

WEARING THE MASK OF NATIONALITY LIGHTLY:  
THE EFFECTS OF UNION OCCUPATION DURING THE CIVIL WAR

by

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(Under the Direction of John C. Inscoe)

ABSTRACT

This is the story of two communities, Carteret and Craven County, at the southern tip of North Carolina's Outer Banks, and how the experience of Union military occupation shaped the inhabitants and the soldiers who occupied the region. Occupied in March 1862, both communities remained under Union occupation for the remainder of the war. The white residents had a strong streak of pre-war Unionism, and appeared to welcome the Union soldiers when they first arrived. However, by 1865, these residents would alter their allegiance and develop a strong sense of southern nationalism as a result of what they perceived as a harsh, oppressive, and racially radical occupation. African Americans in the region utilized Union soldiers to empower themselves and gain independence and autonomy in the face of white hostility, while prolonged occupation duty caused many negative reactions from the Union soldiers who had to act as administrators and policemen in the region. There was a symbiotic relationship between military and civilian forces during and after the war. The individual and collective actions that local white residents, slaves, and soldiers took affected the economic, social, political, and cultural dynamics of the region. After the war, whites furiously sought to re-establish racial control, and held inhabitants accountable for their wartime actions, presaging why Reconstruction would be so difficult in the region and the South. This work traces the development of white Confederate and Unionist loyalties in both regions, shedding light on the nature of Unionism and southern identity formation. Writ large, this work utilizes the experience of two adjacent communities to offer new directions in which to view the construction of personal and national identities as well as the nature of military occupation in the Civil War and beyond.

INDEX WORDS: Civil War, Unionism, Occupation, Reconstruction, Racism, Loyalty, Emancipation, New Bern, Beaufort, Ambrose Burnside, Edward Stanly, Guerrilla warfare

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who always believed that I would “go all the way.”

Jason Browning (1945-1994)

Joann Browning (1946-1992)

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## INTRODUCTION

As Sidney Andrews made his way through the coastal towns of Beaufort and New Bern, North Carolina, in the summer of 1865, during his tour of the southern states immediately after the cessation of hostilities, he was struck by the janus-faced loyalty of local whites, many of whom had lived seemingly rather docilely, at least from his northern journalist's point of view, under the past three years of Union occupation. He described a puzzling irony in the region: "the North Carolinian calls himself a Unionist, but he makes no special pretence of love for the Union." Andrews already detected a streak of southern nationalism developing in the Beaufort-New Bern region only weeks after the southern nation had been laid to rest. Andrews sensed that white professions of Unionism were thinly-veiled at best. The journalist employed an apt metaphor to describe the waning strength of national allegiance in the region and state, proclaiming that the North Carolinian "wears his mask of nationality so lightly there is no difficulty in removing it."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, many North Carolinians, but especially whites in the Beaufort-New Bern region had been wearing masks and changing one for another for the previous five years. Local whites had professed themselves Unionists before the war. New Bern residents began calling for secession soon after Lincoln's election, but their Beaufort neighbors maintained a steady conditional Unionism until Lincoln called for troops on April 15, 1861. Then residents of both towns removed their Union masks, and eagerly put on Confederate ones. Only a year later, when the Union army arrived to occupy the region, many white residents, upon being promised enhanced economic benefits coupled with the social *status quo ante bellum*, quietly put their

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<sup>1</sup> Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War, As Shown by Fourteen Weeks of Travel and Observation in Georgia and the Carolinas*, with an introduction by David Donald (rev., Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1971), 392.

Confederate masks into storage, and donned the old, familiar Union mask once again. However, by the time Andrews visited in 1865, he sensed that many of those same residents had already taken their Confederate masks down from the attic and dusted them off. They wore their Union mask of nationality so lightly, that there indeed was no difficulty in removing it. If the new post-war Union included emancipation, enfranchisement, black education, and threats of social equality, then whites would strip those masks off and show their true allegiance, identifying with the ideals—especially white supremacy—of the now defunct Confederacy.

This work analyzes the symbiotic relationship between military and civilian forces in two coastal North Carolina communities, Carteret and Craven counties (concentrating primarily on their respective county seats of Beaufort and New Bern), during Union military occupation in the Civil War. Union forces marched into New Bern on March 14, 1862, and Beaufort on March 25, 1862, marking the beginning of an occupation that would last the rest of the war. With Union occupation came thousands of Federal soldiers, government officials, and missionaries. For the next three years, residents of Beaufort and New Bern would question their own loyalties, and negotiate with their occupiers and each other in an effort to carve out social, cultural, and political identities. During the occupation, a degree of cultural exchange took place, whereby the northern soldiers and the southern white and black residents interacted on both personal and political levels. Writ large, this work utilizes the experience of two adjacent communities to offer new directions in which to view the construction of personal and national identities as well as the nature of military occupation in the Civil War and beyond.

This study is social history that fits into two historiographical trends. It is simultaneously a community study and part of the larger trend described as “new military history,” analyzing the effects of war on society, the nature of civil-military relations, and engaging in a social analysis

of the military and civilian participants involved. It also holds military soldiers and local residents—white and black, men and women—accountable for their actions, and does not view them simply as pawns in a larger power struggle, or as passive recipients of larger, impersonal historical forces. This work not only explores why local residents, slaves, and soldiers took the actions they did, but also analyzes how their actions affected the economic, social, political, and cultural dynamics of the region.

There is much value in focusing on one specific geographic region in order to analyze the broad theme of military occupation. One can get to know that particular region intimately, and therefore track the change over time that characterized military occupation. Daniel Sutherland, in an influential essay, suggested that if historians wished to get “the real war into books,” they need to explore the effect of the war on civilians; one method would be through “a reconstruction of the stories of individual communities and their inhabitants.” Sutherland argued, “One must watch, weigh, measure, evaluate the consequences of war as they affected a single concentrated area and the people, soldiers, and civilians, who occupied it.” In this work, I have heeded Sutherland’s advice to analyze a concentrated area and the people who occupied it, be they civilians or soldiers, white or black, male or female. The region serves as an excellent case study not only because it foreshadows the difficulties surrounding Federal Reconstruction policies, but also because it reveals the complex nature of wartime occupation and complicates our understanding of what it meant to be a Unionist.<sup>2</sup>

This work also serves as a suitable response to Maris Vinovskis’s question: “Have social historians lost the Civil War?” Since Vinovskis issued his challenge, many historians have taken

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Sutherland, “Getting the ‘Real War’ into the Books,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98 (April 1990): 200-201. Sutherland heeded his own advice, writing the admirable community study of Culpeper County, Virginia: *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995).

up their pen to analyze civilian and community life, as well as provide more social analysis about soldiers during the war—utilizing the analytical lenses of race, class, and gender often to admirable effect. There have even been several scholarly studies of military occupation, but few scholars have attempted to comprehensively analyze how the experience of military occupation affected all civilian and military participants in a region. This work attempts to undertake such a task, and concomitantly complements some, challenges others, and gives flesh and blood to still other historical examinations of occupation and the civil war.<sup>3</sup>

This work gives a “bottom-up” complement to Mark Grimsley’s “top-down” exploration of the shift in Union military policy from a conciliatory to a harsher tone. While Grimsley, in *The Hard Hand of War* (1995), analyzes policy decisions from within the Union command structure, my work offers a first hand, ground-level account of how and why that policy shifted in one location, suggesting that the reasons for the shift in policy were not so clear-cut as Grimsley asserted. As a local study, this work also is able to offer a concentrated point of perspective to supplement the broad strokes that Stephen V. Ash painted in his exploration of southern reaction to occupation, *When the Yankees Came* (1995). While Ash conceives of southern reaction in largely manichean terms, as either violent or sympathetic, this work reveals the fact that southern reactions were flexible, and could shift over time, depending on the circumstances of occupation.<sup>4</sup>

This work also offers a unique contribution to the growing literature on southern Unionism; it examines the nature of Unionism in an area under direct Union control, offering some similarities, but more remarkable contrasts to southern Unionists in other regions,

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<sup>3</sup> Maris Vinovskis, “Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War? Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations,” *Journal of American History* 76 (June 1989): 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

especially in Appalachia. Unionist sentiment tended to be fluid in the Carteret-Craven region, and only in rare cases rooted in strong ideological convictions. Instead, many outside factors mitigated for or against Unionist sentiment—property protection, economic benefits, and racial dominance. This offers a strikingly different interpretation of the nature of Unionism than other recent scholarly works on the subject.<sup>5</sup>

Equally important to this story is the experience of the African American population. Much has been written on the African American experience during wartime, even during occupation, however, most scholarly works have been concerned with how Union agents proscribed black freedom and autonomy. Instead of examining how events affected blacks, this work focuses on blacks as savvy pragmatists who utilized the Union army and agents of northern benevolent societies to attain the four pillars of their empowerment: escape, employment, enlistment, and education. Blacks enjoyed much success in those years of the war when they were able to assert their independence, confident in the support of the Federal government.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In particular this work challenges some interpretations put forth in the following works: Margaret M. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Thomas G. Dyer, *Secret Yankees: The Union Circle in Confederate Atlanta* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). For other works on Unionism in which this study engages, see Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the nineteenth century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Richard N. Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992); John C. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer, eds., *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001). See Chapters 2, 3, and 6 of this dissertation.

<sup>6</sup> This work engages and challenges the interpretative analysis put forth in the following works: Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999; originally pub., 1964); Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, chap. 5; Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1973); Ira Berlin, *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992); Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981); Julia Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); Patricia C. Click, *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

At the outbreak of war, the white residents of North Carolina's Craven and Carteret Counties were largely representative of those from the state's coastal counties, who historically voted Whig, were not major cotton producers, and felt they had much to lose from secession due to their mercantile ties to the Atlantic world. Initial resistance to secession evaporated in the aftermath of Fort Sumter in April 1861. When President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to help put down the southern rebellion, Carteret and Craven residents joined their North Carolina brethren in rejecting Lincoln and embracing the cause of the Confederacy. By June, hundreds of local residents had enlisted in companies for the Confederate cause.

Yet for all this initial enthusiasm, Union occupation in March 1862 forced the creation of another new identity as white residents tried to portray themselves as loyal to the United States. President Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet ministers anticipated the majority of local whites citizens would be loyal, and expected to utilize this sentiment to foster a harmonious restoration. In May 1862 Lincoln appointed a native son, Edward Stanly, as Military Governor of the state with orders to enforce North Carolina state laws, as they existed prior to the war. Early results seemed positive, but the experience of Union occupation would ultimately lead to complicated relations and allegiances between occupiers and occupied. Residents (even Unionists) altered their allegiances over perceived arbitrary uses of Federal power and serious disagreements over racial policies.

I analyze how Union occupation affected the residents of this lower coastal Carolina region, and place their experiences in the context of the Civil War South. How did their lives change and how did they adapt to new stresses? How did they negotiate with their occupiers to create their own space? Whites and blacks forged new identities for themselves in the tense atmosphere of change. Freedmen sought to attain autonomy over their own lives and assert their

independence, especially among their former masters. Whites took oaths of allegiances and proclaimed themselves Unionists, though such claims did not necessarily reveal any ideological or patriotic motivations. Both whites and blacks sought to create circumstances that allowed them to provide the best means for them to support themselves and their families. Both knew what they wanted, and were cognizant of the risks inherent in their choices.

Though each group sought to protect their own self-interests, they had multiple, often divergent, motivations behind their actions. Many wealthy white merchants found themselves embracing their occupiers, largely for financial reasons. Other locals gave lip service to the Union in order to protect their personal property, while their true allegiance lay with the Confederacy. Those without property to protect, local poor whites, took advantage of the Union army's arrival and invitations to improve their economic and physical situation. Unlike the economic and survivalist pragmatism that motivated whites, African Americans who migrated to or inhabited the Beaufort-New Bern region demonstrated a multi-faceted array of motivations for their actions. Repudiating their slave heritage, African Americans sought control over their own bodies, minds, and material conditions. They asserted their independence and embraced the rights and privileges that deserved to come with freedom, demonstrated their manhood, self-sufficiency, and improved the educational and material conditions of themselves and their children. Their actions, both symbolic and physical, often led to violent conflict with local whites, confrontations that strained the Union occupiers' ability to administer the region and preserve harmony in the local society, especially as local whites became increasingly hostile toward African American assertions of independence.

Many works have been written on southern communities at war, from every part of the southern geography. Community studies increasingly saturate the Civil War field, with a

remarkable diversity that proves more and more William Freehling's assertion that there was no "monolithic" South, but "various Souths."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, much has been written specifically on the effect of Union occupation on southern communities. This dissertation moves beyond this concentration on just the southern community and simultaneously focus the analytical lens on the northern people who occupied the South.

For Union soldiers, the experience of occupation altered their understandings of national and racial identities. Many soldiers, even some of the hardest abolitionists, could not immediately overcome their racial prejudices—a condition Harriet Beecher Stowe had so ably captured in her famous anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In the novel, New Orleans slaveholder and general *bon vivant* Augustine St. Clare chastises his dour Vermont cousin, Miss Ophelia, who found little Eva St. Clare's close personal interaction with Uncle Tom to be "so dreadful." "I have often noticed, in my travels north, how much stronger [prejudice against blacks] was with you than with us," spoke St. Clare. "You loathe them as you would a snake or a toad, yet you are indignant at their wrongs. You would not have them abused; but you don't want to have anything to do with them yourselves." St. Clare might have been speaking to the majority of anti-slavery Union soldiers who entered the region.<sup>8</sup> Many found their convictions tested and their patriotism weakened in the face of the local hostility, petty tyrannies of army life, and unrelenting monotony of occupation. Regardless of the strength of their commitment to ultimate victory, Union soldiers found that the experience of occupation had changed them significantly, especially altering their initial idealistic views of the war, their enemies, African Americans, and their government's national policies.

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<sup>7</sup> William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1789-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), vii-ix

<sup>8</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: or, Life Among the Lowly* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986; originally published in 1852), 273.



The question of military occupation, and its multi-faceted social, economic, political, and cultural effects, has an extraordinary relevance to our modern world. The United States is becoming an occupying force all over the world. This work not only offers a new way of looking at the American Civil War, but also gives a contemporary significance to an age-old policy. Perhaps the experiences of the U.S. military in the Civil War can offer valuable lessons to twenty-first century Americans, as well as positively influence Federal policy decisions. It also offers useful lessons for political science, international relations, and sociology. Examining the historical nature of occupation can only enhance our modern understanding of this controversial policy, especially by examining such questions as: What does the experience of occupation do to the occupier? What values do they bring to the foreign land; what values do they take from it? How do their lives and their views of American society and national policies change as a result of their intensive interaction with a subjected people?

Finally, this is a story of how local whites manipulated, challenged, and endured Union occupation, and ultimately managed successfully to relegate blacks to a subordinate position in society. Northerners brought benevolent ideas of education, emancipation, and economic opportunity, but also brought their crippling prejudice. Just as William Sherman eventually adopted a policy of employing blacks and encouraging runaways primarily to weaken the southern war effort, Union policy in eastern North Carolina was more one of war necessity than one of an earnest attempt to uplift degraded slaves into a measure of social equality.<sup>9</sup> The white occupiers raised black hopes of equality but ultimately relegated them to a subservient labor force. Union troops sought only to free them from slavery, but preferred to impose their own

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Fellman, *Citizen Sherman: A Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 1995), 149-170.

version of a proper hierarchical society. In the end, the Federal government abandoned the Reconstruction experiment it had begun in 1862, believing the cost was not worth the reward.

The irony for Carteret and Craven County is that white residents were more firmly sympathetic with the Confederacy at the war's end, than they had ever been during the heady days of secession. Only *conditional Confederates* in 1861, they became *confirmed Confederates* during the very Union occupation that was supposed to cultivate and encourage Unionist feeling among the local inhabitants. Local whites resented the perceived radical racial policies of the Federal government. Most scholars, while debating the merits and efficacy of Union policy towards African Americans, have ignored the degree to which the sentiments of southern Unionists (whether staunch or lukewarm) were altered by the emerging assertions of freedpeople to their rights—assertions that were supported in large measure by the Union army.<sup>10</sup> Federal policies and local Union enforcement created the sentiments that would foster a combative postwar experience in the region. Instead of serving as a model of how benevolent Union occupation could foster harmony in the South, these counties became two of the more hostile regions to the Federal government during Reconstruction in North Carolina.<sup>11</sup>

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Southern novelist Eudora Welty wrote, “One place comprehended can make us understand other places better. Sense of place gives equilibrium; extended, it is sense of direction, too.” Such is the goal of this dissertation: to understand the complex interactions in one southern place in order to learn more about the people, the times, and the nation as it played out its national internal conflict in microcosm. This work also seeks to understand the

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<sup>10</sup> Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 11153; Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman*, 32; C. Vann Woodward, “Equality: the Deferred Commitment,” in Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 69-88.

<sup>11</sup> Roberta Sue Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen: Race Relations During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 16, 44-45.

uniqueness of the localized experience, as well as place the coastal North Carolina Civil War experiences in context of the universal experience of wartime, occupation, and the effects they have on the occupied and occupiers throughout American history.

This is a story of whites and blacks, men and women, soldiers and civilians, rebels and Unionists, Confederates and Federals, all trying to carve out a social and cultural space for themselves during a tense time. This is the story of northern soldiers bringing principles of civilization that conflicted with the ideals of white North Carolinians. This is the story of how blacks sought to take advantage of these two conflicting cultures to improve their own situation, with a varied mix of successes and failures. Ultimately, this is a story of Americans trying to define what America should be, and the conclusions they come to in regard to American policy, culture, and society.

## CHAPTER ONE

### FROM SETTLEMENT TO SECESSION: DEVELOPMENT & DIVERGENCE IN CARTERET AND CRAVEN COUNTIES, 1696-1860

In 1524, Giovanni da Verrazano, an Italian explorer in the service of the French King, became the first European to view the southern tip of the Outer Banks. Verrazano painted a romantic picture of the tall sweeping grasses and majestic evergreens of Bogue Banks, the twenty-five mile long sandy island that teemed with dozens of species of exotic birds—such as herons, egrets, sanderlins, purple buntings and purple sandpipers—and sheltered tranquil Beaufort harbor from the tempestuous Atlantic Ocean. In 1585, Sir Richard Grenville, a captain in Sir Walter Raleigh’s first English-sponsored colonization effort, became the first European to sail into Pamlico Sound and the mouth of the Neuse River, a few miles from the present-day site of New Bern. The beauty and fecundity of the region made such an impression that artist and cartographer John White included the Neuse in a map of Raleigh’s colonized area. However, Raleigh’s colonization attempt failed, and over a century passed before Europeans again approached the coastal areas that would become New Bern and Beaufort.<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of the colonial and antebellum periods, New Bern and Beaufort, and their respective counties, Craven and Carteret, would develop in far different ways. Beaufort became primarily a fishing society, integrally attached to the surrounding waters, while New Bern became a farming and mercantile society—with attachments to both the state’s interior and the greater Atlantic World. In the antebellum period the two neighboring counties would compete,

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Sharpe, “Completely Coastal Carteret,” *The State* 21 (June 27, 1953), 4; John Bowen, *Adventuring Along the Southeast Coast: The Sierra Club Guide to the Low Country, Beaches, and Barrier Islands of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1993), 95-96; Alan D. Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County* (New Bern, N.C.: Tryon Palace Commission, 1987), 1. See also Bill Sharpe, *A New Geography of North Carolina* (Raleigh: Sharpe Publishing Company, 1954).

sometimes bitterly, for commercial developments and choose divergent political paths during the decade of crisis before the Civil War. So close in proximity, and sharing many similar characteristics of coastal communities, Carteret and Craven found themselves worlds apart in 1860 in terms of society, commercial culture, and politics. Though both would ultimately support secession, it would take an extreme external threat to unite these two counties. The divergent worldviews of these two communities began forming almost from the moment the first Europeans arrived in this region of North Carolina.

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From the earliest days of European settlement, New Bern had been a more active, thriving port than Beaufort, though the latter possessed the best harbor in the state. Much of New Bern's advantage depended on geological circumstance dating back 2 million years. Over eons, the Neuse River wended its way over a 275-mile trek from the upper Piedmont above present-day Raleigh past New Bern into the Pamlico Sound. With the widest mouth of any river in the continental United States, the Neuse made New Bern a gateway into the colony. Ships could pass through Ocracoke Inlet, and sail through Pamlico Sound into the Neuse River to New Bern, where goods could be moved either up the river, or overland on a system of roads that emanated from the port town.<sup>2</sup>

Ocean-going vessels could opt to pass through the less dangerous Topsail Inlet further south, and sail into Beaufort's deep harbor with less difficulty. Twelve feet deep at low tide, and deemed "very safe and Navigable for Vessels of Great Burthen" by a 1766 Act, Topsail Inlet was much better than its northern sister, Ocracoke, which only had a depth of nine feet. However, once merchants landed their goods at Beaufort, they found further distribution much more

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<sup>2</sup> "Wild Waterways: North Carolina Rivers," *ExplorNet's Trailblazer Magazine* (Spring 2000), website located at: [http://www.trailblazermagazine.com/February00/html/features\\_2.htm](http://www.trailblazermagazine.com/February00/html/features_2.htm).

difficult. The North and Newport Rivers, which flanked Beaufort, were merely glorified creeks, only five feet deep and extending less than 15 miles into the interior. In addition, no simple overland route existed between Beaufort and New Bern or other points on the interior.<sup>3</sup>

In order to get to New Bern, travelers from Beaufort either had to sail through the shoal-infested, shallow Core Sound (ranging from a few inches to seven feet in depth) to Pamlico Sound and the Neuse River, or, as one traveler noted, take a “dreary, melancholy, and uncomfortable” trek over the wretched paths through “the almost perpetual solitary dreary pines, sandy barrens, and dismal swamps, that are met with throughout the whole of that part of the country.” Corduroying roads took enormous time, effort, and expense and to little avail, as the swampy land was intersected by creeks, bays, and bogs, and suffered from poor drainage. Upkeep was well nigh impossible. For all practical commercial purposes, Beaufort was cut off from North Carolina’s interior from European settlement until the eve of the Civil War.<sup>4</sup>

The first Europeans to inhabit the region did not come directly from Europe—except for a small group of Swiss and German settlers that arrived in (and named) New Bern in 1710—but rather slowly spread down from English settlements in Virginia and North Carolina’s Albemarle region, beginning in 1696. When they migrated south to the region that became Craven County, they settled on a land of evergreen shrub bogs—a habitat possessing countless minerals and potentially great soils, which developed on the flat area between the freshwater streams and

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Christopher Crittenden, “The Seacoast in North Carolina History, 1763-1789,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 7 (October 1930): 436 (first quotation), 437 (second quotation); William Stuart Morgan III, “The Commerce of a Southern Port, New Bern, North Carolina, 1783-1789,” *American Neptune* 49 (Spring 1989): 83 (Ocracoke).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Christopher Crittenden, “Overland Travel and Transportation in North Carolina, 1763-1789,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (July 1931): 240-241. In early 1710, Baron Christoph von Graffenreid, a nobleman of the Swiss capital of Berne, led a large party of Swiss and German émigrés from their mountainous homeland to the swampy flatlands of eastern North Carolina. For more on his settlement, see Fred J. Allred and Alonzo T. Dill, Jr., “The Founding of New Bern: A Footnote,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 40 (Summer 1963): 361-363, 374; Alonzo Thomas Dill, Jr., “Eighteenth-century New Bern, A History of the town and Craven County, 1700-1800: Part I, Colonization of the Neuse,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 22 (January 1945): 156-165; Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 13-54.

rivers that fed into the sounds. However, the farther south settlers proceeded, into what would eventually become Carteret County, the more difficult cultivation became. Throughout the length and width of the county, the land rose no higher than 30 feet, which resulted in poor drainage and an abundance of sandy soil not conducive to productive farming. A dense mass of shrubs and scattered pond pines blanketed the interstream bogs, which the settlers labeled “pocosins” or “dismal swamps.” Interspersed among these pocosins were large savannahs. Settlers to Carteret County soon adapted these plains to small farms and pastures for livestock, eschewing the backbreaking and wallet-breaking drainage of the pocosins.<sup>5</sup>

Soon after their arrival, white settlers engaged in a bitter war with the native Tuscarora Indians from 1711 until 1714, when the majority of the defeated Tuscaroras migrated to New York. After the war, both the Neuse River and Core Sound settlements developed slowly, though the latter recovered first. From its earliest days, the tiny village that developed in the Core Sound region around 1709 was unofficially dubbed Fishtown, before being officially named after the Duke of Beaufort in 1713. No matter its official name, there was no disguising the fact that Beaufort was truly a “fish town.” The opportunity for residents to make a living from the sea was great, as the coastal area was perfectly suited for fishing. Thousands of acres of estuaries—lagoons, bays and sounds partially cut off from the sea where fresh water flowing from rivers mixes with salt water—created the most prolific fishing ground on the Atlantic coast.<sup>6</sup> Slaves were tied to the water as well. As historian David Cecelski argues, “Many tidewater slaves came from sections of West Africa more closely resembling, and with maritime

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<sup>5</sup> Harry Roy Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 188-193; Sharpe, “Completely Coastal Carteret,” 3-5.

<sup>6</sup> Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 13-54; Charles L. Paul, “Colonial Beaufort,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 42 (April 1965): 144; David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman’s Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 53-60; Sharpe, “Completely Coastal Carteret,” 5, 33.

traditions better suited to, the shallow, marshy Carolina coastline than did their colonial masters with their deepwater experience.” Fishing dominated Carteret communities for generations. On the eve of the Civil War, 95 percent of the residents of Harker’s Island, located in Core sound near Beaufort, were fishermen. The 1860 census reveals that 637 of the 1029 (62 percent) white working men in the county earned their living on the waters.<sup>7</sup>

The sea so dominated its life that Carteret County never developed any form of large-scale agriculture. Yeomen farmers supplemented their small farms with livestock, particularly cattle, sheep, and pigs, who thrived on the coarse marsh grasses that grew along the sounds and rivers, and on the savannas. However, some residents in both Carteret and Craven counties did take advantage of the prodigious forests that covered the coastal plain. Colonists marveled at the “indescribably beautiful cedar wood, poplar, oaks, beech, walnut, and chestnut trees,” which were commonly “fifty to sixty feet [tall] below the limbs.” In addition, there were thousands of acres of towering pines, many of which were prized for their naval stores. In Carteret, lumber rivaled fish as the prime export, while the forest industries dominated Craven’s commercial exports. In addition to tar, pitch, and turpentine, shipbuilders prized the majestic pines for masts, and particularly valued cedars and live oaks because their crooked shape perfectly fitted ships for the knees, catheads, and futtocks that supported the hulls of ships. Ultimately, with few connections to the interior and no significant farming or industry, Beaufort quietly existed throughout the eighteenth century as an isolated port just inside the tempestuous Outer Banks.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John Michael Luster, “Help Me to Raise Them: The Menhaden Chanteymen of Beaufort, North Carolina,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 11-13, 16-17; Cecelski, *Waterman’s Song*, 5 (quotation), 8-9, 61, 64, 72; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, N.C., Population Schedule. For a further look at black fishing culture, see David S. Cecelski, “The Hidden World of Mullet Camps: African American Architecture on the North Carolina Coast,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 70 (January 1993): 1-13.

<sup>8</sup> Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 56 (quotations); “American Navies, 1775-1783,” United States National Park Service Poster (Washington, DC Division of Publications, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, 1976); A. Roger Ekirch, *“Poor Carolina”: Politics and Society in Colonial North Carolina, 1729-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 224, 227.



In contrast, rapidly developing New Bern benefited from several agricultural, commercial, and political advantages in the eighteenth century. The port's political advantage lay in its central location in the colony, as it was located midway between the northern and southern coastal settlements of Edenton and Wilmington, respectively. When the royal governor named New Bern as the colony's temporary capital in 1756 (and the permanent capital in 1766), many government offices and merchants relocated there. Craven County's rich lands also attracted settlers. Concomitantly, the county developed improved transportation networks, constructing roads and ferries that provided many more commercial conduits of trade than Beaufort. By 1766, only 10 percent of the exports from the region left through Beaufort, while the remainder departed from New Bern. Royal Governor Josiah Martin compared the thriving capital city with its coastal neighbor, declaring that though Beaufort "is advantageously situate[d] for Commerce... there are no persons of condition or substance in it, and the trade that was formerly carried on through that Channel is now derived almost entirely to this town, since it became the seat of Government, which has promoted its growth exceedingly, by inviting many considerable merchants to settle in it." By 1777 some dubbed New Bern "the metropolis of North Carolina."<sup>9</sup>

The seeds of North Carolina's involvement in the Revolution were planted in New Bern. In 1774, seventy-one North Carolina delegates convened the First Provincial Congress (the first one held in America) at New Bern in defiance of Governor Martin's orders. Though patriots drove Martin from the capital, a substantial number of avowed Loyalists still inhabited the town. However, as one scholar noted, "public scorn, fear of physical violence, concern for family, and

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<sup>9</sup> Alonzo T. Dill, Jr., "Political and Commercial Rise of New Bern," *North Carolina Historical Review* 23 (January 1946): 47-61; Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 37-38,, 41 (taxables), 56-57; Alonzo T. Dill, Jr., "Years of Slow Development," *North Carolina Historical Review* 22 (October 1945): 465-477; Dill, "Political and Commercial Rise of New Bern," *North Carolina Historical Review* 23 (January 1946): 59; Josiah Martin quoted in Paul, "Colonial Beaufort," 149 (first quotation); Merrens, *Colonial North Carolina*, 150 (second quotation).

loss of property caused many to recant or to remain silent in the trying times when the patriots attempted to present a united front to the British.” These tactics foreshadowed those taken by secessionists against Unionists in the region eighty years later.<sup>10</sup>

In the Revolution, Beaufort significantly served as a safe haven for ships seeking to avoid British cruisers. After the war, William Blackledge, a Republican congressman from the district, remembered that cargo ships “ran into Beaufort rather than run the risque of being taken while lightering at Ocracock or weathering Cape Look Out.” Import revenues from the War of 1812 reveal Beaufort’s importance. In 1810, Beaufort had cleared a mere \$522 through its Customs House. But in 1813, with British cruisers blockading Ocracoke and Wilmington, an astonishing \$105,214 in goods entered the port of Beaufort. As Blackledge aptly concluded, during war, “the port of Beaufort immediately becomes of immencely greater importance to the Commerce of North Carolina than it has heretofore been in peace.” In 1861, Confederate authorities would also recognize the value of Beaufort’s harbor as a safe haven for blockade-runners.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of the Revolution, while Beaufort returned to its somnolent ways, New Bern underwent a transformation from its colonial days. Many of the most wealthy and prominent members of New Bern society had been Tories who fled, while others died or moved during or after the war. The state capital moved to Raleigh in 1790, reducing New Bern’s role as the center of political action in the state. As a result of the departure of many of its leading families, New Bern witnessed an influx of new blood, primarily commercially-oriented men, climb to the

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<sup>10</sup> Alonzo T. Dill, Jr., “New Bern During the Revolution,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 23 (July 1946): 326; Gertrude S. Carraway, “Members of the First Provincial Congress,” *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine* 107 (August-September 1973): 658; Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 83 (quotation).

<sup>11</sup> William Blackledge to Thomas Jefferson, February 2, 1808, in Alice Barnwell Keith, ed., *The John Gray Blount Papers*, 4 vols., (Raleigh: State Archives and Department of History, 1952-1982), 2: 101-102 (first and second quotations); Report of Lieutenant J.N. Maffitt to A.D. Bache, Secretary of the Navy, in Report of the Secretary of the Navy, June 15, 1854, in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad* (North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, hereinafter cited as NCC) (customs).

top of its social ladder. Under their leadership, New Bern grew quickly. Francis Asbury, an itinerant Methodist minister, noted in 1796 that New Bern was “a growing place,” and predicted a bright future: “Should piety, health and trade attend this Newbern, it will be a very capital place in half a century from this.” Indeed, New Bern and Craven County grew substantially, along with its coastal neighbor, throughout the nineteenth century (See Table 1).<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1 – Population Growth**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Craven</u>			<u>Carteret</u>		
	White	Slave	Total	White	Slave	Total
1790	6474	3658	10,469	2927	713	3732
1800	5756	4161	10,245	3373	918	4399
1810	6501	5050	12,676	3545	1172	4823
1820	6863	5087	13,394	4262	1329	5609
1830	6602	6129	13,734	4864	1593	6596
1840	6624	5702	13,438	5087	1360	6591
1850	7220	5951	14,709	5166	1623	6939
1860	8747	6189	16,268	6064	1969	8186

\* Source: Published Census Records.; See note <sup>13</sup>

The table reveals that, except for the 1830s when both counties’ population stagnated due to heavy migration westwards, Craven and Carteret experienced steady growth each decade of the antebellum era. By 1860, Carteret’s population had increased 219 percent over its 1790

<sup>12</sup> Alonzo T. Dill, Jr., “New Bern at Century’s End,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 23 (October 1946): 496-508; Francis Asbury, *The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, bishop of the Methodist Episcopal church from August 7, 1771 to December 7, 1815*, 3 vols. (New York: N. Bangs & T. Mason, 1821), II: 272-273.

<sup>13</sup> *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States, taken in the year 1790: State of North Carolina* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908; reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, Inc., 1990), 10, 127-140; *Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States, Second Census of the United States [1800]* (reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, Inc., 1990), 2k; *Aggregate amount of each Description of Persons within the United States of America, and the Territories thereof, Agreeable to actual Enumeration made according to law, in the year 1810* (Washington: n.p., 1811; reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, Inc., 1990), 75a; *Census for 1820* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1821; reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, Inc., 1990), 25; *Fifth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, 1830* (Washington: Duff Green, 1832; reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, Inc., 1990), 90-91; *Sixth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, as Corrected at the Department of State, in 1840* (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1841; reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, Inc., 1990), 218-219; *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, 1853; reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, Inc., 1990), 307-308; *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, by Joseph C.G. Kennedy* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864; reprint, New York: Norman Ross Publishing, Inc, 1990), 358-359.

population, while Craven experienced a 155 percent growth. Though Carteret grew slightly more, Craven still maintained twice the population as Carteret in 1860, and its port city population was even more pronounced, as New Bern contained 5,432 people compared to Beaufort's 1,610. While one-third of Craven's population lived in the New Bern census district, the majority of Carteret's population lived outside of the city, along the waterways and in the lowland countryside and pine forests. In addition, Craven County possessed far more slaves than Carteret, reflecting its greater involvement in both agriculture and naval stores production.<sup>14</sup>

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Despite the decidedly non-urban Carteret majority, Craven relied much more on rural agriculture and forest industries than did Carteret. Thanks to a nearly nine-month growing season, due to the proximity of the Gulf Stream and its moderating effect on the climate, and the larger proportion of arable land (compared to the poorly-drained pocosins that dominated Carteret), a vast proportion of the Craven's residents identified themselves as agriculturalists. Throughout the antebellum era, Craven raised far more of every variety of crop than Carteret. These agricultural outputs are reflected in the farm valuations. In 1850, Craven had 45,197 acres of improved farmland compared to Carteret's 9,941 acres. The 1850 cash value of farms and farm machinery in Craven was just short of \$800,000. In Carteret, farms and equipment valued at only \$160,000. By 1860, Craven had increased its improved farmland 17 percent to 63,345 acres, and its farm values 78 percent to over \$1.4 million. Carteret increased its improved farmland by only 4 percent to 10,388 acres, but increased its farm values by an impressive 189 percent, to \$463,000. As will be discussed later, long awaited internal improvements, most

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<sup>14</sup> *Population of the United States in 1860*, 359.

notably the completion of a railroad to New Bern in 1858 and Morehead City in 1860, considerably improved the land values in the two counties.<sup>15</sup>

Though Craven produced more agricultural goods, it did not have many plantations or raise significant amounts of cash crops. In 1860, nearly 80 percent of the 690 farms in Craven County consisted of fewer than 100 acres. Only nineteen farms were larger than five hundred acres, and only eleven were larger than 1000 acres. While merchants and planters may have dominated the local economies and held positions of community and political power, the majority of people in Carteret and Craven Counties lived a yeoman existence, relying on neighbors and kinship networks to survive and prosper. Undoubtedly many farmers, large or small, shared the sentiment uttered by a New Bern planter: “We call the farmer’s life, the life of independence—It is so—Under our own vine and our own fig tree, we can enjoy, with those connected to us by the tender ties of friendship, the fruits of our own industry from our own soil.” But those fruits did not include many cash crops. Though Craven rebounded from a low output in 1850 to raise 817 bales of cotton in 1860, this number still paled in comparison to neighboring coastal plain counties steeped in plantation agriculture. The simple fact was that Craven’s land was not as well-suited to large-scale cotton farming.<sup>16</sup>

Instead, much of Craven’s wealth came from its woodlands—especially the naval stores industry. Carteret participated in the naval stores industries as well, maintaining thirty-one establishments that barreled crude and distilled turpentine, valued at over \$114,000. But Carteret

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<sup>15</sup> Sharpe, “Completely Coastal Carteret,” 4; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, Population Schedule; *Statistics of the United States of America as Collected and Returned by the Marshals of the Several Judicial Districts, under the Thirteenth Section of the Act for Taking the Sixth Census [1840]* (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1841), 240-241; *Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 307-323; *Agriculture of the United States in 1860: compiled from the original returns of the eighth census, under the direction of the secretary of the interior / by Joseph C.G. Kennedy, superintendent of census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 104-105; Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 252.

<sup>16</sup> Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 252 (farm size); Wright C. Stanly to John Gray Blount, June 18, 1821, in Keith, *John Gray Blount Papers*, 4: 349-350 (second and third quotations); *Manufactures of the United States in 1860* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865; reprint Norman Ross Publishing, Inc, 1990).

could not compare with Craven, which had forty-seven turpentine establishments producing over \$570,000 worth of output. In fact, by 1860 Craven County was the second largest producer of naval stores in North Carolina, accounting for nearly \$700,000.<sup>17</sup>

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Craven far exceeded Carteret not only in goods produced, but also in ownership of slaves. From 1790 to 1860, slaves never accounted for more than 24 percent of Carteret's total population. In Craven, however, slaves had always provided about 40 percent of the total population, while a steadily increasing free black population made the proportion of whites to blacks in the county equal. A higher percentage of individual households held slaves in Craven as well (See Table 2).

**Table 2 - Slave Distribution among households**

	<u>Craven County</u>				<u>Carteret County</u>			
	Slaves in County	Households owning slaves	Percentage of households	Avg. slaves per household	Slaves in County	Households Owning slaves	Percent. of h.h.	Avg. slaves per h.h.
1840 -	5702	748	43%	7.6	1360	255	28%	5.3
1850 -	5951	742	40%	8.0	1623	307	32%	5.3
1860 -	6189	625	30%	10.0	1971	282	24%	7.0

Source: Unpublished Census Records; See Note <sup>18</sup>

The data reveals that even while total slave populations increased in both counties, individual slave ownership decreased. A similar pattern developed throughout the South in the antebellum period. Economic historian Gavin Wright argued that fewer landowners in the South owned slaves between 1830 and 1860 because price had outstripped the ability to buy. By the late 1850s, the price of slaves effectively excluded yeomen from joining slaveholder ranks,

<sup>17</sup> New Bern and Craven County trailed only Wilmington and New Hanover County in naval stores production in 1860. *Statistics of the United States of America as Collected and Returned by the Marshals of the Several Judicial Districts, under the Thirteenth Section of the Act for Taking the Sixth Census [1840]* (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1841), 240-241; *Manufactures of the United States in 1860* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865; reprint Norman Ross Publishing, Inc, 1990); Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 250, 252-255.

<sup>18</sup> 1840 U.S. Census, Carteret and Craven Counties, Population and Slave Schedules; 1850 U.S. Census, Carteret and Craven Counties, Population and Slave Schedules; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret and Craven Counties, Population and Slave Schedules.

unless they were bequeathed slaves through inheritance from slave-owning kin. Beyond this coastal region of North Carolina, the same economic dilemma existed throughout the South. For example, average slave prices in Georgia rose from \$722 in 1845 to \$1658 in 1860, while in Louisiana a prime field hand that could be purchased in New Orleans for \$850 in 1830, cost between \$1800 and \$2200 in 1860. Practically no amount of yeoman commodity market participation or 'saving for a rainy day' could support the purchase of a slave at those prices.<sup>19</sup>

As the agricultural and manufacturing censuses reveal, slavery in Craven, as well as Carteret, buttressed a multitude of agricultural and forest industries. Slaves were often unskilled laborers tending to rice, cotton, corn, or potatoes in the fields, or blazing pine trees and collecting sap and tar from the forests. As skilled laborers, slaves, as well as the growing free black population in Craven, served as mechanics and carpenters on merchant vessels and farm buildings, as coopers making barrels to transport the tar, pitch, and turpentine, or as mill operators, sawing thousands of feet of lumber, or grinding corn into meal. In addition, slaves served as seamstresses, housekeepers, and fishermen for their masters. The majority of slaves in this region were not field hands, and concomitantly they had more freedom of movement and interaction with both races than their fellow bondsmen in other slave majority counties. Alan D. Watson noted, "In the capacity of boatmen on the rivers and creeks, drivers on the plantations, and supervisors of turpentine distilleries, bondsmen moved about freely in white society, assumed positions of trust, and conducted much business nominally controlled by whites."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 1978), 34; Frederick Beck Gates, "Building the 'Empire State of the South': Political Economy in Georgia, 1800-1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 2001), 206-207 (Georgia slave prices); Roger W. Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers during Slavery and After, 1840-1875* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939), 86-87 (Louisiana slave prices).

<sup>20</sup> Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 250. For other works that demonstrate the greater degree of responsibility, freedom of movement, and common racial interaction between slaves and whites in lowcountry regions, see Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Lowcountry*, (New York: Oxford

However, greater responsibilities and freedom of movement did not place slaves of the region beyond whites' scrutiny and concern. Indeed, whites in Craven and Carteret were constantly on alert for any improper ideas their slaves may harbor. They were acutely aware that coastal slaves were exposed to outside ideas and influences—influences that could potentially lead to a flight to freedom. Many slaves became infused with the ideas of freedom in the larger world from black seamen who frequented the ports. As David Cecelski has asserted, “Coastal ports like Bath, Ocracoke, and even New Bern may have outwardly resembled backwater posts on minor trade routes, but a tour of those harbor districts would have belied any notion of provincialism. There a visitor would have met black sailors from many nations, swapping the latest scuttlebutt from Boston, San Juan, and Port-au-Prince in a half-dozen languages.” Runaway slaves set up hidden camps in the swamps of Craven and Carteret, and communicated with each other. Slaves also received the aid of poor whites while escaping. In 1857, the slave William Kinnegay ran away and hid in piney woods and swamps south of New Bern. There he killed and dressed hogs for local poor whites, and traded with them for supplies. But poor whites were not the only ones willing to help runaway slaves. In the 1830s, the son of a local slaveholder often hid slaves in ships carrying timber to Philadelphia. Indeed, the best means for escape for coastal slaves was on a northern bound vessel, and many made their way north in such a manner.<sup>21</sup>

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University Press, 1995); Timothy Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in South Carolina's Lowcountry, 1740-1790* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002)

<sup>21</sup> Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*, 141 (quotation), 131 (William Kinnegay), 135-136 (local slaveholder); Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 494 (hidden camps). By 1800, both free and runaway slave black migrants from New Bern had established a small exile community in New Haven, Connecticut. These New Haven folks maintained contact with their New Bern kinfolk throughout the antebellum period. Not only did the coastal regions allow more opportunities for escape, but also for integration. Racial boundaries were perhaps more flexible in the Outer Banks area than anywhere else in the antebellum south. Many sailors and captains had sexual relations with black women. Some



While Craven and Carteret residents feared that their slaves might escape, a much more controlling fear was that their slaves might rise up in rebellion against whites. Several rumors of slave insurrections over the years heightened anxiety. There was a brief scare in Carteret County in 1821, caused by “a number of slaves and free persons of colour who had collected arms,” and were “committing thefts and alarming the inhabitants” in the isolated regions of the county. The county militia mustered to put down this renegade band. Craven residents had discovered a planned insurrection in 1775, and when word of the famous successful slave revolt against the French at Santo Domingo in the West Indies in 1792 arrived in the region, New Bern whites became even more alarmed. One wrote that local slaves had contemplated “to rise against their masters and to procure themselves their liberty.” As a result, “The inhabitants have been alarmed and keep a strict watch to prevent their procuring arms.”<sup>22</sup>

More fears emerged in 1829 when copies of *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, a document denouncing slavery, written by former North Carolina slave David Walker, appeared in the county. The document prompted the state to pass the “Free Black Code,” a body of legislation that restricted the freedoms and proscribed many actions of free blacks. New Bern residents became concerned when on the heels of Walker’s *Appeal*, a Quaker preacher, purportedly from New York, arrived in New Bern and delivered incendiary sermons regarding slaves. According to one planter, white witnesses agreed “that his observations respecting our Slaves were highly improper and most of them say he used the following strong language ‘that the Slaves of the South were a degraded & oppressed People that the just judgment or vengeance

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even claimed their mistresses, freed their offspring, provided them with land and property. Calvino Windsor, the son of such a union, “inherited from his white father more than 60 acres at Shackleford Banks.” Windsors descendants intermarried with local blacks and Indians and developed a remarkable reputation in Carteret County for handling fishing and whale boats. See Cecelski, *The Waterman’s Song*, 19, 50.

<sup>22</sup> Loren Schweninger and John Hope Franklin, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 154 (first and second quotations); Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 157 (third and fourth quotations).

of God was now hanging over the heads of their masters on account of it and that the time would soon come when they would all be free.”<sup>23</sup>

The Nat Turner uprising in southern Virginia in 1831 further heightened anxieties. In New Bern, locals requested arms from the state government, and the state’s adjutant general sent 200 muskets from a Raleigh arsenal. The Craven County Court ordered all firearms confiscated from local slaves, and agents kept a vigilant watch on free blacks. Ten years later New Bern experienced another moment of paranoia regarding their slaves. William H. Bryan, a local politician, wrote a friend, “There has been considerable alarm in Craven on account of a supposed conspiracy of the Negroes, and from what I learn they had been talking about it. It is a terrible state of things especially for the female portion of the community to be subjected to such horrible apprehensions.” Yet, despite these latent fears, whites entrusted their slaves in Carteret and Craven County with a great deal of responsibility and allowed them a certain degree of freedom of movement, as required by their occupations. While simultaneously granting slaves certain latitudes, whites utilized slave patrols, militias, intimidation, and occasionally the courts to maintain racial boundaries and proper slave behavior. Whites, especially in Craven County, could not deny the fact that slaves contributed greatly to their prosperity and kept the agricultural and commercial engines of society running smoothly.<sup>24</sup>

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Craven County commerce, though temporarily stunted by the Embargo Act of 1807 and disrupted by the War of 1812, remained steady and vibrant until the 1840s, when it began a period of sharp decline. Throughout the 1830s, New Bern had been a bustling port, shipping the

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<sup>23</sup> Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 207 (Black Codes); John Gray Blount to Joseph B. Hinton, December 14, 1830, Keith, ed., *John Gray Blount Papers*, 4: 544 (quotation).

<sup>24</sup> Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 157, 207-208; W.H. Bryan to E. Pettigrew, September 20, 1840, Pettigrew Papers (North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; hereinafter cited as NCSA) (quotations).

second highest value in exports from the state. But, in 1841, only 24 percent of all ships entering the state did so at New Bern. By 1850, that number was down to 12 percent. The port reached its commercial nadir in 1859, when only 12 of 223 ships leaving North Carolina ports departed from New Bern. A correspondent with the *Newbernian* despaired in 1849, “New Bern is sinking, going down, down, down.”<sup>25</sup>

New Bern declined largely as a result of—and in direct proportion to—the rise of the port of Wilmington, which benefited from the Wilmington-Weldon Railroad. New Bern’s sudden commercial stagnation affected its population as well. Since colonial days New Bern held the distinction of being North Carolina’s most populous city. In 1840, it fell behind Wilmington and would never overtake that Cape Fear River port. New Bern residents held town meetings to discuss internal improvements. They decided that the only way to reverse their declining fortunes was to get a railroad line connecting New Bern with the state’s interior. By 1850, the desire for a railroad had become the dominating political and economic influence in New Bern.<sup>26</sup>

New Bern was not the only coastal port vying for a railroad. Beaufort had been calling for connections to the state’s interior for decades, and the Carteret County port held an advantage over New Bern—its harbor. However, unlike New Bern, by 1840, Beaufort was still a struggling town. Beaufort had streets and sidewalks that were “continuous banks or drifts of sand,” and only “a few stores... no market house, a courthouse, and but one church,” and it seemed far removed from the rest of the state. Reverend John Edwards, who preached in Beaufort in 1839, remarked, “Beaufort in those days, was as nearly out of the world as a town could well be.” Visitors noted that the town lacked any social graces as well. Colonel John Rogers Vinson, commandant of the Fort Macon garrison in 1844, commented, “there is not one family in the

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<sup>25</sup> Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 262, 283 (quotation), and 289.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 232, 295; *Sixth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States... 1840*, 218-219.

place where our officers visit on terms of social interest.” While admitting that he personally enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere (largely because his young son accompanied him), Vinson noted: “The other officers can only read, talk, and visit... and to do these books & society are requisite, in both of which Beaufort is lamentably deficient.”<sup>27</sup>

Beaufort in the 1840s lacked more than just literary and social stimulation. Dr. James Manney, a local physician, lamented Carteret’s poor economic opportunities. To his son, also named James, who wished to return from medical school up north to succeed his father’s practice, the elder Manney sagely advised, “you could make a living here—but as to getting rich in so poor a county, that is next to an impossibility.” As Colonel Vinson recorded, Carteret residents “depend[ed] on fishing & the making of tar & turpentine for their subsistence.” Reverend Edwards observed, “nobody was rich, and none so poor as to be dependent on charity. The means of subsistence were in reach of all that could get to the water,” as it had always been in Beaufort.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the antebellum era, leading Carteret citizens tried to bring the railroad and other technological improvements to Beaufort in order to take advantage of its harbor, and improve their commercial prospects. In 1821, Archibald D. Murphey, a former state senator and advocate for internal improvements, proposed a series of canals leading from Beaufort to New Bern, and further up the coast to the Roanoke River, to no avail. The United States government had recognized the advantages of Beaufort’s harbor as early as 1838, when a congressional improvement bill asserted that Beaufort, with its “capacious harbor, where more than 500 vessels

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<sup>27</sup> Reverend John Edwards account in “Beaufort Long Ago was Quiet and Good,” *Beaufort News*, November 29, 1923, Newspaper Clippings File, NCC (first, second, and third quotations); John Rogers Vinson to mother, February 19, September 21, 1844, John Rogers Vinson Papers (Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, NC; hereinafter cited as DU) (fourth and fifth quotations).

<sup>28</sup> James Manney to James L. Manney, Jr., January 31, 1848, James Manney Letterbook (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as SHC) (first quotation); John Rogers Vinson to “mother,” February 19, 1844, Vinson Papers (second quotation); Reverend John Edwards account in “Beaufort Long Ago was Quiet and Good,” (third quotation).

can be moored in safety during our most violent autumnal gales, offers advantages not possessed by any other seaport in the state.” A lieutenant from an army engineers’ surveying crew found Beaufort to be 17 feet in the shallowest point at low tide, in 1850. Manney ordered 300 copies of that chart, and distributed them to prospective investors. In addition, he got a respected captain, James Creighton, of the *Louisa Bliss*, to testify to the harbor’s many advantages. He sent out copies of Creighton’s testimony to dozens of newspapers throughout the state and region.<sup>29</sup>

Many locals and state politicians, such as Thomas Clingman, advocated completing the Atlantic & North Carolina Railroad to Beaufort, so that western North Carolina’s produce and agricultural goods could be transported to market via Beaufort instead of Charleston, South Carolina, as was the current method. Manney asserted that the completion of the railroad was a manifestation of “the loftiest spirit of patriotism, [and] of state pride.” North Carolina goods and dollars and export fees should be reserved for North Carolina people. And of course, the establishment of Beaufort as a major trading port would not hurt the town either, as Manney acknowledged that “our merchant princes would have their splendid palaces, at this great seaport, one of the healthiest in the Union.” When the General Assembly passed acts in 1850, and again in 1852, to run a railroad line from Goldsboro to Beaufort, by way of Kinston and New Bern, residents in both Carteret and Craven rejoiced, and pledged hundreds of thousands of dollars to the enterprise.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> “Internal Improvements in North Carolina,” *The North American Review* 12 (January 1821): 16-38; April 9, 1838, United States Congress, House of Representatives, 25<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Document No. 308—“North Carolina- Improve Core Sound”; James Manney to Edward Stanly, February 8, 1850, Manney Letterbook.

<sup>30</sup> T.L. Clingman, “North Carolina—Her Wealth, Resources and History,” *DeBow’s Review* 25 (December 1858): 678 (first quotation). James Manney to David B. Outlaw, March 1, 1850, Manney Letterbook (second and third quotations); “A Bill to incorporate the Beaufort and North Carolina Railroad,” Session 1850-1851, Senate Document No. 74; “A Bill to incorporate the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad,” Session 1852-1853, House Document No. 30, in *Proceedings of the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad*.

However, the construction of the railroad became an issue that bitterly divided the two counties. Some problems quickly arose, not the least of which was Beaufort's diminutive physical capacity to serve as a major entrepôt for commerce, unlike the much more developed New Bern. Walter Gwynn, an engineer who surveyed the best possible routes for a line into Beaufort, warned Governor David S. Reid in 1854, "The harbor of Beaufort undoubtedly possesses many advantages... but to make it the center of a trade, now dispersed to other places, a city must be built up in a day, everything, Minerva like, must spring into existence in full perfection of matured vigor." He advised that it would be too difficult and expensive to cross the Newport River and run the railroad into Beaufort, and recommended placing the terminus at the small, newly-established village of Morehead City, on the western side of the river, instead. Until Morehead could be properly developed, New Bern would serve as the primary commercial hub of the railroad. Angry Beaufort residents felt betrayed by the members of the railroad board—many of whom, including the chairman, John D. Whitford, were New Bern residents—and cut their monetary contributions in half. As one Beaufort resident complained, "Are we to consider that the eastern division of the [railroad] has a 'sliding' terminus, and if so, is it not to be feared that it will eventually 'slide' so far up the line, as to be *finally* fixed within the corporate limits of Newbern?" The conflict over the railroad led to bitter recriminations and feuding in the competing county newspapers and stopped just short of prominent Beaufort and New Bern residents settling the dispute by the *code duello*. Despite the tension, the railroad was finally completed, reaching New Bern in 1858, and Morehead City in 1860.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Walter Gwynn to David S. Reid, October 17, 1854, Session 1854-1855, House Document No. 12 (first quotation); Letter of John D. Whitford, Esq., to the Editor of the *Beaufort Journal* Respecting the Construction of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, December 26, 1857, Second reply of the *Beaufort Journal* including the letters of Messrs. Davis, Perry and Pool to John D. Whitford, Esq., President of the A. & N.C.R.R. Co. respecting the construction of the Atlantic & North Carolina Railroad, February 22, 1858 (second quotation), all in *Proceedings of the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad*.

In addition to the railroad, local citizens attempted to improve the economic situation of Carteret in many diverse ways. Some sought, unsuccessfully, to add industry, while others sought a more adventurous route to riches. “There is great excitement here about California. Some of our young men have started from Beaufort for the Gold Region,” James Manney, Sr., wrote in early 1849. His son, James, joined the expedition with the hope of getting “into some kind of profitable business there,” as the “young men have poor encouragement in the ‘Old North State.’” However, as one later observer noted, “nearly all of the ambitious ten found the wave washed shores of old Carteret far more attractive, if not more profitable, than the golden shores of California.”<sup>32</sup>

In fact, those “wave washed shores” of Beaufort proved to be its biggest attraction, and one of its more profitable assets, not necessarily for commercial traffic, but for personal recreation. Wealthy socialites from all over North Carolina chose Beaufort, and its developing resort hotels, as a vacation destination to recoup their health and enjoy the cool sea breezes in the height of summer. After returning from a 17-day stay in the seaside town, a congressman wrote Governor Reid, “Beaufort has become quite a favorite summer resort with North Carolinians. From all parts of the State, there is a constant inpouring of the people, who wish to see the finest harbor south of the capes of Virginia, and to enjoy the health-giving breezes of the Atlantic.” Elites from all over the state, including politicians, planters, and even William Woods Holden, editor of the *North Carolina Standard*, came to enjoy the scenery, the pleasant walks along Front Street, and the cool ocean breezes, which, according to one citizen, during the summer months

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<sup>32</sup> James Manney to George E. Badger, February 7, 1849 (first quotation), James Manney to Edward Stanly, December 17, 1849 (second and third quotations), Manney Letterbook; Undated letter to the editor (typescript), Box 2, F.C. Salisbury Collection, NCSA (fourth quotation). In 1847, Manney wrote a letter to John Motley Morehead on behalf of the leading Carteret citizens who were “talking strongly of establishing a cotton factory in this town... to run two thousand spindles, and twenty looms.” However, the price proved prohibitive and the factory never materialized. James Manney to John Motley Morehead, December 8, 1847, Manney Letterbook

“sets in about ten o’clock in the morning & blows with refreshing coolness throughout the day.”<sup>33</sup>

Visitors from Greensboro in the late 1850s found a thriving town taking advantage of the tourist trade: “Beaufort... has a population of some twelve or fifteen hundred—contains three very neat Churches—three Hotels, all said to be good houses, and at either of which, comfortable lodgings, and plenty to eat can be had.” This was a far cry from the backward Beaufort they had heard of in previous decades, where the rumors ran that “the people lived on fish, and used oyster shells as cups, with which to drink water out of old pine stumps.” These Piedmont elites visited the coastal town to see for themselves “whether or not the men of that region—as had been reported and believed in the interior by many—were scaly, had broad tails, and thorny fins, growing from their backs—the result of living on fish and diving after crabs.” The travelers were obviously pleasantly surprised to encounter not such mythical backwards folks, but rather “an active, good looking, thriving and intelligent population, men of character and stability, who were putting forth all their energies to avail themselves of the many advantages and the great market facilities with which nature had so bountifully blessed them.”<sup>34</sup>

Even New Bernians touted the vacation spot. A reporter for the *New Bern Daily Progress* joined a New Bern militia company in an excursion to Beaufort in August 1860, and issued glowing reports of the town when he returned. “The general impression is that there are, at this time, all of a thousand visitors at that pleasant summer resort, all seemingly gay and happy, and perfectly delighted with the circumstances by which they are surrounded,” the

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<sup>33</sup> William Geffrey to David S. Reid, August 30, 1858, David S. Reid Papers, NCSA (first quotation); William Woods Holden to Miss L.H. Holden, August 6, 1858, in Horace W. Raper and Thornton W. Mitchell, eds. *The Papers of William Woods Holden, 1841-1868*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 2001), 1: 95; “A City by the Sea,” by G.F. Stanton, *Beaufort Reminiscence*, [ca 1901], Box 2, Alida F. Fales Papers, NCSA (description); J. Henry to Thomas Henderson, December 16, 1810, in “One Hundred Years Ago Beaufort Had Big Shipbuilding Industry,” *Beaufort News*, February 14, 1929, Newspaper Clippings File, NCC (second quotation).

<sup>34</sup> Greensborough *Patriot*, September 17, 1858, in Box 3, F.C. Salisbury Collection, NCSA.



journalist recorded. “Indeed,” he wrote, with a bit of hyperbole, “Beaufort... was as pleasant a place as could be found any where in the habitable world.” He heartily encouraged others to visit, and lauded the town’s future prospects, stating unequivocally, “The truth is, Beaufort is destined to be *the* place for Summer recreations.” Perhaps such glowing praise helped to assuage Beaufort’s bitter feelings over the railroad debacle.<sup>35</sup>

The economic boosts from the tourist trade led some merchants to open small shops, while other invested even greater amounts of money to entice vacationers to visit their fair city. Whereas in 1839, “a hotel could not be supported and boarding houses were scarce,” only twenty years later, Beaufort sported three luxurious hotels, and many made a living renting out rooms to boarders. Some local businessmen, especially hotel owners like Josiah Solomon Pender, Benjamin A. Ensley, and George W. Taylor—all of whom offered various amenities such as ocean views, bathing houses, pleasure boat excursions, as well as excellent, bands, bars, and dining at their establishments—expected to derive handsome fortunes from the blooming tourist industry.<sup>36</sup>

Pender moved to Beaufort in 1856 and spent enormous amounts of money building the Atlantic House, which was “handsomely furnished as a high-class summer resort; it was built far out over the Sound and was connected with the town by a long bridge.” Boats bringing boarders from Morehead City would land at its wharf. In 1860, its guestbook registered visitors from every state in the Union but two. Benjamin A. Ensley, “a young man who owns some considerable estate,” operated the Front Street House. Though known as “a good hearted, jolly

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<sup>35</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, August 20, 22, 1860.

<sup>36</sup> “Beaufort Long Ago was Quiet and Good” (quotation); *New Bern Daily Progress*, July 2, 1860; John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 20, 1862, in Judkin Browning and Michael Thomas Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist: John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, 1862-1865* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2001), 7; North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 173, 176-A, 176-E, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.).

fellow” who was “never satisfied unless there’s plenty of fun going on,” Ensley was considered less reliable financially than Pender. The local credit agent characterized Ensley as “a rolling stone,” and “one of those speculative characters [who] never sticks to one thing long.”<sup>37</sup>

Conversely, the former grocer and distributor George W. Taylor was a shrewd businessman who had moved from New Bern to Beaufort in 1853, just as the latter was beginning to develop its reputation as a resort area. In 1856, the thirty-eight year old purchased the Ocean House Hotel. By all accounts Taylor kept “a 1<sup>st</sup> rate house,” but he was also encumbered by large debts. “If he succeeds with it he will make money,” wrote a credit agent, who also warned, “If he does not succeed he will be worse off than he ever has been.” The advent of war would dry up the tourist trade at a time when all three of these proprietors needed the continued profitability of their hotels. One can imagine that each was reluctant for secession and war to ensue in 1861. However, as will be seen later, when the war did come all three would choose different paths.<sup>38</sup>

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Partisan politics had prevailed in the Carteret-Craven region since the development of the first parties in the 1790s. In the early national period, Federalists, whose strength lay among the merchants in the port cities, battled Republicans, who were championed by farmers in the countryside. Partisanship disappeared temporarily with the demise of the Federalist Party after the War of 1812, but resumed by 1836 with the advent of the Whigs and the Second Party System. In the presidential election of 1828, Craven went for the victorious Andrew Jackson, while Carteret supported John Quincy Adams. In the next two presidential elections, both

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<sup>37</sup> Unprocessed material, Box 3, F.C. Salisbury Collection (first quotation); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-A (Pender) and p. 176-E (Ensley, fifth and sixth quotations), R.G. Dun & Co. Collection; New Bern *Daily Progress*, September 1, 1860 (second, third, and fourth quotations).

