Executing Daniel Bright:

Power, Political Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a North Carolina Community

1861-1865

by

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(Under the Direction of John C. Inscoe)

Abstract

This community study examines the guerrilla war in northeastern North Carolina during the American Civil War by reconstructing the events surrounding the death of one of the Confederate irregular soldiers who died in this local conflict. In December 1863, Daniel Bright, a citizen of Pasquotank County, North Carolina was executed for his involvement in an irregular resistance to Union army incursions along the coast of the state. The project traces the contours of divided political loyalties in the community focusing particular attention on the Unionist minority of Pasquotank. Ultimately, the project argues that guerrilla war reshaped this community and profoundly affected how loyalties manifested themselves during the war. It also contends that this community is further proof that guerrilla violence was not isolated to the highlands of Appalachia but that irregular wars stretched from one corner of North Carolina to the other.

INDEX WORDS: Unionism, Guerrilla Warfare, Pasquotank County, Daniel Bright, American Civil War, North Carolina

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B.A., The College of Wooster, 2003

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2005

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DEDICATION

For Molly

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While writing this thesis I accrued many debts. First, I would like to thank the United States Marine Corps Historical Center for awarding me the 2004 Lt. Colonel Lily H. Gridley Fellowship. When I first proposed this community study focused on guerrilla violence, I realized few historical organizations might fund the topic because of its obvious importance to military problems. The Marine Historical Center, however, made this project possible through its support of a topic they viewed as important to current issues faced by the United States military. The fellowship alleviated many of my worries and provided invaluable support for my research trips to archives in both the North and South.

Many thanks must also go to the Richard B. Moreland Foundation which provided important computer and technical support without which I would not have been able to complete the thesis.

The staffs at the University of Georgia Hargett Library, the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the North Carolina Department of Archives and History were all unfailing in their aid. I would especially like to thank the hardworking and underappreciated staff at the University of Georgia interlibrary loan department. This group put up with my nagging requests for obscure primary and secondary materials throughout the research phase of the project.

My debts among Georgia's history faculty are unrepayable. My committee James C. Cobb, Paul S. Sutter and John C. Inscoe provided necessary encouragement at

important points throughout the writing and research phases when I had doubts about the future of the thesis. Furthermore, my long chats with Dr. Inscoe about the project have taught me much about being a professional as well as being a historian.

Finally, I must thank those who supported this project in ways only they know, my family. Matthew, Wendy, and Lorna all encouraged me to continue my graduate studies in the Deep South even though it meant sending me to the other side of the country for long periods of time. And, most especially, I would like to thank my darling fiancé Molly, who provided another historian's ear on top of all the love and support she gave to me during this process.

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INTRODUCTION

On 18 December 1863, a large group of white Union officers and black enlisted troops under the command of Brigadier General Edward Augustus Wild escorted "a man of about thirty, a rough, stout fellow…dressed in butternut homespun," to an empty cider-barrel inside of an unfinished postal building.[1] At that site on a knoll overlooking the public road just north of Elizabeth City in rural northeastern North Carolina, the Union soldiers fastened a cord with a hangman's knot to a joist directly above the barrel, which was to serve as both scaffold and drop. Federal volunteers affixed a noose around the man's neck, and prepared to execute a sentence passed the day before by "drum-head court-martial." General Wild himself presided as executioner that day, and at the appointed moment, after the local man had been given a chance to pray, Wild kicked the barrel out from underneath his feet. According to one Union soldier's account of the hanging, the guilty man did not die immediately from the fall since his neck was not broken. He instead suffered death by "strangulation, his heart not ceasing to beat for twenty minutes."[2]

The Union soldiers were not the only observers of the grisly scene that afternoon. At least two local residents of Pasquotank County, Union hostages Elizabeth Weeks and Phoebe Munden, the wives of Confederate soldiers in Captain John T. Elliott's company of irregulars (men recently assigned to Colonel James W. Hinton's organizing regiment

[1] Correspondent "Tewksbury," New York Times, 9 January 1864; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC. Daniel Bright was twenty-eight years old in 1860.
[2] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864; Milledgeville (GA) *Southern Recorder*, 19 January 1864.

of North Carolina State Troops), were among the party of observers, surely wondering if they would suffer the same fate.[3] Union authorities would later claim that the condemned man was a deserter from the Confederate army, but they left a message at the Hinton's Crossroads execution site which clearly and forcefully communicated the reasons for their actions to the local community and the Confederate troops who later found the body. Pinned to the man's back was a note that read: "This guerrilla hanged by order of Brigadier-General Wild. Daniel Bright, of Pasquotank County."[4]

When a Confederate cavalry squadron dispatched by Colonel Joel R. Griffin of the Sixty-second Georgia Cavalry/Partisan Rangers (then part of the Department of North Carolina commanded by General George E. Pickett) arrived at the scene of the execution some forty hours later, they found Bright's body still hanging.[5] One of Griffin's soldiers, Richard Barfield, recorded that the Georgians gave Bright a full military funeral.[6] Confederate authorities would later claim that Bright was a member of the Sixty-second at home on leave attempting to raise a new company of cavalry authorized by North Carolina Governor Zebulon Vance. Having failed to accomplish this, he retired to his

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[3] Walter Clark ed., *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-1865*. Vol. 3 (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell & Co. State Printers, 1901), 713-728. Some accounts of the raid confuse the Sixty-sixth NC State Troops and Sixty-eighth NC State Troops since Hinton's unit was initially designated the Sixty-sixth. Hinton's regiment entered service as the Sixty-eighth State Troops in January 1864 having been superseded in organization by two other units. The guerrilla companies of Captains John T. Elliott, Willis Sanderlin, Cyrus W. Grandy, Richard Keogh and Caleb B. Walston all became part of James W. Hinton's Sixty-eighth NC State Troops.

[4] W.N.H. Smith Report, 10-17 February 1864, U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 1127-1130 (hereafter cited as *Official Records*); Edward A. Wild Report, 28 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 1, 910-918.

[5] Joel R. Griffin to General George Pickett, 19 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 883. Griffin's command was made up of seven companies of Georgians and three companies of local North Carolinians. For background on the Sixty-second Georgia, see Lillian Henderson, *Roster of the Confederate Soldiers of Georgia, 1861-1865*. Vol. 6 (Hapeville, GA: Longino and Porter, Inc., 1964); Joseph H. Crute, Jr., *Units of the Confederate States Army*, 2nd ed. (Gaithersburg, MD: Olde Soldier Books, Inc., 1987), 115-116.

[6] Richard Barfield Papers, Hargett Library, University of Georgia, Athens. Barfield discusses the Sixty-second Georgia's discovery of Bright's body in his correspondence home to his wife.

farm. General Wild and his officers alleged a much more sinister story behind Bright's home front activities.[7] Bright was a "guerrilla" they believed, and he had deserted from the regular army in order to plunder local farms, harass the loyal Unionist citizens of Pasquotank County, and waylay Union troops from his home near the Great Dismal Swamp.[8]

The execution of suspected guerrilla Daniel Bright has been treated by Civil War scholars as only a footnote event in the voluminous history of the conflict. The few scholars that have addressed the events in Pasquotank have dealt with them only as sidelines to larger projects on other topics. Indeed, Edward Augustus Wild's 1863 incursion into Pasquotank, Camden and Currituck counties, which culminated in the Bright hanging, has received little attention by historians. Popular Civil War author Webb Garrison offered an account of Phoebe Munden and Elizabeth Weeks' ordeal as captives

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[7] Edward A. Wild Report, 28 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 1, 910-918.

[8] For a careful analysis of guerrilla warfare as both a concept and method, see Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (Boston, Mass: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), Preface viii-ix. Laqueur characterized guerrilla violence as an intensely individualistic undertaking. To be effective, the guerrilla needed imagination, an understanding of geography, a fluency in the cultural mores of his environment, and familiarity with political and social resources. Laqueur includes tactics of harassing the enemy, avoidance of pitched battle with opponents, destruction of vital supplies, interruption of communication, and surprise assaults on adversaries all under the heading of guerrilla warfare. His description fits with the role guerrillas played on the Civil War home front, but the definition offered is still broad, requiring specific explanation and nuance for the Southern context. For a perceptive discussion of the many types of irregular warriors that fought in the Civil War South, see Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 112-113. Grimsley notes four types of Civil War guerrillas in the South. The first form consisted of Partisan Ranger corps or authorized guerrillas developed under the 1862 Partisan Ranger Act of the Confederate Congress. The Confederate government sanctioned this group for remote operations in areas that the Confederate army did not control. The second group consisted of unauthorized, self-constituted bands sometimes consisting of deserters, looters, outlaws, and other vigilantes. There are examples of these units among both Confederate and Unionist communities in the South. Examples of this type of include William Clarke Quantrill and William "Bloody Bill" Anderson's units in Missouri, Champ Ferguson's group in North Carolina, and the Unionist Kansas Jayhawker commands. The third level consisted of quasi-guerrillas, regular cavalry units that employed guerrilla tactics on occasion. John Hunt Morgan, Nathan Bedford Forrest, Turner Ashby, and at times, even James E. B. Stuart encouraged their cavalry in this manner of fighting. The fourth category consisted of individual politicized citizens. Like the second group, these people existed in both Confederate and Unionist societies. In this thesis, I use the terms irregular, guerrilla and partisan synonymously. Partisan Ranger is used only in reference to the specific group of soldiers sanctioned under the April 1862 through February 1864 Confederate Congressional policy.

in his recent *Civil War Hostages* (2000). Historian Lesley Gordon in her biography *General George E. Pickett in Life & Legend* (1998) provides a brief assessment of General George Pickett's role in ordering retaliation for Daniel Bright's death, and environmental historian Jack Temple Kirby mentions Bright's hanging in his larger project *Poquosin* (1995) on the Dismal Swamp region. Historian Noah Andre Trudeau provided another brief account of the Wild raid in his narrative of the black Union combat experience, *Like Men of War* (1998). Trudeau portrays the incursion and Bright hanging as heavy handed because the general allegedly used "a liberal definition of what constituted a "Rebel."[9]

The two best accounts of Daniel Bright's execution and the Edward Wild raid were written by Frances H. Casstevens and Jerry V. Witt. Witt, a retired army General, wrote a thorough pamphlet entitled *Wild in North Carolina* (1993) for the Family Research Society of Northeastern North Carolina. Witt's booklet provided a good military account of the brief occupation but falls short on social history analysis and community response to Wild's operations. Casstevens' *Edward Augustus Wild and the African Brigade in the American Civil War* (2003) sets the Daniel Bright execution in the context of Edward Wild's life and of the legal issues he faced after his decision to hang the suspected guerrilla. Unfortunately, like Noah Trudeau's account of the raid, Casstevens portrays Wild largely as a man determined to live up to his own name and

[9] Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men Of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862-1865* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1998), 117; Webb Garrison, *Civil War Hostages: Hostage Taking in the Civil War*, (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Press, 2000); Lesley J. Gordon, *General George E. Pickett in Life & Legend* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998); Jack Temple Kirby, *Poquosin: A Study of Rural Landscape & Society* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995).

does not take into account the nuanced approach which the general used in dealing with the difficult problem of guerrilla war.[10]

This thesis takes issue with earlier interpretations of General Wild's conduct and command in Pasquotank. I argue throughout the section on the occupation that Wild used a measured level of violence to achieve specific goals when he targeted Confederate sympathizers and irregulars. Wild was not indiscriminate in his use of force within Pasquotank County. He did confiscate property from civilians of both Unionist and Confederate loyalty, but he made efforts to avoid impressing the property of Unionists if he was able to positively determine their allegiance. In short, what Wild's operation represents is the muddy and complex evolution in Union military treatment of Southern civilians over the course of the war.

My study also diverges from all of these previous works by focusing on Daniel Bright's community, Pasquotank County. By centering Bright's death and Edward Wild's raid in the framework of a community history, scholars can see into the chaotic local guerrilla war that gripped northeastern Carolina just as it plagued so many Southern communities during the four years of the Civil War.

Daniel Bright was a member of a community before he fought for the Southern cause, and it is through the window of local relationships that historians can understand the interactions of Pasquotank's black and white residents that led to the events of December 1863. The circumstances surrounding Bright's execution expose the cast of players within this locality: Wild's black soldiers, former slaves recruited from

[10] Frances H. Casstevens, *Edward Augustus Wild and the African Brigade in the American Civil War* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2003); J.V. Witt, *Wild in North Carolina: General E.A. Wild's December 1863 Raid into Camden, Pasquotank and Currituck Counties* (Belvidere, NC: The Family Research Society of Northeastern North Carolina, 1993).

northeastern North Carolina, who returned to Pasquotank County to free fellow blacks from bondage; captured women, who represent the peaceable but politically divided white community and its helplessness in the face of continued power reversals between Union raiders and Confederate guerrillas on the Carolina coast; Edward Wild, although not a community member, who represents Federal military policy and emancipation at the point of black bayonets; and Daniel Bright, who represents the pattern of retaliatory guerrilla violence in Pasquotank County and the role irregulars played in attracting Wild to the county in 1863. By understanding the community from which Daniel Bright came, historians can understand more about the nature of Southern guerrilla violence during the Civil War.

Clearly, what Daniel Bright's execution and the irregular war in northeastern North Carolina illustrate is how widespread guerrilla violence was in the state of North Carolina. For many years, the historiography of North Carolina has focused attention on the guerrilla war of the highlands of western Carolina or the inner Civil War of the piedmont region. What this thesis demonstrates is that the violence and brutality of guerrilla war was not limited to one or two regions of the state but that it reached every corner of North Carolina, even the small, rural counties of the northeastern region.

This thesis focuses on four tightly interwoven themes to explain both the origins of local guerrilla war in northeastern Carolina and the history of Pasquotank County from the antebellum years through the end of the Civil War. Race, power, political loyalty and guerrilla violence all shaped the life of Daniel Bright and the county he died defending. The interplay of these four dynamics created a world where irregular military activity

could thrive and where murder and execution could hold hostage a Southern county on the periphery of the major Confederate war effort.

Since the publication of Phillip Shaw Paludan's *Victims* (1981) on the massacre at Shelton Laurel in Madison County, North Carolina, Civil War scholars have steadily worked to rediscover Southern guerrilla violence in all its many forms and regional variations.[11] Historians have pursued the task of filling this gap in the historiography with histories of the Civil War South's many irregular conflicts.[12] This thesis adds local

[11] The historiography on violence as a part of Southern identity is vast and growing. The presence of the Dismal Swamp in and around Pasquotank County created a frontier like atmosphere for many farmers living in the northern regions of the county. Several historians have argued that environments like the one in Pasquotank contributed to the feeling of militant individualism among Southern white men. My understanding of violence and individualism as a part in this particular local guerrilla conflict is informed by Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: A. A. Knopf Inc., 1941), 31, 43-44, and John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1860* (Harvard, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1956), 21, 33-34. Cash asserts that "the dominant trait" of the Southern "mind was an intense individualism...perhaps the most intense individualism the world has seen since the Italian Renaissance and its men of 'terrible fury.'" The frontier life of Southerners during the eighteenth century coupled with a smaller regional population spread over a wide area relaxed the system of laws and created an atmosphere where independence flourished. According to Cash, "in this world of ineffective social control, the tradition of vigilante action, which normally lives and dies with the frontier, not only survived but grew" up until the era of civil war. Furthermore, he believes that, "Southern individualism...reached its ultimate incarnation in the Confederate soldier" since "this soldier could not be disciplined."

John Hope Franklin elaborated and expanded upon this notion of individualism in his provocative chapter entitled "Personal Warfare," Franklin demonstrates how Southern men validated ideas about their own military strengths through individual achievement. Summing up Southern militant identity in one concise sentence, he writes, "In the South, it was impractical to rely on the rather feeble protective arm of the government; and the Southerner was too self-sufficient and too realistic to do so. Thus, he tended either to evolve some loosely organized, temporary protective machinery or to prepare to do battle alone for the protection of himself and his family." Franklin emphasizes, "It was most frequently left to the individual…to adopt a policy that would safeguard the lives and interests of those for whom he was responsible." In an atmosphere where self and community defense was omnipresent Southern men found it necessary to prepare themselves personally to defend their homes, freedom, and beliefs. This preparation would supply impetus for guerrilla struggle later. Like W. J. Cash, Franklin believes that the combination of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century frontier life created a characteristic repugnance among Southern men for any type of discipline or control. The frontier atmosphere necessitated a person who was both intensely independent and prepared to use violence as an essential part of daily life. Franklin contends that Southerners had "contempt for control" and desired that "Honor...regulat[e] the conduct of the individual." The remoteness and isolation of the Southern frontier forced white men into a position where they "might be called upon to defend [their] life against some beast of the forest or some intractable human being."

[12] The fine regional and local studies of Southern irregular conflict include: Phillip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville, TN: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1981). For a community study of Washington County also on the North Carolina coast, see Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990); Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the Civil War* (New York: Oxford Univ.

perspective from northeastern Carolina to the existing debates over what the role of guerrillas on the home front was and who Southern irregulars actually were.

A recent essay by historian Daniel E. Sutherland breaks down the complex shadowy world of Southern irregulars into general phases and sheds light on the military policy of guerrilla violence as a question facing the entire Confederacy. He argues that the initial drive for guerrilla war to protect the Confederate borders in western Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri gave way by 1863 to a more localized conflict among neighbors and ultimately to banditry and outlawry during the final years of the war.[13] Although Pasquotank's local war had its own specific timeline, I have found these broad phases effective in explaining the coastal conflict of North Carolina's guerrillas.

In Pasquotank and the surrounding counties of northeastern Carolina, guerrilla war shattered the peace after the fall of Elizabeth City to Union naval forces in February 1862. Since Union troops never permanently garrisoned any town in the region east of the Chowan River, a period of uncertainty began for the citizens. During the spring and summer of 1862, pro-Southern mounted patrols began monitoring the situation in the county, to resist regular Union expeditions and coerce Unionists and black laborers into submission or silence. By early 1863, a pattern of retaliatory violence developed between the Union army recruiting forces sent to the North Carolina coast and local irregulars that had formed in Pasquotank. During mid-1863, the state authorities, strapped for

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Press, 1989); Noel C. Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1997); Kenneth W. Noe, "Who Were the Bushwhackers? Age, Class, Kin, and Western Virginia's Confederate Guerrillas, 1861-1862," *Civil War History* 49, no. 1 (2003); Jonathan Dean Sarris, "'Hellish Deeds…in a Christian Land': Southern Mountain Communities at War, 1861-1865" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Georgia, 1998). Also, Daniel E. Sutherland ed., *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: Univ. of Arkansas Press, 1999) provides a nice region by region introduction to the local guerrilla wars of the Confederacy.

[13] Daniel E. Sutherland, "Guerrilla Warfare, Democracy, and the Fate of the Confederacy," *Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 2, (2002): 259-292.

manpower, began an effort to organize these guerrillas, but the local men resisted formal organization, and conscription efforts and continued their independent operations. By summer of 1863, Union counter-guerrilla operations began in earnest. A series of Federal raids sent to combat guerrillas throughout the fall of 1863 met with limited success. Finally, Massachusetts General Edward Wild was given permission to launch an expedition into the region. He used his black soldiers in an effort to liberate the remaining slaves in Pasquotank and combat irregulars from the county. Wild's operation flipped the antebellum racial order of Pasquotank County on its head and resulted in the first major counter-guerrilla operation employing black soldiers in the eastern theater.[14]

This thesis also examines the socio-economic background of local guerrillas in the Civil War South. The guerrillas who fought in Pasquotank County during 1862 through 1864 were young (most in their early twenties but some even under the age of seventeen) and predominantly poor; many of these men were not even the heads of their own households. Pasquotank guerrillas were similar to the irregulars in Missouri discussed by Michael Fellman in his *Inside War* (1989). Fellman asserts that Missouri partisans tended to be young and idealistic and that many sought vendettas for their grievances. There is also some evidence for neighborhood and kinship playing a role among guerrilla recruitment in the northeastern region of North Carolina. This fits with what Kenneth Noe has found in a detailed analysis of bushwhackers in western Virginia. Unlike guerrillas in Pasquotank, Noe argues that irregulars in the mountains of western

[14] Although Wild's African-American soldiers were probably the first black units in the eastern theater to be used as counter-guerrilla soldiers in a raid, they were not the first blacks during the war to see combat against guerrillas. Other black civilians that were armed in Pasquotank by Union officers in January 1863 may or may not have raided and fought guerrillas. The extant source material does not mention their involvement in military actions during 1863. Nonetheless, black soldiers west of the Appalachian Mountains engaged guerrillas long before December 1863, especially along the Kansas-Missouri border. One such engagement occurred at Island Mound, Missouri on 29 October 1862.

Virginia came from more diverse economic backgrounds and that they were older with an average age in the mid-thirties.[15]

Both Fellman and Sutherland also address the question of slavery's role in hindering the Confederate government's use of guerrilla war as a strategy. Fellman found evidence that slavery limited guerrilla activity in Missouri, and Sutherland claims that more work needs to be done to prove that slavery was a major obstacle to guerrilla war. In this thesis, I argue explicitly that irregulars acted as a policing force to control free and slave black labor in northeastern Carolina. Daniel Bright went from antebellum slave patroller to irregular between 1859 and 1863; one impetus for initially forming guerrilla bands in the county was slave control. Yet, the presence of irregulars in the northeastern counties attracted counter-guerrilla operations, which steadily weakened the system until it ultimately collapsed at the hands of counter-guerrilla forces. In late 1863, Wild's effort to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation and destroy the irregulars brought an end to slavery in Pasquotank. The experience of Pasquotank County bolsters the claims of other historians that guerrillas both protected the Southern racial order built on slavery and simultaneously threatened it by attracting counter-guerrilla operations.[16]

It has been nearly three quarters of a century since historian Ulrich B. Phillips first declared that race is the central theme of Southern history. Yet, despite this topic's centrality among the causes of the South's bloodiest conflict, until recently Civil War scholars have seemed somewhat reluctant to focus directly on the role of race in shaping wartime events. In a recent article, Mark Grimsley highlighted the importance of race and racism in the context of the conflict not just in igniting hostilities but as a significant

[15] Noe, 17-18.
[16] Fellman, 65-73; Sutherland, "Guerrilla Warfare, Democracy, and the Fate of the Confederacy," 281.

factor in shaping battlefield and home front fighting. According to Grimsley, the use of black soldiers and Native Americans by both sides made the war not just a clash of two colossal white armies over the status of slaves but also "an interracial conflict."[17]

For their part, military historians have elaborated the story of black soldiers in the Union army. Joseph T. Glatthaar provided an outstanding study of the relationship between black soldiers and their white officers in *Forged in Battle* (1990) and Dudley Taylor Cornish gave Civil War scholars a comprehensive narrative of the black soldiering experience in his *The Sable Arm* (1956).[18] But for social historians of the war, and specifically for scholars interested in the local and regional reaction of Southern civilians and Confederate officers to the use of black soldiers on the home front, race and racism remain relatively unexplored themes. Two recent exceptions are the collection of essays edited by Gregory J.W. Urwin, *Black Flag Over Dixie* (2004) which focuses on racial atrocities, and *Black Soldiers in Blue* (2001) edited by John David Smith, a collection broadly cast to engage many parts of the black military experience.[19] Both volumes demonstrate that by looking more closely at Southern racial fears during the war, we can see community motivations and responses that lie beyond that of pure military exigency.

Despite the declaration nearly two decades ago by Richard Beringer, Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones in *Why the South Lost* (1986) that the potential for race war prevented Southerners from adopting a guerrilla war after Appomattox, virtually no historian has focused on the dynamics of race and guerrilla violence on the Southern

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[17] Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, "The Central Theme of Southern History," *American Historical Review* 24 (1928): 30-43; Mark Grimsley, "Race in the Civil War" in *North and South* 4, no. 3 (2001): 1.
[18] Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865*. (Lawrence, KS: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1956); Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*. (New York: The Free Press, 1990).
[19] Gregory J.W. Urwin ed., *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 2004); John David Smith ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001).

home front. This thesis focuses particular attention on the use of black soldiers to hunt white guerrilla fighters and the use of pro-Confederate guerrilla forces in slave coercion and control.[20]

During Wild's raid, black soldiers played an integral role as executioners and executed. They were ordered to take hostages, impress and destroy property, and ultimately aid in freeing more than 2500 black bondsmen in the region. The reaction to their presence and the continual shift in military supremacy between pro-Confederate guerrillas and Unionist raiding parties played no small part in the local white population's attempt to develop a new strategy for coping with racial disorder and guerrilla war, that of negotiated neutrality with the two belligerent governments.

The growing literature on political loyalty in the South during the Civil War compels any scholar of community to discuss this theme. Since Georgia Lee Tatum first outlined three categories of Southern dissenters: Unionist, disloyal and disaffected in her work *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (1934), many scholars have attempted to delineate the shades of allegiance within the divided South. Numerous local and regional studies have offered nuance and perspective to this picture, but unfortunately, a new synthesis on dissent in the Civil War South is sorely needed. This synthesis remains perhaps the greatest single omission in the historiography of the Civil War. Recent efforts to investigate Unionism on the Southern home front by John C. Inscoe and Robert Kenzer in their essay collection *Enemies of the Country* (2001) have provided excellent analysis of dissent and offer evidence that synthesis is sorely needed. But, until this gap in the

[20] Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still Jr., *Why The South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia, 1986), 436-438.

historiography is filled, scholars may never have a full understanding for why popular will and social order fell apart in the Confederacy.[21]

Political loyalty shaped the experience of Pasquotank's citizens in fundamental ways. Whig party dominance in the region acted as a mitigating political influence on sectional tension throughout most of the final years before the war. A political heritage of moderation disintegrated into divided loyalties when many of the wealthy, slaveholding Whigs did not transfer their loyalty to the Confederacy in 1861. Moderate antebellum politics evolved into a majority pro-Confederate community with a strong Unionist minority. By mid-1863 this community was war weary from power reversals and guerrilla war on the home front. Loyalties in Pasquotank became steadily more and more difficult to discern. By the time of Wild's raid most members of the community claimed neutrality. Wild, however, was still able to identify a list of Unionists, which he used as a guide in his counter-guerrilla activities. The community's response to the execution of Daniel Bright and the Wild raid in 1864 was to negotiate a neutral position between both Confederate authorities in North Carolina and Union military officials in Virginia. The attempt to negotiate neutrality was an effort to assert community power and reestablish order from a position of weakness. By August of 1864, this attempt at neutrality had failed and loyalties grew more ambiguous in the county, with both governments claiming that Pasquotank and the surrounding area were loyal to their cause.

The concept of power in history is not easily explained but profoundly felt. My discussion of power in Daniel Bright's community is constructed around Steven V. Ash's notion of a "no man's land." Pasquotank and the nearby counties fall into this broad

[21] Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1934), viii; John C. Inscoe and Robert Kenzer ed., *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2001).

regional grouping by having a Unionist minority and Confederate majority population but with neither able to maintain permanent control. Although nominally Confederate, these areas remained on the edges of where large Southern armies actually operated and always open to Union occupation. By exploring the constant shift back and forth between who could politically influence the county's population and how they demonstrated this to the community through violence and coercion, specifically public executions and murder, one can begin to understand the state of fear that gripped Pasquotank citizens during the Civil War.[22]

I define power broadly to include both military force and political actions taken to exert influence over the community and especially communal loyalties. The decision by members of the community to hold a meeting following Wild's raid was an example of power in a similar way to Wild's use of Daniel Bright's execution to communicate about loyalty. Both were meant to convey messages about political control and appropriate conduct. In order to understand Pasquotank County's war experience, one must understand the effects of these constant shifts in military and political pressure over the daily lives of its residents. Bright's execution fits into a pattern of retaliatory guerrilla violence that was larger than the Wild raid and signaled just another shift in power relationships.

My understanding of violence and execution as public demonstrations of power meant to influence community is borrowed from a reading of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault described the use of public execution in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth century as a multilayered event meant to satisfy several

[22] For a discussion of the no man's land concept as it applies to the entire occupied South, Steven V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995), 99-105.

purposes and audiences. And, although Foucault subsequently argued that the public execution's reign of terror ended in France with the birth of the prison in the early nineteenth century, I have found important parallels between the reasoning for execution then and the justification of execution during the guerrilla war of rural northeastern Carolina. By borrowing some of Foucault's framework on violence as a conversation with the community, I explore the underlying purposes of public execution in Pasquotank's guerrilla war. Foucault argued that early forms of punishment were meant to purify and educate the community about power and law, while serving the dual purpose of punishing the individual who committed the crime. Furthermore, he believed public violence was a "political ritual," a reassertion of state power over the community.[23]

In northeastern North Carolina, both armies used violence as a means of affecting political loyalty and conduct at war. Executions were one method by which soldiers conveyed their argument about the legitimacy of their own status as regulars or irregulars. "The public execution," for Foucault, "did not reestablish justice; it reactivated power."[24] Through executions, both Union soldiers and Confederate guerrillas attempted to legitimize their forms of violence, while also reasserting their influence over the community. It was an educative lesson in power for the occupied community. In Pasquotank, the symbols and messages of this lesson were the very bodies of the executed soldiers. In this way, execution and murder became both the instrument and locus of a conversation about power relationships in Pasquotank.

[23] Foucault, 47.
[24] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Paperbacks, 1995), 49.

Each of the chapters of this thesis builds each other to explain how the four themes of race, power, political loyalty and guerrilla violence shaped the Pasquotank war experience. The prologue opens with an analysis of the antebellum labor system, race relations and political debate over slavery. Chapter one focuses on the emergence of a rift between pro-Union and pro-Southern factions in the community in 1861, and in 1862 on the events that led to the formation of local guerrilla bands. The second chapter analyzes Edward Wild's 1863 military operation in Pasquotank against irregulars and the institution of slavery, and the tactics he used to achieve his military objectives. Chapter three discusses the response by local people, state and regional authorities and the Confederate Congress to the events of the Wild raid and specifically to Daniel Bright's hanging, and the role of racism in shaping those responses. The epilogue focuses on the final year and half of war and the ambiguity of loyalty following the Wild raid.

Southern newspapers in the 1860s carried news of the guerrilla war in northeastern North Carolina far and wide, and the Daniel Bright hanging became the signature event in these sensationalized stories. Although the events of Pasquotank's guerrilla war affected people in this region in much the same way that major battles like Gettysburg and Fredericksburg changed the people who witnessed them, the events of this local war have not received the appropriate scholarly investigation. By blending both social and military history, this thesis provides perspective on how irregulars, their supporters and their enemies fought a war in the "no man's land" of the Confederacy. And, by evaluating the events that ultimately led to the Union army's execution of Daniel Bright, I hope this work provides one more chapter to the ever-expanding history of how Americans have coped with guerrilla war.

