exempt from the draft. Planters also made sure that their sons would not have to fight by paying the necessary exception fees. Another means of escaping military service for wealthy planters was proving to the state that they could provide food stuffs necessary to the war effort. Such exempted men offered no relief to the wives or families of those soldiers who were still fighting since their obligation to provide meat and other food stuffs would not be due until a years after the date of the exemption. Needless to say the actions of the planters only made the situation worse, since they could have helped out the families of soldiers, but instead they remained selfish and focused on profits. The planter class, while viewed by others as being selfish and self-centered, was attempting to keep the antebellum economy and their own political power in place during the war. The South paid a heavy price for

103 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 121.
104 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 122 - 123.
105 Weitz, A Higher Duty, 122 -123.
allowing the wealthy to avoid service under any guise, and despite economic and political arguments in favor of slaveholders, these Confederate policies undermined the war effort.

The situation in Georgia worsened with the growing number of shortages occurring throughout the state. The first shortage of an essential resource for the state struck in the early winter of 1862. In time period without refrigeration the only way to preserve certain foods was with salt and the South was quickly running out of salt. Without salt there could be no fresh meat which was vital to both the army and civilian populations. The situation was compounded when the Confederate Army seized salt shipments destined for Georgian civilians. Salt epitomized the southern dilemma, for there was not enough salt for both the army and civilian populations. The Confederate Army exhausted its supply by mid-1862. Even if the army somehow managed to survive without salt there was the serious possibility that the people at home would not. Some women on the home front did have the necessary livestock to produce enough meat for the following year, but without salt there was no way to keep the meat from rotting. The government of Georgia attempted to implement several aid programs whose ultimate goals was to make sure that all families received some amount of salt. However, like most of the programs enacted throughout the Confederacy these aid programs were utter failures. Inadequate communications, difficulty of travel, low literacy, lack of money, and the inability to move through the administrative process all contributed to the Upcountry’s receiving few salt rations. The salt shortage indicated how the war was undermining the Upcountry family, community, and economic structures. The shortage of salt soon combined with other factors

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would render the Georgian home front a disaster area by late 1863. Georgia soldiers, when they found out the conditions their families were being forced to live in, quickly decided that desertion was the only way to get home and save them.

These shortages ultimately led to government corruption that took the form of speculation and impressment. In 1862, Georgians were faced with a drought that destroyed a majority of their crops and what nature did not destroy, men soon would. The planter elite’s greed and selfishness would soon make the situation worse. The corn and grain that did survive the drought was supposed to go to the families of the soldiers, but these supplies never reached those in need. Some Georgians who owned distilleries diverted the main corn and grain to their businesses in order to make liquor. Speculation started almost immediately after the shortages began. Speculation was immune to the governments’ efforts to stop it, and it actually spread into the government itself, which only added to the problems and increased the hardships to those living in north Georgia. In November 1862, Mrs. Wellborn wrote a letter to governor Brown describing how disgusted she was by the actions of those people taking advantage of the poor. Her messages was that prewar patriotism had given way to wartime greed, with the soldiers at the front and their wives and children at home suffering the most. Government speculation hurt everyone, but those who suffered most were yeoman farmers. Some farmers were able to grow enough crops to feed themselves and have a little surplus, which they sold to government agents in the fear that if they did not that these same agents would show up and confiscate their goods. Many of these government agents were unscrupulous and so they took the goods, held them, and then resold them. The actions of these agents caused many citizens to lose faith in the


government and their promises of protection. Speculation also encouraged other forms of fraud. Some stooped so low as to traffic in forged substitution papers, which allowed some men who could not escape military service to remain at home, which in turn forced others to remain at the front — often men who had been in combat for more than a year. Stories of these speculators and their deeds circulated in the local paper. Southern soldiers read about the actions of these men and became infuriated at the lack of protection provided by their state governments.\footnote{Weitz, \textit{A Higher Duty}, 115.}