<sup>38</sup> North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 173, 176-A, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection.

counties voted the Democratic ticket, but by narrow majorities. By 1840, both counties had thrown their support to the Whigs, much like the state had as a whole.<sup>39</sup>

Several reasons led to the triumph of the Whig party in the state, and the Pamlico Sound region in specific. Jackson's war to destroy the Bank of the United States had adversely affected the branch banks in North Carolina, including the Bank of New Bern. Removal of its deposits had prompted local merchants to decry that Jackson had "transcended the legal executive power and descended from the dignity of the office." Additionally, Jackson's opposition to Distribution (the policy of distributing proceeds from Federal sales of western lands to the states) undoubtedly angered many who dreamed of using that money to improve their state's transportation and trade facilities. Similarly, many feared that Martin Van Buren—who, some argued, led a wildly extravagant and corrupt lifestyle in the White House—would use his power over the militia to "curtail liberties," use his Subtreasury plan to "prostrate the American economy," and use patronage to "destroy the freedom of elections."<sup>40</sup>

The Whig party's image as the party of reform against the perceived abuses of power of the Jackson and Van Buren administrations, and, more importantly to local residents, as champion of internal improvements convinced many to join. Whigs throughout the state supported an activist Federal government that would utilize its resources to improve transportation and commercial facilities.<sup>41</sup> From 1836 through 1850, the Whig party maintained supremacy in the state. However, the Democrats hotly contested each election, and Whigs never

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<sup>39</sup> Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 183-201.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 200 (first quotation); Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 3-4 (second, third, and fourth quotations).

<sup>41</sup> For more on the development of the national Whig party, see Richard P. McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966); Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For more on the development of the Whig party in North Carolina, see Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, esp. 3-28; Herbert D. Pegg, *The Whig Party in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: Colonial Press, 1968).

won more than a 55 percent majority in any state or national election during that time. Craven and Carteret illustrated this vibrant and partisan two-party system as well. Between 1836 and 1860, Carteret became staunchly Whig, voting for Whig candidates for governor every election between 1836 and 1854, and only voting Democratic once, in 1858, before voting for the Whig, or Opposition, Party candidate again in 1860. These political tendencies reflected residents' hopes for internal improvements and a government that would try to improve their port facilities to take advantage of their harbor. However, the Democratic party maintained a strong presence in the county, and victory margins were often extremely narrow. Whigs won by only four votes in 1854, and the American Party (to whom a majority of Whigs had drifted) won by only nine votes in 1856.<sup>42</sup>

Craven reflected similar evenly split political divisions. The county voted Whig in the gubernatorial elections in 1838 and 1840, and then again from 1844-1850. Democrats, however, gained victories in 1836, 1842, and from 1852-1858. One reason Craven returned the Democratic Party to power was that by 1852, state Democrats had overcome dissenting voices within their own party and, according to Marc W. Kruman, "evolved toward an endorsement of the positive state." In other words, Democrats had adopted many of the traditionally Whig economic policy platforms, including the one dearest to Craven residents—internal improvements. As one historian has noted, in the Pamlico region, "Advocacy of a railroad became a bipartisan matter from which there was little discernible dissent."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> John L. Cheney, Jr., ed., *North Carolina Government, 1585-1979: A Narrative and Statistical History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1981), 1328-1331. For more on the contested nature of party politics in the state, see Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, esp. Chapters 2 and 5; Clarence C. Norton, *The Democratic Party in Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 1835-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930); Thomas E. Jeffrey, *State Parties and National Politics: North Carolina, 1815-1861* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

<sup>43</sup> Cheney, ed., *North Carolina Government*, 1328-1330; Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 68-73 (first quotation on p. 73); Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 232 (second quotation). For an analysis of the two parties' stances on internal improvements, see Thomas E. Jeffrey, "Internal Improvements and

New Bern and Beaufort served as the location of many gubernatorial debates during election years. The idea of canvassing the state and engaging in debates had been started in 1840 by John Motley Morehead (who advocated it as a means of getting his message and name out to more constituents who were unfamiliar with him), and immediately became a tradition. On May 10, 1848, Democratic candidate David Settle Reid engaged Charles Manly in the campaign's first debate in New Bern. A few days later in Beaufort, Reid astounded his opponent by proposing the radical new "free suffrage" plank, which called for the end of property qualifications to vote for state senators. When a stunned Manly opposed the proposal, Democrats castigated Whigs as aristocrats opposed to democratic reform, and, as Thomas E. Jeffrey argues, offered themselves as the true "champions of reform and the friends of the common man." On the strength of such issues, Democrats gained the governor's chair in 1850. Some debates were even more heated in Beaufort; in the 1858 campaign debate, Democrat John W. Ellis and Distribution party candidate Duncan K. McRae of New Bern actually engaged in fisticuffs on the stump.<sup>44</sup>

Though Craven voted Democratic in the 1850s, while Carteret stood by the Whig party, both counties harbored strong Unionist feelings during the crises of the decade. One of the first serious moments of distress for the Union occurred in 1849, when the crisis over the admission of California as a free state heated the secessionist rhetoric in Congress and throughout parts of the South to a near boiling point. When southern Democrats called for a Southern Convention to meet in Nashville, Tennessee, in June 1850, many North Carolina coastal plain counties began

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Political Parties in Antebellum North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 55 (April 1978): 11-56. For the ultimate demise of the Whig party, see James Roy Morrill III, "Presidential Election of 1852: Death Knell of the Whig Party of North Carolina" *North Carolina Historical Review* 44 (October 1967): 342-359.

<sup>44</sup> Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 41; Thomas E. Jeffrey, "'Free Suffrage' Revisited: Party Politics and Constitutional Reform in Antebellum North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 59 (January 1982): 28 (quotation); Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 225-226, 239 (fisticuffs).

holding “Southern Rights” meetings in support of the convention. Neither Craven nor Carteret held such a meeting, suggesting that their concern for the preservation of the Union outweighed any concern for southern rights over slavery. James Manney, a Beaufort physician, thought secessionist calls for disunion absurd. “We are devoted to the Union, in the ‘Old North State,’” Manney wrote, “we would rather all the abolitionists and negroes should be drowned in the Atlantic Ocean, than our glorious Union—cemented by the blood and toils of our forefathers, should be dissolved.” Manney denounced both “the crazy abolitionists at the North and the crazy pro-slavery men of the South” who “are striving with all their strength to rend asunder the bonds which unite us as one people and made us the greatest and most prosperous Republic which has ever existed.” Another sympathetic resident wrote to former president Martin Van Buren, “our people will rise up against Disunion & Disunionists the moment they see that there is any peril of action.”<sup>45</sup>

Manney tried to explain to the editors of the *Republic* what the legal distinction of slavery meant to southerners. “Slavery is a state institution, it was recognized by the non slave holding states in the constitution which created us as a Nation,” Manney explained. “It is none of their business to interfere in our local state affairs.” To the agitating abolitionists, Manney admitted that, like them, “Thousands in the southern states consider the institution of slavery an evil—yet we insist that this evil is to be removed in such manner, and such time as the sovereign power in each state may deem best.” Constant agitation by the abolitionists over the previous twenty years had actually done more harm than good to the cause of emancipation: “The fanatical Abolitionists at the North have rooted more strongly the chains of the slaves, and greatly retarded

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<sup>45</sup> James Manney to George E. Badger, February 7, 1849 (first and second quotations), Manney to Editors of the *Republic*, [November 1849] (third and fourth quotations), Manney Letterbook; William H. Haywood, Jr., to Martin Van Buren, May 30, 1849, in Elizabeth Gregroy McPherson, ed., “Unpublished Letters from North Carolinians to Martin Van Buren,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 15 (April 1938): 149 (fifth quotation).

their emancipation.” William H. Haywood, Jr., a former Democratic U.S. Senator from Raleigh, agreed that “I have no doubt myself that they People care very little (if let alone) whether Slavery goes to California or not,” but that “timid politicians are afraid to encounter any degree of prejudice” by saying as much. He feared the time when constant agitation would be too much to overcome: “It will be a source of some anxiety to sober minded men whenever the time forces it upon us because [slavery] is one of those topics that no human power can keep out of the hands of Demagogues.”<sup>46</sup>

Yet, both men agreed that current differences over slavery should not lead to dissolution of the Union. Manney spoke for many Carteret residents, who denounced heightened passions over slavery and those who threatened to tear the Union apart, “I am willing to lay down my life at any hour, rather than see our stripes torn or one star blotted from our glorious banner.” When the Compromise of 1850 finally passed, temporarily diffusing the situation, Haywood exulted, “I am very sorry for some of the pol[iticia]ns who have made asses of themselves but the union is in no danger... The Disunionists are eating their own words—brimstonish as they were.”<sup>47</sup>

The strong appeal of the Union continued in the state and the Pamlico region through most of the decade. In 1851, when Southern Rights Democrat Thomas Ruffin challenged the Whig congressman Edward Stanly, for the Eighth District seat in Congress, Stanly wrote a letter to the citizens of New Bern advocating a Unionist stance: “I sincerely believe that any candidate, an avowed advocate of secession or disunion, who would without equivocation proclaim his wish to dissolve our Union, would be driven into retirement amidst the execration of our people.” Craven supported Stanly, casting their vote for Union as much as for the candidate, as

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<sup>46</sup> James Manney to Editors of the *Republic*, [November 1849], Manney Letterbook (first, second, third, and fourth quotations); William Haywood to Martin Van Buren, May 30, 1849, in McPherson, “Letters to Martin Van Buren,” 149 (fifth, sixth, and seventh quotations).

<sup>47</sup> James Manney to Zachary Taylor, February 18, 1850, Manney Letterbook (first quotation); William Haywood to Martin Van Buren, [December 1850], in Mcpherson, “Letters to Martin Van Buren,” 151 (second quotation).

even Stanly recognized. “It is a victory of the friends of the Union,” Stanly observed of his triumph, “It has proved that the people of this district condemn those who advocate even the ‘abstract right of secession.’”<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, in the presidential election of 1856, the fate of the Union and southern interests dominated southern political discourse. A concerned friend wrote to New Bern’s John D. Whitford, “The question is as to the *perpetuity of the Union*, and no sophistry or artifice can hide it from a thoughtful, calm man who loves his country more than party.” Concern had grown rapidly over which party was strong enough to thwart the newly formed northern Republican Party, and its anti-slavery expansion platform. Several former Whigs had gravitated to the American Party, but ultimately, Craven and Carteret (and the state as a whole) backed the Democratic candidate James Buchanan—a Pennsylvanian who embraced southern values—as more likely to protect southern interests and, concomitantly, prevent radical southerners from advocating disunion. Thus, even as late as 1856 residents of Craven and Carteret maintained their steadfast support of the Union.<sup>49</sup>

Slowly, some attitudes began to change, beginning in the fall of 1859, when word of John Brown’s October raid on Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, spread into eastern North Carolina. In New Bern, newspaper editors advocated keeping a vigilant eye on potential outside agitators, particularly northern booksellers: “No doubt but all such are abolition agents in disguise and we can conceive no remedy likely to prove of so much efficacy as *tar and feathers*.” In addition, northern merchants came under intense scrutiny. “No southern merchant should buy a dollar’s worth of merchandise from a nigger freedom shrieking abolitionist under any circumstance,”

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<sup>48</sup> Edward Stanly to New Bern citizens quoted in Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 233 (first quotation); Edward Stanly quoted in J. Carlyle Sitterson, *The Secession Movement in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 92 (second and third quotations).

<sup>49</sup> Francis Hawks to John D. Whitford, August 14, 1856, John D. Whitford Collection, NCSA (fourth quotation); Cheney, *North Carolina Government*, 1330-1331; Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 174-178.



proclaimed the *New Bern Daily Progress*. When people learned that two of the men in John Brown's band had been free blacks from North Carolina, some legislators proposed evicting all free blacks from the state. The New Bern newspapermen supported this measure entirely, reprinting an article that declared free blacks to be the "meanest people" and implored the state to "get rid of such nuisances."<sup>50</sup>

New Bern, and Craven County, prepared for drastic measures, taking military precautions against abolitionist insurrections winked at by the north. On November 30, 1859, denouncing the treasonous northerners who were "openly applauding" Brown and his crusade, Duncan K. McRae, gubernatorial candidate in 1858, organized a local militia company, the "Newbern Light Infantry." Rallying together a month after John Brown's execution, the citizens of Craven County held a meeting at the Court House in New Bern, and appointed a delegation to inform the governor of "the condition of the 'Depot of Public Arms' at this place, and also to request your aid in obtaining for the State, her full quota of all arms of the latest and best improvements." Joining the New Bern Light Infantry, and the Elm City Cadets (a militia company that had formed in 1858), New Bern men created a volunteer cavalry company in March 1860, in order to be even better prepared when the next crisis came.<sup>51</sup>

Well before Lincoln's election, Craven citizens believed that next crisis was looming. "Even the most careless observer of the signs of the times, must be aware that danger not only threatens us, but it is imminent," three New Bern leaders declared to Governor Ellis in January 1860, advising that in the case of secession, "Our geographical position will not permit us in this

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<sup>50</sup> Victor B. Howard, "John Brown's Raid at Harpers Ferry and the Sectional Crisis in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 55 (October 1978): 398-415 (first quotation on p. 402, second quotation on p. 415, and third and fourth quotations on p. 410).

<sup>51</sup> Duncan McRae quoted in Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 240 (first quotation); Nathan H. Street, Peter G. Evans, John N. Washington to Ellis, Newberne Jan. 9 [1860], in Noble J. Tolbert, ed., *The Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1964), 2: 345 (second quotation); Henry B. Clarke to Ellis, March 20, 1860, John W. Ellis, Governors Papers, NCSA (militia).

or any contest involving the South, to be neutral or indifferent, even if we were craven enough to desire it. Whenever Virginia and South Carolina act, North Carolina must take her part.”<sup>52</sup>

Not everyone in Craven shared this sentiment, however. John L. Pennington, the editor of the *Daily Progress*, a politically independent newspaper, supported Stephen Douglas, the pro-Union Democratic candidate for president. In July 1860, after the Democratic party had split and nominated two competing candidates for president—John C. Breckinridge by splinter group southern Democrats, and Stephen Douglas by the remainder of the Democratic party—Pennington condemned President James Buchanan and his radical southern manipulators for effectively destroying the national party. “The election in November will show to the world how complete has been its destruction,” the editor presciently predicted. Pennington’s press opposed Breckinridge, who it believed “has no chance of election by the people,” and supported Douglas for pragmatic reasons. “The fact is, while Douglas is not likely to be elected,” the editor admitted, “his being run will most certainly prevent the election of Lincoln by the people and throw it into the [H]ouse,” where, moderates hoped, a more suitable compromise candidate could be elected. In such a way, Pennington hoped to preserve the Union.<sup>53</sup>

In Beaufort, Stephen Decatur Pool, a schoolteacher and former editor of the *Beaufort Journal*, and one of the most outspoken antagonists in the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad disagreement, joined his New Bern counterpart in seeking to preserve the Union. Pool established the weekly *Union Banner* in Beaufort on August 25, 1860, as an advocate of the Constitutional Union party ticket of John Bell and Edward Everett. This pro-Union sentiment prevailed at the polls in November. Carteret residents gave 441 votes to Bell, 370 to Breckinridge, and 42 Douglas. Craven gave an even larger majority to Bell, as he polled 693

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<sup>52</sup> Nathan H. Street, Peter G. Evans, John N. Washington to Ellis, Newberne Jan. 9 [1860], in Tolbert, ed., *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 346-347.

<sup>53</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, July 3, 1860.

votes to Breckinridge's 492 and Douglas's 122. The results of that year's gubernatorial election further demonstrated the Union sentiment in the region. Both Carteret and Craven residents gave majorities to the Opposition Party candidate John Pool over Democratic incumbent John W. Ellis, even though both counties had voted for Ellis in 1858 (and despite the fact that Ellis had married a New Bern belle that summer). Word that Ellis supported secession in event of a Republican victory in the presidential election turned many in the region against him.<sup>54</sup>

When that Republican victory came to pass in November, the New Bern *Daily Progress* reported the anxious mood in the county. "Some declare themselves for immediate resistance, while others and by far the larger portion, seem disposed to take things coolly for the present and wait and see what is to turn up," the editor declared. The paper made no secret of its stance: "We believe in holding on to the Union as long as it is possible to do so with honor." Though Lincoln's election might not have immediately changed the position of some Craven residents, it did transform the attitude of many others. Matthias E. Manly, a State Supreme Court Justice, wrote his Justice Thomas Ruffin from New Bern on December 2, 1860, "Our political surroundings make me sad and apprehensive." Though he held out a slim hope that Lincoln's election may "present an occasion of having a better understanding with our northern neighbors," he sternly warned, "If they insist upon regarding slaves at the south as a *moral taint* which it is *their* duty to eradicate, we must quit them."<sup>55</sup>

Other New Bern citizens were more proactive in the course they believed the state should pursue. On December 12, 1860, a week before South Carolina declared their secession from the Union, New Bern citizens met in the city theater to give vent to their feelings on the "present

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<sup>54</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, August 29, 1860; Cheney, *North Carolina Government*, 1330, 1400; *The National Era* [Washington, D.C.], August 26, 1858 (Ellis's marriage).

<sup>55</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, November 9, 1860 (first and second quotations); Matthias E. Manly to Thomas Ruffin, December 2, 1860, in J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, 4 volumes, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1918-1920), 3: 104-105 (third, fourth, and fifth quotations).

alarming state of National affairs.” They resolved to send a proclamation to Governor Ellis declaring, “the state of North Carolina has suffered from the aggression of the North upon the institution of slavery until the burden has become intolerable,” and the Union no longer afforded North Carolina the “welfare, equality and tranquility which it was intended to secure.” They recommended that the state should simultaneously not only prepare itself militarily to resist any attempt by the national government to forcibly coerce any southern states that may choose to secede back into the Union, but also quickly institute the process by which the State Legislature could call a secession convention. In the wake of such declarations, and of developments around the country, even Pennington altered his Unionist attitude. By December 17, he announced, “If the Union cannot be preserved upon principles of equality, for which all good men should devoutly pray, let it be smashed and let it be smashed now.” By early 1861, New Bern had restocked its armory with over 1600 rifles, and several local companies of men prepared to take them up in the cause of the South if North Carolina were to secede. As New Bern held a meeting in February 1861 for the nomination of delegates to the secession convention, a resident wrote, “The time has come when we should no longer submit to the tyranny of the detestable abolitionists, but should defend our rights, even if it costs us the last drop of our blood.” Come what may, Craven County was prepared, and some even welcomed a conflict.<sup>56</sup>

Carteret County took none of these steps, reflecting the depth of its Unionist sentiment. While leading New Bern citizens issued pro-secession proclamations, several prominent Beaufort residents held their own pro-Union meeting on December 15. “Taking strong grounds in favor of the Union,” the meeting decided that the state should assemble a convention that

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<sup>56</sup> W.B. Wadsworth to John Ellis, December 12, 1860, John W. Ellis, Governors Papers, NCSA (first, second, and third quotations); New Bern *Daily Progress*, December 17, 1860 (fourth quotation); James Morris to John W. Ellis, February 6, 1861, Tolbert, ed., *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 587 (restocking arms); P.W. Biddle to “Rosa,” February 19, 1861, Simpson-Biddle Papers, NCSA (fifth quotation).

would embody “that spirit of moderation, conciliation and compromise, which becomes the character of North Carolina.” Though not condemning the action that any other southern state may take regarding secession, the Beaufort meeting proclaimed, “we believe that the people of North Carolina should never adopt such a course” without cooperation with all other southern states, including the border states. Like conditional Unionists throughout the state and the South, the members of the Beaufort meeting did not deny the right of secession, but only viewed it as the absolute “final remedy—after all other remedies... have been tried and failed.” When a citizen offered a resolution that called for North Carolina to secede if South Carolina seceded, “it was rejected by an almost unanimous vote.”<sup>57</sup>

Carteret’s Unionist sentiment continued to prove deeper and stronger than Craven’s throughout the months following Lincoln’s election. When Craven County voted in favor of a secession convention in February 1861 by over 500 votes, Carteret voted in favor by only twenty-one votes. Though a slim majority of eligible Carteret voters had approved a secession convention, this did not translate into a call for action. Craven had elected secessionist delegates to attend the failed convention, but Carteret had elected a Unionist. Carteret, like many counties throughout the state, called for prudence. In contrast to Craven County, no local companies of eager young men were formed during these anxious months in Beaufort; no wealthy local financed an organization, or tried to captain a vigilance committee; no letters emerged from Beaufort leaders welcoming the secession movement.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Union Banner* [Beaufort], December 15, 1860, quoted in *New Bern Daily Progress*, December 20, 1860. Carteret County was one of ten counties that held Union meetings after Lincoln’s election. For a discussion of the competing secessionist and Unionist meetings, see Sitterson, *Secession Crisis in North Carolina*, 191-200. For an excellent study of Upper South conditional Unionists, see Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1989), especially 144-152, and 330-341 for North Carolina’s Unionists.

<sup>58</sup> “Voting for Convention,” Letter Book, 392-393, Governor’s Papers, John Willis Ellis, NCSA (Carteret vote count). The final vote for Carteret was 415 yeas, 394 nays, while Craven voted 891 yeas, 362 nays. Overall the state voted down the convention by a tally of 47,323 to 46,677. Craven sent two delegates, John D. Whitford and

Instead, Carteret residents were content to see what course the new president might take before they condemned the venerable Union to destruction. As Governor Ellis wrote to the South Carolina governor before the election of 1860, “Some favor Submission, some resistance and others still would *await the course of events that might follow.*” Few favored the former; by early 1861, most in Craven favored the middle course; but Carteret residents preferred the latter. All hinged upon what course the Lincoln administration would pursue. The climax of the waiting was coming soon, as Confederates in Charleston, South Carolina were preparing to fire on Fort Sumter and force the surrender of the Union garrison there. Lincoln’s actions after that watershed event would unite a reluctant Carteret County with their ardent neighbor Craven County, and mobilize North Carolina for war.<sup>59</sup>

While nearly two centuries of development had seen Craven and Carteret County, and specifically New Bern and Beaufort, follow different social and economic paths and possess different political views, the threat of the use of force by the Federal government against their region, their state, and potentially their communities, would unite these two counties in a common bond. Like two companions joining hands as they jump off the precipice together, they would leap into the war to resist the tyranny of the Federal government, not knowing what awaited them in the abyss below.

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George Green, both southern rights Democrats John D. Whitford and George Green, while Carteret sent only one, Charles R. Thomas, chairman of the Union meeting in Beaufort on December 15, 1860. See Cheney, *North Carolina Government*, 386-387, 399-401 (p. 399 for statewide vote count); New Bern *Daily Progress*, December 20, 1860, and February 28, 1861; and Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*, 246-247 (p. 246 for Craven vote count). For more on the Unionist debates over secession, see Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*.

<sup>59</sup> John Ellis to William H. Gist, October 19, 1860, in Tolbert, ed., *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 469-470.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “GREAT EXCITEMENT PREVAILS IN OUR MIDST”: CONFEDERATE MOBILIZATION IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE WAR

Sitting in his parlor in Raleigh on the evening of February 13, 1861, Governor John W. Ellis closed his day by writing in his diary about the pervasive fear that had preoccupied his thoughts since South Carolina seceded nearly two months before. “Coercion is all the talk. Whether that will be the policy of the incoming administration &c &c,” Ellis wrote. The despised word even came out of the mouth of Ellis’ babe. “Sitting at dinner to day our little daughter Mary about 20 months old overheard this word ‘coercion’ and pronounced it quite distinctly, and of course, we thought, very sweetly,” Ellis recounted. “It was the first word of four syllables that she had ever pronounced. But alas! How ignorant of its terrible meaning.” Ellis, along with many other southerners in the Upper South states, adopted a watch-and-wait attitude in the days before the firing at Fort Sumter. These conditional Unionists believed that Lincoln’s election alone did not mandate secession. However, they did not disagree with the right of secession, and their pacifism would endure only as long as the Federal government did not attempt to forcibly compel the seven seceded states to rejoin the Union. As Ellis penned in his diary, the word everyone used to represent that potential use of force was “coercion.”<sup>1</sup>

The word’s terrible meaning became clear on April 15, three days after Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, when President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 troops to put down the rebellion. Lincoln’s decree appeared to be the manifestation of what southerners

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Ellis Diary, February 13, 1861, in Noble J. Tolbert, ed., *The Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1964), 2: 478-479. For more on conditional Unionists, see Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

had been maintaining vigilance against. When Secretary of War Simon Cameron formally sent a telegram to Ellis calling for North Carolina's contribution to the national levy, the governor responded indignantly, proclaiming the call to arms against the seceded southern states to be "in violation of the constitution and a gross usurpation of power." He confirmed the state's posture toward Lincoln's act with his unequivocal statement, "You can get no troops from North Carolina."<sup>2</sup>

Lincoln did not realize the depth of the state's fear of arbitrary power. North Carolinians interpreted his call for troops as the herald of an establishment of an abolitionist military despotism in the South. Of course, Lincoln's proclamation alienated other upper-South states, prompting Virginia, Tennessee and Arkansas to secede along with North Carolina, and compelling many conditional Unionists to throw their lot in with secessionists. Carteret and Craven residents were just a fraction of those provoked into joining the war by this call to arms. Residents of the two counties supported the southern Confederacy, though with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Craven residents rejoiced at the event and embraced the opportunity to join their brethren in arms. Carteret residents showed proper support at a surface level, but their conviction proved to be not only shallow in depth, but also limited by numerous conditions. While Craven residents offered an unrestricted allegiance to the Confederacy, Carteret residents demonstrated that they would fight, but only if they could dictate their terms of their service in a localized way. Together, these adjoining communities would face many trials over the next year that would temper their enthusiasm and test their loyalty to the Confederate nation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Ellis to Simon Cameron, April 15, 1861, Telegram, in Tolbert, ed., *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 612.

<sup>3</sup> William C. Harris, *With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 58-59; William C. Harris, *North Carolina and the Coming of the Civil War* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1988), 56; James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 276-282; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 334-352.



The news that Fort Sumter had surrendered arrived in New Bern at around 9:30 p.m. Sunday, April 14, on a special train from Goldsboro. Over one hundred residents greeted the train at the depot and shouted in great excitement as a messenger read the reports aloud. Many of the white residents in town poured out into the wide, tree-lined city streets to celebrate. At 10 p.m., seven guns were fired in honor of the seven seceded states, and the townspeople lit up the night sky in several bonfires. A group of young men hung Abraham Lincoln in effigy from the ruins of the recently burned Court House, with a sign around his neck that read “May all Abolitionists meet the same fate.” Little boys pelted the effigy with rocks. In the court house square along Broad and Pollock Streets, and at the south and east Front Street wharfs bordering the Trent and Neuse River, people embraced each other, shouted out their exultations, and fired off small arms and cannon, before eventually retiring to taverns or their homes to further fortify their spirits. John L. Pennington, as editor of the New Bern *Daily Progress*, announced in fiery rhetoric that the firing of Fort Sumter should cement local support for the South: “The South is now our country and our country demands our allegiance; our section, our honor, our Interests and all that we hold dear upon earth calls to arms! Are there any whose craven hearts will shrink from a duty so palpable,” Pennington, asked. “We will not believe it.”<sup>4</sup>

If any did still shrink from war after April 14, news the next day stiffened their backbones. At noon on April 15, another express train brought the news of Lincoln’s proclamation calling for troops. In response to this news, the *Progress* declared, “a war of *coercion* has been openly proclaimed.” “There is no division of sentiment in our community now. All are for defending our rights as Southern citizens to the death,” the editors further expounded. “If divisions existed before upon the true policy of the county, the proclamation of

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<sup>4</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, April 15, 1861.

Lincoln has served to disperse them and make our people unite.” A large, enthusiastic crowd met at a local hall, where the people voted, without any state authorization, to send a committee of men to “hold, possess, and occupy” Fort Macon. That night, a New Bern militia company, the Elm City Riflemen, marched through the town carrying a hastily made flag of the Southern Confederacy, while ladies crowded the windows and doors of downtown establishments, waving their handkerchiefs, and cheering them deliriously. The next day, the company marched down the road toward Beaufort and Fort Macon while the “whole population” saw them off with “deafening shouts.”<sup>5</sup>

The steady reports of euphoric celebration suggest that everyone welcomed the opportunity to get the suppressed anxiety out of their system. Months of nervous anticipation had given way to a climactic release. One local planter expressed relief that the tension had finally been broken: “I was glad to learn . . . that the Confederate States had taken Fort Sumpter, and hope since war has actually began between the two sections, that the border States will no longer hesitate about uniting her destiny with that of the Confederate States.” The call to arms seemed to mobilize and unify the county’s entire population. As the *Daily Progress* proclaimed, “Great excitement prevails in our midst seasoned with genuine patriotism and an unyielding love of our own institutions.” Even those who had opposed war now appeared to surrender, momentarily at least, to their regional pride. Such enthusiasm convinced the local newspaper editors: “We think we can safely say that there is but one party here now and that is for the Independence of a Southern Confederacy.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, April 17, 1861 (first, second, and third quotations), April 16, 1861 (fourth, fifth, and sixth quotations).

<sup>6</sup> S.W. Biddle to Rosa, April 15, 1861, Simpson-Biddle Papers (North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; hereinafter cited as NCSA) (first quotation); New Bern *Daily Progress*, April 17, 1861 (second quotation), April 16, 1861 (third quotation).

Craven was not alone in its joy. Carteret manifested similar excitement upon hearing the news. On April 12, upon hearing word that South Carolina had commenced firing on Fort Sumter, the Southern Rights Party of Carteret County held a meeting—in which over 120 County leaders attended—in Morehead City, where they declared, “The honor and best interests of North Carolina demand that her connection with the present Union be dissolved, and that she should unite her destiny with her sister States of the Southern Confederacy.” News of Fort Sumter’s surrender on Sunday further fueled their excitement. In addition to public cheering along Front Street, many men would gather at the Atlantic Hotel to hear its proprietor, Josiah Solomon Pender, rally men to follow him in imitating their southern brethren in Charleston, and capture the Federal fort in their harbor. Pender led a small group of inspired Beaufort friends and neighbors to capture Fort Macon. Their task was not difficult, as only one individual, serving primarily as a maintenance man, inhabited it.<sup>7</sup>

Pender’s precipitate action stunned even the war hawks in New Bern. City leaders could scarcely believe that the Unionists of Beaufort could have struck a blow for the Confederacy before New Bern’s martial-spirited men. Indeed, residents of Carteret displayed the instant transformation in attitude that swept the state and prompted former governor Charles Manly to avow on April 22, “All are unanimous. Even those who were loudest in denouncing secession are now hottest & loudest the other way.” On April 16, a surprised Pennington praised “the gallant people of Beaufort” for their actions and demanded, “When will Newbern send down her quota?”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, April 16, 1861 (quotation), April 19, 1861 (Pender’s action); John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 10-11 (Pender); Louis H. Manarin and Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr., comps, *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*, 14 vols. to date (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1966--), 1: 114-123 (Pender).

<sup>8</sup> Charles Manly to David L. Swain, April 22, 1861, quoted in John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 56 (first quotation); New Bern *Daily Progress*, April 16, 1861 (second and third quotations).

Pennington did not have long to wait. Numerous Craven County leaders got into the martial enlistment spirit immediately after the outbreak of hostilities. On April 18, two prominent New Bern men informed Ellis, “Alive to the emergency of the times, forty-six gentlemen have already pledged themselves to take up arms in defence of the State and Southern Rights.” Calling themselves the “Beauregard Rifles” after the commander of the Fort Sumter bombardment, the men asked the government for arms to outfit the emerging company, in which one of the men, twenty-four year old former port Customs Collector Edward K. Bryan, would serve as second lieutenant. Lest Ellis have any doubts, they assured him, “The citizens of New Bern are thoroughly aroused and patriotic in the Southern Cause.” The number of men who flocked to the Confederate banners in the late spring of 1861 overwhelmingly supported their contention.<sup>9</sup>

New Bern businesses closed early every day to allow men to enlist and train on the city’s fairgrounds. Bryan’s “Beauregard Rifles” were the first to form. On April 18, the men elected thirty-four year old bookkeeper Joseph W. Jones as their captain. Though undoubtedly flattered—for being elected captain was often a sign of one’s community popularity—Jones immediately resigned his commission for unknown reasons. The men then promoted thirty-five year old tailor Daniel W. Hurtt to the captaincy. Quickly joining the “Beauregard Rifles” in the Confederacy’s service were the “Gaston Rifles”—organized by twenty-three year old Hugh L. Cole, son of one of the largest landowning farmers in the county—and the “Elm City Rifles” militia company, which boasted twenty-two year old George C. Lewis as its captain, and twenty-one year old Alexander Miller as its first lieutenant. Lewis and Miller lived together and worked

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<sup>9</sup> J.W. Primrose & E.K. Bryan to John W. Ellis, April 18, 1861, John W. Ellis, Governors Papers, NCSA (quotations); Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 3:462.

for Miller's father's successful rosin oil distillery. These three companies formed the nucleus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Regiment, and served in Virginia.<sup>10</sup>

Forty-year old attorney, and 1858 gubernatorial candidate, Duncan K. McRae formed a company that eventually became Company D, of the 5<sup>th</sup> North Carolina on June 3, 1861. McRae's neighbor, engineer Henry T. Guion, served as captain of Company B, of the 10<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment, which mustered into service on June 13, 1861, and formed part of the garrison at Fort Macon. During the summer, several more companies enlisted and were detailed to man the defensive lines below New Bern. Newspaper editor Pennington served as lieutenant of Company I, 10<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment, which elected John N. Whitford, a twenty-four year old New Bern merchant, as their captain. Thus, six Craven companies formed in the initial *rage militaire*, but several more materialized in response to Union expeditions that threatened the North Carolina coast in the fall and winter.<sup>11</sup>

Thirty-nine year old Peter G. Evans, the wealthiest landowner in the county, canvassed Craven and neighboring Lenoir County for volunteers to join his cavalry company, the "Macon Mounted Guards." Evans' unit consisted of scions of the economic elite in the region, with an average wealth valuation of \$26,481 per man, four to seven times larger than all previous companies (See Table 1). Simultaneously, James S. Lane organized over 100 men into what became Company D, 40<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment in October 1861. Though he recruited at the same time as Evans, Lane lured men from a different economic class, as his company possessed one of the lowest average wealth valuations. Thirty-one year old merchant Joseph Whitty organized the last group of Craven men to enlist in 1861, becoming Company K of the 31<sup>st</sup> North

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<sup>10</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, April 20, 1861 (Jones initial election); Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 3: 431-441, 462-479; 1860 U.S. Census, Craven County, Population Schedule.

<sup>11</sup> Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 4: 171-183; 1: 52-61, 138-146; 1860 U.S. Census, Craven County, Population Schedule.

Carolina Regiment on November 21, 1861. Confederate authorities ordered the 31st to Roanoke Island, where on February 8, 1862, the regiment, including Whitty's company, would be captured by Ambrose Burnside's Union expeditionary force.<sup>12</sup>

With Burnside's expedition sailing down from Virginia in January 1862, the *Progress* declared that this was no time for sunshine patriots. "He who refuses to act now," the editors wrote, "is a traitor to his country, a traitor to his home, and a traitor to his God!" Two more companies enlisted soon after the appeal. Nearly 950 Craven men had joined Confederate units during the first ten months of the war, prompting the *Progress* to boast, "no county in the State... has done as much as Craven has toward the object of self-protection and Southern independence." Over the course of four years of war, approximately 1100 men, or nearly 70 percent of men of military age (between the ages of 16 and 39 in the 1860 census) would join fourteen companies from the Craven area.<sup>13</sup>

Carteret would not match Craven's enlistment output either in total numbers or in proportion to its population, nor could it duplicate Craven's enthusiasm. Yet, enough county residents enlisted to suggest that they did not lack in patriotism, at least initially. Three Beaufort men formed companies in Carteret in the weeks after Lincoln's call for troops. The close examination of their efforts at enlistment, however, reveals suspect sentiments and various motivations for fighting. Naturally enough, Josiah Pender, the captor of Fort Macon, was the first to begin recruiting a company for military service. Pender combined a charismatic personality with a natural commanding presence—standing a slender six foot two, with dark hair, heavy eyebrows and blue-grey eyes. Born in 1819 in Tarboro, North Carolina, Pender had attended schools in Rome and Paris, and in his early life had dabbled in the arts, both aesthetic—

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<sup>12</sup> Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 2: 213-220; 1: 406-417; 8: 505-512; 1860 U.S. Census, Craven County, Population Schedule.

<sup>13</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, January 2, 1862 (first and second quotations), January 25, 1862 (third quotation).

as a painter and a poet—and military—as he briefly attended West Point and had also served briefly in the Mexican War. Though not a Beaufort native, the well-traveled Pender had immediately established himself as a leader in the community when he arrived with his family in 1856. With business partner Stephen Page, Pender constructed the enormous Atlantic Hotel, and appeared to be prospering handsomely. In the 1860 census Pender claimed \$50,000 worth of real estate and \$20,000 worth of personal property, which included seven slaves.<sup>14</sup>

Though many admired his hotel and his wealth, Pender had amassed substantial debts to go along with his impressive assets. In July 1860, only a few days after the census taker visited Pender's home, the local R.G. Dun agent expressed his concerns to the national credit bureau. "They have expended a large amount in the erection of this hotel," the agent wrote, "they must be in debt to no small amount. My advice is caution." Court records further reveal the financial problems, as Pender had been sued for debts by a number of businessmen. In January 1861, Pender bought out Page (who then left the county) and continued the hotel on his own, but was still dilatory with his creditors. By February 1861, the credit agent characterized Pender as a "very slow pay." A short two months later Pender would be the aggressive captain of the Fort Macon raiders.<sup>15</sup>

While Pender's martial activity may certainly have stemmed from a strong sense of regional solidarity with South Carolina and patriotism for the nascent Confederate nation, it is also quite plausible that Pender rattled his saber the loudest in order to deflect local public

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<sup>14</sup> *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. "Pender, Josiah Solomon"; Unprocessed material, Box 3, F.C. Salisbury Collection, NCSA; Bill Stancil, "Laura Pender of Tarboro: Belle of the Blockade Runners," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, March 29, 1970, Newspaper Clippings File (North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as NCC); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-A, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.); 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, Population and Slave Schedules.

<sup>15</sup> North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-A, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (quotations); *J.H. Davis v. J.S. Pender*, Fall Term, 1861, Carteret County, Appearance Docket Superior Court, 1833-1869, vol. 2, NCSA; *E.H. Norcum v. J.S. Pender*, November term, 1860, Carteret County Civil Action Papers, 1858-1864, NCSA.

attention away from his local financial difficulties. He capitalized on his standing as a community leader to actively champion secession. He had served as secretary of a meeting of the Carteret County Southern Rights Party on April 12 that had called for North Carolina's secession, before leading the capture of Fort Macon on April 14, and recruiting a company of local boys for military service. Eventually 101 young men would join his company, which officially mustered into service at Fort Macon as the aptly named "Beaufort Harbor Guards" on June 1, 1861. Pender's conspicuous military activities simply cemented his image in the community as a natural leader imbued with enthusiasm for the southern cause.<sup>16</sup>

Another local company leader had more practical incentives to display his martial ardor than just patriotic zeal. Forty-two year old Stephen Decatur Pool, a Pasquotank County native who had moved his family to Beaufort in the mid-1850s, sought to enhance his flagging prestige within the community. Prior to April 1861, Pool was the least likely candidate to raise a company for Confederate service. In fact, he appeared to be as firm a Unionist as lived in the County. He had edited the anti-secessionist *Union Banner* in Beaufort, served on the committee of the pro-Union meeting that had met in December 1860, and had refused to participate in the Southern Rights Party meeting on April 12. But after Lincoln called for troops, Pool quickly championed the Southern cause, perhaps for practical reasons. Unlike the wealthy Pender, Pool experienced a more economically tenuous existence. In the 1860 census Pool owned no property and claimed just \$1,000 in personal value. As the local agent for the R.G. Dun & Company reported, Pool's income as newspaper editor and schoolteacher at the town's female seminary had gotten progressively worse before the war. While acknowledging that Pool was "married and of very fine character," the agent deemed him a "slow pay" on his debts, and more to the

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<sup>16</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, April 16, 1861 (Southern Rights Party); Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 113-124.



point, “a bad manager [who] has but little means.” In 1860, the agent wrote that Pool was “a hard case[;] consider him insolvent (or he won’t pay his debts which is worse).” Finally on February 19, 1861, the agent concluded that Pool was “not worth anything.”<sup>17</sup>

Though he had tried to maintain his role in the community as a young, educated professional, Pool had not been able to secure a position even within the county court system since February 1859. The county commissioners did not trust him in a position of fiscal responsibility. The sense of shame and loss of honor, in a society that respected men on their ability to materially provide for their families, must have been severe to this father of ten. Another way southern society allowed one to regain honor and save face was through the display of manly, martial acts. Enlisting a company for the war served as a public commitment to combat on the field of honor. Such a pledge served a similar function as another honor-defending mechanism in antebellum southern society, the duel. As Bertram Wyatt-Brown argued in regards to the antebellum practice of dueling, “it enabled lesser men to enter, however imperfectly, the ranks of leaders” and though “the promise of esteem and status that beckoned men to the field of honor did not always match the expectation,” frequently the duel—or in Pool’s case, the commitment to honorable combat—“served as a form of scapegoating for unresolved personal problems.” For Pool, the war could not come fast enough for him to regain lost honor and perhaps rehabilitate his professional reputation in Beaufort society.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 127; New Bern *Daily Progress*, August 19, 1860 (editor of *Union Banner*), December 15, 1860 (Unionist meeting), April 16, 1861 (Southern Rights Party); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-A, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (quotations).

<sup>18</sup> Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 124-137; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, Population Schedule; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 350-351 (quotations). For further exploration into the role of violence and combat in the creation and reaffirmation of masculine codes of honor, see Richard E. Nisbet and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: the Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996); Pieter Spierenburg, ed., *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998).

Carteret County citizens must have respected his education and talent for leadership enough—despite his financial woes—to welcome him as company commander of their sons. One hundred and one young men, whom Pool deemed “the flower of Carteret County,” including the sons of some of the wealthiest and most well known citizens in the county, served in his outfit. Pool recruited his company, dubbed the “Topsail Rifles” after the name of the inlet that led into Beaufort harbor, concurrently with Pender in the days after Fort Sumter, and tendered it to the state on May 21, 1861. Pool and his men garrisoned Fort Macon, where on June 1, his troops watched Pender’s company officially muster into service. Three days later, however, the War Department ordered Pool’s company to Camp Advance, near Garysburg, North Carolina, on the Weldon Railroad, less than 10 miles from the Virginia border. Once there, the company was assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Infantry Regiment, where three Craven companies already served. August found the men north of Richmond. As they passed through New Bern on their way to camp in June, Pool had assured New Bern leaders that his men “would only return to their homes and friends when victory and independence shall have been achieved for the South.”<sup>19</sup>

However, time would prove the men’s devotion to be not nearly as strong as Pool proclaimed. As will be discussed in the next chapter, within one year half of Pool’s company would abandon their unit. Likely enlisting under the tacit assumption that they would join their comrades in Pender’s company serving at home, within the earthen walls of Fort Macon, some of the men in Pool’s company undoubtedly were dismayed that they were being sent to fight so far from home. Though Pool’s company would be reassigned to Fort Macon before autumn, their

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<sup>19</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, May 23, 1861 (first quotation), June 4, 1861 (second quotation); Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 124-137.

departure during the summer probably affected the recruiting efforts of the next officer to follow Pender and Pool.

In June, Benjamin Leecraft, a successful Beaufort dry goods merchant with prominent and long-standing family ties to the community, set about recruiting a company to join Pender and Pool in the Confederate war effort. In a foreshadowing of the county's lukewarm commitment to the cause, he found much of the initial enlistment enthusiasm to be suddenly tapped out. Most Carteret men only reluctantly abandoned the Union after Lincoln's call for troops. Job L. Kinsey, a native farmer who would serve as a Confederate spy in the region during the latter part of the war, acknowledged, "I was a Union man at first, but afterwards went into the Confederate army." Similarly, farmer William Rowe testified to post-war Federal investigators, "At first I was a union man," but "afterwards my sympathies were with the confederacy." Clifford Simpson testified that he was "strictly loyal until the state seceded and went out of the union and I then followed my State."<sup>20</sup>

These statements not only illustrate the shift from Unionist attitudes as a result of Lincoln's action, but also reveal the complex nature of loyalty in the region—as one man proclaimed loyalty to the Confederacy, while another identified specifically with his state. Even though many Carteret residents felt Lincoln's actions had been evidence of an intolerable coercion of southern states, their allegiance to the Confederacy, with some exceptions, proved more conditional than absolute. As William Blair asserted in his study of Virginia's Confederate identity, "people may not fight for the nation but for the community or neighborhood."

However, "When local goals fall into line with national purpose, the combination creates a

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<sup>20</sup> North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 163, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection; Deposition of Job L. Kinsey, *Calvin Perry v. United States* (case file no. 8958) (first quotation), Deposition of William Rowe, *Arrington Purify, administrator of Thomas Purify v. United States* (case file no. 7852) (second and third quotations), Deposition of Clifford Simpson, *Gabriel Hardison v. United States* (case file no. 8070) (fourth quotation), all in Records of the United States Court of Claims, Record Group 123, National Archives, Washington, D.C. [hereinafter cited as RG 123].

powerful motivating force.” Carteret enlistment patterns imply that most men in the region considered their foremost loyalty to be to their own community. But by fighting for their own small corner of the Confederacy, they were, by extension, defending the nation.<sup>21</sup>

When Leecraft began recruiting, he encountered resistance, as potential recruits dictated enlistment terms in a localized way. Leecraft discovered that these local conditional Confederates would serve only under the condition that they could remain in their home region. Most had never been away from their corner of the world, and were less concerned with the potential dangers of Union armies marching through the fertile fields of the Shenandoah Valley, or sailing down the waters of the Mississippi, Tennessee or Cumberland Rivers, than they were with the real dangers of the Union army marching through the marshy fields outside of Beaufort and Morehead and Smyrna or sailing through the waters of Pamlico Sound and Beaufort harbor. The difficulty Leecraft encountered, even though there were a large proportion of able-bodied men still available for service, suggests the superficial commitment to the Confederate cause in Carteret. Residents certainly did not share the same enthusiasm as their Craven neighbors, and efforts at enlistment seemed to be more perfunctory than passionate.

On June 25, 1861, three weeks after Pool’s company departed, Leecraft admitted defeat to Governor Ellis, conceding that his “endeavors to raise a company... have been unsuccessful.”

Leecraft lamented that he “could not succeed in raising a company to go [just] any where on

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<sup>21</sup> William Blair, *Virginia’s Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 141 (quotation). For an explanation of how national identity interconnects with local identity, see David M. Potter, “The Historian’s Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa,” in *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 34-83. Citizens of the Carteret region, of course, had many competing loyalties. As Thomas G. Dyer has perceptively written, people have always retained multiple loyalties: “Allegiances to family, home, friends, lodges, church, class, state, and region (among others) competed with or complemented national loyalty.” In peacetime, loyalties can complement each other, but in wartime “demands arise that national loyalty be paramount and controlling.” See Thomas G. Dyer, *Secret Yankees: The Union Circle in Confederate Atlanta* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 4. For more on the concept of multiple loyalties, see Harold Guetzkow, “Multiple Loyalties: Theoretical Approach to a Problem in International Organization” (Princeton, N.J.: Center for Research on World Political Institutions, 1955); George P. Fletcher, *Loyalty: An Essay on the Morality of Relationships* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Southern Soil to repel the invader,” but he explained to Governor Ellis, “I find that a large number would enlist for the War provided they could have the assurance that they would be retained in the County.” Duty only went so far, and for these men, if duty to country and family could not be made compatible, then their obligations to family were much stronger than their obligations to a country that had held their citizenship for only a month. Leecraft, stressing the importance of defending the state’s coastline, urged the governor to allow him to enlist a company to guard Carteret’s coastline. Leecraft informed the governor that having a local company there would be beneficial for all involved: “none would be of more service than men who live there and in places adjacent—they are a hardy set—inured to hardships, and besides a very important consideration, they are perfectly acquainted with every hill, skirt of woods, bay & creek and are withal excellent marksmen.” Ellis consented to the captain’s suggestion, and Leecraft enlisted sixty-nine men by October 12, 1861, when his company was officially mustered into service as a battery of heavy artillery. It would serve in Carteret until ordered to New Bern on the eve of the Union attack in March 1862. In addition to Leecraft’s company, about sixty more Carteret men joined assorted other companies that arrived in Beaufort in the autumn of 1861.<sup>22</sup>

In all, Carteret County sent approximately 350 men into service, approximately 31 percent of the population of eligible age. Craven County by contrast enlisted nearly 1100 men, or approximately 73 percent of its men of eligible age. While Craven sent an overwhelming number of men into Confederate service, Carteret sent forth enough men to earn the respect of its

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<sup>22</sup> Benjamin [L]eeecraft to John W. Ellis, June 25, 1861, in Tolbert, *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 875-876 (quotations) (The volume has Leecraft’s name incorrectly cited as Seecraft); Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 269-272. Specifically, seventeen Carteret men joined “Andrew’s battery,” a company of heavy artillery originally organized in nearby Wayne County that arrived in Beaufort in July 1861 to help garrison Fort Macon. In October 1861, amid heightened anxiety over a possible impending Union invasion, forty more Carteret men joined “Herring’s Artillery,” another company sent to defend the canals around Beaufort. Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 104-111, 301-311; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, Population Schedule.

neighbor. The editor of the *New Bern Daily Progress* was sufficiently impressed by Carteret's enlistment efforts in June 1861 to declare, "It is madness and folly longer to say that those who were for the Union a short time ago, were not truly solicitous for the honor and happiness of our country, for Carterett [*sic*], though a small county and one of the strongest for the Union, has, now, two companies in the field and another almost completed." Despite the *Progress's* praise, however, the numbers suggest that the martial spirit in Carteret was not nearly as incandescent as it was in Craven. While Craven men willingly volunteered to serve the Confederate nation wherever it may need them, Leecraft's lament to Ellis reveals that Carteret's men lacked this level of commitment. Carteret could put up an impressive façade, but behind this veneer there was no real depth of solid foundation of Confederate sentiment.<sup>23</sup>

An economic and demographic analysis of the enlistees from each county further illuminates the disparity in devotion. At the time they enlisted in the Confederate army, the vast majority of Carteret recruits had not established independent households and possessed no real or personal property of their own. Of the 295 men who can be found in the census, only sixty-nine soldiers (or 24 percent) were heads of households. Few had any association with slavery either, as only 3 percent owned slaves and 24 percent lived in slave owning households. Only fifty men (or 17 percent) claimed any real or personal property of their own. Though most of the enlistees were neither independents nor possessed any wealth of their own, nearly 68 percent did come from landowning households, and 83 percent came from households that could claim either land or personal property of some kind. In contrast to Carteret, over 41 percent of Craven enlistees were heads of households, and over 37 percent claimed personal ownership of land or property.

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<sup>23</sup> *New Bern Daily Progress*, June 4, 1861 (quotation); 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret and Craven Counties, Population Schedules. I tabulated the numbers by counting the number of enlisted men from each county, using Manarin and Jordan's *North Carolina Troops*, and then divided that number into the number of military age men in each county. There were 1123 Carteret County white men between the ages of 16 and 39 in the 1860 census, and 1522 Craven County white men of military age in the census.

While only 7 percent of Craven enlistees owned slaves themselves, 31 percent lived in slave owning households. In addition, 75 percent of enlistees came from landowning households, and 91 percent came from households that possessed either land or personal property.<sup>24</sup>

This data not only reflects the greater wealth of Craven compared to Carteret as a whole, but also suggests the depth of commitment to the cause for each county. In Carteret, primarily unattached youth flocked to the banners, probably because they found the excitement of service more enticing than the continued drudgery of farm or sea work, especially given that they would not have to leave the county. Their fathers generally stayed out of the war; in fact, only 12 percent of Carteret enlistees were older than thirty (compared to 25 percent of Craven enlistees). Unlike Carteret, Craven's enlistment patterns demonstrate the depth of their attachment to the cause. Established citizens matched the zeal of the youth, and they did not demand to stay in the region; they were willing to serve anywhere the Confederate authorities needed them. This war was not a lark to these men, but an earnest defense of their way of life. Their commitment was deeper; they fought to preserve the homes and households they had formed. Lincoln's call to arms could either damage their livelihood through coastal blockade, or threaten their homes, property and loved ones through invasion. For many, their honor demanded that they take up military arms in defense of their families, homes, and livelihoods.

However, Carteret and Craven did share some characteristics of enlistment. In both counties, those who enlisted in the initial excitement following Fort Sumter tended to come from more financially secure households. Table 1 shows the steady decline in household wealth for Carteret enlistees.

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<sup>24</sup> Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 52, 60, 104-137, 145, 163, 170, 269-272, 301-311, 468-478, 493; 2: 215 [for Carteret County enlistees], 1: 52-61, 138-146, 407-417, 465-478; 2: 214-220; 3: 431-441, 462-479; 4: 171-183; 8: 505-512; 14: 669-677 [Craven County enlistees]; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret and Craven Counties, Population and Slave Schedules.

**Table 1 – Wealth and Slaveholding by Company—Carteret County**

<u>Company (Enlistment)*</u>	<u>Wealth Valuation Per household</u>	<u>Men from Slave- Owning households</u>	<u>Identified enlistees in 1860 Census</u>	<u>As %</u>
Pender (April 1861)	\$3564	29	83	35%
Pool (May 1861)	\$3054	22	91	24%
Leecraft (October 1861)	\$1625	12	57	21%
Others (Fall/Winter 1861)	\$1491	7	59	12%

\* Excludes the company captains

Craven County experienced the same general pattern. Table 2 lists the companies in the order in which they were organized.

**Table 2 – Wealth and Slaveholding by Company—Craven County**

<u>Company (Enlistment)*</u>	<u>Wealth Valuation Per household</u>	<u>Men from Slave- Owning households</u>	<u>Identified enlistees in 1860 Census</u>	<u>As %</u>
Hurttt (May 1861)	\$16,013	9	35	26%
Cole (May 1861)	\$5245	22	69	32%
Lewis (June 1861)	\$6968	18	48	38%
Guion (June 1861)	\$5857	20	65	31%
Whitford (June 1861)	\$5379	38	108	35%
Lane (September 1861)	\$3587	20	72	28%
Evans (October 1861)	\$16,392	15	31	48%
Whitty (November 1861)	\$4043	17	56	30%
Latham (January 1862)	\$2531	14	62	23%
Biddle (January 1862)	\$2207	3	20	15%

\* Excludes company captains & McRae's company, in which only 9 men could be identified in the census.

Just as in Carteret, Craven companies experienced a generally steady decline in the average household wealth and slave ownership over time. The two companies that disrupt the pattern—the companies of Lewis and Evans—were exceptions. Lewis's company was a prewar militia outfit, which had attracted many prominent citizens as much for social reasons as martial ones in the years before the war. Evans's company was a highly selective cavalry outfit, which



had recruited mainly among elites (probably those who could furnish their own horses) in the Craven and Lenoir region.

The wealth valuation of the officers who organized these companies have been excluded from both tables, since with few exceptions (notably Stephen Decatur Pool), each was a wealthy landowning slaveholder, and thus was usually in a different economic stratum from the enlisted men. The economic, political and social leaders of local communities often became the military leaders. As many scholars have pointed out, men in volunteer companies maintained local allegiances by electing prominent leading citizens in their communities as officers. Indeed, in Carteret and Craven not a single officer of any company was a mere yeoman farmer or fisherman. Every one either was occupied as, or lived with, a merchant, professional, or planter (with the exception of one, who was a blacksmith). The enlisted men elected as their officers citizens from the community whom they worked for, traded with, and trusted with positions of civil authority. Indeed, nearly every one of the officers in both Carteret and Craven had held some position of civic responsibility (either at the state, county, or municipal level) in the two years prior to the war. These civic leaders-cum-military leaders reflected a higher degree of slave ownership as well as a higher average wealth valuation than the common enlisted man, as evidenced in Table 3.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Martin Crawford, "Confederate Volunteering and Enlistment in Ashe County, North Carolina, 1861-1862," *Civil War History* 37 (March 1991): 38; John L. Cheney, Jr., ed., *North Carolina Government, 1585-1979: A Narrative and Statistical History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State, 1981), 386-387, 399-401; Carteret County Court Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarters, 1858-1868, NCSA. For further examples of community enlistment, see Inscoc and McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, especially chapter 3; W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), especially chapters 3 and 4; Daniel E. Sutherland, *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), especially chapter 2; Charles E. Brooks, "The Social and Cultural Dynamics of Soldiering in Hood's Texas Brigade," *Journal of Southern History* 67 (August 2001): 535-572; Larry M. Logue, "Who Joined the Confederate Army? Soldiers, Civilians, and Communities in Mississippi," *Journal of Social History* 26 (Fall 1993): 611-623.

**Table 3 – Comparative Wealth of Officers**

	<b>Wealth Valuation Per household</b>	<b>Men from Slave- Owning households</b>	<b>Identified sample in 1860 Census</b>	<b>As %</b>
Carteret Officers	\$15,533	13	21	62%
Carteret Enlisted Men	\$3,076	70	295	24%
Craven Officers	\$14,350	25	37	68%
Craven Enlisted Men	\$7,102	176	575	31%

These men, officers and enlisted men alike, knew each other well, hailing from the same communities and localities. Sarah Trenwith, a New Bern teenager, remembered that of the Confederate troops constantly passing her house and stopping in to call on them in 1861 and 1862, several of them “were young men we knew who lived in the neighborhood.” They were neighbors, schoolmates, and business colleagues, as well as fathers, sons, brothers, cousins, uncles, and nephews. They worked together, played together, drank together, and worshipped together. As historian Martin Crawford stated, “volunteer companies, with their closely woven kinship and neighborhood fabric, were direct extensions of the community itself, communities away from home.” Not only were they communities away from home, but the war served as an avenue for many of the young boys to come of age, to earn the privileges of adulthood and community citizenship. As Reid Mitchell has argued, for many Civil War youth, “the very ideas of man, soldier, and citizen were inextricably linked. Remaining a citizen was thought unmanly; going to war a proof of manhood.” These men had signed up to participate in their generation’s great war not only to display their manhood, but for a variety of reasons, and there was no mistaking the fact that they were preparing for something momentous and exhilarating. After the war, a sober, reflective Trenwith remembered the intoxicating excitement that infused all the

young men of the Carteret and Craven region in 1861: “They were young fellows who thought it fine fun to go to war, were full of fun and frolic and didn’t know what war meant.”<sup>26</sup>

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While Carteret and Craven residents rallied to enlist in the war effort, Governor Ellis turned his attention to organizing the state’s defenses against Federal forces. He sent out orders to confiscate the forts guarding the state’s coastline—including orders to capture Fort Macon. When he learned that Pender had already captured the fort, the governor praised him. This was just the beginning of what would be a long, cumbersome process of mobilization for a war for which the state was hopelessly unprepared. Over the course of the next several months, thousands of men—short on equipment, military skill, or patience, but long on braggadocio, exuberance, and moxie—hurriedly organized into companies and flooded into hastily arranged training camps around the state capital and its surrounding communities. Ellis would soon be overwhelmed with his responsibilities, and the strain would take a fatal toll. He would die on July 7, 1861 while traveling to a mountain retreat to recoup his failing health. His death would leave the state with even more organizational and administrative difficulties. But that was in the future. In the immediate wake of Lincoln’s proclamation, and North Carolina’s official secession on May 10, Ellis tried to prepare the state for war as well as he could.<sup>27</sup>

Of prime importance to residents of Beaufort and New Bern, the governor attempted to bolster the woefully inadequate coastal fortifications. Immediately after the capture of Fort

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<sup>26</sup>Deposition of Sarah F. Trenwith, *Sarah F. Trenwith, executrix of Clifford F. Simpson, deceased v. United States* (case file no. 10014), RG 123 (first and fourth quotations); Crawford, “Confederate Volunteering,” 38 (second quotation); Reid Mitchell, “Soldiering, Manhood, and Coming of Age,” in Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4 (third quotation).

<sup>27</sup> John W. Ellis to Marshall D. Craton, April 17, 1861, in Tolbert, *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 619. For more on mobilization and its effect on the state capital of Raleigh, see David H. McGee, “‘On the Edge of a Crater’: The Transformation of Raleigh, North Carolina, in the Civil War Era,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1999).

Macon, Ellis had instructed his agent to do all he could to improve the fort's defenses. "You will take the most active measures for the defence of the post under your command, and hold it against all comers," Ellis instructed Marshall D. Craton, captain of the "Goldsboro Rifles" and the fort's temporary commander, on April 17. Knowing that the weaponry at the fort was either outdated, dilapidated, or non-existent, Ellis assured Craton that heavy batteries had been ordered to the fort, and that an agent was in Richmond purchasing cannon to fill the fort's casemates and parapets.<sup>28</sup>

In the excitement and euphoria after the capture of the fort, some local citizens let their exuberance cloud their judgment in lauding its defenses. One Beaufort native wrote to a friend in late May, "Those acquainted with such matters think the fort can not be taken except by a very powerful force." At the time of this letter the fort held approximately six unofficial companies, about 400 men, "all in fine spirits and anxious for an attack," even though, as gunners they were "sadly lacking in skill," and, as one observer noted, their drill and discipline were "very imperfect." Besides the poor quality of the garrison troops, there were important structural problems with the fort. Though the fort looked imposing on paper, or even from the decks of ships sailing into Beaufort harbor, the garrison troops discovered a different reality when they entered the fort. The woodwork of the barracks and one of the drawbridges had rotted, and needed to be replaced. Most of the iron in the fort was badly rusted, the shingles were rotted, the masonry needed extensive repairs and repainting, and bridges across the moat had to be repaired. In addition, the shot furnaces inside the fort were also in need of a complete rebuilding, while the

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<sup>28</sup> John W. Ellis to Marshall D. Craton, April 17, 1861, in Tolbert, ed., *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 619.

only four operational guns actually facing out to sea were mounted on decaying carriages that would not last long.<sup>29</sup>

The citizens started promptly to repair it, especially when Henry Guion arrived from New Bern on April 17 with sixty-one slaves and free blacks, and some building supplies, all donated by New Bern citizens. Over the course of the next few weeks, more black laborers would arrive (the maximum number at any one time being 207), along with the hundreds of white men who mustered into their local companies on Fort Macon's crowded parade ground. The sense of martial excitement reached a high pitch in the first week of May when a contingent of Morehead City ladies presented a new Confederate flag to the fort. Nine guns saluted its ascension to the top of the flagpole while the men of Pender's and Pool's companies cheered. And when the state's ordinance of secession was read aloud on the night of May 21, the soldiers exhibited "the wildest and most enthusiastic demonstrations of joy," which included singing "Old North State Forever," and "Dixieland" boisterously well into the night. However, despite all the whites' giddy martial activity, and the blacks' backbreaking labors, repairs at the fort progressed slowly.<sup>30</sup>

In late May, Walter Gwynn had to admit to Governor Ellis, "I find Fort Macon much more exposed than I had supposed." Not only were there very few serviceable guns mounted, but also "there are no land defenses, and the guns on every face of the Fort, both by land and sea,

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas R. Cain to Thomas Ruffin, April 26, 1861, in J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, 3 vols. (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., 1920), 3: 147 (first, second, and third quotations); Walter Gwynn to John W. Ellis, May 27, 1861, in Tolbert, ed., *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 800 (fourth quotation); Extract from Annual Report of John G. Foster, October 1, 1861, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols. in 128; Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Ser. 1, vol. 1: 476-477, 478 (hereinafter cited as *Official Records, Army*) (fort's problems).