PROLOGUE

Black Labor and Moderate Politics in an Antebellum North Carolina Community

Swamps, dense cypress forests, meandering black water canals, and poisonous canebrake rattlesnakes made Pasquotank County an ideal environment for a renegade guerrilla to call home. In the mid-nineteenth century, Pasquotank was a community of small farms and large plantations. It was one of the six counties in northeastern North Carolina east of the Chowan River, a region that also included Gates, Perquimans, Camden, Chowan, and Currituck counties. Located on the northern side of the Albemarle Sound, Pasquotank was immediately south of the Virginia state line and the Great Dismal Swamp. Swampy terrain was the hallmark feature of the entire region, providing a perfect haven for runaway slaves and other fugitives. In the 1860s, a portion of the vast Dismal Swamp extended into the northern section of the county and crept almost to the outskirts of the county seat, Elizabeth City.[1]

During most of the antebellum era, Elizabeth City was an important shipping port. The northeastern Albemarle region, crisscrossed by the Perquimans, Pasquotank and Little Rivers, had waterborne access from the Albemarle Sound to the Atlantic Ocean. The Sound also connected the Roanoke River and the interior of North Carolina to commerce with Norfolk, Virginia. Because of its geography, Elizabeth City along with Edenton in nearby Chowan County became the center of much of the seaborne commerce in northeastern Carolina. A maritime economy developed around the export of locally

[1] For an excellent contemporary map of the region, see U.S. War Department, *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891-1895), plate 138.

produced products: grain, forestry supplies like cypress shingles, and naval stores such as turpentine. Diligent mariners delivered these goods to the energetic commerce port of Norfolk via the Pasquotank River and inland Dismal Swamp Canal, which began limited through navigation in 1805.[2] From Norfolk the commodities were then shipped on to Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. As the population of Pasquotank County grew in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Elizabeth City merchants imported large quantities of finished goods from the North back to their stores. The hardworking seamen of the county carried on this profitable shipping trade, while also sustaining a vibrant fishing industry in the waters off their shore.[3]

Besides producing many seafarers, the export economy of Pasquotank also required a large number of agriculturalists. The county was in 1860 the state's seventh largest producer of corn and fifth largest producer of flax.[4] It also cultivated large amounts of wheat, rye, and silk cocoons. According to the final census before the Civil War, however, it produced no cotton or tobacco. Nevertheless, the vast fields of corn in Pasquotank County clearly made this plantation society a staple food exporter for other regions of the country. In fact, during the Civil War one Northern traveler through the county believed that, even after two and half years of home front violence, it was still

[2] Charles Royster, *The Fabulous History of the Dismal Swamp Land Company* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999). Although shingle flats could navigate the canal in 1805, the canal did not open to larger shipping vessels until 1814. The first one of these more substantial ships, a twenty-ton vessel, passed through the canal during that year. By 1828, the canal was widened and enlarged by slave labor. Royster notes the use of company owned slaves, but he does not discuss the use of any free blacks in the actual construction of the canal.

[3] Kirby, 11-12, 17, 26-27.

[4] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C., 1864), 108-115, 210-236. (hereafter cited as Bureau of the Census, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*). Pasquotank had a total of 53,674 acres of improved land and 40,258 unimproved acres in the final year before the war. The county totaled 481 farms of three acres or more. The overall cash value of all improved farms was estimated at 1,927,149 dollars. In 1860, Pasquotank produced 70,388 bushels of wheat, 39,400 bushels of rye, 10,210 pounds of flax (#5 of 86 counties), 58 pounds of silk cocoons (#1 of 86), 6,478 pounds of honey, and 574,689 bushels of Indian Corn (#7 of 86). It produced no rice, cotton, or tobacco in 1860.

"one of the richest agricultural regions in the State."[5] Pasquotank's antebellum economy was rooted in two labor intensive practices, large scale plantations and the procurement of forestry supplies. The two most important forestry products were cypress shingles for building and turpentine, a naval store. These two enterprises required a ready supply of cheap available labor to keep the productivity of the region at peek levels. But, the swampy, lowland environment and the multi-faceted geography made slavery a difficult system to manage.

The white citizens of Pasquotank County supplied labor for their farms and forest industry in a seemingly contradictory way, by sustaining a black labor force of both free blacks and slaves. By allowing a significant free black population to exist alongside a large slave populace, they could meet both of their main economic goals: securing raw materials from the swamps and maintaining plantations. Free blacks made up a ready supply of labor for hire in the turpentine and shingle-making industry. With free blacks doing the difficult and dangerous work in the swamps, there was little need to use valuable slave labor in an activity that might risk the possibility of escape. Nevertheless, a few slaves deemed reliable were hired out to themselves as shingle-getters and swamp guides. The Dismal Swamp Land Company owned several slaves during the antebellum years to help operate the Dismal Swamp canal. Despite the presence of some task slaves, most of the black laborers in the marshes appear to have been free.[6] Free blacks that did

[5] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.

[6] John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 74-75, 132-135. It is difficult to put an exact figure on the number of free blacks who worked in the swamps of Pasquotank County during the antebellum period. The overwhelming majority of free black males living in Pasquotank County listed their occupations in 1860 as farm hands, farmers or carpenters. The number of swamp workers from the county must have been considerable though given that in 1847 the General Assembly of North Carolina passed legislation mandating that all free blacks working in the Great Dismal Swamp had to register a description with local authorities. After that year, Pasquotank and the surrounding counties began registering each free black worker in the Great Dismal

not work in the swamps probably provided a cheap labor pool for ancillary farm work in the county, especially during harvest when slave resources were thoroughly taxed. Fifty-one free blacks owned some real estate in 1860 signaling that many among the free African-American population of the county were small farmers.[7] Many of the unskilled free blacks, however, found their way into either swamp labor or work in the maritime fishing economy around Elizabeth City. While free blacks and a small number of task slaves labored in the difficult terrain of northern Pasquotank County, slavery reigned as the primary system of labor on the large wheat and corn plantations of Pasquotank's lower districts.[8]

The number of free African-Americans in the county grew in the antebellum years as a result of this economic diversity; it was also helped by the religious makeup and political activities of some in the white population. A sizable number of Quakers who lived in the Pasquotank community encouraged individual manumissions throughout the period and some of the Society of Friends even bought slaves for the expressed purpose of emancipating them.[9] Quaker influence in the county could be measured by their large meeting house, which in 1850 could hold 800 people.[10] The Friends also played a major role in the prominence of the American Colonization Society in the Elizabeth City area. During the late 1820s, Elizabeth City was one of the most important financial sponsors of

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Swamp as a way of controlling the activity of free blacks and preventing runaway slaves from being aided by them. For an example of a free black registration certificate, see Franklin, *Free Negro in North Carolina*, 75.

[7] Ibid., 229, 231

[8] Kirby, 19, 26.

[9] Franklin, *Free Negro in North Carolina*, 23-26, 200, 204.

[10] J.D.B. DeBow, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850. An Appendix embracing notes upon the table of each of the states, etc.* (Washington: GPO, 1853); Secretary of the Interior, *Statistics of the United States, (including Mortality, Property, &c.) in 1860; Compiled from the original returns and being the final exhibit of the Eighth Census* (Washington: GPO, 1866). In 1850, Pasquotank had one Quaker meeting house that held 800 people, but neighboring Perquimans County had four meeting houses. By 1860, Pasquotank County had no meeting houses and Perquimans had only one. This decline in the Quaker population may have been due to rising sectional tensions over the slavery issue during the 1850s.

this political movement in the state. The local Elizabeth City colonization group promoted removing free blacks to a colony in Liberia on the African continent. Several affluent white citizens in Pasquotank financially supported the organization until the early 1830s when the money dried up all over the state as a response to the 1831 Nat Turner rebellion in nearby Southampton County, Virginia.

The antebellum history of Pasquotank was filled with events that demonstrate an anxiety over the issue of potential black violence. Fear of an armed slave revolt was rampant in the community after Pasquotank's militia put down a planned 1802 slave insurrection in the county.[11] And, the proximity of Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion was not lost on this anxious white populace. The added belief that Turner's men were headed toward the Dismal Swamp only exacerbated local apprehension. In September 1831, local leaders from Pasquotank wrote the governor of North Carolina demanding that either weapons or an army be sent to the region for protection. According to one citizen, the white people of the county were so upset they "patrol and mount guns constantly to keep up appearance without means. The females and children are much distressed."[12] The North Carolina legislature responded in 1832 by commissioning two local militia companies, the Elizabeth City Rangers and the Elizabeth City Guards.[13] The tense feelings left over from the Turner scare also prompted the community in August 1835 to appoint a committee of vigilance "to give the earliest notice to the inhabitants of any designs against their peace and security by those fanatics who are endeavoring to incite

[11] 1802 Slave Insurrection, Pasquotank County, Records of Slaves and Free Persons of Color, 1733-1892, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh. (hereafter cited as NCDAH).
[12] Request for arms J. M. Gregory to Governor Montford Stokes, September 17, 1831, Governor's Papers, State Series, LXII, Montford Stokes, NCDAH. Also, see Franklin, *Free Negro in North Carolina*, 70-73, 204.
[13] William A. Griffin, *Antebellum Elizabeth City: The History of a Canal Town* (Elizabeth City, NC: Roanoke Press, Inc. 1970), 136-137.

our slave population to insurrection and rebellion."[14] But if the community feared for its safety in the years following the Nat Turner rebellion, it did not commit rampant reprisals against its own free black population.

Despite the uneasiness of many residents with the presence of both a large slave and free black population in their midst, they chose overwhelmingly *not* to disfranchise the free black men of the state when given the chance to vote on the issue. In 1835, Pasquotank had a total of seventy-five black voters. During that year, the citizens of the county opposed an amendment to the North Carolina constitution that would have barred free blacks from voting. This demonstrated an emerging theme in the county's development, moderate politics. Pasquotank, however, was the only one of the six northeastern counties to vote against disfranchisement. Perhaps this was because Pasquotank's white voters were comfortable with their own ability to influence the seventy-five free black voters. Since Pasquotank's voters supported the Whig party in most antebellum political races and not the Democratic Party, the white voters may have felt as though blacks had little choice but to vote for the dominant political group as well. Unfortunately for the free blacks in the county, Pasquotank's voters were in the minority statewide. North Carolinians approved the disfranchisement amendment to their constitution, and in the summer of 1835 free blacks lost the right to vote in the Old North State.[15]

In 1840, interest in free black colonization on the African continent revived in Elizabeth City. The donation records of the American Colonization Society show gifts from the county totaling more than 150 dollars in that year. Some local blacks even

[14] *Herald of the Times*, 5 September 1835 cited in Griffin, 130. Also, see Franklin, *Free Negro in North Carolina*, 70.
[15] Franklin, *Free Negro in North Carolina*, 111-113.

managed to make it to the African continent through the work of the Pasquotank society. An Elizabeth City freed black woman named Sarah Pailin sailed to Liberia on a ship that left from Baltimore Harbor in 1850. Even Pasquotank's largest slaveholder, James C. Johnson, who owned more than 180 slaves right before the Civil War, gave money to the local organizers of the colonization movement in 1854.[16] His gift probably went toward the passage of fourteen Elizabeth City free blacks who were onboard the ship *Sophia Walker*, which sailed for Africa that year with 252 free African-Americans on board.[17]

An antebellum history of Quakerism, a flirtation with the American Colonization Society movement, and the need for cheap, uninterrupted labor (to make shingles, and secure naval stores in the swampy forests) sustained an unusually high population of free blacks. In 1830, 1038 free African-Americans resided in Pasquotank, but by 1860, these three major factors had conspired to give Pasquotank County 1507 free men and women, the second largest free black population of any county in the state of North Carolina. Among these free blacks 261 owned real or personal property in 1860. That meant that in the final year before the outbreak of hostilities between the North and South, one in three blacks living in the county was free, and one in six free black men owned property. In Elizabeth City proper 217 free blacks lived alongside 620 slaves and 952 whites.[18] But, this fragile racial order of white dominating free black and slave did not survive without discord.

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[16] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Slave Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC, National Archives publication, Microfilm No. 653, Roll No. 925. Johnson was actually a resident of nearby Chowan County, but he owned property's in several counties of the eastern North Carolina including Poplar Plains plantation in Pasquotank County. For more on James C. Johnson, see Hayes Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
[17] Ibid., 204, 209, 239.
[18] Ibid., 17-18, 231.

In fact, the large number of free blacks in Pasquotank is somewhat deceiving. This was not a society dominated by racial egalitarians. The final census before the Civil War showed that 348 men in Pasquotank owned a total of 2983 slaves.[19] The total white male population of the county in 1860 was 2207.[20] This made slaveholders roughly 15 percent of the adult, white male population. And, although the majority of these slaves were held by yeomen with only one to five bondsmen, five of the wealthiest planters in the county retained more than fifty slaves each.

The combination of economic exigency, moderate political, and benevolent religious influences did not mean that the presence of such a large free black and slave population living in the same county sat easily on the minds of all white residents. This issue clearly heightened the anxiety for many white citizens throughout the antebellum period. In 1852, one citizen of the community complained that the free blacks of Pasquotank "are found addicted to the worse vices with not one single incentive to industry, or a victorious life set before them." The resident continued by noting that "thousands of dollars are…filched from the pockets of the farmers and merchants…annually. The free negroes live, they eat, they drink, they are clothed, yet how few of them work."[21] Clearly, some members of the white community of Pasquotank were growing restless with the black population living among them.

One example of these heightened racial tensions during the 1850s involved James W. Hinton, a prominent, local lawyer, slaveholder, and later a colonel in the Confederate

[19] Bureau of the Census, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*, 235-236.
[20] Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census*, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior. (Washington: GPO, 1864). 348-363; for the total white male voting population in the 1860 Presidential election, see R.D.W. Connor ed., *A Manual of North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: E.M. Uzzell & Co. State Printers, 1913), 986.
[21] *The Old North State*, 27 March 1852 cited in Griffin, 136.

army. Hinton was threatened with violence by a free black couple, who had allegedly stolen goods from him. After being convicted of stealing property from Hinton, the two free blacks threatened to "put him away" and burn his property. The couple was ultimately jailed for their threats.[22]

Like many other Southern communities during the years leading up to the Civil War, the white citizenry of Pasquotank County restlessly struggled with how best to control its laboring black population. Throughout the antebellum era, and especially in the late 1850s as tension over the abolitionist movement in the North rose, fear of another slave uprising gripped community members. As a result, they organized regular slave patrols. These patrols, commissioned by local leaders, were responsible for the regular maintenance of the fragile racial order through the capture and coercion of resistant blacks. One of these community leaders responsible for organizing slave patrols was the same James W. Hinton, who was threatened with death by free blacks. Hinton would go on to be the wartime commander of northeastern North Carolina's State Troops unit. And, one of the many men called to serve as a pre-war patroller was a yeoman farmer named "Daniel Brite" (His name is listed as Daniel Bright in the 1860 census).[23] Twenty-eight year old Bright, like many of Pasquotank's white men, owned one slave and would enlist in the Confederate army as a private when hostilities broke out in the 1860s.[24]

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[22] *Democratic Pioneer* 17 November 1857 cited in Griffin 136. Hinton owned five slaves in 1860.
[23] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC. The name of the only "Daniel Brite" listed in the 1860 census of Pasquotank County is spelled "Bright" not "Brite."
[24] Slave patrols, Pasquotank County, Records of Slaves and Free Persons of Color, 1815-1861, NCDAH. Daniel Brite (Bright) served as a member of a patrol that was approved by Clerk of the Court James W. Hinton. Interestingly, R.B. Creecy and George D. Pool, men on opposite sides politically during the war, served together on a committee to appoint a slave patrol in March of 1861. For another reference to Daniel Bright serving in a slave patrol, see 5 June 1859, Pasquotank County, County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1737-1868, NCDAH.

For the members of Pasquotank County's white community, local racial tension was not the only problem they faced during the 1850s. State and national political issues were also an arena of contention and social division. In 1850 and 1851, the sectional issue of slavery on the Western frontier of the United States split many communities in the North and South and Pasquotank was no different. In Pasquotank, an editorial conflict broke out between Stephen D. Pool of the *Old North State* newspaper, a Whig entity, and Lucian D. Starke of the *Democratic Pioneer*. Starke and Pool fired off a series of articles in their respective papers over the questions of the extension of slavery into the territories. Pool asserted that each new state should have the right to determine whether slavery or freedom would reign supreme in its borders. Starke, however, believed that the Missouri Compromise line should be upheld through the Western territories. Starke also called for the formation of a Pasquotank Southern Rights Association.

Starke's call for a Southern rights organization in the county led to a meeting in December of 1850 at the county seat of Pasquotank where the local political leaders gathered to discuss the divisive issue of slavery in the territories and the Compromise of 1850. At the gathering, Southern rights advocates put forward a resolution, which threatened that a repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law would be cause for disunion. Moderation prevailed at this meeting, however, when Pasquotank's most prominent politician, the Whig John Pool, a relative of Stephen D. Pool, spoke eloquently about the questions of the Fugitive Slave Act and convinced many in the community that support of the resolution was unwise. Ultimately, no resolutions supporting disunion were approved at the meeting.[25] Following the gathering, the idea of a Pasquotank Southern Rights

[25] Griffin, 132-133.

Association died a quiet death like other such local Southern rights organization throughout the South.

What did not end was the feud between Lucian D. Stark and Stephen D. Pool. During the summer of 1852, Starke read an editorial in Pool's *Old North State* that referred to him and the Democratic Party as "Loco Foco." Starke took this as an affront to his honor and attacked Pool on the streets of Elizabeth City with a cane. Pool struck Starke in the face and was then accosted by two other citizens who held Pool while Starke hit him several times. The incident only ended when another man came between Starke and Pool. Following the fight in Elizabeth City, Lucian Starke challenged Stephen Pool to a duel. Pool declined the challenge, however, and the debate continued in the local papers until 1855. The argument ended in that year when the *Old North State* discontinued printing as a result of financial problems.[26]

Not long after the efforts to found a Pasquotank Southern Rights Association ended, the Whig Party collapsed as a major entity in national politics. In North Carolina and especially in the northeastern counties, however, Whigs remained vital players in the state government. In Pasquotank, the Whig heritage of the antebellum period would continue to play a major role in the political debate about slavery and sectionalism through the secession crisis and provide a base for the strong local Unionism of the war years.[27]

During the remainder of the decade, the Pool family like many other Whig leaders in the upper South remained committed to the institution of slavery for its economic

[26] Ibid., 131-133.
[27] For a discussion of the Whig party and American party in North Carolina during the 1850s, see Thomas E. Jeffrey, *State Parties and National Politics: North Carolina, 1815-1861* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 245-280.

benefits. But disunion was not something that these men were prepared to carryout in the name of "southern rights." As sectional tensions threatened to boil over in the late 1850s, Pasquotank remained a divided community. The majority of citizens, however, continued to support Stephen D. Pool's position on the issues of slavery and opposition to disunion when given a chance to vote on the issue in the elections of 1860 and 1861. The margin during the February 1861 state secession convention referendum was 426 opposed and 159 in favor, nearly a 3 to 1 ratio against secession. During these elections, Pasquotank voters clearly asserted their moderate political leanings.

Sectional disagreement over slavery grew to a fever pitch in the United States in 1860, and Pasquotank County contributed significantly to the contentious debate over this issue in the state of North Carolina. John Pool, an Elizabeth City attorney and centrist Whig, electioneered as the Constitutional Union/Opposition Party candidate for governor during that year.[28] Pool's central campaign issue in the election was his approbation of the ad valorem taxation policy. The ad valorem policy proposed that all citizens in North Carolina should be liable for taxation on the full appraised amount of their land and slave property, not just a percentage of that value. Despite being a slaveholder himself, Pool supported the policy in true Whig fashion because of his devotion to fiscal responsibility and internal improvements in the Southern economy, which he believed ad valorem would help fund.[29] This issue proved to be somewhat of a class wedge between planters and yeomen in some regions of North Carolina during the election, but it was not enough

[28] Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1983), 190-193, 196-197; and Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1890* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985), 29.
[29] John Pool owned seven slaves in 1860. See, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Slave Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC, National Archives publication, Microfilm No. 653, Roll No. 925.

to propel Pool into the Governor's mansion. Democrat John Ellis defeated Pool in a narrow election, but Pool's support from the people of Pasquotank and the northeastern counties enabled him to narrow the margin to only 6,000 votes statewide.[30] According to historian Marc W. Kruman, Pool received 47.2 percent of North Carolina's popular vote with his greatest support coming from the traditionally Whig counties, like Pasquotank.[31]

The lack of extant primary sources prevent a more thorough discussion of the debate over disunion in Pasquotank County, but the presidential election and secession vote of February 1861 do provide insight into the feelings of Pasquotank's citizenry. In the November 1860 presidential election, Pasquotank's voters supported the Constitutional Union candidate, the former Whig John Bell. But, even though the short-lived eastern Carolina newspaper the *Albemarle Southron and Union Advocate* strongly advocated the moderate Bell ticket, the county electorate was divided.[32] Bell had the support of 477 (62%) citizens, 239 (31%) voted for the Southern Democrat John C. Breckenridge and 55 (7%) preferred the Northern Democrat Stephen A. Douglas.[33] What this vote demonstrated was that during the final days of 1860, as South Carolinians thundered with the rhetoric of secession, the majority of people in Pasquotank sought a middle ground, a negotiated solution that would keep the Union together and their fragile racial hierarchy of slavery and free-black labor intact. Many Pasquotank voters hoped, like thousands of people in North Carolina and other states of the upper South, that cooler heads would prevail through the moment of sectional disagreement.

[30] Jeffrey, *State Parties and National Poltics*, 276.
[31] Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 196.
[32] *Albemarle Southron and Union Advocate*, 19 October 1860.
[33] Connor, *Manual of North Carolina*, 986.

In step with John Pool's politics and the strong Whig political heritage of the county, Pasquotank's voters overwhelmingly opposed a statewide convention that might take North Carolina out of the Union in the state referendum of 28 February 1861. Pool spent some of his time during the winter of 1861 giving speeches that condemned secession. In one speech, he urged his fellow North Carolinians "not to yield their attachment to the Union, but to adhere to it until all possible peaceable means" for resolving the conflict had been pursued.[34] In the event that a secession convention discussing disunion did convene, Pasquotank's electorate supported the pro-Union delegate Rufus K. Speed.[35] In the early months of 1861, North Carolinians opposed the idea of a secession convention, and Pasquotank was in the majority. Two months later, however, events shifted public attention in the upper South toward Northern aggression and many opinions throughout North Carolina changed as well.[36]

[34] *Raleigh North Carolina Standard*, 20 December 1860.
[35] Dr. Rufus K. Speed, a former mayor of Elizabeth City, had also spoken alongside John Pool against the December 1850 Pasquotank resolutions that criticized the North for the Compromise of 1850 and resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law. Griffin, 132.
[36] The six counties east of the Chowan River voted as follows in the February 1861 convention election: Camden, Opposed to the convention 290, For the convention, 41. Union Delegate selected; Chowan, Opposed to the convention 222, For the convention 204, Union Delegate selected; Currituck, Opposed to the convention 86, For the convention 447. Secession Delegate selected; Gates, Opposed to the Convention 141, For the convention 367, Union Delegate selected; Pasquotank, Opposed to the convention 426, For the convention 159, Union Delegate selected; Perquimans, Opposed to the convention 182, For the convention 299, Union Delegate selected.

CHAPTER ONE

"A Damn Black Abolition Son of a Bitch": Divided Loyalties and the Origins of Guerrilla War in the North Carolina No Man's Land

In April of 1861 as the guns in Charleston, South Carolina's harbor rumbled, a majority of citizens living on the rural farms of Pasquotank County transferred their loyalties to a new Southern government that supported the economic institution on which their agricultural society was based. Like many other areas of the South, the majority of people in the northeastern counties of North Carolina had maintained their loyalty to the Union until the day after the attack on Fort Sumter, when President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to put down the rebellion in the states of the Deep South. That presidential order sent many politically moderate Southerners rushing into the ranks of the Confederate army.[1]

In Pasquotank, the citizens who supported this new Southern regime included yeomen, wealthy planters, and a core group of affluent lawyers.[2] A few of the

[1] Numerous Confederate and Union sources support the analysis that there was a Confederate majority in Pasquotank after April 1861. See James A. Seddon to Zebulon B. Vance, 3 November 1863, in Joe A. Mobley ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, Vol. 2 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1995), 327 (unless otherwise noted all references to this edited collection are from Vol. 2); Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Edward Augustus Wild Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as E. A. Wild Papers, SHC); Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864; Josiah Simmons, (no. 9560), Southern Claims Commission Case Files, 1877-1883, Records of the Government Accounting Office, Records of the Third Auditor's Office, Record Group 217, National Archives, College Park, MD. (hereafter cited as Southern Claims).

[2] For compiled data on the Confederate community, see, *Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC; and Minutes of the Town of Elizabeth City, 4 January 1862, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina cited in Griffin, 65. The sample list of Confederates was derived from those men listed in the minutes January 1862, who were then in regular Confederate military service. These men were released from the poll tax by this local meeting. The sample of Confederate citizens included thirty-three names of which nineteen could be positively identified in the census. I also added the names of Ban B. Balance, Lucien D. Starke, Edmund

Confederates were merchants, artisans, doctors and mariners. But, since the majority of Pasquotank's white citizens were small farmers, the overwhelming majority of Southern sympathizers were poor farmers, who owned few or no slaves. Nevertheless, they were tied to an economic and social order that benefited from the use of slave labor. Most of the slaves owned by Pasquotank Confederates were concentrated in the hands of wealthy planters and lawyers.

But, even after the upper South marched out of the Union, and other antebellum moderates were throwing off their old ties to support region, family and the institution of slavery, not all of Pasquotank's citizens renounced their loyalty to the old flag. In fact, a sizable minority of the county's antebellum moderate majority remained in the county throughout the war and continued to support the Union, roughly two percent of the male population in 1861 and (perhaps as high as 10 percent of the white male population residing in the county in 1863).[3] A significant number of those citizens lived in Elizabeth City or along the roads leading into the town, and were tied to its antebellum commerce

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Perkins and R.B. Creecy to this list increasing the sample to twenty-three identified in the Confederate sample. Balance's loyalty is avowed in the Southern Claims Commission records. The loyalty of Creecy and Perkins is evident in the Creecy Family papers. Lucien D. Starke's loyalty is confirmed both in his prewar pro-slavery stance as editor of the *Democratic Pioneer* newspaper and his service in the 17th North Carolina (2nd Organization) during the war. See, Josiah Simmons, (no. 9560), Southern Claims; Creecy Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Creecy Family Papers, SHC); Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. VI, Infantry* (Raleigh, NC: Division of Archives and History, 1977), 204; and Griffin, 132. James W. Hinton, who is listed among the men in regular Confederate service, later organized the companies of guerrillas from the surrounding region into a regiment. Hinton is listed in the Confederate citizen sample. The names of two men B.F. White and H.B. Coleman appear on both the Confederate list and the guerrilla list; they are left in both statistical samples. These men signify the shifting attitudes about methods of resistance from regular to insurgent warfare in the community. Isaiah Fearing is the only citizen listed on both the Confederate list in 1862 and Wild's Unionist list in 1863. Fearing's presence on both of these lists signifies the mutability of loyalty in Pasquotank County.

[3] E.A. Wild Papers, SHC. In December of 1863, Edward Wild compiled a list of fifty-three Unionists in Pasquotank County this would have been about ten percent of the 523 men who signed the petition for the removal of the guerrillas in 1863. The 53 would have been roughly two percent of the 2207 white men listed on the 1860 census for Pasquotank. See, Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior*. (Washington: GPO, 1864). These percentages are conservative estimates. By the time of Wild's raid, many staunch Union sympathizers had fled the region fearing guerrilla attack.

and trade.[4] The vast majority of these Unionists belonged to Pasquotank's middle or upper class: well established merchants, craftsman of middling rank, and farmers owning significant amounts of land. In short, the majority of the wealth in the community was concentrated in the hands of moderate antebellum political figures, who remained Unionists. Their personal property ownership included an average of eight slaves.[5]

Table 1: Pasquotank Citizens' Real Estate Value in 1860

Dollar Amount	Unionist	Confederate
0-99	10 (24.3%)[6]	16 (69.6%)
100-499	7 (17.0%)	1 (4.3%)
500-999	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
1000-2,499	9 (21.9%)	1 (4.3%)
2,500-4,999	6 (14.6%)	2 (8.7%)
5,000-9,999	3 (7.3%)	1 (4.3%)
Over 10,000	6 (14.6%)	2 (8.7%)
Total Property Value	165,305	75,350
Average Per Citizen	$4,032 (No. 41 in sample)	$3,276 (No. 23 in sample)

[4] The occupation of forty-four of these Unionists on Wild's list can be positively identified in the 1860 census. The property ownership of forty-one of the Unionists could be positively determined. Of the fifty-three identified Unionists by Wild, he recorded that sixteen lived in Elizabeth City proper, three on the Road from Elizabeth to Nixonton, and five on the Elizabeth City Road to the River Bridge. Therefore, twenty four out of fifty-three lived close to the county seat or in it. The remainder lived either in Nixonton proper, on the road between Nixonton and Woodville, or in the lower part of the county. Isaiah Fearing, who is left in both Union and Confederate samples, demonstrates shifting loyalty in the county.

[5] The average age of the Unionists in this sample was thirty-nine compared with thirty-two in the Confederate sample.

[6] All percentages are out of the sample not the total population of the county. For example, the ten Unionists who owned less than 99 dollars were 24.3% of the Unionist population.

Table 2: Pasquotank Citizens' Personal Property Value in 1860

Dollar Amount	Unionist	Confederate
0-99	3 (7.3%)	9 (39.1%)
100-499	7 (17.0%)	4 (17.4%)
500-999	5 (12.2%)	2 (8.7%)
1000-2,499	9 (22.0%)	1 (4.3%)
2,500-4,999	6 (14.6%)	3 (13.0%)
5,000-9,999	6 (14.6%)	3 (13.0%)
Over 10,000	5 (12.2%)	1 (4.3%)
Total Property Value	183,971	74,035
Average Per Citizen	$4,487 (No. 41 in sample)	$3,218 (No. 23 in sample)

Table 3: Pasquotank Citizens' Slave Ownership in 1860[7]

No. of Slaves	Unionist	Confederate
1-4	10 (24.4%)	1 (4.8%)
5-9	9 (22.0%)	2 (4.8%)
10-14	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
15-19	1 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)
20-24	2 (4.9%)	0 (0.0%)
25-29	1 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)
30-34	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
35-39	1 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)
40-44	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.0%)
45-49	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Over 50	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total No. of Slaveholders	24	4
Total No. of Slaves Owned in Group	195 (No. 41 in sample)	58 (No. 23 in sample)

[7] For source of table date, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Slave Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC, National Archives publication, Microfilm No. 653, Roll No. 925.

Table 4: Occupations of Pasquotank Citizens in 1860

Occupation	Unionist	Confederate
Attorney at Law	**0 (0.0%)**[8]	**4 (17.4%)**
Clerk	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (4.3%)**
Artist	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (4.3%)**
Sail Maker	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (4.3%)**
Constable	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (4.3%)**
Bar Keeper	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (4.3%)**
Teacher	**0 (0.0%)**	**2 (8.7%)**
Stage Driver	**0 (0.0%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Farmer	**24 (58.5%)**	**1 (4.3%)**
Mariner	**1 (2.4%)**	**3 (13.0%)**
Painter	**0 (0.0%)**	**2 (8.7%)**
Farm Hand	**1 (2.4%)**	**1 (4.3%)**
Carpenter	**1 (2.4%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Hotel Keeper	**0 (0.0%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Horse Trader	**0 (0.0%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Jeweler	**0 (0.0%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Merchant	**7 (17.0%)**	**3 (13.0%)**
Doctor	**1 (2.4%)**	**2 (8.7%)**
Speculator	**1 (2.4%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Blacksmith	**1 (2.4%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Baker	**1 (2.4%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Cabinet Maker	**1 (2.4%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Under age 17 and no occupation listed	**0 (0.0%)**	**0 (0.0%)**
Total in Sample	**39 (Occupation of 2 not known)**	**23**

[8] Unionist George W. Brooks is listed in the census as both a farmer and lawyer. I have listed him in the farmer category in this table.