In the end, the ability of Georgia’s soldier to endure hardship and face death early on in the war contributed to the desertion wave in 1864. Trouble at home and not the fear of death on the battlefield drove many Georgians to desert. The Union, which understood the close connection Southern soldiers had with their families back home constructed policies designed to exploit it. Veteran soldiers from Georgia accepted the Union desertion alternatives because their responsibility to family gradually overcame their duty to the Confederate cause. They returned home only after the situation had become unbearable and when they realized that their sacrifices had not been matched by other Georgians who remained at home for most of the war.\footnote{Weitz, \textit{A Higher Duty}, 171.} Georgia’s desertion story reveals differing ideas of honor between social classes. For the wealthy farmers and planter class the economic conditions allowed these men and women to maintain their conceptions of honor while contributing little to the war effort. In north Georgia the situation was very different. When the war rendered north Georgian communities destitute and their families were on the verge of starvation, desertion was viewed as honorable. Desertion was acceptable for north Georgians because their duty to home and family was recognized by their fellow soldiers, many of whom deserted with these men. Loyalty to home was a higher duty.
then loyalty to the Confederate government. The success of Lee’s army could not feed north Georgia and the loyalty to the Confederacy held by men from this region was tied to the government’s ability to protect their families which it could not do.\textsuperscript{114} Desertion reflected the resolution of conflicting loyalties within the complex social relationships in Georgia that in the end were not acts of cowardice, but decisions made by men who simply chose home over the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{115}

In Alabama, like in Georgia, at the beginning of the secession crisis, disunion did not have the full support of all the people. Many people did not believe that destroying the Union was the best way to solve their problems. It was only after President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to crush the rebellion that many people in Alabama started to lean towards secession. Most of the common people in Alabama saw the coming war as a fight for self-defense and not a fight to preserve slavery. The common people of Alabama, like those of many other states, did not want to be occupied by an invading army and that is what they believed Lincoln’s plan was. The poor farmers in Alabama did not own slaves and therefore did not have a strong connection with the planter class. These farmers were not going to leave their families to fight for a style of living that they had no connection to and in many cases would never be able to achieve. In 1861, when the Confederacy opened fire on Fort Sumter, many men in Alabama flocked to the recruiting officers and volunteered for one year of service. Most believed it would not take more than three or four months to defeat the Yankee invaders.\textsuperscript{116} Many of those who volunteered believed that joining the army would prove to be a grand adventure or something fun and

\textsuperscript{114} Weitz, \textit{A Higher Duty}, 176.

\textsuperscript{115} Weitz, \textit{A Higher Duty}, 179.

\textsuperscript{116} Bessie Martin, \textit{A Rich Man’s War, A Poor Man’s Fight: Desertion of Alabama Troops From the Confederate Army} (The University of Alabama Press, 2003), 63.
exciting instead of the boring lives they were living at home. Still others volunteered in the belief that they would not be called upon unless their local communities were in danger and these same men believed that they would not have to leave and serve outside of their states. These misconception would prove to be disastrous for the Confederate Army. These volunteers were accustomed to the workings of their local militia units, and their lax discipline, and they believed that the Confederate Army would operate in much of the same way, but the commanding officers in the Confederate Army understood they would need a well trained and disciplined army in order to defeat the Union forces.

Discipline and constant drilling would prove to be the first issue that created conflict between the soldiers and their officers. The sons of wealthy planters who volunteered showed up to war with manservants and three large suitcases filled with their possessions. They had no real understanding of what army life was going to be like. Another problem with the early volunteers was they would sometimes attempt to stipulate the terms of their enlistment and under whom the would be willing to serve. The fact that many of these men came from a single community and they all knew each other made things more difficult. These men wanted their commanding officer to be chosen from among themselves, and this person would usually be a well-respected community leader. Confederate officials were taken aback by these demands, since they were focused on raising an army large enough to fight off the Yankee invaders. Early on many recruiters were willing to allow the men to elect their own officers, but as the war went on and manpower became more limited they were less inclined to give in to these demands. However, giving into the demands of the soldiers did not solve the problem. In some cases it made things

worse, for example soldiers treated their elected officers like old friends and this led to a lack of discipline. Soldiers sometimes would not follow marching orders and they did not want to carry travel passes which reminded them too much of “slave” passes.\textsuperscript{118}