<sup>30</sup> Fred M. Mallison, *The Civil War on the Outer Banks: A History of the Late Rebellion Along the Coast of North Carolina from Carteret to Currituck* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., 1998), 24; Richard S. Barry, "Fort Macon: Its History," *North Carolina Historical Review* 27 (April 1950): 168; John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 11; "Looker On" to "Progress," May 22, 1861, in *New Bern Daily Progress*, May 24, 1861 (quotations).

are exposed to an enfilade, or flank fires. No traverses have been erected to protect them. The guns are all in barbette without merlons to protect either them or the men.” This meant that the gun positions had neither blocking walls constructed on either side to protect men from shrapnel from indirect shell bursts, nor solid walls in front of the gunports. Outside the walls, the natural conditions compromised the fort’s integrity and military value. Gwynn stated that he was spending as much time “leveling the sand banks adjacent to the Fort” as he was trying to improve its interior. But lacking equipment, the work was “most expensively conducted—the earth being removed by hand barrows.”<sup>31</sup>

Only after he had briefed the governor on the manual labor required to improve the fort’s condition did Gwynn bring up a crucial problem. It lacked anything near adequate firepower or manpower to be effective. “For Fort Macon alone there will be required, for one item, thirty seven (37) heavy guns,” Gwynn wrote. “And if it is designed completely and effectually to protect Beaufort Harbor, not less than two thousand (2000) men.” At the time of his communication the fort only held 400 poorly trained men. Though local authorities continued to call for more aid, state and national authorities moved lethargically with little sense of urgency throughout the warm summer months, almost as if their torpor were in direct proportion to the steamy summer heat.<sup>32</sup>

An event at the end of August jolted the state leaders out of their daze. On August 29, U.S. navy steamers appeared at Hatteras Inlet, and within 24 hours a combination of naval and land forces had captured Fort Hatteras and its inadequate 550-man garrison, thereby controlling access to Albemarle Sound and Pamlico Sound, and the rivers that led into the state’s interior. Many coastal residents probably shared the sentiment of eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Collier,

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<sup>31</sup> Walter Gwynn to John W. Ellis, May 27, 1861, in Tolbert, ed., *Papers of John W. Ellis*, 2: 794-795.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; Mallison, *Civil War on the Outer Banks*, 26.

living in the coastal plain off the Neuse River, who bemoaned in her diary in the finest tradition of the Psalms, “Quick oh God! Save us from the enemy. Surely thou hast not forsaken us.”<sup>33</sup>

Hoping to protect residents like Miss Collier, and most importantly the port cities and valuable hinterlands connected by railroads, Governor Henry T. Clark (Ellis had died in July) dashed off an urgent message to the Confederate Secretary of War acquainting him with the serious implications of the attack: “An extensive coast frontier now requires all the attention of the Confederate government.” Clark then wrote to the Adjutant General of the inadequate defenses at the other important coastal points, including only “five companies at Fort Macon... one regiment and two battalions at New Berne,” as well as “a light battery at New Berne, but no ammunition.” Even if they could send warm bodies to the coastal areas, the state of North Carolina did not have enough resources to equip and arm them adequately. Clark had two regiments in Raleigh ready to move, and had “any number of volunteers offering, but very scarce of arms.” If the Confederate government wanted to protect the coastline of one of their largest, most populous states, they had better send supplies, and fast. North Carolina faced too many internal difficulties to do it alone. If the coast were lost, all the ports of North Carolina be cut off and become havens for the Union blockade fleet, and the rivers that drained into the coastal sounds could serve as avenues of invasion for the entire coastal plain, almost one-third of the state.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, 40-45; Diary of Elizabeth Collier, August 30, 1861, in W. Buck Yearn and John G. Barrett, eds., *North Carolina Civil War Documentary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 32 (quotation).

<sup>34</sup> Henry T. Clark to L.P. Walker, August 30, 1861 (first quotation), Henry T. Clark to Samuel Cooper, August 30, 1861 (second, third, and fourth quotations), *Official Records*, Ser.1, 4: 637. Clark was also beset by problems in the western part of North Carolina. While pleading for reinforcements to improve the threatened coastline, Clark also informed Richmond of the manpower problems facing the mountain counties. In the highland counties to the west, Clark warned of discontent: “Border warfare must ensue, and unless our people are protected they may be somewhat affected either by the superiority of the traitors or [by] their artful promises. That portion of NC is now very weak and exposed from the large and undue proportion of volunteers furnished from this section.” Inscoc and McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 81.

By September, Beaufort and New Bern were seriously alarmed, as rumors swirled that a Union invasion fleet would attack at any moment. Henry King Burgwyn, Sr., whom Governor Clark sent as his military aide to inspect defenses and procure weapons from a British steamer lying off Beaufort, wrote to the Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory from Beaufort that just having men in the garrison at Fort Macon would accomplish nothing if they could not effectively man the guns. “Fort Macon has not one practical gunner,” Burgwyn wrote on September 4, “and only raw troops without proper supplies.” If it was not “supplied at once with a competent naval ordnance officer,” Burgwyn warned, then without any doubt, “it must fall.” Clark added his laments that the fort’s officers “are all taken from the ordinary occupations of civil life, with no military instruction or education except what they have acquired amidst the labors of camp life.” Despite Captain Pender’s very brief stints at West Point and in the Mexican War, no officer had adequate military training, much less possessed the technical expertise necessary to properly service the guns in the event of an attack. Even the Colonel of the 10<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and current commander of the fort, an Edgecombe County native named John L. Bridgers, acknowledged his ignorance in such matters. A Confederate naval officer recounted a conversation in which Bridgers admitted, “he knew nothing about heavy artillery or the defense of fortified places. ‘I only know,’ said he, ‘that the flag must not come down.’”<sup>35</sup>

Though no attack ever came in the autumn of 1861, such urgent appeals did at least succeed in prompting Confederate authorities to redouble their efforts to strengthen these coastal defenses. The War Department recalled Captain Stephen D. Pool’s company of Carteret men

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<sup>35</sup> H.K. Burgwyn to S.R. Mallory, September 4, 1861 (first, second, third, and fourth quotations), Henry T. Clark to L.P. Walker, September 7, 1861 (fifth quotation), *Official Records*, Ser. 1, 4: 639-640, 643; J. Kelly Turner and John L. Bridgers, *History of Edgecombe County, North Carolina* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Publishing, 1920), 200 (sixth quotation).



from Virginia and sent them to Fort Macon in late August. By September several new guns had been added to Fort Macon, and new troops were slowly arriving. The first troops to arrive in Beaufort at this time was the 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment, led by future governor Zebulon B. Vance, and Henry King Burgwyn, Jr., son of Clark's military aide, and precocious 19-year-old former VMI cadet and current lieutenant colonel. So many rumors were spreading about the build-up that residents as far away as Hatteras warned Union Colonel Rush Hawkins that the area had been reinforced so strongly that Beaufort and Fort Macon held 4500 soldiers, and sections of the fort had been reinforced with railroad iron. The numbers were grossly inflated, and in reality, not nearly enough had been done to protect the coast.<sup>36</sup>

Such problems were not unique to North Carolina or Beaufort, but in fact were endemic of the preparations for war throughout the Confederacy. Every state and every fort called for guns, ammunition, troops, uniforms, and experts. But in the opening months of the war, state governments and the Confederacy were in short supply of many of the necessary munitions of war. North Carolina was as unprepared materially as the Confederate government to wage war. The state, which had relied on the North and Great Britain for almost all of its manufactured goods, had next to no manufacturing capabilities. Out of nearly one million people, barely 14,000 were engaged in any sort of manufacturing trade. The state could not supply its own people with clothes, shoes, or saddlery, much less such military necessities as iron, lead, guns, or swords.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Earl J. Hess, *Lee's Tar Heels: the Pettigrew-Kirkland-MacRae Brigade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 7; Archie K. Davis, *Boy Colonel of the Confederacy: The Life and Times of Henry King Burgwyn, Jr.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 83-84; Rush Hawkins to John Wool, September 19, 1861, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, 4: 618.

<sup>37</sup> Barrett, *Civil War in North Carolina*, 17. For more on mobilization in North Carolina, see Richard Iobst, "North Carolina Mobilizes: Nine Crucial Months, December 1860-August 1861," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1968).

In addition to material shortcomings, confusing and conflicting administrative domains made the task of defending North Carolina's extensive coast even more difficult. The division of responsibility between the states and the Confederate government had not yet been clearly defined, and communities, not knowing whether to plead for aid from their state capitals or Richmond usually appealed to both, causing confusion over what supplies had been sent and by whom. North Carolina's situation had been made even more difficult when, on July 7, Governor John Ellis had unexpectedly died. Henry Toole Clark had to assume a job for which he was ill prepared at a time in which the state government was even less equipped for the logistics and supply demands of wartime mobilization. Not only were the manufacture of arms, clothing, and munitions difficult to contract; they also had to be paid for. And some North Carolina banks had ceased loaning money to the state government, causing supply shortages, bankruptcies, and unrest among the unpaid troops, including those stationed at Beaufort. Colonel Vance wrote to Governor Clark two weeks after his 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment arrived in Beaufort: "I am sorry to say that a portion of my regiment are almost in a state of mutiny on account of the non-reception of their pay."<sup>38</sup>

Through all the assorted difficulties, the state and national authorities continued to send reinforcements as best they could to build up the Beaufort and New Bern defenses. The War Department assigned Daniel Harvey Hill, a West Point graduate, and later, Lawrence O'Bryan Branch, a political general, to coordinate the North Carolina coastal defenses. Hill threw himself into the task, traveling all over the region inspecting defenses and alternately demanding,

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<sup>38</sup> Davis, *Boy Colonel of the Confederacy*, 85-86; Zebulon B. Vance to Henry T. Clark, September 18, 1861, Henry T. Clark, Governor's Papers, NCSA (quotation).

cajoling, and pleading for more men, guns, powder, and ammunition. Nearly every request was met with plaintive replies of regret from both Raleigh and Richmond.<sup>39</sup>

However, some local pressure was being put on young men who had not joined in the spring. After the Hatteras attack, Elizabeth Collier had written, “Men of NC Arise! Arise! Let the cry be ‘Victory or Death.’” Undoubtedly New Bern and Beaufort ladies echoed her sentiments as well, especially with the enemy potentially at their door. During this time of heightened anxiety Captain Benjamin Leecraft’s company officially mustered into service, and forty Carteret men enlisted in “Herring’s battery” near Beaufort. In New Bern, Peter G. Evans organized the “Macon Mounted Guards,” under a recent Confederate Congress act for local defense and special service on the coast. James Lane and Joseph Whitty organized their companies after the fall of Hatteras. Twenty-three more Craven County men enlisted in Captain Whitford’s company in the days and weeks after the attack on Hatteras, and a handful of Carteret County men also came forward to join already established companies at this time of seemingly imminent peril.<sup>40</sup>

On October 23, the War Department sent ominous warnings of a Federal 15,000-man expedition possibly sailing for New Bern. Rumors of such contradictory nature flew so fast that soldiers had no idea what to believe. They exhausted themselves in physical and mental activity. Rumors spread that the enemy had landed or appeared in the distance. The long roll would sound calling the troops to arms, and the soldiers on the banks and the garrison in the fort would draw in line, on edge, nerves becoming increasingly frayed, only to find once again that it was a false alarm. Seeing Federal blockade squadron ships sailing on the horizon only added to the

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<sup>39</sup> R.C. Gatlin to General S. Cooper, September 9, 1861, Special Orders No. 166, September 29, 1861, D.H. Hill to S. Cooper, October 2, 1861, S.R. Mallory to Secretary of War, October 23, 1861, all in *Official Records*, Ser. 1, 4: 645, 661, 664, 687.

<sup>40</sup> Collier diary, Sept. 1, 1861, in Years and Barrett, *North Carolina Civil War Documentary*, 32 (quotation); Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 2: 212-220.

stress. “Every thing begins to look Seriously like an attack soon,” Vance wrote in October, “the ocean is smooth & a great many ships are seen every day cruising around.” A few days later he added, “we are in constant doubt here... We may be here till Spring without being molested, and then a days carelessness might see us surprised and ruined.” Another soldier agreed, writing home, “we cant tel what a day will bring forth[.] the next time you hear from us we may have had a hard battle or may be prisners bound for New York or some other port.” The strain of constant vigilance took a toll on men’s psychological health, and dulled their edge.<sup>41</sup>

The climate and the ubiquitous mosquitoes did not help the men’s health. Some men brought communicable diseases like measles and mumps, while mosquitoes brought malaria, and terribly unhygienic camp conditions, fostered by the ignorance of amateur officers, brought on near epidemics of typhoid. Even the young Lieutenant Colonel Henry K. Burgwyn of the 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina spent most of the fall in a hospital, stricken with typhoid fever. Neither did the local merchants give the soldiers many breaks, as a review of the price of foodstuffs shows that patriotism did not come with a financial discount. A soldier of the 37<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment stationed in New Bern commented, “We Get plenty To Eat but have To pay for it.” “Butter is selling at 60 cts a Pound in Newburn,” he recounted, “but we Don’t Eat any butter At that price.” As far as the overpriced chickens and eggs, the soldier stated, “We can Doo very well without.” Farmers demanded twenty cents a pound for pork. When Confederate officials only offered sixteen, the farmers left town without selling the produce. In addition, in February 1862, the New Bern branch of the Bank of North Carolina refused to take state Treasury notes—the

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<sup>41</sup> J.P. Benjamin to General Gatlin, October 23, 1861, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, 4: 686 (warnings of expedition); George C. Underwood, *History of the Twenty-Sixth Regiment of the North Carolina Troops in the Great War, 1861-1865* (Goldsboro, N.C.: Nash Brothers, Book and Job Printers, n.d.; reprinted, Wendell, NC: Broadfoot’s Bookmark, 1978), 5 (rumors and battle stations); Zebulon Vance to wife, October 13, October 17, 1861, in *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 2 vols. to date, ed. Frontis W. Johnston and Joe A. Mobley (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1963-), 1: 118 (first, second, and third quotations); John Jackson, October 22, 1861, quoted in Hess, *Lee’s Tar Heels*, 8 (fourth quotation).

currency in which the soldiers were paid—on deposit. Obviously, the bank feared for the soundness of the currency with the prospect of invasion and potential defeat looming. So the soldiers, both from local companies and other regiments from around the state, fought the rumors, diseases, local price-gougers, and financial institutions to the best of their abilities, all while digging trenches until their hands were raw.<sup>42</sup>

The soldiers detested this last duty, and they blamed their generals, though local slaveholders were also culpable. Generals Hill and Branch worked tirelessly to establish defenses along the lower coastal region throughout the fall and winter of 1861-1862. Branch implored slaveowners in the region to send their slaves to help dig the fortifications that would protect their towns. But those who had offered their slaves in April no longer wanted their valuable property in the hands of anxious, hard-driving officers. To his entreaties Branch met only indifference, as he disgustedly noted, “I got but a single Negro.” Hill agreed with Branch, and denounced the attitudes of the people in New Bern and Beaufort who did not seem to be taking an active enough part in their own defense. “There is much apathy among the people,” Hill proclaimed, “They do not want to have their towns destroyed, neither are they disposed to do much for their protection.” He could not understand how the local populace could appear so unconcerned with its own defenses. Imbued with a strong sense of patriotism himself that compelled him not to give up an inch of southern territory, Hill had little tolerance for those who did not share the depth of his commitment. Therefore, he had set all the labor force at his disposal—the white soldiers—to digging trenches and fortifications all around the region, much to the soldiers’ indignation. “The spade has been set again everywhere I have been,” he wrote.

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<sup>42</sup> Davis, *Boy Colonel of the Confederacy*, 91 (disease and Burgwyn); Dan L. Morrill, *The Civil War in the Carolinas* (Charleston, S.C.: the Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 2002), 270 (quotations); New Bern *Daily Progress*, February 22, 24, 1862 (currency problems).

Sardonically, he wrote of his most difficult task: “I have also got the promise of a little work from Beaufort. Should it be done, the miracle of the ages is not yet over.”<sup>43</sup>

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The apathy and indifference that Hill and Branch encountered in the region were reflections of the lukewarm enthusiasm toward the Confederacy that many local people held, especially in Carteret County. Even while men enlisted in Confederate companies after Lincoln’s call for troops, there was evidence of quiet dissent lurking beneath the community’s secessionist surface. Many youth flocked to Confederate companies, while their fathers, regardless of class, remained much more guarded. Some fathers protested out of personal concern, but others ideologically opposed the Confederacy. Most of this evidence comes from the post-war Southern Claims Commission, and suggests the region’s divided loyalties, even within families. Reuben Fulcher, a humble Beaufort fisherman, “begged [his 18-year-old son, Wallace] not to go in the service, but he would not listen to me.” Wallace joined Captain Leecraft’s company on November 9, 1861. Early in 1862, Elijah Whitehurst and a couple of loyal friends had “frequently met and discussed the better way to get to the federal Blockade fleet off Beaufort Harbor in case they were drafted in the Rebel army.” Naturally, he had been despondent when his seventeen-year-old son, Samuel, “left against the wishes of his family” and joined the Confederate service in the spring of 1861. However, Elijah was able to get Samuel discharged after five months for being underage.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> L.O’B. Branch to T.H. Holmes, March 26, 1862 (first quotation), D.H. Hill to General B. Huger, October 1, 1861 (second and third quotations), D.H. Hill to R.C. Gatlin, October 27, 1861 (fourth and fifth quotations), *Official Records*, Ser. 1, 9: 241, 4: 664, 694.

<sup>44</sup> Testimony of claimant Reuben Fulcher, Claim 13819, Carteret County, Records of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Disallowed Claims, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter cited RG 233) (first quotation); Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1:270 (Wallace’s enlistment); Testimony of William H. Congleton (second quotation), and testimony of Claimant Joseph B. Whitehurst (third

Other fathers could not use such measures to remove their sons from the service. Jesse Fulcher of Beaufort had no legal recourse when his twenty-five year old son, William, joined Pender's company in April 1861. When Fulcher applied to the Southern Claims Commission after the war for compensation for his fish house, he reluctantly admitted, "I had a son in the Confederate army." The memory must have been painful to Fulcher, since William had died on December 17, 1862, in battle against a Union expedition near Goldsboro, North Carolina. Overcoming his own personal grief, Fulcher asserted in his application that he "contributed nothing to supply him with military equipment or money," and he testified that his son had joined "without my consent or approval," but the Commission used this evidence to reject his claim.<sup>45</sup>

Some parents successfully beseeched their sons to avoid the siren song of war, at least temporarily. James T. Lewis, of Craven County, had served in the "Elm City Rifles" militia company before the war began. When war broke out, James reported to the training camp with his mates, where his company was incorporated into the 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Regiment. "I was only at the camp three days when I got a letter from home begging me to return, so I got on the train next day and came home," Lewis admitted. However, his parents could not keep him out of the war for long. "I remained at home till about 12 or 13 months after the capture of Newberne, and then crossed the lines, in opposition to the wishes of both my parents, and joined the State troops." A neighbor confirmed that his father was, on both occasions, "bitterly opposed to his son for going into the confederate service." Gabriel Hardison, another Craven County farmer, likewise lamented the departure of his sixteen-year old son, Council, to Confederate lines. A

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quotation), Claim 1664, Carteret County, Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury, Settled Case Files for Claims Approved by the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Record Group 217, National Archives II, College Park, Md. (hereinafter cited as RG 217).

<sup>45</sup> Testimony of claimant Jesse Fulcher, Claim 19070, Carteret County, RG 233 (quotations); Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 117 (Fulcher's enlistment and death).

relative declared that, “when [Gabriel] came home and found him gone he said he would rather have found him dead.” As the parental laments of the Fulchers, Whitehurst, Lewis, and Hardison reveal, many sons joined the Confederate army over the objections of their fathers. But this was just one manifestation of dissent in eastern North Carolina.<sup>46</sup>

Dissent could run the gamut from vigorous Unionism to inert disaffection, but the result was the same—a determination to resist Confederate authorities, either actively or passively. As noted earlier, in addition to protesting enlistments, some locals demonstrated their resistance to Confederate authorities by refusing to give soldiers price breaks, and refusing to let their slaves serve as manual laborers for the army. Eastern North Carolina, of course, was not alone in having dissenters in its midst. Scholars have demonstrated that the state was home to significant numbers of Unionists throughout the western mountains, central piedmont, and eastern coastal plain.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Deposition of James T. Lewis (first and second quotations), Deposition of Elijah Ellis (third quotation), in *Isaac W. Lewis v. United States* (case file no. 4863), RG 123; Deposition of George Hardison (fourth quotation), *Gabriel Hardison v. United States* (case file no. 8070), RG 123. This contrasts with what Margaret Storey discovered in her study of Alabama Unionists. Storey argues that Alabama Unionists “took it as a matter of duty that they should reproduce their own political loyalty among their sons, grandsons, and nephews... [and] they frequently demanded that the actions of younger male relatives reflect, and sometimes directly extend, their own loyalties to the Union.” In eastern North Carolina, many Unionists helplessly watched as their sons rejected, at least initially, their elders’ directives. Margaret M. Storey, “Civil War Unionists and the Political Culture of Loyalty in Alabama,” *Journal of Southern History* 69 (February 2003): 89-90.

<sup>47</sup> The first to identify the different degrees of dissent—asserting a distinction between passive disaffection and active disloyalty—was Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934). For works on mountain Unionism, see Martin Crawford, *Ashe County’s Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001); Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Inscoc and McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*; Philip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981). For works on Piedmont Unionism, see William T. Auman, “Neighbor against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Randolph County Area of Confederate North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 61 (January 1984): 59-92; William T. Auman and David D. Scarboro, “The Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 66 (January 1989): 61-86; 67 (April 1989): 179-210; William Thomas Auman, “Neighbor against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Central Counties of Confederate North Carolina,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1988). For coastal plain Unionism, see Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Gerald W. Thomas, *Divided Allegiances: Bertie County during the Civil War* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1996).



One finds it difficult to define what constituted a Unionist in the South, much less in eastern North Carolina. As many scholarly studies have argued, Unionism could stem from an abstract, ideological conviction or more concrete, practical concerns.<sup>48</sup> A contemporary, William “Parson” Brownlow of Tennessee, offered a rigid definition; a Unionist was one who showed “unmitigated hostility” to Confederates, “uncompromising devotion” to, and a willingness to risk life and property in defense of, the Union. Though scholars have discovered such sentiments in Appalachia, Alabama, and other regions, very few eastern North Carolinians fit Brownlow’s description. Such die-hard Unionists were few and far between in the first year of the war in Carteret or Craven. The first twelve months of the war could be a very difficult time for those who vocally stood up for the old Union and condemned the Confederate experiment. Quiet resistance or passive noninvolvement was a more prudent tactic. However, some found their disagreements with the Confederate representatives in the region too strong to suppress. These few vocal Unionists brought swift reaction from Confederate officials, who were dismayed that, in addition to preparing to fight off the approaching armies of Federal soldiers in the anxious autumn and winter of 1861-1862, they had to quell the ominous stirrings from enemies within their lines.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Some good works on the various natures of Unionism are Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the nineteenth century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Richard N. Current, *Lincoln’s Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992); John C. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer, eds., *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Daniel E. Sutherland, ed., *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999). Many of the most incisive examinations of the complexity of Unionism have been set in a localized, community context. For some outside of the North Carolina region, see Dyer, *Secret Yankees*; William Warren Rogers, Jr., *Confederate Home Front: Montgomery During the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), especially chapter 7; Daniel E. Sutherland, *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community, 1861-1865* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Steven Elliott Tripp, *Yankee Town, Southern City: Race and Class Relations in Civil War Lynchburg* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); David Williams, *Rich Man’s War: Class, Caste, and Confederate Defeat in the Lower Chattahoochee Valley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); Margaret M. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama’s Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> Robert Tracy McKenzie, “Prudent Silence and Strict Neutrality: The Parameters of Unionism in Parson Brownlow’s Knoxville, 1860-1863,” in Inscoe and Kenzer, eds., *Enemies of the Country*, 74 (quotations).

These stirrings came not only from Carteret County, where a prewar Unionism existed in strength, but also from strongly secessionist Craven County. Alexander Taylor, a poor Craven County farmer whose brother joined the Confederate army, had been a vocal opponent of secession from the beginning. In early 1861, he declared to “a party of gentlemen that if they did not put a stop to the war they would be as poor as I was.” As early as July 19, 1861, the interim editors of the New Bern *Daily Progress* (Pennington had enlisted) denounced those who were trying to disrupt Confederate enlistment, calling them “traitors” to the cause. The editors warned: “Having determined to hazard our life in the struggle for independence we are as willing to encounter traitors at home as to meet the common enemy of the North, and we should take more deadly aim at a Yankee sympathizer here than we would at old [Union General Winfield] Scott or even Lincoln himself.” That the paper would dedicate its lead column to such episodes of local “treason” on the eve of the war’s first major battle suggests that there was more than just an isolated incident of dissent in the region. The warnings became more numerous through the winter of 1861-1862, as rumors of Union invasion circulated.<sup>50</sup>

Local Confederate officials tried to intimidate those who publicly maintained their fidelity to the Union, using traditional southern methods for community discipline—including social ostracism, humiliation, and violence. In late May 1861, the New Bern paper reported an incident from neighboring Jones County where illiterate 60-year-old laborer James Griffin was “tarred and feathered and rode on a rail” for his “unsound sentiments and incendiary words and conduct.” Similar examples of intimidation were taking place in Carteret and Craven County, even if the local paper, wishing to present a united front, declined to publish them.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Testimony of claimant Alexander Taylor, Claim 11419, Craven County, RG 233 (first quotation); New Bern *Daily Progress*, July 19, 1861 (second quotation).

<sup>51</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, May 29, 1861 (quotations). For further depictions of the methods of community-enforced values, see Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 435-438, and especially Part III; Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance*

In Carteret, Beaufort fisherman Jesse Fulcher, whose son had joined Captain Pender's company against his father's wishes, ran afoul of the captain who "threatened to put a gag in my mouth and place me in close confinement." Unlike Fulcher's isolated threat, railroad supervisor Isaac Hill and his family experienced continued harassment at the hands of Confederate soldiers because he "vehemently opposed the actions of the secessionists." In 1861, a soldier of the 7<sup>th</sup> North Carolina regiment "cocked his gun at him and told him he was a damned Yankey," while another "drew his bayonet and attempted to strike him with it." Hill was "injured by threats to burn my house, and the burning of the bridge in the immediate vicinity of my house." Hill claimed such abuse did not hurt him personally, but they "frightened my wife so much that she died here days afterward."<sup>52</sup>

Hill's close friend, David Morton, a Morehead City grocer, got into trouble as well for his words and actions against the Confederate cause. One day he angered a pro-Confederate crowd in Beaufort. As a companion later related, "one time we were out at the brickyard where they were drilling the Confederate malitia[.] [S]omething was said concerning the Northern people and about how many Northern soldiers it would take to whip the crowd and [Morton] said three would whip the crowd, and they wanted to ride him on a rail for what he said. They called him a 'dam abolitionist.'" Morton further undermined the Confederacy by convincing his nephew to leave the army. News of his activities reached Confederate authorities. Morton testified after the war that in February 1862, his friend Isaac Hill had warned him that "I was reported at Havelock & that I must be cautious & say as little as possible or else I would be arrested & put in

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*and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 143.

<sup>52</sup> Testimony of claimant Jesse Fulcher, Claim 19070, Carteret County, RG 233 (first quotation); Deposition of H.B. Hill (second quotation), *Brief for the Claimant on Loyalty*, December term, 1886 (third and fourth quotations), and Deposition of Isaac S. Hill (fifth and sixth quotations), all in *Nancy C. Hill, administratrix of the estate of Isaac S. Hill, deceased, v. United States* (case file no. 1191), RG 123.

prison.” Morton was not the only one threatened. Henry Covert, a “decidedly loyal and outspoken” ship carpenter from New Bern angered local residents with his Unionist talk. A friend begged Covert “not to speak so freely as he might get into difficulty. I have heard him say he considered the southern leaders in getting up this war were the biggest fools in the world.” In the fall of 1861, a New Bern mob arrested Covert and “threatened [him] with tar and feathers for talking on the Union side.”<sup>53</sup>

Thomas Hall, who had purchased a Morehead City hotel on the eve of North Carolina’s secession, claimed that in the summer of 1861, he “was threatened with imprisonment by Mrs. Vance, wife of Col. Z.B. Vance.” In response to his unpatriotic sentiments the soldiers of Vance’s regiment “burnt my boat & part of my fence and robbed my kitchen, and one of them threatened to take my life.” Hall refused to back down, and was threatened by another wife of a Confederate officer and even the father of Henry King Burgwyn. Hall remembered, “Generally, I was very much annoyed on account of my Union sentiments, especially by being called a “whitewashed yankee.”<sup>54</sup>

Even African Americans were singled out for their Union sentiments. The potential fifth column that they represented caused fear among the locals, who used every opportunity to keep them in check through intimidation. One scholar has pointed out the slaves along the coastal regions were perhaps predisposed to cause alarm to local whites because black watermen kept

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<sup>53</sup> Deposition of Zem Garner (first quotation), Deposition of claimant David W. Morton (second quotation), in *David W. Morton v. United States* (case file no. 6935), RG 123. Judgment of claimant Henry Covert (third and fifth quotations), Testimony of W.H. Pearce (fourth quotation), Claim 10416, Craven County, RG 217. Morton’s nephew, Joseph A. Bell, joined S.D. Pool’s company in May 1861. Captured at Fort Macon, he returned to his unit after being exchanged. He was then captured at Washington, NC, on September 6, 1862, and never returned to his unit. Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 127. Morton experienced a degree of relief when the Union army captured New Bern. When the first Union troops came marching down the railroad toward Beaufort, Morton was the first to greet them. He took them into his house and fed the soldiers and their officers. As one witness recalled, “The captain came up and called us all ‘brothers,’ Mr. Morton brothered him back again.” Depositions of J.T. Dennis and Lewis McCain, in *David W. Morton v. United States* (case file no. 6935), RG 123.

<sup>54</sup> Testimony of claimant Thomas Hall, Carteret County, RG 217.

them well informed of outside events. David Cecelski has argued that throughout the nineteenth century, black watermen had served as key agents of anti-slavery thought, and political awareness, as sailors from ports all over the Caribbean and the eastern seaboard passed on political rumors. The slave population in the Beaufort area was well informed of political events and anti-slavery thought, due to their constant work on the water and exposure to these purveyors of information. Over time black boatmen developed a reputation as bolder, more assertive, and independent-minded than other slaves, due to their jobs, which allowed long periods without supervision, and constant interaction with outside sailors.<sup>55</sup>

This assertiveness, which whites had considered a nuisance during peacetime, became a serious threat during wartime. John Chapman Manson's slave, Caesar, was one boatman who was singled out for being too vocal. "Always a bold, outspoken man," Caesar made many trips to Fort Macon, where his master served as a lieutenant in Captain Pool's company. There, his words or actions angered the garrison, and "they threatened to tar and feather him for his Union sentiments." Manson did actually suffer humiliation at the hands of Captain Pender. Though Pender had allowed his own slaves certain latitudes in peacetime—he permitted his skilled slaves to hire themselves out and keep much of their wages—during wartime he took a dim view of the nature of slave loyalty to masters. Pender publicly shaved Manson's head in order to "disgrace him and cow him down." Confederates could not afford to allow whites or blacks to continue to speak treasonous statements, lest it lead to open insurrection against the Confederacy.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> David Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2001, xvi, 141-191.

<sup>56</sup> Testimony of David Parker (quotations), Claim 1666 (Caesar Manson), Carteret County, RG 233; Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 127 (John Chapman Manson).

For all their difficulties in dealing with supply shortages and recalcitrant local residents, Generals Hill and Branch did manage to modestly improve the defensive situation in the region, and under their command, before the year 1861 was out, properly trained naval officers arrived at Fort Macon to train its garrison and its officers in how to properly lead their men. But Josiah Pender would no longer be one of those officers. On December 19, 1861, Pender was dismissed from the service by a sentence of General Courts Martial for being absent without leave, and then lying about it. The story of his dismissal reveals the amateur nature of the fighting forces, and underscores the men's beliefs that because they served in their home county, they could tend to business at home during an emergency.

Pender was a bit of a contradiction. Outspoken on behalf of the Confederacy, Pender had held everyone accountable for their actions, and tried to intimidate those who dissented from the southern party line. Yet, he broke the rules when he left his post at Fort Macon without permission to go tend to his wife, who was dying at the Atlantic Hotel in Beaufort, within easy view of the fort. When asked by his superiors who gave him permission to abandon his post, Pender lied, stating that he was absent on General D.H. Hill's authority. When Hill denied the claim, Pender was charged with being absent without leave and brought before a court martial. It must have been a difficult week before Christmas in 1861 for Pender. On the evening of December 18, he stood by the bed of his wife, Marie Louise, as she died of an undisclosed disease at the age of thirty-five. The next day, Pender stood in front of the court martial that found him guilty and dismissed him from the service. James Manney—a pre-war anti-secessionist who had been a committee member of Beaufort's December 1860 Unionist meeting, but had enlisted after Lincoln called for troops—assumed the command of the company and the

rank of captain upon Pender's discharge. Though Pender was gone, Manney continued the work of training his men and preparing them for the battle that would inevitably come.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout the Pamlico region, the New Year opened with more of the same anxiety with which the old year closed. Word spread that an expeditionary force was headed for New Bern, and General Branch ordered the 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina, along with several other companies, there in late January 1862. Once Burnside's expedition had captured Roanoke Island on February 8, Branch, expecting the next attack to be on New Bern, called all the remaining troops from Beaufort, except five companies (including the Beaufort contingents of Pool's, Manney's, and Andrew's battery) left to garrison Fort Macon under the command of a twenty-seven year old, West Point-trained lieutenant colonel, Moses J. White. Branch dispatched the rest of his troops along a defensive line south of New Bern.<sup>58</sup>

New Bern had two sets of defensive fortifications south of the city along the Neuse River. The farthest line, about ten miles below New Bern, was known as the Croatoan line. It ran from Fort Dixie on the west bank of the Neuse River, across the main highway to New Bern, and ended at a nearly impenetrable swamp. General Branch considered these works to be his strongest prepared defensive position, but too exposed. If the main enemy force landed upriver, it could attack the defenders from behind and cut them off from New Bern. Branch did not have enough men to man this advance position; therefore he concentrated on a closer defensive line—the Fort Thompson line, about six miles south of the city. These primary defensive fortifications anchored its left flank on Fort Thompson, an under-prepared, earthen fort on the west bank of the Neuse. Branch detailed most of his troops to defend a line of fortifications extending from Fort

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<sup>57</sup> Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 114; Unprocessed material, Box 3, F.C. Salisbury Collection, NCSA; Maurice Davis, "History of the Hammock House and Related Trivia" (Beaufort, N.C., 1984, unpublished typescript), NCC; New Bern *Daily Progress*, December 20, 1860 (Manney's Unionism).

<sup>58</sup> Hess, *Lee's Tar Heels*, 7-9; Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, 95-98, 113.

Thompson west to Bryce Creek. Between these two streams ran the likely avenues of attack, the main Beaufort road and the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad. However, the position was weaker than it appeared on paper, because of Fort Thompson's thirteen guns, ten faced the river. This was one of the weaknesses of the New Bern defense. Engineers had laid out seven forts to guard the river approaches, but no forts effectively guarded the more likely land approaches. One Confederate officer complained about the "miserable manner in which our works were constructed... They are a disgrace to any engineer." Nevertheless, the soldiers directed all their efforts to improving these works. Troops constantly marched back and forth from camps near the city to work on the fortifications, all the time keeping alert to the sign of Federal forces on the rivers and creeks. The strain of constant vigilance took its toll. Colonel Vance wrote a friend from New Bern, "I am exceedingly tired of watching and waiting behind ditches."<sup>59</sup>

Alarmed residents feared a Union attack every day. One Confederate soldier stationed in New Bern wrote a friend in January 1862, "Exciting rumors have been afloat all day and we are on the lookout for an attack almost constantly." The soldier downplayed them, stating, "I still am of opinion that Newbern is too small a place for so grand an expedition to seek." Another soldier wrote his father in late January, "There is a good deal of excitement down here among the citizens they expect Newbern attacked dayly." But the soldier, suffering from the disease that would soon take his life, was confident that the southern defense would be stout. "I guess it will be hard for the yankies to get possession of this country," he wrote. The waiting became difficult and men began to fear that the Union battalions would pass them by. One Confederate soldier wrote on February 4, 1862, "Day after day we have been looking for the enemy, but as often have been disappointed. Since our fortifications have been rendered somewhat efficient,

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<sup>59</sup> Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, 96 (first quotation); Zeb Vance to Allen Davidson, March 4, 1862, in Johnston, ed., *Papers of Zebulon B. Vance*, 1: 119 (second quotation).



and there is a probability that we can make the enemy land below them[;] we are rather anxious than otherwise that Newbern should be assailed, & if the Yankees pass us by, we will certainly be very much disappointed.”<sup>60</sup>

Keener military minds held a decidedly different view. The works were poorly designed, the men were poorly trained, and several of the officers were poor leaders. Burgwyn of the 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina declared in January, “None of our Regiments are as efficient as they should be.” For his own regiment’s faults, Burgwyn blamed Vance: “His abilities appear to me to be more overated than those of any other person I know of.” Despite his best efforts, Burgwyn still found his regiment’s discipline “wretched.” Not only was Burgwyn “heartily tired of being under [Vance’s] command”; he also saw even greater dangers in the region’s defensive scheme.<sup>61</sup>

Unable to divine precisely where the next Federal attack would come, and overwhelmed by urgent appeals from citizens all along the coast to send troops to their locality, state and Confederate authorities spread their forces too thin, sending isolated detachments to many different points along the coast. As a result, whenever Burnside concentrated his attack at any one location, very few reinforcements would be available to help the defenders ward off the intruders. Burgwyn railed against this setup, dictated by local interests, writing to his mother that it was a “very great mistake... to divide our troops so as to expose the detachments to a certain defeat just whensoever they may be attacked.” As for his own location, Burgwyn took a dim view. In late February he wrote his father, “It appears to me therefore to be plain that whenever New Bern is attacked by the force Burnside will have it will fall,” and on March 12, when news arrived that the Federal invasion force was sailing up the river toward New Bern,

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<sup>60</sup> J.T. Shaffner to Christian Thomas Pfohl, January 17, 1862 (first and second quotations), February 4, 1862 (fifth and sixth quotations), Christian Thomas Pfohl Papers (microfilm), SHC; John Quincy Adams to Nathan Adams, January 29, 1862, Adams and Partin Family Papers, NCSA (third and fourth quotations).

<sup>61</sup> Davis, *Boy Colonel of the Confederacy*, 91 (first quotation), 99 (second quotation), 100 (third quotation).

Burgwyn reaffirmed his misgivings, “My opinion is and has been from the start that New Berne ought to be abandoned.” Within forty-eight hours he would have confirmation of his fears, when the Union soldiers appeared and attacked the defensive line.<sup>62</sup>

The first year of the war had seen Carteret and especially Craven boldly pronounce themselves against Lincoln’s coercive tactics, and in favor of the newly established Confederacy. Yet as the year wore on, residents had to deal with the enlistments of their young men, ill-prepared defensive fortifications, and dissent and opposition to the Confederacy within their own neighborhoods. In addition to having to quell the internal threats posed by these dissenters, they were constantly troubled by the rumors of an impending invasion by Burnside’s expedition. When it did finally come, that invasion would force residents to declare where their true allegiances lay, for once the Union army occupied the region, locals had to choose whether to abandon their property, livelihood, and perhaps families, or abandon their southern allegiance. Both choices would come with potentially dangerous consequences.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 100 (first quotation), 105 (second quotation).

### CHAPTER THREE

#### “THE GREATER NUMBER ARE UNION MEN NOW”: THE RETURN OF UNIONISM AND EMERGENCE OF DISSENT

When advance scouts brought the word on March 13, 1862 that Union soldiers had disembarked from ships on the Neuse River about ten miles south of New Bern, excitement and dread gripped the town's citizens, who had been anticipating this moment for months. There had been several alarming scenes in the very recent past. In January, newspaper editors lamented that rumors of a Yankee landing fueled a “cruel and unnecessary panic now raging in our town, crushing up furniture and driving crowds of people from their homes.” In February, the Bank of New Bern stopped accepting North Carolina Treasury notes, fearing that Union capture would render them worthless. Even the weather seemed to portend something ominous, as it snowed all day on March 6 in New Bern—an extremely rare occurrence. As if divining disaster from the heavenly signs, residents rushed to load up on supplies. The next day, the *Daily Progress* editors witnessed, “the greatest rush we have ever seen on a store in Newbern.”<sup>1</sup>

Though some panicked, other residents demonstrated their resolve. Its editors had vowed to continue publishing the *Progress* throughout the war: “Though the war be brought to its very door *it shall not suspend.*” In January, a “worthy gentleman” publicly bet \$500 that the Yankees would not invade New Bern. Few residents left the city on March 13, though many did prepare a train for quick departure on the morrow if necessary. Instead, these residents had confidence in their defenders. On the morning of March 14, the Confederate soldiers reinforced this belief

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<sup>1</sup> New Bern *Daily Progress*, January 23, 1862 (first quotation), February 22, March 7, 8, 1862 (second quotation).

with their jocosity. Many even called on local ladies to prepare dinners to feed them upon their triumphant return from the morning's battle.<sup>2</sup>

Mary Norcott Bryan was one of those ladies who had risen early in the morning to prepare extra dinners, "expecting to feed the Confederate soldiers." But late morning brought sounds of heavy fighting and messengers relaying the grim news of Confederate defeat. Instead of sitting down to a midday meal with gray-clad officers, Mary got caught up in a "perfect panic and stampede, women, children, nurses and baggage getting to the depot any way they could." The young woman ruminated, "our homes and hundreds of others were left with dinners cooking, doors open, everything to give our northern friends a royal feast." A Union soldier laughed over similar situations throughout the city: "The troops which left the city in the morning told their folks to get a good dinner ready for them as they should whip the Yankees in two hours." However, as Mary Bryan had witnessed, "they returned whipt & had not time to eat even a hasty plate of soup."<sup>3</sup>

The retreating soldiers had indeed been "whipt" in what was, for most of them, their first taste of battle. New Bern fell on March 14; Beaufort capitulated without a fight eleven days later; and Fort Macon would surrender on April 26, setting the stage for a Union occupation in the region that would last the rest of the war. The experience of battle, and more importantly defeat, would alter the allegiance of many Carteret and Craven combatants. When the Union army asserted command over the region, many residents chose to forsake their allegiance to the Confederacy. Seeking to take advantage of new economic opportunities while simultaneously

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., May 28, 1861 (first quotation); January 23, 1862 (second quotation).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Norcott Bryan, "Recollections of Old-Time Dixie," in Mary Lindsey Thornton, "New Bern, North Carolina, 1862-1865: A Southern Town under Federal Occupation," (n.d., typescript.), p. 5 (North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as NCC) (first, second, and third quotations); Entry dated March 17, 1862, Henry White Diary (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.; hereinafter cited as AAS) (fourth and fifth quotations).

maintaining the social status quo, they wedded themselves to the Union. Yet, even during the initial honeymoon, dissent emerged as local whites disapproved of certain Union policies, especially regarding race.

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On that fateful fourteenth of March, the outnumbered Confederate military forces had manned the defensive works south of New Bern, stretching from Fort Thompson on the Neuse River east to Bryce's Creek, and had held the Union army in check briefly in the early morning. But General Branch had unwisely placed his least reliable troops, the militia, in the least fortified point in the line—the center, where the Atlantic and North Carolina railroad ran from Beaufort. When the fighting reached its hottest, the militia line broke, exposing the Confederate defenders on the left and right to flanking and rear attacks. Confusion ensued; orders did not get passed properly, and some units beat a hasty retreat while others doggedly held out, unaware of the turn of events. Colonel Zebulon B. Vance's 26<sup>th</sup> North Carolina regiment, defending the Confederate right, remained completely oblivious that the rest of the line had broken, and only began its retreat after it was cut off from the roads to New Bern. Vance was forced to flee to the creek, scrounge for boats, and ferry his men across the swollen stream, nearly drowning himself in the process. They barely escaped capture. The Federal soldiers exulted in their victory and the pell-mell retreat of the Confederates. The rebels "could not stand the Yankees," wrote one Connecticut soldier, "They ran into the city and got into the cars—all that could, the rest running through the country as if the devil was after them."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alonzo Cushman to Miss Caroline D. Cushman, March 21, 1862, Alonzo Cushman Letters, Octavo Volume, Civil War Collection, AAS (quotations). For more on the battle, see Daniel Harvey Hill, *Bethel to Sharpsburg* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1926, reprinted, Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1992), 229-235; Richard A. Sauers, *The Burnside Expedition in North Carolina : A Succession of honorable victories* (Dayton: Morningside House, 1996); Richard A. Sauers, *The Battle of New Bern and related sites in Craven County, N.C., 1861-1865* (New Bern, N.C.: Griffin & Tilghman Printers, 1994); John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1963), esp. chap 2.

Indeed, as the Confederate soldiers retreated back to the town, panic set in among the remaining residents. All who were able frantically packed as much as they could and then hastily fled town in wagons, on horseback, on foot—over roads or recently plowed fields—or piled into the train cars that had been specially stationed in town for just such an emergency. The Union soldiers witnessed and heard much of the flight as they approached from below the city. By Union estimates, seven trains, with at least 120 cars, left the city on the day of the battle, carrying away most of the town's white (and some of its black) population.<sup>5</sup>

Not only had the locals left, but they also had left in such haste that much valuable property had been left inside homes, or abandoned in the open. Mary Bryan remembered, “our house was nicely furnished, a year's provision in the smokehouse, in the pantry all sorts of jellies, pickles, catsups, cordials, and so on.” She had left a dinner still warm from preparation on the table when she found herself “running away with a few trunks of hastily packed clothing” toward the trains. Many others left more valuable commodities than just pork and greens. One Union officer remembered, “I saw on one of the streets a handsome piano, which, evidently, the owner had attempted to carry away, but in his haste had thrown from his load.” He concluded, “They must have been terribly frightened.” Many were so frightened that they abandoned their slaves, who concomitantly helped themselves to much of the property abandoned by their masters.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, March 15, 1862, Daniel Read Larned Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as LOC); Oliver Cromwell Case to sister, March 16, 1862, (typescript) Oliver Case letters, Civil War Collection (Simsbury Historical Society, Simsbury, Conn.); J. Waldo Denny, *Wearing the Blue in the Twenty-Fifth Mass. Volunteer Infantry, with Burnside's Coast Division, 18th Army Corps, and Army of the James* (Worcester: Putnam & Davis, Publishers, 1879), 104.

<sup>6</sup> Thornton, “A Southern Town Under Federal Occupation,” 5 (first and second quotations); John M. Spear, “Army Life in the Twenty-fourth Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, Dec. 1861 to Dec. 1864, 1892” (typescript), p. 54 (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.; hereinafter cited as MHS) (third and fourth quotations). General Ambrose Burnside wrote to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that “nine tenths of the depredations on the 14<sup>th</sup>, after the enemy and citizens had fled from the town, were committed by the Negroes, before our troops entered the city.” Ambrose Burnside to Edwin Stanton, March 21, 1862, Vol. 9, Union Battle Reports, ser. 729, War

Unprotected homes fell prey not only to local African Americans, but also to incoming soldiers with an inclination to gather the spoils of war. One Connecticut soldier wrote that the fleeing whites had left their houses filled with valuables. He noted, “I could got all I wanted but [had] no way to carry it.” Other enterprising soldiers improvised means to gain the goods. One Massachusetts officer admitted, “When we first captured the place, some of the soldiers went into houses and did considerable damage.” Another soldier lamented, “I visited some of the private residences in the city and it was sad to see the waste and confusion that no doubt our soldiers had made[;] furniture broken and damaged Bureaus with the drawers smashed in with the butt of the Musket or pried open with the Bayonet and rifled of their valuables.” Union soldiers helped themselves to quite a large haul of booty. One Massachusetts soldier noted, “I have no doubt that tens of thousands of dollars’ worth of silks, laces, books, silver, etc., was sent home by soldiers.” He remarked that the soldiers were so thorough in their plundering that “For a day or two New Berne gave us a faint idea of a city given over to be sacked.”<sup>7</sup>

Victory had put the soldiers in an exultant mood. The celebratory soldiers lounged “in nicely fitted parlors... banging away on the piano full of song and cheer.” When Daniel Read Larned, Burnside’s personal secretary, visited the house of “a rabid secessionist” a few days after the battle, he discovered that “all that was left was torn & broken & the whole inside of the house a wreck.” Larned joined in the exultations, recounting, “I found a piano there & sat down & played ‘America’ and such a chorus as I had the soldiers on the street took it up and the woods rang with it.” As soon as possible Burnside imposed martial law on the city to put an end to all

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Records Office, RG 94, quoted in Ira Berlin et al, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation; Series I, The Destruction of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1: 80-81.

<sup>7</sup> F.B. Spruz to “Friend,” [March 1862], Humiston Family Collection, Civil War Miscellany Collection (United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.; hereinafter cited as USAMHI) (first quotation); Spear, “Army life in the Twenty-fourth regiment,” 60 (second quotation); Entry dated March 15, 1862, Levi Hayden Diary, LOC (third quotation); William F. Draper, *Recollections of a Varied Career* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1908), 67 (fourth and fifth quotations).

plundering, whether by soldiers or civilians. He posted sentries, and forbade soldiers from entering private dwellings, though one officer noted that they still “do it on the sly and pick up many relics.”<sup>8</sup>

However, for much of March 14 Burnside’s army sought to put out the fires that threatened to destroy the city. As their last act before abandoning the city, the Confederates had put the torch to all structures of value to the enemy, including the long wooden railroad bridge over the Neuse River. From the other side of the river, the entire city appeared to be engulfed in flames. A Rhode Island officer marveled at the sight as he approached up the Neuse River on a gunboat, “The great arches of the bridge, with every post, rail and brace, all ablaze, and ever and anon, great timbers falling with a hissing crash into the water below, sending up showers of golden sparks scintillating in the great black cloud above them.” Another soldier recorded in his diary that the spectacle of the abandoned city burning “was the most sublime event of the day as the flames shot up in different parts of the city sending far into the Heavens a lurid glare and mingling with the clouds its volumes of blackened smoke.” An awestruck Connecticut soldier, arriving at the edge of the burning town proclaimed, “It was the grandest sight I ever saw.”<sup>9</sup>

Intending to use New Bern as their major base of operations in the North Carolina theater, Federal forces quickly gave up the chase of the retreating Confederates and expended all their energy on dousing the fires. Every available soldier and sailor formed bucket brigades and fought the flames. One soldier wrote, “we went in boats across to the city and in conjunction with the jack tars stopped the fire from spreading.” After many hours of toil, the soldiers and

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<sup>8</sup> Entry dated March 15, 1862, Levi Hayden Diary (first quotation); Daniel Read Larned to Sister, March 18, 1862, Larned Papers (second, third, and fourth quotations); Spear, “Army life in the Twenty-fourth regiment,” 60 (fifth quotation).

<sup>9</sup> George H. Allen, *Forty-six Months with the Fourth R.I. Volunteers in the war of 1861-1865 . . .* (Providence: J.A. & R.A. Reid, printers, 1887), 97 (first quotation); Entry dated March 14, 1862, John E. Bassett Diary (microfilm), MHS (second quotation); Oliver Cromwell Case to sister, March 16, 1862, Case Letters (third quotation).



sailors succeeded in saving the city from the fires started by the Confederates. At least one soldier appreciated the irony of the situation: “It was a splendid sight—a beautiful moral example. The men that fought the enemy’s of their country a few minutes before were now fighting for their Enemy’s Homes and property.” Indeed, their efforts to save the city not only served a practical end—as they could better utilize the city as their base—but also demonstrated to the very few remaining white residents of New Bern that the army was not bent on the destruction of southern property.<sup>10</sup>

Though it is impossible to determine the exact number of residents who left, Union soldiers were impressed by the degree to which whites utterly abandoned the city. One Union officer estimated that “only about two hundred out of a total population of seven or eight thousand white people, remained at their homes.” Larned concurred that “all but the poorest residents have left,” suggesting that only those who lacked any possible means to move remained. Larned commented the day after the battle, “This morning the city presents a desolate appearance.” In the ensuing weeks, many other soldiers offered their observations of the town, and its lack of white residents, coupled with its preponderance of blacks and soldiers. “It was not the kind of place I had expected to see,” A New Jersey soldier wrote, “A New England town on a fast day, I imagined, would be a cheerful place in comparison... To me it seemed as though every one had gone to a funeral, or was arranging for one. The windows of the houses were darkened, and it appeared as if the destroying angel was hovering over the place.” Another soldier noted, “the town has a deserted look, as the stores are closed,” and also voiced the complaint shared by nearly everyone who wrote from occupied New Bern throughout the war, “one meets nobody but soldiers and niggers.” The overwhelming presence of military men and

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<sup>10</sup> James M. Drennan to wife, March 15, 1862, James M. Drennan Papers (Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Mass.).

destitute black refugees, the fire-damaged and destroyed structures, as well as the strict imposition of martial law prompted one Massachusetts soldier to lament that the city more closely resembled a “despotic power of monarchal Europe than that of a free democratic government.”<sup>11</sup>

Most soldiers were able to appreciate the beauties of the city despite its forlorn appearance and the overwhelming presence of the military. Many soldiers agreed with Connecticut soldier Oliver Case, who wrote his sister that New Bern “is one of the pleasantest cities I ever saw for its streets are shaded by large trees which meet overhead which makes the streets pleasant that otherwise would be uninhabitable.” Daniel Larned admired that the city was “dry and level, and quite ancient in its style.” Charles Duren, a Massachusetts soldier, liked the city so much that he wrote his parents, “I can but hope that if we are stationed any where in the State, it will be here.” Despite this preference, many Union soldiers could not stay very long after the fall of the city. Burnside turned his attention southeast, toward Beaufort, and more importantly, the capture of Fort Macon, which guarded its harbor. Less than a week after the capture of New Bern, he ordered Brigadier General John G. Parke to lead a force to subdue any resisting Carteret towns and set up the approaches to the fort. Parke began marching his units down the road toward Morehead City and Beaufort on March 22.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Denny, *Wearing the Blue*, 104 (first quotation); Daniel Read Larned to “Uncle,” March 20, 1862 (second quotation), Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, March 15, 1862 (third quotation), Larned Papers; J. Madison Drake, *The History of the Ninth New Jersey Veteran Vols . . .* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Journal Printing House, 1889), 66-67 (fourth and fifth quotations); George H. Baxter to Jim, April 6, 1862, George H. Baxter Letters (microfilm), MHS (sixth and seventh quotations); Charles S. Wilder to Rev. Alonzo Hill, June 1, 1862, Box 1, Folder 7a, Civil War Collection, AAS (eighth quotation).

<sup>12</sup> Oliver Case to sister, June 3, 1862, Case Letters (first quotation); Daniel Read Larned to “Sis,” March 18, 1862, Larned Papers (second quotation); Charles Duren to “Mother and Father,” March 20, 1862, Charles M. Duren Papers (Special Collections & Archives, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.; hereinafter cited as EU) (third quotation). John G. Parke to Ambrose Burnside, March 23, 24, 26, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols. in 128; Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Ser. 1, Vol. IX, 276-280.

Residents in Beaufort, as well as the Confederate garrison at Fort Macon, had known the Union army was on its way ever since March 14. Throughout that morning the townspeople could hear the boom of the cannon as the Union army assaulted the Fort Thompson line, about forty miles away as the crow flies. Citizens also knew the formidable Union navy plied the waters somewhere over the horizon as well. The crew of the Confederate blockade-runner, *Nashville*, which had recently arrived from Bermuda, had hurriedly shoveled coal into her boilers on the evening of Monday, March 17, and steamed out of the deep harbor and past the Fort. Its departure ended Beaufort's contact with the outside Confederate world. The rumble of cannon from the Federal blockading ships that fired on the *Nashville* as she raced away alerted the residents to the actual proximity of the fleet. Colonel Moses White and his 441-man garrison at Fort Macon, which included three companies of Carteret and one of Craven men (Guion's company), would inevitably face a Union attack. White, who felt it was his duty to hold out as long as possible, warned the townspeople that he would turn the guns of the fort on Beaufort if Union troops attempted to enter it. This caused no little stir among the populace, and the citizen-soldiers from Beaufort in the fort's garrison.<sup>13</sup>

On Monday, March 24, two Federal officers under a flag of truce from Union General John G. Parke, arrived in Beaufort to bid representatives to speak with Parke. James Rumley, the clerk of the Carteret County Court, and D.W. Whitehurst, a respected planter, met with the Union commander over the next two days at his headquarters near Morehead City. Rumley tried

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<sup>13</sup> Undated entry, [before April 23, 1862], James Rumley Diary, Levi Woodbury Pigott Collection (North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; hereinafter cited as NCSA) (hearing the cannons); Beaufort *Look Out*, January 7, 1910; Pat Dula Davis and Kathleen Hill Hamilton, *The Heritage of Carteret County, North Carolina, Vol. 1, to 1982*, (Beaufort, N.C.: Carteret Historical Research Association, 1982), 5; John G. Parke to Ambrose Burnside, March 23, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, 9: 277. The version of Rumley's diary in the paper is slightly different than the version at the State Archives. The version in the newspaper had been filled in with other information, particularly accounts from the *Official Records*, which Rumley could not have known at the time he was writing. The manuscript copy in the State Archives appears to be the original diary before a newspaperman edited it in order to print it in serial form.

to dissuade the general from sending troops to the town by saying that they had no supplies for the troops and barely enough for the civilians, and warned Parke of White's threat to fire on the town. The general, undisturbed by the news, informed the two representatives that the town would hear from him shortly. Rumley and Whitehurst returned to town knowing that troops would arrive any day. The two men, perhaps in an effort to avoid causing panic among the citizens, did not spread the alarm widely throughout the town.<sup>14</sup>

As dawn cast its shimmering light over the sleepy little port of Beaufort, North Carolina, on the soggy morning of March 26, 1862, local residents awoke to find their world had changed overnight. They had drifted off to sleep the night before as residents of a quiet Confederate municipality, but awakened to find themselves inhabitants of the newest Federal possession in North America. Probably heeding Rumley's warning about White's intentions to fire into the town during threat of Union invasion, General Parke had ordered a small force to take the port by stealth. During the wet, foggy night of March 25, two companies from the 4<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island regiment shoved off from Morehead City, quietly rowed past Fort Macon, landed at Beaufort's wharf, and marched into the town, encountering no resistance.<sup>15</sup>

Union forces then began preparing to besiege Fort Macon. When Lt. Colonel White declined General Parke's preliminary call for surrender, Parke sent troops to approach Fort Macon from its land side, on Bogue Banks, while constructing batteries on other islands in the harbor. On Parke's signal, the army batteries would join the Union naval squadron in bombarding Fort Macon into submission. Parke took his time preparing the siege, paying careful

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<sup>14</sup> Undated entry, [before April 23, 1862], Rumley Diary; John G. Parke to Ambrose Burnside, March 24, 1862 and March 26, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, 9: 278-280.

<sup>15</sup> John G. Parke to Ambrose Burnside, March 26, 1862, *Official Records*, ser. 1, 9: 279-280; Undated entry, [before April 23, 1862], Rumley diary; Allen, *Forty-six Months with the Fourth R.I. Volunteers*, 101. Allen states that his company took Beaufort on March 21, but Parke's official report, a contemporary source, states that he ordered Allen over to Beaufort on the night of March 25, hence I have favored Parke's report over Allen's postwar recollection.

attention to detail, and would not be ready to begin his bombardment for nearly a month. During that month things grew increasingly tense for the twenty-two officers and 419 men inside the beleaguered fort. Lt. Colonel Moses White, an intelligent and able 27-year old West Pointer, suffered from poor health and even poorer discipline in his garrison. Stricken with epileptic seizures and rumored to be fond of the bottle as well, White was strict and inflexible with his men, brooking no dissent from his hold-at-all-costs stance. A Union officer heard that White had supposedly claimed, “He would not surrender until he had eaten his last biscuit and killed his last horse.” White’s threats to bombard Beaufort if residents allowed the Union army to enter the town earned the hatred of many of his men. In an effort to maintain discipline, White ordered several soldiers placed in confinement for “expressing their dissatisfaction” with his decisions. Daniel Larned, repeating gossip, asserted that the Beaufort members of the garrison “will mutiny if an attempt is made to destroy the city.”<sup>16</sup>

The murmurings of discontent grew louder as the April days passed. White, weakened in health and trying to rule with an iron hand, feared for his life, according to one source. Larned learned after the fort capitulated that the garrison had “stood in mortal fear of their Colonel, hating him to an extent that he has been obliged to lock himself in his room during the night, for fear of violence from his men.” White admitted that “some discontent arose among the garrison” during the siege. He wrote that the men complained of their fare and other quibbles, but White touched on the more incisive point when he declared that the garrison “seemed to be dissatisfied with being shut up in such a small place, so near their relations and friends, but unable to communicate with them.” Even Union soldiers lamented the impossible situation of the fort’s

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<sup>16</sup> Fred M. Mallison, *The Civil War on the Outer Banks: A History of the Late Rebellion Along the Coast of North Carolina from Carteret to Currituck* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., 1998), 103 (White description); Spear, “Army life in the Twenty-fourth regiment,” 66 (first quotation); New Bern *Daily Progress*, April 28, 1862 (second quotation); Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, March 26, 1862, Larned Papers (third quotation).

garrison. “It seems a pity that they should attempt to hold it,” wrote a Connecticut soldier, “when they themselves know they cannot and it will probably cost them a great many lives.”<sup>17</sup>

Some local soldiers agreed and decided to abandon their hopeless prospect. Three Carteret farmers, Owen and William Foreman, and John D. Phillips, together stealthily abandoned the fort on the night of April 9. The next night, two poor mariners and Beaufort neighbors from Manney’s (formerly Pender’s) company, Joseph Bloodgood and George W. Scott, followed their comrades and stole away from the fort. Charles P. Willis, a private in Pool’s company, was mourning the loss of his brother, Martin, who had died of pneumonia in the fort on February 27, when he decided to desert. Willis joined three other members of the company, and together this disgruntled contingent made good their escape to Union lines in the days before the assault began.<sup>18</sup>

When the bombardment commenced, it was a more powerful demonstration of force than anyone in Beaufort or Fort Macon had ever witnessed before. At 5:40 a.m on the morning of April 25, the guns opened up. The shelling lasted nearly eleven hours, with the concussions from the mighty 10-inch siege mortars jarring the earth and reverberating through the wooden buildings of Beaufort like a continual mild earthquake. The bombardment, which could be clearly seen from town, “was one of painful interest to the inhabitants of Beaufort,” Rumley wrote, “many of whom had husbands, brothers or sons in the doomed fortification.” Local residents watched the action from their windows and perched on rooftops.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, April 26, 1862, Larned Papers (first quotation); Moses J. White to Theophilus H. Holmes, May 4, 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. IX, 293 (second and third quotations); Oliver Case to sister, April 6, 1862, Case Letters (fourth and fifth quotations).