At the inception of hostilities, the Albemarle coastline, dotted with large plantations and beautiful homes, provided an enticing target for Federal maritime expeditions. Realizing that their area of North Carolina was vulnerable, hundreds of the white men from Pasquotank went off to war on behalf of the Confederacy. In 1860, the total white population of the county was 4463. This made the 362 men that enlisted in the Confederate army by November of 1861 roughly 8 percent of the total white population.[9] Many of these men from Pasquotank enlisted in the Seventeenth North Carolina Volunteer Infantry (First Organization) during the spring and summer of 1861 to protect the region from Federal invasion.[10] These men were commanded by a local Pasquotank lawyer turned Confederate colonel named William F. Martin. During the summer of 1861, Martin and his men were stationed on Hatteras Island, which with its two forts provided a defensive barrier to naval operations in the Sound. After a successful amphibious operation by Union army and naval personnel on 29 August 1861, the forts were captured. Several hundred Confederate troops were taken prisoner at Hatteras when it fell to Union troops; among those men made prisoners of war were many citizens from Pasquotank and Elizabeth City.[11]

Among the captured at Hatteras Island was Daniel Bright, a private in Company A, Seventeenth North Carolina Infantry (First Organization). Following his surrender, Bright was transported to Federal prisoner of war camps first in both New York and then Boston Harbor. Bright's experience was typical of many loyal Confederates from

[9] Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC. For a complete list of enlistments by county in the state of North Carolina as of November of 1861, see Charlotte (NC) *Western Democrat*, 18 March 1862.
[10] The designation First Organization is important because there were two Seventeenth North Carolina Infantry Regiments during the war.
[11] Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. VI, Infantry*, 118-119.

Pasquotank who enlisted in the army during the spring and summer of 1861. When paroled in December 1861 and sent back to North Carolina, Bright agreed not to take up arms until an official cartel of prisoners traded him for a Union soldier held by the South. The majority of the men in his unit were formally exchanged in February of 1862. Upon exchange, Bright was immediately transferred into Company B (First Organization) of the Thirty-second North Carolina Infantry.[12] In April 1862 shortly after his transfer to the Thirty-second North Carolina, Daniel Bright formally mustered out of this regiment, and like many other local men, returned home for spring planting.[13]

The fall of the Hatteras forts in August of 1861 and the capture of many local men depressed Southern loyalists in northeastern North Carolina, but as long as the Confederate forces on Roanoke Island remained resolute, the Union naval and army forces could not penetrate far into the Albemarle Sound region. Without a base of supply on Roanoke Island, inland operations that threatened the counties bordering the Albemarle would be difficult for the Union army. Southern armies could easily cut Union troops off and destroy any expedition piece meal by disrupting a long distance supply line over the open waters of the Sound. Confederate officials understood this and in December of 1861 transferred command of northeastern Carolina defenses to the former Virginia governor turned brigadier general, Henry A. Wise. Wise's skill at making political speeches, however, did not translate into military success in the Albemarle.[14]

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[12] Ibid., 118-121. The First Organization here is important because there were two Co. B's for this unit during the war.
[13] Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. IX, Infantry*, 18.
[14] Clarence C. Buel and Robert U. Johnson ed., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. 1. (New York: Thomas Yoselfoff, 1956 [1887]), 632-640.

In February of 1862, excitement gripped the community of Elizabeth City when Union General Ambrose Burnside captured Roanoke Island, the final Confederate stronghold protecting the Albemarle region and the inland waterways that were accessible from the mouth of the Sound. The fall of Roanoke Island on 8 February left the entire Albemarle region open to Federal invasion. In the aftermath of General Burnside's amphibious expedition, Northern troops established a community on the island for refugee slaves. On 11 February, Union naval forces supporting Burnside's expedition defeated a Confederate mosquito fleet off the coast of Elizabeth City, causing immense panic in the town. At this point, only two Confederate infantry regiments were in the immediate vicinity. The Fifty-ninth Virginia Infantry was in Pasquotank County around the county seat and the Third Georgia Infantry guarded the important Dismal Swamp Canal locks just north of Elizabeth City at South Mills in Camden County.[15] Fearing the invasion of a superior force of Yankee troops and not wanting to leave valuable property to the Federal troops, Confederate soldiers and Southern sympathizers in Elizabeth City began burning the village and set fire to the courthouse, which was shortly razed to the ground.[16] Southern sympathizers fled the county in every direction, but many moved to nearby Currituck County, which had an overwhelmingly pro-Confederate population.[17]

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[15] Jordan Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. VI, Infantry*, 119. Also, see *Battles and Leaders*, 645-646. Also, see Jerry V. Witt, *South Mills, April 19, 1862: A Nearly Forgotten Battle* (Belvidere, NC: Family Research Society of Northeastern North Carolina, 1992).

[16] Frank Moore ed., *Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, With Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc.* Vol. 4 (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1863), 122-123.

[17] In the February 1861 secession convention vote, the people of Currituck supported a secessionist delegate and a secession convention by the largest margin in the six northeastern counties. In Currituck only 86 men opposed the convention, while 447 favored it. They selected a secession delegate to represent the community. For a discussion of locals fleeing in every direction, see Creecy Family Papers, SHC. 5 April 1862.

As the small contingent of Southern soldiers commanded by Colonel C. F. Henningsen of the Fifty-ninth Virginia Infantry fled Elizabeth City in the face of Union naval power, they took out their frustrations on the local Unionist population. During the retreat, a group of Southern soldiers arrived at the home of John Lister outside of Elizabeth City, wanting to take him into the Confederate interior. Lister, a well known Unionist who had named one of his sons after Abraham Lincoln, refused to go with the Confederates. According to Colonel Henningsen's account, Lister had been avoiding for more than a month a local vigilance committee that desired his arrest. When Lister rebuffed the soldiers, Confederates attempted to force him to go by threatening to burn his home to the ground. Lister then locked himself in the house and fired at the party of secessionists, wounding one young private.[18] The troops then set the house on fire and as Lister ran to the window to escape the billowing smoke, he was shot, falling back into the house. Lister's body was then left inside the dwelling to burn along with his property.[19]

After the fall of Elizabeth City in February 1862, a period of uncertainty commenced for both the Unionist and Confederate citizens of Pasquotank County. At different points from the spring of 1862 through the fall of 1863, Union troops came ashore and occupied Elizabeth City. Federal soldiers, however, never permanently garrisoned the town with a major force as they did in New Bern or Plymouth. While the Confederate population feared the loss of their slaves and other property to the invading Union soldiers, Unionists faced a different kind of dilemma.[20] During the periods when Federal soldiers occupied the city, some members of the Unionist community stated their

[18] Nancy L. Lister, (no. 12,046), Southern Claims.
[19] Col. C. F. Henningsen Report, 12 February 1862, *Official Records,* Ser. 1, Vol. 9, 191-194.
[20] Creecy Family Papers, SHC, 1 October 1861.

loyalty publicly and a few even aided the Federal army with transport and supplies.[21] But they then faced the problem of what to do when the Union army left and Confederates came back. Pasquotank County became the quintessential example of North Carolina's coastal "no man's land," a region with a Confederate majority and Unionist minority, at all times open to Federal incursion, but in reality controlled by neither government.[22]

In the spring of 1862, Elizabeth City was tossed back and forth by the armed belligerents of the North and South. Confederate soldiers reoccupied the town in early April, only to be briefly driven off when Union soldiers came ashore and captured seventy-three Southern soldiers on 8 April 1862.[23] Confederate soldiers seized the city again by mid-April, this time with two regiments.[24] Later that same month, Union troops returned to the region, this time with the intent of destroying the Dismal Swamp Canal locks at South Mills a few miles northeast of Elizabeth City. Growing fear in the Northern navy over armored Confederate warships, which might move from waters in Virginia into the Albemarle Sound via the canal, prompted the Union military to take action.

The threat of Confederate ironclads may not have been the only reason why Union soldiers wanted to destroy the locks. Confederate confiscation agents regularly visited the northeastern Carolina counties to impress wheat, corn and other food stuffs for the Southern army. If the locks could be destroyed and the shipping commerce between

[21] Josiah Simmons, (no. 9560), Southern Claims.
[22] Ash, 99-105.
[23] Rush C. Hawkins Report, 11 April 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 9, 296-297.
[24] Ambrose E. Burnside Report, 17 April 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 9, 377-379.

the North Carolina and Virginia interior bottled up, the Confederacy's armies in northern Virginia would experience a significant reduction in vital sustenance from the region.[25]

On 19 April 1862 after landing at Elizabeth City, Union soldiers marched north toward the Camden County line and met the Third Georgia Infantry and local Confederate militia in a battle at Sawyer's Lane just below South Mills. The ensuing skirmish, known afterward as the Battle of South Mills, did not produce the results that Northerners had hoped; Confederate forces successfully defended the locks.[26]

As local residents dealt with the reality of living on the periphery of Southern control, the Confederate government struggled to adapt policies to cope with the reality of limited Southern resources. In April 1862, the Confederate Congress enacted two laws that would affect northeastern North Carolina in profound ways. It passed the first national conscription bill in American history. This policy would become steadily more and more unpopular, especially in rural farming regions of the South where yeomen seemed to be doing most of the fighting and class differences were sharp.[27] Less well known, but perhaps just as important, was the Confederate Partisan Ranger Act, which allowed the Southern War Department to authorize guerrilla units for remote regions of the South where Confederate armies were not in control.[28] By this point in the spring of 1862, self-constituted guerrilla bands were already forming in many parts of the Confederacy, and the Richmond government wanted to bring order to these loosely

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[25] Zebulon Baird Vance 4 February 1863, Mobley ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance,* 46-47.
[26] *Battles and Leaders,* Vol. 1, 654-659.
[27] Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 118-121. Hahn discusses the resistance to Confederate conscription by yeomen in two counties of middle Georgia. He argues that local politics largely mitigated class difference in Jackson and Carroll Counties.
[28] Barton A. Myers, "Controlling Chaos: Negotiated Conduct and White Identity in the Civil War South, 1861-1865," (Senior Thesis, The College of Wooster, OH, 2003). This thesis discusses the history of the Partisan Ranger Act from adoption through repeal.

organized groups. In theory, the Partisan Ranger Act would provide a way of controlling irregular soldiers by curtailing the number of these units and setting responsible officers over them. In reality, however, the act created the widespread impression, among a people already inclined toward independent violence, that their government was sanctioning local vigilante activity in the no man's land areas.[29]

Following the surrender of Elizabeth City on 10 February 1862, Pasquotank citizens began an armed resistance to regular Union military incursions. In early March, one Confederate sympathizer, who remained in Pasquotank after the fall of the county seat, mentioned in his correspondence that Southern sympathizers in the community had begun a regular mounted patrol of the county for public safety.[30] This mounted patrol was probably the modest beginning of a coalescing guerrilla resistance. The armed pro-Confederate opposition grew throughout the spring, summer and fall of 1862 as more of Pasquotank's early war enlistees like Daniel Bright returned home, were formally exchanged, or mustered out of the service. At the same time that these men returned to the home front resistance to Confederate conscription multiplied, and Union naval ships continued to patrol the coast of Pasquotank and Federal army personnel periodically visited the county seat. The presence of local militia units in the region as well as other organizing Confederate units, added to the white manpower available in the Albemarle country.[31] These men fell through the cracks in the desks of Southern administrators in Raleigh and Richmond. Each of these factors worked together to produce a large number

[29] For a discussion of individualism and violent behavior as a major component of Southern identity, see Cash, 31, 43-44; Franklin, *The Militant South*, 33-62; Sheldon Hackney, "Southern Violence," *The American Historical Review* 74 (1969): 906-925.
[30] Creecy Family Papers, SHC, 3 March 1862.
[31] The use of local militia from the region during the battle of South Mills is discussed in *Battles and Leaders*, Vol. 1, 654-659.

of white male citizens who sympathized with the South but were not under formal Confederate military control in 1862 and 1863.

Part of the problem in determining exactly when the irregular war began in the region relates to the complicated history of independently operating companies, evolving unit designations, and unit transfers that involved the Confederate government, North Carolina state authorities, and men from this region. What is clear is that some organic guerrilla activity sprang up in Pasquotank between the spring and fall of 1862 since both Union and Confederate sources mention military operations not organized by the Confederate government in northeastern North Carolina.[32]

In May 1862, Union naval personnel operating off the coast of Elizabeth City were angered by the persecution of local Unionists; their correspondence offers the first indication from the Union side of irregulars forming a company in the region. In a private letter dated 13 May, Lt. C.W. Flusser of the Federal navy mentioned his consternation that his men had not found and confronted a new local Confederate cavalry company during a recent expedition into the Pasquotank countryside.[33] But, in his official correspondence five days later, Flusser clearly stated that no regular Confederate troops were in the region. On 18 May 1862, he complained in a letter to the mayor of Elizabeth City that "there being no Confederate troops in this city or its vicinity, any persecution of

[32] Ibid. See Donald E. Collins, "Eastern North Carolinians in the Union Army: The First and Second North Carolina Union Volunteer Regiments," North Carolina Union Veterans Project n.d., http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~ncuv/collins1.htm (9 September 2004). Collins mentions a guerrilla attack in September 1862 on a Union recruiting base at Shiloh in Camden County. Also, see Rush C. Hawkins Report, 11 April 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 9, 296-297. In April 1862, Hawkins mentions capturing men from the First Brigade of North Carolina Militia and killing a rebel scout named Tim Gregory. The presence of a large local militia may have been the seed that planted the idea of local guerrilla forces. Furthermore, some members of the Gregory family (Camden Co.) were prominent supporters of the guerrillas in 1863, and it is likely this member of their family was already operating as one in April 1862.

[33] C.W. Flusser letter, 13 May 1862 cited in John W. Hinds, *Invasion and Conquest of North Carolina* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Press, 1998), 247.

Union people that may occur hereafter must be the work of evil-minded citizens." "Many Union people have been taken from their homes and confined in prisons on frivolous charges," he asserted. "It is my intention, on any recurrence of such outrages," Flusser threatened, "to seize two secessionists for each Union man seized, and subject them to precisely the same treatment which the loyal man receives at the hands of the disloyal…If [Union] officers or men are detained, I shall be obliged, however unwillingly, to fire on the town."[34]

After Flusser issued his ultimatum, the town authorities requested three days to ponder his terms and issue a formal response. In order to gain the insight of the local citizenry, city authorities desired to hold a county meeting. Nevertheless, when Flusser and his officers returned after three days, he found that local secessionists had prevented a meeting from occurring. In his analysis of the situation in Elizabeth City that prevented the meeting, Flusser did not mention guerrilla activity outright, but he clearly believed that some members of the local community were coercing the Unionist population to remain silent.[35]

Throughout most of 1862, the Union army grappled with policy initiatives for holding northeastern North Carolina. At first, Federal officers secured the coast of Elizabeth City and the surrounding area by keeping naval forces floating off shore. This policy enabled the army and navy to control the greater region of inland rivers all along the northern coast of the Albemarle Sound, without committing the manpower to a

[34] C.W. Flusser Report, 18 May 1862. U.S. War Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, 30 vols. (Washington: GPO, 1897-1927), Ser. 1, Vol. 7, 385. (hereafter cited as *Official Records Navies*).
[35] Stephen Rowan, 19 May 1862, *Official Records Navies*, Ser. 1, Vol. 7, 439-441.

permanent garrison at any one spot.[36] In the late spring, however, Union naval personnel came ashore in Pasquotank and found "100 people who only wish a leader in order to take arms in their own defense." During that visit, Unionist citizens in the county even asked that a Federal recruiting agent be sent to Elizabeth City.[37]

As a result, in the fall of 1862, soldiers from the First North Carolina (Union) Regiment, loyalists from the coast of North Carolina came to the northeastern region of the state on a recruiting expedition. This unit had begun recruitment in adjacent Washington County on the southern coast of the Albemarle Sound during April of 1862, but it had not yet recruited enough men from the eastern portion of the state to form a complete regiment. The desire for more eager Union recruits brought Captain Enos C. Sanders of Company D, First North Carolina (Union) to the northeastern counties.[38]

While in the Albemarle district, Captain Sanders came face-to-face with the brutality of Southern guerrilla violence. The Unionist North Carolinians first established a camp in Camden County just east of the Pasquotank River, but while away on a recruiting trip to Pasquotank in September of 1862, guerrillas attacked Sanders' base at Shiloh. They took several of his men as prisoners and pillaged his supplies.[39] It is unclear exactly who these guerrillas were, but they were likely men from Pasquotank who were operating on the home front as an independent company.[40] In October, the New Bern *Daily Progress* reported that the Unionist citizens of the northeastern counties were

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[36] Ambrose E. Burnside Report, 5 July 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 9, 408-409.
[37] Lt. Charles W. Flusser Report, 19 May 1862, and S.C. Rowan Report, 12 June 1862, *Official Records Navies*, Vol. 7, 391, 476.
[38] Collins, "Eastern North Carolinians in the Union Army: The First and Second North Carolina Union Volunteer Regiments."
[39] Ibid.
[40] This guerrilla group that attacked Shiloh may have been the men from Co. L, Seventeenth North Carolina, which had been paroled to the home front in February 1862 and formally exchanged in August. After exchange, it continued to operate as an independent company in the region. See Jordan, Jr. ed, *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. VI, Infantry*, 192-195.

forming mutual protection organizations to fend off the emerging pro-Confederate guerrilla resistance in the northeastern counties.[41] Many of these organizations were based in the swamps of the region. Sanders and his Union army recruiters found many of the male Union sympathizers in the county hiding in the same swamps that guerrillas were using as bases. Armed Unionists who lived in the swamps and Federal soldiers recruited in North Carolina earned the title "Buffaloes" among Confederate sympathizers. Following the guerrilla attack on his base at Shiloh, Sanders left the northeastern counties, but the strong demonstration of Unionism that he and his men found on the coast compelled them to return to Pasquotank sometime in late December 1862. During this trip to the county, they established a Federal recruiting post in Elizabeth City.[42]

During the fall of 1862, the Southern War Department and the state of North Carolina opened up a Pandora's Box when they sanctioned a Partisan Ranger regiment to organize in eastern North Carolina. This unit officially designated the Sixty-sixth North Carolina Partisan Rangers, an authorized guerrilla regiment, was ordered to recruit ten companies before it would be formally recognized as part of the Confederate service. Despite recruiting enough men for four companies from Northampton, Bertie and Hertford counties, this unit never reached the necessary ten companies. These four initial companies were transferred to other units in mid-1863. It is not clear whether these companies ever operated east of the Chowan River. But the attempted formation of a Partisan Ranger regiment near the northeastern counties did have an effect on Pasquotank. By early 1863, additional companies were organizing in the six northeastern counties in the hopes of eventually joining the Sixty-sixth North Carolina Partisan Ranger

[41] *New Bern Daily Progress*, 6 October 1862.
[42] Eleanor Leigh, (no. 7131), Southern Claims.

regiment. Since the companies of Sixty-sixth never came together as one unit, the various companies remained independent and scattered across the counties of the northeastern region once formed. The legacy of an organizing but never formally mustered Partisan Ranger unit would haunt this area for the remainder of the war by promoting irregular military service as a viable option.[43] When Captain Enos Sanders and his recruiting party returned to Elizabeth City in late December 1862, they encountered pro-Confederate guerrillas that were in the process of organizing, probably for the Sixty-sixth Partisan Rangers.[44]

Both within and beyond Elizabeth City, the power of the pro-Confederate guerrilla reigned. On the evening of 5 January 1863 as four soldiers from the First North Carolina (Union) regiment walked down the main street of town, they were attacked by a small group of local irregulars. The guerrillas, hidden behind the ruins of burned down buildings, fired a volley at the Union troops. Captain Enos Sanders' brother Lt. Nathaniel Sanders, having just left a "negro dance party" at a local home, was mortally wounded in the incident and died shortly afterward. Immediately following the shooting, the men of Company B, First North Carolina (Union) quickly assembled to search for the perpetrators, managing to capture two of the men before they could get rid of their weapons.[45]

In early February, guerrillas again committed an act of violence that made Union authorities cringe and terrified the Unionist population of the county. Concerned about the increased violence of the Confederate irregular forces, local Union sympathizer and

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[43] Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 509-526.
[44] E. C. Sanders Report, 16 February 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 538-539.
[45] Ibid. Also, see Richard B. Creecy, "A Dread Time," in *Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook*, Vol. 1, (Elizabeth City, NC: Local Publisher, 1954-1955), 79-80; and Collins, "Eastern North Carolinians in the Union Army: The First and Second North Carolina Union Volunteer Regiments."

Federal army Lt. Thad Cox rode out in a buggy to bring his family into Elizabeth City for safety. Upon the return trip from their home, about fourteen miles outside the town, Cox along with his four-year-old daughter and wife were "attacked by a gang of guerrillas, who came upon him from a thicket and fired a volley." Lt. Cox and his small daughter were shot and killed instantly; his wife died a few days later. In response, the Union commander at Elizabeth City again ordered his men to hunt down those responsible for the killings. Several suspected guerrillas were taken prisoner in the wake of the Cox and Sander's murders, and the local Unionist community grew restless for justice. Increasingly weary of the partisan violence, several Unionist citizens of Elizabeth City approached Captain Sanders asking "that something be done to avenge…or at least to set an example to prevent the committing of such brutal outrages." [46]

After a brief period of thought, Sanders ordered the public execution of an "obstinate, unyielding, and an intense Confederate," a prisoner of war and suspected guerrilla named Addison White. White had been captured by Sander's men a few weeks before while attempting to "rendezvous" with local irregulars. According to a Confederate account of Addison White's execution, he was taken down to the Elizabeth City wharf where several Union troops "put him up as a target, one by one they shot at him until they killed him & refusing to allow his body to be moved, would let no one come near it." The Union account of the incident places Lt. Cox's brother among the party of soldiers who carried out the shooting at the wharf. As a warning to any locals

[46] E. C. Sanders Report, 16 February 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 538-539, and George Pearson Pool, "Neighbor Against Neighbor," in John Elliot Wood ed., *Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook*, Vol. 2, (Elizabeth City, NC: Private Publisher, 1956-1957), 113-114.

who might consider engaging in irregular activity, Federal soldiers did not permit White's family and friends to remove his body until the following day.[47]

The murder of Lt. Cox and his family confirmed the threat to local men who joined the Union army. And, the retaliatory execution of Addison White signaled the willingness of both guerrilla and regular soldier, Confederate and Federal, to participate in retaliatory acts of violence. Throughout the fall and winter of 1862 and 1863, Union soldiers operated in the area with a weak force, recruiting for Company D, First North Carolina (Union) Infantry and fighting what had evolved into a protracted guerrilla war in the northern Albemarle counties. Captain Sanders and his men had the upper hand in the town, where many of the local Unionists resided. But, the partisans of Pasquotank clearly controlled the roads and fields surrounding the town, where a sympathetic Confederate population produced bountiful supplies to sustain the irregular forces.

Because of Pasquotank's divided allegiances and close proximity to Union and Confederate recruiting efforts, some members of the male population served in both armies during the conflict. Seventeen-year-old William Leigh was one of those men. Sometime during the early years of the war, probably in 1862, he was conscripted into the Confederate army against his and his mother Eleanor's wishes. He deserted after only two months in the Confederate service and returned home. Twelve months later he enlisted in the Union army at Elizabeth City.[48]

If Confederate conscription was a divisive issue for the local populace, Union recruiting efforts were equally controversial. During their time ashore in Elizabeth City, Union soldiers received word that President Abraham Lincoln had issued the

[47] Beth G. Crabtree and James W. Patton, ed. *"Journal of a Secesh Lady": The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, 1860-1866* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 500.
[48] Eleanor Leigh, (no. 7131), Southern Claims.

Emancipation Proclamation and acceded to the idea of allowing black men to join the Union ranks. Captain Sanders took a fateful step in early January 1863 when he enlisted roughly eighty local black men in the Union army and drilled them on the streets of Elizabeth City for all to observe. These men were probably recruited from the large free black population in the county since the slaves of the region were not freed by his Union troops. It is also possible that slaves may have escaped into Sanders' new force of black troops, but his letters do not specify whether the black men were free or slave when recruited. Sanders, no doubt, hoped that these black men might augment his weak force of local Unionists and aid in defending the county seat from the swelling ranks of the pro-Confederate guerrilla resistance.[49]

Unionism was not significantly weakened in Pasquotank by President Lincoln's Proclamation or his call for black soldiers. This was probably due to the immediate factors of the local guerrilla war. The threats and harassment of Confederate partisans likely shored up any doubt that Unionists had about where their own loyalties lay.[50] And, as long as Lincoln's troops continued to protect their slave property in Elizabeth City, Union slaveholders in the county had no reason to change their stance.

But the sight of armed black men drilling in the streets of Elizabeth City did not sit well with all of the locales, even if armed blacks were needed to prevent guerrillas from taking over the town. In late January 1863, "several gentlemen, residents of Elizabeth City," contacted the Union military governor of North Carolina Edward Stanly and lodged a complaint. Stanly's response demonstrated both the community's skepticism and his own about how best to employ President's Lincoln's new soldiers. "Is

[49] John G. Foster Report, 5 May 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 3, Vol. 3, 192.
[50] Josiah Simmons, (no. 9560), Southern Claims.

every provost-marshal or captain to judge of the 'suitable condition' of the negroes?" Stanly asked in a letter to Major General John G. Foster, the commander of the Union Department of North Carolina stationed at New Bern. Stanly, who according to one historian, was a "rabid proslaver," resigned his position as governor on 15 January 1863, but he found time to write a letter to Foster five days after his resignation about the black soldiers drilling at Elizabeth City.[51] In a frustrated tone, Stanly queried, "Are no instructions to be given that they are not to be sent out into the field or allowed to go on foraging excursions, committing pillage and robbery at discretion?" "My attention has been called already to several instances of this kind," Stanly lectured. He invoked General Foster's "assistance to prevent if possible the most deplorable calamities that will fall upon our loyal citizens and upon the negroes if superior discretion and experience do not now control them."[52]

Four months later in an exasperated letter to the U.S. War Department, General Foster laid out the precarious position of Elizabeth City and the surrounding country that had compelled his subordinate to recruit black soldiers. "We armed them at Elizabeth City during the time that post was threatened by guerrillas," wrote Foster. According to the commander, Sanders and his recruiters "obtained about eighty, and they did their duty well enough, but we found they could not be trusted in any outward movement or raid, probably owing to their lack of discipline."[53] The general's final comment may or may not have been an accurate judgment of the black men's soldiering since it is unlikely that

[51] Richard Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1992), 66-67.
[52] Edward Stanly, 20 January 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 525-526.
[53] John G. Foster Report, 5 May 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 3, Vol. 3, 192. Foster's comment about raiding is not clear on whether the men were actually used in combat or not. If they were, it may well have been one of the earliest uses of black soldiers in combat in the eastern theater of the war. For more on the black soldiering experience, see Cornish, *The Sable Arm*.

Foster ever saw the men drill or "raid" with his own eyes. At least one historian of the black military experience has concluded that Union soldiers and officers were prone to the same racist beliefs about black soldiers that many Southerners were. These Northern assumptions included unruliness and childlike behavior.[54]

Between February and March 1863, numerous guerrilla attacks were made upon Federal supply expeditions in the area. At the end of February, Major J.W. Wallis arrived with a company from the Eighth Massachusetts Infantry and one from the Third Massachusetts Infantry as reinforcements. Wallis succeeded Captain Sanders as commander of the Elizabeth City recruiting post, but by April, Wallis and his men were experiencing the same irregular harassment and partisan violence that Sanders and his North Carolinians endured. Wallis complained to his superior in April that with "a company of cavalry here I think we might rid this section of the country from the guerrillas. As it is now, unless we go out in a large force, we are liable to be picked off."[55]

Throughout this period of chaotic violence, the small but close-knit community of Unionists in the Elizabeth City area was constantly under duress, and at least two men had to flee for their lives. One of these citizens was Josiah Simmons, a local mariner. According to another Pasquotank Unionist George W. Cobb, Simmons was a "very ultra Union man," well known in the community for his strong political beliefs. Unionist John Pailin asserted that Simmons "carried the flag of the Union [on his vessel] as long as he dared to do it." Sometime in early 1861 before North Carolina left the Union, Simmons had even dared to fly the Stars and Stripes on the mast of his vessel in the cradle of

[54] Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle*, 35.
[55] J.W. Wallis Report, April 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 674-675.

secession. In Charleston Harbor, South Carolina troops fired upon Simmons' vessel and detained him, they released him only when they affirmed that he was a resident of the South. Upon his return to Elizabeth City, Simmons' political views continued to place him in danger. In February 1862, he fled Pasquotank after local vigilantes threatened to torch his vessel. After a few months away from the county, he returned when the Union forces controlled the town. Unionist John Pailin asserted that during the first three months of 1863 Simmons "hardly knew whom to talk with," and "was afraid to express himself publicly."[56]

It appears that even members of Simmons' own family did not agree with his views. Pailin even overheard Simmon's brother-in-law Ban B. Balance refer to him as "a damn black abolition son of a bitch." Some of Simmons blood relatives were also Confederate. He had two cousins in the Confederate service, one of whom was killed during the war. When Union soldiers left the city in April 1863, Simmons again fled the county, this time carrying many of the evacuating Federal soldiers to Roanoke Island on his boat.[57]

The experience of Josiah Simmons offers a deeper understanding of how some people in the no man's land coped with persecution. According to Simmons, in 1861 he and a group of other Unionists were called to the Pasquotank County court house in front of the local Confederate vigilance committee, and all of the men but him were impressed into the Confederate service. Simmons believed that the intercession of "influential friends" was the only factor that prevented his arrest or impressment by Southern authorities. Even if his in-laws disagreed with his political views, it was clear to Josiah

[56] Josiah Simmons, (no. 9560), Southern Claims.
[57] Ibid.