The next obstacle facing the Confederate Army was that of inactivity. Men when they enlisted expected to start fighting right away, but this was not the case. After enlisting most soldiers were sent to their respective camps for training and drill. Spending weeks in a cramped camp, training day after day did nothing to lift the morale of the men, in fact it had the opposite effect. The captain of a Mobile company wrote to the Register from Pensacola that many soldiers from Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama were deserting in disgust at doing garrison duty after they had volunteered to fight. A colonel of the Second Alabama Regiment at the same camp wrote to the governor that he only had five hundred men left because all of the others had gone home, disappointed in “the inactive and defensive policy” of the commanding officer.\textsuperscript{119}

When actual combat began on the fields of Manasas, it still did not stop men from leaving the army. After the defeat of Union forces at the Battle of Manasas, many soldiers believed the war to be over, seeing as how no army in its right mind would continue to fight after such a devastating defeat. Believing this thousands of men just left and went home. Those men who decided to leave were not gone for long, seeing as how the Confederate government had just passed into law the first conscription acts, which would force all men to fight in the army for the duration of the war. This news was devastating to the men in the Confederate Army, since they had volunteered to fight for a specific amount of time and now they were being told that they would have to continue fighting without any choice in the matter. Depression quickly set in for

\textsuperscript{118} Martin, \textit{A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight}, 65.

\textsuperscript{119} Martin, \textit{A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight}, 66.
many soldiers, most of whom felt to some extent betrayed by the government, and in some cases soldiers could not face being in the army for the duration of the war, so they deserted.\textsuperscript{120} The lax discipline of Confederate officers would come back to play a major role in the problems of desertion.

From the beginning of 1861, most Southern soldiers viewed the Confederate Army as one of volunteers, and these volunteers had the right to choose the unit he wanted to join. The choice of the unit one was going to join was prized by soldiers since it promised them service under an officer whom they trusted, as well as, the possibility of being among friends and acquaintances which would ensure protection from injustice and loneliness. Confederate officials quickly realized that allowing men to choose their units was an excellent way of building up and solidifying positive morale. After the conscription acts were passed officials realized that if they allowed men, in a limited fashion, to continue this practice it would help to lessen the blow of conscription. The limitations placed on the choices soldiers could make, made things worse. Soldiers were used to having the ability to transfer from one unit to another whenever they pleased, but with these new limitations soldiers could not longer do that.\textsuperscript{121} An example of the soldiers switching units at random occurred in the summer of 1864. Numerous members of the Ninth Alabama Regiment, believing that an injustice had been done when their favorite commanding officer had been relieved, left and went home. After arriving home they decided to join several cavalry units that were being formed in Northern Alabama. In the minds of these soldiers decisions should be made with the consent of the men and if they were not consulted then they had the right to leave that unit and join another which they perceived as being more

\textsuperscript{120} Martin, \textit{A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight}, 66 - 67.

\textsuperscript{121} Martin, \textit{A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight}, 67.
just in the treatment of the soldiers. Many time soldiers would try to secure transfers to units that were stationed closer to their homes, since that would give them an opportunity to check on their families and protect them from any possible invasion by the enemy.\footnote{122}{Martin, \textit{A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight}, 69.}

On April 16, 1862, with the passing of the first conscription act the Confederacy had unknowingly set into motion the events that would significantly contribute to its destruction. Most of the soldiers in the Confederate Army had volunteered from the start, but now they were being told that they had to re-enlist for three more years or until the end of the war. Soldiers were outraged, they had been fighting and dying for more than a year and now they were being told that they would have to remain in the army even though their enlistments had expired. Many soldiers felt as thought they had done their fair share of the fighting and it was now time for them to be relieved.\footnote{123}{Martin, \textit{A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight}, 74 - 75.} These soldier knew that they were needed at home if their family farms were to survive another year. On the home front families were also angered, since now the Confederacy was going to take away all the males from the communities. They asked the question: how are we going to survive with out the support of the male workforce? The Confederacy basically ignored their pleas and stated that if their country was to survive these men were needed at the front to defeat the Yankee invader. They went further by stating that everyone in the Confederacy would have to suffer a little if victory was to be achieved. Concription was to many an attack on their sense of personal honor, as if the Confederacy was calling all those solider who had already been fighting and dying cowards. The \textit{Memphis Appeal} stated, "it was odious to free men to be treated like machines worked by the government officers.
at the handles.”124 In Alabama, the government was not equipped to handle the backlash that accompanied the conscription act. Therefore officials were very lax in their enforcement, since they could not risk an armed encounter. In some instances military forces, forced conscripts into the army, but they did not have the necessary manpower to could keep them in the army. Many conscripts simply deserted after being placed into their units. However, the machinery of conscription was not functioning in Alabama so the conscription act could not be the only reason for the rising number of deserters from Alabama.