<sup>18</sup> Louis H. Manarin and Weymouth T. Jordan, Jr., comps, *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*, (15 vols.; Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1966--), 1: 105, 110, 115-137; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, Population Schedule.

<sup>19</sup> John G. Parke to Lewis Richmond, May 9, 1862, and Ambrose Burnside to Edwin Stanton, April 29, 1862, *Official Records*, ser.1, 9: 284, 274; Entry dated April 25, 1862, Rumley Diary (quotation).

What they saw was the fort's garrison desperately, yet hopelessly returning fire. The fort's garrison could only fire out to sea, as no cannon challenged land approaches to the fort. In a small, yet meaningless accomplishment, the fort's gun crews managed to drive off the Union ships that had come in close enough to fire on the fort. But the land batteries wreaked terrible havoc in the fort. While very few men died as a result of the bombardment, all of the casualties in Pool's company came in one spectacularly grisly moment. One shell tore through a gun crew, blasting Joseph D. Stanton—a student at the outbreak of the war and a wealthy slaveholder's son—into a mutilated corpse, and also killing the young former clerk Jechonias Willis and young farmer Elijah Elliott, while wounding three others, including Captain Pool's nineteen-year old son James. Throughout the long bombardment, the fort kept returning fire, under the particularly diligent efforts of Captains Pool and Manney. Finally, when the Union shells threatened to blow up the fort's magazine, White hoisted a flag of truce, ending the bombardment. White formally surrendered the fort and its garrison on the morning of April 26, 1862, after having negotiated terms with General Burnside.<sup>20</sup>

The terms were highly favorable for most of the men in the garrison. They were immediately paroled upon their surrender. Those from the local area were allowed to return to their homes in Beaufort and Carteret County, while those from outside the region were transported to Wilmington under a flag of truce, so they could return home. Each captive was charged with not taking up arms against the Federal government until they had been formally exchanged. The result was more than any local resident could have hoped for. Instead of spending months inside northern prisons, they were allowed to return to their homes and loved ones. One observer noted the reaction in town when the paroled soldiers arrived. "Sightseers

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<sup>20</sup> Mamré Marsh Wilson, *A Researcher's Journal: Beaufort, NC & the Civil War* (Beaufort, N.C.: author, 1999), 62-67; Journal of James Monroe Hollowell, April 25, 1862, in Janet Hewett et al., eds., *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (80 vols., Wilmington, 1994-2001), Part I, vol. 1: 604.

say that they had a great time over in Beaufort Saturday when the garrison was set free,” wrote a Connecticut soldier. “Children looking for their parents, wives for their husbands, fathers for their children and when they were recognized in the crowd such a hugging and kissing as was not often seen was carried on.” In Beaufort, Union officials granted generous terms to captured combatants, just as in New Bern Federal troops had struggled mightily to douse the fires that threatened to destroy the city after the Confederates fled. In both cases, Union officials hoped the local residents would see that the men who took such pains and risk to accommodate the locals and restore order were not the evil minions of a despotic regime, as southern newspapers had portrayed invading Union soldiers.<sup>21</sup>

Such a lenient policy of conciliation was part of the Federal government’s larger goal to convince the local whites that the Union army would be benevolent and generous in its occupation. Historian Mark Grimsley has asserted: “The central assumption underlying [conciliation] was a faith that most white Southerners were lukewarm about secession, and if handled with forbearance, would withdraw their allegiance from the Confederacy once Union armies entered their midst.” Though the Federal government would ultimately abandon the policy of conciliation in late 1862 for a variety of reasons—from Union military reversals to inveterate southern hostility—it was the overarching Union policy toward southern civilians during the first year and a half of war, including the time of initial occupation of the Carteret and Craven region.<sup>22</sup>

Union Commander George McClellan had encapsulated the goal of the conciliation policy in November 1861, when he wrote: “It should be our constant aim to make it apparent to

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<sup>21</sup> Oliver Case to sister, April 28, 1862, Case Letters (quotation); “Terms of Capitulation,” *Official Records*, Ser. I, Vol. IX, 276.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.



all that their property, their comfort, and their personal safety will be best preserved by adhering to the cause of the Union.” McClellan had a friend and advocate of conciliation in Burnside. General Burnside had issued a proclamation in February 1862 stating that he wished to protect native interests and property, and did not seek to confiscate anything, including slaves. Burnside proclaimed: “The Government asks only that its authority may be recognized, and, we repeat, in no manner or way does it desire to interfere with your laws constitutionally established, your institutions of any kind whatever, your property of any sort, or your usages in any respect.” He earnestly hoped that his efforts to protect property, restore order, and make the occupation as non-intrusive as possible would encourage local residents to return to their former allegiances. In New Bern, he hoped that white residents, though initially scared away, would see the benevolent aims of the Union army, return to the city, pledge their allegiance to the Union, and continue business as usual.<sup>23</sup>

Daniel Larned was confident that the locals would recognize Union efforts: “I have no doubt when these people become better acquainted with us, and our intentions, they will come out in support of our Government.” Larned saw evidence of Unionist sentiment coming to the surface after the fighting was over. When the victorious forces raised the stars and stripes over Fort Macon, Larned noted, “from Beaufort came the hearty cheers of the Union people.” As a gesture of appreciation, “a ‘union lady’ from Beaufort sent the General a magnificent bouquet.” Despite their misgivings about releasing hundreds of paroled Confederate soldiers into their

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<sup>23</sup> George McClellan to Don Carlos Buell, November 7, 1861, quoted in Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 35 (first quotation); Ambrose Burnside, “Proclamation to the People of North Carolina,” February 16, 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. I, 9:363-364 (second quotation); Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 58-61. For a further discussion of the strategy of conciliation and its ultimate failure, see Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 23-92; Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); 1-38; Joseph L. Harsh, “Lincoln’s Tarnished Brass: Conservative Strategies and the Attempt to Fight the Early Civil War as a Limited War,” in Roman J. Hleniak and Lawrence L. Hewitt, eds., *The Confederate High Command & Related Topics: Themes in Honor of T. Harry Williams* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing, 1988), 124-141.

midst, such demonstrations of affection for the Union comforted Federal soldiers, and assuaged some of their initial fears. Most of them believed that the region's populace would appreciate their efforts. Such expectations were not unique to local Union observers, however, as the same general sentiments emanated from the highest offices in the nation as well.<sup>24</sup>

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President Abraham Lincoln and many Federal authorities anticipated that the majority of local white citizens would be loyal, and expected to utilize this sentiment to foster a harmonious restoration. Lincoln believed that a show of force and benevolence by the Union army would bring thousands back to the Union fold. However, throughout the South far fewer Unionists materialized than Lincoln had expected. Many scholars have shown that Lincoln too readily placed a firm faith in southern Unionism. William C. Harris argues that Lincoln "consistently overestimated" Unionist strength during the war, while he conversely "consistently underestimated [southerners'] support for the rebellion." Stephen V. Ash points out that not just Lincoln, but most northerners, believed that "a large proportion of the Confederacy's citizens were loyal Unionists subjugated and silenced by the Rebel despots"; consequently, these "Unionists must be freed from tyranny and protected by Federal bayonets." When southerners initially appeared to assent to Union occupation, many northerners felt justified in their beliefs. As William Blair has argued, though, northerners misunderstood these benign actions of many

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<sup>24</sup> Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, March 30, 1862 (first quotation), Daniel Read Larned to "Sis," April 22, 1862 (second and third quotations), Larned Papers. Many Union soldiers felt the general's terms were far too generous, and protested the return of the enemy into their midst. Even though "many of the prisoners said that they were glad it was over," uttering statements such as "'now they would go home' [and] 'no man could make them fight again,'" one Union soldier still found the parole "provoking." Another soldier agreed, "The prisoners were discharged on parole, much to their gratification and some of our boy's displeasure." Another declared, "There is Considerable dissatisfaction existing among the troops against Burnside for relieving all those rebel Prisoners on peroale." Charles M. Duren to mother & father, April 27, 1862, Duren Papers (first quotation); Oliver Case to sister, April 28, 1862, Case Letters (second quotation); John Michael Priest, ed., *From New Bern to Fredericksburg: Captain James Wren's Diary, B Company, 48th Pennsylvania Volunteers, February 20, 1862-December 17, 1862* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing Company, inc., 1990), 26 (third quotation).

southern citizens; in Blair's words, "northerners overestimated the pro-Union sentiment as they confused acquiescence with loyalty." But these were lessons that would have to be learned in time by Union authorities, for initial appearances along the North Carolina coast seemed promising.<sup>25</sup>

When northerners first arrived in New Bern and Beaufort, they were convinced that they witnessed loyalty, not just submission on the part of those whites who remained in the area. New Bern was largely deserted of native whites, and much of Craven County was in what Stephen Ash termed "no-man's land"—hinterland regions just outside either total Union or Confederate military control, and subsequently visited and inhabited by both Confederates and Union men. Carteret County was almost entirely under Union military control, and most of its native white population remained. The populace that the soldiers encountered in Beaufort, with a few exceptions, was "loyal to a great extent." A Rhode Island soldier determined that the "people there seemed to be about equally divided on the question of loyalty," but admitted that they "welcomed our troops, in many instances with seeming cordiality." John A. Hedrick, U.S. Treasury agent, arrived in Beaufort on June 12, 1862, and after a week of interacting with the local residents, observed, "Some are Secessionists but the greater number are Union men now and I think always have been."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> William C. Harris, *With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 8-9 (first and second quotations); Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 26 (third and fourth quotations); William Blair, *Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 135 (fifth quotation). For an excellent examination of Lincoln's vision and plan of wartime Reconstruction in the South and specifically North Carolina, see Harris, *With Charity for All*, especially pp. 58-72.

<sup>26</sup> Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 76; Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, March 26, 1862, Larned Papers (first quotation); John K. Burlingame, *History of the Fifth Regiment of Rhode Island Heavy Artillery . . .* (Providence: Snow & Farnham, 1892), 59 (second quotation); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 20, 1862, in Judkin Browning and Michael Thomas Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist: John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick 1862-1865* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2001), 7 (third quotation).

Union soldiers noted that even more local residents had started warming to their occupiers when northern merchant vessels laden with goods began arriving at Beaufort and New Bern docks by June 1862. One soldier in New Bern acknowledged on June 8, “Business is getting to be very lively in the city. Nearly all the Stores have been opened and it makes the city look very much like the northern cities, only most all the business is connected with Military matters in some way or other.” The resurgence of commerce and the promise of future profits produced a telling effect on local white attitudes. A Rhode Island soldier in Beaufort witnessed local businesses reopen “with cheerfulness and profit,” and soon “many of the most rabid among them soon dropped their patriotic allusion to the Confederacy, and began to consider themselves as part and parcel of the U.S. government once more.”<sup>27</sup>

When Federal forces drove the Confederate army out of the area, many Carteret and Craven residents shifted their allegiances, falling back into the more comfortable role of supporter of the old and venerable Union. For most in Carteret and many in Craven, acceptance of secession had come very late, only after Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s call for troops. Hence there was not much depth to their ideological conviction for the Confederacy. Many had spent the years leading up to secession vehemently opposing it, only to grudgingly accept secession in the excitable spring of 1861. Most of these residents, and many Unionists throughout the South, simply wanted the antebellum status quo, that is the Union as it was, complete with Federal protections for southern slavery. In fact, many southern Unionists throughout the South had argued against secession, claiming that the Union offered the greatest protection for southern rights and their “peculiar institution.” South Carolina’s James Chesnut, Sr. remembered, “Without the aid and countenance of the whole United States, we could not have kept slavery....

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<sup>27</sup> William A. Musson to “Friend Mary,” June 8, 1862, James O. Brown and William A. Musson Papers, Norwich Civil War Round Table, USAMHI (first quotation); Allen, *Forty-six Months with the Fourth R.I. Volunteers*, 116-117 (second and third quotations).

That was one reason why I was a Union man. I wanted all the power the United States gave me—to hold my own.” At the Virginia secession convention, a Unionist delegate pointed out that much of the world condemned slavery, “and it is nothing but the prestige and power of the General Government now that guarantees to the slaveholder his right.” As North Carolina Unionists warned in 1861, abandoning the United States, “jeoparded [*sic*] the institution of slavery a thousand-fold more by secession, than by carrying on the contest under the old government.” In order to maintain racial order, white supremacy, and avoid the potential disasters of a social upheaval among their slaves, many had opposed leaving the Union, and now many more advocated throwing their support behind the Union quickly, before the war could take any radical turns.<sup>28</sup>

In occupied Carteret and Craven such Unionist support was palpable, though it often had more practical than ideological foundations. Many, like Elijah W. Ellis, accepted Union occupation and took oaths of allegiance in order to maintain their own personal antebellum status quo. Ellis claimed he had opposed secession, though he admitted that when secession came, he quietly “went with the State.” However, he was much more concerned with maintaining his business interests in the naval stores industry than involving himself in the military conflict. When the Confederate army fled from New Bern and burned a large amount of stores in their wake, Ellis abandoned his tenuous allegiance to the Confederacy. In the confusion and panic of the arson and retreat, Ellis claimed, “I was cut at by a Confederate officer while I was endeavoring to put out a fire” that threatened to engulf his warehouses. When the Union army

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<sup>28</sup> Quotes all from Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 70. See also Richard L. Zuber, *Jonathan Worth: A Biography of a Southern Unionist* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965); James L. Roark, *Masters without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), 2-7; Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), especially Chapters 4 and 5.

arrived, Ellis applied for and was granted a protection from General Burnside, acknowledging his allegiance to the Union. However, a friend later aptly characterized Ellis' stance during the war, observing, "I cannot say that I ever heard him express himself pro or con about the war, he did not talk politics much[;] he talked more about turpentine than politics."<sup>29</sup>

Ellis's friend and fellow Craven resident, Solomon Witherington, also exhibited the passive tendencies toward Unionism. Once the Union army arrived in March 1862, Witherington did not leave with the many other families and instead chose to take an oath of allegiance to the Union. However, this did not indicate any strength of conviction. Characterizing Witherington as a "quiet, peaceable, and inofficious man," Ellis testified that during the war: "[Witherington] told me that he did not think he had an enemy in the world—that he liked our side as well as he did the other—that when the Southern troops came to his house he treated them as gentlemen and when the Northern troops came he treated them the same—that he knew no difference." Ellis and Witherington demonstrate that many local residents negotiated just as freely with Union soldiers as they had with Confederates. They had pledged their allegiance to the South while the Confederacy maintained control in their region. Yet, when Union authorities established control over the region, they easily and deftly fell back into their old familiar customs as citizens of the United States.<sup>30</sup>

Residents of all classes negotiated with the local wielders of power to preserve their property and livelihood. This has often been the case for episodes of military occupation throughout history. For comparative perspective of occupations, especially when a similar

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<sup>29</sup> Testimony of claimant Elijah W. Ellis (first and second quotations), Testimony of Ellsworth Hawks (third quotation), Claim 14739, Craven County, Records of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Disallowed Claims, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter cited as RG 233).

<sup>30</sup> Testimony of Elijah W. Ellis, Claim 1998 (Solomon Witherington), Craven County, RG 233. Witherington's name is also spelled alternately as Worthington. After the war, the Federal government deemed the Unionism of Ellis and Witherington too passive, and denied their claims for reimbursement.

culture occupies an area, one need look no further than the American Revolution. As David Hackett Fischer has noted, when the British forces occupied New Jersey in 1776, “some New Jersey merchants and manufacturers . . . thought of the British occupation as a new opportunity for business.” Fischer relates the story of Stacy Potts and Abraham Hunt, Trenton businessmen who sold military goods to both the American and British armies as they came through town. Often, just like in occupied coastal North Carolina during the Civil War, residents could not adequately discern the allegiances of their neighbors. Hunt was “suspected of Tory opinions by the Whigs, and of Whig connections by Tories, but his closest neighbors knew him as a ‘noncommittal man.’” Fischer concludes that some merchants “were steadfast in their devotion to the Revolution or to the king, but more than a few followed their fortunes.”<sup>31</sup>

Such was the case in Carteret and Craven, as many businessmen allied with the Union army to protect their economic interests, especially after witnessing how secessionist property was treated. Immediately upon arriving in Beaufort, northern troops quickly took possession of Josiah Pender’s Atlantic Hotel. After liberating it of its most valuable furniture, the Union army converted the hotel into a major hospital for much of the war. The Union army’s retribution against Pender forced other merchants in town to quickly assess their own allegiances. Seeing the treatment of the Atlantic Hotel, forty-eight year old George W. Taylor, proprietor of the Ocean House Hotel, let few daylight hours pass before he had secured an arrangement with the Federal troops.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 170 (first and second quotations), 171 (third quotation).

<sup>32</sup> Undated entry, [before April 23, 1862], Rumley Diary (Pender’s hotel); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 20, 1862 and October 25, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 7-8, 163-164 (Taylor’s hotel). The Atlantic Hotel became Hammond General Hospital from April 1862 until it was closed on January 14, 1865. See *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. “Pender, Josiah Solomon”; Entry dated January 14, 1865, in Edmund J. Cleveland, “The Late Campaigns in North Carolina as seen through the eyes of a New Jersey soldier,” (unpublished typescript), Edmund J. Cleveland Papers (Southern Historical Collection, Louis Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as SHC).

Though Taylor left behind no writings to suggest his ideological convictions, he certainly had practical business reasons for declaring his allegiance to the occupying army. Taylor, a grocer who had suffered financial problems, had moved from New Bern to Beaufort in 1853, just as the latter was beginning to develop its reputation as a resort area. Taylor sought relief from his financial woes by tapping into the market that seemed to offer the most opportunity for profit in the resort town of Beaufort—hotel-keeper. In 1857 he bought the Ocean House Hotel from D.W. Whitehurst, and tried to appeal to the vacationing wealthy elites in Beaufort’s summer season. Though the unrelenting stress of his financial condition probably led Taylor to the bottle—a contemporary lamented that he “*drinks hard*” and that “rather freely”—by January 1861 his hotel gamble seemed to be paying off. The agent could report that Taylor had “been exceedingly cramped, but is getting out of his difficulties.” Then the Civil War began, drying up the tourist trade at a time when Taylor desperately needed the continued profitability of his hotel.<sup>33</sup>

Taylor recognized the economic benefits he would derive from cooperating with and catering to a northern clientele. He immediately agreed to operate his establishment as a boarding house for Union officials. Military officers, government agents, and benevolent society members all took advantage of the Ocean House’s hospitality. John A. Hedrick, the newly appointed U.S. Treasury Department agent for Beaufort, arrived in June 1862 from Washington, D.C., and took a room in Taylor’s hotel, noting that it was the only hotel in town that remained open. Taylor’s decision to ally with the Union would secure his financial stability through the

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<sup>33</sup> North Carolina, Vol. 5, 173, 176 A, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.).



war years. By December 1865, Taylor's net worth had grown to nearly \$15,000, and he was "doing good business." He owed his wartime prosperity to the decision he made in April 1862.<sup>34</sup>

The other major hotel owner in town, Benjamin A. Ensley, proprietor of the Front Street House, did not make such a clear choice as Taylor. Ensley did not immediately take the oath of allegiance, and as a result Union forces shut down his hotel. As another Beaufort resident noted, when the Union soldiers arrived, they required local residents to swear an oath of allegiance. Those who refused were not allowed to continue their business in town, or travel outside the lines. This was particularly difficult for Ensley, who in addition to owning the hotel and a house in Beaufort also owned a farm in Craven County (where he claimed residence in 1860). Ensley had been active in Craven society before the war, and had joined a volunteer cavalry company that formed in New Bern in March 1860, in reaction to John Brown's raid.<sup>35</sup>

Ensley had a difficult time maintaining his livelihood in the occupied region. Records seldom appear about Ensley during the war. But the glimpses we get suggest a man hesitant to renounce the Confederacy, but ultimately choosing to protect his property. In March 1863, he petitioned for a pass to leave Beaufort and visit his Craven farm, which was denied by the provost marshal, because Ensley had not made his allegiance plain. "Mr. Ensley has not taken the oath," wrote the Provost Marshal, "on account, as he says, of particular reasons." Ensley was understandably hesitant, fearing severe retribution from Confederates and his secessionist-sympathizing neighbors if southern forces recaptured Craven. John Hedrick admitted as much, observing that many who openly supported the Union "were afraid they would be punished

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<sup>34</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 20, 1862, October 25, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 7-8, 163-164; North Carolina, Vol. 5, 173, 176-A, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection. Even though his hotel would burn down in October 1863, Taylor found other ways to provide services to Union authorities.

<sup>35</sup> North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-E, and Vol. 7, p. 289, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection; Undated entry, [before April 23, 1862], Rumley diary; Henry B. Clarke to John W. Ellis, March 20, 1860, John W. Ellis, Governors Papers, NCSA.

under State law” if the Confederates returned. In addition, their their property “would be confiscated by the rebels immediately.”<sup>36</sup>

However, Ensley finally felt compelled to enter the Union fold. In October 1863, a kitchen fire destroyed Ensley’s residence in Beaufort. Without home or means to a living in Beaufort since the Union army had confiscated his hotel, Ensley relented and made peace with the Union forces. On January 28, 1864, Ensley wrote to the Provost Marshal, “being desirous of obtaining the possession of my ‘hotel’ I am willing to allow the US Government to put a building on the ground where I was burnt out on Front Street for use of commissary.” After maintaining basic neutrality, with considerable difficulty, for nearly two years, Ensley ultimately joined the occupying forces in order to stabilize his tenuous economic situation.<sup>37</sup>

Occupation forced the other merchants in town to quickly decide where their allegiance lay. Retribution was immediately taken against those who were known secessionists. Thus, Benjamin Leecraft’s store received the same treatment as Josiah Pender’s hotel. In June 1862, the Union Provost Marshal granted a Boston merchant “permission to occupy the store formerly occupied by Benjamin Leecraft,” which he justified with the disclaimer, “the owner having joined the CSA Army.” James Rumley helplessly witnessed slaves expropriate bed and table furniture and “even the dresses of Mr. Leecraft’s deceased wife and child.” Rumley was incensed, yet, trying to preserve his own interests, he did not object to the Union authorities about such outrages.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> E.A. Harkness to Southard Hoffman, March 5, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as RG 393 (first quotation); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 20, 1862 (second quotation), August 2, 1863 (third quotation), in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 7, 141.

<sup>37</sup> J. Jourdan to B.B. Foster, October 25, 1863 (fire), B.A. Ensley to J. Jourdan, January 28, 1864 (quotation), Part II, Letters Sent, October 1863—March 1864, District and Subdistrict of Beaufort, North Carolina, Entry 940, RG 393.

<sup>38</sup> Circular Issued from Headquarters Provost Marshal, Beaufort, North Carolina, July 20, 1862, Alfred H. Martine Papers, SHC (first and second quotations); Entry for June 7, 1862, Rumley diary (third quotation).

The impressive number of soldiers in the occupying army—which usually had a minimum of two regiments stationed in and around Beaufort at all times (approximately 1000 active-duty soldiers), with anywhere between 5,000 and 30,000 troops at varying times stationed in and around New Bern—helped convince the population that the Union intended to remain in the vicinity for the duration of the war. This probably helped persuade many Unionists to openly proclaim their allegiance, and also tended to make secessionists keep their dissent private. Rumley is a perfect example of the latter. Rumley befriended John Hedrick, the U.S. Treasury Department Collector, and projected a neutral façade in public interaction with Union officials, while secretly spouting his rage into his diary. As a result, Rumley gave no outward indication of his anger at the Union treatment of Pender or Leecraft’s property. However, both Pender and Leecraft suffered because they were not present when the Union army arrived. Federal forces demonstrated the ability to forgive those who had initially supported secession if their contrition seemed genuine. Joel Henry Davis was a prominent merchant who showed such repentance.<sup>39</sup>

Davis provides an illuminating example of how local whites negotiated with those who were in power—either Confederates or Federals. A prosperous, slave owning Beaufort merchant at the outbreak of the war, the fifty-seven-year-old Davis initially accepted secession. Davis had been the quintessential success story, turning small means into large gains through thrift and hard work. Claiming no slaves and only \$2000 worth of personal value in 1850, the “industrious” and “hardworking” Davis owned \$4000 worth of real estate and \$10,000 worth of personal property, including fifteen slaves in 1860. Davis had earned the respect of his peers, and had mentored young men along the way, most notably a young mechanic from Germany, Henry Rieger, who

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<sup>39</sup> Undated entry, [before April 23, 1862], Rumley Diary; See John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 20, 1862, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 7-8.

married Davis's eldest daughter, named his first-born son Joel Henry, and would eventually become a business partner with Davis.<sup>40</sup>

When North Carolina seceded, economics probably dictated that Davis and many other whites support the Confederacy. The Beaufort correspondent for the *New York Herald* commented in July 1862, after sharing a dinner with several paroled local Confederate officers from Fort Macon: "I will admit that there are some in our midst who love secesh better than they love God, but it is all because their pecuniary interests are with the South far in preference to the North." Similarly, in order to protect all that he had gained during the antebellum years, Davis had supported the Confederacy. If Davis secretly harbored any Unionist sentiments, he kept them quiet. Undoubtedly, he witnessed the attacks made on other merchants who spoke out against the Confederacy, like David Morton and Isaac Hall. Publicly at least, his allegiance appeared to belong to the Confederacy. Two of Davis' sons, twenty-two-year-old James and eighteen-year-old Joel, had made an even more public demonstration of their allegiance by enlisting as privates in Stephen Decatur Pool's Company on May 25, 1861. Thus, there were many economic, social, and family reasons for Davis to support the Confederacy in the first year of the war.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, the elder Davis quickly supported the Union authorities when they occupied Beaufort. Like George W. Taylor, Davis immediately took the oath of allegiance and opened his store to Union currency, and even allowed the Treasury Agent, John Hedrick, to use a room in his store for an office. Ever the pragmatic merchant, Davis quickly recognized the

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<sup>40</sup> North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-L, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (quotations); 1850 U.S. Census, Carteret County, Population and Slave Schedules; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, Population and Slave Schedules; William B. Fowle, Jr. to Southard Hoffman, January 14, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (Rieger's partnership).

<sup>41</sup> *New York Herald*, July 27, 1862 (quotation); Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 128 (Davis's sons' enlistment).

benefits that accompanied allegiance to the Union forces. His store would maintain a steady trade with Union soldiers and still be able to export goods through the blockade. Of course in April 1862 no one was certain who would win the war, but Davis felt that his best opportunity for protecting his own property and business interests lay with the Union. Davis soon earned distinction in his role as a Unionist. John Hedrick applauded Davis's public stance at the same time he lamented the fact that other prominent citizens were not very demonstrative in the support of the Union. "Mr. Joel H. Davis, Mr. [Rieger], and a few others of some wealth and standing have contended for the Union all the time," Hedrick wrote in September 1862, "but I can tell that men of their stamp are few and far between." Davis even accepted some of the duties that came with being a prominent Unionist in town. At a meeting in September 1862, Davis introduced staunch Union promoter and orator, Charles Henry Foster, to the gathered assembly. He had developed a reputation as perhaps the foremost Unionist in Beaufort, even though he and his sons had supported the Confederacy without much recognizable hesitation. Davis had successfully negotiated with those in power—whether they were Confederate or Union authorities—to protect his personal interests. His sons followed their father's example.<sup>42</sup>

After surrendering with the Fort Macon garrison on April 26, 1862, James and Joel Henry Davis, Jr. forsook the Confederate army and took the oath of allegiance. James even opened a billiard parlor and bowling alley behind the Provost Marshal's office in Beaufort, where he entertained Union soldiers. The two Davis sons were not the only ones who retired their Confederate uniforms after they surrendered. Levi Woodbury Pigott, a thirty-one year old former teacher and recently a private in Pool's company, took the oath of allegiance and immediately applied to John Hedrick for a position in the U.S. Treasury Department, which he

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<sup>42</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, September 7, 1862, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 33 (quotations); *New Bern Weekly Progress*, September 20, 1862 (introducing Foster).

was granted. After his parole, twenty-two-year old John W. Day, a former mariner, operated a poor house about seven miles outside Beaufort, hosting several venues of entertainment, including a well-attended fandango in 1865, for Northern soldiers. Of the 177 Carteret men who were captured and paroled at Fort Macon, fifty-six (32 percent) did not return to their units after their exchange, and thirty (17 percent) more who did return soon deserted.<sup>43</sup>

Benjamin Leecraft's company had not been at Fort Macon, but experienced similar abandonment at the battle of New Bern. In the retreat from New Bern, Leecraft's battery fled in such disorganized haste that it virtually ceased to exist. In his after-battle report, he observed that he had "no intelligence" about several men of his command who had subsequently "strayed off in New Bern" during the retreat. Leecraft had been a respected merchant and civic leader in antebellum Beaufort, but this did not translate to effective military leadership. When his company reassembled at Kinston on the evening of March 14, 1862, Leecraft only fielded twenty-one of the original sixty-nine men in his command. Confederate authorities reassigned his remaining men to another company. Leecraft resigned in protest on April 12, 1862, but did not venture back to his home in Beaufort, though undoubtedly many of his soldiers had. Ultimately, of the 356 Carteret men who had enlisted for the Confederate cause, 134 (38 percent) permanently abandoned their units during the war. Thus, in an inversion of James McPherson's famous thesis, these men had decided not only that they were not fighting for the "cause," but also that they were not fighting for their "comrades" either.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 128 (Davis sons), 1: 134, 434 (Pigott), 1: 129 (Day); Entry dated February 16, 1865 (Davis's billiard parlor), Entry dated January 12, 1865 (Day's fandango), Cleveland diary; John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 22, July 10, 1862 (Pigott's application), in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 7-8, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Benjamin Leecraft to C.C. Lee, March 14, 1862, *Official Records, Supplement*, part 1, 1:598-599 (quotations); Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 269-272; James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). In fact, Leecraft never returned to Beaufort again, even after the war.

These actions suggest that for Carteret men, their ideological convictions for the Confederacy were never that strong. They had joined the Confederate army hoping to stay close to home, and had been granted that wish, but when the Confederate army abandoned their home county, many soldiers in turn abandoned the Confederacy. Craven experienced a similar lack of commitment, though their forsaking of the Confederacy more commonly took the form of outright desertion. Of the approximately 1100 Craven men who enlisted during the war, at least 219 (or 20 percent) abandoned their regiments. For these men, an ideological attachment to the Confederate nation either did not exist, or was too weak to sustain in the face of hardship. These men, many of them of lower class status, undoubtedly left their units and returned home to protect their property and economic investments, or sought to improve their economic opportunities under Union authority.<sup>45</sup>

Quantitative data speaks volumes about the presence of a class dimension of loyalty to the Union and Confederacy, especially when one compares the average wealth valuation of those who abandoned their Confederate units—let’s call them “departers”—to those who remained in their units through the war—we’ll call them “diehards.” In Carteret, “diehards” had an average wealth valuation of \$4,067, while “departers” possessed an average of only \$1181. A similar divide existed in Craven; “diehards” claimed an average wealth valuation of \$8,307, while “departers” had an average of \$2,822. These numbers suggest that the more wealth one had, the more likely one was to remain in the Confederacy, probably because one had more of a vested

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<sup>45</sup> When I refer to those who “abandoned” their regiments, I refer not only to deserters, but also those who did not return to their regiments after capture and exchange, those troops listed as “absent without leave” from some point to the end of the war, and those who have no further records after 1862. Those who died, officers who resigned for health reasons, or those who were legitimately discharged for disability or other reasons are not considered to have “abandoned” their regiments.

interest in the fight. Conversely, those who were poorer were much more likely to abandon the Confederacy.<sup>46</sup>

Whether they left for economic reasons or not, those who departed their Confederate units to return home demonstrated that their primary allegiance was to their very localized community; their more important duty was to family rather than nation. As David Potter observed respecting southern nationalism, “The readiness with which the South returned to the Union will defy explanation unless it is recognized that Southern loyalties to the Union were never really obliterated but rather were eclipsed by other loyalties with which, for a time, they conflicted.”<sup>47</sup>

While some Carteret and Craven County men demonstrated their loyalty by leaving their units, taking the oath of allegiance, or just resuming business as usual, others actively aided the Union army. James B. Roberts, a Carteret farmer from Shepherdsville who had refused to join his two brothers in the Confederate army, acted as a cavalry guide and as a pilot for Union ships plying the Neuse River toward New Bern. Some impecunious citizens—such as William T. Fulcher, a Beaufort fisherman who had “piloted the union fleet to New Bern when the Burnside

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<sup>46</sup> I computed average wealth by cross-referencing the company rosters with the census population schedules. For average household wealth, I added the total value of personal property and the value of real estate from the 1860 census for the households in which each enlistee lived and then divided that sum by the total number of enlistees for whom records could be found. The enlistee did not have to personally own the wealth in the household.

<sup>47</sup> David Potter quoted in Beringer et al, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, 78. There is a vast literature on southern nationalism. For works that deal with the creation and establishment of Confederate nationalism, see Frank E. Vandiver, *Jefferson Davis and the Confederate State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); Vandiver, *Their Tattered Flags: The Epic of the Confederacy* (New York: Harper’s Magazine Press, 1970); Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Emory Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publ., Inc, 1979); Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Confederate South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). All of these works ultimately agree that Confederate nationalism failed, but some works address this failure more comprehensively and provocatively. See Beringer et al, *Why the South Lost the Civil War*; Kenneth Stampp, “The Southern Road to Appomattox,” in Stampp, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the background of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); David M. Potter, “The Historian’s Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa,” in Potter, *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).



Expedition captured the place,” and Asa Piver, a Beaufort fisherman and an “old line Whig”—also served as pilots for the Union naval vessels in the coastal rivers and sounds during the war. Isaac Hill, who had been threatened by Confederate soldiers in 1861, worked as a government naval stores inspector in Carteret County.<sup>48</sup>

Other men took an even more overt step in demonstrating their loyalty; they enlisted in the Union army. In June 1862, the Federal government authorized the raising of an infantry regiment of native North Carolinians, the 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina. In November 1863, the government authorized the creation of a second regiment of native white volunteers. In each regiment, individual companies formed in the occupied towns along the North Carolina coast. One company of the 1<sup>st</sup> and three of the 2<sup>nd</sup> formed in Beaufort, while one company of the 1<sup>st</sup> formed in New Bern. Nearly 1500 men joined these two regiments throughout the North Carolina coast, earning the derisive nickname “buffaloes” from unsympathetic residents. Unionists from throughout the state’s coastal plain made their way to these port cities and enlisted. However, many local residents also joined up in the region. Thirty-three Carteret men and sixty-nine Craven men joined, while many others were refused due to physical disability or age. Six of the thirty-three Carteret Union enlistees had previously served in the Confederate army, while twenty-five of the sixty-nine Craven Union enlistees had once worn Confederate

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<sup>48</sup> Roberts’ brother, David W. Roberts, served in Pool’s company, while Richard Roberts served in 1<sup>st</sup> Co. I, 36<sup>th</sup> North Carolina Regiment. See Manarin & Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1:134, 311. Drake, *History of Ninth New Jersey*, 79 (cavalry guide); Testimony of claimant James Roberts, Claim 12135, Carteret County, Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury, Settled Case Files for Claims Approved by the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Record Group 217, National Archives II, College Park, Md. (hereinafter cited as RG 217) (pilot); Testimony of claimant William T. Fulcher, Claim 9860, Carteret County RG 217 (first quotation); Testimony of claimant Asa Piver, Claim 15876, Carteret County, RG 217 (second quotation); Deposition of Isaac S. Hill, in *Nancy C. Hill, administratrix of the estate of Isaac S. Hill, deceased v. United States* (case file no. 1191), RG 123 (naval stores inspector).

gray. Most of those “turncoats” who left records revealed that their Confederate sympathies had been very suspect to begin with, and most had been coerced into the southern army.<sup>49</sup>

These men told diverse tales of how they had been compelled into Confederate service. Easton Arnold, a turpentine maker, claimed, “my service in the Confederate army was a force of circumstances.” He was “engaged peacefully” in making turpentine until Union forces captured Hatteras in the fall of 1861. Then he could no longer find willing distributors for his products, and was unable to move the goods himself. “I shunned Confederates until I was reduced to a state of starvation,” Arnold later testified. Ultimately he had to deal with the devil in order to gain his salvation. “As a last resort I joined Confederate forces with a view of escaping and joining US forces,” Arnold wrote, “which I did at first opportunity.”<sup>50</sup>

Similary, William Fillingum of Craven County told of how he was compelled into joining Captain Joseph Whitty’s Company K of the 31<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Regiment in November 1861 against his wishes. He asserted, “I never fired a gun with them and left at the first chance.” He joined the 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Union Regiment on September 27, 1862. John Lincoln, also of Craven County, asserted that he, too, was nearly compelled into Confederate service. Lincoln claimed that he “was never a regularly enlisted man in the Confederate service,” but told how Confederate officials confined him and eighty-five others at Stonewall, a tiny village on the northern Craven County line, for six months “with a view to putting us in the Confederate

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<sup>49</sup> Judkin Jay Browning, “‘Little-souled Mercenaries?’ The Buffaloes of Eastern North Carolina during the Civil War,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 77 (July 2000): 337-363. Many were rejected because they were over 45 years of age. A.W. Woodhull (Surgeon, 9th NJ) to Maj. Southard Hoffman, September 9, 1862, Box 1, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393. There is no clear origin for the appellation, “buffaloes.” For more information on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Union regiments and the etymology of “buffaloes,” see Browning’s article.

<sup>50</sup> General Affidavit, December 10, 1901, Easton Arnold pension file, Federal Pension Application Files, Records of the Veterans Administration, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter cited as RG 15).

Army.” Soon after the Union army invaded Craven County, Lincoln related, “the matter was abandoned and we all went home.” Three months later he joined the Union army.<sup>51</sup>

Henry Sawyer experienced Confederate intimidation as well. Sawyer had desperately sought to avoid Confederate agents, claiming, “I lade in the woods over a month to keep way from them but then they took me.” Indeed, In January 1862 Confederate soldiers forcibly took Sawyer from his home and, “after many protests,” compelled him to serve at Fort Thompson near New Bern, preparing the breastworks for the impending Union attack. Sawyer unwillingly participated in the battle on March 14, 1862, and when the company was forced to retreat, Sawyer claimed he “runaway and lade in the woods until I could get to the United States army.” He enlisted in the Union army in June 1862. When Confederates learned of his actions, they took their vengeance; Sawyer later related that Confederate pickets destroyed “all most everything I had and even cut my beds open and burned my fence down.”<sup>52</sup>

Local poor whites, like Arnold, Fillingum, Lincoln, and Sawyer, took advantage of the Union army’s arrival and invitations to improve their economic and physical situation. Stephen V. Ash argued that the northern army arrived with preconceived notions of poor whites as degraded and deluded by a slaveholding elite, who were only too willing to welcome Union forces. Their first impressions upon arrival did not alter their view. A soldier in the 9<sup>th</sup> New Jersey wrote, “Nearly every family, especially the poorer classes (“white trash,” as the planters

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<sup>51</sup> Deposition of William Fillingum, October 19, 1900, William Fillingum pension file (first quotation), Deposition of John Lincoln, August 15, 1900, John Lincoln Pension file (second, third, and fourth quotations), both in RG 15; Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 412 (Lincoln’s Confederate service), 8:507 (Fillingum’s Confederate service); John Lincoln Service File, First N.C. Infantry, Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers who served in Organizations from the State of North Carolina, Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served during the Civil War, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (microfilm, NCSA) (hereinafter cited as Compiled Service Records, RG 94) (Lincoln’s U.S. service).

<sup>52</sup> Henry Sawyer to “Commissioner of Pensions,” June 13, 1895 (first, third, and fourth quotations), General Affidavit, June 27, 1890 (second quotation), Henry Sawyer Pension file, RG 15; Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 414 (Confederate service); Henry Sawyer Service File, First N.C. Infantry, Compiled Service Records, RG 94 (Union service).

called them) possessed a love for the ‘old flag,’ and they joyfully hailed their deliverance from the bondage from which we had released them.” Throughout the occupied regions of the South the Union armies employed three tactics in dealing with poor whites in order to cultivate their perceived latent unionist sympathies: give them provisions, smite aristocrats while treating poor whites “with a velvet gloved hand,” and change their situation through education. Ash asserted, “Propelled by discontent, beckoned by opportunity, and without the encumbrance of property, poor whites headed for Union-held territory.” Three weeks after the Union forces occupied New Bern, the *New York Herald* correspondent reported, “Mr. Colyer [Superintendent to the Poor, appointed by Burnside] has at present under his care about 250 poor white families, who are utterly destitute, and he is supplying them with provisions and clothing where it is possible.”<sup>53</sup>

Poor whites deemed the prospects offered by the Union army as the potentially most beneficial for their individual self interests. Undoubtedly these men had nearly as many reasons for joining the Union army as they did the Confederate. Nay Sayers, like James Rumley, passed it off as simple-minded ignorance, decrying, “Some poor deluded wretches enter [the recruitment office], and are induced by false representations to sell themselves to the public enemies of their country.” Others blamed it on avarice, condemning the “little-souled mercenaries who are croaking so loudly and are willing to sell their country for filthy lucre and let their names be handed down to posterity branded with the curse of being traitors to their country.” Historian Richard Current has speculated that a steadfast devotion to the Union lay at the core: “Whatever

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<sup>53</sup> Drake, *History of the Ninth New Jersey Veteran Vols.*, 71 (first quotation); Steven V. Ash, “Poor Whites in the Occupied South, 1861-1865,” *Journal of Southern History* 57 (February 1991): 45-46 (second quotation), 52 (third quotation); *New York Herald*, April 16, 1862 (fourth quotation).

the feelings that impelled a white Southerner to enlist in the U.S. Army, a strong sense of old-fashioned patriotism must have been one of them.”<sup>54</sup>

While a few may have been unabashed Unionists, most poor men simply recognized the many practical advantages of joining the Union army. They could provide food, clothing, shelter, and protection for their families. Rumley grudgingly admitted that recruiting efforts “has been materially aided by the establishment of a public subsistence store in Beaufort, where the families of volunteers are gratuitously supplied.” A Union soldier also recognized this transparent motivation of many poor white enlistees. After soldiers from his unit gave provisions to a desperately destitute man and his family, the exuberantly thankful recipient announced that he would join the local native Union regiment to “help defend his family.” The Union soldier remarked somewhat cynically, “that is the spiret [*sic*] that is gaining ground here fast [especially] amongst the poor class if it is not through love for freedom it is because Uncle Sam will furnish them provision and that is a greight thing to them.”<sup>55</sup>

As important as material provisions was the very attractive economic opportunity to get paid in Union currency (whose inflation rate was much lower than that of Confederate script). When one looks at the economic breakdown of those who joined the Union army in both Carteret and Craven, one discovers the powerful truth of this sentiment. While the average household wealth of men who joined the Confederate army from Carteret was \$3076, the average wealth valuation of men who joined the Union army from Carteret was only \$489. Craven County showed a very similar breakdown. The average household wealth of Craven men who joined the

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<sup>54</sup> Entry dated October [n.d.], 1862, Rumley Diary (first quotation); Rufus A. Barrier to “Dear Father,” March 6, 1864, in Rufus Alexander Barrier and William Lafayette Barrier, *Dear Father: Confederate Letters Never Before Published*, ed. By Beverly Barrier Troxler and Billy Dawn Barrier Auciello (North Billerica, Mass.: BDB Auciello, 1989), 41 (second quotation); Richard N. Current, *Lincoln’s Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 146 (third quotation).

<sup>55</sup> Entry dated October [n.d.], 1862, Rumley Diary (first quotation); Charles Henry Tubbs to wife, February 4—February 11, 1863, Charles Henry Tubbs Letters, NCSA (second and third quotations). For a deeper exploration on the motivations of men enlisting in these two regiments, see Browning, “Little-Souled Mercenaries,” 337-363.

Confederate army was \$7102, while the average wealth valuation of those who joined the Union army was only \$413. In both counties, only one Union enlistee lived in a slaveholding household.<sup>56</sup>

Certainly the opportunity to earn a steady income for their families and provide an acceptable standard of living led men into the ranks. Lt. Colonel James McChesney, commanding officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Regiment argued, “The majority of these men have large families who are entirely dependent on the thirteen dollars per month for the supply of all their wants.” Records indicate that many men were the breadwinners for their increasingly destitute families. One farmer, Joseph Fulcher, recognized that the war had severely disrupted his family’s normal agricultural livelihood. He joined the army to support his family, and freely admitted to friends that he devotedly “gave all his wages to his father because he had a family to maintain and was not able to work.” Farmers were not the only ones who used the Union army as an economic buttress to their lives. Federal money also enticed local fishermen, especially heading into their first winter under occupation. One recruiting officer in Beaufort wrote on October 21, 1862, “The Fishing season is now nearly over and I expect to be able to fill up the Company very soon from the large number of men whose business will then be suspended.” Indeed, several Carteret men, and nearly two hundred more white men from neighboring counties who had fled to Union lines upon occupation, joined during the winter months of 1862-1863.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> For explanation of how I tabulated this wealth data, see footnote 44 in this chapter.

<sup>57</sup> J.M. McChesney to Major R.S. Davis, April 6, 1864, Regimental Letter and Endorsement Book, First N.C. Infantry, Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter cited as RG 94) (first quotation); Deposition of Britton Ambrose, July 17, 1889 (second quotation), Joseph Fulcher Pension File, RG 15; Wilbur F. Stevens to Colonel E.E. Potter, October 21, 1862, Wilbur F. Stevens File, First N.C. Infantry, Compiled Service Records, RG 94 (third quotation).

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As previously noted, soon after Union occupation began, many whites took oaths of allegiances and proclaimed themselves Unionists, though such a claim did not necessarily reveal any ideological or patriotic motivations. Whites of all classes sought to protect their self-interests, but they had multiple, often divergent, motivations behind their actions. Some elites, like Joel Henry Davis, and middle-class merchants, like George W. Taylor, negotiated with the Union forces to preserve their material interests. James Rumley also took the oath of allegiance in order to keep his property in Beaufort, but only exhibited a neutral façade while spouting his secessionist vituperation in the safe silence of his personal diary. Poor whites—such as those who were employed by the Federal government, enlisted in the Union army, or simply attended northern-operated local schools—negotiated with Union authorities to improve their economic, material, and sometimes even social, situations. Most whites initially accepted Union occupation, and appeared to get along well with the Union soldiers. After the war, George Allen, whose Rhode Island regiment departed for Virginia on June 30, 1862, fondly remembered his time in the region, “We can never forget our life in Beaufort, or the pleasant relation sustained with its inhabitants.”<sup>58</sup>

Though the majority of local whites behaved well, not every relation was as pleasant as Allen recalled. In postwar memoirs soldiers could remember their tours affectionately, but in their contemporary letters home, they noted some recalcitrant individuals who resisted the occupiers, either through verbal insults or physical attacks. Women were particularly outspoken in offering insults to Union soldiers. When a Union officer tried to talk with a white lady in New Bern shortly after the battle, she became agitated and defiant and “remarked that she Could blow Abe Linkon’s Brains out with a pistol.” Soldiers were burying a fallen comrade in May 1862

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<sup>58</sup> Allen, *Forty-six months with the Fourth R.I. Volunteers*, 116-119 (quotation on p. 119).

“when one of those secesh ladies was passing along—she stopped and told them to dig it deeper. They asked why? She said that the journey to hell might be shorter.” Such comments shocked northern soldiers unconditioned to hearing such aggressive and disrespectful talk from ladies. One officer commented upon a lady who had profanely railed at the Union soldiers for allowing her slaves to runaway, “I told her it sounded very strange to a northerner to hear such language from a lady.” It would have sounded strange to most southern men as well, for such improper language broke all social conventions.<sup>59</sup>

Such aggressiveness by secessionist women against Union soldiers was certainly not unique to North Carolina. The most famous examples, of course, come from General Benjamin Butler’s occupation of New Orleans in 1862, where women crossed over streets rather than share a sidewalk with Union soldiers, refused to share churches or public transportation with soldiers, and even dumped the contents of their chamber pots on the heads of passing soldiers. As George Rable suggested in a persuasive article, women took such aggressive actions not only to demonstrate their own defiance, but also to shame southern men who seemed too ready to abandon their masculine duties. Rather than resisting traditional gender roles and codes of honor, women were reinforcing their conception of masculinity. “For women who accepted traditional definitions of masculine honor,” Rable wrote, “their menfolk had thoroughly disgraced themselves, first by surrendering the city and then by fitting their necks to the despot’s yoke.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Entry dated March 18, 1862, in Priest, ed., *From New Bern to Fredericksburg*, 13 (first quotation); I.N. Roberts to Ebenezer Hunt, May 24, 1862, Ebenezer Hunt Papers, MHS (second quotation); Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, March 20, 1862, Box 1, Larned Papers (third quotation).

<sup>60</sup> George C. Rable, “‘Missing in Action’: Women of the Confederacy,” in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 139. For more on the role of women asserting their public selves, especially in regards to the New Orleans occupation, see Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). See also George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).



Though referring specifically to New Orleans, Rable's statement applies equally well to New Bern and Beaufort. The local men had either fled or surrendered, but few Union soldiers would admit in 1862 that much of the female population had. "The secesh ladies seem the most bitter enemies we have—I think if we had them to fight, we should find it warmer work," wrote one Massachusetts soldier in May. Two months later he reaffirmed, "The women are more bitter than the men. They are very open in the declarations. I heard one fine looking and intelligent lady say that, never, never, would the southern people live under the 'stars and stripes.'" One Union soldier recorded his encounter with a local woman, in June 1862, stating, "I'd bet you would have laughed if you had heard the lecturing I got from a woman in this city, she was talking about the mean contemptible Yankees and about Genl. McClellan. I told her she had better shut up and then she gave me what Paddy gave the drum [a slap]."<sup>61</sup>

Reid Mitchell, in a suggestive essay entitled "She Devils," asserts that due to such aggressive actions, northern soldiers came to believe that "Confederate women should not be regarded as exemplars of domesticity and feminized virtue." Northern soldiers, Mitchell argues, came to regard southern women not as the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of their enemy, but as enemies themselves. Soldiers believed that the southern women "supported the rebellion with more irrational zeal than their husbands, brothers, and sons, [and] they might be considered even more dangerous enemies than Confederate men." Still, despite Mitchell's suggestion, many women in North Carolina were able to speak and act so boldly without repercussion primarily because they were women, even if they were enemies. Union social values—rooted in the Victorian ideals of women as innately pious, submissive, fragile, and inferior to males—still found women to be non-threatening and ultimately not representing a potentially violent force,

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<sup>61</sup> I.N. Roberts to Ebenezer Hunt, May 24, 1862 (first quotation), July 19, 1862 (second quotation), Hunt Papers; William Amerman to "Cousin Aletta," June 30, 1862, William P. Amerman Papers, Norwich Civil War Round Table, USAMHI (third quotation).

regardless of what came out of their mouths. Similar words uttered from the mouths of men, however, would not be so benignly tolerated.<sup>62</sup>

Union authorities also demonstrated that they would not tolerate attacks that were anything other than verbal. On June 24, when a New Bern woman stood on her front porch, took out a revolver, and fired into a crowded street, killing one person, “the guard immediately arrested every person in the house and carried them to jail.” Again, Union men arrested not just the trigger-woman, but the other males in the house as well, holding them ultimately accountable for the actions of anyone in the household. The next day a soldier wrote home of another developing pastime in New Bern, “the citizens have commenced the game of firing on the sentries from houses in the night.”<sup>63</sup>

The “game” took a dangerous turn on the night of July 25, when a soldier from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts Regiment was seriously wounded while on night patrol in one of New Bern’s districts, which was “infested with suspicious persons.” In swift response, General John G. Foster, commanding the Union forces in North Carolina, ordered the regiment to destroy the house from which the shot emanated, as well as four houses nearby and all surrounding outbuildings. The six residents of the suspected house were arrested, despite their plaintive protestations of innocence. That afternoon the regiment “leveled” the house until “it was prostate [sic] finally amidst the loud cheers of soldiers, darkies, and some of the citizens.” Foster

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<sup>62</sup> Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 100. Men were not allowed such leniency. When Haney Smith cursed a guard, he was thrown in jail immediately. Mrs. Haney Smith to Gen. John G. Foster, September 3, 1862, Box 1, Part 1, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393.

<sup>63</sup> Frederick Osborne to “Dear mother,” June 25, 1862 (first quotation), and July 25, 1862 (second quotation), in Frank B. Marcotte, ed., *Private Osborne, Massachusetts 23rd Volunteers: Burnside Expedition, Roanoke Island, Second Front Against Richmond* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1999), 85, 92.

further warned the gathered crowd of citizens that he would “make a camp ground of the whole City if they don't stop shooting his men.”<sup>64</sup>

Despite such reprisals, some locals continued to take potshots at sentries in August and September. One New Bern woman lamented the actions, claiming that “Some of our people are acting very impudently, in the suburbs of the town they have been shooting at the guards placed at the corners for the protection of the place.” After witnessing Foster’s retaliation in July, she wrote on August 21, “would you believe it two nights ago, a guard was shot at again.” When Union doctors in Portsmouth, in Carteret County, suspected the few inhabitants there of plotting to capture the hospital, they sent out soldiers to confiscate all the guns from people who were not known Union men. Such efforts indicate that although they hoped to cultivate a harmonious feeling among the citizens in the region, whom they perceived as latent Unionists, Union authorities would impose order in the occupied zone through use of military force if necessary.<sup>65</sup>

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Federal authorities tried mightily to impose order and foster a harmonious restoration in other, more palatable, ways than using military force. To help bring North Carolina back into the Union, Lincoln appointed a Craven County native, Edward Stanly, as Military Governor of the state in May 1862. Stanly, who had been a Whig representative in Congress in the late 1840s and early 1850s for the region, had moved to California and returned when summoned by President Lincoln. Stanly’s appointment heartened some local residents. Caroline Howard, a resident of New Bern, wrote to a relative in August 1862 that Stanly “is a really blessing to the

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<sup>64</sup> Herbert E. Valentine, *Story of Co. F, 23d Massachusetts Volunteers in the War for the Union, 1861-1865* (Boston: W.B. Clarke & Co., 1896), 61-62 (first quotation on p. 61); James Edward Glazier to “Dear Parents,” August 1, 1862, James Edward Glazier Papers (Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA) (second and third quotations); Entry dated July 26, 1862, Dexter B. Ladd Papers, Civil War Miscellany Collection, USAMHI (fourth quotation).

<sup>65</sup> Caroline Howard to “Cousin Harvey,” August 21, 1862, Harvey Stanley Papers, SHC (first and second quotations); Dr. Hall Curtis to Gen. Foster, [September 9, 1862], Box 1, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (Portsmouth plot).

citizens here, he has it in his power to protect, and defend them.” She proclaimed, “God has sent him for the sake of these poor suffering people.” Charged with helping reconstitute local self-government and reassuring the local population of the national government’s limited and benevolent war aims of restoring the Union, Stanly, with the supposed cooperation of Burnside and the army, attempted to carry out Lincoln’s broad, if amorphous and ill-defined, orders. Stanly had been given orders to enforce antebellum state laws, and being a native of the region, he took these orders seriously, especially the ones that pertained to maintaining racial control in the region.<sup>66</sup>

Stanly arrived in New Bern on May 26, 1862, “amid the most drenching rainstorm.” The tempest was a fitting portent of his turbulent administration in the region. Stanly discovered to his surprise that Burnside had been employing escaped slaves—even paying them wages of \$8 a month, plus rations and clothing—and allowing blacks to attend school under the supervision of a northern missionary, Vincent Colyer. Officially appointed Superintendent of the Poor, Colyer had come to New Bern in early April from Washington, D.C. where he had worked in hospitals under the auspices of the YMCA. In New Bern, Colyer immediately set up a day school of white children, but more radically, two evening schools for blacks, which were soon “full to overflowing.” One approving Union soldier remarked, “how joyful that a brighter day is dawning upon this down trodden race.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Edwin M. Stanton to Ambrose Burnside, May 20, 1862, *Official Records, Army*, ser. 1, 9: 391 (Stanly’s appointment); *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v. “Stanly, Edward”; Caroline Howard to “Cousin Harvey,” August 21, 1862, Stanley Papers (quotations).

<sup>67</sup> Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, May 27, 1862, Larned Papers (first quotation); Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy toward the Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1973), 30 (Burnside paying slaves); Special Order No. 65, March 30, 1862, Part I, General Records, Correspondence, General and Special Orders, Departments of North Carolina and Virginia, 1861-1865, RG 393 (Colyer’s appointment); Norman D. Brown, *Edward Stanly: Whiggery's Tarheel "Conqueror"* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1974), 207 (Colyer’s background); Charles Duren to “mother and father,” May 2, 1862, Duren Papers, EU.

There was no joy in such practices to traditionalists like Stanly who simply wanted to enforce the antebellum status quo. North Carolina laws expressly forbade teaching blacks to read. Stanly, who sympathized with local slaveowners but opposed secession, shared with James Rumley that “he deeply lament[ed] the bad effects of the war upon our slave population.” Though Burnside initially informed the Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that his views and Stanly’s were “remarkably coincident,” Stanly found some of Burnside’s arrangements for the fugitives too radical for his tastes. The governor insisted that Vincent Colyer shut down the school for freedmen. While some of the 800 freedmen who had been attending the school “cried as if their hearts would break,” Colyer stormed off and reported his injustice to Washington. The action angered many Union soldiers, and prompted Burnside to diplomatically retract his early statement of complete agreement with Stanly’s view, and instead assure Stanton that he would enforce Stanly’s dictums regardless of how unpopular they may be with his own troops.<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, when slaves escaped into Union lines, Stanly, invoking North Carolina laws, deemed them fugitive slaves and subject to be returned to their owners as soon as the latter took the oath of allegiance. Local residents had reason to believe slave property would not be bothered. As noted earlier, Burnside had issued a Proclamation vowing not to interfere with North Carolina laws, institutions, or property, on February 16, 1862, shortly after Union forces captured Roanoke Island. The New Bern *Daily Progress*, now run by Union soldiers, declared explicitly on March 26: “We are not fighting for the perpetuation or annihilation of the peculiar institution of the South. We propose to let the people of the South manage their Negro question as seems best to them.” This was just what local white citizens wanted. The paper further

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<sup>68</sup> Entry dated June 7, 1862, Rumley Diary (first quotation); Ambrose Burnside to Edwin Stanton, May 28 (second quotation), May 30, 1862 (enforcing dictums), *Official Records*, Ser. 1, 9: 393-394, 396; Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, May 28, 1862, Larned Papers (second quotation). For more about closing the school, see Maxine D. Jones, “‘A Glorious Work’: The American Missionary Association and Black North Carolinians, 1863-1880,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1982), 29-30.

assured residents that the Federal government “shall not make war upon the peculiar institutions or reserved rights of a class, but shall adhere to all constitutional requirements under which our nation had thrived so long and happily.” The practice, however, proved much more complicated than the theory.<sup>69</sup>

In the first test of the law, a local farmer named Nicholas Bray visited Stanly’s headquarters in New Bern on May 30, 1862, less than a week after the governor took office, and claimed that a “rude” northern soldier had taken his four slaves against their will. Stanly insisted that Bray first take the oath of allegiance, which he did. Then, suggesting the owner “use mildness and persuasion,” Stanly granted Bray permission to search for and retrieve his slaves; one female slave, according to Stanly, “voluntarily returned” to her “kind master.” However, northern soldiers reacted against Stanly’s orders, and confronted the Brays that night. A Union soldier readily acknowledged, “A party of our men had made them a visit... held a pistol at the head of Bray and his wife—put the girl into a carriage and left—One of his houses was burned down and the fence of his own on fire.” Burnside’s personal secretary corroborated the story, and offered advice to the distraught Mrs. Bray: “We have promised to place a guard at her house, but advised her to let her slave remain where she is. I think they will soon find out that the best way is to let their slaves be where they are.” Powerless to command the army, Stanly also advised the Brays to give up their quest. Stanly’s impotence in the matter only emboldened some Massachusetts soldiers further, as one related, “so this kidnapping game has been played out in a brief and summary manner—It will soon be attempted again—the feeling is deep and bitter among the soldiers and many of the officers.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ambrose Burnside, “Proclamation to the People of North Carolina,” February 16, 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, 9: 363-364; New Bern *Daily Progress*, March 26, 1862 (quotations). See also Harris, *With Charity for All*, 62.

<sup>70</sup> Edward Stanly to Edwin Stanton, June 12, 1862, *Official Records*, Series 1, 9: 400-401 (first, second, third, and fourth quotations); R.R. Clarke to Dr. J.G. Metcalf, June 5, 1862, Box 3, Folder 5, Civil War Collection, AAS (fifth

To native residents, such actions by northern soldiers, though contrary to formal Federal policy at that time, only foreshadowed much more ominous initiatives in regards to African Americans. Stanly had justified his actions by saying that he was trying to prove to loyal citizens that the Union army was not there to destroy their property and rights. When chastised by Stanton for his actions, Stanly testily replied, “what are the ‘constitutional rights and privileges’ of the loyal inhabitants of this State? If their property is destroyed or removed before peace is restored, what ‘rights and privileges’ are they to expect!” Stanly embodied the beliefs of many local Unionists in the region, and throughout the South. He had opposed secession, not the institution of slavery; he had supported the Union, not abolition; he wanted a united nation again, not anything resembling social equality between the races. Stanly presciently warned Lincoln’s administration on May 31, 1862, that unless he could give North Carolinians “some assurance that this is a war of restoration and not of abolition and destruction, no peace can be restored here for many years to come.”<sup>71</sup>

However, events in the summer and fall of 1862 would alter Union war goals, as the war slowly progressed from one of simply restoration, to one of emancipation. When Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, five days after the bitter struggle at Antietam, the war had ostensibly become a war for freedom for all men. But, more significantly, what Lincoln’s Proclamation meant for whites in occupied Carteret and Craven was that social equality, race-mixing, and black empowerment had become officially sanctioned Federal policies. While African Americans immediately took advantage of both Union protection and the promise of emancipation to seek autonomy in their own lives, local whites resisted this radical transformation of their social and cultural lives. Those, like James Rumley,

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and seventh quotations); Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, May 28, 1862, Larned Papers (sixth quotation). For more on the Bray incident, see Brown, *Edward Stanly*, 208-214.