Simmons that a strong network of other personal relationships in the community kept him from being arrested or worse.[58]

Simmons was not alone in his experience with intimidation. John Tatum "an opened mouthed Union man" barely escaped Pasquotank with his life in April 1863 having been shot at twice, the final time as he fled the local pro-Confederate guerrilla group led by Captain John T. Elliott.[59]

Elliott's company was Pasquotank's local irregular band. This unit was probably the culprit of the majority of violence attributed to guerrillas in the county during the war. Elliott along with other men from Pasquotank had joined the Confederate army in 1861 as a member of Co. L, Seventeenth North Carolina Infantry (First Organization). But, in February 1862, he was captured at the battle of Roanoke Island. The captured men from his unit were paroled to the home front in late February 1862 and remained there until exchange in August of that year. After exchange, Co. L continued to operate as an independent command on the home front. John Elliott and many of his cohorts from Pasquotank remained on the rolls of Co. L, Seventeenth North Carolina (First Organization) until it officially disbanded in March 1863. After this date, he mustered a local group of men in an attempt to join the Sixty-sixth North Carolina Partisan Rangers.[60] Many men in this new company had been members of the old Seventeenth North Carolina Infantry (First Organization) that had been captured during the early war and paroled to the home front. Since the Sixty-

[58] Ibid.
[59] Benjamin B. Tatum, (no. 7138), Southern Claims.
[60] Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 528-529. John Elliott's group musterered as Co. E, Sixty-sixth North Carolina Partisan Rangers in April 1863, but like the other companies of this unit, it was never formally accepted as part of a regiment into the Confederate or North Carolina state service. It did not officially enter North Carolina service as part of a regiment until the Sixty-eighth North Carolina State Troops was accepted in January 1864.

sixth Partisan Rangers never reached the requisite number of companies to become a complete unit and no officer arrived to organize these men into a regiment, they proceeded to operate independently as an irregular band. While the earliest reference to John T. Elliott's command of a guerrilla group is in April 1863, it is likely that these were from Co. L, Seventeenth North Carolina (First Organization) were the men who had operated as irregulars in the region since the fall of Elizabeth City. By the early days of 1863, Elliott's group of ruffians consistently threatened all those who dared express fidelity to the Union.[61]

Table 5: Pasquotank Guerrillas' Real Estate Value in 1860

Dollar Amount	Pro-Confederate Guerrilla
0-99	29 (70.7%)
100-499	3 (7.3%)
500-999	3 (7.3%)
1000-2,499	3 (7.3%)
2,500-4,999	2 (4.9%)
5,000-9,999	1 (2.4%)
Over 10,000	0 (0.0%)
Total Property Value	18,175
Average Per Citizen	433 (No. in sample 41)

[61] See Benjamin B. Tatum, (no. 7138), Southern Claims. Also, see Jordan, Jr. ed, *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. VI, Infantry*, 192-195.

Table 6: Pasquotank Guerrillas' Personal Property Value in 1860

Dollar Amount	Pro-Confederate Guerrilla
0-99	**28 (68.3%)**
100-499	**4 (9.8%)**
500-999	**2 (4.9%)**
1000-2,499	**5 (12.2%)**
2,500-4,999	**1 (2.4%)**
5,000-9,999	**1 (2.4%)**
Over 10,000	**0 (0.0%)**
Total Property Value	**22,477**
Average Per Citizen	**535 (No. in sample 41)**

Table 7: Pasquotank Guerrillas' Slave Ownership in 1860

No. of Slaves	Pro-Confederate Guerrilla
1-4	**3 (7.0%)**
5-9	**2 (4.9%)**
10-14	**0 (0.0%)**
15-19	**0 (0.0%)**
20-24	**0 (0.0%)**
25-29	**0 (0.0%)**
30-34	**0 (0.0%)**
35-39	**0 (0.0%)**
40-44	**0 (0.0%)**
45-49	**0 (0.0%)**
Over 50	**0 (0.0%)**
Total No. of Slaveholders	**5 (0.0%)**
Total No. of Slaves Owned in Group	**17 (No. in sample 41)**

Table 8: Pasquotank Guerrillas' Occupations in 1860

Occupation	Pro-Confederate Guerrilla
Attorney at Law	0 (0.0%)
Clerk	3 (7.0%)
Artist	0 (0.0%)
Sail Maker	0 (0.0%)
Constable	0 (0.0%)
Bar Keeper	0 (0.0%)
Teacher	0 (0.0%)
Stage Driver	1 (2.4%)
Farmer	13 (32.0%)
Mariner	5 (12.2%)
Painter	1 (2.4%)
Farm Hand	7 (17.0%)
Carpenter	1 (2.4%)
Hotel Keeper	1 (2.4%)
Horse Trader	1 (2.4%)
Jeweler	1 (2.4%)
Merchant	1 (2.4%)
Doctor	0 (0.0%)
Speculator	0 (0.0%)
Blacksmith	0 (0.0%)
Baker	0 (0.0%)
Cabinet Maker	0 (0.0%)
Under age 17 and no occupation listed	7 (17.0%) (11 under age of 17 in sample, but 4 reported working in 1860)
Total	41

Elliott's men provide another window into the makeup of the Confederate community of Pasquotank. These men owned little real or personal property in 1860 and their average age was only twenty-five during that year. Eleven of the men serving in this guerrilla band were under the age of seventeen in 1860, the youngest being twelve years old in the final year before the war. Those who were old enough to have an occupation in that year were almost all small farmers who owned no slaves.[62]

Although not as shocking as being threatened with physical violence by Elliott's guerrilla band, property confiscation was also disconcerting for Union loyalists. During the hostilities, several Pasquotank residents overheard a frustrated Percival D. Sikes declare "that the secessionists brought on the war--that they were fighting for their negroes and damn them they might fight it out," but that "he would never help them." On at least one occasion, Confederates in the area had threatened to torch Sikes' vessel the *James Norcum* because of his political opinions. Confederates never succeeded in destroying the boat, but Sikes lost the ship anyway. Despite his pro-Union sentiments, his vessel was pressed into thirty-six months of uncompensated wartime service by the United States government.[63]

Another local man who lost property to the Union army was a free black farmer named Isaac Griffin. Griffin complained that in April 1863 his only horse had

[62] Using John T. Elliot's irregulars as an indicator of Confederate economic background, a class alliance emerges between poor and rich Confederate loyalists in the community. Elliot's company of guerrillas consisted of ninety-one men who served at various points throughout the war; forty-one of those were positively identified in the 1860 population census of Pasquotank County. The author's database on Elliott's command was compiled from *Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC; E.A. Wild Papers, SHC, and Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry.*

[63] Percival D. Sikes, (no. 21,050), Southern Claims.

been impressed by soldiers from the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry while they were camped about five miles from his Rosedale, Pasquotank County home.[64]

Around the time Isaac Griffin's horse became a fine Yankee cavalry mount, rumors of a major Confederate military force moving into the region reached the post at Elizabeth City. As a way of protecting the spring planting in the eastern counties of the state, General Robert E. Lee ordered general D.H. Hill to move his corps from the North Carolina interior toward Goldsboro in eastern Wayne County.[65] In the face of major Confederate military maneuvers in the eastern section of the state, Federal forces abandoned Elizabeth City on 18 April. But not even their evacuation could proceed without some response from the guerrillas. As they sailed out of the harbor at Elizabeth and down the coast of the county, the "Country [was] full of guerrillas," and their gunboats had to shell the banks of the river to keep them at bay.[66]

Even with the evacuation of the town, Union naval power continued to dominate the Albemarle Sound and the inland waterways. This vulnerability frustrated Southern administrators in North Carolina; their state had contributed more manpower than any other to the Confederate cause, yet they could not find an army to protect their own coast. The vulnerability of the whole northeastern region of the state to Federal soldiers and gunboats had become a clear political problem for Confederate authorities in Raleigh. This region, although under guerrilla control when Union soldiers left on their ships or stayed in their Elizabeth City quarters, was at all times open to the return of Federal soldiers and their seizure of the entire territory. This made enforcing Confederate loyalty increasingly difficult, especially given the violence and local chaos that pro-Southern

[64] Isaac Griffin, (no. 20,625), Southern Claims.
[65] Durrill, 173-174.
[66] John Peck Report, 20 April 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 639-640.

irregulars propagated. Despite the presence of Union troops in Elizabeth City for sporadic, short periods of time, Pasquotank and the surrounding counties remained an important supplier of fresh meat and corn for the Confederate army. Raleigh officials wanted to protect this supply for future campaigns. But, little could be done by the manpower strapped Southern army to indefinitely protect this remote, easily exploited and not absolutely vital section of the Confederacy.[67]

By the early months of 1863, Confederate officials in Raleigh were struggling with the problem of the northeastern counties. They remained one of the few areas of the South with a large, previously untapped pool of manpower and fertile soil capable of producing an abundance of much needed supplies. According to one Union commander who visited Pasquotank County in 1863: "There is at this moment a larger proportion of able-bodied whites [in this region], than in any other part of the South."[68] Many of the local men from Pasquotank who had left the region in 1861 to enlist in the Southern army were now deserting to the home front and evading the April 1862 Confederate Conscription Act by joining local guerrilla bands.[69] Some of the white men, who were never supporters of the Confederate war effort, simply took to the woods when conscription officers came around.[70] But throughout late 1862 and early 1863, the issue of Confederate conscription emerged as a major difficulty for Southern authorities in both Raleigh and Richmond. They were in need of more soldiers, but they could not protect the families of the available men on the North Carolina coast.

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[67] Zebulon Vance to Matt Ransom, 16 October 1863 in Mobley ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 301.
[68] E.A. Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Edward Augustus Wild Papers, SHC.
[69] Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 528-534. Some of the men in the Sixty-eighth North Carolina were deserters from other units who joined the guerrilla unit on the home front.
[70] For Unionists and Union soldiers discussing hiding in the woods, see Josiah Simmons, (no. 9560), Southern Claims, and E.C. Sanders Report, 1 May 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 259-260.

Conscription and the vulnerability of the region to Federal invasion, however, were not the only issues that officials were contending with in their struggle to get more manpower out of the northeastern district. Following President Lincoln's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and allow black troops to enter the Union military, slaveholders along the Albemarle grew restless. On 5 February 1863 after hearing of efforts to recruit black soldiers in Elizabeth City, Brigadier General James Johnston Pettigrew wrote to North Carolina Governor Zebulon Baird Vance about the growing racial fears of the Confederate citizens in northeastern North Carolina. Pettigrew, a graduate of the University of North Carolina and a Tyrell County native, stressed that "the Yankees seem to have selected this State and Louisiana for the practical experiment of arming the negroes in the midst of the white population." "Now that the Yankees have openly declared the reign of terror," Pettigrew worried, "I fear more of our people, will succumb to fear and be as dangerous to us, as though they were regular traitors." He ominously asserted that "from all appearances the 'black flag' is imma[nent]."[71] For Pettigrew, one of the largest slaveholders in eastern North Carolina, the black flag meant that social chaos and merciless violence would follow the enlistment of black soldiers.

One of the northeastern Carolina families Pettigrew worried about was Richard Benbury Creecy's. Creecy, whose sympathies were with his "guerrilla friends" during the conflict, also used slave labor on his plantation.[72] Although he did not serve during

[71] James Johnston Pettigrew to Zebulon B. Vance, 5 February 1863 in Mobley ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 47-49.

[72] Creecy, *Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook*, Vol. 1, 79. For reference to slave ownership and vacationing on Nags Head, see Creecy Family Papers, SHC, 31 August 1861, 9 October 1861, 6 May 1862, and 14 April 1863. Creecy's papers discuss slaves on his property, but he is absent from the 1860 slave census. It is possible that he was vacationing at Nags Head during the summer months (as his family normally did) when the census enumerator recorded the slaveholdings. It is more likely that the slaves on Creecy's property were not owned by him but by his wife's father, Edmund Perkins. Perkins owned 44 slaves in 1860 and is mentioned in the family papers. Perkins may have also been the owner of Cloverdale.

the war in any military unit, he was, as master of Cloverdale plantation fourteen miles from Elizabeth City. The uncertainty of slave control in 1862 and 1863 and the frequent presence of Union soldiers near his farm vexed the planter. Creecy's wife Mary openly worried in correspondence with their daughter Elizabeth that their slaves might at any moment run away to the enemy. In one letter, she told their daughter that "everything is sad and desolate in this country, every body is losing all of their servants nearly some have lost all, Mr. Joseph Poole has lost thirty two, Mr. Mark Sawyer all that he had, and Mr. Munden 19 and your Grand Pa eleven. The Yankees go and take them at night. There is great distress throughout the country."[73] But in another letter, Mary assured Elizabeth of Richard Creecy's own steadfast commitment to the Confederate cause. Despite regular visits by Union troops, she avowed that Richard Creecy had "no idea of taking the oath," referring to the loyalty oath which Union troops compelled some Southerners to take to prevent seizure of property.[74]

With home front racial tension, Confederate manpower shortages, and supply troubles coming to a head in Pasquotank County and the surrounding region, Governor Vance knew he had to find a solution for the problem of northeastern Carolina. His solution was to organize the loose and undisciplined bands of partisans forming in the six

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See, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Slave Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC, National Archives publication, Microfilm No. 653, Roll No. 925.

[73] Creecy Family Papers, SHC, 6 May 1862.

[74] Creecy Family Papers, SHC, 17 March 1864(?). Also, see Creecy Family Papers, SHC, 25 February or March 1863. One of these regular visits came in either February or March of 1863 when ten black soldiers visited the property. About this visit R.B. Creecy's wife stated: "We have had very bad times ever since Cox was killed. Great many armed negroes have been passing our home every two or three days and last Wednesday 25th 10 armed negroes came here without any white man and took Louisea (probably a horse) and an ax and some other things. They did not come in the house but came to the …and I think would have come in but your Pa and some other gentlemen were standing on the steps and [wou]ld not get away. O I am so thankful you were not home, but General Palmer came up Thursday and took all arms from the negroes and carried away about fifty… hope to have a better order of things. If you wish to return home Eddie (her brother) must bring you." After penning this letter, Creecy's wife wrote at the bottom of it "burn this up."

northeastern counties. In early 1863, as a way of protecting this remote region from Union invasions, Vance approved a policy that would transform the then organizing Sixty-sixth North Carolina Partisan Ranger unit into a tightly controlled and formally recognized group of state troops.[75] Before this point, the armed men in the region operated loosely and individually as companies with no regimental commander. Vance hoped that the white men of the region would allow themselves to be organized into a regiment or battalion and respond to his authority. This would give him a way of keeping an active Confederate force in the northeastern counties, protecting loyal citizens, growing crops and fighting the Yankees, all in a place where Rebel armies desired supplies. Governor Vance wanted to reassure local Confederates that their new Southern government had not abandoned them to the black soldiers of the Union army. Having devised a solution, all Vance needed was a local man of respectability to organize and lead the guerrillas as an effective Confederate unit.

Vance ordered his aid David Barnes to contact John Pool, then residing in nearby Bertie County, to ask him to organize the northeastern Carolina guerrillas. In a letter written in early March, Barnes offered Pool the command of all of the partisan units organizing east of the Chowan River.[76] Pool, however, declined the offer, believing that "The Rangers are of service to the people east of the Chowan, as a sort of police force, & ought to be kept there for that purpose. But they can do nothing for the Confederacy." On the other hand, Pool suggested: "The Rangers will succeed in limiting the depredations & outrages of the few miserable 'Buffalos' who infest that section, by waylaying the roads & killing some of them, now & then." Pool, always the consummate

[75] Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 509.
[76] David Barnes to John Pool, 12 March 1863 in Mobley ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 87-88.

moderate, continued by offering that "no military enterprize, that would reflect credit on a commander, is possible. Large forces of the enemy, by land and water, completely environ & possess that whole section of the country." He further worried that the guerrillas "would sooner disband and go home--leaving the commander to be held responsible for calling down upon the people a raid which could do nothing to repel or punish." Two weeks later, Pool forwarded to Governor Vance the name of James W. Hinton as a man who had the local respect, experience and wherewithal to organize and command the irregulars. Hinton, who was an established attorney from Pasquotank that Pool knew from his own days as a lawyer in Elizabeth City, probably seemed like a logical choice for bringing discipline to the guerrillas. Not long after Pool's endorsement, Hinton received permission to organize a regiment of infantry from the partisan soldiers operating in the region.[77]

Pool, whose family members in Elizabeth City were among the most prominent Unionists, had managed to side step the issue of his own loyalty by suggesting someone else for the leadership of the irregular forces. By doing so, he removed himself from the debate about guerrillas and the rampant disloyalty to the Confederacy in the region. He referred to the "few miserable 'Buffalos'" who infest that section," but it is more than likely he was referring not to Unionists generally but specifically to North Carolinian Union soldiers.[78] Even though Pool at one point in his letter referred to Union soldiers as "the enemy," and his response to Vance was worded vaguely enough to be construed as allegiance to the Confederacy, it is difficult to determine whether in the early months of 1863 the pragmatic Pool had actually thrown off his prewar centrist Unionism for strict

[77] John Pool to David Barnes, 28 March 1863 in Mobley ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 101-102.
[78] Ibid.

obedience to Confederate authority. This seems doubtful; he did enough to be left alone by the Southern government and secure his own place in local politics. Although a slaveholder and avidly opposed to black equality, Pool probably was no more than a cooperationist with the Confederate regime, a man who wanted to ride out a difficult period for Southern moderates. Within a year, he would support the peace candidate William Holden for governor. In 1864, he was elected to the state senate and became the principal champion of the peace movement in that body.[79]

Beginning in the late spring of 1863 and continuing into the summer and fall, Union forces undertook a sporadic operation of raids and counter-guerrilla operations along the shores of the Albemarle. While keeping a small force in nearby Camden County, they made several efforts to secure the families of men who had joined the Union army while recruiting was underway at Elizabeth City. Some of these family members were brought out of the county. In May of 1863, guerrillas seized control of most of rural Pasquotank and captured two Union vessels and their crew in the nearby Currituck Canal, one of the many waterways used for commerce in the area.[80] The Union army responded to these irregular operations with four separate raids over the next several months designed to disrupt Col. Hinton's organizational efforts and capture or kill men from John

[79] John Pool's loyalty throughout the war appears to be that of a pragmatic cooperationist. In 1862, Pool wrote letters that can easily be judged as loyal to North Carolina or as a cooperationist with Confederacy. Nevertheless, his chief concerns were local matters at the county level, principally alleviating the suffering of those poorer residents that suffered from the flight of planters to the upcountry. Above all, Pool seemed committed to preserving local stability, including the system of slavery. In 1864, however, he was a principal backer of the peace candidate for Governor, William Holden. After the war, Pool became a Republican and was elected to the United States Senate. Unfortunately, there are few extant papers remaining from Pool's political career that can shed light on Pool's loyalty. For a letter of Pool's that can be taken as cooperationist, see John Pool, 18 September 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 745-748. The editors of the Zebulon Vance papers describe Pool as a "wartime Unionist." See, Mobley ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 88. But, for a nuanced assessment of Pool's loyalty, see Allen W. Trelease, "Pool, John," *American National Biography Online* Feb. 2000 http://www.anb.org/articles/04/04-00800.html (9 June 2004).

[80] E.C. Sanders Report, 1 May 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 259-260.

T. Elliott's guerrilla band and the other companies of irregulars in the district.[81] In May, June, August and October, Union forces visited Pasquotank and Elizabeth City, but all of these raids and expeditions met with only limited success, killing or capturing a few local partisans in each raid but never ending the threat posed by the any of the guerrilla groups.[82]

The expedition Union forces launched in June came as a result of a prisoner escape from a Union transport vessel, the *Maple Leaf*, which was overtaken by Confederate prisoners and guided to the shores off of Currituck County during that month. The Southern officers on board the ship then made their way into the Confederate interior via Pasquotank County. Union soldiers traversed Currituck, Camden and Pasquotank in search of these men. Unfortunately for the Union soldiers, this expedition to recapture the Confederate prisoners from the *Maple Leaf* ended in failure. Once the expedition arrived in Elizabeth City, the Union troops learned that the Confederates had escaped across the Chowan River with the aid of Pasquotank's Confederate sympathizers, probably members of the guerrilla forces.[83]

One soldier who was part of that pursuit of Confederate escapees described the ambivalence and ambiguity of loyalty in the Pasquotank no man's land. When asked to state their loyalty many citizens in the community say "they ain't go no interest no how in the war. They don't assist no side, and only want to be let alone to take care of their

[81] For evidence and discussion of other guerrilla companies in the region, see Captured Muster Rolls of "N.C. Defenders" and 28 December 1863 Report, Edward Augustus Wild Papers, SHC.
[82] W. Dewees Roberts, 17 May 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 18, 356; B.F. Onderdonk Report, 20 August 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 1, 70-71; John Peck Report, 12 October 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 301. Also, see Benjamin B. Tatum, (no. 7138), Southern Claims.
[83] For a complete discussion of the events surrounding the June 1863 escape, see Jerry V. Witt, *Escape from the Maple Leaf* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1993); Michael Corcoran Report, 18 June 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 27, pt. 3, 207; John. Peck Report, 8 June 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 27, pt. 2, 786.

farms." As the violence continued in the county, the experience of this frustrated Union soldier would become a pattern.[84]

Union counter-guerrilla operations only complicated the difficult duty facing Confederate Colonel James W. Hinton back in his home county. In 1860, Hinton was a successful attorney; at thirty-three years of age he was also one of the wealthiest men in Pasquotank. In the final census before the war, he owned $24,350 worth of real estate and personal property valued at $7600. His personal property in 1860 included five slaves. Hinton began the war as an officer in the Eighth North Carolina Infantry, but in the summer of 1863, he returned from service in an infantry regiment to organize and command troops near his home.[85]

In July of 1863, Hinton arrived in the northeastern counties with command of what was now tentatively the Sixty-sixth North Carolina State Troops, the government having changed the designation of the Sixty-sixth Partisan Rangers that had never formally organized as a regiment. For the next several months Hinton futilely struggled to command the respect of the local independent companies in the northeastern region, enforce conscription, and attempt to organize the irregulars into a Confederate infantry regiment.[86]

On 24 October 1863, Colonel Hinton wrote to Governor Vance about his difficulty in securing partisan manpower by conscription. "The almost total loss of slave labor from that section," Hinton asserted, "imposes upon nearly every man of family the

[84] Union Surgeon "Bradney," account of pursuit of eighty escaped Confederate officers, 28 June 1863, Virginia State Library, Richmond, VA cited in Kirby, 186-187.
[85] *Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC; Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 527 ; and *Pasquotank Historical Society Yearbook*, Vol. 1, 70-71.
[86] Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 509.

necessity of laboring daily for their support." Hinton's comment here was not entirely truthful. Although some slaves had escaped bondage during the first two years of war, a large number of black residents both slave and free remained in Pasquotank County through late 1863. It is impossible to gauge how many remained; perhaps as many as 2500 blacks continued to labor in the county as of December 1863.[87] Hinton further complained in his letter that "there are a large number of young [white] men who do not labor at all, and who have no earthly excuse for being out of the service." He qualified his assessment of the regional situation by stating that "in Chowan I met with no difficulty; but… in Pasquotank...am inclined to the opinion…that but few will respond to the call."[88]

In the fall of 1863, the Confederate government in Richmond and state officials in Raleigh wrestled with how to get the uncooperative white men from Pasquotank County

[87] For a discussion of the number of blacks in the region as of December 1863, see Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, E. A. Wild Papers, SHC. Hinton's assessment of the labor situation in the region was probably somewhat exaggerated. Doubtless many "able-bodied" blacks had freed themselves by mid-1863. But, Edward Wild estimated 2500 blacks were freed during his mission in December 1863. Although some of the slaves that Wild escorted from the county probably came from Currituck and Camden counties, the blacks remaining in Pasquotank were the bulk of the group secured by General Wild since he spent the majority of his three week expedition in this county. Out of a pre-war population of roughly 4500 (slave and free blacks) in Pasquotank this number would have meant that more than half remained in the county when Wild came through. Wild mentioned a large number of fields planted in the county this suggests the continued presence of a large laboring black population. It is unlikely, however, that Wild was familiar enough with the history of the county to realize that many in his group of "2500 Negroes released and migrated" may have already been legally free but had not left the community. Some of the 2500 therefore were likely freed people, how many it is impossible to ascertain. Regardless, it is unlikely that all of blacks had fled the region by the time of Hinton's October 1863 letter as he suggested.

[88] J.W. Hinton to Zebulon B. Vance, 24 October 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 4, Vol. 2, 906-907. The unit Governor Vance approved and Hinton was selected to lead was slated as the Sixty-sixth Regiment of North Carolina State Troops (re-designated in July 1863 from a Partisan Ranger unit to an Infantry regiment), but it was not formally commissioned into Confederate service until January of 1864 under the designation Sixty-eighth North Carolina State Troops. Two other units finished organization before the Sixty-eighth met all requirements for state commission. In this work, the guerrillas, when referred to by a unit designation, are called the Sixty-eighth North Carolina. This was their final unit designation when mustered into the Confederate service. Some sources identify them as the Sixty-sixth. The unit that officially mustered into Confederate service as the Sixty-sixth North Carolina Infantry enrolled at Kinston and served in the region around Lenoir County. See, Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 509-526.

under Southern military control or into the Confederate ranks.[89] In an urgent letter to Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon late in October about the problems in Pasquotank, Vance wrote that "conscription...has operated very well except in the counties east of the Chowan River; there they have lost all their negroes." Furthermore, "They are cut off by gun-boats from aid or communication with the State, and are exposed to almost weekly raids from the enemy, which, from the nature of the country, it is impossible to resist."[90] Seddon's response acceded to the "embarrassing question" of the northeastern counties, while not "being in the actual occupancy of the enemy are at all times open to their control."[91] While they realized the state of affairs in Pasquotank and the neighboring counties, Seddon and Vance could do little but agree that conscription of white males with families should be suspended in the region. In late November, Seddon and Vance gave Colonel Hinton permission to excuse all white men of military age, if a non-military age male was not available to do the work of supporting their family.[92] Vance and Seddon made no other exemptions in their correspondence about the region.

Even with leniency on the conscription issue, James W. Hinton faced organizational troubles. The newly minted colonel had to impress upon the various local pro-Confederate guerrilla leaders that *he* was their new commander. He also had to persuade the local community that he was now in control of the situation. When Colonel Hinton arrived in July 1863 with orders for the guerrillas to meet, organize into a new regiment of infantry, and begin drill, he met with resistance. Only five of at least eight

[89] For another look at draft evasion on a regional level in Georgia, see David Carlson, "The 'Loanly Runagee': Draft Evaders in Confederate South Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2000): 589-615.
[90] Zebulon Vance to James Seddon, 26 October 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 4, Vol. 2, 906.
[91] James Seddon to Zebulon B. Vance, 3 November 1863 in Mobley ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 327.
[92] Zebulon B. Vance to James W. Hinton, 24 November 1863, *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 326-327.

separate irregular companies in the six-county region responded, and these companies only followed Hinton's direction when it suited their needs.[93] Hinton faced a difficult task, even without knowing that the Union army was preparing to send its largest expedition yet into the county. Hinton's efforts were constantly hampered by the independent structure and mentality of the guerrilla forces. These men, some of whom had been irregulars for a year by October 1863, were happy with their home front duties and did not want to take the chance of becoming a line infantry regiment that could be removed from northeastern Carolina and the relative safety of neighborhood swamps.

Since the fall of Elizabeth City to Union forces in February 1862, the guerrillas of Pasquotank had exacted a heavy toll on the citizens of the county. Partisan forces in other regions of the Confederacy were usually weaker in number than the Union volunteers facing them, and therefore, could rarely do more than slow the advance of the blue troops. But the environment of the Albemarle enabled the guerrilla companies of this region to hide and attack from unexposed positions with much greater effect than in more open country.

What made guerrilla warfare during the Civil War so dangerous to any community was that it was an internal menace. The community could be held hostage collectively by a minority of its own members. The presence of these partisans was a threat to both Confederate and Unionist sympathizers in Pasquotank since the irregulars in the county did not hesitate to live off of the citizens as both individuals and as a

[93] Edward A. Wild Official Report, 28 December 1863, E. A. Wild Papers, SHC. Wild mentions seven different companies of guerrillas that he faced by name of the commander in his official report. Of these units mentioned by Wild, only four mustered into service in the Sixty-eighth North Carolina under Hinton's command in January 1864. They included: John T. Elliott's (Pasquotank), Cyrus W. Grandy's (Currituck), Willis B. Sanderlin's (Camden), Caleb Walston's (Camden and Currituck). Richard Keogh's (Chowan) Company also mustered into the Sixty-eighth, but it was not mentioned by Wild as participating in any of the engagements he fought with irregulars. Wild also mentions the companies of Captains Hughes, Etheridge and Coffey; none of these units ever mustered into Confederate service.

group.[94] Not even the Confederate citizens could completely control the pro-Southern guerrillas who operated in their midst. Their activity brought the wrath of Yankee troops to their farms without any recourse. In Pasquotank, the harassment of Unionists became routine by mid-1863, and several among the Unionist community felt that fleeing the region or remaining silent were the only recourses to death at the hands of murderous irregulars.[95]

But, if neither Confederate authorities not local Southern sympathizers could control their own partisan forces, Union troops could do little more to protect the citizens of Pasquotank from the devious activities of these men. Between May and October 1863, four separate Federal raids sent to stop guerrilla maneuvers ended in ultimate frustration. Each succeeded in capturing a few of the partisans, but the irregular bands largely eluded Federal efforts and continued to recruit new men to their ranks. Neither could the Union raids succeed in stopping the flow of smuggled or confiscated supplies going into the Confederate interior.[96]

Despite remoteness from the great battles and campaigns of the war, the populace of Pasquotank County endured a great deal of discord from 1861 through 1863. The regional environment was well suited for defense by pro-Confederate guerrillas who could hide out in the swamps when Union soldiers came in large numbers to hunt for them. The northern fringe of the Dismal Swamp provided a perfect haven for Confederate draft evaders and guerrilla forces during the period following the adoption of the Confederate Conscription Act. Likewise, the Federal raids in this region, aided by the

[94] Ibid.
[95] For discussion of the need to remain silent among Unionists, see Josiah Simmons, (no. 9560), Southern Claims. Also, see Edward A. Wild Official Report, 28 December 1863, E. A. Wild Papers, SHC.
[96] Edward A. Wild Official Report, 28 December 1863, E. A. Wild Papers, SHC.

United States Navy, would not have been possible without the open waterways and easy access to land from the Albemarle Sound. Environment was clearly a force putting this community at risk.

By December of 1863, the Civil War in Pasquotank County had become a contest for power over a local community of divided allegiances. The civilian population of this North Carolina locality, Unionist and Confederate alike, were at the mercy of two seemingly inexorable and uncontrollable forces, determined Union soldiers and pro-Confederate guerrillas. As this community struggled to retain the social and racial order of its prewar society, a wild Union general was about to bring it to its knees.