The inability of soldiers to get leave or furloughs was another key cause to the desertion of troops from Alabama. The Confederate government’s response to the soldiers complaints about the lack of furloughs was that private interests must be sacrificed for the greater good of securing a Southern victory.125 However, it seemed to many common soldiers that if an officer requested a furlough he had no problem securing it and this led to complaints by soldiers that there was obvious favoritism in the Confederate Army. The inability of soldiers to get furloughs led to men leaving the army without permission to visit their families.126 Soldiers when marching through their home towns did not see anything wrong with stopping by their homes to check on their families. In their minds this did not make them any less of a soldier, since what they were fighting for was the defense of home and family. Many soldiers when they saw the conditions at home did not want to return to the army. In many cases soldiers families were living in extreme poverty, in some cases on the verge of starvation. These living conditions infuriated soldiers who started having second thoughts about their support of the Confederacy.


The Confederate and state governments had made promises at the beginning of the war insuring soldiers that their families would be looked after by the government and there would be no need for them to worry about their welfare. It was quite obvious to most soldiers that the government had not lived up to their promises and so it would be up to them to return home for their families protection.

The horrid conditions on the home front were equalled only by the living condition in the Confederate Army. In the army soldiers were daily faced with inadequate supplies of clothing and food, arrears in pay, and infrequent furloughs, all of which contributed to low morale and increasing rates of desertion among the soldiers.127 In addition to these hardships, Southern soldiers had to deal with the extremes in weather conditions. Soldiers from Alabama who were stationed in Virginia had to face extreme cold, which led to the deaths of many soldiers who were not used to these conditions. Neither the state or Confederate government had the abilities to provide an adequate supply of blankets, shoes or uniforms. In the fall of 1862, the Army of Northern Virginia was on the verge of collapse. It was reported that one-fifth of the Army of Northern Virginia were barefoot, one-half in rages, and the whole army was half-famished.128 The soldiers families tried to send as much clothing and foods as they could spare, but seeing as how conditions at home were just as bad they could not be of any real help. The Confederate Armies on a regular basis did send out small parties of men to gather supplies from the locals, but many of these mission ended with the soldiers returning empty handed, since the locals had little to nothing to spare. When General Hood’s Army of the Tennessee was defeated in late 1863 - 1864 there were stories circulated of how the retreating soldiers lefts bloody

127 Martin, A Rich Man’s War, A Poor Man’s Fight, 79.

128 Martin, A Rich Man’s War, A Poor Man’s Fight, 80.
footprints in the snow, since they no shoes to wear. Many of these soldier contracted diseases that ended up killing them.\textsuperscript{129} Even if the soldiers had the proper clothing there was the much larger problem of adequate food supplies. Dr. Basil Gildersleeve stated, “Hunger was the most dominant note of life in the Confederacy, civil as well as military.” In 1862, the normal rations for a Confederate soldier was one pound of beef or one-half pound of bacon and not more than one and one-half pound of flour or meal per day.\textsuperscript{130} By 1864 - 1865, it was one and one-quarter a pound of meal and one-third of a pound of bacon per day. Often when the soldiers received these rations the meat was rotten. These conditions left many Confederate soldiers in no condition to make long marches let alone fight the Union Army. The insufficient food supply would prove to be disastrous for the Confederacy. In 1863, during the siege of Vicksburg a letter signed “Many Soldiers” was presented to General Pemberton describing the effects of hunger on the army. The letter stated:

We have been cut down to one biscuit and a small bit of bacon per day, not enough scarcely to keep body and soul together . . . If you can’t feed us you had better surrender us, horrible as the idea is, than suffer this noble army to disgrace themselves by desertion

Men are not going to lie here and perish even if they do love their country dearly.\textsuperscript{131}

General Pemberton’s soldiers understood horrible the conditions that existed, as well as, the fact that the government did not have the necessary supplies to adequately feed all the soldiers. The soldiers defending Vicksburg believed that there was honor is dying in battle, but to let the army to starve to death was something they could not and would not allow to occur. In the Army of

\textsuperscript{129} Martin, \textit{A Rich Man’s War, A Poor Man’s Fight}, 82.

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion}, Series IV, Volume II, p. 414.

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{O.R.}, Series I, Volume XXIV, part III, p. 982.
the Northern Virginia the conditions were just as bad. General Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis stating that men half crazed with hunger were refusing to follow orders and deserting. Many starving soldiers watched as their fellow soldiers died along the roadsides and reasoned that they had pushed themselves to the limits of human endurance; and therefore in order to save themselves the only solution was desertion.132 Besides the lack of food and clothing, arrears in pay only compounded the problems in the Confederate Army.

To the Confederate soldiers, arrears in pay represented both bad faith on the part of the government and imposition of hardships upon both the soldiers and their families. The Confederate government made no adequate arrangements to pay the bounties which it promised for those men who enlisted and reenlisted.133 In addition, the Confederate government rarely paid its soldiers. Some soldiers were only paid twice in two years' service and a large part of the soldiers were not paid at all during the last two years of the war.134 Outraged soldiers started writing letters to the government demanding that their salaries be paid, seeing as how their families depended on this money in order to survive. In the Montgomery Mail, a correspondent for the paper asked how, in the view of such grievous wrongs as the failure to pay the soldiers and provide them with sufficient food and clothing, the government expected to stop desertion and turn the complaints of oppressed men into cheerful sacrifice. The government's response was that the soldiers in the Confederate Army should not be fighting for money, but for their rights.135

132 Martin, A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight, 86.
133 Martin, A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight, 86 - 87.
135 Martin, A Rich Man's War, A Poor Man's Fight, 88 - 89.
Needless to say, this response did not sit well with many soldiers, who were risking their lives and expected to be compensated for their sacrifices.

The common Confederate soldiers in the face of all of these hardships began to view the war as “a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight” and the proof of this was the fact that many of the wealthier men received assignments that kept them hundreds of miles from the front lines. The Confederate government with many of their policies only added to the belief that their was favoritism within the Confederacy. The tax-in-kind policies fell especially hard on the poor whites in the South. These poor whites had supplied the vast majority of the soldiers now fighting at the front, and now the Confederate government wanted them to give up a percentage of their crops and livestock. Poor whites saw this as more proof of the favoritism that existed in the Confederacy. Imposters posing as state or Confederate officials took all kinds of property, leaving behind worthless receipts which could never be turned in for payment of the items taken.136

In the end, desertion in the Confederate Army was a major problem from the beginning of the war. Many Southern soldiers enlisted believing that the war would only last six months to a year, which proved to be a false belief. The conditions in the Confederate Army were harsh from the start. Confederates lacked for food, clothing, shelter, and money to pay the troops. As the war dragged on soldiers continually received letters from home describing how there was no food, no clothing, no money, and family members who were dying of disease and starvation. The common Confederate soldier came to the realization that they were fighting a “rich man’s war” and that the wealthy were not going to help fight the war or take care of the soldiers

136 Martin, *A Rich Man’s War, A Poor Man’s Fight*. 94.
families while they were away at the front. By the second years of the war many soldiers decided that they were no longer going to fight while their families were starving at home.
Conclusions

In 1865, the Confederate Army was defeated militarily, however the Confederacy’s fate was sealed much earlier. In 1861, when the Confederacy decided to go to war the country was not united. There were large pockets of people who did not want to leave the Union and had no intention of supporting the Confederacy in any way. The opposition to secession largely had to do with the social and economic differences arising from the large geographical variety within the South. A vast majority of the people within the South lived in rural agrarian communities and there were not many slave owners within these communities. These rural communities had a hard time relating to the large plantation owners, who owned many slaves and who did most of the work on their plantations. Those who opposed secession also resented the fact that a relatively small group of slave owners held the political power and made decisions for everyone in their states.