<sup>71</sup> Edward Stanly to Edwin Stanton, June 12, 1862, *Official Records*, Series 1, 9:400-401.

who already disdained Union occupation, simply saw a fulfillment to their dire prophecies. However, even those who had embraced the arrival of Union forces, like Joel Henry Davis, found reason to equivocate in their feelings. The tensions and conflicts that would ensue began to change local white attitudes toward both their present Union occupiers, and the nation to which they were trying to return.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### “VISIONS OF FREEDOM AND CIVILIZATION OPENING BEFORE THEM”: AFRICAN AMERICANS SEARCH FOR AUTONOMY DURING OCCUPATION

Wednesday, January 14, 1863, found Beaufort, North Carolina, still drying from a recent tempest, and getting colder by the hour. The weather had not been the only turbulent event that week. Captain William B. Fowle, Jr., Beaufort's Provost Marshal, sat down that morning to write a letter to his superior officer relating an event that had occurred just a few days earlier, when an African American woman had encountered two prominent Unionists, Joel Henry Davis and Henry Rieger. Fowle wrote:

“Mr. Davis and Mr. Rieger together tied the woman to a tree her arms over her head and then whipped her severely, the flesh on her arms where the ropes went was badly lacerated and her arms covered with blood when I saw her—She was only released upon the peremptory order of a private of the 9<sup>th</sup> N. Jersey, who says the treatment was very cruel—Her crime was that she demanded her daughter whom Mr. Davis retained in slavery; she is a smart intelligent woman and quite able to support herself and children.”<sup>1</sup>

This story illustrates one of the ways in which African Americans asserted their independence—and the violent reactions such assertions could cause—in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation in occupied Carteret and Craven counties. Many slaves felt emboldened by the Proclamation as a direct acknowledgment of their right to freedom, and as a consequence, their right to assert themselves. Perhaps it was under such influences that on a

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<sup>1</sup> William B. Fowle, Jr. to Major Southard Hoffman, January 14, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter cited as RG 393). Weather conditions reported in John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, January 11, 16, 1863, in Judkin Browning and Michael Thomas Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist: John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, 1862-1865*, (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 2001), 80-83. Joel Henry Davis and Henry Rieger were prosperous merchants in Beaufort. North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 175, 176-L, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.).

brisk, early January 1863 day this African American woman sought out Davis, a man she knew well, to insist that her daughter be released from servitude, provoking the incident that Fowle described.

William B. Fowle, Jr. was Beaufort's inexperienced Provost Marshal. As a captain of a company of nine-month Massachusetts Militia Volunteers, Fowle had only been in the service for a little over three months. His company arrived in November 1862, when it was thrust into a complicated matrix of allegiances. When encountering Davis's action, Fowle admitted his uncertainty and informed Davis "that the matter was one which I did not understand and about which I should be obliged to ask advice at Headquarters." As the town's military chief of police, Fowle would have been in charge of arresting those who broke the law, and beating a free citizen was certainly a criminal offense. But he did not arrest Davis immediately, probably because he knew that Davis was one of the foremost Unionists in the region.<sup>2</sup>

The woman's ability to support herself and her assertion of her independence probably rankled the former slaveholder Davis as much as any Federal policy. In southern society, whites believed a black person's proper role, especially a woman's, was as a dependent. Independence and autonomy granted blacks a new psychological footing, and if allowed to go unchecked, such black assertions could lead to a genuine belief in social equality. The woman's demand challenged Davis's traditional social authority. For financial reasons, Davis had embraced Union occupation, but he would not tolerate black expectations to equal rights. Davis's violent attack was his own personal, physical attempt to stem the tide of racial equality that the Federal government seemed to be ushering into the region. His action served a dual symbolic and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid (quotation). William B. Fowle, Jr. was Captain of Company C, 43<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts Militia Volunteers. His unit mustered in on September 22, 1862 and mustered out on July 30, 1863. See Janet B. Hewett et al, eds., *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (100 vols.; Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1994-2001), Part II, Vol. 29: 378-380.

political purpose. By physically scarring her body, Davis sent a visual warning to other blacks not to challenge their former masters. To fellow whites whose allegiance may be suspect, Davis's message revealed that though he had accepted Union occupation, he would not accept racial equality. To be a Unionist did not mean one forsook white superiority.<sup>3</sup>

Many scholars have written on those tensions inherent in the creation of a new order that began when Union soldiers arrived in southern communities. However, most scholarly works have been concerned with how Union agents proscribed black freedom and autonomy, or as Stephen Ash concluded, how "the Union army decreed an end to black bondage but staked out certain limits to black liberty." Even Willie Lee Rose, in *Rehearsal for Reconstruction* (1964), the first major exploration of a black community during wartime occupation, focused much more on the role played by anti-slavery men and women—particularly the idealistic abolitionists of "Gideon's Band" and the often unscrupulous Union army officers—than the slaves who gained their freedom in the region. Though scholars make the perfunctory assertions that blacks forced the administration's hand in terms of liberalizing its policy, they generally focus on the role whites played in the black emancipation experience.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the use of the violent physical demonstrations against the body to send political messages, see Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Sarah E. Chinn, "Theorizing the body as evidence," in Chinn, *Technology and the Logic of American Racism: A Cultural History of the Body as Evidence* (London: Continuum, 2000), 1-23.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict & Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 153 (quotation); Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999; originally pub., 1964). For works that deal with aspects of occupation, see also, Stephen V. Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Gerald M. Capers, *Occupied City: New Orleans under the Federals, 1862-1865* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1965); Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1973); Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Michael Fellman, *Citizen Sherman: A Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 1995), esp. pp. 136-170; Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Peter Maslowski, *Treason Must be Made Odious: Military Occupation and Wartime Reconstruction in Nashville, Tennessee* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1978); Daniel E. Sutherland, *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community, 1861-1865* (New York: The Free Press, 1995). For works that grant blacks more agency in their

This chapter offers a different perspective—focusing not on Union authorities, but on blacks as savvy pragmatists who utilized the Union army and agents of northern benevolent societies to attain the four pillars of their empowerment: escape, employment, enlistment, and education. While whites certainly figure prominently in this story—as they were integrally involved with the black experience and much evidence of black actions come from white sources—blacks are the leading actors in this drama. Freedmen were remarkably successful at achieving their empowerment goals during wartime occupation, and hoped that that success would lead to greater opportunities for independence and autonomy once the war ended. In this, they were frustrated. Once the war ended, the Federal government withdrew its wartime level of support, reneged on promises, and allowed former Confederates to regain control of their abandoned lands. Yet, this should not diminish the story of the black struggle for autonomy under Union occupation. Blacks gained much success in those years of the war when they were able to assert their independence, confident in the support of the Federal government.<sup>5</sup>

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emancipation experience, see Ira Berlin, *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992); Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981); Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Though much has been written about each of these themes, scholars tend to focus on them in isolation, rather than as an integral whole. For works on slave escapes, see Loren Schweninger and John Hope Franklin, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For works on black employment, see Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy toward the Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973); Julia Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Much scholarly literature deals with black enlistment and efforts at education. For more on black enlistment, see Ira Berlin, ed., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867; Series II: The Black Military Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Dudley T. Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1956); Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: Macmillan, 1990); John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Keith P. Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom: The Camp Life of Black Soldiers during the Civil War* (Kent, Oh.: Kent State University Press, 2002).; For more on black education, see Ronald E. Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); Patricia C. Click, *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

The Carteret-Craven County region offers a unique lens through which to examine these black efforts at independence and autonomy. The port cities of Beaufort and especially New Bern served as Union military bases, and destinations for thousands of escaped slaves. In addition, unlike the situation that Willie Lee Rose explored in South Carolina's Sea Islands, many local whites remained in the Carteret-Craven region after Union forces occupied it. Therefore, freedom-seeking slaves had to interact with local whites, as well as Union soldiers and benevolent society members. An examination of this region not only allows for greater understanding of the black search for autonomy in North Carolina, but also fills an important void left by Stephen Ash in his otherwise excellent exploration of military occupation in the South—it allows the reader to see how African Americans reacted “when the Yankees came.”<sup>6</sup>

Hoping to escape war's uncertainty and take advantage of new economic opportunities while simultaneously maintaining the social status quo, many local whites forsook the Confederacy and pledged their allegiance to the Union—some more equivocally than others. But the most unequivocal demonstration of loyalty came from African Americans who flocked to the region to take advantage of the opportunities presented by wartime occupation. While local whites, even Unionists like Davis, were simply trying to preserve the antebellum status quo, the war had taken a radical turn; the Emancipation Proclamation was the culmination of white fears. Repudiating their slave heritage, African Americans sought personal autonomy—control over their own bodies, minds, and material conditions—and asserted their independence, especially among their former masters.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Though Ash briefly discusses slave reactions in several places as a secondary issue, the chapter that analyzes the black experience most thoroughly is more concerned with white reaction to black assertions, and is appropriately subtitled, “The Struggle against Black Freedom.” See Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, chap. 5.

<sup>7</sup> For a further exploration of white reactions to military occupation in this region, see Judkin Browning, “Removing the Mask of Nationality: Unionism, Racism, and Federal Military Occupation in North Carolina, 1862-1865,” *Journal of Southern History* 71 (August 2005): 1-32.

Embittered local whites placed all the blame for such radical black actions on the Union soldiers and Federal government. Local slaveholders declared, like most southern planters, that their slaves were content within the confines of the peculiar institution, and did not desire independence. James Rumley was convinced that slaves “would have but little of this feeling if let alone.” Rumley conveniently ignored reality, however. For as he and other slaveowners knew well, African Americans had been trying to ameliorate their hardships and establish some sort of self-control over their lives for decades before the Union soldiers arrived.<sup>8</sup>

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Individually and collectively, slaves in eastern North Carolina sought to maximize their autonomy in a variety of ways—at home and at work, inside as well as outside the accepted parameters of slavery. Within the home, the dogged attachment to family, despite repeated threats to its existence, revealed the powerful desire slaves had for maintaining some degree of social stability in their lives. Thomas Jones and his wife, Lucilla, had three children together. In his autobiography, Thomas recounted, “Lucilla and I were never tired of planning to improve their condition, as far as might be done for slaves.” The family was soon dissolved when his wife’s master moved away with Lucilla and the children; Thomas never saw them again.

William Henry Singleton, a Craven County slave who experienced similar treatment, recounted

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<sup>8</sup> Entry dated March 25, 1863, James Rumley Diary, Levi Woodbury Pigott Collection (North Carolina State Archives, Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; hereinafter cited as NCSA). Though slaves developed their own methods of dealing with harsh economic and political subordination, they were unable to operate completely free from white control. Southern slaves, in contrast to bondsmen in other slave societies (notably the West Indies), lived in constant contact with their white masters. In fact, in Carteret and Craven County, the vast majority of slaves lived in households containing 5 or fewer slaves. They could not simply establish a new life apart from whites. US. Census, 1860, Carteret and Craven Counties, North Carolina, Slave Schedules. For more on the development and strength of slave communities, see John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (Rev. ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: the Making of the Black Community* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972); Paul D. Escott, *Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Charles W. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984). For more on black and white interaction, see Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). For a good synthesis of scholarly works on slavery, see Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877* (Revised Edition; New York: Hill and Wang, 2003).

how much distress masters caused slaves when they separated families, because, as Singleton noted, “the slaves were as fond of their children as the white folks.” As historian Peter Kolchin asserts, “Slave families thus reflected simultaneously both the determined efforts of their members to achieve a measure of autonomy and the fragility of that autonomy.” Yet, slaves were remarkably resilient, and continued to seek the stability and comfort of a family life. Thomas Jones married again, and through hard work and diligent effort he purchased his own freedom and that of his second wife, to insure that his family could never again be torn asunder by man.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to maintaining a domestic family life, slaves sought to carve out a cultural space for themselves that was not dominated by working in the fields. They clandestinely nourished social ties within the black community, often traveling away from their home grounds at night, while keeping a vigilant eye out for the slave patrols. Slaves also engaged in an active, often illicit “internal economy”—trading or bartering goods with each other and lower class whites. Blacks did more than just exchange items of economic value with these whites; they often worked, drank, and slept with them as well. William Henry Singleton explained that local masters feared that poor whites “might teach us to read or might give us some information about what the North was trying to do.” Poor whites also would occasionally aid escaping slaves, if the whites could derive personal benefit from it. When William Kinnegay ran away from his

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<sup>9</sup> *The Experience of Reverend Thomas H. Jones, Who Was a Slave for Forty-three Years*, written by a friend (New Bedford: E. Anthony & Sons, Printers, 1885), in William L. Andrews, general editor, *North Carolina Slave Narratives: The Lives of Moses Roper, Lunsford Lane, Moses Grandy & Thomas H. Jones*, edited by David A. Davis, Tampathia Evans, Ian Frederick Finseth, and Andrea N. Williams (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 230 (first quotation), 232 (Jones remarried); William Henry Singleton, *Recollections of my Slavery Days*, edited and annotated by Katherine Mellen Charron and David S. Cecelski (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1999), 34 (second quotation); Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 143 (third quotation).

master in 1857, he concealed himself in the swamps south of New Bern and killed and dressed hogs for nearby whites in exchange for survival supplies.<sup>10</sup>

Escape from the confining nature of slavery represented the most direct way of asserting one's independence. Antebellum North Carolina newspapers were filled with hundreds of advertisements for runaway slaves, especially in the coastal region, where access to waterborne travel allowed abundant opportunities for escape to the North. New Bern, with its heightened commercial activity, was a prime location to gain transport to freedom. One Carteret County master predicted the course of his escaped twenty-five year old slave: "it is supposed he will make for Newbern, where he was taken up at lately, but was secreted for some time before, and has said since that he had like to have passed away from thence in some vessel." David L. Jones of northern Craven County claimed that his slave, Shadrach, "took passage in some boat for Newbern, no doubt he will try to get north in some vessel." Another master declared that his slave, Wiley, "is about Washington, Wilmington or Newbern, attempting to get away—for it has been frequently a theme of conversation with him, when he has named these places." Slaves believed that stowing away on a northward bound vessel at New Bern was the quickest and most logical form of escape—rather than trying to flee to northern states overland. Some escaping slaves found unusual allies in their efforts. David Cecelski discovered that in 1838, "the son of a local slaveholder regularly concealed slaves in timber vessels bound for Philadelphia." Most

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<sup>10</sup> Charron and Cecelski, eds., *Recollections of my Slavery Days*, 43 (quotation); David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 131 (William Kinnegay story). For works on the slave family, see Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976); Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). For more works on the slaves internal economy, see Timothy James Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the eighteenth century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998); Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in South Carolina, 1740-1790* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinkfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). For more on slaves who hid in the swamps, see Hugo Prosper Learning, *Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995).



slaves, however, could not rely on clever white elites willing to aid them, but their own familiarity with water routes, and knowledge of sailing and boat schedules undoubtedly prompted many to take their chances on escape.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, a surprising number of slaves did not seek to abandon their home district. Kinship proved to be the tie that bound many runaway slaves to the Carteret-Craven region.

Advertisements often repeated variations on the same theme, such as one Craven County master's notice for his slave who he believed was probably bound for New Bern, "at which place I think it most likely he will harbour, as the most of his family connections are there." Similarly, Bate, a 22-year old slave of Beaufort physician James Manney, fled in 1828. Manney had a strong hunch where he went: "He has a wife in Newbern—was formerly owned there, and is probably lurking about the Town." When slaves escaped, they had to be wary of both slave patrols and black informants, such as Brister, a slave barber in New Bern who not only helped his free black master, John C. Stanly, catch his own runaways, but also served as a useful spy for other local slave owners. Escaped slaves, tried to avoid these potential captors and sought to remain near their relatives, who provided the necessary support system to maintain them while on the lam.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *North Carolina Gazette* [New Bern], June 14, 1794, p. 9 (first quotation); *Newbern Spectator and Literary Journal*, August 8, 1840, p. 796 (second quotation); *Newbern Spectator and Literary Journal*, April 18, 1834, p. 780 (third quotation), all in Freddie L. Parker, ed., *Stealing a Little Freedom: Advertisements for Slave Runaways in North Carolina, 1791-1840* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1994); Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*, 135-136 (fourth quotation).

<sup>12</sup> *Carolina Federal Republican* [New Bern], August 24, 1816, p. 525 (first quotation); *Carolina Centinel* [New Bern], April 19, 1828, p. 654 (second quotation), all in Parker, ed., *Stealing a Little Freedom*; Schweninger and Franklin, *Runaway Slaves*, 166, 200 (Brister story). As Franklin and Schweninger have noted, "The most common form of absconding was not actually running away at all, but what might be termed 'truancy,' 'absenteeism,' and in some cases, 'lying out.'" Slaves would disappear from anywhere for a few hours to a few days, to avoid work, visit family, or in some cases, try to gain concessions from their owners. Indeed, most masters usually ignored the common form of absenteeism, acknowledging that their slaves were moving clandestinely in the local area. Franklin and Schweninger note, "most planters felt it better to keep such matters quiet unless they felt such movements posed a threat." Therefore, slave advertisements reveal only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to recording slaves absconding from their masters. Schweninger and Franklin, *Runaway Slaves*, 98-109.

Some runaway slaves told of remaining near family for many years. “Nights I came back to my mother’s house and to the cellar and very early in the morning before the sun was up I would go to the woods and watch the men go to their work,” William Henry Singleton wrote. “I would stay in the woods all day and then come back at night.” Similarly, Harriet Jacobs, a slave from coastal Chowan County escaped from slavery only to hide for seven long years in the attic of the house of her free black grandmother, before finally deciding to flee north. These slaves chose to flee slavery, but could not completely discard all the positive relationships at home. What was the value of freedom if one had to abandon family, community, and all the social networks one had established?<sup>13</sup>

Though running away might be the ultimate method of asserting one’s autonomy, many other slaves sought to ameliorate their lives within the institution of slavery through acceptable practices—most often in the employment of a trade. The ability to “hire out” imbued skilled slaves with a greater sense of autonomy and independence than field hands, for they could control their time, occupation, and often their income, as well as utilize their earnings to improve their family’s standard of living through the purchase of goods. In Beaufort John Pender and Henry Mathewson, slaves of the prosperous merchant and Confederate captain Josiah Pender, were carpenters who maintained a limited degree of independence through the practice of their trade. John remembered that his master “allowed us to make our own contracts and buy such tools as we needed.” Mathewson recalled that the two carpenters had a limited degree of control over their income: “I was a slave but having a trade my master allowed me part of my wages with which I bought part of the tools.” John Pender achieved such a level of autonomy that he even purchased land from his master, which he used to establish his family’s homestead during

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<sup>13</sup> Charron and Cecelski, eds., *Recollections of my Slavery Days*, 39 (first and second quotations); Linda Brent [Harriet Jacobs], *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: An Authentic Historical Narrative describing the horrors of slavery as experienced by black women* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1973), 117-160 (hiding in attic).

and after slavery. “I am on land bought from him while I was a slave for which I have his deed, which is recorded in the Register's Office, Carteret County,” explained Pender to skeptical Federal agents after the war. He defiantly continued to assert his earned independence from his former master, “I am not in his debt.”<sup>14</sup>

Many slave boatmen shared Pender’s sense of independence. As David Cecelski has argued, few occupations allowed slaves more freedom than those that required work on the water, for “the nature of their labors meant they could not be supervised closely, if at all, for days or even weeks.” Not only did they have a larger degree of personal freedom than most slaves, but also they disseminated antislavery talk among the local slaves. “No pattern emerged more forcefully than that of black watermen serving as key agents of antislavery thought and militant resistance to slavery,” argues Cecelski. They traveled widely, traded information with slaves and free blacks from all over the Atlantic region, and “dealt with seamen who connected them to the revolutionary politics that coursed the black Atlantic.” Though not all slaves had opportunities to meet people outside their own geographic region, few were ignorant of the wider world around them.<sup>15</sup>

While many slaves sought to carve out cultural space within the confines of slavery, through escape or employment, nearly all slaves viewed education as one crucial determinant of their personal autonomy. As historian Janet D. Cornelius has affirmed, “For enslaved African Americans, literacy was more than a path to individual freedom—it was a communal act, a political demonstration of resistance to oppression and of self-determination for the black community.” Whites, of course, feared the implications of education for slaves. North Carolina

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<sup>14</sup> Testimony of claimant John Pender, Claim 1667, (first, third, and fourth quotations), Testimony of claimant Henry Mathewson, Claim 1667, (second quotation), Carteret County, North Carolina, Records of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Disallowed Claims, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as RG 233.

<sup>15</sup> Cecelski, *Waterman’s Song*, xvi.

slave testimony recorded during the Works Progress Administration (WPA) interviews of the 1930s reveals the taboo whites placed on black education. “You better not be found trying to learn to read,” recalled Hannah Crasson. “Our marster was harder down on that than anything else.” Patsy Michner confirmed, “You better not be caught with no paper in your hand; if you was, you got the cowhide.”<sup>16</sup>

Supporting testimony also came from more contemporary informants than octogenarian freedmen trying to remember their childhood. Horace James, a Union chaplain, heard slaves decry their masters’ restrictions: “if any of them saw us with a spelling-book trying to learn to read, they would take it away from us and punish us.” Autobiographer William Henry Singleton recounted how his master “whipped me very severely,” just for opening a book. Even a hint of a slave seeking some reading knowledge would bring instant retribution from concerned masters. Nonetheless, many slaves still sought education because of its empowering virtues. As one clandestinely educated slave noted, “I felt at night, as I went to my rest, that I was really beginning to be a *man*, preparing myself for a condition in life better and higher and happier than could belong to the ignorant *slave*.”<sup>17</sup>

Many slaves sought, primarily through surreptitious means, to acquire some degree of education. These efforts were surprisingly successful. Historians have suggested that between 5 and 10 percent of southern slaves had at least some rudimentary degree of literacy by 1860. Union soldiers confirm these suspicions in the New Bern-Beaufort region. Henry Clapp, a

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<sup>16</sup> Janet Duitsman Cornelius, “*When I Can Read My Title Clear*”: *Literacy, Slavery and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 3 (first quotation); Slave Narrative of Hannah Crasson, p. 18 (second and third quotations), Slave Narrative of Patsy Michner, p. 77 (fourth quotation), all in Belinda Hurmence, ed., *My Folks Don’t Want Me to Talk about Slavery: Twenty-one Oral Histories of former North Carolina Slaves* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: Blair, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> Horace James to “My Dear Friends,” May 25, 1863, Horace James Correspondence (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester Mass.; hereinafter cited as AAS) (first quotation); Charron and Cecelski, eds., *Recollections of My Slavery Days*, 41 (second quotation); *The Experience of Reverend Thomas H. Jones*, in Andrews, ed., *North Carolina Slave Narratives*, 220-221 (third quotation).

Massachusetts soldier who would be part of the occupying force in New Bern in 1863, wrote: “I should say that about one in fifteen of the men, women, and children could read. We find that many learned or began to learn before they were freed by our army—taking their instruction mostly ‘on the sly’ and indeed in the face of considerable danger.” Whether “on the sly” or through acceptable methods, North Carolina slaves, including those in the coastal region, sought autonomy and self-control over their own lives as much as possible throughout slavery. When Union soldiers began arriving in the spring of 1862, African Americans in the region recognized that they had been presented a golden opportunity to throw off the chains of slavery and embrace the independence they had long desired.<sup>18</sup>

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When Union soldiers landed south of New Bern on March 13, 1862, they immediately encountered welcoming slaves, most of whom, as one officer remarked were “laughing and so glad to see us.” One Union soldier noted that as they marched from the boats, “a few Negroes with the liveliest joy depicted on their countenances greeted our approach.” Some were more serious, recognizing the consequences of the soldiers’ arrival. One slave woman, “her eyes shining like black diamonds,” encouraged the Federal soldiers to defeat the Rebels, defiantly commanding, “you Bomb ‘un out.” A Union officer summed up the emotions in the county when he wrote, “The slaves alone seemed rejoiced at our coming, and looked upon our victorious banners as signs of their approaching millennium.” As their masters fled, slaves felt immediate relief from the institution of slavery, and thanked the Federal forces for their release. As one slave told a Union soldier three weeks after the battle of New Bern, “it seemed like

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<sup>18</sup> Henry A. Clapp to mother, March 14, 1863, in John R. Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle: The North Carolina Service of Pvt. Henry A. Clapp, Company F, Forty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, 1862-1863* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1998), 150 (quotation). W.E.B. DuBois suggested that about 5 percent of slaves learned to read, while Genovese believes it may be even higher. See Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 563.

Christmas to him,” for “it was the most rest that he had seen in all his life.” One Massachusetts soldier recounted after the war that slavery had “died a natural death wherever the stars and stripes were unfolded, and the moment we entered New Berne, the overjoyed slaves considered themselves free, and they were wildly free!” In fact, he claimed, “It required some days, and not a little severe discipline, to teach them how to enjoy and not abuse freedom.”<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, after taking control of something as intangible as their own personal liberty, slaves turned their attention to taking more tangible items that had been so long denied them—such as their masters’ property. In New Bern, General Burnside informed Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, “nine tenths of the depredations on the 14<sup>th</sup>, after the enemy and citizens had fled from the town, were committed by the Negroes, before our troops entered the city.” The efficiency of looting by local blacks impressed Union soldiers, who displayed remarkable skill themselves in plundering. A Massachusetts soldier noted, “the Negroes take the advantage [and] became Masters of their Masters[’] Houses and things and went in for spoils and things had to fly.” “I have no doubt that tens of thousands of dollars’ worth of silks, laces, books, silver, etc., was sent home by soldiers,” Union officer William Draper admitted, but he affirmed, “while from the style in which the negroes dressed afterwards it was evident that they did not suffer in the distribution of clothing, at least.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Daniel Read Larned to Sister, March 18, 1862, Box 1, Daniel Read Larned Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as LOC) (first quotation); Entry for March 13, 1862, Henry White Diary, AAS (second, third, and fourth quotations); Colonel Heckman to Governor Olden, March 15, 1862, in J. Madison Drake, *The History of the Ninth New Jersey Veteran Vols., A Record of Its Service from Sept. 13th, 1861, to July 12th, 1865* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Journal Printing House, 1889), 65-66 (fifth quotation); “Extracts from letters,” April 9, 1862, William L. Norton Papers (Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, CT) (sixth and seventh quotations); J. Waldo Denny, *Wearing the Blue in the Twenty-Fifth Mass. Volunteer Infantry, with Burnside's Coast Division, 18th Army Corps, and Army of the James* (Worcester: Putnam & Davis, Publishers, 1879), 104 (eighth and ninth quotations).

<sup>20</sup> Ambrose Burnside to Edwin Stanton, March 21, 1862, Vol. 9, Union Battle Reports, ser. 729, War Records Office, RG 94, quoted in Ira Berlin et al, eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation; Series I, The Destruction of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1: 80-81 (first quotation); James Drennan to wife, March 15, 1862, James M. Drennan Papers (Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Mass.) (second

In Beaufort, while Federal officers commandeered the comfortable home of the temporarily absent merchant, Edmund H. Norcom, angry local resident James Rumley noted, “the kitchen and backyard [had] become a perfect den of thieving runaway Negroes,” who “had free access to every part of the building.” Some blacks took practical items from the houses of Norcom and Benjamin Leecraft, the absent commander of a Beaufort Artillery Company, such as food, beds, and furniture and “even the dresses of Mr. Leecraft’s deceased wife and child.” Other liberties were more symbolic than practical. A Massachusetts soldier reported that in New Bern blacks “stole everything they could get hold of—some of the colored ladies now wear some very fine silk dresses—and seem to feel above the rest of man or woman kind.” In Beaufort, Rumley raged, “A big buck Negro was lately seen seated in the parlor, thumming on Mrs. Norcom’s piano.” Perhaps more galling to Rumley’s sensibilities as a patriarch and protector of the purity of white women was his comment that “even her bridal dress has been worn by negroes!” This last garb held particular symbolic importance to the plundering bondspeople. Slaves had been denied any legal right of marriage, and though they took spouses, they had no protection against separation or white male sexual exploitation. Donning the silk dresses of city elites, and the wedding dress of the wife of a wealthy slaveowner was more than just an appreciation of quality tailoring; it was a bold public gesture of defiance and revenge.<sup>21</sup>

### Escape

The arrival of Union forces offered more than just prospects for plunder; it afforded slaves opportunities to attain the four pillars of their empowerment. The first, and foundational pillar was escape, without which none of the others could follow. Despite local white protests,

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quotation); William F. Draper, *Recollections of a Varied Career* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1908), 67 (third and fourth quotations).

<sup>21</sup> Entry dated June 7, 1862, Rumley Diary (first, second, third, fifth, and sixth quotations); I.N. Roberts to Ebenezer Hunt, May 24, 1862, Ebenezer Hunt Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.; hereinafter cited as MHS) (fourth quotation).

numerous slaves in the countryside fled their masters and sought their freedom under the protection of the Union army. Union soldiers documented the flood of black refugees. Daniel Larned wrote from New Bern on March 28, 1862, “Stealing in from every direction by land & sea—in squads from 6 to 30 each—they come and dump themselves by the side of the fence and ‘wait orders from Mr. Burnside.’” A Massachusetts soldier rejoiced in their escape, declaring: “Thank God for the evidence that we here see that the day of their oppression is passed.” Another soldier noted the risks that slaves took. “They are continually coming in,” he wrote, “in squads of from one to a dozen threading their way through the swamps at night, avoiding pickets, they at last reach our lines.” Sutton Davis, a black fisherman, led the slaves on Davis Island in Pamlico Sound to freedom in New Bern. He found a small boat and rowed it to the fishing village of Smyrna, from which they escaped to New Bern on foot.<sup>22</sup>

Some Union soldiers were less charitable in their language, but nonetheless impressed with the persistence of slaves in escaping to Union lines. William Lind, of the 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment wrote to his brother in August 1862, saying, “the niggers are coming in as thick as sheep[;] there was 62 came in yesterday.” Joseph Barlow, a soldier in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, wrote to his wife in November 1862, “the nigers still come into our lines, about a hundred came yesterday. What in the name of god will Become of them I don't know for there is more here now than can be taken care of. I expect by the first of January we shall be over run with them.” In December 1862 after a Union expedition toward Goldsboro, one Union soldier remarked, “The Negrose are flocking in here from Kingston in droves.” He admitted, “you never saw a happier set of beings than they appear to be.” Another soldier

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<sup>22</sup> Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, March 28, 1862, Box 1, Larned Papers (first quotation); James Edward Glazier to “Dear Parents,” March 19, 1862, James Edward Glazier Papers (Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca.) (second quotation); R.R. Clarke to Dr. J.G. Metcalf, April 26, 1862, Box 3, folder 5, Civil War Collection, AAS (third and fourth quotations); Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*, 205 (Sutton Davis story).



concurred that Union expeditions always attracted more slaves from the countryside, who were so dedicated to escaping that they had no concept of what to do after they had accomplished this feat. “Possessed with the single idea of personal freedom,” wrote James Emmerton of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts, “they took no thought of how they were to be supported. Some of them seemed to have no idea that the change meant anything but a new and, they hoped, kinder master. A young mother brought a cart-load of her black pickaninnies to the lines, and, when asked to whom the horse and vehicle belonged, had no answer but ‘To you all, Massa.’”<sup>23</sup>

Slaves also testified to their immense desire for freedom. George W. Harris, a Jones County slave, recalled that his master had concealed George and his fellow slaves in the woods, “mindin’ hosses an’ takin’ care o’ things he had hid there.” George, his father, and several other slaves decided to leave together in a gang, and “ran away to New Bern,” about twenty-five miles away. Mary Barbour and her family came from much further away. They originally fled from near Raleigh to Union lines in Chowan County. While there, “De Yankees tells pappy ter head fer New Bern an’d dat he will be took keer of dar, so ter New Bern we goes.”<sup>24</sup>

The irresistible impulse for freedom compelled many slaves to perform amazing feats to rescue friends and family members. Vincent Colyer, the first Superintendent of Negroes in the region related the story of a woman and her children who took a canoe one night and sailed down the Neuse River to New Bern. “They rowed, after twilight, down the river, until a breeze came up, which rocked the canoe badly, and they rowed for the shallow water, where, however, the

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<sup>23</sup> William Lind to brother, August 13, 1862, William Lind Papers (United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.; hereinafter cited as USAMHI) (first quotation); Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, November 19, 1862, Joseph Barlow Papers, USAMHI (second quotation); George Kimball to wife and children, December 16, 1862, George W. Kimball Papers, USAMHI (third and fourth quotations); James Emmerton quoted in Frederick Osborne, *Private Osborne, Massachusetts 23rd Volunteers: Burnside Expedition, Roanoke Island, Second Front Against Richmond*, edited by Frank B. Marcotte (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1999), 78.

<sup>24</sup> George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography; Volume 14, North Carolina Narratives, Part I* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1977), 373 (first and second quotations), and 81 (third quotation).

waves were higher,” Colyer wrote. “She jumped out, and walking, kept the boat steady all the way—twelve miles—to Newbern.” The boldness of a slave who had just escaped to New Bern in April 1862 astounded R. R. Clarke, a Massachusetts soldier. The slave “had just heard that his wife was about 7 miles above our pickets and that [the rebels] were going to carry her off upcountry,” Clarke wrote. “He wanted to go & get her—of course we gave consent & I have no doubt but that he will evade their pickets and get her within 48 hours.” Testifying before the American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission at Fort Monroe, Virginia on May 9, 1863, a Union provost was asked, “In your opinion, is there any communication between the refugees and the black men still in slavery?” He answered, “Yes Sir, we have men here who have gone back 200 miles” to bring others to the sanctuary of Union lines. Slaves had discussed freedom for so long that they could not pass up the opportunity to seek it out. Alex Huggins, a slave who escaped to New Bern remembered what prompted him to run away from his family at age twelve. “Twan’nt anythin’ wrong about home that made me run away,” he recalled. “I’d heard so much talk ‘bout freedom I reckon. I jus’ wanted to try it, an’ I thought I had to get away from home to have it.”<sup>25</sup>

Thousands of slaves likewise “wanted to try it” and flocked to Beaufort and New Bern to “have it.” Beaufort, whose total white and black antebellum population numbered about 1,600 (including 600 blacks), became home to nearly 2,500 blacks by January 1864, and over 3,200 by 1865, while New Bern housed over 8,500 freedmen in January 1864 and nearly 11,000 a year later (compared to about 3,000 blacks in 1860). Slaves readily migrated to coastal cities like Beaufort and New Bern, utilizing the same water routes of escape that many runaways had used

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<sup>25</sup> Vincent Colyer, *Brief Report of the Services Rendered to the Freed People*, 34-35, quoted in Mary Lindsey Thornton, “New Bern, North Carolina, 1862-1865: A Southern Town Under Federal Occupation,” (n.d., typescript) (North Carolina Collection, Louis Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as NCC) (first and second quotations); R.R. Clarke to Dr. J.G. Metcalf, April 26, 1862, Box 3, Folder 5, Civil War Collection, AAS (third and fourth quotations); Testimony of Captain C.B. Wilder, May 9, 1863, in Berlin, ed., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation*, 1: 89 (fifth and sixth quotations); Rawick, *North Carolina Narratives*, 14: 450-452 (seventh and eighth quotations on p. 452).

in antebellum times. The escaping slaves, if they remembered the anti-slavery talk they heard during the antebellum years from black sailors, may have even banked on receiving favorable treatment from Union soldiers, especially those from the abolitionist state of Massachusetts.<sup>26</sup>

Slaves discovered that they had useful allies in these Bay State soldiers who would often directly intervene to insure a slave's successful escape, as they did in May 1862 when they forcibly freed the slave of New Bern's Nicholas Bray, who had retrieved her earlier that day with Governor Edward Stanly's permission (as described in Chapter Three). To native whites, such actions by northern soldiers who granted slaves *de facto* freedom only portended much more ominous initiatives in regard to African Americans.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, when President Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862, it reaffirmed white fears, particularly because North Carolina was not exempted from the Proclamation, unlike most other areas under Union occupation. Though they bitterly opposed it, white citizens were highly cognizant that the Proclamation would grant *de jure* freedom to their slaves in the New Year.<sup>28</sup>

African Americans were also aware of the Proclamation's meaning. One Union soldier in New Bern commented, "although they could neither read nor write," slaves "were quite well informed upon the President's proclamation, at least the portion relating to their own immediate

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<sup>26</sup> 1860 U.S. Census, 1860, Carteret County, North Carolina, Population and Slave Schedules, and Craven County, North Carolina, Population and Slave Schedules (1860 population figures); Horace James, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina, 1864. With an Appendix containing the History and Management of Freedmen in this Department up to June 1<sup>st</sup> 1865*, (Boston: W.F. Brown, 1865), 3, 6 (1864 and 1865 black population figures); Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song*, xvi, 141-151 (slave migration to coast).

<sup>27</sup> Edward Stanly to Edwin Stanton, June 12, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols. in 128; Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Ser. 1, vol. 9: 400-401; R.R. Clarke to Dr. J.G. Metcalf, June 5, 1862, Box 3, Folder 5, Civil War Collection, AAS (first and third quotations); Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, May 28, 1862, Box 1, Larned Papers (second quotation). For more on the Bray affair, see Norman D. Brown, *Edward Stanly: Whiggery's Tarheel "Conqueror"* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1974), 208-214.

<sup>28</sup> Though the Emancipation Proclamation exempted several occupied sections of the Confederacy from its power (notably parts of Virginia and Louisiana and the entire state of Tennessee), North Carolina in its entirety came under the power of the proclamation. See "Emancipation Proclamation," in Michael P. Johnson, ed., *Abraham Lincoln, Slavery, and the Civil War: Selected Writings and Speeches* (Boston: Bedford, St. Martin's Press, 2001), 218-19. For more on the effect of the Emancipation Proclamation in North Carolina, see William C. Harris, *With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), esp. chapter 3.

change of condition, viz. freedom.” Another soldier concurred: “The Negroes are on the whole so far as I have seen more intelligent and clear headed than I fancied and are considerably interested in the President’s proclamation, which many of them understand very well.” The Proclamation had a powerful and lasting effect in African Americans’ collective memory. After the war, when agents for the Southern Claims Commission asked former slave Caesar Manson of Beaufort when he became free, he answered forthrightly: “at the time of President Lincoln’s proclamation went into effect.” A Union soldier detected the black affection for Lincoln and declared, “still coming generations that come up will call him blessed.” Some former slaves also utilized their newfound freedom to rectify previous wrongs. William Derby, a soldier in the 25<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, recounted the story of James Whitby, a slave who had married Emeline 30 years earlier and had watched 8 of their 15 children sold away. In 1863, James and Emeline asked the regiment’s chaplain to remarry them, making the act legal in the eyes of God *and* the law. Derby recalled James explaining, “we’s want dis ting right dis time, for shu!” Indeed, a new day had dawned for slaves, and their hopefulness and joy at future prospects became infectious. One northern missionary noted that blacks beheld “visions of freedom and civilization opening before them,” which he admitted, “inspired my heart with unwonted enthusiasm.”<sup>29</sup>

Often blacks’ desires to assert their independence led to confrontations with local whites over the nature of what it meant to be free and occupy a place in this new civilization. Many

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<sup>29</sup> George H. Weston to “Dear Sir,” February 15, 1863, New Bern Occupation Papers (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as SHC) (first and second quotations); Oliver W. Peabody to Mary Peabody, November 20, 1862, Oliver W. Peabody Papers, MHS (third quotation); Testimony of claimant Caesar Manson, Claim 1666, Carteret County, RG 233 (fourth quotation); Entry for January 11, 1863, Journal of Benjamin H. Day, Civil War Collection (Beverly Historical Society & Museum, Beverly, Mass.) (fifth quotation); W.P. Derby, *Bearing arms in the Twenty-seventh Massachusetts regiment of volunteer infantry during the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Boston : Wright and Potter Printing Co., 1883), 216 (sixth quotation); Letter from H.S. Beals, August 18, 1863, *American Missionary* 7 (October 1863): 231 (seventh and eighth quotations).

confrontations were rather benign, as slaves exercised their newfound power. James Rumley complained when “negroes looked on with indifference” as “delicate women and aged men” had to perform “drudgeries, to which they have never been accustomed.” Understandably, ex-slaves felt little pity when their former owners were compelled to perform daily menial tasks for survival. Slaves also engaged in verbal rows with whites. One New Bern resident complained, “It is nothing unusual for the Negroes to curse their masters & mistresses in passing along the streets. They are allowed to do so [by the Yankees].” Another white lady angrily vowed, “if any of her slaves were impudent again she ‘would knock them flat.’” These quotes reveal the stresses and resentments created between even white and black women—who, Marli Weiner argues, had developed a “potential to identify common ground across racial lines”—due to the latter’s affirmations of their freedom. Weiner contends, “Black women’s determination to make their freedom meaningful coupled with white women’s reluctance to acknowledge the reality and implications of emancipation brought a new antagonism to their dealings with one another. Racial hostility, never far beneath the surface before the war, would replace tolerance based on shared gender expectations as the defining assumptions of women’s interactions.”<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the time of occupation however, some black assertions of independence led to more malevolent confrontations, as whites used violence to intimidate blacks into submission. A military court found that civilian Edward Hughes, “did commit an assault with intent to kill,” upon a black woman in New Bern, “by shooting at her twice with a pistol, both shots taking effect upon her person.” Union soldiers noted that Rebel pickets would shoot at blacks whenever they had an opportunity. In March 1865, Toby Williams, a freed slave, was “accosted by a man

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<sup>30</sup> Entry for January 1, 1863, Rumley Diary, Pigott Collection (first, second, and third quotations); Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 162 (fourth quotation); Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, March 20, 1862, Box 1, Larned Papers (fifth quotation); Marli Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 2 (sixth quotation), 156 (seventh quotation).

with a double-barreled gun, who after asking him some questions, deliberately killed him.” In 1864, several blacks who tried to cultivate land outside of Union lines were captured or killed by Rebels.<sup>31</sup>

The most illustrative example of violent confrontation in the wake of Emancipation was the story that opened this chapter, when Joel Henry Davis tied up and mercilessly beat a former slave for demanding that he release her daughter from bondage. Though he was a respected Unionist, Davis was aggrieved about the uncompensated loss of his slaves, but being a practical merchant he recognized the benefits that accompanied allegiance to the Union forces. Historian Margaret M. Storey noted in her recent study of Alabama Unionists, “although loyalty to the Union represented a rejection of the Confederate state, it did not necessarily represent a rejection of southern culture or values.” Even though he may have saluted the stars and stripes, Davis did not welcome some of the government’s more radical war aims—embodied in the woman’s demand for her daughter. Davis had come to terms with Union occupation, but he would not allow a social leveling between blacks and whites. Davis lashed out against the woman to demonstrate that as a white man, he still enjoyed certain powers over blacks. His reaction exemplifies Stephen V. Ash’s assertion: “To whites throughout the occupied South... the more violence they were able to inflict on blacks, the more thorough was their racial mastery.” Indeed, violence was native whites’ response to their disenchantment with a Federal policy that prevented the maintenance of the antebellum social status quo.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> General Order No. 25, April 8, 1862, Entry 3239, Vol. 33, Part I, General Records, Correspondence, General and Special Orders, Departments of North Carolina and Virginia, 1861-1865, Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as RG 393 (first and second quotations); Entry dated August 2, 1862, J.M. Drennan Diary, J.M. Drennan Papers, SHC (shooting at blacks); Frederick Osborne to mother, May 30, 1862, in Marcotte, ed., *Private Osborne*, 77 (shooting at blacks); Entry dated March 20, 1865, Edmund J. Cleveland Diary, Edmund J. Cleveland Papers, SHC (third quotation); James, *Annual Report of Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina*, 4 (killing of black farmers).

<sup>32</sup> Margaret M. Storey, “Civil War Unionists and the Political Culture of Loyalty in Alabama,” *Journal of Southern History* 69 (February 2003): 75 (first quotation); Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 169 (second quotation).

Unlike local whites, who simply wanted the restoration of the pre-war Union, some Federal officials desired a much greater change. Foremost among them was Horace James, chaplain of the 25<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment who later became Superintendent for Negro Affairs for the Department of North Carolina. James asserted as early as June 1862, “It is not enough to bring back this country to its position just before the breaking out of the rebellion. The ‘Union as it was’ is not what I want to see restored. Let us rather have it purified and perfected, coming out holier and freer from this dreadful ordeal, sanctified by the baptism of blood.” Another soldier agreed: “The more we learn of the despicable social condition of the South, the stronger appears the need of the purification which, in the Providence of God, comes of the fire and the sword.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Employment**

Despite white protests, blacks hastened such efforts at “purification” of the southern social system. In addition to escaping from their masters, they sought employment, especially such that would give them the chance for land ownership—a foundational piece of autonomy. Many tried to set up their own farms. The desire to be independent and autonomous drove some African Americans to risky lengths. Horace James declared that, with no land available on which to settle freedmen, “some of the more fearless among them did indeed venture to hire tracts of land a little out of the towns, or on the ‘debatable territory’ along the railroad and the Neuse, and attempt the culture of cotton or corn, or the making of turpentine.” James admitted that those who desperately sought such independence took their chances with Confederate

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<sup>33</sup> Horace James to “My dear friends,” June 21, 1862, Horace James Correspondence, AAS (first quotation); Corporal [Zenas T. Haines], *Letters from the Forty-fourth Regiment*. . . (Boston, 1863), 90, as quoted in Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 171-172 (second quotation). For more on the role of benevolent societies, see Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction*; Joe M. Richardson, *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986). For an examination of the role missionaries played among North Carolina freedmen, see Click, *Time Full of Trial*.

raiders or secessionist sympathizers, and often forfeited their freedom or their lives. Though some tried to maintain their independence from all whites, many others took advantage of the Union army's demand for labor.<sup>34</sup>

Escaped slaves began working for the Union army from the moment it first arrived in the area. In April 1862, just a month after the capture of New Bern, one Union soldier noted that over 700 able-bodied black men had arrived in town, looking for work. "They all find employment," he wrote. "Some work on the fortifications, some unloading ships—more are really needed to perform the labor to be done here." The government employed many freedmen in the quartermaster department as teamsters and manual laborers. Some blacks served more specialized roles. Willis M. Lewis, a free black in New Bern, served at different times as a guide and scout for Federal troops, as well as a nurse at regimental hospitals. Jacob Grimes, an escaped slave, came to New Bern, and "was employed by the U.S. government as a detective," presumably to monitor illicit trading activities, or treasonous actions against the government.<sup>35</sup>

Union soldiers also hired black men as servants, which angered local whites. James Rumley complained that officers employ them in various capacities and "promised to pay *them* and not their owners, for their services." One soldier noted that even the youngest black refugees knew the value of money: "The black boys want to hire out as servants, and at such low rates that many of the men in the ranks have one to run errands, draw water, wash their tin dishes." The problem became such a nuisance and so disruptive to army discipline that on December 4, 1862,

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<sup>34</sup> James, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> R.R. Clarke to Dr. J.G. Metcalf, April 26, 1862, Box 3, Folder 5, Civil War Collection, AAS (first and second quotations); Testimony of claimant Willis M. Lewis, Claim 11730, Craven County, North Carolina, Settled Case Files for Claims Approved by the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury, Record Group 217, National Archives II, College Park, MD; hereinafter cited as RG 217; Deposition of Jacob Grimes, in *Gabriel Hardison v. United States* (case file no. 8070), Records of the United States Court of Claims, Record Group 123, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as RG 123 (fourth quotation).



Colonel Horace Lee of the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment ordered all blacks, except servants to commissioned officers, out of the regiment's camp.<sup>36</sup>

While men worked for the army as manual laborers or servants, black women utilized their domestic skills to earn income. They provided meals, mended uniforms, and washed clothes for the Union soldiers. Others baked goods and sold them in the army camps for quite a profit. Soldiers commented on the freedmen's good business sense. One soldier wrote, "Some are very intelligent and charge reasonable prices for things while the whites ask four times what they are worth." Another commented, "The Negro women are round every day selling gingerbread cakes pies and other things and it is remarkable how they know all about money and are so ignorant in every respect." Some women established legendary reputations as cooks. One soldier wrote a friend of how he and some friends had gone down to dinner at "Jane's" place, where they enjoyed a savory meal of pork steak, fried liver, baked sweet potatoes, hoe cake, and coffee. "She was cook for one of the first families," he wrote, "& now drives quite a business on her own account." Unable to make any money as a slave, Jane parleyed her skills into a lucrative business after she gained her freedom.<sup>37</sup>

Slave craftsmen also took maximum advantage of their skills. Coopers, wheelwrights, and carpenters worked for the Union army. In early 1865, James wrote, slaves "have come in, and among them many mechanics and skilled laborers, so that New Berne has now a good supply of tradesmen, in nearly all the different branches essential to social prosperity." Former slaves Eliza Garner and John Pender were carpenters who worked for the Union army "putting

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<sup>36</sup> Undated Entry, [before April 23, 1862], Rumley diary (first quotation); John M. Spear, "Army life in the twenty-fourth regiment, Massachusetts volunteer infantry, Dec. 1861 to Dec. 1864, 1892," (typescript), p. 61, MHS (second quotation); Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 39n (Horace Lee order).

<sup>37</sup> Edward Bartlett to Martha, November 1, 1862, Edward J. Bartlett Papers, MHS (first quotation); Entry for December 1, 1862, Journal of Benjamin H. Day, Civil War Collection (second quotation); Horatio Newhall to George, November 17, 1862, Horatio Newhall Papers, Civil War Miscellaneous Collection, USAMHI (third and fourth quotations).

up buildings for the troops and... repairing navy vessels.” Slave mariners converted their skills into service for the Union authorities. Caesar Manson worked as a boatman carrying the U.S. Mail, while others shuttled goods and passengers between Fort Macon, Beaufort and Morehead City. James noted the preponderance of black watermen in the region, musing, “the Negro is here an aquatic animal, and takes to the water almost as readily as the sea fowl that abound in this vicinity.” “Not less than one hundred men are constantly employed in boating, this business being wholly in the hands of the Negroes,” James wrote, “And a remunerative calling it proves to be, indeed.” In fact, some amassed enough wealth to purchase their own boats. One slave who lived in Beaufort saved up his earnings and purchased his own boat in 1863 “for the convenience of visiting his wife,” who lived on Bogue Island across the harbor.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to providing valuable services to the Union personnel and securing their own financial freedom, employment allowed the building of a robust free black community. Many freedmen lived in temporary camps outside of Beaufort and New Bern. Housed in tents or makeshift shacks, these camps were arranged in neat rows like regimental camps, and allowed for intermingling and community building among the freedmen. One of the strongest centers of social engagement was the local barbershop. In Beaufort, David Parker, a literate freedman, opened a barbershop in 1863 that served as a nexus of freedmen’s activity. “Many times in my shop we talked about the war,” Parker recalled. “Sometimes I received papers and could read them and tell them colored people what battles had been fought and who were victorious and all about the reports of the battles and the movements of troops. My shop was sort of general head quarters for the colored people to come to for news.” Not only was it an important social center,

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<sup>38</sup> James, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina*, 10 (first quotation), 19 (third, fourth, and fifth quotations); Testimony of Eliza Garner, Claim 1667 (John Pender and Henry Mathewson), RG 233 (second quotation); Testimony of claimant Caesar Manson, Claim 1666, RG 233; Testimony of claimant Andrew Ward, Claim 11566, RG 217 (sixth quotation).

but it also exemplified one of the most lucrative types of employment. When Horace James listed the highest grossing occupations among freedmen in 1864, barbers were near the top of the list, earning an average annual income of \$675 (compared to an enlisted man, who would earn \$13 a month, for a yearly income of \$156).<sup>39</sup>

James further observed that many of the freedmen, not just barbers, were prospering under occupation. “Some of these people are becoming rich; all are doing well for themselves, even in these times,” he wrote. Grocers (\$678), carpenters (\$510), blacksmiths (\$468), coopers (\$418), masons (\$402), and turpentine farmers (\$446) all made handsome average incomes. Some individual freedmen, primarily those engaging in the turpentine business, earned more than \$3000 in one year, while over a dozen from assorted other occupations grossed more than \$1000 in 1864. When James called on freedmen in New Bern who worked independently—outside of the government—to report their income for 1864, he found 305 men and women, reporting a total gross income of \$150, 562, an average of nearly \$500 a person. James was greatly impressed by the freedmen’s innate business acumen: “They evince a capacity for business, and exhibit a degree of thrift and shrewdness, which are ample security for their future progress, if they are allowed an equal chance with their fellow-men.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Enlistment**

Many black men felt that enlisting in the United States armed forces allowed them the greatest opportunity for “an equal chance” to demonstrate their manhood. Some local freedmen served as sailors and seaman on military and commercial Union vessels, while others enlisted

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<sup>39</sup> Testimony of David Parker, Claim 1666 (Caesar Manson), RG 233 (quotations); James, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina*, 12. For more on freedmen camps and community outside New Bern, see Joe A. Mobley, *James City, A Black Community in North Carolina, 1863-1900* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1981).

<sup>40</sup> When James called on freedmen in New Bern who worked independently—outside of the government—to report their income for 1864, he found 305 men and women, reporting a total gross income of \$150, 562, an average of nearly \$500 a person. James, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina*, 11-12 (quotations on p. 11).

into colored infantry regiments. Few things upset local whites more. The sailors, “often fugitive slaves whose masters reside [in Beaufort],” engendered a mixture of outrage and fear among the citizenry for, as James Rumley noted in August 1862, “some of the rascals are armed.” Viewing black sailors walk the streets prompted Rumley to envision (even if rhetorically) the apocalyptic day when “armies of black negroes may yet be turned upon us to complete the ruin and desolation that Yankee vandalism has begun.” Old Antebellum fears of slave insurrections, fueled by memories of Santo Domingo, Nat Turner, and John Brown created such an intense Negrophobia that by March 1863, Rumley anxiously wrote, “Visions of armed and infuriated bands of these black traitors, like imps of darkness, rise before us and darken the future.”<sup>41</sup>

Whites would become even more upset later in 1863, when African Americans demonstrated their commitment to the Union cause and exhibited their personal self-worth by enlisting into black infantry regiments. “A recruiting office has been opened today by the Yankees for negro volunteers on Front Street,” the fiery Rumley wrote from Beaufort on June 1, 1863, “where the black traitors are gathering in considerable numbers.” In spite of white outrage, African Americans desired to demonstrate their equality as men. Rumley recounted the speech of an African American orator who invoked the themes represented in enlistment and independence, arguing that “their race would have not only their personal freedom, but political equality, and if this should be refused them at the ballot box they would have it at the cartridge box!”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Entry dated August [n.d.], 1862 (first and second quotations), Entry dated March 25, 1863 (third and fourth quotations), Rumley Diary.

<sup>42</sup> Entry dated June 1, 1863 (first and second quotations), and Entry dated January 1, 1864 (third quotation), Rumley Diary. For more on African American enlistment, see Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue*; Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle*; Berlin, ed., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867; Series II: The Black Military Experience*; Cornish, *The Sable Arm*; Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*; Wilbert L. Jenkins, *Climbing Up to Glory: A Short History of African Americans during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2002), chapter 2.

African American enlistment practices became politicized to represent both manhood and the privileges that rightfully accompanied freedom. Teachers from the American Missionary Association recognized the importance of enlistment to African American psychology: “the action of the government in incorporating the colored people into the army creates a new era in their history; it recognizes their manhood, gives them a status in the nation, and is open acknowledgment of their value to the country in the time of its peril.” Historian Jim Cullen has persuasively argued that enlistment in Union regiments greatly enhanced black men’s fundamental self-perceptions: “As the *material* conditions of their lives changed—as they joined the armed forces, were freed from slavery, or both—so too did their ideological conceptions of themselves as men.” In just one example, when a white man asked a black South Carolina soldier, “What are you, anyhow,” the soldier replied in terms that African American men could appreciate, “When God made me I wasn’t much, but I’s a man now.”<sup>43</sup>

The desire to prove their manhood prompted numerous blacks to enlist. Many had been waiting for the opportunity from the moment Union troops arrived. William Henry Singleton, a Craven County slave, claimed that over one hundred black refugees had been drilling on their own as early as the spring of 1862, anticipating the time when the Lincoln administration would allow African Americans to enlist in the army. In January 1863, one Massachusetts soldier wrote, “I think there could be here in Newbern one thousand who formally were slaves, but who are now free, enlisted in the Union army, who would fight like Tigers to defend their rights as they now enjoy them.” Indeed, when the Federal government finally authorized the enlistment of black soldiers in the region a month later, volunteers flocked to the enlistment office. In the

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<sup>43</sup> “Notes from North Carolina,” *American Missionary* 7 (March 1863): 58 (first quotation); Jim Cullen, “‘I’s a Man Now’: Gender and African American Men,” in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 77 (second quotation), 91 (third and fourth quotations).

first muster in February 1863, a Union officer reported that 413 already answered the roll. In April 1863, a Union soldier noted, “they are enlisting Negroes here at a grate [*sic*] rate[.] [T]wo hundred nearly enlisted in about two days.” On May 24, 1863, a Union officer reported that over 400 had enlisted that week alone. Though accurate numbers of black enlistments from Carteret and Craven County are difficult to ascertain exactly, over 5,000 blacks joined the Union army from North Carolina, almost all of them from the occupied region of the state.<sup>44</sup>

John Hedrick suggested in December 1863 that not all of these enlistments were voluntary. He wrote that General Foster “has... ordered all able bodied negro men between the ages of 18 & 45 to be mustered into the U.S. Services, and forbids the employment of such negroes on public works.” Accordingly Hedrick claimed that the order “created quite a stir among the darkies,” since, he asserted, “There are very few of them that really wish to fight.” However, there is little corroborating evidence from this region to suggest that blacks were coerced into military service, which occurred frequently in other occupied areas, especially in South Carolina’s Sea Islands. Hedrick’s letters have numerous derogatory references to blacks and especially black soldiers. This one negative letter contrasts with much evidence, from black and white sources, that confirms a strong black zeal to enlist in the Union army. Some were undoubtedly compelled into service, but the vast majority appear to have volunteered willingly.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Charron and Cecelski, eds., *Recollection of my Slavery Days*, 188; William Augustus Willoughby to wife, January 22, 1863, William Augustus Willoughby Papers (typescript), AAS (first quotation); James Owens to Gen. Wessells, February 20, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (February muster); Jeremiah Stetson to “Dear ones at home,” April 21, 1863, Jeremiah Stetson Papers, SHC (second quotation); Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth Massachusetts,” p. 156 (May 1863 enlistments); Michael K. Honey, “The War Within the Confederacy: White Unionists of North Carolina, *Prologue* 18 (Summer 1986): 65-66 (5000 blacks in Union army).

<sup>45</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, December 13, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 172 (quotations). For a depiction of coercion of blacks into military service in the Sea Islands, see Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*, 265-270. In July 1862, the Second Confiscation Act and the Militia Act gave President Lincoln the right to recruit black soldiers. Lincoln endorsed arming black troops in the Emancipation Proclamation. In February 1863, the Federal government began recruiting black troops. On May 22, 1863, the War Department created the Bureau of Colored Troops to oversee and regulate black enlistment. See Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 1-2; Gregory J.W. Urwin, “United States Colored Troops,” in David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler,

Black enlistment efforts met resistance, as they encountered hostility from locals as well as Union soldiers. As will be discussed in much greater detail in the next chapter, many white soldiers, even liberal anti-slavery ones, maintained decidedly racist views after their arrival. While sentiment was divided among Union soldiers as to the propriety or desirability of enlisting black soldiers, most eventually accepted the fact as a practical measure if nothing else. One officer wrote in July 1863, after several nine-month regiments had departed for home, “We were very glad to see them [the 55th MA], even if they are black, for our garrison has been quite small since the nine months men left us.” He concluded, “I do not object to black soldiers, but rather, think they should do some of the fighting.”<sup>46</sup>

Some soldiers grew to appreciate the fighting qualities of the black soldiers. Henry Clapp, a soldier in the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, wrote home in April 1863, from New Bern that his regiment placed the local black troops “as sort of night-picket in half-defiance of the directions from head-quarters, and [they] perform their duties splendidly. It is absolutely impossible for any one to get either in or out of the lines, when they are on guard.” Clapp gave positive endorsements of their mettle, saying, “They are in respect models of courage, vigilance and trustworthiness, and the bands of rebel guerrillas who infest the out skirts and who caused almost constant alarms by night, before these men were put on, stand in the greatest dread of them.” He further praised their “unique” skills, averring, “They all know every forest path and have eyesight like cats so that at night while their color will let them be perfectly hid in the shadow of a tree they themselves see everything.” Some, though certainly not all, soldiers overcame their initial hostility toward black enlistments and recognized it as good for the war effort. As Massachusetts soldier Edward J. Bartlett wrote to his sister in 1863, “I think that

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eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Press, 2000), IV: 2002-2003.

<sup>46</sup> Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth Massachusetts,” p. 173.

enlisting Negroes in going to be the saving of the country, and I am glad that they have come to it at last.”<sup>47</sup>

### **Education**

Whether asserting their manhood as soldiers, or simply trying to advance their material conditions within Union lines, African Americans demonstrated their fervent desire to assert their independence and improve their lives. They derived support from northern teachers who tirelessly sought not only to be “intelligent friends and counselors, to guard them against the insults, impositions, immoralities and various abuses of those who hate them,” but also to educate their charges. The inability to read or write represented a tangible symbol of slavery; therefore, former slaves, whether they were refugees or enlisted men, embraced the educational opportunities offered by Union soldiers and members of freedmen’s aid societies that entered the region.<sup>48</sup> As Keith P. Wilson has argued, regarding black soldiers who struggled for literacy, “Since literacy was the mark of a free man, the learning process became a ritual that affirmed the soldier’s liberated status.” However, whether a soldier or not, Wilson notes that all freedmen could agree, “School attendance became an expression of liberty and an act of defiance against slavery.” For their part, white abolitionist officers who spearheaded the literacy campaigns in the occupied region believed, as Wilson noted, that education offered the freedman “an opportunity for moral reform, self-reliant citizenship, and some degree of protection from his enemies in the post-Civil War South.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Henry Clapp to Willie, April 10, 1863, in Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 176 (first, second, and third quotations); Edward J. Bartlett to Martha, February 26, 1863, Bartlett Papers (fourth quotation).

<sup>48</sup> “Appeal for the Freedmen,” *American Missionary* 7 (January 1863): 13 (first quotation). See also Jones, ““A Glorious Work,”” 35-38.

<sup>49</sup> Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom*, 83 (first and second quotation), 85 (third quotation). For more on the education of black soldiers during the war, see Warren B. Armstrong, “Union Chaplains and the Education of the Freedmen,” *Journal of Negro History* 52 (April 1967): 104-115; Ira Berlin et al, *The Black Military Experience*, 611-632; John W. Blassingame, “The Union Army as a School for Negroes,” *Journal of Negro Education* 34 (Spring 1965): 152-159; Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle*, 226-228.