CHAPTER TWO

Toward "A More Rigorous Style of Warfare": Edward Wild's Raid and the Limits of a Pragmatic Union Military Policy

Edward Augustus Wild was an unorthodox Union general. Born in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1825 of sturdy abolitionist stock, Wild spent his formative years in Massachusetts being educated first at Harvard and then as a physician at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. The future Union commander left for study and adventure in Europe in 1848 and again in 1855. While on his second trip abroad, he served as both surgeon and soldier of fortune in the armies of the Turkish sultan during the Crimean War. When he returned to the United States after his travels, Wild joined a militia unit in Brookline. When Civil War came, Edward Wild was a successful physician and one of Massachusetts' first volunteer officers.[1]

Wild's early Civil War service was distinguished but harrowing; he nearly lost his life on two different battlefields, one in Virginia, the other in Maryland. After a bullet crippled his right hand during the battle of Fair Oaks in June 1862, Wild went home to convalesce. He returned to the army quickly, only to suffer the loss of his left arm at the battle of South Mountain in September 1862. Nevertheless, Wild's zealous belief in the cause of abolition kept him committed to the cause of preserving the United States government and ready to return to the war when his body mended. Wild worked his way

[1] For biographical background on Edward Wild, see Bradford Kingman, *Memoir of Gen. Edward Augustus Wild* (Boston: Privately Printed, 1895); Edward A. Longacre, "Brave Radical Wild: The Contentious Career of Brigadier General Edward A. Wild," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 19, no. 3, (1980): 8-19; Casstevens, *Edward Augustus Wild and the African Brigade in the American Civil War*, 1-35.

through the ranks quickly, first as a captain in the First Massachusetts Infantry and later, in August 1862 as the colonel of his own regiment, the Thirty-fifth Massachusetts. Following his wounding at South Mountain, Wild was promoted to brigadier general in April 1863. His dedication to racial equality and new authority led him to recruit one of the first all African American combat units of the war in early 1863. This green unit, with a freshly minted brigadier general as its leader, would be referred to in official correspondence as "Wild's African Brigade."[2] By late 1863, Wild's distinguished combat record and his racial beliefs won him a spot serving under Union Major General Benjamin Butler, who was then in command of the Norfolk, Virginia garrison.

In December 1863, the passionate General Wild led his 1800 man force of black soldiers, recruited from towns in Ohio, Massachusetts and North Carolina, in an expedition to the coast of the Old North State.[3] Some of Wild's black soldiers had even been slaves at one point in Pasquotank but had made their way to Union lines at Roanoke Island, Plymouth or New Berne by this point in the war and were recruited into combat units. Even with these early war runaways, the northeastern region of North Carolina was still populated with a large number of slaves that could easily be liberated if a Union commander was inclined to press the issue.[4] If freed, this loss of labor might deny Confederate forces needed supplies from this wealthy agricultural district. Furthermore, once emancipated by their brethren in arms, Pasquotank's remaining male slaves might

[2] Richard Reid, "Raising the African Brigade: Early Black Recruitment in Civil War North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 70 (1993): 266-301.
[3] Patricia C. Click, *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001), 45-46. General Wild recruited the first company of colored volunteers from Roanoke Island in mid-June 1863. For a discussion of the return of these black soldiers to Pasquotank and other coastal counties after the war, see Richard Reid, "USCT Veterans in Post-Civil War North Carolina" in Smith, 391-421.
[4] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, E. A. Wild Papers, SHC. General Wild estimated that he freed roughly 2500 black people during his raid meaning that a large number of blacks remained in the county as of December 1863.

be favorably disposed to joining the ranks of Wild's new command. Northeastern Carolina also became a target for Wild and his superior General Butler because of the growing pro-Confederate guerrilla resistance in the counties along the northern side of the Albemarle Sound. These partisan soldiers were daily harassing the minority Unionist community, especially those in Elizabeth City. Wild hoped that a mission to Pasquotank and surrounding counties would accomplish several goals: free the slaves in the region, convince the Unionists of their safety, and punish the Confederate guerrillas who threatened social stability in this section of the state. He also hoped to stop blockade running and confiscate community property, specifically surplus crops and livestock that might otherwise fall into the hands of Confederate commissary officers. With these objectives in mind, Wild secretly prepared in the late days of November 1863 to dash into the hostile no man's land of Pasquotank County, North Carolina.

Wild started his troops from their bases in Virginia on December 5. His men left in two columns. The first, which he led himself, left from Norfolk and included the Fifth U.S. Colored Troops, one hundred men from the First North Carolina Colored Volunteers, and the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts.[5] The other column left from Portsmouth and consisted of the First U.S. Colored Troops and the Second North Carolina Colored Volunteers.[6] During the early days of December 1863, Wild and his "sable braves"

[5] For more on the formation and history of these units, see Jonathan William Horstman, *The African American's Civil War: A History of the First North Carolina Colored Volunteers* (MA Thesis: Western North Carolina University, 1994); Versalle Freddrick Washington, *Eagles on Their Buttons: Fifth Regiment of Infantry, United States Colored Troops in the American Civil War* (PhD Dissertation: Ohio State University, 1995). The First and Second North Carolina Colored Volunteers became the Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth United States Colored Troops in 1864. Also, see Richard Reid, "USCT Veterans in Post-Civil War North Carolina" in Smith, 391-421; James Kenneth Bryant II, "'A Model Black Regiment': The 36th Colored Infantry in the Civil War" (MA Thesis: Univ. of Vermont, 1996); Shana Renee Hutchins, "'Just Learning to Be Men': A History of the 35th United States Colored Troops, 1863-1866" (MA Thesis: North Carolina State University, 1999).

[6] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, E. A. Wild Papers, SHC.

meandered their way south, past the canals and through the forests of southern Virginia, across the state line, and into the heart of northeastern North Carolina. As they entered the Albemarle region, the black soldiers skirted swamps on narrow footpaths and sauntered confidently by large plantations. A *New York Times* correspondent known only as Tewksbury attached himself to Wild's command and described his journey into this difficult country. "The [region's] inhabitants being almost exclusively 'secesh,' the colored boys were allowed to forage at will along the road," the reporter wrote.[7] General Wild also commented that during the early days of the raid, "we were...obliged to live on the country for a few days; which we did judiciously, discriminating in favor of the worst rebels."[8]

Wild and his soldiers congregated at South Mills in Camden County just north of Pasquotank on 7 December. While at South Mills, Wild was reinforced by two companies of cavalry and a section of artillery from Norfolk. Of this group, both the Fifth and Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry companies had previously operated as a reconnaissance force in the northeastern region of North Carolina during the fall of 1863. There his men busied themselves with rebuilding a bridge across the Pasquotank River that had been destroyed earlier in the war. To do so, Wild ordered the home of a local guerrilla demolished. It is unclear how Wild knew for sure that an irregular lived at this Camden County residence. This was the first recorded building destroyed during Wild's expedition, but it would not be the last. Wild then crossed the river and started toward Elizabeth City.

[7] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.
[8] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.

When Wild arrived at Elizabeth City on December 10, he established a headquarters at the home of a local Unionist, Dr. William G. Pool, probably a relative of John Pool. "Three years ago it was a busy and beautiful little city, noted for the number of its stores and manufactories, the extent and variety of its trade, for its enterprise and the rapid increase of its population," wrote Tewksbury. But, he continued "Now most of the dwellings were deserted; the stores all closed; the streets overgrown with grass, its elegant edifices reduced to heaps of ruins by vandal Georgian troops; the doors of the bank standing wide open, and a sepulchral silence brooded over the place."[9]

Wild decided to determine the loyalty of the local citizens. No doubt, Wild had already heard about the minority Unionist population in the county seat, and with the help of the prominent Unionist Dr. Pool, he identified virtually every assertive Unionist that remained in the county. General Wild's list totaled fifty-three, nearly every one a head of household.[10] "After careful inquiry," Wild recorded, "I have been able to make out a list of genuine Union citizens of Elizabeth City and vicinity." He continued by describing the loyalty of the entire county.

> "We found the majority of people along our track to be reasonably neutral; that is to say, although sympathizing with the South, they were tired of the war, or weary of their own distresses and privations; harassed by the frequent alternation of masters, being plundered by both sides; or despondent of the ultimate success of the South; or convinced of the doom of slavery; or aware of the mischief arising from the presence of guerrillas in their midst."

With true New England skepticism, Wild further qualified his assessment of local loyalty: "or if really neutral, or sympathizing with the North, they were usually (and reasonably) afraid to speak their minds, on account of Guerrillas etc." The Union

[9] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.
[10] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC. Also, see author's compiled databases on Pasquotank citizens in Chapter One.

general, however, believed the true motivation for loyalty to one side or the other among most citizens in Pasquotank was property ownership. When the property of men was threatened by his occupation forces, Wild saw that he could recall their loyalty to the old flag of the Union.[11]

The earnest brigadier also began his principal task of freeing local bondsmen at Elizabeth City. Once Wild established a headquarters at the county seat, "slaves belonging to isolated plantations were constantly coming to headquarters and asking the General to protect them in the removal of their families."[12] Tewksbury described one incident where a member of Wild's brigade asked the general for permission to retrieve his son who was enslaved at the farm of his own former master. It is likely that Wild recruited this soldier on Roanoke Island among the free black colony. In response to his request, Wild sent the black soldier on that mission with a contingent of guards to ensure their protection. In the end, the man secured his son from bondage.[13]

As Wild and his soldiers set about the business of removing slaves from all of the local plantations and offering them safe passage to a Union colony for freedmen on Roanoke Island, his troops encountered stiff resistance from irregulars in the vicinity of Elizabeth City.[14] Since some of Wild's men had at one point been residents of Pasquotank themselves, whether free black or runaway slave, there was an added dimension to Wild's turning the racial order around. Not only was he putting black men

[11] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.
[12] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.
[13] Ibid.
[14] For an excellent analysis of the Roanoke Island Freedmen's colony and General Wild's involvement in it, see Click, 48-49, 218-223. The appendices of this work refer to some freedmen who were from Elizabeth City and moved to the Island during the period before Wild's northeastern Carolina raid. Wild recruited some of his black soldiers among these Elizabeth City free blacks that had fled to Roanoke Island. The presence of these free blacks in his force may have made Wild's task of determining loyalty easier during the December expedition.

over white, he was placing former slaves or black employees over those white men that had once owned or employed them. This point clearly disturbed the local guerrillas and must have been on their minds as they planned operations against Wild and his soldiers.

During one of Wild's engagements with the partisan forces, Captain John T. Elliott's Pasquotank guerrillas captured, Private Samuel Jordan of the Fifth United States Colored Troops. Fearing that Jordan would not be treated as a legitimate prisoner of war, but as a rebellious slave, Wild used an unusual, if not unprecedented method to ensure the protection of Pvt. Jordan's life.[15] He took two hostages, Elizabeth Weeks and Phoebe Munden, the wives of local irregulars then serving in Elliott's partisan band. Wild also captured twenty male citizens most of whom were later released after a hearing on their status, except eight men who were charged with "various offenses."[16]

The day after Jordan's capture, General Wild sent out a party to Hertford, the seat of neighboring Perquimans County, to break up the organizational camp of Colonel James W. Hinton. The expedition succeeded in destroying two guerrilla camps in lower Pasquotank County, but when the Union soldiers arrived at the banks of the Perquimans River, they found the bridges across the waterway destroyed and the channel un-fordable. They returned to Elizabeth City having captured at a local farm house only one suspected guerrilla, a farmer named Daniel Bright. [17]

Meanwhile, the guerrillas east and west of the Pasquotank River watched, scouted, and waited for evening to fall. "The Guerrillas pestered us," General Wild later

[15] For an explanation of the May 1863 Confederate Congressional policy on black soldiers and their white officers, see Cornish, 161-162; for examples of other hostage takings as response to guerrilla activity, see Ash, 66.
[16] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC. The women were taken on 12 and 13 December 1864 respectively; Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.
[17] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.

noted in his official report. "They crept upon our pickets at night, waylaid our expeditions, and our Cavalry scouts, firing upon us whenever they could." "Finding ordinary measures of little avail," a frustrated Wild "adopted a more rigorous style of warfare, burned their houses and barns, eat up their live stock, and took hostages from their families…we learned that [the guerrilla companies] grew disgusted with such unexpected treatment." No doubt, the seizure of two local women, twenty men, and the destruction of Confederate property also sent fear through the hearts of the pro-Confederate community in the county; the fact that all this was carried out by African American soldiers was impossible for the local Unionists or Confederates to ignore. [18]

Officers in the region, however, looked on with great frustration as Wild and his black troops accosted Pasquotank residents. During mid-December, two Confederate colonels in the northeastern counties, who were both perplexed with Wild's activities and afraid of the consequences to both men and supplies, sent off a flurry of correspondence to their regional commander, Major General George E. Pickett. Pickett, who had lost his position in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia following the debacle at Gettysburg, now commanded the Southern forces in all of eastern North Carolina.[19] On 14 December 1863, worried about his inability to hold Wild and the African Brigade at bay, Colonel Hinton, wrote to Pickett that "My little force-- about 500 strong-- are doing all they can to hold them in check, but cannot operate successfully against so large a force." Pleading with Pickett, Hinton asked, "Can you not, general, send a brigade to the relief of that community?" Fearing serious repercussions, Hinton warned that "If they are not Speedily dislodged, the Confederacy need not expect to get any more provisions from

[18] Ibid.
[19] For an excellent analysis of General Pickett's racial beliefs, see Gordon, *General George E. Pickett in Life and Legend*, 126-127.

that section of country, but it they are driven off, the quantity of pork and bacon that will come to the Confederacy from the east side of the Chowan will be truly incredible." [20]

The next day another dire message came from the Confederate forces near Pasquotank. Colonel Joel R. Griffin of the Sixty-second Georgia Cavalry/Partisan Rangers, who operated independently of Hinton in southern Virginia and northeastern Carolina, also sent General Pickett an urgent message. "Enemy, 1,500 strong, negroes and whites," Griffin wrote frantically. The black soldiers are "committing all kinds of excesses; insulting our ladies in the most tantalizing manner."[21]

As Pickett received word from both Griffin and Hinton, he grew deeply concerned about the further loss of resources from his theater and the continued embarrassment to his own reputation. He fired off a letter to the Confederate War Department suggesting that "we could send a cavalry expedition of our own down in such neighborhoods to collect and bring in the negroes...as every day loses so much valuable property to the Confederacy."[22] Pickett's comment about the continued presence of African Americans contradicts the October 1863 correspondence of James W. Hinton, who had claimed that the Confederates of this region had already lost most of their slaves.[23] Aggravated with the inability of his own forces to respond efficiently and effectively, Pickett charged that "Butler's plan, evidently, is to let loose his swarm of

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[20] James W. Hinton Report, 14 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 877

[21] Joel R. Griffin to George E. Pickett, 15 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 872-873. The Sixty-second Georgia Cavalry was also known as the Second Georgia Partisan Rangers and consisted of ten companies in 1863. Three of those companies were from North Carolina and seven from Georgia. In December of 1863, it had 408 effectives. Throughout 1863 this unit was assigned to the Department of North Carolina commanded by General George Pickett. Normally Partisan Ranger units did not operate outside the region from which they were recruited, but the Sixty-second Georgia spent much of its career beyond the Georgia boundaries. Since three companies of this unit are recruited later in North Carolina, it is probable that the unit left Georgia for northeastern Carolina on a recruitment expedition. For more on the Sixty-second Georgia, see Crute Jr., 115-116, and Stewart Sifakis, *Compendium of the Confederate Armies: South Carolina and Georgia* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1995), 151, 164-165.

[22] Joel R. Griffin to George E. Pickett, 15 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 872-873.

[23] J.W. Hinton to Zebulon B. Vance, 24 October 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 4, Vol. 2, 906-907.

blacks upon our ladies and defenceless families, plunder and devastate the country." He then openly threatened retaliatory execution in his War Department correspondence: "Against such a warfare there is but one resource--to hang at once every one captured belonging to the expedition, and afterward any one caught who belongs to Butler's department."[24] Writing the same day to his troops stationed in the Albemarle, Pickett reinforced his earlier statement with an unequivocal order: "Any one caught in the act (negroes or white men) of burning houses or maltreating women, must be hung on the spot, by my order."[25]

Pickett was not the only commander growing frustrated with the military situation in Pasquotank. General Wild was irritated with the incessant guerrilla attacks on his troops. On 17 December, Wild sent a dispatch to the guerrilla captain Elliott, who operated out of the Pasquotank swamps. In the letter Wild threatened that he held "in custody Mrs. Munden and Mrs. Weeks as hostages for the colored soldier taken by you. As he is treated so shall they be, even to hanging." Over the next several days, the aggravated Massachusetts brigadier would go beyond merely threatening the guerrillas with violence; he would use it to send a clear message about their inappropriate conduct.[26]

Later on the 17th, Wild busied himself with the proceedings "of a drum-head court-martial." At this hearing, he reviewed the status of the roughly twenty prisoners seized during his excursions to local farms and plantations. Most of these individuals

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[24] George Pickett to Samuel Cooper, 15 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 873. For a study of another hanging General Pickett ordered at Kinston, North Carolina in February 1864, see the essay by Lesley Gordon in Sutherland ed., *Guerrillas, Unionists and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*, 45-58.
[25] George Pickett to Joel R. Griffin, 15 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 872-873. Also, see Gordon, 126-127.
[26] E.A. Wild to John T. Elliott, 17 December 1863, E.A. Wild Papers, SHC.

Wild probably detained for aiding and abetting the guerrillas in the county. But, he believed that one of those captured, farmer Daniel Bright, was in fact a deserter from the Sixty-second Georgia Cavalry/Partisan Rangers, who returned to his home to join the Pasquotank guerrillas. Wild accused Bright of engaging in pillage and other illegal activity. During the "court-martial" General Wild acted as both judge and jury. Little else is known about the proceedings, except that he based his decisions largely on whether the accused could prove legal status as a combatant. The soldiers could do this by producing paperwork that stated that they were given a legal furlough from the Confederate army. At the proceedings, Phoebe Munden and Elizabeth Weeks were ordered detained and eight men were sent to jail in Norfolk. The men sent to Norfolk were probably the individuals Wild discussed in his report as soldiers at home who were granted official leave from their units.[27] The balance of the twenty prisoners was released without punishment and without any further discussion of their status. Perhaps these citizens were suspected of supporting the guerrillas, and after arraignment, Wild decided that they were not worth incarcerating.

Apparently, Daniel Bright could not produce proof of his own legitimacy as a soldier. Bright, unlike the other men, was charged with robbery and desertion. This may have been because Wild's men captured him in lower Pasquotank when they were on an expedition sent to Hertford. More than likely, Wild's soldiers seized Daniel Bright as a suspect when they were searching for the perpetrators who had destroyed the bridge over the Perquimans River. For General Wild, the facts of the case led him to pass a sentence

[27] According to Tewksbury the General sent eight men to Norfolk as prisoners. According to Wild he "took a number of prisoners, including six Confederate soldiers, provided with furloughs, some with a printed clause stipulating that they should provide themselves with horses before returning." These six were apparently among the eight sent to Norfolk. The status of the other two is unknown.

of execution. Bright, who was singled out from the eight other men sentenced to jail terms, was condemned to hang. Following the court-martial, Wild began the withdrawal of his troops from Elizabeth City, which they had occupied for seven days.

"About noon" on the following day, 18 December, Wild stopped on his march north from Elizabeth City and executed Bright. General Wild publicly displayed Bright's body at the small hamlet of Hinton's Crossroads (also known as Hintonsville on contemporary maps of the county) on the edge of the Dismal Swamp.[28] Wild's choice of where to execute Bright is telling. He left the body hanging prominently from the same beam where he was executed in an unfinished building along the public road. Wild exhibited the body at a crossroads close to the swamps of northern Pasquotank County, where many of the irregulars lived. It was also directly across the road from the dwellings of people that may have been supporting the swamp denizen irregulars. Wild obviously wanted to send a clear message to the partisans and the local community of Unionists and Confederates. Attached to Bright's dead body was a message, condemning the man for his guerrilla activities. The very body of Bright became the locus of education about who wielded power over the community.[29]

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[28] Confederate accounts refer to the site of Daniel Bright's execution as Hinton's Crossroads, see *Charleston Mercury*, 5 and 20 January 1864. Contemporary maps and the Tewksbury account refer to the site as Hintonsville. Tewksbury describes this place as having "a church and a single dwelling-house." Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.

[29] Foucault, 49, 47, 58. Foucault's masterful discussion of the public execution provides theoretical frame for my analysis of the community and its interaction with the body of the condemned. Executions were one method by which soldiers conveyed their argument about the legitimacy of their own status as regulars or irregulars. "The public execution," for Michel Foucault, "did not reestablish justice; it reactivated power." Through executions, soldiers attempted to legitimize their forms of violence as the only way, while also reasserting their influence over the community. In the public domain, specific forms of violence had another meaning beyond the overt justifications given by officers. The violent event became the instrument and locus of a conversation about power relationships in Pasquotank. It was also "a political ritual," an educative lesson in power for the occupied community. In the case of Daniel Bright and later Samuel Jordan, the symbols and messages of this lesson in power were the very bodies of the executed soldiers. In Foucault's terms, "The aim [of the execution] was to make an example, not only by making people aware

Wild's use of African Americans to guard the captured white wives of the guerrillas, who looked on helplessly as Bright swung in the wind, also sent a strong racial message to the few people living near Hinton's Crossroads. Those few individuals, who lived at the small hamlet bordering the swamp, must have carried the message of death back to Elizabeth City, only a few miles down the road. The presence of the newspaper correspondent Tewksbury at the execution ensured that the sensational events of Wild's raid would reach regional and national newspapers within a few days. By January 1864, all of the South would read about the hanging of the guerrilla Daniel Bright, from Milledgeville, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.[30]

After the gruesome public spectacle of violence, Wild divided his men into three different columns to strike at a broader area; he then marched into Camden and Currituck Counties. Once he left the forest and swamp around the tiny settlement of Hinton's Crossroads, the men headed into Camden. "At first, the country was poor, and the houses were mean," but by afternoon, Tewksbury described "spacious corn-fields on every side." Finally, he came upon an area of wealth and splendor. "In no portion of the South had I seen more magnificent plantations," he wrote of lower Camden.[31]

But, amidst all of the grandeur there was significant danger. As the men of the African Brigade marched toward Indiantown in Camden County on the afternoon of December 18, they were ambushed by three different companies of guerrillas. The following day Wild retaliated with fire. He burned every suspected guerrilla home within

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that the slightest offence was likely to be punished, but by arousing feelings of terror by the spectacle of power letting its anger fall upon the guilty person."

[30] See, Staunton, Virginia *Republican Vindicator,* 29 January 1864; Milledgeville, Georgia *Southern Recorder*, 19 January 1864; *Charleston Mercury*, 5 and 20 January 1864.

[31] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.

a four mile radius of Indiantown. He also detained Major D. Gregory, an elderly man in his seventies, who was also suspected of aiding the irregular forces. Gregory was seized as insurance since a second of General Wild's black soldiers had been captured.[32]

Like Pasquotank County, Wild found neighboring Camden and Currituck full of hostile irregular forces living in the deepest parts of the local swamps. The Union general also discovered that destroying the guerrilla menace could be time-consuming and difficult due to these environmental conditions. Wild stated that during one of the forays against irregulars he "drove them a long chase into their swamp, and after much trouble, struck their trail…a succession of single felled trunks leading in to their citadel. We filed in singly, burned their camp." Following another encounter, he wrote that "after burning the neighboring houses and giving them another chase, we…sent out Col. Draper with 170 to attack Captain Grandy's [Guerrilla] Camp, situated like the others in the center of the swamp…accessible only Single file over a pathway of felled trunks, from a third to a half mile long." After destroying this irregular fortress, Wild then sent his subordinate Colonel Alonzo Draper to Knott's Island where more slaves were in bondage and where another band of partisans, was reportedly operating. During Draper's brief independent excursion, he took another woman hostage, Nancy White, the daughter of a lieutenant in Coffey's company.[33]

On December 22, Wild again attempted to communicate with the guerrillas in the region. He sent a letter to partisan Captain Willis Sanderlin threatening retaliation for the

32 William N.H. Smith Report, 10-17 February 1864, *Official Records*, Ser.2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 1127-1129.
[33] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC. Nancy White like Phoebe Munden and Elizabeth Weeks would be detained and taken to Norfolk. White was released in mid-January 1864, but Munden and Weeks were still being held in late January while Butler reviewed the situation and negotiated with the Confederate government. See, Benjamin F. Butler to W.J. Munden and Pender Weeks, 26 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 877.

capture of a second black soldier from his command. Wild had singled out Major D. Gregory as his hostage because his name appeared on the muster roll of "N.C. Defenders" that Wild and his men seized at one of the guerrilla swamp hideouts. Wild also determined that Gregory's farm was a major supplier of corn for Willis Sanderlin's guerrillas.[34] Ultimately, he released Gregory, but the old man died not long after the experience. According to Confederate accounts, the black soldier for whom Gregory had been taken hostage later escaped; Samuel Jordan, the first USCT captured by the guerrillas, remained in their custody.[35] Edward Wild and his men had now been away from their base in Virginia for more than two weeks. On December 23 and 24, his men exhausted and foot sore, Wild started the troops back to Virginia, laden with confiscated goods and trailed by a wagon train of blacks, a group that probably included both former slaves and free blacks from Pasquotank and the surrounding counties.

Following the expedition, Wild summarized his raid's accomplishments: "We sent by water 9 loads [of former slaves] to Roanoke Island, and two to Norfolk, besides 4 long trains overland. The exact numbers it was impossible to count, as they were constantly coming and going," Nevertheless, Wild estimated "2500 Negroes released and migrated." "But few recruits were gained," Wild complained, "as the ablebodied negroes have had ample opportunities to escape heretofore, or have been run over into Dixie." Despite this assessment of recruitment, he estimated that between seventy and one hundred African American soldiers were enrolled from Pasquotank and the surrounding area.

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[34] Captured Muster Rolls of "N.C. Defenders" and 28 December 1863 Report, Edward Augustus Wild Papers, SHC. Also, see Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864. Tewksbury asserts that Gregory was taken at his own home for supporting guerrillas. Major D. Gregory was his proper name, not a military rank. His name is found on the captured list of "N.C. Defenders."

[35] Deposition of William J. Munden, 10 February 1864, *Official Records*, Ser.2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 1129-1130.

Of his counter-guerrilla operations, Wild was equally proud. “We burned 4 Guerrilla camps, took over 50 guns, 1 drum together with equipment, ammunition etc, burned over a dozen households, two distilleries etc, took a number of prisoners.” Neither did he shy away from discussing his use of hostage taking to coerce and deal with the guerrillas in his report. We took “four hostages for our men taken prisoner, 3 women and one old man, hanged one Guerrilla, captured 4 boats engaged in contraband trade, took many horses.” He finished his official account by thoroughly endorsing the performance of his black troops. “The men marched wonderfully--never grumbled, were watchful on picket, and always ready for a fight. They are most reliable soldiers.” [36]

Wild astutely discerned the nature of the guerrilla forces that he faced and attempted to gauge his response to them accordingly. His brief description of the resistance provides interesting background on the composition and operations of Confederate partisan forces. Wild asserted in his official report to General Benjamin Butler:

> “The organization of the guerrillas is loose and improper, and ought not to be recognized. Governor Vance gave commissions to the officers to raise their companies, ostensibly for State defense. They are entitled “North Carolina Defenders.” Each captain is his own mustering officer; musters men into the service of North Carolina, and the men are paid, or expect pay, from the State only. Governor Vance supplied them with excellent arms (new Enfields) and ammunition. There appears to be some person acting as commissary near each company, to keep a small stock of provisions in camp: but the bands do not scruple to live on the inhabitants, individually and collectively. The captain is allowed to encamp where he pleases, and to operate when and where he sees fit, his proceedings being as independent, arbitrary, and irresponsible as those of any chief of bandits. The men have never been obliged to report to anybody except the captain…They are virtually bandits, armed and hired by Governor Vance. They have not defended and cannot defend their State, nor any portion of it. They can only harass us by stealing, murdering, and burning; by stopping negroes from reaching us, and by driving them over the lines, and harass their own State by plundering, terrifying, and even murdering Union citizens. There

[36] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.

> are jealous disaffections among them--not only between the individuals of a company, but between one company and another--amounting to rancor. There are more than enough for one regiment of infantry between Hertford and the Atlantic…Of late, attempts have been made to bring them together into a regiment. They are called the Sixty-sixth [Sixty-eighth] North Carolina State Troops, and the different companies are lettered. Hinton to be colonel."[37]

Edward Wild also provided a detailed description of his activities in northeastern Carolina during December 1863. His account provides rare insight into the mind of a Civil War commander dealing with the intractable problem of guerrilla war. During his three-week occupation of the region, his troops tried, executed, and publicly displayed the corpse of a guerrilla. His men also burned the homes of other suspected irregulars, took hostage four family members and supporters of the irregulars, and ultimately, hauled off thousands of dollars in farm products, livestock and slave property that might have otherwise been used to support the Southern cause. Through his actions, Wild demonstrated the power of violence in communicating the will of the state to this rural community. For Wild and his command, violence became the most effective educational tool for a community filled with guerrillas. But violence was not the only form of power Wild wielded over Pasquotank.

Racial and mild sexual displays of power also became ways of communicating to both the Confederate, Unionist, and guerrilla members of the population about appropriate conduct. Wild's message to the guerrillas was clear: abandon your activities and join the regular Confederate service. In fact, during the raid Wild had even sent a message to Captain John T. Elliott clearly stating his feelings. "Guerrillas are to be treated as pirates, Wild wrote, and "you will never have rest until you

[37] Ibid.

renounce your present course or join the regular Confederate Army."[38] To the local community it was less explicit. Blacks saw his raid as an opportunity for freedom, and by the end of it, more than 2500 of an 1860 population of nearly 4500 (free and slave blacks) would be ushered north to Virginia under the guard of their black brethren.[39]

The situation for white members of the community was complex. By capturing and guarding white women with black soldiers, Confederates were enraged and unnerved by Wild's use of race as a weapon of war. According to Tewksbury, the white citizens of the counties were "completely panic-stricken. Scores of families fled into the swamps on [Wild's] approach. Never was a region thrown into such commotion by a raid before." The Yankee journalist also believed that "An army of fifty thousand blacks could march from one end of rebeldom to the other…the terror they would inspire making them invincible."[40]

"General Wild …understands the guerrilla pathology," believed Tewksbury, "and can give prescription that will cure every time." [41] The *New York Times* reporter was clearly convinced of the racial power at play in Pasquotank, and he explicitly described the military prowess of black soldiers in this Southern guerrilla war. "This raid possesses historical importance," he commented. "It is the first of any magnitude undertaken by negro troops…and by it the question of their efficiency in any branch of the service has been practically set at rest." Furthermore, Tewksbury was "confident" that black soldiers "will prove far better guerrilla-hunters than the whites." He even defiantly charged that

[38] Benjamin Butler to Henry Halleck, 17 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 847. See Sub-inclosure from General Wild to Captain Elliott date 17 December 1863.
[39] *Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC.
[40] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.
[41] Ibid.