Another glaring problem for the Confederacy was the deep social tensions that plagued the South before the war. These tensions only increased in intensity during the war and eventually turned the poor whites in the South against the wealthy planter elite. The selfishness and indifference of the wealthy planter elite towards the rest of the South caused many whites to give up on the Confederate cause. Many of the planter elites refused to serve in the Confederate Army and refused to help out the families of the poor white soldiers. The refusal on the part of the planter elite to fight or support a war that they started only helped to reinforce the beliefs that the common soldier in the South was fighting a “rich man’s war” that in the end would only benefit those at the top of the social hierarchy.
Desertion in the Confederate Army was a major problem from the beginning of the war. Southern soldiers volunteered to serve for six months to a year, in the belief that the war would be over in a year's time. These beliefs proved to be false and most soldiers found that their enlistments had been extended indefinitely. The harsh conditions both in the army and at home caused many southern soldiers to lose their faith in the Confederate cause which led to large numbers of southerners deserting. Lacking the resources to feed and clothe both soldiers and civilians only compounded the problems in the Confederacy. Making the situation worse were the actions of the planter elite at home, who seemed content to let the poor die while they continued to live very comfortably. The common Confederate soldier came to the realization that they were fighting a “rich man’s war” and that the wealthy were not going to help fight the war or take care of the soldiers families while they were away at the front. By the second year of the war many soldiers decided that they were no longer willing to fight for a government who allowed their families to suffer while they were off fighting.

The Confederacy sealed its fate even before the first shots of the war were fired since they were never able to get all Southerners to back their cause. The class tensions between the planter elite and poor whites did not allow the Confederacy to successfully unite against the Union Army. These tensions led to large numbers of Southerners abandoning the Confederate cause and joining Unionist groups in attempts to overthrow local Confederate leaders. The unwillingness of planters and their families to support the war effort or help out poor soldiers’ families led to large numbers of Confederate soldiers deserting from the army. While the Confederacy did have major military and political problems it was class tensions, unionism, and desertion that eventually caused the Confederacy to collapse in 1865.


**Appendix A**

*Units with the Highest Numbers of Deserters in Georgia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Number of deserters</th>
<th>Army/Theater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39th GA Inf.</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36th GA Inf.</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st GA Inf.</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40th GA Inf.</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th GA Batt.</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th GA Cav.</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th GA Cav.</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43d GA Inf.</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52d GA Inf.</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65th GA Inf.</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56th GA Inf.</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d GA Cav.</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th GA Inf.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Army of Northern Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34th GA Inf.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st GA Cav.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60th GA Inf.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Army of Northern Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42d GA Inf.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30th GA Inf.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41st GA Inf.</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23d GA Inf.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37th GA Inf.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63d GA Inf.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Army of Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,809</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops During the Civil War, 71*
Appendix B

*Desertion Rates in Virginia Units*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regiment</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1862</th>
<th>1863</th>
<th>1864</th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Enlisted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17th Va.</td>
<td>Tidewater</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th Va.</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th Va.</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30th Va.</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Va.</td>
<td>Valley</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33rd Va.</td>
<td>Valley</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>1382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52nd Va.</td>
<td>Valley</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>1506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51st Va.</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63rd Va.</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>1535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd Va.</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>2473</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Virginia's Private War: Feeding the Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861 - 1865*, 61
Appendix C

Deserters By Rank in Georgia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2,947</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscripts</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmilitary</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,312</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops During the Civil War*, 77
Appendix D

*Total Number of Deserters from Georgia by Month 1863 - 1864*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 1863</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1864</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1864</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1864</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1864</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1864</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1864</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1864</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1864</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>8.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1864</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1864</td>
<td>93</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1864</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1864</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,014</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops During the Civil War*, 67
## Appendix E

**Distribution of oath-swearing Confederate Deserters by State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number in sample</th>
<th>Percent of total sample</th>
<th>Projected total number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>10,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>4,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,281</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>31,344</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This projected total was determined by combining the 423 pages in book 1 and the 389 pages in book 2 of the Register of Confederate Deserters to the Union Army, 1863–1865 (812 pages total) and then multiplying that figure by the average 44 names appearing on each page. The half-filled pages of officers' names were omitted, as were the only partially filled pages at the end of each letter of the alphabet. If Georgians were added to this number, it would reach 34,712.