Of course, Union attempts to educate blacks, which began immediately after occupation in 1862, angered local whites, and created conflict between Union officers and military governor Edward Stanly. In April 1862, Vincent Colyer, recently-appointed Superintendent of the Poor, set up a day school for whites and two evening schools for blacks in New Bern. The black school was always “full to overflowing” with more than 800 students who were “joyful and bright as any young learners.” It progressed well for nearly six weeks, as Colyer enlisted several Union soldiers to act as teachers. “It is a glorious work,” wrote Charles M. Duren, a Massachusetts officer. “How sad that so many are growing up entirely ignorant,” he wrote, “and now how joyful that a brighter day is dawning upon this down trodden race.” However, when Governor Stanly arrived on May 26, 1862, he did not share Duren’s joy, and ordered Colyer to close the school on the grounds that teaching blacks to read was against North Carolina law. Colyer closed the school and went to Washington to protest.<sup>50</sup>

The school closing had the most pronounced impact on the African American population who benefited from it. As many as 800 African Americans attended the school from its opening in April until its closing in June, demonstrating the intense desire among ex-slaves to improve their condition. A correspondent for the American Missionary Association wrote that “the old people dropped their heads upon their breast and wept in silence; the young looked at each other with mute surprise and grief at this sudden termination of their bright hopes.” However, their hopes were soon rekindled, as President Lincoln informed Colyer that Stanly had no power to close the school, and furthermore that “he had given Gov. Stanly no such instructions as would

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<sup>50</sup> Special Order No. 65, March 30, 1862 Part I, General Records, Correspondence, General and Special Orders, Department of North Carolina, Departments of North Carolina and Virginia, 1861-1865, RG 393 (Colyer’s appointment); Charles M. Duren to “Mother and father,” May 2, 1862, Charles M. Duren Papers (Special Collections & Archives, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.) (quotations).

justify him in these acts.” Colyer returned, and freedmen schools opened again in July 1862, over Stanly’s protest.<sup>51</sup>

Individual officers, soldiers, and benevolent society teachers operated makeshift schools wherever there was room. Throughout the wartime occupation, teachers held class in churches, army barracks, barns, abandoned plantation buildings, basements, deserted jails, and one officer taught his pupils “in the rear of the Quartermaster’s office.” One teacher commented, “we teach in a barn fitted up with seats for nearly four hundred persons,” which during winter months “is heated by only one Sibley stove, and having no sash in the windows.” Students still attended despite the fact that it was so cold that the teacher “taught every day so far in a hood, blanket shawl, and thick gloves.”<sup>52</sup>

Initially unprepared to conduct formal schooling, instructors improvised teaching supplies. One soldier related that in May 1862, “As primers were not at hand, an olive green window shutter served for a blackboard, the instruction being mainly oral.” Teachers utilized Bibles as standard texts. Yet, Union agents were improving the situation as quickly as possible, constructing new schools, and recruiting supplies and teachers from northern benevolent societies. Horace James, who had spent many years actively engaged in fostering education in New England, reported in May 1863 on his efforts to get good teachers, stating, “nothing short of ‘yankee school ma’am’s’ will answer for their children.” By the end of March 1864, New Bern boasted eleven freedmen schools while Beaufort had three, and nine more existed in other

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<sup>51</sup> A.M.A. correspondent quoted in Jones, “‘A Glorious Work,’” 29-30 (first quotation); Horace James to “My dear friends,” June 21, 1862, Horace James Correspondence, AAS (second quotation).

<sup>52</sup> Jones, “A Glorious Work,” 45-51; Herbert E. Valentine, *Story of Co. F, 23d Massachusetts Volunteers in the War for the Union, 1861-1865*, (Boston: W.B. Clarke & Co., 1896), 65 (first quotation); Miss Emily Gill to the American Missionary Association, January 11, 1864, American Missionary Association Collection (Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, La.; hereinafter cited as AMA) (on microfilm at the University of Georgia Library) (second and third quotations).

occupied parts of North Carolina. July 1864 found 3000 black students enrolled in classes in the region.<sup>53</sup>

Determined freedmen used every spare minute to study. A soldier in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts wrote, “Grown men, employed in ‘dug outs’ to catch and raft logs, brought, on their way to the saw mill... [their] spelling book[s] which [were] speedily whipped out and zealously studied at every break, however short, in their onerous task.” An officer’s wife, visiting her husband at New Bern in February 1863, wrote to a friend, “I have frequently seen in the street the Negro teamster[s], poring over their primers and spelling books, while waiting for something or other.” One missionary noted, “After a hard day’s work, they return to their homes, take their frugal meal, change their dress when they can make a change-come to the school & devote an hour and a half to earnest study.” Some adults sought individual arrangements for education, bartering practical goods for instruction. One Union soldier recounted, “Aunty Southwhite gave me a quilt tonight on condition that ‘I learn her how to read.’” Freedmen also used their hard-earned money to provide opportunities for their further enhancement. When Reverend George N. Green arrived in Beaufort from New York in October 1863 to set up a school, he collected \$84.88 from freedmen to defray operating expenses. Residents of the Pine Grove settlement, one of several camps outside of town, raised \$95, and told Green that they would raise “another hundred if necessary in order to educate their children.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Valentine, *Story of Co. F*, 65 (first quotation); Horace James to U.S. Sabbath School, May 25, 1863, James Correspondence (second quotation); Sing-Nan Fen, “Notes on the Education of Negroes in North Carolina During the Civil War,” *Journal of Negro Education* 36 (Winter 1967): 25 (schools and enrollment).

<sup>54</sup> James Emmerton, *A Record of the Twenty-third Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (Boston: William Ware, 1886), 97 (first quotation); Mary Peabody to Livy, February 23, 1863, Peabody Papers (second quotation); William Briggs quoted in Jones, “A Glorious work,” 41-42 (third quotation); Entry for November 16, 1864, Cleveland Diary, Cleveland Papers (fourth quotation); Letter from Rev. G.N. Green, October 23, 1863, *American Missionary* 7 (December 1863): 280 (fifth quotation).

African American students and their white teachers persevered in spite of hostile conditions. In addition to weather difficulties, the exigencies of wartime often halted classes. One teacher commented in early 1865 from New Bern, “we are in hourly expectation of an order for the opening of our churches for hospital purposes.” When a Rebel army under George Pickett threatened New Bern in February 1864, Union officials forced a black school out of Fort Totten, and another school near the Trent River had to close for a week because the incessant cannonading made it too difficult to hold class. Non-military enemies also took their toll on the students. In the summer of 1864, a yellow fever epidemic hit New Bern and Beaufort, killing hundreds of blacks and whites, and forcing many to flee or quarantine themselves in the city. The freedmen schools shut down in July 1864 as a result, but opened again in December when the epidemic had passed. In addition, local whites tried to intimidate northern teachers and discourage black students from attending schools. In 1864, three white men torched one of the freedmen schoolhouses and threatened the female teacher with violence unless she promised to “never again teach the niggers to read.” Perhaps more than employment and enlistment, local whites feared the empowerment education granted to freedmen, because it reached even the youngest members of black society. This instruction held dangerous implications, as the northern benevolent society teachers taught ideas that transcended spiritual lessons and charitable efforts to teach the “three R’s.”<sup>55</sup>

At the same time, however, northern missionaries’ ideas about what was best for the freedmen often conflicted with what the freedmen believed. As Jacqueline Jones commented, the “relationship between New England freedmen’s aid societies and the ‘objects’ of their

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<sup>55</sup> W.T. Briggs to the American Missionary Association, March 3, 1865, AMA (first quotation); Jones, “‘A Glorious Work,’” 48-51 (Fort Totten); Thomas J. Farnham and Francis P. King, “‘The March of the Destroyer’: The New Bern Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1864,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 73 (October 1996): 435-483; Fen, “Notes on the Education of Negroes in North Carolina During the Civil War,” 26n11 (second quotation).

benevolence was often fraught with tension,” as frequently, “the aid came with strings attached.” During their experience freedmen found that many missionaries rarely viewed them as equals. For instance, many northerners dismissed freedmen’s emotional religious tradition as “ludicrous and saddening,” and full of “strange, wild ideas.” Typical of northern reactions was that of Massachusetts soldier Charles Hubbard, who witnessed a black religious meeting in early 1863 and wrote, “It was sad to think these poor creatures could hope to win salvation in such a manner, yet at the same time, the absurdity and comicality of the whole affair was irresistible and showed a phase of Negro character both strange and amusing.” Missionaries sought to educate them in order to reform their moral character, which many considered degraded or dissolute, and try to give them some sense of social responsibility and stability in the tumultuous times. In other words, they hoped to remake them in an idealized northern middle-class Christian image, ignoring the freedmen’s own cultural mores. As Ronald Butchart noted, “Acceptance into white society was predicated on changing blacks, making them as much like whites as possible.”<sup>56</sup>

African Americans, on the other hand, were quite practical, accepting a certain amount of northern proselytizing while utilizing the benevolent society members to garner the material possessions as well as intellectual ones they needed to achieve autonomy. One northern missionary in New Bern, who had hoped to convert ignorant former slaves, learned that “Greater good might be done by holding a pair of shoes, or a new frock in one hand, and the Bible in the other.” She noted in January 1864, “It is wonderful how much more influence you can have over those who do not believe, by doing something for their souls and bodies at the same time.” The

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<sup>56</sup> Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*, 4 (first and second quotations); Charles Eustis Hubbard, *The Campaign of the Forty-fifth regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia: “The cadet regiment”* (Boston: J.S. Adams, 1882), 82 (third and fifth quotations); Letter of H.S. Beals, August 1863, *American Missionary*, 7 (Oct. 1863): 230 (fourth quotation); Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction*, 23 (sixth quotation). For more on the benevolent society efforts, as well as the conflicts northern teachers encountered with both whites and blacks, see Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction*; Click, *Time Full of Trial*; Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love*; Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*.

young woman did not understand that this was most likely part of the freedmen's plan.

Practically every freedman had been exposed to Christianity as a slave, and few rejected the idea of a Christian afterlife, in which the ills of this world would be replaced by the glories of the next. However, many recognized the value of playing to northern stereotypes of their ignorance in order to help address their insufficient material possessions. Teachers slowly began to realize how they were being used. One wrote from Roanoke Island in December 1863, "Yesterday a woman came asking for a flannel for her sick babe. She seemed honest, but there is so much wrongdoing that I am compelled to ascertain always." However, freedmen did gain a certain degree of hope from their interactions with northern missionaries. Though missionaries believed they were teaching moral and social values, they served as an example of how Reconstruction might offer positive opportunities for freedmen.<sup>57</sup>

Missionaries not only redeemed freedmen's spiritual souls, but also heightened their awareness of their political bodies, and the rights inherent in being a free person—offering visions of a promising future in which African Americans could control their own destinies without being beholden to whites. A black soldier's comment to an American Missionary Association teacher reveals that African Americans heartily imbibed from this hopeful fount. "Do you know how responsible your situation is?" the soldier asked. "We listen to every word that you utter to us, so that nothing that you utter is lost to any of us. If we do just as you instruct us to do, and we lose our souls, whose fault will it be?" Though this soldier perhaps did fear the Prince of Darkness, his quote serves as an effective metaphor for those who did not dread their eternal damnation as much as a potential worldly one. If freed people diligently followed the

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<sup>57</sup> Letter from Miss Burnap, January 18, 1864, *American Missionary*, 8 (March 1864): 65 (first and second quotations); Letter from Miss E. James, [December 1863], *American Missionary*, 8 (February 1864): 39 (third quotation).

advice of their northern deliverers and the promised land of respect, economic independence, and personal autonomy did not emerge, their betrayal would be devastating.<sup>58</sup>

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Ultimately, such betrayals would begin as soon as the war ended. During wartime freedmen had to negotiate with their white counterparts in the hostile world of occupation. After military hostilities had ended, freedmen faced an equally difficult road, especially as native whites began returning to the area. Where possible, whites continued to assert their dominance, especially in control of the land. William A. Graham, a planter and former North Carolina governor, wrote to David L. Swain, another former governor on May 11, 1865, informing him that many of his former slaves were leaving his plantation. "I have told the rest I would give victuals and clothes as usual, and would allow wages out of the crops, where I thought them earned, but this must be left to me, and my authority to remain the same," wrote Graham, reflecting the white desire to maintain authority over black laborers. Graham further reflected the whites' inability to understand black assertions of autonomy when he wrote, "They are not capable of determining for themselves, in a matter of so much moment, and leave home in search of freedom, like knights errant in search of adventures. Some 30,000 are congregated at New Berne 10,000 at Raleigh. Falsehood circulates among them, even more currently than among the whites; and they are told of persons and places, where easy employment & high wages may be had for the offering and are deluded off in this expectation." Many freedmen not only left their family plantations in search of employment elsewhere, but also to find family members who had been sold away or to request grants of land from Union agents.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Letter from Chaplain Talbot, *American Missionary* (January 1865): 6.

<sup>59</sup> William A. Graham to David L. Swain, May 11, 1865, William A. Graham, *Papers*, edited by J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1957-1984), 6: 311.

Freedmen encountered particular hardship in acquiring land, the foundational requirement for the autonomy and economic independence they desired. During the war, they had been able to cultivate, often very profitably, the land abandoned by secessionist owners. However, when the war ended, Federal authorities generally returned the land to its former owners, even the dedicated secessionists. “I wish the giving back of houses and property by the Department commander could be stopped,” implored Horace James in July 1865. “I am quite in the dark about our prospects” regarding land, responded Eli Whittlesey, North Carolina’s Freedmen’s Bureau Commissioner, to James’ repeated inquiries. “The President’s pardon may at any time take them out of our control,” Whittlesey admitted. “I would not encourage men to build on land which they are not sure of their holding.”<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, President Andrew Johnson’s liberal pardon policy for former Confederates severely limited the opportunities for freedmen’s autonomy in the region. Colonel Whittlesey protested to the Bureau’s national director, Oliver O. Howard, that returning the lands to their former owners, after the freedmen had improved the quality and value of the lands during the war, was ridiculous and unjust. “In the towns and immediate vicinity such property has increased in value fourfold,” Whittlesey argued, “and we are to pay [the rebels] for the privilege of making them rich.” When the local whites reclaimed their land, they threatened economic retaliation against the freedmen. A Freedmen’s Bureau agent predicted, “much suffering might be anticipated among freedmen about Christmas, as planters are showing an intention not to employ freedmen or aid them in obtaining support.” A few years later, another agent in coastal North Carolina warned what would happen when the Freedmen’s Bureau left: “It is to be feared,

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<sup>60</sup> Horace James to Eli Whittlesey, July 20, 1865, Letters Received, Roll 8 (first quotation), Eli Whittlesey to Horace James, October 2, 1865, Letters Sent, Roll 1 (second, third, and fourth quotations), Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of North Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, Record Group 105, [microfilm, M843]; hereinafter cited as RG 105.



however, that after the withdrawal of this Bureau, the violent hatred of the old Rebel Slave holders will result in injuries & insults to the poor Freedmen, & excite them to retaliation & revenge.”<sup>61</sup>

In the face of native white hostility, African Americans tried to negotiate better deals for themselves. In late July 1865, several freedmen from coastal Hyde County met with Horace James and requested that a former Hyde County sheriff be named their agent. James wrote, they “petitioned for the appointment of Mr. Hilliard Gibbs as their protector and magistrate as it were, stating that they had confidence in him, and believed that he would promote their interests, and do them justice.” James admired their assertiveness, and recommended Gibbs as a bureau agent, admitting that Gibbs was “a strong, two-fisted fellow.” James hoped that such an action would foster the appointment of other native white civil agents for the Bureau, to help staff the hopelessly undermanned agency. His hopes were dashed in the experiment of Mr. Gibbs. Six weeks after recommending him for an appointment, James admitted that he was “surprised and chagrined” by Gibbs’ behavior. “He is unpopular in Hyde Co... [H]e drinks hard, and is little respected,” James desponded. However, he did not give up all hope of civil agents. James considered civil appointments of the utmost importance, asserting: “If the blacks are ever treated justly it must be by and through the southern people themselves.”<sup>62</sup>

Of course, by 1877, unconcerned about whether blacks would be treated justly or not, the northern people and the Federal government abandoned African Americans throughout the South to southerners, and the disfranchisement, lynching, segregation, and Jim Crow laws that

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<sup>61</sup> Eli Whittlesey to Oliver O. Howard, October 4, 1865, Letters Sent, Roll 1 (first and second quotations); Fred H. Beecher to Horace James, September 13, 1865, Letters Sent, Roll 1 (third quotation); William Doherty, “Semi-monthly Report of Outrages by Whites Against Blacks in the State of North Carolina, Elizabeth City, August 15, 1868,” Reports of Outrages and Arrests, Roll 33 (fourth quotation), all in RG 105.

<sup>62</sup> Horace James to Eli Whittlesey, July 31, 1865 (first and second quotations), Horace James to Fred H. Beecher, September 18, 1865 (third and fourth quotations), Horace James to Fred H. Beecher, September 20, 1865 (fifth quotation), Letters Received, Roll 8, RG 105.

followed. Freedmen had strived during the war to achieve the tools necessary for autonomy and independence. After the war, they needed the support of the Federal government to solidify the gains they had made. But northerners left only civilian teachers as a token reminder of their presence. As Ronald E. Butchart astutely asserted, “The Afro-Americans were on the threshold of freedom. They needed land, protection, and a stake in society. They needed and demanded meaningful power. They were given instead a school.” This was small consolation. Butchart declared, “The gift was vastly inadequate to the needs of men and women set free in a vengeful, vindictive society.” Black efforts at political and economic empowerment simply increased white hostility, and blacks found little support from local Unionists, who generally disapproved of black suffrage, and preferred that blacks work as wage laborers instead of independent proprietors. Whites often proscribed black employment, and limited black efforts at autonomy.<sup>63</sup>

The failure of blacks to gain the independence and autonomy they so desired left a lingering feeling of bitterness. One former North Carolina slave, Thomas Hall, expressed this bitterness in an interview with a WPA worker in 1937. “Lincoln got the praise for freeing us, but did he do it? He give us freedom without giving us any chance to live to ourselves, and we still had to depend on the Southern white man for work, food, and clothing, and he held us, through our necessity and want, in a state of servitude but little better than slavery,” Hall declared. “Lincoln done but little for the Negro race, and from a living standpoint, nothing. White folks are not going to do nothing for Negroes except keep them down.” Hall concluded with the dismal declaration that many resentful blacks undoubtedly shared, “I don’t want you to write my story, because the white folks have been and are now and always will be against the Negro.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Butchart, *Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction*, 9 (quotations).

<sup>64</sup> Slave Narrative of Thomas Hall, in Hurlimann, ed., *My Folks Don’t Want Me to Talk About Slavery*, 52-53 (first and second quotations), 54 (third quotation).

Hall, who was born around 1856, was probably too young to remember that there was a brief period of time when blacks enjoyed success, and whites were not able to “keep them down.” These were the years of Union wartime occupation, when African Americans actively took control of their own lives, successfully attaining the pillars of empowerment—escape, employment, enlistment, and education. Such efforts had given them a sense of hope; indeed, “visions of freedom and civilization” did appear to be “opening before them.” Blacks would have to use the memory of these visions as support for the future, as they would have to discover new forms of empowerment to maintain control of their own lives as much as possible in the face of white hostility and Federal neglect in the postwar period.

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The Union army, whom freedmen had welcomed and in whom they had placed so much faith, proved to hinder black efforts as much as help them. Blacks had learned quickly that though the Union army sought to free them, few did so for any egalitarian motives. As will be discussed in chapter five, Union soldiers could rival local whites in terms of racial hostility, and stereotyped portrayals of African Americans. Though freedmen utilized the Union army as external agents that could help liberate them from slavery, they also suffered the demeaning and humiliating racism of their benefactors. While local whites negotiated with their occupiers, African Americans found that they too had to negotiate with their supposed liberators. Black men and women found it difficult to achieve a level of independence and equality, when neither friend nor foe was inclined to grant the latter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### “I AM NOT SO PATRIOTIC AS I WAS ONCE”: THE EFFECTS OF OCCUPATION ON THE OCCUPYING UNION SOLDIERS

On the oppressively hot afternoon of July 11, 1862, Captain William Augustus Walker of the 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry Regiment sat inside a house in downtown New Bern and witnessed a “great buck nigger, very black and very fragrant,” with “bare feet, tattered shirt and knotted hair” fanning the flies away from a lieutenant as he wrote. Though he agreed that “the flies are really tormenting and the heat is intolerable,” he averred, “I had rather endure both, than to have one of those confounded dirty niggers anywhere within twenty feet of me.” This Massachusetts officer believed “as a class they are lazy, filthy, ragged, dishonest and confounded stupid.” Walker, an unmarried thirty-five year old accountant from central Massachusetts was an avowed abolitionist. Though he was devoted to “destroy[ing] from off the face of the country every vestige of this enormous crime,” and would sacrifice his life at the battle of Cold Harbor on June 3, 1864 for this cause, he still could not abide the actual physical beings who personified the abstract institution of slavery.<sup>1</sup>

General Ambrose E. Burnside’s personal secretary, Daniel Read Larned, who was also in New Bern, shared the captain’s sentiment, remarking to a friend, “the negroes are niggers all over. They are ignorant, lazy, [and] thievish.” He had also written to Burnside’s wife, “they are the laziest, and the most degraded set of beings I ever saw.” Even John A. Hedrick, the anti-slavery native North Carolina Unionist held a low opinion of blacks in general. On his way to Beaufort, Hedrick described one of the contrabands on board his steamer as being of “the pure

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<sup>1</sup> William Augustus Walker to Sister, July 11, 14, 1862, in Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievers, eds., *Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters between New England Soldiers and the Home Front* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 61-62.

Guinea nigger style, full of talk and I think a little impudent.” Larned admitted to his sister that he recognized that “it seems as if all my letters have been ‘nigger, nigger’ since I came here, but if you could see them you would not wonder. They are amusing, yet disgusting.” This attitude reveals that even the well-meaning Yankees had a difficult time coming to grips with the massive influx of African Americans that sought refuge within the safety of Union lines. Those who welcomed freedom for the slaves could not get beyond their preconceived ideas of slaves as filthy, simple-minded, dissembling dependents.<sup>2</sup>

The Union soldiers who occupied the Carteret and Craven region had joined the Union army for a variety of reasons. The majority were volunteers who sought to serve bravely in their nation’s democratic army, and to preserve the Republic their founding fathers had created. However, their experience along the coast of North Carolina exposed them to not only the petty tyrannies of army life, but also to a foreign environment within the borders of that vaunted Republic, as the climate, inhabitants, and culture of the coastal North Carolina region shocked northern soldiers and their sensibilities. Ultimately, the experience of occupation tested their convictions—weakening some, while strengthening others. Union soldiers serving in the occupied region suffered from sagging morale that corresponded to military defeats elsewhere, and their own sense that the government was not utilizing them in the most efficient manner to end the war. However, though individuals might denounce their own particular circumstances and even the policies of the Federal government, collectively, the soldiers appeared committed to

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, March 20, 1862 (first quotation), Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside (second quotation), March 23, 1862, Larned to Sister, March 30, 1862 (fourth quotation) Box 1, Daniel Read Larned Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as LOC); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 6, 1862, in Judkin Browning and Michael Thomas Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist: John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, 1862-1865* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 2001), 2 (third quotation)

the cause—sustaining the war effort until the Confederacy had surrendered, regardless of the hostility and unpleasantness they encountered.

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During the course of the Union occupation of New Bern and Beaufort, men from approximately forty-five different regiments served for varying periods of time in the region. These men came from the northeastern states—fifteen regiments came from Massachusetts, while several hailed from Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. When they enlisted, they answered no specific call to come to the North Carolina coast to engage in the work of dealing with refugee slaves and local Unionists. Instead, they answered the same siren song that attracted hundred of thousands of their brothers in arms in the spring and summer of 1861. Enlistment had its privileges. Henry White, a private in the 21<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts Infantry, who enlisted “in my own cornfield in Boylston” on July 5, 1861, was struck by the deference shown to the troops by political officials. When Massachusetts governor John Andrew, Secretary of War Simon Cameron, Secretary of State William Henry Seward, and Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, reviewed the regiment outside the nation’s capital in November 1861, “with head[s] bared,” this hardscrabble, thirty-five year old shoemaker, small farmer, and father of four remarked proudly, “I never expected to be placed where such men would take off their hats to me.”<sup>3</sup>

Many of those who joined professed a desire to preserve the integrity of the Union. On August 23, 1861, as volunteers assembled at Camp Lincoln in Worcester, Massachusetts, wealthy local lawyer and orator Alexander H. Bullock proclaimed: “We are not to lose our national identity. We shall continue to date from George Washington, and his achievements and

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<sup>3</sup> Entry for August [n.d.], 1861, Entry for November 17, 1861, Henry White Diary (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.; hereinafter cited as AAS); U.S. Census, 1860: Worcester County, Mass., Population Schedule.

his glory.” “American constitutional government is a conviction, an idea, a principle that is imperishable, for it rests in the hearts of its people,” expounded the charismatic Bullock. Samuel Storrow, a private in the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, used similar language when he explained to his father why he interrupted his studies at Harvard to join the army. “What is the worth of this man’s life or that man’s education,” Storrow argued, “if this great and glorious fabric of our Union, raised with such toil and labor by our forefathers and transmitted to us in value increased tenfold, is to be shattered to pieces by traitorous hands and allowed to fall crumbling into the dust.” Though his father had all but begged him not to go to war, Storrow was firm in his conviction. “What shame, what mortification would it cause me years hence to be obliged to confess that in the great struggle for our national existence I stood aloof, an idle spectator, without any peculiar ties to retain me at home and yet not caring or daring do anything in the defense of my country.” Storrow ultimately gave his life in his nation’s defense—after serving nine months in the occupation of New Bern, he reenlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, which was attached to General William Sherman’s army, and was killed on March 16, 1865 at Averasboro, North Carolina.<sup>4</sup>

Others who would serve as occupation troops in North Carolina also felt the pull to be a part of the great crusade. Charles Duren, a private in the 24<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, debated with his father, a merchant who naturally wanted Charles to stay employed clerking for a mercantile firm in Cambridge. Duren wrote his father from Boston in July 1861, admitting, “I love my business, but I love my country better.” He pleaded, “I *can not* if I would resist. It is no

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<sup>4</sup> Bullock quoted in Charles F. Walcott, *History of the Twenty-first regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers, in the War for the Preservation of the Union, 1861-1865*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1882), 4 (first and second quotations); Samuel Storrow to father, October 12, 1863, Civil War Letters of Samuel Storrow (microfilm) (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.; hereinafter cited as MHS) (third, fourth, and fifth quotations); Samuel Storrow Civil War Journals, 1863-1865, MS 192 (Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Tex.) (biographical information).

sudden and exciting burst of patriotism, from the first I have been willing & desirous, of giving my life (if *God wills*) to my country's cause." Benjamin Day, who enlisted in 1862, echoed the theme of making his ancestors proud. He proclaimed that he was going to fight "to protect our flag against the menaces of a traitorous foe, to fight for that liberty which was bought by the blood of our forefathers." William Augustus Willoughby declared to his wife, "I was always a law abiding citizen, and joined the army to sustain the Government and Laws under which I was willing to live and obey." Duren wrote his father from Boston, two weeks before he joined the 24<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, "A Soldier's life is not one I should choose unless, as now it is a *necessity*, necessary for our country's future welfare and glory." Duren also derived inspiration from a higher power, assuring his parents, "I know I am doing what I feel God would have me; altho it is at times hard to think of breaking in upon the best part of my life still such must not be thought of while our country is in peril."<sup>5</sup>

The volunteers also drew strength from loved ones at home who supported their efforts to enlist. Joseph Barlow, who would eventually serve in New Bern as a corporal in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts, undoubtedly took comfort in his wife's praise of his decision to join the 8<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts (a 90 days regiment) in April 1861, immediately after Lincoln called for troops. "I feel proud to think my husband belongs to [the 8<sup>th</sup>], and that he was one of the first to go," Ellen Barlow wrote her husband. Her poignant missive reflects the pain of separation, and also the unrealistic concept of how long the war would take: "although 3 months seems a very long

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Duren to "my dear father," July 1, 1861 (first and second quotation), Charles Duren to father, October 10, 1861 (fifth quotation), Charles Duren to mother and father, November 1, 1861 (sixth quotation), Charles M. Duren Papers (Special Collections & Archives, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.; hereinafter cited as EU); Entry for November 25, 1862, Journal of Benjamin H. Day, December 3, 1862, Civil War Collection (Beverly Historical Society & Museum, Beverly, Mass.) (third quotation); William Augustus Willoughby to wife, August 1, 1862, William Augustus Willoughby Papers (typescript), AAS (fourth quotation).



time to have you gone away from me yet I will try and bear it like a soldier's wife, and if you have to fight, fight bravely for your country.”<sup>6</sup>

After the Union defeat at the battle of Manassas on July 21, 1861, it became apparent that the war would last longer than just three months. The Federal government redoubled their efforts to recruit more men, and formulated a more comprehensive strategy than just the “Forward to Richmond” philosophy that had dominated both public and private discourse in the weeks before the battle. As Federal authorities enacted General Winfield Scott’s plan of blockade, they developed the idea of securing bases along the North Carolina coastline to serve as refueling and re-supply ports for the blockade squadrons, as well as open up opportunities to disrupt and destroy Confederate supply lines supporting the armies in Virginia. In December 1861, Lincoln authorized General Ambrose Burnside to lead an expeditionary force to seize the ports and sounds of coastal North Carolina.<sup>7</sup>

Burnside set about drafting his attack plans in December 1861, for an expedition that would shove off from its northern staging ports in January 1862. He intended to capture Roanoke Island, which controlled water-borne access to the Albemarle Sound, as well as New Bern and Beaufort, two important ports at the southern edge of the Outer Banks. The expedition engendered eager expectation among some soldiers. Henry White wrote, “Everyone is in high spirits at the prospect of soon having a chance of doing something for the cause we love.” New Bern would provide an excellent base for staging raids into the Confederate hinterland, while Beaufort’s deep harbor not only offered the perfect refuge from the unpredictable Atlantic storms, but also would serve as a prime refueling and repair station for ships on blockade duty.

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<sup>6</sup> Ellen Barlow to Joseph Barlow, April 30, 1861, Joseph Barlow Papers (United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.; hereinafter cited as USAMHI).

<sup>7</sup> Abraham Lincoln to Ambrose E. Burnside, December 26, 1861, in Michael P. Johnson, ed., *Abraham Lincoln, Slavery, and the Civil War: Selected Writings and Speeches* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001), 149.

The expedition proved successful, as the general captured his three objectives in a month and a half with relatively little loss of life. Burnside's success made him very popular with his army.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, Burnside engendered strong attachment from the men who served under him. Larned wrote, "The General is a man who is mindful of all in his service and receives the love and respect of his men in return." Hale Wesson, a private in the 25<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, concurred with Larned: "I tell you Gen. Burnside has a place dear in the heart of every Soldier under his command." Though Burnside had brought these men to North Carolina, he did not remain long to share their trials. In early July, the War Department ordered Burnside to sail for Virginia to offer relief for General George McClellan's distressed Army of the Potomac. On July 6, 1862, Burnside departed with 7,000 men. He left in the region three brigades, with about 9,000 men, under the command of General John G. Foster. These remaining brigades would serve as the backbone of the occupying force in North Carolina. After Burnside left, soldiers testified to their attachment to him. A Rhode Island soldier later remembered that despite Burnside's mixed record during the war, he "was loved by the troops in North Carolina."<sup>9</sup>

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The troops may have loved their bewhiskered commander, but they did not always adore the region to which he brought them. North Carolina might as well have been a foreign country, for that's how many northern soldiers viewed the climate, landscape, and inhabitants of the area. One urban soldier commented, after eating possum meat, "I feel I am seeing strange countries, perhaps following in the footsteps of Lord Bateman as well as of Raleigh." One Massachusetts

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<sup>8</sup> For more a detailed account of Burnside's military expedition, see Richard Allen Sauers, *The Burnside Expedition in North Carolina: A Succession of Honorable Victories* (Dayton, Oh.: Morningside House, 1996). For more on Beaufort's wartime role as blockading port, see Dan Blair, "'One Good Port': Beaufort Harbor, North Carolina, 1863-1864," *North Carolina Historical Review* 79 (July 2002): 301-326.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Read Larned to Sister, December 27, 1861, Box 1, Larned Papers (first quotation); Hale Wesson to Father & Mother, April 5, 1862, Hale Wesson Letters (microfilm), EU (second quotation); Philip S. Chase, "Service with Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery in North Carolina," *Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society of Rhode Island, Personal Narratives*, 3rd Series, No. 7 (Providence: Snow & Farnham, 1884), 6 (third quotation).

soldier commented on a unique cottage he saw that was unlike the houses and shanties that dominated the region. He quipped that the location had “an air as if it had been brought whole from some foreign country—New England, for instance.” Most soldiers were predisposed to think poorly of the southern landscape and culture, based on what they had read about the South—in travel accounts written before the war. One soldier wrote to his sister, “If you want to know how these N.C. swamps appear, just look up a sketch by Porte Crayon of the eastern part of North Carolina in an old number of Harper’s that will show you exactly.”<sup>10</sup>

Their exposure to eastern North Carolina’s natural and social environment did not change their impressions greatly. Edward Bartlett, a private in the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, marveled at the dense native woods, which were “so different from northern forests.” Instead of the many varieties of chestnut, beech, maple, walnut, hickory, birch, poplar, and elm trees that infused the forests surrounding his native Concord, eastern North Carolina was covered with “Great pines and oaks... hanging down with long grey moss, and bunches of green mistletoe growing from the top of the oaks and the holly tree with there shining green leaves and red berries—all overgrown with a thick underbrush of briers.” While the astonished Bartlett noted that he moved through “a glorious country of pine swamps, every tree tapped for turpentine,” others in his

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<sup>10</sup> Charles E. Briggs to “Lizzie,” November 22, 1862, Charles E. Briggs Letters, MHS (first quotation); James A. Emmerton, *A Record of the Twenty-third Regiment Mass. Vol. Infantry in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (Boston: William Ware, 1886), 84 (second quotation); Henry Clapp to Helen, April 28, 1863, in John R. Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle: The North Carolina Service of Pvt. Henry A. Clapp, Company F, Forty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, 1862-1863* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1998), 195 (third quotation). Porte Crayon, the pseudonym of David Hunter Strother, wrote many travel accounts for national magazines, such as *Harper’s Weekly*. The most well-known, and probably the most widely-read antebellum travel accounts are those of Frederick Law Olmsted: *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States, with Remarks on Their Economy* (New York: Dix & Edwards, 1856); *A Journey through Texas; or, A saddle-trip on the South-western Frontier* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Company, 1857); *A Journey in the Backcountry* (New York: Mason brothers, 1860); and *The Cotton Kingdom: a Traveller’s Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* (New York: Mason brothers, 1861).

regiment, such as Horatio Newhall, son of a Dorchester tanner, were less charitable, declaring, “This is the most desolate country I ever saw, nothing but niggers, sand and pine trees.”<sup>11</sup>

Soldiers were struck by the hostility of the natural environment. The ubiquitous pocosins not only were difficult to navigate, but also concealed many unusual antagonists. On April 12, 1862, as his regiment marched up to Bachelor’s Creek to set up an outpost north of New Bern, Dexter Ladd, a private in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts, wrote, “We have frequent skirmishes with the Enemy—nothing but Swamps, Snakes, Rebels & Lizards round here.” In May, another soldier noted that his regiment skirmished with “Snakes lizards and wild cats and a lot of other quadrupeds to numerous to mention.” He also identified other staples of the pocosins when he added, “It is getting so warm here and the misquitoes is as thick as the devil.”<sup>12</sup>

The aggressiveness of the insects that plagued the region astounded the soldiers. Henry Clapp, a private in the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, wrote home to a friend in May, 1863 about the flies: “To sleep during the day is impossible, unless one’s face is wrapped up in a handkerchief.”<sup>13</sup> In addition to the flies were wood ticks, which one soldier described as “a most disagreeable little bug—he burrows himself in your hide without asking, devouring as he goes.” Willoughby, complained of the fleas: “Your bed at night and your clothes in the day time is completely lined

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<sup>11</sup> Edward Bartlett to Ripley, December 27, 1862, Edward J. Bartlett Papers, MHS (first, second, and third quotations); George B. Emerson, *A Report on the Trees and Shrubs Growing Naturally in the Forests of Massachusetts*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1878; originally published, 1846); Massachusetts Adjutant General’s Office, *Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the Civil War*, 8 vols. (Norwood, Mass.: Norwood Press, 1931-1935), IV: 291 (Bartlett); Horatio Newhall to George, December 1, 1862, Horatio Newhall Papers, Civil War Miscellaneous Collection, USAMHI (fourth quotation); U.S. Census, 1860: Dorchester, Mass., Population Schedule (Newhall).

<sup>12</sup> Entry for April 12, 1862, Dexter B. Ladd Papers, Civil War Miscellaneous Collection, USAMHI (first quotation); William Lind to Thomas Lind, May 20, 1862, William W. Lind Papers, USAMHI (second and third quotations). For more on how nineteenth-century Americans viewed climate as integrally related to health, see Conevery Bolton-Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Henry Clapp to Willie, May 12, 1863, in Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 206 (first and second quotations). See also Daniel Read Larned to sister, June 2, 1862, Box 1, Larned Papers; Entry dated May 2, 1863, in John Jaspers Wyeth, *Leaves From a Diary, written while serving in Co. E, 44th Mass., From September, 1862, to June, 1863* (Boston: L.F. Lawrence & Co., 1878), 52.

with them.” Oliver Case noted that annoying Connecticut insects had nothing on the sandy hills of the North Carolina coast, “where sand flies and fleas seemed as if to foreclose mortgages upon your carcass.”<sup>14</sup> Then of course, there were the ubiquitous mosquitoes, of which John M. Spear, a surgeon with the 24<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, declared, “There are larger ones, more of them, and worse biters, than I ever saw before.” One species of mosquito would prove a very dangerous enemy in the summer of 1864. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, carrier of the dreaded yellow fever, made its presence felt beginning in July 1864, causing an outbreak of yellow fever that killed nearly 1,000 civilians and soldiers.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the unaccustomed plague of insects, northern soldiers were struck by the unusual duration and intensity of the southern summer, bringing a heat for which they were not acclimated. “Thermometer standing 108 degrees in the shade,” wrote John E. Bassett on July 8, 1862. In fact, Bassett, a native of Southbridge, Massachusetts, opened nearly every diary entry for July and August with a comment on how unbelievably hot it was to him. Isaac Newton Parker, a Union soldier from Rodman, New York, wrote his sister, “It is so awful and mighty hot for the last few days that it seems almost impossible for man or beast to move about in the sun.” Parker noted that even the pine trees, “each clothed and glistening with pitch, streaming down their grand trunks like water by the heat, [appeared] almost ready to take fire.” These soldiers found the elevated temperatures to be downright diabolic. George Jewett, a sergeant in the 17<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Edward J. Bartlett to Martha, March 9, 1863, Bartlett Papers (first quotation); William Augustus Willoughby to wife, October 29, 1862, Willoughby Papers (second quotation); Oliver Case to Sister, May 8, 1862, Oliver Case letters (typescript), Civil War Collection (Simsbury Historical Society, Simsbury, Conn.) (third quotation).

<sup>15</sup> Henry Clapp to Willie, May 12, 1863, in Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 206 (first quotation); John M. Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth regiment, Massachusetts volunteer infantry, Dec. 1861 to Dec, 1864, 1892,” (typescript), p. 89, MHS (second quotation); Thomas J. Farnham and Francis P. King, “‘The March of the Destroyer’: The New Bern Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1864,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 73 (October 1996): 449, 471. See also William Augustus Willoughby to wife, October 29, 1862, Willoughby papers.

Massachusetts, declared one hot July day, “I don’t believe the devil would live here if he wasn’t obliged to.”<sup>16</sup>

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The natural environment was only one of the elements of North Carolina that made the Union soldiers feel they were in a foreign country. The local inhabitants left a distinctly unfavorable impression on many. Soldiers had heard much about the supposedly degraded poor whites of the South. Exposure to poor whites did little to alter northern soldiers’ opinions. One soldier wrote of the striking dichotomy between the high-minded principles of the Massachusetts soldiers, of which he was one, and those of the southern people: “The firm strong feelings of loyalty, which fill the breasts, and prompt the inhabitants of one place to risk every thing, even life itself for the support of those principles of religion and liberty which from the first have been the chief corner stone of the government, afford a striking contrast with the loose and despicable principles which are the acknowledged belief of the people of the south.”<sup>17</sup>

Northern soldiers often tried to describe these people of such despicable principles. One wrote of the Confederate soldiers who fled to Union lines after the capture of New Bern: “I pity them from my heart; the most of them are not intelligent not half of them can read so one of them told me they are just the men to be led by the nose by political leaders.” Others were less sympathetic. Daniel Larned wrote that the poor whites of New Bern “are a most forlorn and miserable set of people.” The next day he described their “contemptible” appearance, saying “they are white a[s] chalk, long, lean, a[nd] lanky with long yellow hair.” Another soldier

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<sup>16</sup> Entry for July 8, 1862, John E. Bassett Diary (microfilm), MHS (first quotation); Isaac Newton Parker to Caroline Parker, June 26, 1864 (second quotation), Isaac Newton Parker to Martha Hoyt Parker, August 15, 1863 (third quotation), in Laurence M. Hauptman, ed., *A Seneca Indian in the Union Army, The Civil War Letters of Sergeant Isaac Newton Parker, 1861-1865* (Shippensburg, Pa.: Burd Street Press, 1995), 82, 100; George Jewett to “Deck,” July 8, 1862, George O. Jewett Collection, LOC (fourth quotation).

<sup>17</sup> Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 237, 297-299, passim (on poor whites); George H. Weston to “Dear Sir,” February 15, 1863, New Bern Occupation Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as SHC) (quotation).

claimed, “They are horribly sallow, pale, and all have the shakes.” One Massachusetts soldier was struck by their ignorance, declaring, “the fact is the poor whites of the south are not so well informed as a boy ten years old in the north and have not much more judgement.”<sup>18</sup>

One of the sights that particularly disturbed the young males serving in the Union army was the unattractive features that characterized southern white women. One soldier wrote to his wife in November 1862, “all the female population here are rather black & rough looking.” Another assured his sister he would not be seduced by a southern woman. “You spoke about falling in love with some of these southern girls,” Alfred Chamberlin wrote his sister in October 1862. “Do not worry yourself about that for there is not a woman in all North Carolina that I would snap my finger for.” Northern soldiers also excoriated the peculiar southern female practice of taking snuff, which northern soldiers found revolting and horribly unrefined. “The women here, both white and black, ‘dig’ snuff like thunder,” proclaimed George Jewett. He described the process to a friend, “they put the snuff on a piece of pine, and stick it up in their gums, and then smack their lips as though they were eating something peculiarly nice. It will do for niggers but white women, faugh!”<sup>19</sup>

Henry Clapp suggested that he would scorn a local white woman over any alternative. “I don’t imagine that I shall ever be put to the proof,” Clapp wrote, “but I believe that were I forced to the horrible alternative of choosing a bride from these whites or from the negroe women, I should prefer the darkest Ethiop that ever made midnight blacker, rather than one of these

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<sup>18</sup> Entry for March 18, 1862, Henry White Diary (first quotation); Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, March 23, 1862, (second quotation), Daniel Read Larned to sister, March 24, 1862 (third and fourth quotation), Box 1, Larned Papers; Henry Clapp to mother, November 14, 1862, in Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 22 (fifth quotation); Charles Henry Tubbs to wife, February 25—March 3, 1863, Charles Henry Tubbs Letters (North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.; hereinafter cited as NCSA) (sixth quotation).

<sup>19</sup> Oliver W. Peabody to Mary Peabody, November 17, 1862, Oliver W. Peabody Papers, MHS (first quotation); Alfred Otis Chamberlin to sister, October 7, 1862, Alfred Otis Chamberlin Papers (Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.; hereinafter cited as DU) (second, and third quotations); George Jewett to “Deck,” June 1, 1862, Jewett Collection (fourth and fifth quotations).

wretched, forlorn, poor white women.” Charles B. Quick, a Sergeant in the 3<sup>rd</sup> New York Light Artillery, expressed a sentiment that many shared when he wrote his wife, “I keep looking forward to the time when I shall leave this miserable place & go where there are civilized people.” His experience in the South had left him with nothing but unfavorable impressions of the white men and women: “they are not civilized people in this part of the world, they are worse than our hogs and cattle at the north.”<sup>20</sup>

Yet not all soldiers found the southern women to be less refined than northern swine and bovines. Dexter Ladd kept a diary, where he recorded his amorous activities while on duty. In June 1863, he wrote, “Sgt. Bragston and I went scouting and got acquainted with some good looking girls.” They went to see them twice more, and at each visit Ladd commented that they “had a gay old time.” Even Alfred Chamberlin, who had been disgusted by the southern women and their habits nine months earlier, wrote to his parents in July 1863 that he had just met “the prettiest little snuff chewing piece of divinity that I have seen out here. She was quite a Union girl and quite sociable.” His comment embodies historian Reid Mitchell’s suggestion that a woman’s loyalty enhanced her beauty to northern soldiers. “Physical attractiveness became equated with ideology through the link of virtue,” Reid argued. Unlike the ugly secessionist “she-devils,” Mitchell noted that to northern soldiers, “Virtuous women are pretty, virtuous women are pro-Union.”<sup>21</sup>

Of course, some soldiers’ libidos drove them to mingle with the opposite sex, even if women’s loyalties were somewhat ambiguous. Edward Bartlett wrote to his sister Martha in

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<sup>20</sup> Henry Clapp to mother, November 14, 1862, in Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 22 (first and second quotations); Charles Quick to “Sister Mary,” February 25, 1863, Charles B. Quick Correspondence, SHC (third and fourth quotations).

<sup>21</sup> Entry for June 4, 1863 (first quotation), Entry for June 7, 1863 (second quotation), Ladd Papers; Alfred Chamberlin to father and mother, July 11, 1863, Chamberlin papers (third quotation); Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 98 (fourth, fifth, and sixth quotations).



March 1863 of one of his more memorable encounters: “About a mile from camp there lives a man (poor white) named Hardison. They have Union protection but are secesh enough. Well! He has two very pretty daughters.” Bartlett described how he and a friend had gone to their house under the ruse of asking for eggs. “They then asked us to come in. We were very glad to accept! The two young ladies were at home alone... We sat down and had a very pleasant half hour call. They were very pretty, modest and polite girls. Cassie the younger is the handsomest but her sister Lizzie is the smartest and brightest. They are about 16 or 18 years old. They have not left the house for a year, have not been to New berne since the capture. They used to go every day to school.” Bartlett even admitted that part of his socializing took on the air of a traditional Victorian chaperoned courting ritual: “Cassy was spinning and I handed her her shreads of cotton, and [played] the gallant.”<sup>22</sup>

Other soldiers carried the courtship ritual out to its final sanctification. Corporal Charles W. Lawrence in the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts married “a lovely young secesh damsel,” the daughter of New Bern banker Israel Disosway in May 1863. Disosway had been a prosperous slaveholder before the war, with real estate valued at nearly \$27,000. Upon the marriage, Disosway transferred his remaining property into the hands of Lawrence, while he, for unknown reasons, refused to take the oath and left the town with other secessionists. Lawrence’s was the most discussed, but not the only, wartime wedding between Union soldiers and local girls.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Edward J. Bartlett to Martha, March 25, 1863, Bartlett Papers.

<sup>23</sup> Edward Bartlett to Ripley, May 6, 1863, Bartlett Papers (quotation); Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 203n (Disosway). For more on marriages, see J. Madison Drake, *The History of the Ninth New Jersey Veteran Vols., A Record of Its Service from Sept. 13th, 1861, to July 12th, 1865* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Journal Printing House, 1889), 75 (May 1863 wedding); Mamré Marsh Wilson, *A Researcher's Journal: Beaufort, NC & the Civil War* (Beaufort, N.C.: author, 1999), 22-23; Deposition of Clifford Simpson, Deposition of Sarah Trenwith, *Sarah F. Trenwith, executrix of Clifford F. Simpson, deceased v. United States* (case file no. 10014), Records of the United States Court of Claims, Record Group 123, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter cited as RG 123).

While soldiers were disgusted or entranced by the appearance and habits of the local whites, they were simply overwhelmed by the presence of African Americans in the region. Though the armies ultimately ended up freeing the slaves, the majority of soldiers did not consider the abolition of slavery to be either a primary or even a secondary motivation for their enlistment. Many carried strong racist feelings to war with them, and their exposure to blacks often reinforced their preconceived notions. As historian David Cecere points out, the northern soldiers “carried their home front culture with them into what amounted to a foreign land,” because of the numbers of African Americans. Most of these soldiers had practically no exposure to blacks before the war, and now they served “at the front lines of racial adaptation.”<sup>24</sup>

William Walker’s comment that opened this chapter—“they are lazy, filthy, ragged, dishonest and confounded stupid”—encapsulated the soldiers’ beliefs regarding slaves. A common stereotype that the soldiers repeated was that blacks preferred a filthy existence and seemed immune to the sweltering heat. Alfred Holcombe, a private in the 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, wrote to his sister in the summer of 1863, “the little nigs are lying around in the sun and sand as thick as toads after a shower but we have to keep in out of the sun to feel comfortable.” He further commented on their lack of regard for personal cleanliness, stating, “If a nigger goes to set down he will go out of his way to get in the sand before he will sit on the grass. The nastier they get the better they feel.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> David A. Cecere, “Carrying the Home Front to War: Soldiers, Race, and New England Culture during the Civil War,” in Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., *Union Soldiers and the Northern Home Front: Wartime Experiences and Postwar Adjustments* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 296 (first quotation), 297 (second quotation).

<sup>25</sup> William Augustus Walker to Sister, July 11, 14, 1862, in Silber and Sievers, eds., *Yankee Correspondence*, 62 (first quotation); Alfred Holcomb to Emma, May 31—June 1, 1863 (second quotation), Alfred Holcomb to Father, July 12, 1863 (third quotation), in Henry C. Lind, ed., *The Long Road for Home: The Civil War Experiences of Four Farmboy Soldiers of the Twenty-Seventh Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteer Infantry as Told by their Personal Correspondence, 1861-1864* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992), 130, 134.

In addition to being filthy, soldiers believed that blacks were naturally too shiftless and lazy to work without compulsion. Horatio Newhall, a soldiers in the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts who arrived in the region in November 1862, described his contempt of black inhabitants: “The niggers are the most dependent & lazy set of dogs I ever saw.” He averred that they recognized their own inferior status by claiming, “They say themselves that they don’t know what they could do if there were no white men to take care of them.” Captain William G. Leonard of the 46<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment agreed with that latter sentiment. “Many of them are too lazy to work well, & they need the restraint of the soldier & the discipline of Courts Martial to make them profitable laborers,” he informed the department’s commander. He suggested that “the Government might get more return for what they are doing for him, which return he should be obliged to render.” He proposed to enlist blacks in work battalions, set up like regiments. His request to lead such an organization operation was respectfully denied.<sup>26</sup>

While soldiers reinforced their belief in the slaves’ inherent intellectual inferiority, William Walker noted that there was some hope. “There are exceptional cases & if I could find a decent bright mulatto boy I would take him & bring him home with me,” he wrote, “but the boys learn mischief & wickedness so early that a respectable specimen is as scarce as hen’s teeth.” Some of the soldiers treated the local blacks as ignorant in the realm of normal human behavior as well, and used them as their exotic toys. Edward Bartlett related, “the boys are having great sport trying to make ‘Long’ the nig who washes our dishes dance. I wish you could see a darkey dance. It is a kind of a shuffle like the Irish dance.” Others played dangerous pranks on their servants. In December 1862, while on an expedition towards Goldsboro, a

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<sup>26</sup> Horatio Newhall to George, December 1, 1862, Newhall Papers (first and second quotations); William G. Leonard to John G. Foster, April 26, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, Records of the United States Continental Commands, Record Group 393, National Archives (hereinafter cited as RG 393) (third, fourth, and fifth quotations). For more on Union perceptions, see Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, March 20, 1862, Box 1, Larned Papers; John M. Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth regiment,” p. 62;

soldier “seized my nigger” whom he amusedly dubbed “Gutta percha.” On one cold night, the soldier “woke up and found Gutta Percha lying between me and the fire. I immediately roll[ed] him into the fire and he did not move until one of his boots burnt off when he thought he kinder smelt some nigger’s foot burning and such a Howling I never heard before.”<sup>27</sup>

Nathan G. Newton wrote to his mother in late 1862, “the other day we had some fun with them. Our regiment would give one of them 5 cents and they would put them in a blanket and toss them up and down some times their feet would be in the air and their head, sometime they will but their heads to geather.” One soldier recorded on the back lining of his diary an example of the impromptu and humilitaing “oaths” the soldiers would require the escaping slaves to take:

“I, Junius Long, or any other man do Solemnly Swear to Support the Constitution of these United States and Black yer Boots, get a Pail of water and shine up your Brasses and Bear True allegiance to the Pope of Rome, John Brown and Brigham Young, So help me General Burnside or any other man.”<sup>28</sup>

These comments by northern soldiers reveal that white images of blacks were, in Cecere’s words, initially “marked by two dimensional understandings of African Americans: blacks were subhuman, simple-minded, amusing pets, often the butt of jokes.” These images were rooted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century developments of racial ideology, in which whites justified their own exploitation of blacks by creating a negative racial image of African Americans. Theories of racial inferiority stemmed from a form of biological determinism, which stated that blacks were intellectually and socially inferior, largely because they did not share “civilized” European cultural traits. Many northerners were also steeped in Free Soil ideology, which denounced the institution of slavery as antagonistic to free enterprise, and detrimental to the white working

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<sup>27</sup> William Augustus Walker to Sister, July 11, 14, 1862, in Silber and Sievers, eds., *Yankee Correspondence*, 61-62 (first and second quotations); Edward Bartlett to “Lizzie,” February 17, 1863, Bartlett Papers (third quotation); Entry for December 18, 1862, Ladd Papers (fourth, fifth, and sixth quotations).

<sup>28</sup> Nathan G. Newton to mother, November 22, 1862, Newton Letters, EU (first quotation); Inner lining of Dexter Ladd diary, Ladd Papers (second quotation). See also “Carl” to “My Dear Parents,” April 6, 1863, Folder 44, Federal Soldiers Letters, SHC.

class. Northern soldiers grew up loathing the institution of slavery, but rarely distinguishing the institution from its workforce. As a result, they found that they could simultaneously hate slavery and slaves. They could read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and feel sympathy for those fictional, noble characters, but they could not transubstantiate those characters into the physical beings they encountered. As a result, the first year of exposure often brought out the worst in soldiers' racial prejudice.<sup>29</sup>

Some of this antagonism toward blacks stemmed from common soldiers' perception that blacks received better treatment from their own officers. Alfred Holcombe complained to his sister in August 1863, "A nigar is thought more of here than a private." When on a march, if a black man needed a rest, he was given aid, while "a poor private has got to get a long the best way he can." Another soldier complained that blacks had more freedom than soldiers. Connecticut soldier Oliver Case found the ripe blackberries just outside his camp tantalizing and torturing. "They are plenty," he wrote, "but we cannot get at them but the darkies have full swing at them for they can go out and in when they please."<sup>30</sup>

Union soldiers also noticed that blacks came and went at leisure in other areas besides blackberry patches. Many black women, who came into camp ostensibly to sell pies and cakes, often ended up dispensing sexual favors. Sexual interaction began immediately after troops arrived. In May 1862, local resident James Rumley commented ruefully "some of [the soldiers] have been seen promenading the streets with Negro wenches." Edwin Fish, a soldier in the 3<sup>rd</sup> New York Artillery, assured his young wife that he would remain faithful to her despite the

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<sup>29</sup> Cecere, "Carrying the Home Front to War," 297. For more on development of racial thought, see Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper Row Publishers, 1971), especially chaps 1 and 2. For more on the free soil political thought, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), especially chap. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Alfred Holcomb to Emma, August 4, 1863, in Lind, ed., *Long Road for Home*, 139 (first and second quotation); Oliver Case to sister, May 24, 1862, Case Letters (third and fourth quotations).

temptations that surrounded him: “*Lucy you need not fear about my troubling the wenches any.*”

“I do not think as much of the darkies as I did,” Edwin continued. “About half of them are regular prostitutes and I am sorry to say a good many of the first boys that came out are degraded enough to run with them.”<sup>31</sup>

The boys were not the only ones to run with ladies of the night. Isaac N. Roberts wrote home disgusted with the scandalous lack of virtue some officers displayed. “Some of the Captains in a regiment I know of, I will not number it, you can guess, will not permit a private to enter their quarters, without first having a sergent go in, and ask permission for an interview,” he protested. “Yet Nigger wenches are seen to go out and in 2 or 3 times a day, and even to stay all night. And all of this has to be endured for the love of country or for glory. And for one I must confess I am tired of it. I wish to be at liberty again, where I can act and speak for myself, not be considered so much inferior to the vile and loathsome Nigger wenches about town.”<sup>32</sup>

Several soldiers denounced homefront liberals who proselytized about black rights. Joseph Barlow wrote to his wife in November 1862, “It is all very fine to talk about but I want some of the establishment to come out here and live that’s all and then if they don’t alter their tune I am mistaken.” Similarly, Alfred Holcombe wrote to some friends in August 1862, “I would like to have that ace cousin of mine drafted and see how he likes the land of dixey and the black greasy niggars. He would not think to mutch of them as I have.” Hale Wesson was much more vehement in his condemnation of the ubiquitous presence of African Americans. He wrote his father in September 1863, “As for Niggers I am disgusted with their infernal Black harts now.

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<sup>31</sup> Entry for May [n.d.], 1862, James Rumley Diary, Levi Woodbury Pigott Collection, NCSA (first quotation); Edwin Fish to Lucy Fish, September 25, 1862, Edwin R. Fish Letters, EU (second, third, and fourth quotations).

<sup>32</sup> Isaac N. Roberts to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt, December 5, 1862, Ebenezer Hunt Papers, MHS.

They are set on the same barrel with a white man. There is no being where they are... They are master now and we are slaves... I say dam the nigger.”<sup>33</sup>

Wesson’s bitterness stemmed partly from the Federal government’s efforts to enlist black men into the armed forces. While Union authorities in New Bern began raising black troops in February 1863, the process did not start in Beaufort until May 30, 1863. James Rumley happily noted in July 1863, “Mutterings of discontent which are heard from officers and soldiers plainly indicates that this Negro which has been introduced among them stings their pride, quenches their ambition, and is actually disintegrating the already broken fragments of the once massive and powerful army of the Union.” Though the army was in not in danger of collapsing as Rumley hoped, it did show signs of discontent. Mary Peabody, visiting her husband in New Bern, wrote to a friend, “This question of Negro regiments is going I hope to be fairly tried, but the feeling against them is doubtless very strong and it seems to me strangely puerile.” For instance, one white soldier described black soldiers as “regular Congoes with noses as broad as plantains and lips like raw beefsteaks.” John Hedrick could only begrudgingly admit, “They don’t look as dangerous and bloodthirsty as might be expected.”<sup>34</sup>

The animosity could lead to violence. On February 23, 1863, George H. Troup wrote in his diary, “There is a rumor that the... 9th NJ & 24th Mass burnt up the nigger huts of the regiment in their brigade.” While this rumor cannot be substantiated as fact, its presence as speculation suggests that such an incident would not have been surprising. Two months later Troup recorded an incident in which he took part: “Three of 17th Mass Reg got into a fuss with

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, November 19, 1862, Barlow Papers (first quotation); Alfred Holcomb to Milton, August 29, 1862, Alfred Holcomb Papers, USAMHI (second quotation); Hale Wesson to father, September 26, 1863, Wesson Letters (third quotation).

<sup>34</sup> Entry dated May 31, 1863 (enlistment office), Entry dated July 3, 1863 (first quotation), Rumley Diary; Mary Peabody to [unknown], March 1, 1863, Peabody Papers, MHS (second quotation); George Jewett to “Deck,” July 18, 1863, Jewett Collection (third quotation); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 19, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 130 (fourth quotation).

the niggers & some of our boys & the 96th NYork came to their rescue.” Tensions between white and black regiments continued to simmer throughout the summer. Conscripted Union soldiers, who arrived in August 1863, demonstrated particular antipathy for blacks in the area. James Rumley recorded with obvious pleasure: “They drive the Negroes from their presence whenever they encounter them.”<sup>35</sup>

These examples seem to prove Mary Peabody’s observation that resentment was hierarchical: “As a rule it seems to grow stronger as you descend in rank, the privates having more feeling than the officers”; though not always. Over dinner one day in 1863, Commodore H.K. Davenport, commander of the Union gunboat squadrons, asked Mary’s husband, Captain Oliver Peabody, “What should you do, sir, if you were to meet a Nigger Colonel, Should you salute him?” “Certainly, I should,” replied the captain, adding that rank outweighed skin color. Mary related: “The commodore looked at him with horror and getting up from his chair gesticulated violently exclaiming in his indignation, ‘My blood boils at the thought.’”<sup>36</sup>

The commodore was not alone, as the presence of black troops caused many heated episodes between officers as well as enlisted men. Long after the war, Charles Codman of the 45<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment remembered many officers’ reactions when the first black troops arrived in 1863. “Many of the officers—especially the New York clubmen on General Foster’s staff—were much opposed to the levying of Negro troops and said so,” he recalled, “but the general himself was much too wise to do this.” Codman tried to overcome this prejudice by deliberately exposing his staff to a black soldier. “General Wilde had a colored surgeon on his staff, a Cuban by birth, but educated in France—a very modest & quiet man. The opponents of Negro troops thought it bad enough that enlisted men should be Negroes, but than an officer

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<sup>35</sup> Entry for Feb. 23, 1863, April 24, 1863, George H. Troup Diary, Troup Family Papers, MHS (first and second quotations); Entry for August 2, 1863, Rumley Diary (third quotation).

<sup>36</sup> Mary Peabody to [unknown], March 1, 1863, Peabody Papers.



should be of that color was beyond words. I asked Wilde... to bring his colored surgeon with him some day.” Codman related, “Major Jack Anderson appeared on this occasion with some other officers. As they had often said that they would not recognize a Negro officer socially, I wondered what would happen—but they behaved perfectly well, as I felt certain they would.”<sup>37</sup>

As Codman’s story reveals, Union soldiers adapted to the presence of black soldiers, and eventually accepted them as, if nothing else, a means to help end the war. When the 55<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts (Colored) Regiment arrived in July 1863, a Union surgeon declared, “We were very glad to see them, even if they are black, for our garrison has been quite small . . . I do not object to black soldiers, but rather, think they should do some of the fighting.” A naval officer was impressed with the black troops he watched drill in June 1863: “There is a firmness & determination in their looks & in the way in which they handle a musket that I like.” The officer admitted his misconception of them: “I never have believed that a common plantation negro could be brought to face a white man. I supposed that everything in the shape of spirit & self-respect had been crushed out of them generations back, but am glad to find myself mistaken.”<sup>38</sup>

This suggests that a shift in racial attitudes occurred as soldiers spent more time around the freedmen. David Cecere has argued, constant interaction with blacks changed soldiers’ preconceived racial perceptions, creating more complex racial models. “Dehumanizing attitudes were not wholly discarded,” Cecere argues, “but there was no longer a unified predominant

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<sup>37</sup> Charles Codman Reminiscence, 1897 volume, p. 240-242, Charles Codman Papers, MHS (second and third quotations). For more examples, see also James Cartwright to Mother, February 25, 1863, Cartwright Family Papers, Civil War Times Illustrated Collection, USAMHI.