"When the rebellion shall have subsided into partisan warfare, so far from lasting for ever, as Jeff Davis threatens, our colored troops will take care that its end is soon reached." He concluded: "It is an instructive turn of the tables that the men who have been accustomed to hunt runaway slaves hiding in the swamps of the South, should now hiding there themselves, be hunted by them." This final comment published in the most widely read Northern newspaper focused on psychologically shaming white Southerners for both guerrilla violence and their racial beliefs.[42]

The white Unionists of the locality faced a different kind of problem than the Confederates did. When General Wild discussed the situation of the Unionist minority in Pasquotank, he was empathetic. Some of these men "have hired their slaves on share of profits, a few even…pay them money. [Unionists] have, of course, been cautious and silent; but they have been persecuted more or less," the General thought. Moreover, "I would respectfully suggest that such men deserve some extra discrimination in their favor, in the way of protection, &c."[43]

An angry member of Pasquotank's Unionist minority, perhaps Dr. William G. Pool, suggested to Wild the message that he should issue concerning the problem of guerrilla war in the county.[44] This proposed declaration highlights two factors Wild perceived as being most important to both Unionists and Confederates in Pasquotank, peace and property. According to Wild this letter was "written by a professional gentleman of excellent judgment, discretion, and experience, residing at Elizabeth [City]. He, with all the rest, supposed that we were intending to occupy the city permanently,

[42] Ibid., 304.
[43] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.
[44] Enclosures A, B and C, Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.

and he urged me to issue a proclamation and follow it up by action." Wild included a copy of this letter in his official report to Major General Benjamin Butler:

> "A TIMELY WARNING. General Butler intends to exterminate all guerrillas east of Chowan River, and will use any and all means to do so. If it cannot be done otherwise, property of all sorts will be destroyed, and the country entirely laid waste. If citizens wish to prevent such universal destruction of their property, they must aid our authorities in ridding this country of these land pirates. It now rests with them to save themselves and property, or not. We have force now here sufficient to accomplish our purpose, and we shall immediately enter upon the work. Now is the time for the people to come forward."[45]

Wild himself suggested the following as the formal edict to the entire region if it were to be occupied and the Union line extended to the Chowan River:

> "To the inhabitants of Currituck, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Gates, and Chowan Counties: All guerrillas are on a par with pirates, and are to be treated as such. The fact of their being paid by the State, and being called "Partisan Rangers," does not help the matter. Neither the Governor of the State nor Jefferson Davis can legalize such a style of warfare. You will never have any rest from us so long as you keep guerrillas within your borders. It will be for your interest, therefore, to exert yourselves actively in driving them out. You can do this, not only by refusing them food, shelter, and support, but by giving information against them to the military and naval authorities at every opportunity, and by arming yourselves against them whenever possible. All slaves are now at liberty to go where they please, or to stay. By assisting them on their way with food and transportation, you can save yourselves the necessity of visitations from the colored troops. By thus avoiding the two causes of molestation, you can preserve peace within your borders."[46]

Wild's compassion for the Unionists' plight even ran over into his suggestions for Union military strategy in this part of North Carolina. He urged the extension of the Union lines around Pasquotank County, noting that "the Pasquotank [River] is a natural barrier, being wide and deep." And, if the river were controlled by Union forces, "the advantages of such communication would be very great. It would go farther towards reclaiming the inhabitants of that region than any other measure." Wild believed that

[45] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.
[46] Ibid.

"the only drawback or danger arising from the Guerrillas, I could rectify in two weeks of stern warfare. The included territory comprises exceedingly productive tracts which would be brought to bear next season, if the inhabitants could be assured against other alternation of masters and have confidence on protection." He asserted that in this sector of the state "the rebels have been and still are drawing vast supplies for their Army and for their great works." Wild was not a stranger to strong words or strong actions in his efforts to protect loyalists and free bondsmen. [47]

Edward Wild pushed the limits of Union military policy toward Southern civilians in December 1863. Earlier historians of Wild's conduct during the Pasquotank County expedition have portrayed him as a man desperately trying to live up to his own name. Wild has been portrayed as both a complex abolitionist who could not control his urges to punish Southern slaveholders and also as a man who consistently tried to buck authority. Because his men "foraged for food from the very beginning of the raid" and selectively destroyed the homes of guerrillas and some of their supporters, Wild's actions have also been interpreted by biographer Francis H. Casstevens as "wanton destruction."[48]

Wild and his men were caught up in the complex ongoing debate about Union military policy toward Southern civilians, especially the amount of violent force that should be applied to coerce Southern guerrillas. At first glance, General Wild appears to have used extreme violence against the guerrillas and civilians of Pasquotank and surrounding counties. He took innocent civilians hostage, executed a man, and destroyed or confiscated a significant amount of personal property during the course of his December 1863 raid. But, in fact, Wild did not use violence indiscriminately, and the

[47] Ibid.
[48] Casstevens, 126.

force he did apply was targeted at certain individuals and was measured for effect. He knew that he could not destroy all of the personal property of the entire community and could not detain all of the people supporting the guerrillas in Pasquotank County. The general did not forcibly remove the entire population from the region, because this would have overstepped his mandate. This policy would probably have been impractical anyway given the difficulty in ferreting out irregulars and frightened citizens from the dense swamps. Yet this very policy was put into effect in Missouri when Federal commanders dealt with irregulars in this region in August 1863.[49] The standing Federal military policy for North Carolina called for him to do everything in his power to bring the eastern part of the state back into the Union fold. Moreover, Wild's troops only killed thirteen guerrillas in combat during the counter-guerrilla portion of his occupation, a small number of those he actually engaged. This small number suggested that he had not pushed as hard a line with the guerillas as he might have. Wild even alluded to not using all of the military force at his command in his own official report. He stated that if sent back to the county and given permission, he would press a "stern warfare" on the irregulars, suggesting that he had not pushed a maximum effort to do so the first time.[50]

In the end, the Massachusetts general did not succeed in quelling the guerrilla resistance. He was limited by the Unionist presence in the region and by following a more lenient strategy in his use of violence toward Southern civilians. Wild's measured response demonstrated the limits of applying violence in the context of a guerrilla war. More than just violence was needed to defeat the partisans. In order to gain an upper hand on the guerrillas, Wild knew that he needed to be politically astute with Unionist

[49] Fellman, 95.
[50] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.

members of the community. They provided the intelligence and if protected, might convince Confederate citizens to renounce the chaos of guerrilla war. In the aftermath, Wild's tactics were viewed as overly harsh by both Confederate and Union accounts of the incident. Nonetheless, his attempt to gain the community's confidence by being judicious and giving even the most obstinate citizens he captured a court martial belies this interpretation. Indeed it is difficult to explain why Wild hanged only one suspected guerrilla out of perhaps hundreds who might have been captured and summarily executed.[51]

Civil War historians have long debated the nuances of Union military strategy in the Southern occupied zones. The clearest articulation of the evolving Union military policy toward Southern civilians has come from the pen of historian Mark Grimsley. In *The Hard Hand of War,* Grimsley outlines the shift from conciliatory to pragmatic and ultimately, to a policy of hard war during the four years of armed conflict. According to Grimsley, Federal military strategists between July 1862 and January 1864 advocated discernment and discrimination toward individual Southerners on the basis of their loyalty. He argues that policy during this period "tended to be whatever seemed best calculated to produce operational success." Those loyal to the Union were largely protected. Southern secessionists were punished on the basis of their activities against the Federal government, and neutral populations were dealt with as the specific regional situation required.[52] For Grimsley, the period of hard war pressed by the Federal army after February 1864 included: "operations aimed at the destruction of enemy economic

[51] Ibid. An exact figure on the number of guerrillas in the region will probably never be known, but Wild mentions seven different companies engaged in the raid.
[52] Grimsley 3-4, 111-119. For another interpretation of Union military policy that argues for an earlier start to hard war without the pragmatic phase, see Ash, *When the Yankees Came.*

resources (whether publicly or privately owned), forced evacuations, or confiscation of property without recompense." Hard war's "one common element" was "the erosion of the enemy's will to resist by deliberately or concomitantly subjecting the civilian population to the pressures of war."[53] Grimsley's clear thesis works best in the eastern theater, but even here it can not be applied to areas of the no man's land without serious qualification.[54]

So, was Edward Wild's December 1863 foray into the no man's land of Pasquotank County pragmatic or hard in its policy toward Southern civilians? Wild's biographer Francis H. Casstevens argues that the raid was a policy of hard war, yet the most distinguished scholar of Union military policy has argued that hard war policy did not commence until February 1864. In fairness to the community and Wild, the raid included elements of both strategies. Wild's identification of fifty-three Unionists in the county during the raid, his use of a court-martial hearing, and his restraint in the use of violence aimed specifically at guerrillas and their supporters is clearly evidence of Union army pragmatism. Wild's attempt to discern who he should and should not target "judiciously" during part of the raid showed that he was not, in fact, as wantonly indiscriminate, as some accounts allege.[55] Wild's ability to wield both physical and racial power over the community did command the citizenry's attention and most of the public was frightened by his actions, but he did not allow his men to arbitrarily destroy the homes of slaveholders or non-slaveholders in Pasquotank County. And, Wild did not

[53] Grimsley, 5.
[54] For another historian that has found problems with Grimsley's thesis in the no man's land, see Noel G. Harrison, "Atop an Anvil: The Civilians' War in Fairfax and Alexandria Counties, April 1861-April 1862," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 106 (1998): 133-164.
[55] "A Wild General," *New York Daily World*, 5 March 1864, Edward Augustus Wild Report, Wild Papers, SHC.

execute most of the civilians he captured, even the ones suspected of aiding irregular forces.

Union Brigadier General Edward Augustus Wild, despite his unusually committed ideological stance on black equality and his zeal for fighting guerrillas, adhered largely to a policy of restraint in his application of violence toward civilians. During his occupation of Pasquotank and surrounding region, he discriminated between Confederate and Unionist Southerners and appears to have largely targeted those who were disloyal to the Union government for confiscation of certain kinds of property: corn, horses, and meat.[56] Even Tewksbury believed Wild had been practical in his use of force. "Had every one of these [guerrilla] scoundrels captured been hanged, and the house of every other one burned, such organizations would long ago have ceased to exist."[57]

As the general left Pasquotank for Camden and Currituck Counties, however, he began to slide down the slippery slope toward a harder strategy. Between December 18 and 25, Wild's method of "judiciously discriminating" among all civilians gave way to "a more rigorous style of warfare" toward the guerrillas and their supporters, especially as he entered the area around Indiantown, Camden County. "Guided by the captured muster-roll," Wild put roughly a dozen homes to the torch in the four-mile area around Indiantown. Since Wild was still relying on a list of secessionist guerrillas to target, this

[56] For evidence that Unionists were not targeted for food and livestock confiscation during the raid, see the Records for Allowed Claims, Southern Claims Commission Case Files for Pasquotank County, NC. Despite the large number of allowed claims made by Unionists from Pasquotank County after the war, only one of these claims issued from the period of Wild's raid. This claim was made by a man named Phillip C. Fletcher. Fletcher, who was only fifteen in 1863, kept his horse at his Grandfather's home in Camden County. During the December 1863 expedition, Wild and his men seized this horse at his Grandfather's property. His Grandfather's name was Major D. Gregory. Although the government awarded him money for his horse, it is unlikely that even this claim was valid given his Grandfather's wartime sympathies with the guerrillas. Phllip C. Fletcher, (no. 21,340), Southern Claims. Also, see Benjamin Butler Report, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 596-597. General Butler received members of the community afterward who attested to the black soldiers' discretion.

[57] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.

action was pragmatic in its use of violence. Yet, one can see Wild's mindset shifting from measured response to a harder line of attack.

The Massachusetts native demonstrated one clear use of hard war throughout his infamous expedition, his racial policy. In just under three weeks, Wild emancipated virtually every remaining slave in Pasquotank County, North Carolina as well as many in Camden and Currituck County. Clearly, this policy was aimed at destroying the economic infrastructure of the Confederate communities. This type of confiscation went farther than most other Union commanders in the eastern theater had gone to this date and signaled a transition in overarching strategies.

In this area of economic warfare, Wild adopted a hard war stance. Given that Wild set out to free every slave in the region, it appears as though even Unionists lost their bondsmen during the expedition. Even though Wild noted that some of the Unionists had begun to pay wages to blacks in the region, he did not protect their right to own human chattel. It is difficult to assess whether Unionists actually did pay former slaves by 1863, given the large number of free blacks working in the swamps before the war, who were probably paid for their work. Furthermore, if he were accurate in his analysis that some Unionists in Pasquotank paid wages to their former black slaves, Wild noted a highly unusual phenonmenon at work on the eastern North Carolina home front. In short, a duality was at work during the expedition: Wild remained a pragmatist in his application of violence in the Southern community, targeting only those who were disloyal, but he seemed completely unconcerned with this practicality when it came to the question of slave property.[58]

[58] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC.

If the use of black soldiers is considered as a dimension of Wild's strategy, Wild's pragmatism in his application of violence becomes even clearer. Black soldiers were not permitted to rampantly attack slave-owners. Nevertheless, Wild's use of black troops to drive home his racial agenda, given its frightening effects on Southerners could be viewed as a hard war tactic. He restrained his soldiers in their operations, but their very presence drove the Southerners into frenzy. Some whites were so "panic striken" by the mere presence of African American soldiers that they fled into the swamps.[59]

The execution of the guerrilla Daniel Bright and the hostage taking of several members of the community also throws into stark relief the issues that pushed Union generals toward rethinking their methods. Wild used violence as a form of communication when he publicly executed Daniel Bright. Through this execution, which he carried out personally, Wild sent a message about the appropriate conduct expected between honorable belligerents. By making a public display of the violence near the stronghold of local guerrillas, he shrewdly calculated the effect that one concentrated demonstration of power would have on this Southern community.

There is significant debate among historians about whether Bright's execution was, in fact, legal under the existing laws of war. Casstevens argues that Wild incorrectly believed that Bright was a "war rebel" as defined under Article 85 of "Frances Lieber's Code." Francis Lieber, a Columbia College jurist, analyzed guerrillas and their official military status under the laws of war in his legal writings at the request of Union General-in-Chief Henry Halleck. Halleck, a renowned military scholar in his own right, deferred the question of guerrilla legitimacy to the foremost legal mind of the day. Lieber's thoughts, first published in 1862, were later issued to officers as Union General Orders

[59] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.

No. 100 on 24 April 1863.[60] Lieber defined the war rebel as a person or "persons within an occupied territory who rise in arms against the occupying or conquering army or against the authorities established by the same." Wild, if he categorized Bright as a war rebel, believed that he deserved execution under the laws of war. Casstevens asserts that Bright was not a war rebel but a legally operating member of Company L, Sixty-second Georgia Cavalry/Partisan Rangers. This is essentially the same defense that an Confederate congressional committee would argue in February 1864. This committee, set up to investigate Wild's raid, subsequently referred to Bright as "a member of the Sixty-second Georgia Regiment, under command of Col. J. R. Griffin, [who] had received authority from the Governor of North Carolina to raise a company in that county for local defense. Failing in the effort, he had retired to his farm, and was there seized, carried off, and executed."[61]

If Bright failed to raise a company commissioned by the governor, why did he retire to his home and not back to the Sixty-second Georgia? No document has surfaced from Governor Zebulon Vance to Daniel Bright or even Colonel Griffin about a new company being formed. Colonel Griffin acknowledged afterward that Bright was a member of his unit, and one of his men described giving Bright a full military funeral in his letters home. Even so, Griffin offers no explanation in his correspondence about why Bright was away from his company.[62] If Bright really was a member of the regiment, it is virtually impossible to prove since no compiled service record for him exists. He

[60] Casstevens, 125-126. Also, see General Orders No. 100, 24 April 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 3, Vol. 3, pt. 1, 154.
[61] William N.H. Smith Report, 10-17 February 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 1127-1129.
[62] Joel R. Griffin to George E. Pickett, 19 December 1863, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, p. 883

appears on no muster roll for the Sixty-second Georgia and the rolls for this unit do not even list a Company L, to which Bright supposedly belonged.[63]

Unlike several other regular soldiers whom Wild captured in the raid, Daniel Bright was not sent to Norfolk as a prisoner of war because he had no papers proving his status as a legitimate combatant. This is a strange phenomenon, indeed, if Bright had really been given permission by the governor of North Carolina to raise a new company. He might have at least had papers proving a legitimate furlough. Furthermore, according to the *New York Times* correspondent who watched the execution, Bright was not in uniform.[64] Without a uniform, he could not be categorized as lawful partisan ranger operating independently from his unit. If, indeed, Bright was engaged in pillage as Wild suspected, not in the uniform of his regiment, and had no documentation to prove his status, then he fell within the legal bounds for execution.

The Federal account provides a more practical answer than the Confederate investigatory committee. Farmer Daniel Bright, according to Wild and later Major General Benjamin Butler, who defended his subordinate's position, most likely deserted the Sixty-second Georgia to join the Pasquotank guerrillas or to start his own irregular company.[65] As a deserter, Wild and Butler believed that Bright fell into the categories laid out in Articles 82 through 85, Section four of Lieber's Code. These sections describe the appropriate punishment for irregular soldiers. If Bright was a deserter, and not a partisan "belonging to a corps which acts detached from the main body," he was not

[63] Henderson, Vol. 6. Henderson found no record of a Company L, Sixty-second Georgia Cavalry in her compilation of Georgia soldiers. Neither Frances H. Casstevens or I have been able to locate a compiled service record for Daniel Bright. See, Georgia. State Division of Confederate Pensions and Records. Alphabetical Card File, reel 8. The only record on Daniel Bright listed in the Georgia archives is the hanging notice issued by Wild. Also see, Casstevens, 125, 290.
[64] Tewksbury, *New York Times*, 9 January 1864.
[65] Benjamin Butler to James W. Hinton, *Official Records*, 27 January 1864, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 883-884.

entitled to prisoner of war status as a legal partisan ranger. Under "Lieber's Code" Bright fell into several categories including "armed prowlers," "armed enemies not belonging to the hostile army," and "war-rebels." Each of these categories called for summary execution of the captured person.[66] Wild adhered to the law by holding a hearing for his captured guerrilla during which he could assess his status. In the end, the general reasoned that if Bright was involved in destruction of property, pillage and bridge burning, he deserved execution.[67]

Wild's use of hostages is also open to debate. Other examples of hostage taking during the Civil War preceded Wild, and it was legal in certain extreme circumstances. In one case, in Sumter County, Tennessee historian Steven Ash notes that the wife of a guerrilla was taken hostage in retaliation for a local Unionist captured by irregulars. Ash has also found more extreme measures taken by Union forces facing guerrillas, such as the burning of entire villages at Randolph, Tennessee and Hopefield, Arkansas in 1862 and 1863 respectively. Nonetheless, hostage taking was unusual and went farther than most officials were willing to go in search of a solution to the Southern guerrilla problem.[68]

Wild showed restraint in not killing every guerrilla sympathizer he captured. But, he saw his failure to destroy the entire guerrilla population in Pasquotank and contiguous counties as the limitation of applying violence too sparingly. In his official report, the

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[66] General Orders No. 100, 24 April 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 3, Vol. 3, pt. 1, 154.
[67] For an excellent evaluation of the legal issues relating to guerrilla war, see Paludan, 87-88.
[68] For discussion of other hostage takings as a result of guerrilla violence, see Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 62-66. Ash notes that there were few executions of women even during local guerrilla wars across the South, but he discusses several cases of hostage taking in Tennessee, Virginia and Louisiana as examples of counter-guerrilla tactics. Ash's assertion that Union hard war policy started by the end of 1862 holds up well in the western theater of the Confederacy. But his thesis is complicated by events in the eastern theater, where as Mark Grimsely has noted, a more pragmatic policy is at work until early 1864. I find elements of both hard war and pragmatism in Wild's raid, which occurred in the eastern theater during a period of transition to hard war.

Massachusetts general came to the conclusion that many other Union commanders were also coming to during this period: that only "stern warfare" toward irregulars while working carefully with local Unionists had a chance at solving the problem of guerrilla violence in the American South.[69]

Following Wild's expedition, General Benjamin Butler defended his subordinate's military strategy and the conduct of his soldiers while in the Albemarle. "I think we are much indebted to General Wild and his negro troops for what they have done," asserted Butler in a letter to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, "and it is but fair to record that while some complaints are made of the action, authorized by Gen'l. Wild against the inhabitants and their property…the negro soldiers made no unauthorized interference with property or persons, but conducted themselves with propriety." Butler seemed to think that Wild had operated with pragmatic restraint during most of his raid. Yet, even Butler had some criticism of the operation. Referring to his prosecution of the war of confiscation against the guerrillas, he commented that Wild operated "with great thoroughness, but perhaps with too much stringency."[70]

For Civil War scholars studying occupation, Wild's brief incursion into Pasquotank County, North Carolina and the northeastern region demonstrates the rocky transitional period from pragmatic to hard war military policy. Elements of both were clearly present in Wild's raid. In Wild's response to the partisan problem, one can see the limits placed on violence in dealing with guerrilla forces while also attempting to retain political loyalties in a divided community. And, the historian can also see the ease with which a commander put in a difficult position could slip into the alternative of less

[69] General Orders No. 100, 24 April 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 3, Vol. 3, pt. 1, 157.
[70] Benjamin Butler to Edward M. Stanton, 31 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 596.

restraint toward innocent civilians as they fight an irregular war. Ultimately, the recalcitrant problem of guerrilla activity in no man's land communities, like Pasquotank, Camden and Currituck counties, would be a key element that pushed Union commanders into the broad, across-the-board shift to hard war tactics in 1864.

From the pro-Confederate and Unionist community's perspective, Wild's raid was a curse and a blessing. The curse came in Wild's destruction of slavery, the principal source of labor in the county, the loss of food and other personal property, and in the taking of civilian hostages, who included innocent women. The blessing, however, came in the aftermath of the raid. Wild's expedition provided the impetus for the peaceable Unionist minority and the reluctant Confederate majority to forge a middle road in this fratricidal, neighbor-against-neighbor guerrilla war. Without Wild's public demonstration of Union military and racial power, the community would not likely have negotiated with both governments for their own security in the days following Wild's raid.

CHAPTER THREE

"Without Aid or Protection from Any Source": Negotiated Neutrality in a North Carolina Community

In late December 1863 following Edward Wild's raid, Governor Zebulon Vance wrote to the Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon frustrated with his inability to control his own defensive forces. "DEAR SIR: I desire to call your attention to an evil which is inflicting great distress upon the people of this State and contributing largely to the public discontent…detached bands of troops, chiefly cavalry." These units are "enough in many cases to breed a rebellion in a loyal county against the Confederacy, and ha[ve] actually been the cause of much alienation of feeling in many parts of North Carolina." Vance wrote Seddon to ask if the Confederate government could do anything to get control of the guerrillas, some of whom were still roaming the northeastern region of the state. Although guerrilla violence was now a statewide problem, involving irregular groups from the mountains of western Carolina to the central piedmont counties to the coast of Pasquotank, Vance had not found an effective way of controlling these independently operating bands. According to Vance, these Confederate units were guilty of "stealing, pilfering, burning, and sometimes murderous conduct." Vance assured Secretary Seddon that "in North Carolina it has become a grievance, intolerable, damnable, and not to be borne." He even called upon Biblical rhetoric to put the problem of guerrilla violence in perspective for the secretary: "If God Almighty had yet in store another plague worse than all others which he intended to have let loose on the Egyptians in case Pharaoh still hardened his heart, I am sure it must have been a regiment or so of

half-armed, half-disciplined Confederate cavalry." In desperation the governor inquired as to whether "a few men [might] be shot for perpetrating these outrages, as an example? Unless something can be done I shall be compelled in some sections to call out my militia and levy actual war against them."[1]

In the aftermath of General Edward Wild's raid through northeastern Carolina, Zebulon Vance was not alone in his alarm about undisciplined irregulars and the threat they posed to the Confederacy. Although many white Southerners had been slow to recognize the menace that guerrilla war had created in Pasquotank County during 1862 and 1863, North Carolinians and other white Southerners at the local, state and national level reacted adversely to the consequences of Wild's counter-guerrilla operation--the sensationalized violence of Daniel Bright's execution and the shock of lost slave labor.

In the weeks following the Federal expedition, the Confederate government appointed a committee to evaluate the incidents in Pasquotank and the adjoining counties. Pro-Confederate guerrillas residing in the Albemarle retaliated with an execution of their own. And, the Confederate public and press launched a virulently racist campaign attacking General Wild and his troops. All of these actions might have been predicted given the brief but violent history of the Albemarle guerrilla resistance and the concern that the Confederate government had shown for the manpower and agricultural resources of the region. But what could not have been predicted was the reaction of Pasquotank's war-weary and divided populace.

When Edward Wild rode into the county in December 1863, it was already fatigued from more than a year and a half of power reversals in the form of sporadic Federal occupation and guerrilla violence. Wild's expedition, although devastating to

[1] Zebulon Vance to James A. Seddon, 21 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser. 4, Vol. 2, 1061-1062.

both the economic infrastructure and racial psyche of both Unionist and Confederates, was just the latest in a series of violent exchanges. The politically divided community had faced the constant threat of occupation from without as well as the threat of plunder and destruction from the irregulars operating within the county. They had two omnipresent threats to social order, but no true protectors. This county on the periphery of the larger Southern war effort, divided internally along racial and political lines, needed to devise a solution to the social chaos of local guerrilla activity, Federal military incursion, and above all, further loss of life and property. When Wild left the region, the people of Pasquotank were ready to assert their own political power to shape their local war.

The county's white and black people responded to Wild's demonstration of power over their lives in different but profound ways. Members of the free black and slave community used Wild's operations as an avenue toward freedom or movement north. A small number of former slaves saw the black troops in blue and joined their ranks. But however individual blacks chose to respond, the majority of the black community viewed Wild as a liberator, who had provided an opportunity to free themselves from slavery on the plantations of the Albemarle district or peonage in the swamps of northern Pasquotank County. The white citizens of the county, divided by internal political disagreement, viewed the Wild raid quite differently.

At the end of December 1863, the whites in Pasquotank, Unionist and Confederate alike, faced a dilemma. For nearly two years, since the fall of Elizabeth City, neither the Southern government in Raleigh nor the Northern authorities assigned to command in the region had been successful in protecting their county from the other side. At times, both governments seemed apathetic and indifferent about the plight of this

remote but prosperous agricultural sector of the state. Only one factor had remained constant in the community, a contest for power over who would dominate the politically divided population.

Prominent Confederates in Pasquotank feared further reprisal by Union troops, but their local guerrillas, who reigned supreme at night on the roads outside of Elizabeth City, were unable to protect them. First white Union officers arrived in small numbers for recruiting, then armed black soldiers drilled in the streets of Elizabeth City, and finally General Wild seized their slave property. For local slaveholders, their economic system lay in shambles, as nearly all the remaining slaves in the county fled to the Federal colony for freedmen on Roanoke Island during the month of December 1863.[2] With the antebellum racial, social and economic order shattered, Confederates were ready to be rid of the Union raiders for good. Some of these Confederates were committed enough to preserving peace and property that they were for a brief period will to work with Unionist community members in order to recover social stability.

General Wild's fifty-three "truly loyal" Union men faced a different kind of problem once Wild and his black troops left the region. Wild had not spared their slave property, but he had shielded them from the violence of his troops. The loss of slaves hurt them economically, but at least their homes had been protected. When Wild left the county, these supporters of the Federal government continued to fear the guerrillas. The Unionists in Pasquotank wanted to get Confederate or Union authorities to control the irregulars in order to prevent future incursions from either side that might disrupt their local economy. Since the pro-Southern irregulars were community members who knew

[2] For lists of freed people from the northeastern region of North Carolina who lived on the Roanoke Island Freedmen's colony, see Click, 218-223, 225-226.

the Unionists and where they lived, the shifting tides of power on the coast of the Albemarle left the Unionist population most vulnerable.

However General Edward Wild's raid into Pasquotank affected individuals within white society, Unionists and Confederates faced the same quandary in 1863: how to stop the violence perpetuated by both sides upon their community. Having endured regular power reversals on the exposed North Carolina coast since the fall of the county seat in February 1862, many leading white citizens regardless of political allegiance were tired of war. The peaceful majority of this divided community was ready to see their local war end.

On Saturday 19 December 1863, only one day after Daniel Bright's execution, influential citizens from both halves of the divided county gathered for an urgent meeting at Elizabeth City. The meeting brought together prominent Unionists and the Confederate leaders in Pasquotank, bridging divided allegiances. One of the men who went to the meeting was Richard Benbury Creecy.

A Southern sympathizer throughout the war, Creecy arrived in Elizabeth City with few answers to the problems of his community. Creecy, who spent the entire war at his father-in-law's plantation Cloverdale in the lower section of Pasquotank County and may have known Daniel Bright from service in slave patrols during the 1850s, provided a complex explanation for why the community held the meeting.[3] Years later he wrote that for a Confederate like himself, "not going meant death" at the hands of Union soldiers. But, his discussion of the meeting written in 1900 may have been disingenuous given his actions following the meeting. After all, Wild and his men were no longer in the county

[3] Slave patrols, Pasquotank County, Records of Slaves and Free Persons of Color, 1815-1861, NCDAH. Richard Benbury Creecy sat on a committee to appoint slave patrol that called Daniel Bright to serve in the late 1850s. Therefore, Creecy probably knew the men he appointed to the patrol.

forcing the citizens to have the meeting, and local guerrillas were omnipresent. In fact, Creecy's own son Edward Perkins Creecy, who was only twelve years old in 1860, had joined John Elliott's band sometime in mid-1863.[4] Nevertheless, Richard Creecy attended the gathering, which he described as a meeting of "Buffaloes."[5]

But, what Creecy saw once he got to Elizabeth City on that Saturday in December "almost paralyzed" him. There in the heart of the county seat only one day after Wild and his troops moved beyond Pasquotank's borders "stood a man, clad in a confederate grey uniform, with a captain's cap on and a musket on his shoulder, grim, fierce looking, the embodiment of hate and defiance. It was Tom Tamplin, the captain [actually second lieutenant] of the guerrillas, as brave a man as ever lifted arm in a fight--blessed be his memory." Creecy thought Tamplin "looked like he was making a note of every wretch he saw coming to attend this meeting of buffaloes." Although he supported the guerrilla resistance and his own Confederate sympathies must have been known by those in the

[4] Kate Curtis to Elizabeth Creecy, 15 August 1863, Creecy Family Papers, SHC; *Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC.

[5] Richard Benbury Creecy, "Old Times in Betsy," *Elizabeth City Economist*, 24 August 1900. Creecy is applying the term "Buffaloes" broadly here for political reasons. He wants to show that he was coerced in some way into going despite what his voluntary actions in representing the community at Raleigh afterwards might show. Historian John C. Inscoe defined the term "Bufaloes" as "local Unionists engaged in guerrilla warfare and terrorist tactics during the Civil War, especially in eastern North Carolina…They formed bands which were compared with "herds of buffaloes" that hid out in swamps and forests and, often in league with fugitive slaves, gathered arms and raided local communities and plantations, harassing civilians and stealing or destroying their property and foodstuffs" (The copy of this definition is in author's files). This definition might apply to some community members who attended the Pasquotank meeting on 19 December 1863, but it certainly did not describe all of the people gathered that evening and did not accurately describe all of the Unionists in the crowd either. Many of these Unionists were peacefully living out the war in Elizabeth City. For a full discussion of eastern Carolina "Buffaloes" and the entymology of the term, see Judkin Jay Browning, "'Little Souled Mercenaries'? The Buffaloes of Eastern North Carolina During the Civil War," *North Carolina Historical Review* 77, no. 3, (2000): 338-339. According to Browning, the term is originally applied to men from North Carolina recruited into the first and second Union regiments, but it quickly gains currency as a synonym for all Unionists from the state.

community, Creecy seemed somewhat concerned about the uncontrollable nature of the Pasquotank irregulars.[6]

After the war, Creecy stated that he only went to the gathering because he thought his life was in danger, but given his own weariness of Tamplin, it was perhaps fear of both the pro-Confederate partisans and Unionist raiders that drove him to go. While at the meeting he agreed to represent the community as an ambassador to meet with Governor Vance and the state legislature; his sole purpose was to gain the withdrawal of the guerrillas from the county. Despite his post-war explanation of the incident, Creecy permitted the community to send him as part of their three-man delegation to Raleigh.[7]

Also present at the December 19 meeting were notable members of the Unionist minority. These men included an Elizabeth City merchant, Isaiah Fearing, a poor farmer, John D. Markham, and a wealthy planter and lawyer, George W. Brooks. This group represented a cross-section of class in the county and at the same time a cross-class alliance among the Unionist minority. Fearing served as secretary of the meeting, Dr. William G. Pool, another local Unionist, presided as chairman of the gathering, and John D. Markham was assigned the task of gathering signatures of men from his district of the county.[8] It is not clear why each man was selected, but it is likely that their influence among their respective class groups within the community played a role.