Source: *More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army*, 131
Appendix F

*Numbers of Unionists Soldiers By State*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>2,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>8,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>1,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>5,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>3,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>31,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>1,965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century, 175*
Appendix G

**Prices of Provisions in the Confederacy 1862 - 1865**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTICLES</th>
<th>JAN. 1862</th>
<th>JAN. 1863</th>
<th>JAN. 1864</th>
<th>JAN. 1865</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour, extra... bbl.</td>
<td>$11.25</td>
<td>$57.00</td>
<td>$100.40</td>
<td>$300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; superf... bbl.</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$53.00</td>
<td>$100.20</td>
<td>$275.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; fine... bbl.</td>
<td>$8.00</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
<td>$100.10</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn Meal... bush.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn... sack.</td>
<td>58.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee, Rio... lb.</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar, brown... lb.</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; refined... lb.</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter, country...</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs... doz.</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacon... lb.</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>7.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard... lb.</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Beef... lb.</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>85.00</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Pork... lb.</td>
<td>14.30</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal, Shelby... ton.</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>150.00</td>
<td>200.00</td>
<td>200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candles, Sperm... lb.</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt, Liverpool...</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap, hard... lb.</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tallow... lb.</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes, sw... bbl.</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; Ir... bbl.</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions... bbl.</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens... doz.</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkeys... doz.</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>100.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice... lb.</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molasses, N.O... gal.</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples, dried... lb.</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaches, dried... lb.</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>90.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beechew... lb.</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat... bu.</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, oak... cord.</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Gleanings from Southland, 276*

Appendix H

**Inflation of Good in the Fall of 1862**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Prices</th>
<th>Prices on September 24th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salt, per sack</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee, per lb.</td>
<td>.12 to .15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar, per lb.</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk Cows</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter, per lb.</td>
<td>.12 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens, per lb.</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs, per doz.</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Jeans, per yd.</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com. Cotton Cloth, per yd.</td>
<td>.10 to .15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.60 to .75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy, 149*
## Appendix I

**Approximate Values of Gold and Currency in 1862 - 1865**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Currency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1863

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Currency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100 400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1864

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Currency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100 3400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1865

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Currency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100 3400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100 4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100 5000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gleanings from Southland, 276
Appendix J

The Richmond Bread Riots

Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper
Appendix K

Food Shortages in the Confederacy

Source: Harper's Weekly
Appendix L

Poor family suffering while wealthy family continues their lavish lifestyle

Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper
Appendix N

Rich Man’s War, Poor Man’s Fight

Source: Harper’s Weekly
Appendix O

Poor White's Being Impressed into Military Service

Source: Pictorial Book of Anecdotes and Incidents
Appendix P

Layout gangs who attacked Confederate supply routes, plantations and impressment officers

Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper
Appendix Q

Violence of the guerrilla war fought throughout the Confederacy

Source: Ellis, Thrilling Adventures
Appendix R

Vigilante “justice” in the South

Source: Plain Folk in a Rich Man’s War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia, 149
Appendix S

The Poor Conditions in the Confederate Army

Source: Scribner's Monthly, 1879
Bibliography

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Cumming, Kate. *Gleanings From Southland: Sketches of Life and Manners of the people of the South Before, During, and After the War of Secession with extracts from the author's journal and an epitome of the New South.* Birmingham: Roberts & Son, 1895.


*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (N.Y.), 1861 - 1865.*


*Harper's Weekly (N.Y.), 1861 - 1865.*


Secondary Sources