<sup>38</sup> John M. Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth regiment,” p. 173 (first quotation); William F. Keeler to Anna Keeler, June 30, 1863, quoted in James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 127 (second and third quotations). Several scholars have argued that emancipation resulted more as a practical war measure than any socially revolutionary experiment. See Michael Fellman, *Citizen Sherman: A Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 1995), 149-170; Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy toward Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1973), 32; Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 153; Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 130-141; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 125, and especially chap. 9.

viewpoint.” Of course, it varied with the individual. Many soldiers taught blacks in schools, helped them escape, and tried to improve their lives. Others wanted no contact with them whatsoever. The Federal government and its soldiers would grapple with the dilemma of what to do with the black men and women in the region for the next several years after emancipation.<sup>39</sup>

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Another aspect of occupation life that tried Union soldiers’ patience was the clandestine, small-unit, hit-and-run attacks they suffered at the hands of Confederate military units and civilian sympathizers. Union soldiers referred to combatants as “guerrillas,” though that designation should not convey the sort of violence and brutality that characterized guerrilla fighting in other disputed territory in the South, such as Arkansas and western Tennessee, and even further up the North Carolina coastline. Soldiers often witnessed guerrilla violence practiced upon local Unionists. In June 1862, a New Jersey soldier told of a “party of Confederates (farmers by day and soldiers at night),” who evaded Union pickets and kidnapped a local minister. “He had refused to identify himself with the cause of rebellion,” decried the soldier, “and having comitted the crime of addressing a Union meeting, composed of his neighbors, incurred the mortal hate of secessionists, who embraced this opportunity of wreaking vengeance upon him.” Mary Peabody, visiting her husband in February 1863, reported, “Just across the river here from New berne, the Secesh are hunting down the Union people, men women and children with the greatest inhumanity and barbarity.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cecere, “Carrying the Home Front to War,” 323. For more on how many Union soldiers helped blacks in terms of escape and education, see chapter four.

<sup>40</sup> J. Madison Drake, *The History of the Ninth New Jersey Veteran Vols., A Record of Its Service from Sept. 13th, 1861, to July 12th, 1865* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Journal Printing House, 1889), 75 (first, second, and third quotations); Mary Peabody to Livy, February 23, 1863, Peabody Papers (fourth quotation). For more on guerrillas elsewhere, see Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*, 111-119; Fellman, *Citizen Sherman*, 137-148; Donald S. Frazier, “‘Out of Stinking Distance’: The Guerrilla War in Louisiana,” in Daniel E. Sutherland, ed., *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 151-170; Robert Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865* (Norman, Okla.: University of

Local Confederate sympathizers also actively sought to sabotage the Union infrastructure. Rebels torched an important Steam Saw Mill outside of Beaufort in May 1863, often sabotaged the railroad track between New Bern and Beaufort, and burnt the printing office of the Union-controlled New Bern *Daily Progress* in December 1864. In perhaps the most impressive feat, rebel saboteurs burnt Cape Lookout Lighthouse on April 3, 1864, increasing the difficulty of navigation for Union transports and blockading vessels at the lower tip of the Outer Banks. Union officials had been informed in March 1864 that Rebels would try to blow up lighthouse. When they dispatched a sizeable force of troops to guard it, Mary Frances Chadwick, a teenage Confederate spy in Beaufort, reported to Josiah Fisher Bell, a Confederate secret service agent in Carteret. Bell and some compatriots burned the lighthouse on April 3, 1864.<sup>41</sup>

Though Confederates attacked Union civilians and property, they also harassed Union military outposts. Union soldiers were annoyed that they could rarely bring the Rebel fighters to a full battle. Hale Wesson informed his father, “There is not much fighting here except bush whacking with Guirillas, nine of our regiment has been shot as yet.” About 3:00 one November morning, some mounted Rebel guerrillas attacked the guard of a Union encampment outside of New Bern, before fleeing through the woods. At daybreak, the Union captain noted, “By the tracks they appeared to be well mounted and acquainted with the by roads—and were around us in several directions during the night.”<sup>42</sup>

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Oklahoma Press, 2004); Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>41</sup> George Frederick Jourdan to wife, May 3, 1863, Box 1, Folder 9, Civil War Collection, AAS (saw mill); Jeremiah Stetson to wife, July 4, 1863, Stetson Papers (railroad); William Jackson to George Root, December 4, 1864, George A. Root Letters, DU (printing office); James Gifford to parents, April 3, 1864, James E. Gifford Papers, SHC; Wilson, *A Researcher's Journal*, 23 (Chadwick and Bell).

<sup>42</sup> Hale Wesson to father, September 2, 1862, Wesson letters (first quotation); Captain Cole to Southard Hoffman, November 15, 1862, Box 1, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (second quotation). For more examples, see Thomas Kirwan, *Memorial History of the Seventeenth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry*

Indeed, guerrillas seemed to be hiding everywhere in the woods and along the rivers around New Bern. When John M. Spear traveled via canoe from Portsmouth to New Bern with two black assistants one night, he noted, “The banks of the Neuse River swarmed with guerrillas...We could see their fires and hear them talking, and there would be an occasional shot.” The apparent preponderance of Confederates making clandestine raid on Union lines set the northern soldiers on edge. One Rhode Island soldier recalled his experience on picket duty one night in a dense pine forest: “Everything appeared to assume a weird and strange appearance. Our imaginations would see in every stump a rebel, and the hogs that run at large through the forest of North Carolina, appeared in the darkness like men coming towards us.” Many a porcine adversary paid the last full measure of devotion that night.<sup>43</sup>

As noted in chapter 3, clandestine violence occurred within the city limits as well. A rebel shot and wounded a Union sentry in New Bern on the night of July 25, 1862. After one such incident, two sentries chased the perpetrator, wrote Frederick Osborne, “but it was so dark and he being acquainted with the yards and garden round there he got off.” The angry Osborne suggested a harsh tactic: “they had ought to take everyone else they catch and shoot them. That would stop it as quick as anything.” On August 14, 1862, guerrillas fired at the sentries again. This time the sentries captured one of the guilty party, who was “dragged out of a hole in the house.” Hale Wesson angrily reported that the captured conspirator was a Confederate prisoner that had been paroled at Fort Macon in April 1862. “You see how much principall they have,” Wesson wrote, “they are men whose daily walk on earth [is] an insult and disgrace to the sun that shines on them.” Edward Bartlett shared Wesson’s anger at the Janus-faced loyalty of the local

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*(Old and New Organizations) in the Civil War from 1861-1865*, edited and completed by Henry Splaine (Salem, Mass.: The Salem Press Co., 1911), 125.

<sup>43</sup> Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth regiment,” 126-127 (fourth quotation); John K. Burlingame, *History of the Fifth Regiment of Rhode Island Heavy Artillery, during Three Years and a Half of Service in North Carolina, January 1862-June 1865* (Providence: Snow & Farnham, 1892), 56 (fifth quotation).

inhabitants. “There are a set of poor whites around here,” Bartlett wrote, “who are Union-looking citizens in the day time and ‘guerrillas’ at night, who raise hogs and sweet potatoes by day and in the night shoot our pickets.”<sup>44</sup>

Scholars have debated why Confederates resorted to such guerrilla tactics. Stephen Ash has perceptively argued that “guerrillaism was a masculine phenomenon representing, at least in part, the defense of personal honor against the degrading tyranny of Federal rule.” This seems especially apt in eastern North Carolina, where many locals became increasingly angered by Federal policies. As Ash noted, “Ennoblement through violence was an article of faith among Southern males,” and in a region where the Confederacy did not provide significant enough military resources to recapture the occupied towns of New Bern and Beaufort, “guerrillaism was the only feasible violent answer to Yankee insult.” Of course, such clandestine acts of violence only heightened the desire for retribution among the occupiers. As historian Michael Fellman notes, “guerrillas broke all the conventions of honorable war and led the occupying forces into a deepening cycle of attack and counterattack, revenge and retaliation, in a war that blurred all distinctions between the civilian and the military, thus deepening war and brutalizing the combatants.” Though not as omnipresent as guerrilla warfare was in other occupied parts of the Confederacy, this “deepening” of war occurred in the Carteret-Craven region as well.<sup>45</sup>

One Union soldier wrote in August 1862 that his regiment found two Union cavalrymen who had been “all Shot two pieces” by Confederate guerrillas. The men had been stripped and robbed of all money and possessions, and one of the victims even “had his stabbed heart cut in

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<sup>44</sup> Frederick Osborne to mother, July 25, 1862, in Frank Marcotte, ed., *Private Osborne, Massachusetts 23rd Volunteers: Burnside Expedition, Roanoke Island, Second Front Against Richmond* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1999), 92-93 (first and second quotations); Hale Wesson to father, August 15, 1862, Wesson Papers (third, fourth, and fifth quotations); Edward Bartlett to Martha, January 30, 1863, Bartlett Papers (sixth and seventh quotations).

<sup>45</sup> Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 47; Fellman, *Citizen Sherman*, 140. For more on guerilla warfare in the south, see Sutherland, ed., *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*.

half with a knife.” The soldier soberly wrote home, “So you can See how they treat our Soldiers.” Another soldier told of Union troops who had been killed and left out in the open in humiliating positions, stripped down to their undergarments. Parker suggested that he would rather die than be captured by the Rebels, as he soberly told his sister that he knew a similar fate awaited him if he were “captured whole.”<sup>46</sup>

The deliberate decision to make a public spectacle of these degraded and humiliated corpses, to leave them where Union soldiers on patrol would find them, imparted a symbolic message. Rebels, too militarily weak to reconquer their former geographical possessions, could at least momentarily demonstrate their power, through an exercise of terror—suggesting to Union soldiers that they occupied a hostile land, and venturing outside the safety of their garrisons could bring gruesome results. In addition, in February 1864, after capturing a detachment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Union Infantry in an isolated outpost near New Bern, Confederates publicly executed twenty-two of these native North Carolina soldiers who had previously deserted from the Confederate army. Such an execution warned of the high price of treason. In the eyes of the Confederates, those men who had forsaken their country’s cause and joined that of the enemy had insulted their sovereign nation. Hence, “the public execution,” as Michel Foucault has argued, was a symbolic and cathartic “ceremonial by which a momentarily injured sovereignty is reconstituted.” Discussing the punishments of the European penal systems, Foucault noted that jurists rationalized that “if severe penalties are required, it is because their example must be deeply inscribed in the hearts of men.” Such was the method behind Confederate spectacles of corpse mutilation and executions: state-sanctioned terror to cow both Union soldiers and Unionists. Moreover, such actions spoke to an elevating sense of

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<sup>46</sup> John Timmerman to Mary, August 4, 1862, John D. Timmerman Papers, USAMHI (first, second, and third quotations); Isaac Newton Parker to Martha Hoyt Parker, April 1, 1864, in Hauptman, ed., *A Seneca Indian in the Union Army*, 97 (fourth quotation).

retributive violence, drifting away from a gentleman's code of warfare, and facilitating the use of "the hard hand of war."<sup>47</sup>

Reflecting the escalating sense of retaliation and retribution, Union soldiers took out their vengeance on suspicious locals. They methodically destroyed houses from which snipers fired at their sentries. They imprisoned those who spoke out against the Federal authorities in any way. Mrs. Haney Smith begged the Departmental commander, General John G. Foster, to release her husband, who had been jailed for cursing a provost guard. Owen Sempler begged for his own release from prison, where he had been sent for six months for "drinking and keeping bad company." Soldiers arrested men who claimed to be Confederate deserters, fearing that they may be advance scouts. When James Williams deserted the Confederate army and turned himself in to Union pickets outside of New Bern on May 1, 1863, they immediately suspected a nefarious motive and imprisoned him. After three months in jail, Williams complained to the provost marshal, "I have [been] treated very unjustly. I come heare to be protected under Baner that I was born under and to fight if is required or do any other thing that is required."<sup>48</sup>

Union soldiers also took particular delight in roughing up suspected guerrillas. William Lind related an incident in which he captured an armed male civilian while raiding farms where Confederates cavalry raiders had been active. Lind "took him by the throat" and marched him

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<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 48 (first and second quotations), 49 (third quotation). For more on the use of corpses to send political messages, see Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Barton Alan Myers, "Executing Daniel Bright: Power, Political Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a North Carolina Community" (M.A. thesis, University of Georgia, 2005). For more on the escalating sense of retributive warfare, see James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, chap. 11; Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War*.

<sup>48</sup> Marcotte, Ed, *Private Osborne*, 92-93 (firing on sentries); Mrs. Haney Smith to John G. Foster, September 3, 1862, Owen Sempler to John G. Foster, September 25, 1862 (first quotation), Box 1, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393; James Williams to Brig. Gen. Heckman, August 8, 1863, recorded in Herbert Valentine diary, Herbert Eugene Valentine Papers, SHC (second quotation). See also Lance Janda, "Shutting the Gates of Mercy: The American Origins of Total War, 1860-1880," *Journal of Military History* 1995 59 (January 1995): 7-26.

out to the road. There, Lind related, his captain “told me to take him out there and shoot him [if] the devil would not give up his arms to us. I told him to hand them over or I would run my bayonet through him.” Lind admitted, “I did stick it into [him] a little.” Lind recounted how the man “[shook] like a leaf” and “begged so hard for his life.” They spared him but plundered all the valuables from his house as retribution for aiding the guerrillas. The chance of catching and exacting retribution on guerrillas was a strong motivation for many soldiers. Alfred Holcomb admitted to his brother, “I would go twenty miles enny day to get a squint across my old musket at one of the cowardly devils.” The problem was that guerrillas blended into the countryside so well, that twenty mile marches to catch them seemed necessary. As one Union soldier sardonically commented, “The Rebels youst to say that it took 5 yankees to whip one of them, but it is the other way[;] it takes 5 yankees to catch one of them.” Having to endure this peculiar form of waging war was just one of the many complaints for Union soldiers serving under occupation in eastern North Carolina.<sup>49</sup>

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Tied to a limited geographic region with little prospect for a major battle, and constant annoyance by small rebel units, the Union soldiers on occupation duty had ample opportunity to voice their complaints. They complained about the weather, the land, the people, the rations, their fellow soldiers, the army, and their officers. Regional pride caused divisions within the army as well, as New England soldiers showed their disdain for mid-Atlantic state soldiers. Oliver Peabody, an officer in the 45<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, wrote his wife, “those about us are mostly New York or Penn. and do not compare favorably with our men in discipline or appearance.”

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<sup>49</sup> William Lind to Thomas Lind, July 28, 1862 (second, third, and fifth quotations), August 1, 1862 (first and fourth quotations), William W. Lind Papers, USAMHI; Alfred Holcomb to Milton Holcomb, August 22, 1862, Holcomb Papers (sixth quotation); John S. Bartlett to “My Dear Affectionate Sister,” June 4, [1862], Box 1, Civil War Papers (Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Conn.; hereinafter cited as CHS) (seventh quotation).



Another Massachusetts officer agreed, recalling with Brahmin disdain, “Some of the regiments—especially those from New York and Pennsylvania—were composed of roughs; and with officers as bad as the men.” When men from New York regiments broke and ran at the battle of Kinston in December 1862, soldiers in the 23rd Massachusetts threatened to shoot them. James Glazier recalled, “Our boys called them cowards, and told them to go back to their regiments but they did not know where their regiments were.” He mused, “though the bullitts were whistling around us we had to laugh at the excuses of these cowards.” George H. Weston averred that non-New England regiments presented “a very unfavorable comparison both as regard morality & general intelligence.” He quipped, “The feelings of patriotism must indeed be strong that would lead one to enlist as a private in one of those regiments.”<sup>50</sup>

Several units were nine months regiments from Massachusetts, organized in August 1862, a month after the Federal government authorized the Militia Act. These men received substantial bounties to entice them to fill out the quotas required of the state governments. Naturally, such belated inducements angered those already in the field. One soldier wrote, “I must say the manner of paying such large bounty is hardly fair, and as far as I know those sent out are the poorest men—men that were rejected in the former Regiments.” These “bounty men” received much harassment from older regiments that had volunteered before such enticements. Many veterans would taunt them with questions like, “What did you do with your hundred dollars?” and called them “nine month ‘well-to-does.’”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Oliver Peabody to Mary Peabody, January 3, 1863, Peabody Papers (first quotation); Codman Reminiscence, 1897 volume, p. 226 (second quotation); James E. Glazier to Annie Monroe, December 27, 1862, James Edward Glazier Papers (Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca.) (third and fourth quotations); George H. Weston to “Dear Sir,” February 15, 1863, New Bern Occupation Papers, SHC (fifth and sixth quotations). For more examples, see also Henry Wellington to “Sister Abby,” March [15], 1863, Henry F. Wellington Papers (typescript) (microfilm), MHS.

<sup>51</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: the Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 500; Isaac N. Roberts to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt, September 12, 1862, Hunt Papers (first quotation); Edward Bartlett to Martha, November 1, 1862, Bartlett Papers (second quotation); Entry for October 27, 1862, Ladd Papers (third

Rather than being enticed, some men were compelled into service through the Federal Enrollment Act of March 1863. When news of the New York City draft riots reached North Carolina in late July 1863, Herbert A. Cooley, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> New York Cavalry, wrote his father of his disappointment with the rioters: “Why do they not come up manfully to the support of those already in the field and who (if I must say it myself) are making almost Superhuman efforts to crush and root [out] the rebellion.” Historian Reid Mitchell argues, “Soldiers saw themselves as better embodying the values of the community than those who selfishly stayed behind; indeed, the center of moral authority shifted from the community at home to the community in arms.” George Root, a Connecticut soldier, condemned the folks at home in May 1864, claiming that they should “take more interest in this war than they do; some of the people don’t seem to care whether the war ever ends.” Joseph Barlow, who had expended much ink complaining about his time in the army, wrote his wife in August 1863, “I thank god that I was not bought or drafted to fight for my country.” Soldiers maintained a certain code of respectability and those who would not voluntarily sacrifice their time and services for the cause, but must be lured in by money or coerced by force of arms, were beneath their contempt.<sup>52</sup>

Coupled with regional pride, and the rivalries between volunteers, bounty men, and conscripts, was the average soldier’s general dislike of the rigors, drudgery, and petty tyrannies of army life, which were exacerbated in the unbroken monotony of occupation. Joseph Barlow likened army service in an occupation zone to be “about the same as being shut up in the State Prison.” Those who weren’t complaining about being inmates, complained about being the guards, as all found the daily grind of guard duty disagreeable. Edward Bartlett, of the 44<sup>th</sup>

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quotation). Massachusetts was charged with raising 19,090 men for nine month service with through voluntary enlistment, or drafting. Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, xxi.

<sup>52</sup> Herbert Cooley to father, July 26, 1863, Herbert A. Cooley Papers, SHC (first quotation); Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair*, 32 (second and third quotations); William H. Jackson to George A. Root, May 5, 1864, George A. Root Letters, DU (fourth quotation); Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, August 25, 1863, Barlow Papers (fifth quotation).

Massachusetts, whose regiment was assigned to provost duty in New Bern in April 1863, wrote, “I don’t fancy it much... The chief duty is to arrest drunken soldiers, salute officers, and make privates show there passes—in short a sort of policeman.” As a result, Alfred Holcomb, of the 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, noted, “this is the hardest duty that we ever done.” Guards also had to spend nearly all their spare time preparing their gear for duty. One soldier remembered the requirements for guard duty: “Everything was in perfect order: every boot on the line polished to an excelsior shine, every strap, buckle and button was in its place; each cap-visor was square to the front, and the bayonets and brasses shone with a brightness that proved the industry and pains-taking character of the men of the battalion.” He acknowledged after the war that though guard duty was not as dangerous as battle, “Long continued duty in a city was not, however, desirable for a soldier. Its effect was very disastrous to a wholesome esprit du corps.”<sup>53</sup>

Despite fleeting moments of high drama, occupation duty proved to be one of unrelenting monotony. One soldier remarked that his regiment gave three hearty cheers when they heard they were preparing to go on an expedition into the country: “Anything to break the monotony of camp life. The soldier even welcomes the fatigues of the march & the dangers of the battlefield as a change.” Soldiers tried to relieve their boredom in many ways. They would often partake of sports—playing baseball, as well as popular card games, which would often have money bet on them to add some spice. In fact, gambling of all forms quickly became prevalent amongst the occupying troops. Horace Ford disdained of the growing vice of gambling, and wrote to his wife, “There is a number of crews around me here engaged gambling and swearing as much as if

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<sup>53</sup> Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, July 5, 1862 (first quotation), Barlow papers; Edward Bartlett to Martha, April 23, 1863, Bartlett Papers (first quotation); Alfred Holcomb to Milton Holcomb, June 21, 1862, Holcomb Papers (second quotation); J. Waldo Denny, *Wearing the Blue in the Twenty-Fifth Mass. Volunteer Infantry, with Burnside's Coast Division, 18th Army Corps, and Army of the James* (Worcester: Putnam & Davis, Publishers, 1879), 116 (third and fourth quotations). For more examples, see Frederick Osborne to mother, May 27, 1862, in Marcotte, ed., *Private Osborne*, 74.

it wasn't Sunday." He noted sardonically about the latter, "Really we can't see much around us that that would remind one of the difference." By January 1863, Lt. Colonel Luke Lyman, commander of the 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, directed to his men, "Gambling of all kinds is positively forbidden. Any known to have disobeyed this order will be punished by court martial." The fact that such an order had to be issued reveals the extent to which authorities feared it had become a problem.<sup>54</sup>

With no prospect of a fight to capture soldiers' imagination or divert their thoughts, the dreariness of occupation duty, coupled with the absence from loved ones, led to a consuming feeling of loneliness. John Bartlett wrote to his sister, "Some days I get so lonesome that I hardly know what to do with myself." Monotony led many soldiers to drown their loneliness and boredom in the bottle, occasionally with disastrous results. John Hedrick reported to his brother that twenty-five year old Lieutenant William Pollock of the 3<sup>rd</sup> New York Artillery "committed suicide by blowing his brains out with a pistol" on the sweltering night of Monday, August 4, 1863. Though Hedrick did not know specifically what inner demons tormented the lieutenant, he surmised that liquor helped fortify him to the task, acknowledging that Pollock "had been in the habit of drinking excessively for some time past." The evils of alcohol had been well known. Northern soldiers grew up in a society in which temperance was often a social reform issue of some gravity. Undoubtedly, many soldiers received admonitions against the danger of alcohol from concerned family members, as Joseph Barlow did. His aunt wrote to him soon after he enlisted in May 1861, pleading, "Be steady, Joseph, don't meddle with anything

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<sup>54</sup> Samuel C. Hunt to "dearest," December 23, 1862, quoted in L.G. Williams, *A Place for Theodore: The Murder of Dr. Theodore Parkman, Boston, Massachusetts & Whitehall, North Carolina, A True Story* (Greeneville, N.C.: Holly Two Leaves Press, 1997), 73; Entries for January 26, 1863, March 11, 1863, and June 9, 1863, Troup diary, Troup Family Papers (games); Horace Ford to wife, February 15, 1863, Horace K. Ford Papers, SHC (first and second quotations); General Order No. 10, January 11, 1863, Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, 27th Massachusetts Infantry, Regimental Order Book, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94 (hereinafter cited as RG 94) (third quotation).

that will intoxicate, bring no blot on your character, as a Soldier, be good and true.”

Unfortunately, as in the case with Pollock, several soldiers did meddle with alcohol and bring blots on their character. One soldier even deduced in January 1863, “I think if Rum had been out of the way this Rebellion would have been put down long time ago.”<sup>55</sup>

Frequently, abuse of alcohol led to violence, though typically not of the self-inflicted variety. Henry White, of the 21st Massachusetts, recorded one tragic episode in which an intoxicated lieutenant was fatally shot by his own sentinel late one night. “It was his own fault,” White lamented of the lieutenant, “he disguised himself & attempted to take the sentinel’s gun away & thus foolishly lost his life.” In addition to violence, the abuse of liquor led soldiers to commit a host of petty crimes “prejudicial to good order and military discipline,” such as theft, larceny, and battery. Some actions were downright surreal. On April 9, 1862, Charles Walcott related an incident of the previous night: “A private in the 11th Conn. regiment, so drunk that he could hardly walk, even with the aid of a Negro who accompanied him, carrying an ancient copper coffin, was arrested by our guard as he passed our camp. The coffin bore the name of Richard D. Spaight, a distinguished Revolutionary patriot, and governor of North Carolina from 1792 to 1795.” Spaight’s coffin was returned to its burial place.<sup>56</sup>

Alcohol also fortified many soldiers with enough liquid courage to make known their true feelings about their service and those whom they served under. On Thanksgiving Day, 1862, several soldiers became intoxicated (illegally) and delivered impromptu speeches on the rebellion and their military service. “One remarked in his speech that he did not enlist for no

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<sup>55</sup> John S. Bartlett to “My Dear Affectionate Sister,” June 4 [1862], Box 1, Civil War Papers, CHS (first quotation); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, August 6, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 142 (second and third quotations); Aunt Nelson to Joseph Barlow, May 15, 1861, Barlow Papers (fourth quotation); George W. Kimball to wife, January 19, 1863, George W. Kimball Papers, USAMHI (fifth quotation).

<sup>56</sup> Entry for September 30, 1861, Henry White Diary (first and second quotations); Record of the Regimental Court Martial, June 15, 1862, Regimental Order Book, 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry, RG 94 (third and fourth quotations); Walcott, *History of the Twenty-first regiment*, 88 (fifth quotation).

\$2000[.] he enlisted because he was a d-m fool.” Observing the axiom of *in vino veritas*, Dexter Ladd remarked that the statement was “pretty near the Truth.” Soldiers shared similar uninhibited statements about their officers. An intoxicated Dennis O’Connell denounced his lieutenant as “a mean contemptible puppy.” In the 24<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, Private John Shine stole and consumed his regiment’s medical supply of whiskey and became so intoxicated that he hurled “abusive and insulting language and epithets” at his captain. These outbursts against officers revealed the tensions between enlisted men and their superiors, a tension that did not always need alcohol to give it voice. In May 1863, Alexander Dakin forfeited a month’s pay for refusing to report for police duty and condemning the officer who gave the order, declaring, “I will be God d---d if I will do anything today, you understand that do you?” Undoubtedly, the officer did.<sup>57</sup>

Part of the enlisted men’s anger at officers stemmed from the latter’s perceived exercise of tyranny over the men. Life in the occupied zone offered little to focus officers’ martial attention, so they often more closely scrutinized their men for petty grievances, and sought various avenues for their own amusement. The net effect of these actions was to weaken the morale among the fighting men. Soldiers resented the privileges officers had, including access to liquor, comfortable quarters (usually in local homes while soldiers lived in encampments), and a seemingly endless amount of free time. This was not unique to the Civil War. One post-World War II psychological study found that the arbitrary exercise of power by the officers, under the guise of “discipline” alienated many enlisted men. In practice, the psychologist noted, “discipline has helped to break morale rather than build it up,” because discipline had come to

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<sup>57</sup> Entry for November 27, 1862, Ladd Papers (first and second quotations); Record of the Regimental Court Martial, June 15, 1862 (third quotation), Special Order No. 64, May 20, 1863 (sixth quotation), Regimental Order Book, 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry, RG 94; General Order No. 33, May 26, 1862, Part I, General Records, Correspondence, General and Special Orders, Departments of North Carolina and Virginia, 1861-1865, RG 393 (fourth and fifth quotations).

mean “an adherence to certain obnoxious rules regimenting all aspects of life,” including the fact that military men had to salute officers without receiving any courtesy in return. When asked to evaluate over two dozen aspects of the army, over half of the men were critical of their officers (while only a quarter complained about that staple of disappointment, army food). One psychologist suggested that morale could be improved by establishing better personal relations between officers and enlisted men. After all, he quipped, “An officer can maintain his dignity without acting like a prig or a tyrant.” Soldiers’ grievances with officers were not unique to occupation zones, yet the monotony magnified the feeling of oppression among enlisted men.<sup>58</sup>

Enlisted men believed a double standard existed in punishment of crimes. Alfred Holcomb confirmed that officers behaved badly, writing in June 1862, “we see them drunk and carousing about the streets every day sometimes half a dozen at a time, but if a private gets a little down he is turned over to the provost marshal and his pay taken away.” William Augustus Willoughby wrote his wife in January 1863 of his disgust with the officers in his regiment: “I have just been out for Regimental Inspection by our beautiful Colonel who was beautifully drunk and who had a beautiful fight last night with one Captain Quinn of Company G over three or four w[omen] who they got to quarter in their barracks through the night.” Willoughby decried, “A good portion of the Company and Regimental Officers are porr drunken set of fellows wholly unfit for position they hold.” The practice of officers taking in loose women pervaded the occupied area. Colonel James McChesney condemned the conduct of his former adjutant, J.A. Chenery, who had disgraced himself in Beaufort in 1864. According to McChesney, Chenery “became irregular in his habits, caused primarily by his association with a lewd woman.” On June 10, 1864, Chenery had married Lizzie Snowden, “a notorious prostitute who has followed

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<sup>58</sup> Arnold Rose, “Bases of American Military Morale in World War II,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 9 (Winter 1945-1946): 413 (second quotation), 414 (first quotation), 416 (third quotation).

her calling before and since the several towns in this State were occupied by our forces.”

McChesney lamented that Chenery’s behavior became “a cause of general remark and public scandal” in the town and the army.<sup>59</sup>

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The disgruntlement with army life under occupation indicated a growing sense of demoralization among some of the volunteers. From the summer of 1862 through the early summer of 1863, Union armies suffered a string of humiliating defeats, especially in the eastern theater. Many soldiers naturally became despondent about the lack of battlefield success and their inability to participate in the great fights, the seemingly strong unity of southerners, and the increasingly apparent lack of true Unionism among the North Carolina natives in their occupied region (a topic which will be explored in great detail in the next chapter). The events of 1862 and 1863 certainly tested the conviction of many Union soldiers, engaged in the seemingly thankless task of occupation, trying to preserve a Union that many local inhabitants seemed ambivalent about securing. Soldiers frequently gave vent to their disappointments in their letters home. Their correspondence shows the depths to which many sank during this year, and coincides with the scholarly consensus that the winter of 1862-1863 was the lowest ebb of morale among the northern soldiers and homefront.<sup>60</sup>

Repeated military disasters in Virginia in 1862 led many soldiers to conclude that letting the South go its own way was the prudent measure. William Lind wrote on September 12, after the defeat at Second Manassas and the subsequent Confederate invasion of Maryland, “I

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<sup>59</sup> Alfred Holcomb to Milton Holcomb, June 21, 1862, Holcomb Papers (first quotation); William Augustus Willoughby to wife, January 11, 1863, Willoughby Papers (second and third quotations); J.M. McChesney to Major R.S. Davis, October 8, 1864, Vol. 3, Regimental Descriptive Books, 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Infantry Regiment, RG 94 (fourth, fifth, and sixth quotations). For more on the antagonism between enlisted men and their officers in a democratic army, see Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair*, 39-54.

<sup>60</sup> For more on low morale, see McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, esp. chap. 20; Charles P. Roland, *An American Iliad: The Story of the Civil War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), esp. chap 6.



believe... that the rebels is going to whip the north yet.” On the same day, Isaac Roberts wrote to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt, “just think of the precious lives that have been lost, to think nothing of the immense amount of property and money, then say if you don’t think it best to finish up this cruel war.” He asserted, “I have come to the conclusion that we can never whip the rebels.” After the Union army stopped the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia’s advance at the battle of Antietam, some soldiers felt their morale revive. “Only a short time ago... we were so despondent if not humiliated at our country’s prospects and doings we often times could not well be considered social beings,” wrote Jacob Roberts of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts. However, he wrote, “Since the Maryland invasion we have improved. We can now hold a higher head and have a ‘lighter heart.’”<sup>61</sup>

But the Antietam victory did not produce a lasting feeling of success. By November, the despondency had returned for many. “I will be heartily glad when this infernal war is ended,” wrote one soldier, “it seems as if one was to be kept from one’s friends forever and all for want of proper management at Headquarters.” He averred, “I’d be willing to bury the hatchet tomorrow on any terms not altogether humiliating—I believe the government is nearly played out any how.” Isaac Roberts, whose correspondence reveals him to be a decided pessimist, wrote after the poor result of the 1862 elections for Republicans (in which they lost 35 seats in the House of Representatives), “Now my last hope is almost gone. I am now ready to give up, and Dr., you have no idea of the growing dissatisfaction among the troops.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> William Lind to Thomas Lind, September 12, 1862, in Lind, ed., *Long Road for Home*, 105 (first quotation); Isaac N. Roberts to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt, September 12, 1862, Hunt Papers (second and third quotations); Jacob Roberts to “Hon. B.F. Carter,” October 5, 1862, Jacob Roberts Correspondence, Lowry Hinch Collection, USAMHI (fourth and fifth quotations).

<sup>62</sup> David Lucius Craft to Sister, November 19, 1862, David Lucius Craft Papers, DU (first, second, and third quotations); Isaac N. Roberts to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt, November 10, 1862, Hunt Papers (fourth quotation).

The perpetually morose Roberts was not alone. Edward Bartlett wrote to his sister after hearing of Burnside's overwhelming defeat at Fredericksburg in December 1862, "All this fighting and killing men does not seem to amount to anything. We have pretty much come to the conclusion that fighting will never end the war." John H.B. Kent concurred, stating, "I have altered my mind with regard to its being every man's duty to do what he can to stop the war and further I do not think bullets will settle it." Joseph Barlow agreed, enlightening his wife in a Christmas letter, "I tell you we are all getting sick of this war. It never will be settled by fighting; the way things are going on it never will be over." Despondent over what he believed was mismanagement of the war, as well as an administrative incompetence that had delayed their pay for over eight months, another soldier wrote early in the New Year, "My opinion is that the government is so rotten and corrupted that the Union will be destroyed, and that the sooner they are ousted from office the sooner peace will be restored."<sup>63</sup>

Many soldiers had determined to get out of the war by refusing to reenlist when their original terms of service expired. On New Years Day, 1863, the traditional day of new resolutions, David Reynolds noted, "There is one resolve most of the soldiers will firmly make, that is, Should they ever return they never will enlist a second time." Hale Wesson, a nine month volunteer with the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, wrote to his mother, "It will take more money than there is in this country to make me enter the service again." When his regiment was departing for home in June 1863, Wesson elaborated to his mother about his decision. "When I put my head into a lion's mouth and the lion is obliging enough not to bite it off I flatter myself that I have common sense enough to keep it out afterwards, for some little time at least." Besides, Wesson

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<sup>63</sup> Edward Bartlett to Martha, December 26, 1862, Bartlett Papers (first quotation); John H.B. Kent to "Mr. Baxter & Teachers & members of the Harris Place Sabbath School," December 29, 1862, George H. Baxter Letters (microfilm), MHS (second quotation); Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, December 26, 1862, Barlow Papers (third quotation); Thomas J. Jennings to "Esteemed friend," February 25, 1863, quoted in Williams, *A Place for Theodore*, 93 (fourth quotation).

sardonically noted, he wanted to allow others to have their chance: “I feel that it is a great privilege to fight for one’s country and not wishing to monopolize all the glory of putting down the rebellion I shall stand aside and allow those immortal patriots who have been advocating a vigorous prosecution of the war, getting up loyal leagues and joining home guards to try a little actual service and see how they like it.”<sup>64</sup>

These sentiments speak to the larger problem of weakened morale among Union soldiers in occupation zones. Perhaps surprisingly to modern sensibilities, no soldiers in North Carolina recorded their experience away from the major bloody battlefields as a fortunate break, or something to be desired; instead their spirits sagged as their likelihood of fighting diminished. Quite simply, soldiers stuck in occupation duty questioned the legitimacy of their usage. They had volunteered to help preserve the Union, but could not see how their duty in a secondary field helped further that aim. As military psychologists Reuven Gal and Frederick Manning postulate, “Perhaps it should not be surprising that in an all-volunteer force there is a stronger relationship between the soldier’s morale and the extent to which he perceives his service as meaningful. The volunteer, after all, made a conscious decision that military service was a worthwhile endeavor. His feelings of whether this service makes a contribution to his country” is “reflected in his level of morale.”<sup>65</sup>

Morale is a broad and somewhat amorphous concept, with many characteristics and many factors influencing it. One scholar has argued that morale is “the net satisfaction derived from acceptable progress toward goals or from the attaining of goals.” A sociologist has concluded that morale “is a measure of one’s disposition to give one’s self to the objective in hand.” Some

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<sup>64</sup> Entry for January 1, 1863, David P. Reynolds Diary, David P. Reynolds Papers, DU (first quotation); Hale Wesson to mother, February 6, 1863 (second quotation), June 9, 1863 (third and fourth quotations), Wesson Papers.

<sup>65</sup> Reuven Gal and Frederick J. Manning, “Morale and its Components: A Cross-National Comparison,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 17 (April 1987): 389.

scholars have noted that “job satisfaction may play a significant role in soldier morale and its consequences (i.e., attrition or reenlistment) in an all-volunteer army.” Each definition supports the notion that a soldier has to feel he is being used in the most efficacious manner toward achieving victory. Most scholars agree that the level of one’s morale is directly influenced by “a sense of fruitful participation in [one’s] work.” Hence, those soldiers who are removed from the possibility of combat, or any similar action they perceive as integral to the cause or the maintenance of their country, tend to suffer a lagging morale. As Reuven Gal, who analyzed Israeli soldiers that occupied Lebanon in the early 1980s, has noted, when “the course of war carried you far away from your country’s borders and from your own home, when the justification of such a war becomes questionable—then the issue of the perceived legitimacy of that war by the soldier becomes a crucial factor concerning his morale and combat readiness.”<sup>66</sup>

Some of the best scholarly work on morale analyzes Israeli soldiers in the occupied Holy Land over the last quarter century. Most scholars concur that soldiers engaged in, or daily anticipating, combat possessed a higher level of morale than soldiers serving in quiet sectors. Three Jewish psychologists studied a sample of Israeli soldiers during two periods of service in Lebanon—first, in the invasion of June 1982, and second, in the military occupation of 1983-1984. They found that morale and cohesion was much higher during the invasion than the occupation, as during the latter, “Soldiers reported a marked decline in their personal endorsement of the official goals of the military operation, in the endorsement of soldiers and officers in their unit, and in that of the nation as a whole.” These scientists contrasted this with

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<sup>66</sup> Nathaniel Warner, “The Morale of Troops on Occupation Duty,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 102 (May 1946): 749 (first quotation); William Ernest Hocking, “The Nature of Morale,” *American Journal of Sociology* 47 (November 1941): 303 (second quotation); Gal and Manning, “Morale and its Components,” 370 (third quotation); John Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 108 (fourth quotation); Reuven Gal, “Unit Morale: From a Theoretical Puzzle to an Empirical Illustration—An Israeli Example,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 16 (June 1986): 561 (fifth quotation).

the high morale of combat: “the cohesive military unit operating in a stressful combat situation would appear to be governed by the *Musketeer Imperative*—‘One for all and all for one.’”<sup>67</sup>

While the stress of combat could bond men, research into American troops in World War II reveals that occupation duty found Porthos, Athos, and Aramis often turning to the bottle and “gripping” about their lack of involvement. In his examination of soldiers who occupied Japan immediately after its surrender in August 1945, Nathaniel Warner discovered, “Although at first the troops were willing or anxious to make the trip to Japan, it can hardly be said that they showed true motivation toward occupation duty; and as soon as the drab character of occupation duty manifested itself, this became apparent, showing itself in depressed morale. From then on the men showed increasing dissatisfaction and lack of drive toward the job to be done.” Much like what occurred among the occupation troops in New Bern and Beaufort during the Civil War, American troops began exhibiting three key emotions: frustration, hostility and resentment, and depression. Hostility and resentment were the most common and led to the traditional response of “gripping,” in which “the troops expounded on their grievances with a vehemence which revealed their hostile mood.” The same emotions which led U.S. servicemen in World War II to complain about their usage, led Joseph Barlow, stationed in New Bern in 1863 to denounce the administration’s handling of the war, indifference to its soldiers, as well as those who seemed to be profiting on the backs of the soldiers: “What does the infernal traitor and contractors care about my life or any Soldier’s life. This is a war for to make money with our blood.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Norman A. Milgram, Ruth Orenstein, and Ezer Zafir, “Stressors, Personal Resources, and Social Supports in Military Performance during Wartime,” *Military Psychology* I (April 1989): 185-199 (first quotation on p. 192, second quotation on p. 196). Gal and Manning agreed that “proximity to a potential adversary gives additional emphasis to those determinants of personal morale related to survival and success in combat.” Gal and Manning, “Morale and its Components,” 387.

<sup>68</sup> Warner, “The Morale of Troops on Occupation Duty,” 752 (first quotation), 754 (second quotation); Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, May 22, 1863, Barlow Papers (third quotation). For more on morale among American enlisted men in other wars, see James Tyrus Seidule, “Morale in the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1997); Charles C. Moskos, *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank*

As these sociological, psychological, and psychiatric studies reveal, morale is often lowest among those soldiers stationed in secondary arenas, while morale of those in the armies on the front lines is often higher. The chance to engage in decisive battle, to contribute something tangible toward ultimate victory often boosted men's spirits. "In defining morale," wrote a British military historian, "there is no better tonic for soldiers than to win a battle." Soldiers on occupation duty in North Carolina faced little prospect of engaging in battle, much less winning one. This demoralization reached its nadir in 1863. Though such disenchantment did not completely cease after this pivotal year, fewer soldiers were so candid in their letters about it. Perhaps many had simply tired of repeating the same laments to their loved ones, but more likely, as the prospect of ultimate victory became apparent, soldiers' outlook improved.<sup>69</sup>

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Soldiers' patriotism may lose its initial incandescence; soldiers may get despondent; soldiers may, at times, doubt their chances of success, especially in the wake of military defeats, but despite moments of negativity the overall theme that emerges from the letters of occupying soldiers is one of *steadfastness*. The majority Union soldiers were willing to put up with the hardships in order to accomplish their mission—restoring the Union. Though many complained about army life, they still had a sense of duty and obligation to see their service through. Charles B. Quick, of the 3rd New York Artillery, wrote to his sister, "I have often thought that I was sorry that I ever enlisted but now I am glad that I did enlist when I did, for now I feel as if I had done part of my duty toward my Country." Though he had been badly burned in a tent accident, Charles reaffirmed to his sister his sense of duty to support the cause. "As long as the Regiment

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*and File in Today's Military* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970); Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation: The Behavior of Soldiers in Battle* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff Pub., 1982); Leonard Wong et al, *Why They Fight: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War* (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 155 (quotations).

stays I want to stay with them,” he wrote, “and I feel it my duty to do so.” He concluded, “it does not seem right for me to go home until we are shure of Victory.” These sentiments reflect psychiatrist Nathaniel Warner’s declaration that, for troops experiencing the monotony of occupation duty, “There was, however, the very effective stabilizing factor of hope. No matter how dreary the present situation seemed, the individual always could find some plausible reason to hope that things would take a turn for the better.”<sup>70</sup>

Even in some of the darkest moments, soldiers found reason to hope. Josiah Wood of the 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts regiment, wrote home in December 1862, “I expected to go through hardships when I inlisted and I am willing to. The country must be defended.” After hearing of the defeat at Chancellorsville in May 1863, Wood penned a stirring lament—“O how I long to sie this rebellion chrushed that there may not be any more such cenes of blood and suffering but peace and prosperity again smile on an undivided and happy country”—followed by an earnest call for greater sacrifice—“but we must make up our minds to work.” Wood was confident of final triumph, remarking, “it is hard to guess how long this war may last... [but] I have no fears for the final result.” Henry Clapp also lamented the defeat at Chancellorsville: “Today we are all profo[u]ndly in the dumps on account of the news from Hooker. I am by turns hopelessly depressed, decidedly elated, furiously indignant.” However, like Wood, Clapp testily declared, “I am wild with every body, also, for talking as if this defeat—if it is one—were going to ruin our cause.”<sup>71</sup>

Benjamin Day, in a pensive mood on New Years’ Day, 1863, reflected, “Many who commenced the past year with bright hopes and buoyant expectations before the close of the year

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Quick to “Sister Mary,” March 26, 1863 (first quotation), July 30, 1862 (second, third, and fourth quotations), Quick Correspondence; Warner, “The morale of troops on occupation duty,” 756 (fifth quotation).

<sup>71</sup> Josiah Wood to Reanna, December 22, 1862 (first quotation), May 12, 1863 (second and third quotations), May 31, 1863 (fourth quotation), Josiah Wood Papers, DU; Henry Clapp to Willie, May 12, 1863, in Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 204 (fifth and sixth quotations).

were sleeping in their graves.” A week later, he proclaimed his resolve, which was shared by many of his compatriots, “let us if necessary fight anew the battles of the revolution[:] let us spill our blood if necessary to protect that liberty unsullied for our children.” Many soldiers iterated the conviction that they were fighting not just for themselves but for those at home, and those future generations to come. Jeremiah Stetson even committed his feelings to verse, penning in April 1863, “Tis not for ourselves we fight so/but those we’ve left behind/For we can fight much better now/Then when by rebs we are in chains/But the cause is just as good/As when we first began/We’ll drive the rebs and let them know/We’ll pull their strong holds down.”<sup>72</sup>

One of the rebels’ strongholds that the soldiers increasingly supported pulling down was that of slavery. Charles Duren declared that he was committed, “to help in not only restoring [the Union] to what it was before but more, to cleanse it from *the* curse of slavery *forever*.” Joseph Barlow commented soon after Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, “I do like the President’s Proclamation. I back him up in anything to put down this rebellion.” Most soldiers knew that sectional conflict would never end as long as slavery remained intact. John Spear admitted, “The President’s Proclamation is pretty rough on the South, but I am very glad he has got up the courage to issue it, for Slavery is certainly the cause of this war, and just so long as it exists, just so long will there be trouble between the North and the South.” Henry Clapp agreed, rejoicing, “I think the Proclamation marks an era in our war—history and I glory in it. The Lord will surely smile upon such a cause.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Entries for January 1, 1863 (first quotation), January 10, 1863 (second quotation), Journal of Benjamin H. Day; Jeremiah Stetson to “Happy,” April 23, 1863, Jeremiah Stetson Papers, SHC (third quotation).

<sup>73</sup> Charles Duren to Father, September 21, 1861, Duren Papers (first quotation); Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, October 23, 1862, Barlow Papers (second quotation); Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth regiment,” p. 110 (third quotation); Henry Clapp to mother, January 16, 1863, in Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 100 (fourth quotation).



John White wrote to his soldier son, Henry, from Boylston, Massachusetts, of the impact of emancipation on the Union war aims: “I suppose you have heard of the President’s Proclamation. Glory to God I say. That’s the thing. Now we have Justice & Liberty on our side. Now we know what we are fighting for.” “I now have faith to believe that we yet shall have a country on the foundation of liberty,” White continued, musing, “That is something different from the ‘union as it was.’” Horace James, chaplain of the 25<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, shared White’s elation, commenting, “It is not enough to bring back this country to its position just before the breaking out of the rebellion. The ‘Union as it was’ is not what I want to see restored.” James saw the fruits of emancipation as justifying the enormous sacrifice. “The volunteers have not gone in by hundreds of thousands to win a barren victory at the cost of a dead man in almost every family,” James declared, “we don’t want to die for nothing.” With a war for “Justice & Liberty,” Union soldiers believed that they had a moral imperative; they were fighting for a more glorious cause.<sup>74</sup>

The belief in this cause fortified the Union soldiers serving in their monotonous duty in North Carolina. In January 1863, Spear, reflected on the enormous costs of the war as well as “how little we have apparently gained during the past year.” He admitted that it made him truly sad, but he did not give way to despair. “I do not have the least inclination to give up,” he vowed, “but will fight it out even if it should take ten years, yes, or twenty, for before we are through I want to see the curse of slavery, which is the real cause of the war, wiped from the land.” Nelson Chapin, a New York officer, was just as dedicated as Spear: “We had better carry on this war twenty years longer than to yield one iota of our rights. The Rebels have forfeited all

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<sup>74</sup> John White to Henry White, September 26, 1862, White Diary (fourth, fifth, and sixth quotations); Horace James to “My Dear Friends of the U.S. Sabbath School,” June 21, 1862, Horace James Correspondence, AAS (seventh and eighth quotations). See also McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, chap. 9.

theirs, and now we have but one thing to do, make one vigorous effort and the rebels must yield, and then with universal emancipation we shall have lasting peace and prosperity.”<sup>75</sup>

Those at home who favored negotiating an early end to war angered many soldiers in the occupied region. The Peace Democrats, or “Copperheads,” led by Clement Vallandigham, issued increasingly louder calls for peace—including the separation of the states—in the wake of Union military defeats. Those soldiers who mentioned the anti-war sentiments in their letters took vigorous stands against the “Copperheads.” Herbert Cooley told his father to warn his friends that “they must not join the Copperheads and resist the draft for a division of the people of the North at the present would be disastrous to our arms.” Henry Clapp took a stronger stance. In February 1863, he thundered, “I hate the Democratic Party as Tybalt hated ‘all Montagues’ & I abhor and utterly detest the peace party with an abhorrance and detestation for which the expressive English tongue has no words.”<sup>76</sup>

Clapp was not the only one disgusted with the dissenters at home. In his final letter, written on May 18, 1863, four days before he was killed outside of New Bern in a skirmish with Confederates, Colonel John Richter Jones of the 58<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment shared his earnest conviction that the war must be not stopped before final victory. “It is better for the great interests of man to expend the whole present generation at the North, than to consent to the separation of the American nation,” Jones wrote. “We are not ready for peace yet. If it were patched up by nominal restoration of the Union, it would be but a hollow truce. We must whip the South into proper respect for us.” Jones then turned his anger on those who called for an immediate cessation of hostilities. “The men who cry peace before the time for peace will stand

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<sup>75</sup> Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth regiment,” p. 132 (first, second, and third quotations); Nelson Chapin to “My dear wife,” January 6, 1863, Nelson Chapin Papers, Civil War Times Illustrated Collection, USAMHI (fourth quotation).

<sup>76</sup> Herbert Cooley to “Dear Father,” April 8, 1863, Cooley Papers (first and second quotations); Henry Clapp to “Dear friends,” February 11, 1863 (third quotation), in Barden, ed., *Letter to the Home Circle*, 126, 204.

historically with the men of the Hartford Convention,” Jones wrote, referring to the ill-fated anti-war Federalist conference of 1814. “The party which attempts to embarrass the Government, whether its measures be just or not, will be as ‘teetotally damned’ as the old Federalists were. Stand by the Government until the storm is over, and then settle whether it ought to have thrown A’s or B’s goods overboard to lighten the ship. This is the only patriotic doctrine.”<sup>77</sup>

After the military successes in 1863 few soldiers’ letters addressed the issue of peace before ultimate victory. Most soldiers rededicated themselves to the cause. By March 1864, when explaining to his wife why a majority of the men in his regiment reenlisted after their original three-year enlistments expired, Nelson Chapin summed up the convictions for the soldiers in the occupied region: “It is a very great mistake to suppose the soldier does not think. Our soldiers are closer thinkers and reasoners than the people at home. It is the soldiers who have educated the people at home to a true knowledge of objects the rebels had in view and to a just perception of our great duties in this contest.” Even while dissenters were “crying out that the government was crushing out Liberty, every soldier knew he was fighting not for his own liberty but for the liberty of these same croaking ravens, and more for the liberty of the human race for all time to come.” The wife of a Massachusetts officer observed the same thoughtful tendencies among the soldiers. “I think the men in the army,” she wrote, “are much more hopeful and patient than the thinking people at home.”<sup>78</sup>

Though soldiers certainly found much to dissatisfy them both in the North Carolina region and in the army, they rarely ever forsook the cause. The soldiers serving in the volunteer forces in North Carolina often complained, but complaints do not necessarily indicate a lack of

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<sup>77</sup> John Richter Jones to Joseph A. Clay, May 18, 1863 [printed in unidentified newspaper clipping], John Richter Jones Papers, SHC.

<sup>78</sup> Nelson Chapin to “My dear wife,” March 6, 1864, Chapin Papers; Mary Peabody to [unknown], March 1, 1863, Peabody Papers.

commitment to the cause for which they are serving. The Union soldiers who served varying stints of occupation duty in North Carolina had grievances and periods of doubt, but few wavered from their belief that they were doing the right thing. Their convictions were tested during the war—especially in the year from roughly July 1862 to June 1863—but their will to win was too strong; their desire to see it through to the end triumphed. Though the costs had been enormous, most agreed with Chapin when he said that it was “Worse, far worse, to yield to traitors plotting the life of the Nation than to fight for years longer.”<sup>79</sup>

Though soldiers ultimately maintained a steadfastness for the cause of putting down the rebellion, the experience of occupation had changed them. As enforcers of Federal authority, they had, often reluctantly, served as military police, emancipators, agents of confiscation and destruction, civil administrators, and representatives of political restoration. Yet, this Union commitment to ultimate victory, and enforcing emancipation and other Federal policies in the region would serve to drive many local whites into an opposition camp. Residents became increasingly recalcitrant in the face of Federal actions. As will be shown in Chapter 6, by the end of the war the communities of Carteret and Craven counties had been completely altered as a result of Federal occupation, but not in the pro-Union way that northern soldiers and government officials had envisioned. The dull experience of occupation and the concomitant psychological lack of satisfaction in their military endeavors, the enforcement of often distasteful Federal policies, and the emerging hostility of local whites all changed the idealistic enlistee into a cynical veteran. Though he assured his friend that he intended to serve until final victory, Connecticut soldier William H. Jackson candidly acknowledged in October 1864 from New Bern, “I am sorry to say though that I am not so patriotic as I was once.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Nelson Chapin to “My dear wife,” January 6, 1863, Chapin Papers.

<sup>80</sup> William H. Jackson to George A. Root, October 28, 1864, Root Letters.

## CHAPTER SIX

### “WEARING THE MASK OF NATIONALITY LIGHTLY”: WHITE REACTIONS TO PROLONGED UNION OCCUPATION

On the morning after the capture of Beaufort in late March 1862, Major George Allen of the 4<sup>th</sup> Rhode Island Regiment recorded, “A few Union people were found here, who, to the great disgust of the rebel element, freely mingled with our boys, shaking them by the hand.” As he suggested, several local residents “of the rebel element” were hesitant to embrace the Union forces at first. Allen recalled that when he tried to use a \$5 U.S. Treasury note to purchase some item from a local store a few days after Beaufort’s capture, the store owner snapped, “we don’t take such stuff here,” implying that only Confederate currency was acceptable. Yet, after April 26, when Fort Macon had been subdued and the port reopened for trade, bringing inexpensive northern merchandise and the prospect for profitable commerce to the town, Allen noted a change in the local population’s attitude. “They at last acknowledged that we had wrought a very great and acceptable change in their affairs, and many of the most rabid among them soon dropped their patriotic allusion to the Confederacy, and began to consider themselves as part and parcel of the United States government once more.” With the prospect of financial gain apparent, Allen noticed that the heretofore aloof residents “were now quite sociable.”<sup>1</sup>

Allen was not the only soldier to notice a promising attitude among the inhabitants. A reporter for the Philadelphia *Inquirer* observed on March 31, 1862 that “There appears to be more real Union sentiment at Beaufort than in any other place in North Carolina yet occupied by our troops.” He further noted, “A large majority of the citizens profess to be favorable to the

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<sup>1</sup> George H. Allen, *Forty-six Months with the Fourth R. I. Volunteers in the war of 1861 to 1865 . . .* (Providence: J.A. & R.A. Reid, printers, 1887), 104-119.

Union cause, and Major Allen's quarters are constantly thronged with those desirous of taking the oath of allegiance." Daniel Read Larned, General Ambrose Burnside's personal secretary, also formed the impression that "Beaufort is loyal to a great extent," and asserted, "I have no doubt when these people become better acquainted with us, and our intentions, they will come out in support of our Government." John Hedrick arrived in Beaufort on June 12, 1862, and after a week of interacting with the local residents, observed, "Some are Secessionists but the greater number are Union men now and I think always have been." After the war, Allen, whose regiment departed for Virginia on June 30, 1862, fondly remembered, "We can never forget our life in Beaufort, or the pleasant relations sustained with its inhabitants."<sup>2</sup>

Yet by 1863, few northern soldiers would describe their interactions with locals as pleasant. One soldier complained after nearly a year of occupation, "I doubt very much the union feeling in North Carolina"; another proclaimed in May 1863, "I don't believe that there is a union man in North Carolina." A soldier in the 24<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment grumbled about the locals: "They may talk Unionism and take the oath of allegiance, but I have no faith in them, for I think they value their oath no more than they do a piece of blank paper." Another soldier declared in March 1863, "There is plenty of professed union men who will shote [*sic*] you out of the window if they get a chance." Even John Hedrick, who believed he encountered so much Unionism in 1862, declared in August 1863, "The great loyalty, which is said to exist in some parts of this State, I think, exists in the minds of the news writers rather than in reality." A disillusioned Massachusetts soldier offered a particularly mordant appraisal after spending ten

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<sup>2</sup> Philadelphia *Inquirer*, March 31, 1862, as quoted in Mamré Marsh Wilson, *A Researcher's Journal: Beaufort, NC & the Civil War* (Beaufort, N.C.: author, 1999), 21; Daniel Read Larned to Henry Howe, March 26, 1862 (first and second quotations); Daniel Read Larned to Mrs. Ambrose E. Burnside, March 30, 1862 (third and fourth quotations), Box 1, Daniel Read Larned Papers (Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as LOC); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 20, 1862, in Judkin Browning and Michael Thomas Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist: John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, 1862-1865* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 2001), 7 (fifth quotation); Allen, *Forty-six Months with the Fourth R.I. Volunteers*, 119 (sixth quotation).

months in the region: “A year ago...I supposed we were going to help a poor oppressed people who were forced into the rebellion by a minority—now I have learned that the whole south is united. They can continue the war forever if necessary.” He further bemoaned, “they hate the old flag—they hate free government—they hate every principal of right—they are not worthy to be called Americans—our nation would be stronger and better without them.”<sup>3</sup>

This shift in tone occurred primarily because reactions from local whites had become increasingly hostile. Many whites became disillusioned with both the local tactics and the larger Federal policies of the occupying force. Residents, seeking to take advantage of new economic opportunities while simultaneously maintaining the social status quo, had wedded themselves to the Union. Yet, just a few months into the honeymoon, many apparent Unionists were rejecting their occupiers, primarily over perceived arbitrary uses of Federal power and serious disagreements over racial policies. Contrary to President Lincoln’s optimism, the experience of Union occupation would ultimately drive local residents more firmly into the Confederate camp than they probably would have been otherwise.

Many scholars have shown that Lincoln, and many officers, too readily placed a firm faith in southern Unionism. The standard scholarly argument asserts that in late 1862 northern soldiers throughout the South shifted from a policy of conciliation toward one of a much harsher tone in reaction to surprisingly inveterate southern hostility. While scholars may agree that Union soldiers figuratively took off their kid gloves and displayed “the hard hand of war” in

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<sup>3</sup> Edward J. Bartlett to “Dear Martha,” January 30, 1863, Edward J. Bartlett Papers (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.; hereinafter MHS) (first quotation); Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, May 29, 1863, Joseph Barlow Papers (United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pa.; hereinafter USAMHI) (second quotation); John M. Spear, “Army life in the twenty-fourth regiment, Massachusetts volunteer infantry, Dec. 1861 to Dec. 1864, 1892” (typescript), p. 115, MHS (third quotation); Charles Henry Tubbs to “My dear wife,” March 1, 1863, Charles Henry Tubbs Letters (North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; hereinafter cited as NCSA) (fourth quotation); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, August 9, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 144 (fifth quotation); James E. Glazier to “Dear Parents,” February 2, 1863, James Edward Glazier Papers (Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Ca.) (sixth and seventh quotations).

reaction to southern hostility, in eastern North Carolina the hostility of white southerners (including Unionists) was a reaction to what they perceived as an oppressive, callous, and radical Federal occupation, especially in terms of race. In the wake of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, local whites realized that what had been a limited war to restore the Union had become a sweeping, society-changing war, much like secessionist fire-eaters had predicted. This serious disagreement over the nature of Union war policy simply lit the fuse of discontent. In Carteret and Craven counties, local whites demonstrated that racial supremacy was more important than economic interests. The wartime experience of these communities reveals why Reconstruction would be so difficult; no matter what economic enticements were proffered, southern whites would not be satisfied until they re-established racial control. During wartime occupation, local whites reacted against what they perceived as proscriptions of their trade, Federal destruction of private property, negligence toward local Union supporters, and most importantly, a far too radical racial policy.<sup>4</sup>

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George Allen had noted that when the port of Beaufort had been reopened in April 1862, "Business of various kinds began to be renewed with cheerfulness and profit." As discussed in chapter three, many local residents in New Bern, Beaufort, and the surrounding countryside, found the opportunities for trade to be too enticing to resist. Many engaged in a lucrative trade and barter with the local soldiers and northern merchants. Herbert E. Valentine, a soldier in the

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<sup>4</sup> For an examination of Lincoln's vision and plan of wartime Reconstruction in the South and specifically North Carolina, see William C. Harris, *With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), especially pp. 58-72. In one of the best treatments of Union military policy in occupied areas, Mark Grimsley argues that conciliation died with the Union defeats outside of Richmond in 1862. Union authorities then moved towards a "pragmatic" policy, between conciliation and hard war. Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 3, 47-119. For more on the shift in Union policy away from conciliation, see also Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 50-53; Michael Fellman, *Citizen Sherman: A Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 1995), 136-148; Mark Grimsley, "Conciliation and its Failures, 1861-1862," *Civil War History* 39 (December 1993): 317-335.