Isaiah Fearing also represented the mutability and ambiguity of loyalties in the community since he had served in the Seventeenth North Carolina Infantry (1st

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[6] Ibid. Also, see Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 528-534. Thomas H. Tamplin, who had served in the Fifty-sixth North Carolina Infantry for a period during the early years of the war, was appointed second lieutenant of John T. Elliott's band of guerrillas in August of 1863. He was not a "captain" as Creecy claimed in his account.

[7] Benjamin Butler Report, 31 December 1863, *Official Records*, Ser.1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 596-597. The other two men sent to Raleigh were Pasquotank Confederates William H. Clark and Dr. J.J. Shannonhouse.

[8] Ibid. Background data on Unionist leaders was compiled from the *Population Schedule of the 8th Census of the United States*, 1860, Pasquotank and Perquimans County, NC.

Organization) during the early war period and when mustered out came home to the county. Sometime between his return to the home front in 1862 and Wild's raid in December 1863, he shifted loyalties.[9] Perhaps the local economic pressures on a prominent merchant forced him to side with the Confederacy during the early war. Little is certain about Fearing and his allegiances. What is clear is that he took on a prominent role in the meeting led by many Unionists, and General Wild listed him as a loyal man. Fearing's apparent shift in allegiance, however, is representative of the difficult position in which many in the community were placed during the conflict and why residents chose to hold a meeting that day in December 1863.

The men who attended the meeting took four important steps in an attempt to solve their wartime security dilemma. First, the community appointed two committees of men, one to go to Raleigh, the other to meet with Butler at his headquarters in Virginia. The committee sent to the North Carolina government included Richard Creecy, Dr. J.J. Shannonhouse, and William H. Clark and the one to Butler consisted of George W. Brooks, George D. Pool, and John J. Grandy. None of the men in the group sent to Raleigh were on Wild's list of Unionists and all three of the men sent to Butler were identified by General Wild as loyal. These two committees were charged with carrying the community's message to the authorities of both governments. The second decision made at the December 19 gathering was to appoint five men to act as emissaries to the other counties of the northeastern region. These citizens were appointed "to bear the proceedings" of the Pasquotank meeting to the other counties of the northeastern Carolina "no man's land," including Gates, Perquimans, Chowan, Camden and Currituck. The

[9] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, Wild Papers, SHC. It is also possible that Isaiah Fearing was coerced into joining the Confederate service in the early war by a local vigilance committee.

community then approved two separate resolutions to send with all of the county's representatives. And, finally the men at the meeting appointed a person in each of the seven districts of the county to secure the signature of every white male over the age of eighteen on the resolutions.[10]

The proceedings of this meeting provide a window into the thoughts of this divided community. "The county of Pasquotank has suffered immensely since the fall of Roanoke Island, without aid or protection from any source," wrote the delegation in attendance. It went on to state that both General Wild and General Butler had brought "universal panic and distress" to the county. Furthermore, they were "assured by General E. A. Wild, in command of this force, that he will continue to operate here, even to the destruction, if necessary, of every species of property for the purpose of ridding this county of 'partisan rangers.'" The citizens at the meeting "believe[d] that these rangers cannot be of any service to us, but that their further presence here will bring upon us speedy and inevitable ruin." Having been "promised to be 'let alone' if these rangers be removed or disbanded," the community decided to send emissaries to ask for the withdrawal of local guerrillas.[11]

After recounting their plight during the previous two years of war, the citizens then approved two resolutions as messages for the North Carolina legislature and General Benjamin Butler. Their modest goals were clearly stated in the two declarations. The first resolution "earnestly petition[ed] the Governor and Legislature of North Carolina satisfied that you cannot protect us with any force at your command, to remove or disband these few rangers." The second public statement "denounce[d] that species of

[10] Benjamin Butler Report, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 596-597.
[11] Ibid.

business carried on here by private citizens for private gain known as 'blockade running,' and that we will hereafter use our best efforts to suppress such trade."[12] By the end of December the petition included the signature of 523 people, every white man remaining in the county that was not fighting in the guerrilla resistance, including Richard Creecy.[13]

In the days following Wild's raid, the community demonstrated its moderate Whig political heritage by searching for a middle ground, just as this same group of voters had done in late 1860 and early 1861. Pasquotank's voters supported the Constitutional Unionists John Bell as their presidential candidate in 1860, voted against a secession convention in February of 1861, promoted a Union delegate for that convention, and now, they were seeking a middle road in their war effort. They desired "to be 'let alone.'" Both Unionists and Confederates were promoting a platform of neutrality in late December 1863, negotiated by their divided leaders. But, why did the community of divided loyalties come together? What compelled citizens to briefly put aside their loyalty to a regional or national cause to support local resolutions. Three reasons worked in concert to bring this divided community to a public gathering about the issues of Wild's raid: desire for peace and social stability, protection of property, and preservation of racial order.

Clearly, social stability and property were major factors in motivating people to put aside ideology for immediate safety. In the wake of Wild's raid, the citizens described "panic and distress" and fear of "destruction…of every species of property." The leading members of the Confederate and Unionist communities subverted their own political leanings for a commitment to public order and the relief of their particular locality from

[12] Ibid. For a list of the signatories of the petition, see Witt, *Wild in North Carolina*, 83-93.
[13] Benjamin Butler Report, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 596-597.

the stress of guerrilla war. After many in the county watched the war come to their doorsteps, peace from outside threats, whether it was a local guerrilla or a black Union soldier, became more important in late December 1863 than their outward political loyalty.[14]

The response of the white community was rooted in retaining peace and property, but also in the desire to reestablish the racial order that had been destroyed by General Wild. The presence of Wild's black troops demonstrated a threat to the racial order. Because even if white society in Pasquotank realized that slavery was threatened as a social and economic institution after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, they were not ready to proclaim black equality and destroy the cultural mores of their locality. The citizens at the meeting probably did not include a denunciation of black troops since they understood that this would not have secured them any safety from future Union raids. The immediate reaction by Pasquotank citizens to this emancipation raid should be reviewed in context of this community's long history with trying to control its black labor force. When taken in this context, it is easy to see that reestablishing racial hierarchy and safety from armed black soldiers, without Federal interruption, would be a driving force toward the community seeking neutral status between the two belligerent armies. The confluence of racial fears, property loss and desire for social order mitigated loyalty for a period, and during that phase, Unionists and Confederates developed resolutions for neighborhood protection.

Pasquotank County organized its own negotiation for neutrality between two opposing governments for immediate reasons specific to their private, local war. Negotiated neutrality blazed a path between the continuous power reversals of the no

[14] Ibid.

man's land on the North Carolina coast. By appealing to the better senses of both Union army authorities and North Carolina officials (and probably by using their agricultural wealth as a bargaining chip), the community sought a respite from the violent incursions of irregulars and raiders. The resolutions were not feigned Unionism meant to appease Federal authorities, since they were not a declaration of loyalty to the Union. Neither were they an outright repudiation of Wild and his activities that would encourage the Confederate state authorities as to their unfailing devotion to the Southern cause. The resolutions were a central course, an avocation of peace, and a renunciation of the violent practices of guerrilla war by a community that had for nearly two years overwhelmingly sponsored it.

Despite being under extreme duress, Confederates in the county could have remained politically inactive and silent as a defense mechanism. And, indeed, it is surprising that the Confederate majority did not do just that. But, the signature on the resolutions of nearly every white male left in the county is remarkable.[15] Since the community began the hostilities, overwhelmingly pro-Confederate in 1861 with over 300 of its white men entering Confederate service, it is safe to assume that a large proportion of the signatories of the 1863 petition at one time considered themselves Confederates.[16] Securing peace from an outside threat, whether it be pro-Confederate guerrilla or Union raider, briefly became more important than political loyalty. The Pasquotank resolutions declared publicly that community relationships and public safety were stronger bonds than regional loyalty and sacrifice to a larger cause at this time and in this particular home front community. Since Wild and his men had left the county, the Confederate

[15] Benjamin Butler Report, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 596-597.
[16] Charlotte (NC) *Western Democrat*, 18 March 1862.

community could have forced a strong denunciation of the raid at the meeting, but it did not. Feeling abandoned by the Confederate authorities in Richmond and Raleigh and persecuted by Union African American troops, this Southern locality argued for an outwardly apolitical stance as a way of surviving the war. Whether it was Confederate conscription, guerrilla violence or a Union raid, this community had seen enough intrusion. Clearly, the citizens of Pasquotank were ready to be left alone by the war.

General Benjamin Butler greeted the resolutions and committee that arrived at his headquarters from Pasquotank with enthusiasm. "The effect" of General Wild's expedition "has been… that the people of Pasquotank, Currituck, Camden, Perquimons, [sic] and Chowan Counties have assembled, and all passed resolutions…and three of the counties have sent committees to me," wrote a confident Butler. In his description of the Pasquotank committee, Butler noted that "the resolutions are signed by 523 of the inhabitants of the County, the average vote being eight hundred. Every prominent man, I am informed by the committee who present the resolutions, that has not signed them has left, and gone across the lines." This probably meant that the white men had fled over the Chowan River to Bertie County as some residents, like John Pool, had done in 1862 and 1863. Butler, reassured by the community delegations, asserted on 31 December 1863 that "the Guerrillas have also been withdrawn from these counties, to the relief of the inhabitants." Within only a few weeks, he would find that his verdict on the guerrillas and their fate in Pasquotank was hasty. [17]

General Butler not only met with community members from Pasquotank about the raid and its social and political fallout, but he defended his "Wild" general to the

[17] Benjamin Butler Report, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 29, pt. 2, 596-597. The assessment of the average vote is an accurate one compared to the voting records of the county. In the Presidential election of 1860, 771 men voted in Pasquotank County. Connor, *Manual of North Carolina*, 986.

Confederate sympathizers in the Norfolk area.[18] On 10 January 1864, Butler responded to a letter from Elizabeth W. Upshur, a Virginia woman, who condemned Wild and the use of black soldiers against innocent white civilians. "You are entirely mistaken and misinformed as to what was done at Elizabeth City," wrote Butler calmly to the woman. "I have had the committees from five counties, Pasquotank, Currituck, Camden, Perquimans, and Chowan, here, and their universal testimony is that the negro soldiers did nothing but what they were ordered to do. They committed no acts except under the orders of their officers." He qualified this earlier statement by arguing "that we had to burn the houses and carry away the families of guerrillas…but it was done under orders." Going even further in his defense of the black soldiers, Butler asserted that he had "yet to learn of a single outrage by a colored soldier committed upon any of the people of Norfolk or Yorktown, and there are three regiments at one place and four at the other."[19]

While Butler was fending off private complaints, Southern outrage at Wild's raid morphed into a nasty and vituperative racial attack on the black Union troops. When the Virginia fire-eating secessionist Edmund Ruffin sat down to pen his diary entries in the winter of 1863 and 1864, Butler and Wild were on his mind. "A Yankee force...moved from Norfolk upon Elizabeth in N.C. The inhabitants of that town had been subjected to every kind of robbery & insult by the occupying negro troops," wrote the disgusted Ruffin. "Among such insults, a common one was to compel respectable & formerly wealthy ladies not only to furnish meals for any requiring parties of the negro soldiers, but to cook & serve meals, for the hated guests, under still more insulting & degrading

[18] *New York Daily World*, 5 March 1864. A hand written copy of this article is also found in E.A. Wild Papers, SHC.
[19] Benjamin Butler to Elizabeth W. Upshur 10 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser.1, Vol. 28, pt. 1, 371.

treatment." He further added with scorn that "Brute Butler is in command for lower Va & N.C." and "his recent government in Norfolk is worse than ever."[20]

Ruffin went on to comment about the execution of Daniel Bright and the hostage taking. "The most atrocious outrages are perpetrated by the [Union] military officers not only on men, & civilians, but on respectable families, on the pretended ground of retaliation, for capture & refusal to release captured Yankee soldiers, & especially negro soldiers."[21] Ruffin, who regularly abused Confederate President Jefferson Davis in his diary, "predict[ed] that nothing will be done on our part to retaliate for the murder of Bright, the imprisonment of [Major D.] Gregory, & the imprisonment in handcuffs, & ten-fold worse indignities, & even the future hanging, of the two innocent ladies." But if disgusted with his own government's inaction, he also defended Daniel Bright and his status as an irregular. "Even if a man's acting as a guerilla [sic], in defence of his family, home & property, was an offence deserving death by hanging after capture, Bright was not so amenable, as he was an enrolled confederate soldier, & not a guerilla [sic]."[22] Ruffin's comments about black soldiers and Bright's legal status would become the two most popular defenses of Confederate irregular activity in the region and condemnations of Edward Wild's raid.

Diarist Catherine Anne Devereux Edmondston, who lived on a plantation in the eastern North Carolina county of Halifax, was equally distressed by the violence in Pasquotank. In a diary entry for 17 January 1864, she wrote that the "papers [are] filled with...details of the outrages committed by Wild in Eastern N C…Private letters tell us

[20] William Kauffman Scarborough ed., *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin: A Dream Shattered, June, 1863-June, 1865* Vol. 3 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1989), 285-286.
[21] Ibid., 300.
[22] Ibid., 301.

that the half is not told. Armed negroes…rove through the country & seize from the defenceless inhabitants what they list. God help them & keep us from a like fate." Holding little respect for Northern generals and their Emancipation Proclamation, she sarcastically added that such acts represented "the tender mercies of Abolitionism!" But, Edmondston was most angry with the treatment of white women. She condemned General Butler and his soldiers, who she described as "Unfitted to cope with armed men or to manoevre [sic] an army in the field, [Butler's] sphere is to triumph over the defenceless, insult innocent women, and to add hardship to an already severe lot."[23] Ruffin and Edmondston were not the only concerned Southerners studying Wild's raid; the southern press was also attracted to the story, and their coverage sensationalized the record of events.

The *Charleston Mercury*, not known for its moderation in discussing incidents involving purported black on white violence during the antebellum period, began to argue a vehemently racist interpretation of wartime events in Pasquotank. "On the streets the ladies of the place were jostled by the negro troops, and had to permit them to walk by their side and converse with them, on pain of arrest and punishment for insulting 'United States troops!'" Moreover, the journalist commented that "any information laid by a negro against a white man was received as conclusive evidence and brought swift punishment upon the alleged offender. The negro ran riot during the Yankee stay in the Albemarle country." Trying to reassure its readers about the poor quality of black Union soldiers, the Charleston paper noted that black soldiers "fled like wild deer on being fired upon, and were shot as they ran." Reminiscent of the arguments for black lynching during the Jim Crow era, the *Mercury* also insinuated sexual advances by black soldiers toward

[23] Crabtree and Patton, ed., *"Journal of a Secesh Lady,"* 517.

Pasquotank's women. They described how Phoebe Munden and Elizabeth Weeks "were kept in handcuffs until taken to Norfolk, where they are kept in jail. They were guarded by Negroes, who never left them under any circumstances…We have not space to narrate the many heartless cases of cruelty perpetrated by these fiends."[24] It did not take much imagination for many white Southerners to understand what "the many heartless cases of cruelty" narrated by the *Mercury*'s journalist may have involved.

While Butler was fending off attacks from Southern letter writers and the Confederate press denounced the abolitionist Edward Wild for alleged abuses, the Confederate delegation from Pasquotank County, including Richard Creecy, made its way across the Chowan River to the state capital. Although the specifics of the meeting between Creecy's delegation and Vance are missing from the historical record, the contents of the Pasquotank resolutions did make their way to the North Carolina legislature and the desk of the governor. Southern newspapers picked up on the story of the Pasquotank resolutions in early January 1864 and interpreted these public meetings in eastern North Carolina as disloyalty to the Confederacy.

The Southern press angrily responded by condemning the resolutions that asked for the removal of the guerrillas. The editors of the paper claimed that hundreds of names on the Pasquotank petition were those of conscripts avoiding the Confederate government. "The fact is," wrote one Southern journalist "this portion of North Carolina is reported to be disloyal, and to be a convenient harbor for deserters and fugitive conscripts, who, with the black banditti and other elements, make up a population

[24] *Charleston Mercury*, 5 January 1864.

unrivaled, perhaps, in Christendom, certainly in the Confederacy, for lawlessness, outrages, and atrocity."[25]

It was not long before the state government in North Carolina reacted as well. Governor Vance responded by condemning the hostage taking and wondering in his official correspondence whether his North Carolina troops then organizing and operating in Pasquotank County were, in fact, lawful regular soldiers. Writing to the Commissioner of prisoner exchange Robert Ould, Vance asked "if some arrangement cannot be made to include these troops within the cartel of exchange and repress if possible this horrible, cowardly and damnable disposition on the part of the enemy to put women in irons as hostages for negro soldiers!" Like others, Vance made the direct connection between white women and black soldiers. He also attacked General Wild personally: "Such men as this Wild are a disgrace to the manhood of the age, not being able to capture soldiers they war upon defenceless women! Great God! What an outrage."[26] Ultimately, however, there was little Vance and the North Carolina legislature could do. Strapped for resources, their best course of action was to ask local military commanders to muster guerrillas into regular service, organize a defense, and bring the raid to the attention of the Richmond government.[27]

In early January 1864, the Confederate Congress in Richmond, a body often lethargic and slow to action, speedily appointed a committee to investigate "the recent outrages alleged to have been perpetrated in the northeastern part of North Carolina by

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[25] *Charleston Mercury*, 20 January 1864. According to the *Mercury* 403 of 576 names listed on the petition from Pasquotank that they reviewed were conscripts. The discrepancy between the 523 and 576 found in the *Mercury* and Butler's report probably comes from an increased number of signatures furnished after Butler received his copy.
[26] Zebulon Baird Vance to Robert Ould, 29 December 1863, *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 357.
[27] James W. Hinton to Zebulon Baird Vance, 24 November 1863, *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 326-327.

the armed forces of the United States."[28] The investigating committee was chaired by a North Carolinian from the eastern region of the state, William Nathan Harrell Smith. Smith, a Hertford County native, who also sat on the important joint House and Senate military affairs committee of the Confederate Congress, would hardly have a chance to begin his inquiry before more violence gripped northeastern Carolina. While the government waited on "persons and papers" to arrive relating to the Bright execution and the hostage taking, the spectacle of a public hanging again shattered the peace of the Pasquotank countryside near the crossroads of Hintonsville.[29]

Using General George E. Pickett's order as pretext, the irregular soldiers under Captain John T. Elliott rode into northern Pasquotank on 12 January 1864 and hanged one of Wild's captured soldiers, Pvt. Samuel Jordan of Company D, Fifth United States Colored Troops.[30] Jordan had been captured by the Pasquotank irregulars on or around 11 December 1863 and may have been initially mistaken for a white man since he was apparently light skinned.[31] Samuel Jordan was at first misidentified by both Union and Confederate authorities; both sides referred to him as "Pvt. Samuel Jones" of the "Fifth

[28] See, *Charleston Mercury*, 9 and 15 January 1864. William Nathan Harrell Smith's committee to investigate the incidents of the Wild raid was also supported by William Porcher Miles, the powerful Chairman of the Joint House and Senate Committee on Military Affairs. Miles was a strong proponent of the 1862 Partisan Ranger Act when it was initially adopted and even shepherded several applications for guerrilla units to the Southern War Department. Surprisingly, Miles did not oppose the repeal of the act in 1864. He did, however, support Smith's efforts to investigate the guerrilla war in Pasquotank County. Perhaps his knowledge of what partisan violence did to the community of Pasquotank during the Wild raid convinced him that the 1862 policy was a failure.
[29] W.N.H. Smith, 10-17 February 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 1128-1130.
[30] James Forbes et. al to General George W. Getty (Enclosure A), 13 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser 2, Vol. 6, 846. For a discussion of General Pickett's involvement, see Gordon, 126-127.
[31] *Charleston Mercury*, 20 January 1864.

Ohio" Infantry.[32] Since the Fifth United States Colored Troops was recruited largely from Ohio, Jordan was probably a native of that state.[33]

Borrowing the same beam from which Bright's body had been hanged, the guerrillas reasserted the racial hierarchy of the Southern community by executing one of Wild's black soldiers. Like the execution of Daniel Bright, the Samuel Jordan hanging was a demonstration of power meant to convey a racial message. Guerrillas reaffirmed their power over their community and at the same time briefly reestablished the white over black racial hierarchy that existed before the Wild raid. In Jordan's hanging, the partisans also acted out their belief that black soldiers did not deserve status as prisoners of war.[34]

The execution of Samuel Jordan also represents an attempt by the irregular forces to assert their own legitimacy as legal warriors and as community protectors. By publicly retaliating and showing their power to the community and to the Confederate press, Southerners might take comfort knowing that the white soldiers in the swamps of the Albemarle were trying to uphold time honored Southern beliefs in the racial order of white over black. At the same time, by retaliating for Bright's execution they could claim that their own methods were justified in the face of Wild's tyrannical acts of violence in their community.

Despite this demonstration of power, local residents remained unconvinced of the guerrillas' ability to protect them. The irregulars had a serious public relations problem since they were unable to defend the community from any major show of force by the

[32] William J. Munden in W.N.H. Smith Report, 10-17 February 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 1128-1130.
[33] Benjamin F. Butler to Henry W. Halleck, 20 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 858. For more on the Fifth United States Colored Troops, see Washington, *Eagles on Their Buttons*.
[34] Benjamin F. Butler Report, 17 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 845-847.

Union military, and their presence even attracted Federal operations to the county. When a small group of Unionists and "neutral" inhabitants living near Hintonsville discovered Jordan's body hanging in their neighborhood, they removed it and fashioned a coffin for the remains. The unfortunate residents then wrote Federal authorities proclaiming their own innocence in the matter and pleading ignorance in the hopes of avoiding further retribution at the hands of the Union government.[35] These Unionist and "neutral" community members expressed the same worries that John Pool had in his letter to Governor Vance about the Albemarle guerrillas in 1862. Pool had asserted that the independent operations of these irregulars could call down upon the whole locality a Union expedition that they could do nothing to stop. The irregulars were incapable of protecting the locality but could disrupt the lives of these citizens. In the words of General Wild, the community felt as though it had "two everchanging masters."[36]

Partisans displayed their power over the community through execution because it was their only recourse to Federal economic warfare and the destruction of the Confederate social order at the hands of black Union troops. They could not prevent the emancipation of slaves by Wild's soldiers, but they could publicly reassert the supremacy of white soldiers over black troops through an execution. Since guerrillas in Pasquotank operated as a wartime slave patrol, they were responsible for the preservation of slavery as a system.[37] Although they could not ensure the permanency of their racial hierarchy through force when faced with overwhelming Union military superiority, they could use execution of a black man as a symbolic gesture to reinforce racial order and attempt to

[35] James Forbes et al. to George W. Getty, 13 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 846.
[36] Edward Augustus Wild Report, 28 December 1863, E.A. Wild Papers, SHC.
[37] For a discussion of slave patrols in Virginia and the Carolinas, see Sally Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001).

shore up the damage done to the psyche of Southern planters. Confederate planters and yeomen were accustomed to commanding blacks as opposed to being dominated by them. In short, Samuel Jordan's execution symbolically reestablished the fragile antebellum racial order in the aftermath of its destruction. The hanging was an attempt, albeit weak, to show Union authorities that despite Federal military power, the Southern racial hierarchy could not be altered.

By late January, the incidents of the Wild raid were well-known in many parts of the American South and accounts of the raid grew more racist and ridiculous in the Southern press. "It is difficult to find words of description for the pictures, given us by our informant, of the wild and terrible consequences of the Negro raids in this obscure, but romantic theater of the war," penned one commentator from the *Charleston Mercury*. "The country is traversed by negro banditti; they burn houses, they enter the parlor of their masters; compel ladies to entertain them on the piano, and chuck them under the chin."[38] This analysis of black soldiers and their operations in Pasquotank prefaced the racial justification offered by Confederate authorities at the local and national level for the actions of pro-Confederate guerrillas in northeastern Carolina. Even though Confederate irregulars were operating in the county long before Wild and his soldiers arrived there to enforce Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, the subsequent events of the December 1863 occupation became the justification for all of the wrongs of the past year and a half committed by partisans.

In the aftermath of Pvt. Samuel Jordan's execution, the Confederate Congressional committee responded with two different explanations of Confederate irregular activity in the region. Like General Robert E. Lee's strategy for winning the war

[38] *Charleston Mercury*, 20 January 1864.

in Virginia, the investigating committee used an offensive defense of their irregular soldiers. By attacking Wild and his black troops, they could defend the misdeeds of their own partisan soldiers.

Confederate explanations of the Wild raid amounted to a frail legal defense of the irregulars closely followed by a racial justification for guerrilla violence. In his official report on the Bright execution Congressman W.N.H. Smith argued "that both the companies which the Federal officer designates as 'guerrillas,' commanded, the one by Captain Elliott [Pasquotank County], the other by Captain Sanderlin [Camden County], were raised in those counties, under authority of the Governor of North Carolina, for local defense and to repel invasions."[39] According to the Southern congressmen, these units "were duly organized, and their officers commissioned by [Governor Vance]; and for a year or more had been in the regular service of that State. At the time referred to they had been attached to, and formed part of, the Sixty-sixth [later mustered as Sixty-eighth] North Carolina Regiment, under command of Col. James W. Hinton."[40]

Hinton had asserted this same legal defense when he wrote Benjamin Butler about the raid in late January. "The Sixty-eighth Regiment of North Carolina State Troops...was organized under authority obtained from the Governor of the State, and its officers are regularly commissioned."[41] Essentially both Hinton and the government argued that since the officers were commissioned, the enlisted men could use whatever tactics were necessary to wage the war in their locality, including hit-and-run assaults on defenseless families.

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[39] Willis B. Sanderlin's company was recruited in Camden County. See, author's compiled database on Albemarle guerrillas and Jordan, Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 528-534.
[40] W.N.H. Smith, 10-17 February 1864, *Official Records*, Ser.2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 1128-1130.
[41] James W. Hinton to Benjamin F. Butler, 15 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 847.

At the local level, Colonel Joel R. Griffin of the Sixty-second Georgia Cavalry/Partisan Rangers articulated the Confederate feeling and prefaced the Congress's racial argument. "Probably no expedition during the progress of this war has been attended with more utter disregard for the long established usages of civilization, or the dictates of humanity, that was your late raid in the country bordering the Albermarle," wrote the Georgia colonel to General Wild. "You burned houses over the heads of defenceless women and children, carried off private property of every description, arrested non-combatants, and carried off ladies in irons, whom you confined with negro men." Griffin's outrage about the jailing of white women under black guards mirrored the sentiment of Confederate public who read about the incidents in the papers. This sexual innuendo became a powerful justification for the guerrillas' actions in the county. He also alleged that black soldiers' were uncontrollable in nature. "Your negro troops fired on Confederates after they had surrendered, and they were only saved by the exertions of the more humane of your white officers."[42] By reinforcing this image of undisciplined black troops harassing white women, Griffin provided a powerful rationalization for pro-Confederate guerrilla violence in the Albemarle district.

This legal defense of the guerrillas in the Albemarle was a weak one. Their own commanders had admitted just prior to Wild's raid that they did not have control over much of the available manpower in the region. And, even though Vance had sanctioned a unit in this portion of the state, it was not until January of 1864, after the execution of Daniel Bright, that this composite force, the Sixty-eighth North Carolina, actually mustered into service as a regular unit. Despite having regularly commissioned officers, the organization and conduct of these irregular Albemarle companies had been for more

[42] *Staunton Vindicator*, 29 January 1864.

than a year, anything but regular.[43] For this reason as well as their own racial beliefs, Confederates felt the need to attack black troops and offer a racial defense of irregular operations.

In a way, Wild's raid provided a convenient post facto justification for adopting guerrilla war to control the no man's land of northeastern North Carolina. Even though irregulars had been present long before Wild and his black soldiers arrived in the region, Confederate Congressional committee needed a convincing argument for the legitimacy of Daniel Bright's alleged activities and the events of the previous years. They could not prove Bright's legal status to Generals Butler and Wild who believed he was a deserter and guerrilla, and they could only offer a weak legal argument defending guerrilla violence in the county generally. Race became their trump card.

In their final report, the Confederate congressional committee meticulously reported the treatment of the two white women taken hostage. The women were "confined in a room without fire, bed, or bedding, with several male prisoners, and tied by the feet and hands." Phoebe Munden and Elizabeth Weeks "were constantly guarded, and neither [woman] was allowed to leave the room for the most necessary duty but in company with a negro armed soldier." "For a more minute recital of the indignities offered the sensibilities of the sex," the committee continued, "Mrs. Munden was in delicate health, was forced from a home immediately laid in ashes, with all it contained… and [she] passed several nights in the cheerless and cold apartment, to which she was confined at that inclement season, before the humanity of her captors was so far softened as to permit blankets to be furnished for her use." Moreover, "It has been represented to her husband that when Mrs. Munden was carried off her wrists were bleeding from the

[43] James W. Hinton to Benjamin F. Butler, 15 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 847.

stricture of the cords with which she was bound." All of these actions at the hands of General Wild's "African Brigade" were inflammatory for white Southerners.[44]

The Confederate congressional committee even cited a Northern account of the Wild raid from the *New York Daily News* as proof of rampant racial discord in Pasquotank. "Negroes were permitted to curse and abuse defenseless ladies, to strip them of their jewelry and clothing, and offer them indignities which would offend delicacy to repeat." The "indignities" which the newspapermen had in mind insinuated sexual interaction between black male captors and the two white female prisoners. The Northern paper described how "a small Confederate force captured two of [General Wild's] negroes, in a skirmish, and for this he outraged all the laws of civilized war. He arrested two ladies of high character, permitted a brutal negro soldiery to tie them hand and foot (as I believe and am credibly informed), and kept them in this condition for two days and nights."[45] These consistent references to bound women in the presence of African American men only served to enrage those who might otherwise question the appropriateness of Confederate irregular activity in the Albemarle as a violation of legal military conduct.

In the final report, the only eyewitness testimony from the county came from William J. Munden, the husband of one of the female hostages, who was himself an irregular soldier with Captain John T. Elliot's command, hardly an objective source on the incidents of the raid.[46] Munden recounted the events leading up to the execution of Samuel Jordan as he saw them but spent the majority of his deposition discussing the

[44] W.N.H. Smith, 10-17 February 1864, *Official Records*, Ser.2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 1128-1130.
[45] Ibid. One of these black soldiers apparently escaped. The other was Private Samuel Jordan of the Fifth United States Colored Troops, a unit recruited primarily from Ohio.
[46] W.N.H. Smith, 10-17 February 1864, *Official Records*, Ser.2, Vol. 6, pt. 1, 1130-1131.

treatment of his wife. “Both ladies [Phoebe Munden and Elizabeth Weeks] were tied by their hands and feet and detained three days, and were liberated only temporarily and to satisfy the calls of nature,” Munden explained to the investigating committee. “When permitted to leave for this purpose they were accompanied by a negro guard, who stood over them with muskets, and they were compelled to do this in a public street.” In the end, Confederate authorities spent the majority of their investigatory document outlining the alleged “brutalities” and abuses of the black soldiers in Wild’s command. They used these attacks on the United States Colored Troops as a way of sidestepping the issue of what really plagued the community of Pasquotank-guerrilla violence and the disorder it brought to the region.

The aftermath of Daniel Bright’s execution and General Edward Wild’s raid brought about community cooperation, public outrage and formal investigation. The citizens of Pasquotank County attempted to find a middle ground and their efforts reaped significant results. In January 1864, Colonel J.W. Hinton formally mustered the Sixty-eighth North Carolina State Troops into service. This brought Elliott’s company and several other irregular bands in the region under more strict control. The measure did not put an end to all guerrilla violence in the county; some partisans remained and continued to disrupt peace around Elizabeth City into 1864. Nevertheless, this action by Confederate authorities brought a majority of those men who had been heavily involved in rampant violence, under more stringent discipline.

Between January and February of 1864, General Butler rescinded Wild’s hanging notice for Phoebe Munden and Elizabeth Weeks and released from Norfolk both of these women as well as Nancy White, the woman captured during Colonel Alonzo Draper’s

expedition to Knott's Island in Currituck County.[47] Never again would Butler or any other Union authority send a major raid of black soldiers into the county. Although some smaller Union cavalry expeditions would return to hunt for irregulars in mid and late 1864, no expedition involving black soldiers would disrupt Pasquotank for the remainder of the conflict. General Wild would ultimately be court-martialed for another incident involving Confederate civilians and suffer censure for the remainder of the war in both the Northern and Southern press. In 1864, he ordered the whipping of a Virginia planter named William H. Clopton by his own freed slaves. Ultimately, a court-martial found Wild guilty of impropriety relating to this incident, but General Benjamin Butler overturned the conviction on a technicality. Despite the court-martial, Wild continued to serve in the Union army, winning distinction for successful battlefield exploits in the Petersburg Campaign. His commitment to black equality would be rewarded after the war; he served briefly as a supervisor with the Freedmen's Bureau in Georgia.[48]

Perhaps the most important effect of the Wild raid came in February 1864. During the same week that the Confederate Congress issued its investigation findings about the execution of Daniel Bright, a short debate took place over the now controversial 1862 Partisan Ranger Act. Guerrillas by this point had become an uncontrollable weapon in the Southern arsenal and a waste of limited Confederate manpower. For example, in the Albemarle country only five of at least eight guerrilla companies, formally mustered into Confederate service when the Southern government ordered it. And, the organization of

[47] It is not clear what date that Munden and Weeks were released in the *Official Records*; Nancy White, however, was released on 12 January 1864. Munden and Weeks were probably released sometime after their husbands received a letter from Benjamin Butler seeking a trade of the husbands for their wives as prisoners. See, E.A. Wild Report, 10 January 1864, E.A. Wild Papers, SHC; and Benjamin Butler to Lt. W.J. Munden and Pvt. Pender Weeks, 26 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 2, Vol. 6, 877-878; and Casstevens, 139-141.

[48] For a discussion of the incidents surrounding the remainder of Wild's military service and his 1864 court-martial, see Casstevens, 183-193, 214.

this unit, the Sixty-eighth North Carolina State Troops, took a year from the time Governor Vance initially ordered the partisans to meet.[49] The irregulars of the Albemarle were not responding to the Raleigh government and at times were not cooperating with military officials appointed to lead them. This same scenario was evident in many regions where guerrilla violence shattered the order of the Confederate home front. As a result, on 17 February 1864 the Southern Congress abolished authorized guerrilla service in the Confederacy.[50]

The principal congressman who investigated the Bright execution also sat on the committee that approved the bill to repeal the Partisan Ranger Act.[51] W.N.H. Smith sat on the military affairs committee and personally investigated the Bright hanging.[52] The suffering of Pasquotank citizens was the clearest and most immediate example of what guerrilla violence was doing to Confederate morale in areas on the periphery of Southern military control. The Southern legislative body took the only action they could to remedy the problem of undisciplined and disobedient pro-Confederate guerrillas. Even though it was far too late to stop guerrilla violence from spreading social disorder across the Southern landscape, the Confederate Congress ended the law which legalized a form of it. The situation that developed in Pasquotank County during the remainder of the war

[49] Guerrillas continued to roam in the region throughout the rest of the war, but the local citizens were successful in having the Confederate authorities remove the guerrilla bands of John Elliott (Pasquotank Co.), Caleb Walston (Camden and Currituck Co.), Willis Sanderlin (Camden Co.), Cyrus W. Grandy (Currituck Co.), and Richard Keogh (Chowan Co.) from the county by May of 1864. The companies of Captains Hughes, Etheridge and Coffey that were also mentioned in Wild's 28 December 1863 report were never mustered into formal Confederate service with the Sixty-eighth North Carolina or any other unit and probably remained on the home front for the remainder of the war. Also, see Clark, Vol. 3, 714.
[50] Jones, J. William et. al. ed. *Southern Historical Society Papers*, 52 vols. (Richmond, VA: 1876-1959). See, Confederate Congressional Minutes for 17 February 1864.
[51] See, Myers, "Controlling Chaos: Negotiated Conduct and White Identity in the Civil War South," 29.
[52] *Charleston Mercury*, 12 and 15 January 1864.

only reinforced the point that guerrilla violence in the Albemarle had left an indelible mark on the locality.

EPILOGUE

Ambiguous Loyalties in the North Carolina No Man's Land

For the remainder of the American Civil War, Pasquotank County endured the no man's land experience through political ambiguity. War weariness among the populace kept local violence to a lower level than during the first two and a half years of conflict, but military forces continued to visit the community. No other incidents of murder or execution were recorded for the rest of the war, but blockade running and Confederate confiscation of supplies continued in the county. Although Federal forces never again sent an incursion of African American soldiers into Pasquotank, expeditions into the county by Union and Confederate military personnel continued in 1864 and 1865. Confederate forces desperately needed supplies and Union forces sought to regulate impressments and guerrilla activity. The community as a whole used obfuscation of loyalty as a way of surviving the hostilities.

In late February 1864, following the repeal of the Partisan Ranger Act and the formal organization of John T. Elliott's band and other guerrilla companies from the region into a regiment, Confederate General George Pickett ordered Brigadier General Matt Ransom to raid into Pasquotank to secure supplies for starving Southern armies, especially bacon. Six regiments of North Carolina infantry (including Hinton's Sixty-eighth North Carolina State Troops) supported by cavalry and artillery visited the county from their bases west of the Chowan River. The raid lasted seventeen days and although

few extant sources discuss the outcome of this Confederate expedition, it clearly reinforced a feeling of instability among community members.[1]

Following the Ransom raid, Pasquotank continued to experience sporadic guerrilla activity from the small number of remaining irregular groups in northeastern Carolina, but the five most troublesome companies of irregulars (the men of Elliott, Walston, Grandy, Keogh, and Sanderlins' companies), who had joined the Sixty-eighth North Carolina, were sent out of the region. Throughout the first several months of 1864 these men camped west of the Chowan River in Northampton and Hertford counties.[2] In May 1864 the regiment was ordered west of the Chowan River permanently, and by July these troops roamed the region around Morganton in western North Carolina. The Sixty-eighth State Troops returned to the eastern half of North Carolina in December 1864 but spent the remainder of the conflict operating farther to the south around Kinston in Lenoir County.[3] But even with many of the irregulars gone from the region, the loyalty of Pasquotank citizens in 1864 and 1865 remained difficult to gauge.

For both the Union and Confederate authorities, the issue of Pasquotank County's loyalty never quite went away. In late July 1864, Union forces arrived in Elizabeth City and seized cotton, tobacco and other supplies from Pasquotank and the surrounding counties.[4] The Union soldiers in this expedition were astonished at what they found. "The people of Pasquotank, Perquimans, and Chowan Counties have treated my men so hospitably and entertained them in such a friendly manner that myself and command are

[1] George E. Pickett to James Seddon, 12 January 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 33, 1083. Also, see Jordan Jr. ed., *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster, Vol. XV, Infantry*, 517.
[2] Jordan Jr., 517
[3] Clark, Vol. 3, 717-718.
[4] The cotton and tobacco was likely from nearby Perquimans and Chowan counties but being stored at Elizabeth City for easy shipment out of the northeastern counties.

impressed with the conviction that by far the larger proportion of the people are loyal to the United States," wrote Brigadier General Israel Vodges the Union officer who replaced Benjamin Butler as commander of the Norfolk and Portsmouth garrison. He continued: "There is a deep Union feeling among at least three-fifths of the people." Nonetheless, the general also noted that "the guerrillas still infest the country through which our troops passed, the citizens of which express a great desire to be rid of them." Ultimately, Vodges requested permission from the head of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina to launch another incursion into the region. "If the commanding general could spare me 250 men of the Thirty-eighth U.S. Colored Regiment, who understand the country, and displayed much zeal on a former raid, to hunt these robbers and murderers out of the swamps to which they resort," wrote the officer.[5] "I have no doubt we can effectually rid the country of them. The citizens are robbed by these marauders and will do all in their power to put a stop to their further depredations."[6] There is no record of an expedition by the Thirty-eighth USCTs or any other black unit to the county in 1864 or 1865, but the Union incursions and the declarations of loyalty by both governments did not stop.

Strangely, in August 1864 Confederate officials also claimed that the majority of Pasquotank County citizens were loyal to their cause. W.N.H. Smith, the Confederate Congressman who represented northeastern Carolina, asserted his thoughts on the loyalty of his constituency. "This district has remained true and faithful under most adverse

[5] Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* vol. 3 (Des Moines, IA: Dyer Publishing Co., 1908), 1729-1730. Although the Thirty-eighth USCTs was stationed in the Norfolk and Portsmouth district, no record of a previous raid to Pasquotank involving them can be found. It is possible that the officer incorrectly requested the Thirty-eighth when he may have meant the Thirty-fifth or Thirty-sixth USCT regiments. These were the formal USCT designations for the First and Second North Carolina Colored Infantry that had served in Wild's unit during the December 1863 expedition. All three units were stationed in the Norfolk and Portsmouth area in early 1864.
[6] I. Vodges Report, 4 August 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 40, pt. 1, 820-821.

circumstances," wrote Smith. "Left beyond the protection of their own armies…and exposed to hostile raids, unchecked and destructive, they adhere to our fortunes and look confidently forward to the day of their deliverance. Nearly all their valuable slaves are gone, but these losses have not abated their patriotism." [7]

Both accounts of loyalty from the same region leave the historian somewhat perplexed as to the actual feeling of the population. Perhaps this confusion over loyalty is evidence that most people in the community were good at shifting their opinions as the situation required and that for those people caught between armed belligerents and guerrillas in the no man's land, surviving the war, no matter what it took, became their most important daily duty.

Ambiguous loyalty in Pasquotank is illustrated by one late war incident that occurred at Cloverdale plantation, the home of the Creecy family. In his discussion of the incident, Richard Benbury Creecy provided insight into how some pro-Confederates in Pasquotank dealt with Union occupation without forsaking their own allegiance to the South. During the Federal expedition in July 1864, Union soldiers went from farm to farm in search of supplies and irregular soldiers. Eventually the troops arrived at the home of Richard Creecy in the lower part of the Pasquotank County. As Union forces approached Cloverdale, Richard Creecy's son Edmund, wearing his grey Confederate uniform coat, ran into the woods to hide one of their prized animals. But on his way back to the house, Edmund ran into Federal soldiers coming down the road toward the Creecy home. The Union cavalry escorted Edmund back to his family's farm. When the Union soldiers rode up to the plantation house, they asked Richard Creecy if he had horses. Creecy stated that he had two, and the Union troops sent their farrier to ascertain the

[7] W.N.H. Smith, 31 August 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 4, Vol. 3, 614-615.

animals' usefulness. In a letter to his daughter Elizabeth, Richard described what followed. The Union officer in charge, "inquired of your Grandpa [Edmund Perkins] & myself our political sentiments—were we Union men to which we replied that we were for peace—with the mental reservation myself as to the kind of peace I was for." Following the loyalty inquiry, Creecy allowed the Union soldiers to roam through his fruit orchard and eat what they wanted. Ultimately, he was so affable toward the Union soldiers that they decided not to take any of his horses and left the property.

The Creecys considered themselves fortunate, especially given Edmund's attire on the day of the Yankee visit and his previous service with the irregulars (of which the Union soldiers were apparently unaware). Richard Creecy later wrote that it was probably Edmund's young age (fifteen or sixteen years old in August 1864) that was his saving grace. After that day, Creecy recorded that he heard from people all over the county that the Union soldiers "took horses without regard to political sentiment. Buffaloes [Unionist guerrillas] fared like others." This treatment of the community signaled a shift in military policy toward a broader strategy of hard war, and Creecy and his family were spared only because of their ambiguity about their political beliefs.[8]

In December 1864 Union authorities again returned to the region to hunt for guerrillas. This time the blue troops were guided by a local Unionist Thomas D. Sanders. Sanders guided the Union authorities to the homes of twenty irregulars in Perquimans and Chowan County. These men claimed to be members of Co. D, Sixty-sixth North Carolina, but it is not clear to which unit this group actually belonged, since the Sixty-

[8] Richard B. Creecy to Elizabeth Creecy, 1 August 1864, Creecy Family Papers, SHC.

sixth North Carolina Partisan Rangers had never entered the Confederate service.[9] Perhaps these men, like John Elliott's company formed in the hopes of joining the now defunct Partisan Ranger regiment and remained an independent company even after this unit's organization fell apart. Whatever the official status of these captured men, the incomplete Partisan Ranger unit that never mustered into Confederate service during the early war continued to leave behind a legacy of guerrilla violence in the form of independent guerrilla companies, not just in Pasquotank County but in the entire northeastern sector of North Carolina.[10]

This thesis has argued that the shifting tides of war shaped the daily lives of citizens in Pasquotank County. As the dynamics of power changed on the North Carolina coast, so did the experiences of citizens in this community, which was peripheral to both Union and Confederate war efforts. After the fall of Elizabeth City in 1862, Pasquotank experienced constant raids from both Union forces and a coalescing guerrilla resistance. Between 1862 and 1863, the irregular conflict steadily developed into a pattern of retaliatory attacks whereby guerrilla and regular forces, murdered and executed local white men.

Edward Wild's December 1863 incursion threw all of these factors into graphic relief and demonstrated the problems of employing a pragmatic policy of violence toward Southern civilians in the context of guerrilla war. Daniel Bright's execution and the seizure of white female hostages demonstrated Union military's power over the community and communicated a powerful point about appropriate conduct during war.

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[9] Crute, 243. The Sixty-sixth North Carolina States Troops that had mustered into Confederate service ahead of James Hinton's command was then serving in Virginia. Therefore, it is doubtful that these men were part of that organization.

[10] H.G.O. Weymouth, 10 December 1864, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, Vol. 42, pt. 1, 962-963.

The guerrilla retaliation for Bright's execution attempted to reestablish a racial hierarchy erased by Wild's raid and the freeing of the black labor force in the county. Samuel Jordan's execution was a reassertion of racial power in a community familiar with power reversals. The violence of the Wild raid and guerrilla war of 1862 and 1863 left the community war-weary and willing to consider another option, public neutrality.[11] The meetings in the aftermath of the raid sent committees to Raleigh and Fort Monroe, Virginia seeking the end of guerrilla violence and a peaceful middle position between armed belligerents. The final year and a half of the war produced fewer historical sources for examination, but it demonstrated one clear pattern ambiguous loyalty in the face of continued shifts in military power.

The executions of Daniel Bright and Samuel Jordan were messages to the community, one about appropriate conduct the other about the racial hierarchy in this Southern locality. Wild's hanging of Bright was a condemnation of guerrilla violence and Jordan's hanging by the guerrillas was a retaliatory act denying the legitimacy of black soldiers while reasserting white power. The public execution in both cases became a cultural message about race and irregular activity in war. Executions were meant to enforce a particular type of conduct and order upon Pasquotank County. That these hangings took place in a community caught between two military forces continuously vying for control only demonstrates the importance of why attempting to find a middle path politically became important to this community in December 1863.

Wild's raid and the execution of Daniel Bright fit into the growing Civil War historiography on the military's treatment of civilians. This incident occurred during a

[11] For an analysis of obfuscation, ambiguous loyalties, and attempts to find neutrality in Missouri's guerrilla war, see Fellman, 44-52.

transitional period in Union military policy between pragmatism and hard war. General Wild's use of both pragmatic and hard war tactics during his raid help scholars understand how Union generals reacted both to Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863 and the birth of widespread Confederate guerrilla violence after the summer of 1862. Wild's troops demonstrated pragmatic restraint in their use of violence by targeting only those citizens who were supporters of the irregular forces. General Wild's use of both hostage taking and highly selective execution were examples of a measured application of force meant to deal with the difficult problem of guerrillas without the use of wanton destruction.

On the other hand, Wild's heavy handedness in his emancipation of all slaves was a hard war tactic designed to cripple the local economy of Unionists and Confederates while driving fear into the heart of Southern slaveholders in Pasquotank County. Historian Mark Grimsley has described the Union hard war strategy of 1864 and 1865 as "actions against Southern civilians and property made expressly in order to demoralize Southern civilians and ruin the Confederate economy."[12] Because of its economic warfare and heavy handedness in Camden and Currituck counties, Wild's expedition fits within this definition and therefore is an early example of hard war in the eastern theater. But, if the reader takes into account both the application of violence and the use of economic warfare, Wild's raid constituted elements of both hard war and pragmatic policy during a transitional phase in the eastern theater of war.

[12] Grimsley, 3. Grimsley argues the Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation destroyed the policy of conciliation toward Southern civilians in existence before July 1862. But, he argues that the Proclamation itself did not inaugurate hard war since it was not forced upon Southerners at the point of the bayonet in the eastern theater until 1864. Grimsley believes the Proclamation alone without enforcement did little to harm the Southern economy and therefore did not inaugurate hard war. I argue that Wild's raid is an early exception to his periodization of hard war as it relates to forced emancipation.

The political history of Pasquotank demonstrated the wide spectrum of loyalties possible in a Southern community. During the antebellum period, concern over controlling black labor and slave insurrection led to significant debate over the sectional issues of the 1850s. Local Whig politicians mitigated the influence of disunionists throughout the 1850s and during the voting of the 1860 and 1861. But after President Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops in April 1861, the community split over the issues of secession and slavery. A period of uncertainty began for Unionists after the fall of Elizabeth City in 1862 and guerrilla violence began shortly afterward. A minority of Unionists remained in the community throughout the conflict but determining loyalties from the outside became steadily more difficult as the war moved into 1863 and 1864. The community's attempt to negotiate neutrality in the wake of the Wild raid ultimately failed in 1864, but citizens gained important concessions from both governments, including the removal of some guerrillas and protection from future large scale Union expeditions by black troops. Events also demonstrated the agency of the community in the face of war and violence. Southerners on the home front were not helpless bystanders waiting to be acted upon; they were participants in their local war, shaping it throughout the conflict. By 1864, loyalties were ambiguous in the county. Individuals remained divided, but the majority of citizens were unwilling to voice their loyalties publicly for fear of reprisal.

Race also played a major role in shaping the community's response to war. Pasquotank's white population had a long history of unease with its free and slave black inhabitants. The divided white population saw some of their antebellum fears come to fruition when black soldiers arrived in their community under the command of a zealous

abolitionist from Massachusetts. Wild allowed the black soldiers of his command (some of whom had previously been subordinate laborers in Pasquotank) to free the remaining slaves in the region and impress the property of those people Wild suspected of disloyalty. This flipped the antebellum social and racial order on its head. Despite their shock at seeing their labors as soldiers, the white population of the county also must have been surprised at the restraint of black soldiers in their use of violence. Wild's troops did not wantonly attack slaveholders, and outside the counter-guerrilla activities of General Wild, no acts of violence against citizens were reported. Furthermore, Wild's raid was one of the first examples of black soldiers being used in a major operation to free African Americans from bondage. Wild's expedition was also likely the first major expedition in the eastern theater of the war where black soldiers operated as counter-guerrillas forces. Nevertheless, during the raid the use of violence by the black soldiers was restrained and selective.

The hallmark of Pasquotank's local war experience and the primary reason for Daniel Bright's execution was guerrilla activity. The primary guerrilla band in Pasquotank, John T. Elliott's company had a complicated organizational history that blurs the neat definitional lines that historians have established for the Civil War's guerrilla conflict. Elliott's Pasquotank partisans were self-constituted, operating as an independent infantry company after their formal exchange in August of 1862. They were unresponsive to North Carolina and Confederate authority. But in early 1863, these men attempted to join a Partisan Ranger regiment. Even after they mustered as a company for the Sixty-sixth North Carolina Partisan Rangers, the unit remained largely unresponsive to Confederate authority until late 1863 and early 1864. During most of 1863, Elliott's

men operated independently from Confederate or state authority in the same way that many guerrilla units in Appalachia or Missouri did during the conflict. Elliott's men behaved much more like these self-constituted units than like John Singleton Mosby's well-disciplined Partisan Rangers in northern Virginia. In the end, Elliott's men were never formally accepted into the Confederate service as part of a Partisan Ranger regiment, and they did not officially join the Confederate/North Carolina state service until January 1864.

Both the pattern of Elliott's activities and the makeup this guerrilla group provide further understanding of Pasquotank's local war. During their independent operations, Elliott's guerrillas and the Federal occupying forces demonstrated a willingness to participate in a pattern of retaliatory violence despite its effects on the local community. The economic and social background of the guerrillas suggests that these men were both young and poor, many of whom were not even heads of household. These findings fit more with what historian Michael Fellman has found among young, idealistic Missouri partisans as opposed to the older and more economically stable irregulars studied by Kenneth Noe in western Virginia and Appalachia.[13] Finally, I assert that the danger from guerrilla violence in the county came principally because guerrillas were both part of the community and outside of it. These men slipped back and forth across the line of community member and outsider as they slipped in and out of their swamp hideouts.

The Civil War history of Pasquotank and the execution of Daniel Bright demonstrate one point clearly: the endurance of the Southern community at war. Personal relationships, despite divided political loyalties, racial fear, and guerrilla violence, mitigated some of war's cruelty after chaotic events. Early in the war, Unionist citizen

[13] Noe, 5-26; Fellman, 132-148.

Josiah Simmons was saved from a Confederate vigilance committee because of his local friendships. During the December 1863 raid, Unionists like Dr. William G. Pool likely directed General Wild toward the guerrillas in their midst and away from peaceable Union and neutral citizens. Following the incidents of the Wild raid, the entire community exhibited commitment to order by putting aside or postponing abstract national loyalties for immediate local stability.

When put under extreme pressure, it was the entire community that came together to preserve order. Having lost their labor force and with no effective protection from any source, these citizens developed a third option of public neutrality between two armed belligerents. After neutrality failed and raids continued, ambiguous loyalty became the defense of the community as a whole. Although many individual citizens continued to show strong fidelity to either the Union or Confederate cause when in the presence of military authorities from one side or the other, determining the general loyalty of the area became virtually impossible for outside observers. In short, the intersection of power reversals, divided political loyalty, racial fear and guerrilla violence created by mid-1864 ambiguous loyalties on this particular home front. Politically divided Pasquotank County, the one-time home of executed yeoman Daniel Bright, continued to endure and find new strategies to cope with war during the final year and a half of conflict.

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APPENDIX

Practical Lessons for the United States Marine Corps Taken From an Analysis of the Guerrilla War in Northeastern North Carolina during the 1860s

The United States Marine Corps has been and continues to be the premier fighting force among America's military branches. During numerous small and asymmetric conflicts over the past two-hundred years, the Marine Corps has faced the difficult problem of guerrilla forces with determination and resolve. Throughout the research and writing phases of my thesis project, the present struggle of American marines and other military personnel in Iraq has never been far from my thoughts. I continue to closely study the efforts by the United States military to deal with this intractable problem, and the following reflection will highlight some of the similarities and differences between the Iraqi conflict and the Confederate guerrilla war in northeastern North Carolina. By drawing parallels between both counter-guerrilla efforts, I hope that this analysis of my thesis findings will illustrate that the problems the American military now faces in Iraq are not new but, in fact, quite old.

At the very least, this thesis can teach the general public something more about what marines have faced and are facing in a guerrilla war. This section of the project allows me to take time and reflect upon the possible insight which my study of guerrilla war can add to the current counter-insurgency effort in Iraq. While this analysis does not answer all of the complex problems of guerrilla violence, my research on counter-guerrilla efforts in North Carolina during the Civil War can provide valuable lessons to the careful military historian who searches for them.

What can the guerrilla war in northeastern North Carolina during the 1860s teach us today about how to conduct a successful counter-guerrilla effort?

1. Familiarity with the social and cultural environment of the area where guerrillas operate is crucial for counter-guerrilla and counter-insurgency operations.

   Understanding the labor system of slavery and race relations enabled Union commanders to use a measured level of violence and hostage taking to send the guerrillas powerful messages. While the seizure of white women at the hands of black soldiers inflamed the Confederate press, it also caused the death of Union soldier Samuel Jordan. By using these tactics Union soldiers frightened the Confederate population, but they did not quell the guerrillas. They may have only caused more violence. In Pasquotank, the belligerents spoke the same language so this was not an obstacle, but it is highly important that present day military personnel speak the language and culture of their enemies and friends in country to deal with the threats effectively.

2. Familiarity with physical environment of the region or country in which counter-guerrilla forces operate is essential.

   The Great Dismal Swamp played a major role in providing shelter for the guerrillas of northeastern Carolina. Just as present day guerrillas in Iraq use urban environments to protect their activities, pro-Confederate irregulars in northeastern Carolina used their knowledge of local swamps to create safe havens during their operations. The partisans in Pasquotank used the environment as a psychological weapon after they launched attacks along roads surrounded by woods and then disappeared into the swamps where pursuit was difficult.

3. Sensitivity to the treatment of the civilian population living near the guerrillas is required for adequate intelligence.

   The loyal Unionist citizens of Pasquotank County provided intelligence to General Wild about who was a guerrilla or guerrilla sympathizer. He used a list developed through this intelligence in order to target the guerrilla families with counter-guerrilla operations. By protecting these loyalists, Wild received vital information for his efforts.

4. Sensitivity to treatment of civilians is necessary to prevent growth of the guerrilla forces due to disaffection.

   Guerrilla forces often grow through disaffection with the present security situation in a given area. This is definitely true of northeastern Carolina. After the fall of Elizabeth City in February 1862, guerrillas emerged to coerce the Unionist population and slaves into submission and to combat the external threat of Union raiders and recruiters. Union forces along the eastern coast of North Carolina failed to protect the communities of the coast once they were rested from Confederate army control. Had an area in the northeastern six counties of North Carolina been permanently occupied, Union forces may have prevented or undermined a guerrilla resistance by providing security and order for the system of slavery that the Confederate government no longer could. After 1863 and the Emancipation Proclamation a resistance may have developed, but by this point, Union forces would have been well established with the local population for intelligence purposes.

5. Protection of loyal civilians from guerrillas is vital to the success of restoring government, order and defeating the guerrilla militarily.

   The civilians of Pasquotank, even the ones who were pro-Confederate, sometimes suffered at the hands of guerrillas. Union military commanders capitalized on this at times during their counter-guerrilla efforts, but they failed partially because they also destroyed and impressed property of civilians. They had very little choice because of the Confederate government’s use of these supplies.

6. The battle for the hearts and minds (or simply loyalty during the Civil War) of the civilian population cannot be won through military force alone. It must also involve political and diplomatic efforts to deal with the local population.

   By 1864, the majority of local civilians in Pasquotank became so war weary from constant harassment by both sides that they ultimately sought neutrality and removal from the violence not loyalty or friendship with Union military personnel.

7. The military forces engaging irregular forces must understand not just the culture and physical surroundings of the enemy guerrillas, but they must also be familiar with the enemy's political objectives, reasoning and ultimate goals.

   Throughout this thesis, I have avoided using the term insurgent to describe the guerrilla forces in northeastern Carolina because the ultimate overthrow of an existing government was not the primary goal of North Carolina irregular forces. I have consistently applied the terminology: irregular, partisan or guerrilla. These terms more accurately define the resistance movement that developed in the counties studied. The Confederate forces in the northeastern counties were not ideologically sophisticated, but they did articulate two clear political goals. First, the guerrillas desired a Confederate government or an autonomous North Carolina authority that was permanently established separate from the United States. Second, the irregulars desired to preserve the existing racial hierarchy in their community (primarily the fragile system of both free black and slave labor that was subordinate to white authorities).

8. The use of specialized military units may be necessary to adequately deal with the problem of guerrilla violence.

   In Pasquotank County, Edward Wild used a new weapon that Confederate guerrillas had never faced-- local black soldiers. Black soldiers recruited from the northeastern Carolina coast were not only familiar with the culture and physical environment, but they also knew many of the local white citizens. This enabled General Wild to more easily determine the loyalty of the civilian populace. Furthermore, black soldiers were equally skilled in the swampy environment of Pasquotank County from their days serving as laborers and shingle-gathers in the region. Finally, the presence of black soldiers was a psychological blow to Confederate guerrillas in the counties because they represented the important racial order of Pasquotank County being turned on its head. In short, the presence of black soldiers demonstrated that guerrillas were not capable of protecting the Confederate community.

9. Numerically superior forces are vital to a successful counter-guerrilla effort.

   Conventional wisdom for fighting an unconventional war suggests that between ten and twenty times the force of the irregulars is needed to subdue the guerrillas

and protect the area of operation. In northeastern Carolina, guerrillas numbered somewhere between 500 and 1000 men. General Wild's troops numbered around 1800. Even if we accept the lower figure of 500 irregulars, General Wild only had about a three to one advantage, hardly a ratio for a successful operation that would have destroyed all of existing Confederate guerrilla forces.

10. The structure of the military forces involved in counter-guerrilla maneuvers must be capable of rapid response to threats that could appear at any point in the region of operation.

    In northeastern Carolina, the force structure that Wild used demonstrated mixed capabilities. At times, his men seemed agile and capable of rapidly responding in small groups to guerrilla attacks from neighborhood swamps. After the troops were on fatigue duty for several days, the men seemed lethargic and incapable of responding. Wild's leadership and determination along with his troops desire to prove their worth as good soldiers drove his brigade beyond the point when most regular Union troops would have succumbed to physical exhaustion. Clearly, a redesigned force structure that allowed for sustained, independent unit operations as well as regular rotation of fresh forces into the Pasquotank swamps would have made the counter-guerrilla operation more successful.