23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts, approvingly noted in July 1862, “Since the establishment of a market by the Provost Marshal, at the foot of our company street, meat, fish, and all varieties of fruit can be purchases at very reasonable rates. The traders come many miles down the river in their boats and dugouts.” In New Bern, each Wednesday was designated as “Trading Day,” when people living outside the picket lines could come to the city market to exchange their farm products for the necessities and luxuries provided by northern merchants, all under the supervision of the Provost Marshal. Some took advantage of this situation. The *New Bern Progress* warned “all Union men to watch closely the boatmen who come here to market,” many of whom may come “for other purposes than the legitimate purposes of honest traffic.” Some unscrupulous Union officers also took advantage of trading days for personal gain, and would trade army supplies to Confederate agents posing as farmers in exchange for gold.<sup>5</sup>

Several soldiers profited from these trade opportunities. Much of this was a universal vice that tempted soldiers in every theater of the war. In Natchez, Mississippi, Union officers profited from corrupt trading practices. In the Sea Islands, Union officers also profited from the confiscation of non-war related valuables. In Memphis, Tennessee, a Union official cursed the private cotton brokers who followed Grant’s army into Mississippi, claiming that, concomitantly, a “mania for sudden fortunes made in cotton has to an alarming extent corrupted and demoralized the army. Every colonel, captain, or quartermaster is in secret partnership with some operator in cotton; every soldier dreams of adding a bale of cotton to his monthly pay.” In New Bern and Beaufort, the wealth was not in cotton, but in the naval stores industries operated

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<sup>5</sup> Allen, *Forty-six Months with the Fourth R.I. Volunteers*, 116 (first quotation); Herbert E. Valentine, *Story of Co. F, 23d Massachusetts Volunteers in the War for the Union, 1861-1865* (Boston: W.B. Clarke & Co., 1896), 60-61 (second quotation); Thomas Kirwan, *Memorial History of the Seventeenth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Old and New Organizations) in the Civil War from 1861-1865*, edited and completed by Henry Splaine (Salem, Mass.: The Salem Press Co., 1911), 251-252 (Trading Day & unscrupulous officers); *New Bern Daily Progress*, April 23, 1862 (third quotation).

in the vast pine forests along the coastal plain. As late as October 1863, John Hedrick noted that naval officials were offering only \$12 a barrel for turpentine, while it sold for \$35 in New York. Unscrupulous officers could reap extravagant profits from such maneuvering. Because of such abuse, and because the navy needed large quantities for its own use, the Treasury Department prohibited private purchases of naval stores, and regulated trade among soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

Residents enjoyed the presence of the Union soldiers and traders, and were content as long as they enjoyed relatively uninhibited trade. Yet, as the war progressed, the Federal government began regulating trade among them as well, which started causing considerable discontent. One such activity that was regulated stringently was the selling of alcohol. Because of the rampant abuse of alcohol by soldiers, Union authorities forbade local merchants from selling this potentially profitable item to the troops. Of course, many attempted to do so anyway. George W. Taylor, owner of the Ocean House Hotel, undoubtedly brightened many a soldier's Christmas in 1862 by dispensing liquor behind the provost's back. The marshal complained that Taylor had, on Christmas Eve, "sold liquor to many persons in violation of privileges heretofore granted him & through his means the night was riotous & disorderly." The provost marshal had to order him twice to close his bar.<sup>7</sup>

Residents and northern merchants often resorted to clever ways to bring the illicit, but profitable beverages into the occupied zone. In Morehead City in November 1862, the provost declared, "I have seized three boxes of contraband stuff, marked 'Horse Medicine.' It turns out

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<sup>6</sup> Leslie Smithers, "Profit and Corruption in Civil War Natchez: A Case History of Union Occupation Government," *Journal of Mississippi History*, 64 (Winter 2002): 17-61; Russell Duncan, ed., *Blue-eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 331-370; Don Doyle, *Faulkner's County: The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 235 (first quotation); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, August 6, 1863, October 3, 1863, October 21, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 143, 159, 163.

<sup>7</sup> William B. Fowle, Jr. to Edward Stanly, December 27, 1862, Box 1, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, Records of the United States Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as RG 393.

on a minute examination to be genuine Bourbon Whiskey.” Douglas Ottinger, Captain of the U.S. Revenue Service, a branch of the Treasury Department, seized the schooner *St. Louis* in Morehead City in January 1863 “on account of having ardent spirits on board which were not on the manifest or cleared from Custom House.” Ottinger reported, “The ardent spirits found on board were secreted under the berths in the Cabin and in other places where cargo is not usually stored.” In April 1863, Ottinger seized more goods at the port. As John Hedrick reported, “The boxes marked Crown Sherry Wine contain about two-thirds whiskey. The upper layer of bottles is wine, and the balance is whiskey.” In December 1864, an aide to the provost marshal in Beaufort caught three local residents selling liquor to a soldier. He took each to the provost, who fined each man \$20 and sentenced them to 40 days in jail. The provost’s clerk noted that “the transactions are usually made in the rear of this office.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to regulating the sale of “demon rum,” the authorities regulated which residents would be allowed to engage in trade as well, by granting passes to transact business only to those who had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States. However, some canny residents applied directly to military governor Edward Stanly for special dispensation. Beginning in May 1862, Stanly granted several passes without requiring the dreaded oath of allegiance, which assuaged the fears of some locals, who probably feared the retribution they would suffer at the hands of Confederates if the latter ever recaptured the coastal region.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John J. Bowen to Southard Hoffman, November 3, 1862, Box 1 (first quotation), Douglas Ottinger to John G. Foster, January 26, 1863, Box 2 (second and third quotations), John A. Hedrick to Henry Wessels, April 22, 1863, Box 2 (fourth quotation), all in Part I, Department of North Carolina, RG 393; Entry for December 17, 1864, in Edmund J. Cleveland, “The Late Campaigns in North Carolina as seen through the eyes of a New Jersey soldier,” (typescript), Edmund J. Cleveland Diary (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; hereinafter cited as SHC) (fifth quotation).

<sup>9</sup> Undated Entry [before April 23, 1862], James Rumley Diary, Levi Woodbury Pigott Collection, NCSA. For more on white fears of Confederate retribution, see John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 20, 1862, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 7.

Of course, Stanly's generosity irritated Union military officers in the region trying to enforce the War Department's directives. Captain William B. Fowle, Beaufort's provost marshal in January 1863, wrote to his commander denouncing Stanly's inclination to grant passes to men whose loyalties were highly suspect. Stanly had informed Fowle that "There are several good citizens in this town, who have always been loyal & for good & sufficient reasons [are] excused from taking the oath of allegiance for the present. I desire they should have such privileges of transacting business in this town & vicinity as have heretofore been accorded to them." Stanly specifically granted four Beaufort men this exemption status—Isaac Ramsey, Benjamin L. Perry, Thomas Duncan, and James Rumley. Ramsey, Perry, and Duncan were three of the most successful businessmen in the county before the war and jointly owned the county's largest steam saw mill, while Rumley, the local clerk of the county court, was decidedly secessionist.<sup>10</sup>

Fowle had only been in Beaufort for three months, but that was long enough to recognize the allegiance of these four men. "None of these gentlemen have taken the oath of allegiance, in my opinion none of them are loyal men, this opinion is formed upon information obtained from truly loyal citizens, also from my personal observations," he decried. "I have seen joy plainly depicted upon their faces when news was received of the reverse at Fredricksburg & grief at the Murfreesboro news. These facts & many others of similar nature convince me that their sympathies are with the Rebels." Fowle surmised that these four men used their passes to illicitly trade salt and other necessities up the rivers to Confederate lines, and declared, "I fully believe the only safety is in refusing them passes."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> William B. Fowle, Jr. to Southard Hoffman, January 14, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (quotations); Unprocessed material, Box 2, F.C. Salisbury Collection, NCSA (prewar success); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-B (Ramsey & Steam Saw Mill), 163 (Duncan & Perry), 167, 170 (Perry), R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>11</sup> William B. Fowle, Jr. to Southard Hoffman, January 14, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (quotations).

Another provost marshal further up the coast, in Washington, North Carolina, joined Fowle in decrying the governor's generous granting of passes. "Must I obey the order of Gov. Stanly in relation to passing articles outside the lines when in my judgment it would be aiding & abetting the enemy?" he asked headquarters. "I can & will stop them crossing our line, but it is placing an additional inducement here for the enemy to come & of no sort of benefit to any one inside our lines, citizens or soldiers." Fowle concurred, declaring on January 16, 1863, "Information and contraband goods go to the rebels from Beaufort. I can stop both if I am permitted to do so, at least I think I can." However, he asked for instructions on how to deal with Stanly's granting of carte blanche passes, affirming that "while doubtful as to my authority I cannot fully perform what I consider to be my duty."<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, Stanly seemed too willing to accept declarations of loyalty. He granted many passes to local residents whom he perceived as Unionists to allow them to travel and take goods through Union lines without being molested by the soldiers. However, perhaps through nefarious means, some passes ended up in the hands of known Confederates. Mary Peabody, the wife of an officer in the 45<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, recorded that in March 1863, when Union cavalry captured some Confederate guerrillas, "One of the guerrillas they took had in his pocket a pass and protection from Gov. Stanly and at the same time a lieutenant's commission from Jeff Davis." Stanly frequently engaged in heated arguments over the dispensation of passes with the army provost marshals, as well as the naval officers who patrolled the rivers and resented the fact

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<sup>12</sup> Luke Lyman to Southard Hoffman, February 4, 1863 (first and second quotations), William B. Fowle, Jr. to Southard Hoffman, January 16, 1863 (third and fourth quotations), both in Box 2, Part I, Department of North Carolina, RG 393.

that he granted passes on the waterways. Ultimately, the naval authorities refused to recognize any passes given out by Stanly, and the War Department revoked his power in the matter.<sup>13</sup>

Even those white residents who had dutifully taken the oath of allegiance found their trade prospects diminished in 1863. Expeditions into the countryside, and occasional Confederate threats of siege or attack forced military authorities to frequently suspend all trade outside of the town limits of New Bern and Beaufort. John Hedrick, who supported an unfettered trade because he received a percentage of the custom duties collected at the port of Beaufort, complained in January 1863 of General John Foster's latest order prohibiting trade. "I am getting tired of being blockaded here," Hedrick wrote. "Besides I somewhat doubt the propriety of stopping all communication with the north. If he thinks that he will prevent the Rebels from knowing what is going on here by that means, he is certainly mistaken." Despite all the efforts to regulate local traffic, Hedrick acknowledged, "men from the country around are coming here and going away every day."<sup>14</sup>

As the spring came, Union authorities enacted further proscriptions on local trade. On March 31, 1863, President Lincoln issued a proclamation declaring all Northern trade with occupied regions of the South illegal, except under the supervision of the Treasury Department. Hedrick wrote in April 1863, "Business is very dull in my line and I expect it to be still duller. The President has recently issued a Proclamation and in consequence of that Proclamation all commerce between here and Newbern will be shut off." Local businessmen felt the effects as well as Hedrick. On May 3, he wrote, "We are now hemmed here in a strip of country bordering on the Sounds and every thing is under the strictest martial law. Nothing is allowed to go out of

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Peabody to Livy, March 11, 1863, Oliver W. Peabody Papers, MHS (quotations); Norman D. Brown, *Edward Stanly: Whiggery's Tarheel "Conqueror"* (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1974), 238-241.

<sup>14</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, January 10, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 80.

this place or Newbern without a permit from the Provost Marshal.” “If a man buys a pound of coffee or a paper or pins,” Hedrick complained, “he must go to the Provost and get a permit to take it from the wharf with him.”<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, some residents chafed under these restrictions. Several resorted to illicit means to make a profit. Solomon Witherington, a Craven County farmer who lived outside of New Bern, enjoyed the privilege of trading between the lines, though many local residents debated his scruples. One postwar informant recalled that Witherington was “loyal to the U.S. Govt, that as such he went in and out of the lines of the U.S. Army at New Bern at will & unquestioned, selling the products of his farm to the Government & U.S. troops & purchasing needed supplies as required, and that all this would not have been allowed had he been disloyal.” However, another local resident remembered Witherington’s activities differently, claiming that not only was he “a strong secessionist and in favor of the war,” but also that “It was reported and believed in his neighborhood that claimant was engaged in trading between the lines” illegally. Other witnesses testified that Witherington was secessionist in his sympathies; his friend Elijah Ellis even boasted of Witherington’s equal treatment of southern and northern soldiers who visited his farm: “When the Southern troops came to his house he treated them as gentlemen and when the Northern troops came he treated them the same.” Many residents undoubtedly shared Witherington’s willingness to trade with anyone who offered them payment.<sup>16</sup>

Active trading between the lines occurred on the waterways surrounding Beaufort as well. On June 1, 1863, a soldier in the 9<sup>th</sup> New Jersey Regiment recorded that his company “was

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<sup>15</sup> Proclamation in *New York Times*, April 7, 1863; John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, April 9, 1863 (first quotation), May 3, 1863 (second, third, and fourth quotations), in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 106, 114.

<sup>16</sup> Testimony of [unknown] (first quotation), Testimony of Edmund D. Jones (second and third quotations), Testimony of Elijah Ellis (fourth quotation), Claim 1998 (Solomon Witherington), Craven County, North Carolina, records of the Southern Claims Commission, 1871-1880, Disallowed Claims, Records of the United States House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as RG 233.

sent over to perform piquet duty on Bogue Island, and put a stop to the practices of those who were supposed to be running the blockade between Beaufort and Swansboro, thus doing a prosperous business between those points.” While performing their duty, the soldiers entered the cabin of a known Unionist—Horatio Frost, a fifty-four year old illiterate fisherman, widower, and father of seven—and captured three Confederates “in his house having lunch.” Frost had found his ability to market his wares along the coastal region curtailed by the new Union regulations. Frost, whose loyalty had never before been questioned, likely made an economic alliance with local Confederate soldiers in the region in order to provide for his large family. The New Jersey soldier does not record what punishment, if any, Frost suffered as a result.<sup>17</sup>

By late 1863, many residents had learned how to work with the Union requirements. John Hedrick noted, however, that local traders acted more out of enlightened self interest than any ideological motivation. On September 27, 1863, he wrote, “In making shipments to the interior, the owner of the goods has to swear that ‘he is in all respects loyal and true to the government of the United States and that he has never given voluntary aid to the rebels in arms nor in any other manner encouraged the rebellion.’” “They take this oath, both rich and poor, without hesitancy,” Hedrick declared. “They reason thus, ‘When the Southern forces were in possession here I would bring my corn, flour, fish and potatoes to market and would sell to any one who would give me the most money. Or if a soldier should come to my house and wish to buy potatoes I would sell them to him, not because he was in the Rebel service but because I

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<sup>17</sup> J. Madison Drake, *The History of the Ninth New Jersey Veteran Vols., A Record of Its Service from Sept. 13th, 1861, to July 12th, 1865* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Journal Printing House, 1889), 140 (first quotation), 141 (second quotation); 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, N.C., Population Schedule. Orders that forbid trade can be found in General Order No. 25, March 14, 1863, Lt. Colonel Luke Lyman, Regimental Order Book, 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry, Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as RG 94.



must have money.’” Such was the case for most locals who relied on trade for their livelihood. The color of the uniform was not as important as the color of the money that the buyer offered. Locals would have to trade under Federal restrictions until May 15, 1865, when Union officials lifted martial law, and no longer issued licenses to trade. Though economic enticements had wooed many locals to the Union side soon after the Yankees arrived, the restrictions placed on trade during occupation caused many to ponder the depth of their attachment to the Union.<sup>18</sup>

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Not only did local whites resent the trade restrictions, but they also believed that Union soldiers were becoming increasingly more undisciplined, especially when on expeditions into the countryside. Those who had taken the oaths of allegiance, but lived outside of the occupied towns, complained to Governor Stanly of ill treatment. Stanly relayed to the Department’s military commander, General John G. Foster, that “In numerous instances, well authenticated, [Union soldiers] entered and robbed the houses of loyal men, destroyed furniture, insulted women, and treated with scorn the protections, which by your advice I had given them.” Similarly, when local residents rebuked soldiers for perceived grievances, retaliations became increasingly more destructive. Stanly lamented in late 1862 that to one Union officer in particular, “House-burning seems becoming, not an extreme medicine of war, but a matter of amusement, to the men he is supposed to command.”<sup>19</sup>

Occasionally physical assault supplanted house burning. In November 1862, Zenas T. Haines, a corporal in the 45<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, reported that when a private in his company was searching a suspected “rebel’s” house for firearms, the homeowner “forcibly

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<sup>18</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, September 27, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 157 (quotations); J.W. Atwill to William J. Riggs, May 15, 1865, Part II, Letters Sent, December 1864—October 1865, District of New Bern, Entry 1660, Polynomous Succession of Commands, RG 393 (trade).

<sup>19</sup> Edward Stanly to John G. Foster, March 28, 1863, Box 2 (first quotation), and November 13, 1862, Box 1 (second quotation), Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393.

resisted” the private’s efforts to secure a weapon. Haines reported that the private “used the butt of a fowling piece over the head of secesh with such good effect that all resistance ceased.” In December 1862, as a Union expeditionary force marched towards Kinston, Haines’s compatriots concentrated on foraging from the local populace. On that cold, windy day, Haines related that his regiment encountered “a spunky secesh female, who, with a heavy wooden rake, stood guard over her winter’s store of sweet potatoes. Her eyes flashed defiance, but so long as she stood upon the defensive no molestation was offered her.” Being December, one can see why the woman fought so tenaciously for one of her subsistence crops that might sustain her family through the winter. “When, however, she concluded to change her tactics, and slapped a cavalry officer in the face,” Haines amusedly noted, “gone were her sweet potatoes and other stores in the twinkling of an eye.”<sup>20</sup>

Locals interpreted such destructive Union actions as the indiscriminate persecution of an undisciplined army. The persecutions included arrests without just cause. Haines related, “All secesh men who might be useful to the enemy, resident along the road, were taken prisoner. Miserable looking fellows were they, as a rule, but quite handsome enough for their wives.” Haines told of one memorable encounter that is illustrative of the fear spread by the army: “In the house of one poor miserable paralytic wretch we found a double-barrelled gun, loaded & capped. ‘This is what picks off our men of nights,’ said a sgt. of cavalry,” who eventually “satisfied himself that the sick rebel was not playing possum.” Haines mused, “The scared & forlorn expression on the yellow and haggard face of his wife was a study for an artist.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> William C. Harris, ed., *“In the Country of the Enemy”: The Civil War Reports of a Massachusetts Corporal* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999), 95 (first, second, and third quotations), 102 (fourth, fifth, and sixth quotations).

<sup>21</sup> Harris, ed., *In the Country of the Enemy*, 94.

Of course, one must question how Haines knew that locals were “secesh.” A desire to defend private property from an army was a normal act of self-preservation, and not one directed solely at Union armies. Confederate troops caused as much havoc as Union troops to southern citizens. Confederate depredations became so unbearable that Governor Zebulon Vance wrote to James Seddon in December 1863, asserting sardonically, “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.”<sup>22</sup>

Some Union authorities recognized the difficult plight for people living in what Stephen Ash aptly dubbed “no man’s land”—the area outside of direct Union control, but subject to raids by both sides. Edward Stanly asked General Foster in March 1863, “Can I give to people whose loyalty is not & has never been questioned any assurance that you can see them protected? As matters now stand, the loyal men & women, aged & infirm, outside of our lines, are the most unfortunate & oppressed in our country. Both sides pillage and rob them.” Thomas Kirwan, a soldier in the 17<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, sympathized with the local residents’ dilemma, writing, “it can be judged what a hardship it was to planters and dwellers in that section. They naturally sympathized with their own people, but if they held intercourse with the Union forces, they were suspected by the Confederates of giving information as to their movements, while the Union troops not only suspected that they gave information of army movements, but when picketing or bushwhacking was indulged in, at night, it was believed that it was these professed non-combatants who did the shooting.” Indeed, both sides suspected those living outside of

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<sup>22</sup> Zebulon B. Vance to James Seddon, December 21, 1863, in *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 2 vols. to date, ed. Frontis W. Johnston and Joe A. Mobley (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1963-), 2: 344-345.

Union lines of nefarious activities. As Kirwan aptly noted, “They were thus between the upper and nether millstones, and suffered accordingly,” especially from the effects of pillaging.<sup>23</sup>

Union soldiers prided themselves on their pillaging prowess, especially on the periodic raids into the countryside. “If you could see the ruin, devastation and utter abandonment of villages, Plantations and farms, which but a short time ago was peopled, fenced, and stocked,” one soldier wrote his wife, “no cows, horses, mules, sheep, or poultry to be seen where ever the Union army advances.” The soldier concluded, “This whole country for all purposes of maintenance for man or beast for the next twelve months is a desert as hopeless as Sahara itself.” Fred Osborne, a Salem teenager serving in the 27<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, described the scene when his regiment marched into the countryside outside of New Bern in December 1862: “On the road up the country and back, at every halt and at every chance the boys would get they would be after turkeys, chickens, pigs and everything that was eatable.”<sup>24</sup>

Desperate to prevent pillaging from Union forces, those civilians who had taken the oath of allegiance would stick white flags on their houses to signify that they had Union protection. Dexter Ladd, a corporal in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts regiment, was amused by the desperate plea of a barely literate Unionist, whose house Union soldiers used as a picket outpost. The turpentine

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<sup>23</sup> Edward Stanly to John G. Foster, March 28, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (first quotation); Thomas Kirwan, *Memorial History of the Seventeenth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Old and New Organizations) in the Civil War from 1861-1865*, edited and completed by Henry Splaine (Salem, Mass.: The Salem Press Co., 1911), 131-132 (second and third quotations).

<sup>24</sup> William Augustus Willoughby to wife, January 22, 1863, in Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievers, eds., *Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters between New England Soldiers and the Home Front* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 97 (first, second, and third quotations); Frederick Osborne to “Jennie,” December 26, 1862, in Frederick Osborne, *Private Osborne, Massachusetts 23rd Volunteers: Burnside Expedition, Roanoke Island, Second Front Against Richmond*, edited by Frank B. Marcotte (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1999), 107 (fourth quotation). The ability to plunder from civilian farms had existed in all wars, and in all military occupations. David Hackett Fischer noted that during the British occupation of New Jersey in 1776, plundering followed certain unwritten customs, and testimony of Union soldiers reveals that these same customs applied during the Civil War. See David Hackett Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 176-177; Marcotte, ed., *Private Osborne*, 107.

farmer had scrawled over his mantle: “this is my Howze i is for the younion Plesse don’t tare up my Pain [pine] treezes I have a protexion from the Ginerl. Riley Wetherington.”<sup>25</sup>

However, these Union raids were not the actions of a wayward few. Destructive expeditions sent into the countryside from occupied coastal North Carolina towns were part of a Union policy designed to deprive the Confederacy not only of the cotton crop, but also of grazing lands for southern cavalry and foodstuffs for the army. Though Stanly and the region’s white inhabitants resented them, these new, harsher measures were part of formal Federal policies—indicative of the retreat from conciliation—that was being enacted in many areas of the South, not just North Carolina. Judging from Confederate reactions, the Union soldiers enforced this policy effectively. Leonidas L. Polk, a lieutenant in General D.H. Hill’s North Carolina army, and future leader of the Farmer’s Alliance, marched with his troops through sections of eastern North Carolina that had been visited by the Union troops in March 1863. “We went 30 miles through as fine and rich lands as in the state and I saw only about 4 acres preparing for a crop,” Polk wrote to his wife. “Large and rich plantations entirely deserted and the only marks left of their recently prosperous and happy owners and tenants was the lonely chimneys of their fine and beautiful residences. Everything was burnt and destroyed that could be. The blighting simoom sweeping madly across the luxuriant beauties of the tropics could scarcely produce a more gloomy sight.”<sup>26</sup>

In addition to using heavy-handed measures against local property, the Federal government started enacting stricter policies regarding suspected disloyal civilians, including several orders to banish such people from occupied southern territories. Union officials in the

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<sup>25</sup> Undated Entry [May 1, 1862], Dexter Ladd Diary, Dexter B. Ladd Papers, Civil War Miscellany Collection, USAMHI.

<sup>26</sup> Leonidas Polk to wife, March 17, 1863, (typescript) L. Polk Denmark Collection, NCSA. For a view on the relatively limited nature of the destructive expeditions, see Mark E. Neely, Jr., “Was the Civil War a Total War?” *Civil War History* 37 (March 1991): 5-28.

Carteret and Craven region evicted those who refused or reneged on the oath of allegiance. The first eviction notice came in October 1862; a Union soldier wrote to his wife, “the white people of this city have had their choice—to take the oath, or leave.” Joseph Barlow was more severe, supporting Foster’s decision because “this place is full of Rebels and there is a good many union men too but I think the best way to silence them would be to shoot them then they would not join the rebel army.” Fortunately, Foster did not share the same extreme views on loyalty, but he did enforce his order. One soldier reflected ruefully, “I pity those who went away for many of them were honest people and loved us as their own sons and brothers, but we cannot know the trials of persons in their circumstances.” Another was less empathetic, stating, “I am glad they have gone for they were a nusence.”<sup>27</sup>

The second eviction order came in the spring of 1863. A Massachusetts soldier wrote to his wife on April 20, 1863, “They have ordered all of the secesh out of Newbern previous to Thursday of this weak.” “This causes great rejoicing among the soldiers for they wer getting pretty saucy,” the soldier wrote, further adding, “It is what ought have to don one year ago.” A week later, Beaufort’s District Commander issued a general order mandating the removal of “Any person who shall refuse to take the oath of allegiance, or having taken the oath of allegiance, shall utter disloyal sentiments, or who shall hold communication verbally with any persons who may cross our lines, or by letter with any persons residing within the lines of the enemy.” John Hedrick noted that by June 1863, the threats had created anxiety in Beaufort. “A great many of the citizens are frightened,” he wrote, “some are afraid of being drafted [into the Union army] and others of being sent out of the lines.” Such attempts to suppress disloyalty

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<sup>27</sup> James Glazier to Annie G. Monroe, October 26, 1862, Glazier Papers (first and third quotations); Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, October 25, 1862, Joseph Barlow Papers, USAMHI (second quotation); Alfred Otis Chamberlain to “Dear father and mother,” October 25, 1862, Alfred Otis Chamberlin Papers (Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.; hereinafter cited as DU) (fourth quotation). See also Mary E. Massey, “Confederate Refugees in North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 40 (April 1963): 158-182.

severely damaged the relationship between Union forces and the civil society they were trying to support. Local whites believed that the United States soldiers were indiscriminately targeting secessionists and Unionists alike, and many felt they could no longer trust Union soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

Some residents reacted against these oppressive actions. Historian David Hackett Fischer reveals an illustrative parallel from the Revolutionary War, especially regarding uncompensated damage to personal property. When Parliament investigated the British army's actions in New Jersey in the winter of 1776, a member of the House of Commons asked Major General James Robertson, "Did the troops plunder the inhabitants as they passed through that country?" Robertson replied, "There was a great deal of plundering." To the following question of "What effect had this on the minds of the people?" Robertson answered pointedly, "Naturally, it would lose you friends and gain you enemies."<sup>29</sup>

Under Civil War occupation in eastern North Carolina, many Union soldiers' actions certainly gained them enemies. Historian Daniel Harvey Hill, Jr. (son of the Confederate general) reprinted part of a postwar letter purportedly written by Edward Stanly to Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, in which the governor condemned the actions of Union soldiers. "Had the war in in North Carolina been conducted by soldiers who were Christians and gentlemen, the state would long ago have rebelled against rebellion," Stanly wrote. Instead, "Thousands and thousands of dollars worth of property were conveyed North. Libraries, pianos, carpets, mirrors,

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<sup>28</sup> George Kimball to wife, April 20, 1863, George W. Kimball Papers, USAMHI (first, second, and third quotations); General Order No. 1, April 27, 1863, District of Beaufort, found in George H. Johnston Papers, SHC (fourth quotation); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, June 24, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 132 (fifth and sixth quotations). For a parallel example, see Louis S. Gerteis, "'A Friend of the Enemy': Federal Efforts to Suppress Disloyalty in St. Louis During the Civil War," *Missouri Historical Review*, 96 (April 2002), 165-187.

<sup>29</sup> Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 174.

family portraits, everything in short that could be removed was stolen by men abusing flagitious slaveholders and preaching liberty, justice and civilization.”<sup>30</sup>

Some Unionists even assailed their occupiers in retaliation for their treatment. John M. Spear, a surgeon with the 24<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, found himself under attack by Robert Wallace, a professed Unionist in Portsmouth, for commandeering Wallace’s boat. Wallace recounted how Spear had come to claim Wallace’s skiff, claiming that it had been left in charge of a local black boy. “I remarked that if the boy said the skiff was left in his charge, that he told a damn lie,” Wallace related, “and if I caught him in her I would kill him.” When Spear replied, “no you won’t,” Wallace threatened Spear. “I said I would serve you so too,” he remarked. “I then forbid him coming in the yard, told him if he did I would kill him.” Spear returned later with soldiers and forcibly arrested Wallace, who, to avoid imprisonment, grudgingly allocuted his errors and promised, “I will neither by word, deed, or action do anything against the U.S. in any form whatever.”<sup>31</sup>

Angry reactions continued among the local whites. In January 1863, some Portsmouth residents seized, and subsequently hid, the United States flag from a revenue cutter. Spear, with the aid of local blacks in the government’s employ, recaptured the banner. “The question I would like to ask some of these professedly strong Union people is, If you are such good friends of the Union, why did you want to secrete the Union flag?” Obviously, the actions of the government had forced some into subtle measures of resistance and rebellion. Others were more overt in their actions. On May 8, 1863, Spear wrote, “I have been at the Provost Marshal’s office the most of the day, as witness in a case in which a professedly strong Union man is charged with disloyalty and using treasonable language.” Spear does not identify the defendant, but

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel Harvey Hill, *Bethel to Sharpsburg* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Company, 1926, reprinted, Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1992), 238.

<sup>31</sup> Spear, “Army life in the Twenty-fourth regiment,” 124-125.



apparently his anger had boiled over and led to his arrest for condemning the government. This dissenter was not the only one vocalizing disdain for the Union forces. Similar actions had prompted another Union soldier to remark, “There is no Union sentiment here. About all are either silent or growling most of the time because we are taking away their rights.”<sup>32</sup>

In addition to arrests or property seizure in retribution for disloyalty, Union forces often confiscated or destroyed local residents’ property out of military necessity, or sometimes simply caprice. Local military reports and the post-war Southern Claims Commission reports indicate the extent to which Union soldiers confiscated local property. Union officers from the 9<sup>th</sup> New Jersey regiment commandeered the *Annie Grey*, the boat of Benjamin L. Roberson, a fifty-year old Beaufort mariner and father of five, soon after they entered the town in the spring of 1862. In June, Roberson, who had voluntarily taken the oath of allegiance, appealed to Governor Stanly, who ordered the boat be returned to its owner. Roberson repaired minor damages to the boat, only to have the provost marshal demand the boat again a month later. He appealed again to Stanly in July, claiming that he “protested against his taking my boat on the grounds that I was a man of family and without my boat I should be deprived of the means of obtaining a living for my family & further that my boat has been taken out of my possession by the officer on a former occasion.” Stanly referred him to the departmental commander and endorsed his plea. Roberson wrote to the departmental commander in November asking for either compensation or the return of the *Annie Grey*, claiming that the loss of the boat, which he valued at \$500, “has injured me very seriously as it was the only source of income I had.” Despite repeated pleas Roberson never received compensation, or saw his boat again. After the war he filed a claim for the boat with

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 106 (first quotation), 152 (second quotation); Isaac N. Roberts to Dr. Ebenezer Hunt, July 19, 1862, Ebenezer Hunt Papers, MHS (third quotation).

the Southern Claims Commission, only to have it disallowed because he had had a son in the Confederate army, and therefore had shown insufficient loyalty.<sup>33</sup>

The military authorities confiscated property without offering compensation from many other people who considered themselves loyal. Daniel Bell had his 18-foot sailboat, *Carrie*, taken by an agent of the Commissary Department on June 11, 1863 at Morehead City. Reuben Fulcher of Beaufort helplessly watched naval authorities commandeer his \$1200 schooner in July 1862. Union authorities, desperate for raw materials to build barracks, defensive fortifications, and improve port facilities, took fifty tons of timber from Daniel Dickinson's farm on Core Creek, and another 125 tons from his relative and neighbor William H. Dickinson. They also tore down David W. Bell's two-story house outside of Carolina City in the summer of 1863, David S. Quinn's small farmhouse near Shepherdsville in January 1864, and Jesse Fulcher's fish house. Like the others, Fulcher and Quinn were upset because they believed they had demonstrated their loyalty as well as they could, often feeding the Union officers and men, for which they "made no charge and received no pay."<sup>34</sup>

Each of these men pursued a common course of action, applying individually to the Southern Claims Commission after the war for compensation for their lost property. Each also had his claim disapproved, because postwar arbiters found their loyalty suspect. After the war, Union authorities had difficulty accepting Unionism in a region that had increasingly become known for its hostility. Taking the oath of allegiance and offering succor to Union soldiers no longer was enough to demonstrate one's loyalty. In rejecting William Dickinson's claim, the

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<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Roberson to Edward Stanly, July 29, 1862 (first quotation), Benjamin Roberson to Southard Hoffman, November 1, 1862 (second quotation), Box 1, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393; Claim of Benjamin Roberson, Claim No. 15562, Carteret County, RG 233.

<sup>34</sup> Testimony of claimant Daniel Bell, Claim No. 1670; Testimony of Nelson E. Hamilton, Claim No. 13819 (Reuben Fulcher); Testimony of claimant Daniel B. Dickinson, Claim No. 12743; Testimony of William H. Dickinson, Claim No. 13817; Testimony of claimant David W. Bell, Claim No. 1670; Testimony of claimant David S. Quinn, Sr., Claim No. 12574; Testimony of claimant Jesse Fulcher, Claim No. 19070 (quotation), all in Carteret County, RG 233.

commissioners stated, “he took the oath of allegiance to U.S. after our Army occupied that section, but that is far from conclusive on the subject.” Even more telling, they asserted, “We are not satisfied with the sufficiency of the evidence in support of the loyalty of the claimant. There are no acts in favor of the government. He did not suffer for the Union cause. He was not threatened or molested by the Rebels.”<sup>35</sup>

David S. Quinn received similar treatment. Though he proved that he had often fed Union soldiers, the commissioners declared, “we are not told the circumstances under which the Union soldiers were fed or the sick soldiers nursed—whether it was done for pay—under compulsion—from motives of humanity or from patriotic motives.” Even more damaging was that Quinn did not appear to endure violence because of his Unionism: “the rebels never molested him & he was never even threatened on account of his union sentiments & he did nothing whatever for the Union cause.” Though he had receipts from the Union Provost for his house, and a sworn deposition dated February 1, 1864, affirming that he had taken the oath of allegiance, the commissioners still would not grant him his claim, primarily because he did not *suffer* for his loyalty, at least not from Confederate persecution. But Quinn, and many other residents became increasingly displeased with the suffering they endured at the hands of the Union occupation forces, especially regarding confiscation of their property.<sup>36</sup>

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Many local whites found their bodies as well as their belongings subject to a form of confiscation by Union forces. Beginning in 1863, Union soldiers and recruiting agents started harassing Carteret men, as well as Confederate deserters and refugees who fled to Union lines, trying to coerce them into joining the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Union Regiments. Charles Henry

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<sup>35</sup> Judgment of William H. Dickinson, Claim No. 13817, Carteret County, RG 233.

<sup>36</sup> Judgment of David S. Quinn, Sr., Claim No. 12574, Carteret County, RG 233.

Foster, a lieutenant colonel and recruiting officer, did not assuage any fears in April 1863, when, while unsuccessfully trying to recruit men at Portsmouth in Carteret County, he “told the people that if they did not volunteer, that they would be conscripted before long.” Other Union officers also advocated filling up regular Union regiments with the local populace. “Are not all our regiments, batteries, &c to be encouraged to recruit their respective commands from among the people of this state, including refugees, deserters &c?” asked James Jourdan, Beaufort’s Provost Marshal in November 1863, who constantly dealt with Confederate deserters who fled to his lines. “It has been the rule here when refugees or deserters should enlist in the Union army to treat them as Union soldiers,” he wrote. He claimed these men voluntarily sought to be enlisted. Ironically, Jourdan was later embarrassed to learn that some of his recruiting agents “have by display of firearms, threats of personal violence, imprisonment as rebels, spies &c, attempted to compel men to enlist.”<sup>37</sup>

John Hedrick noted other coercive tactics employed on the potential recruits: “The way the deserters and refugees are treated, is to put them into prison until they are willing to volunteer in the Union army.” Though he was unsure how long they were confined in jail, Hedrick noted, “they always let them out when they do volunteer.” Hedrick further commented that material destitution combined with peer pressure to induce refugees to enlist. “There are a great many things brought to bear upon them to induce them to join the army,” he wrote. “Most of them come in a destitute condition. Some of them have their families with them and when they arrive, they have no place to go for shelter and subsistence except it is to the military. They are

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<sup>37</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, April 9, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 106 (first quotation); J. Jourdan to J.J. Peck, November 25, 1863 (second and third quotations), and Colonel J. Jourdan, General Order No. 26, n.d. [December 1863] (fourth quotation), both in Part II, Letters Sent, October 1863—March 1864, District and Subdistrict of Beaufort, North Carolina, Entry 940, RG 393. For an examination of standard procedures in U.S. Army occupation policy, see Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860-1941* (Washington, D.C.: United States Army Center for Military History, 1998).

promised large bounties, a place for their families to live in and an outfit of clothing if they will volunteer.” Comparing it to a sort of freshman hazing, reminiscent of “my old Davidson College days,” Hedrick narrated, “When a refugee comes in... All the Buffaloes get after him and before he knows what he is about he has joined the regiment.” Hedrick, however, did not see anything untoward in these pressure tactics, asserting, “There may have been some unfair means used to get these men into the army, but I have not heard of an instance in which it has been practiced.”<sup>38</sup>

James Rumley was not so forgiving of what he condemned as coercive tactics: “[Refugees] come in squads of four or five, and as soon as they set foot upon the place are besieged by Buffalo recruiting officers (who are swarming over the county) and are wheedled or frightened into the Federal service.” Rumley viewed these men with a mixture of indignation and lugubrious pity: “Some poor deluded wretches enter there, and are induced by false representations to sell themselves to the public enemies of their country.” In somewhat calmer moments, Rumley blamed the “treason” on destitution. He argued that recruiting efforts “has been materially aided by the establishment of a public subsistence store in Beaufort, where the families of volunteers are gratuitously supplied.”<sup>39</sup>

Many who had voluntarily joined the army, primarily for the provisions and steady pay to relieve their families’ suffering, believed the Federal government was negligent in their pecuniary support. A captain in the 1st North Carolina Union Regiment complained to Governor Stanly, “Some of the volunteers in our Regiment are unable to provide for their families from the wages they receive as soldiers, on account of the very high cost of provisions & the dependence in many cases of a large family upon such earnings.” He suggested a supplemental pay increase,

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<sup>38</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, November 29, 1863 (first quotation), and March 13, 1864 (remaining quotations), in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 170, 191.

<sup>39</sup> Entry dated November 21, 1863 (first and second quotation), and October [n.d.], 1862 (third quotation), Rumley Diary.

claiming, “The loyal states with very few exceptions afford pecuniary aid to the families of their volunteers. Everything the North Carolina soldier buys for his family to live upon or to wear costs perhaps double or treble its former price, while there is no corresponding increase in his pay.” Stanly forwarded his request to General Foster, but got no response. A Union officer noted in March 1864 that the First North Carolina Regiment was due four months pay, and urged the paymaster at Fort Monroe, Virginia, to expedite it, “as very many of the families of its soldiers have to rely upon the monthly pay for their principal subsistence.” As one colonel pleaded when payroll was several months behind, “mere personal persuasion and influence are not sufficient, without at least some money, to hold a large number of men together.” He declared, “My men have never received one cent of either bounty or monthly pay. There is danger as you must see, under such circumstances, of desertions.” There would be many desertions in the next few months.<sup>40</sup>

Nine “outraged and indignant” men deserted after Union authorities ordered their company from coastal Beaufort to the river town of Washington “in flagrant disregard of solemn promises,” reported Charles Henry Foster, lieutenant colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolian Union Regiment. “These men were enlisted with the distinct and solemnly pledge understanding that they were not to be taken from the coast of North Carolina.” Foster had recruited these men—“principally of refugees and conscript deserters, and intended for local operation”—exclusively from the Beaufort region, “where I am confident the necessary quota of men can readily be procured, who, on account of its distance from their homes would refuse under any circumstances, to volunteer in the 1st North Carolina,” which had companies further up the coast

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<sup>40</sup> Captain C.A. Lynn to Edward Stanly, March 13, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (first and second quotations); C.C. Graves to “Union Paymaster at Fort Monroe, VA,” March 11, 1864, First N.C. Infantry Regimental Descriptive Books, vol. 3, RG 94 (third quotation); C. H. Foster to J.B. Frye, January 5, 1864, Second N.C. Infantry Regimental Letter, Endorsement & Order Book, RG 94 (fourth and fifth quotations).

in Plymouth and Washington. Thus, when the army moved them away from their preferred region, many fled.<sup>41</sup>

More locals fled the Union army after Confederates captured several dozen members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Regiment (Union) outside of New Bern in February 1864. North Carolinians, especially Confederate deserters, who enlisted in the Union army had always been aware of the extreme danger they faced if they ever fell into the hands of southern troops. A Massachusetts soldier had recorded rumors of captives' treatment a year earlier. "How do you suppose the rebs treat the North Carolinian soldiers when they take them," he asked his wife. "They 'put them in a dark cell of the prison and feed them as often as they see fit they have taken two from here' and one they starved to death the other at last accounts was to be hung." "They say that is good enough for the damn buffaloes," the soldier related. "That is what the rebs call the North Carolinian soldiers[;] basterd Yankee is another name."<sup>42</sup>

These "buffaloes" suffered greatly at rebel hands at New Bern. On February 2, 1864, after being constantly "menaced by the enemy," most of Company F of the 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina Union Regiment, which had been defending Beech Grove on the Neuse River north of New Bern, surrendered to the small Confederate army under the nominal command of General George Pickett. Confederates tried and hanged twenty-two members of the company between February 5 and 22, near Kinston. Some of the Confederates tormented the imprisoned Buffaloes, denying them food for several days. Confederates also simultaneously hung thirteen of these men from one gallows, stripped them of their clothes, and, according to some accounts, harassed and robbed the victims' widows who tried to tend to the mutilated bodies. In justification, the rebels

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<sup>41</sup> C.H. Foster to J.M. McChesney, December 15, 1863 (first, second, and third quotations), C.H. Foster to B.F. Butler, November 30, 1863 (fourth and fifth quotations), Second N.C. Infantry Regimental Letter, Endorsement & Order Book, RG 94.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Henry Tubbs to wife, February 25—March 3, 1863, Tubbs Letters.

indicated that they executed only men who had been deserters from the Confederate service, though Union officials disagreed. However, one Confederate witness declared, “I think such an example ought to learn our men better” about the dangers of deserting and joining the enemy.<sup>43</sup>

The example was effective, as many native soldiers fled to quieter sectors, or deserted the army altogether, believing that the Union army was not doing enough to protect them. In March 1864, twenty-eight men deserted their Federal company, and many of them made their way from the front lines at New Bern to more protected Beaufort where they were arrested by the provost. Their colonel tried to excuse their conduct, claiming, “Several of them had brothers or other near relations who were hung at Kinston; all of them acquaintances and old neighbors or comrades, who thus expiated the crime of loyalty upon the gallows; and the news of the horrid and bloody massacre was fresh when they were, as they supposed, ordered to the front.” The departmental commander noted the stark change in attitude among the North Carolina soldiers lamenting to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, “The North Carolina troops I consider useless . . . as the execution of the Carolina troops at Kinston had very much demoralized the whole of them.”<sup>44</sup>

The families of these native Union soldiers also felt neglected by Federal authorities, who often failed to follow through on promises of money or provisions. The Colonel of the 1st North Carolina Regiment wrote in April 1864 that when the theater’s commander, General Benjamin Butler visited the region, “I called his attention to the many cases of destitution among

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<sup>43</sup> H.W. Barrow to Christian Thomas Pfohl, February 17, 1864, Christian Thomas Pfohl Papers (microfilm) (quotation). For more on the capture and execution, see Entry dated March 2, 1864, Rumley diary; Michael K. Honey, “The War within the Confederacy: White Unionists of North Carolina,” *Prologue* 25 (Spring 1994): 66-67; Donald E. Collins, “War Crime or Justice? General George Pickett and the Mass Execution of Deserters in Civil War Kinston, North Carolina,” in *The Art of Command in the Civil War*, ed. Steven E. Woodworth (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 50-83. For the effect of the massacre on the victims’ families, see Lesley J. Gordon, “‘In Time of War’: Unionists Hanged in Kinston, North Carolina, February 1864,” in *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*, ed. Daniel E. Sutherland (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 45-58.

<sup>44</sup> C.H. Foster to B.B. Foster, March 13, 1864, Second N.C. Infantry Regimental Letter, Endorsement & Order Book, RG 94 (first quotation); Innis N. Palmer to Edwin M. Stanton, May 15, 1864, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols. in 128; Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Ser. 1, Vol. 26, pt. 2, 809.



the families of the men of my regiment, the majority of whom had been driven from their homes by the enemy and in many cases not allowed to bring a change of clothing with them.” The colonel appealed for rations and money to be sent with haste, noting, “These people are worthy of it, their husbands are good soldiers and have comparatively been of little expence to the government.”<sup>45</sup>

Six months later there were still bureaucratic delays in doling out the pensions due to the family members of those men executed at Kinston. Several applications had been sent back for lack of proper documentation, prompting Innis Palmer to implore the Treasury Department auditor to accept the claims without requiring further proof. Many times the required documents did not exist. “For instance a marriage certificate is required: many of these people were perhaps married years ago by some ignorant country justice and a record or certificate of the fact was perhaps never made at all,” Palmer noted. “I believe the claims have been prepared as fully as is possible with the means now at hand.” Furthermore, Palmer was moved by their destitution and demanded their claims be processed quickly. “Poor and miserable in the best days of North Carolina, these people by the fortunes of war and the ravages of yellow fever which for more than a month has been raging amongst us, have now become helpless and a drag and burden on the government,” he declared, and further entreated, “As a matter of humanity if nothing more, they should at once receive the pittance that is due them.”<sup>46</sup>

Many Unionists, both enlisted men and civilians, frantically fled to Beaufort in the spring of 1864, after these Confederate military successes. Rumley characterized the fleeing Buffaloes as “wretched victims of Yankee lying and trickery,” who “with their squalid and destitute

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<sup>45</sup> J.M. McChesney to Maj. R.S. Davis, April 6, 1864, First N.C. Infantry, Regimental Descriptive Books, vol. 3, RG 94.

<sup>46</sup> Innis N. Palmer to E.B. French, November 9, 1864, Part II, Letters Sent, December 1864—October 1865, District of New Bern, Entry 1660, Polynomous Succession of Commands, RG 393.

women and children are flocking to Beaufort, as their last place of refuge on the soil of their outraged and insulted state.” Undoubtedly many of these refugee soldiers, like George W. Jones, a twenty-four year old painter whose brother had been executed at Kinston, felt they had been “fooled into [enlistment]... with the promises of protection” by the Yankees. Seeking a discharge after only three months of service, Jones complained in April that he was “looked upon as a traitor and a coward by the majority of the North as well as the South and neither feel willing to protect me.” He gloomily asserted, “I feel like a prisoner [whose] sentence is death awaiting the day of execution.” His lugubrious lament indicates that even Unionists felt betrayed by Federal actions, or inaction, as the case may be.<sup>47</sup>

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But *nothing* angered local white residents more than the perceived gracious treatment northerners gave to the local African American population. The flashpoint of white anger came when Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, which did not exempt North Carolina even though it did exempt many other occupied regions. Occupied North Carolina was not exempted from the Proclamation most likely because, to quote Stephen Ash, the residents there had not “taken steps toward reconstruction sufficient to redeem them in the president’s eyes.” Though most scholars agree that, in reality, the Federal government’s policy of emancipation did not include any real desire to provide complete independence or equality—and therefore, its revolutionary nature was quite limited—that reality is less important than what local whites perceived at that moment in time. Whites North Carolinians saw only radical policies of social equality and the dreaded fear of all white supremacists, eventual amalgamation. As

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<sup>47</sup> Entry dated April 24, 1864, Rumley diary (first and second quotations); George W. Jones to Walter S. Poor, April 15, 1864, George W. Jones Service File, Second N.C. Infantry, Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers who served in Organizations from the State of North Carolina, Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served during the Civil War, RG 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (microfilm at NCSA) (third, fourth, and fifth quotations).

Massachusetts soldier Zenas Haines noted on October 31, 1862, “there was a right smart of Union here before the proclamation, but now it is the other way.”<sup>48</sup>

Native son, James West Bryan, a noted antebellum Whig politician and Carteret County representative, had captured the views of the region’s residents in an 1835 speech in which he proclaimed, “This is a nation of white people, its offices, honors, dignities, and privileges are alone open to, and to be enjoyed by, white people.” Furthermore he declared, “The God of Nature has made this marked and distinctive difference between us, for some wise purpose, and assigned to each color their proper and appropriate part of the Globe; and I can never consent to [their] equality.” Twenty-eight years had not altered those beliefs from the minds of Carteret (and Craven) residents, who feared that Lincoln’s Proclamation was the first step toward such equality. They had accepted occupation as a means of returning to the prewar Union, but found that the Federal government had different ideas.<sup>49</sup>

By 1863, this new Union—embodied in the Emancipation Proclamation and the educational and uplifting aims of arriving northern benevolent societies—represented radicalism that southern whites, even many Unionists, rejected; this included Governor Stanly. Stanly had warned Lincoln’s administration in June 1862, that unless he could give North Carolinians “some assurance that this is a war of restoration and not of abolition and destruction, no peace can be restored here for many years to come.” Hoping to exempt North Carolina from the proclamation by having an elected representative in the United States Congress, Stanly called for an election in December 1862. Stanly personally backed Jennings Pigott, a Unionist from

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<sup>48</sup> Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 151 (first quotation); Harris, *In the Country of the Enemy*, 80-81 (second quotation). For scholars view of Emancipation as a war measure, see Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 153; Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy toward the Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1973), 32; C. Vann Woodward, “Equality: the Deferred Commitment,” in Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 69-88.

<sup>49</sup> James West Bryan quoted in Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 602; *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, s.v., “Bryan, James West.”

Carteret (though he had been living in Washington, D.C. for several years), who nominally opposed emancipation. Charles Henry Foster, Pigott's main challenger, had organized local Free Labor Associations, which advocated compliance with the president's proclamation, and expected to draw on this support to win the election. Foster, an opportunist who had immigrated from Maine in the 1850s and edited a secessionist newspaper in Murfreesboro, North Carolina before the war, had many detractors (namely John Hedrick) who actively campaigned against him. The Union-soldier edited New Bern *Progress* also backed Stanly's candidate, proclaiming that the war was fought for the restoration of the Union, and not "to establish Free Labor in North Carolina."<sup>50</sup>

In the January 1, 1863 election, in which only white males who had taken the oath of allegiance were allowed to vote, Pigott won overwhelmingly, gathering 594 votes to Foster's 157. The election totals indicate that local white Unionists opposed emancipation, as they voted against Foster and his Free Labor Association ideals. However, Foster protested the election on the pretext that Pigott lacked the requisite residency status to be a legitimate candidate, and Congress ultimately refused the seat either of them. In the meantime, eastern North Carolina was not exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation, despite the earnest wishes of its white residents. Later Stanly condemned the proclamation, declaring that it "crushes all hope of making peace by conciliatory measures... It will fill the hearts of Union men with despair,... strengthen the hands of detestable traitors,... [and] to the negros... bring the most direful calamities." Detesting the radical turn the war had taken, Stanly resigned in protest over the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, and left the state in late March, ending his

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<sup>50</sup> Edward Stanly to Edwin Stanton, June 12, 1862, *Official Records*, Ser. 1, vol. 9: 400-401 (first quotation); Alan D. Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County* (New Bern, N.C.: Tryon Palace Commission, 1987), 385 (second quotation); Norman C. Delaney, "Charles Henry Foster and the Unionists of Eastern North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 37 (July 1960): 348-366 (Foster); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, December 16, 21, and 25, 1862, in Browning and Smith, eds, *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 64-69.

association with the occupation forces. Stanly may have also departed so that he would not be deemed guilty by association. On Christmas Day, 1862, in Beaufort, a crowd hung him in effigy, believing that despite his protestations, he was in alliance with the anti-slavery administration.<sup>51</sup>

From the first moments of occupation, whites resented the fact that northerners allowed former slaves a multitude of previously forbidden freedoms. Disapproving whites witnessed blacks attend schools, confiscate white property, and be disrespectful to whites. Furthermore, Federal authorities employed blacks and paid them directly for their labor. Union officials also granted legal rights to freedpeople, an act that was appalling to the “herrenvolk” sensitivities of local white residents. In late May 1862, Rumley complained that Union officials utilized slaves as informants, “get[ting] information from them as to the political opinions and conduct of their owners.” Even more appalling to Rumley than the fact that Union officers paid blacks for these services was that “in some instances arrests of citizens have been made and property been seized upon *negro* testimony!” Rumley complained, “A Negro, who in our civil courts could not be heard except through his master can appear as the accuser of any white citizen [before the provost marshal], and cause the citizen to be arrested.”<sup>52</sup>

Northern soldiers also seemed to allow blacks more privileges than whites. When a New Bern farmer went to the market to purchase fish, his daughter recalled that he “was ordered by a Federal officer to ‘stand back, soldiers first, negroes next, and rebels last.’” As John Hedrick wrote in late July 1862, “the slaves are about as free as their masters, or a little more so now because the niggs can go without passes, while the whites have to have them.” Undoubtedly,

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<sup>51</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, January 10, 1863, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 79-80 (vote totals); Edward A. Stanly, *Military Governor among Abolitionists: A Letter from Edward Stanly to Charles Sumner* (New York: n.p., 1865), 46-47 (quotation); Harris, *With Charity for All*, 70 (Stanly’s resignation); Brown, *Edward Stanly*, 256 (Stanly’s effigy).

<sup>52</sup> Entry dated May [n.d.], 1862 (first and second quotations), and January 1, 1863 (third quotation), Rumley diary.

Union officials granted these freedoms because there was little doubt about the loyalty of blacks—unlike that of whites.<sup>53</sup>

Conflicts also occurred on several occasions over housing for the black and white refugees. In November 1862, Charles Henry Foster, actively recruiting for the 1st North Carolina Union Regiment, proposed to the department commander that all blacks currently living in Beaufort be removed to the contraband camps developing outside of town, “so that the loyal men who enlist from exposed situations in the county may move into them with their families.” Foster promised the commander, “A hundred men can be enlisted here in a month, I am assured, if this be done.” He further noted that Governor Stanly approved of the plan. Without hearing any firm comment from the department commander, Stanly authorized Foster to begin enacting policy. The provost marshal, William Fowle, reacted angrily, and wrote his own missive to General. Foster had been taking charge of all abandoned buildings, and “in case the buildings are occupied by negroes, he is to demand rent of them & if they don’t pay eject them.” “The negroes in question are the very contrabands to whom the Government is issuing rations,” Fowle fumed, “of course if they cannot pay for food, they cannot pay rent & I suppose shelter must be provided for them.” To local whites, Stanly appeared to be sympathetic to their desires while Fowle represented the Federal government’s prerogative to elevate blacks over whites.<sup>54</sup>

Whites also became enraged at Federal efforts to enlist African American soldiers in the region. Rumley complained on May 30, 1863 that a Beaufort church had been “prostituted to the most unholy and damnable work of raising Negro volunteers for the armed service of the Yankee

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<sup>53</sup> Mrs. Frederick C. Roberts, “Historical Incidents,” *Carolina and the Southern Cross* II (April 1914), 5-6, quoted in Mary Lindsey Thornton, “New Bern, North Carolina, 1862-1865: A Southern Town Under Federal Occupation,” (typescript), p. 30 (North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) (first quotation); John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, July 29, 1862, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 19 (second quotation).

<sup>54</sup> Charles Henry Foster to John G. Foster, November 19, 1862, Box 1 (first and second quotations), William B. Fowle, Jr., to Southard Hoffman, January 16, 1863, Box 2 (third, fourth, and fifth quotations), Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393.

government.” Soon authorities moved the recruitment to the symbol of county justice, the court house. “Nothing during our captivity has shocked the feelings of our people more,” claimed Rumley. Though the use of the court house probably offended the clerk of the county court more than others, Rumley was not alone when he expressed his indignation. Even John Hedrick, the antislavery Unionist, admitted that he “would much rather see a hundred negroes sent from than one into the State.” He could only give a backhanded compliment to the black troops, admitting, “they don’t look as dangerous and bloodthirsty as might be expected.” Hostility toward the empowerment of blacks, and the social chaos that it caused, became so palpable that Hedrick informed his brother in July that most Beaufort whites “wish to get rid of slavery and negroes, and if they can not dispose of the latter any other way, they wish to kill them.” Charles Duren, a private in the 24<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, sensed the same reaction. “They say if you free the slaves don’t leave them here, we can not or will not live with [them],” he wrote to his parents. “They never will repeal those laws. The[y] hate a negro, talk about they regarding them as no better than a beast.” Whites felt the traditional social order had been inverted by the Union occupation, which Rumley scathingly indicted as “a reign of niggerism.”<sup>55</sup>

The frequent interactions between freedpeople and Union soldiers, who Rumley believed actually preferred blacks to whites, exacerbated white resentment. As discussed in chapter five, Federal troops did have open, sometime intimate, relations with blacks, but the majority of northern soldiers in the area, including the anti-slavery ones from New England, maintained decidedly racist views. Simultaneously, however, many northern officials did compare African Americans favorably to poor whites of the same economic condition. “The Negroes are not so

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<sup>55</sup> Entry dated May 30, 1863 (first quotation), June 1, 1863 (second quotation), and March 25, 1863 (seventh quotation), Rumley Diary; John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, July 26, 1863 (third quotation), June 19, 1863 (fourth quotation), May 3, 1863 (fifth quotation), in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 140, 130, 115; Charles Duren to mother and father, June 16, 1862, Charles M. Duren Papers (Special Collections & Archives, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA) (sixth quotation).

helpless and dependent as the poor whites,” proclaimed Horace James, Superintendent of Negro Affairs in New Bern. “They are more fertile in expedients, more industrious, more religious, and more active and vigorous in body and mind.” Dr. Jesse William Page, of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, operating a hospital in New Bern, agreed with James and commented that the poor whites were “a more helpless and spiritless race than the Negroes in the same section . . . They have more pride, but less activity.” In refugee camps, industrious freed people grew vegetables for subsistence and the market. “The refugees in a neighboring camp, composed of better houses and standing on better soil, neglected to raise anything themselves, but purchased vegetables freely of the negroes,” observed James. “In some cases, their corn, fifteen feet high, quite overtopped their houses.” James concluded, “of those who are equally poor and equally destitute, the white person will be the one to sit down in forlorn and languid helplessness, and eat the bread of charity, while the negro will be tinkering at something, in his rude way, to hammer out a living.”<sup>56</sup>

Union authorities showed a preference for employing industrious freedmen over poor whites, perhaps because many, though not all, officials deemed poor whites to be inferior to blacks “in intelligence, energy, and every thing else that makes up a noble character.” Edward Bartlett, a soldier in the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, compared the two lower class groups, stating, “the poor whites, what a miserable class they are. . . The blacks are far ahead of them.” He further remarked, “I am surprised to see how intelligent the blacks are, quick to understand, some are even witty,” implying they were superior to poor whites in each of those categories. Poor whites

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<sup>56</sup> Horace James, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina, 1864. With an Appendix containing the History and Management of Freedmen in this Department up to June 1<sup>st</sup> 1865*, (Boston: W.F. Brown, 1865), 44 (first and second quotations), 9 (third quotation), 8 (fourth and fifth quotations), 20 (sixth quotation). Jesse William Page identified in John R. Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle: The North Carolina Service of Private Henry A. Clapp, Company F, Forty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, 1862-1863* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 1998), 105.



discerned this condescension from their occupiers, and considered it to be an insult to their honor. They had fled to Union lines expecting opportunities for economic and perhaps social advancement. However, when it became apparent that some white northerners held them in lower esteem than blacks, poor whites reacted angrily, and sometimes violently. A few took covert action against their occupiers in retaliation. “There are a set of poor whites around here,” wrote Bartlett, “who are Union-looking citizens in the day time and ‘guerrillas’ at night, who raise hogs and sweet potatoes by day and in the night shoot our pickets.”<sup>57</sup>

Poor whites also publicly rejected the northern benevolent society efforts at improvement. When northern missionaries opened schools, freedmen flocked to them, but very few poor whites attended even though they were invited. In November 1864, poor whites caused a panic in a black church in Beaufort by threatening to blow it up with the congregation inside. Three white men torched one of the freedmen schoolhouses in Beaufort and threatened the female teacher with violence unless she promised to “never again teach the niggers to read.” Of course, white fears of educating slaves were endemic throughout the occupied South. As historian Don H. Doyle asserted in reference to northern efforts in occupied Mississippi during and after the war, “The objection stemmed from apprehension that northern missionaries and Republican sympathizers were going to be teaching the freedmen more than reading, writing, and arithmetic.” Ultimately, whites feared their occupiers were going to convert blacks into Radical Republicans, who could potentially undermine conservative white power. It certainly didn’t help that once the war ended, several Union authorities advocated granting blacks the right to vote. Regarding black enfranchisement, Massachusetts soldier Joseph Barlow admitted in

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<sup>57</sup> Henry Clapp to mother, November 14, 1862, in Barden, ed., *Letters to the Home Circle*, 22 (first quotation); Edward Bartlett to “Dear Martha,” November 15, 1862 (second and third quotations), January 30, 1863 (fourth quotation), Bartlett papers. For more on the experience of poor whites during Union occupation, see Stephen V. Ash, “Poor Whites in the Occupied South, 1861-1865,” *Journal of Southern History*, 57 (February 1991), 39-62.

June 1865, “I do not think they should vote now, not until they have become more enlightened,” which he thought would take about ten years. “But at any rate,” he noted, “I had rather they would vote than a Rebel.”<sup>58</sup>

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Though racial radicalism was the most offensive Union policy to local whites, perhaps the final insult occurred one afternoon in early 1865, when Union soldiers arrested Emeline Pigott as a spy and imprisoned her in Beaufort. Living just north of Morehead City, Miss Pigott engaged in several clandestine activities to aid the Confederate army. She often served as a courier for illicit mail between the lines, writing in her diary on February 7, 1865, “I met Confederate scouts near the Neuse River with a Lady friend—[and delivered] all the news that I knew with letters & papers.” She admitted that she often fed the southern scouts, carrying meals to them in the woods: “Some time Yankeys would be in the house while the Confederates [were in the woods, and] were both fed from the same table.” On February 8, 1865, she enlisted the aid of her brother-in-law, Rufus W. Bell, to help her on her mission. Underneath her hoop skirt she wore two pairs of Confederate pants and a pair of boots, and remarkably carried a shirt, a cap, a dozen linen collars and pocket handkerchiefs, 50 skeins of silk, spools of cotton, needles, toothbrushes, combs, knives, razors, gloves, and several letters addressed to Confederates. About 4:00 p.m. Union soldiers arrested the two, and discovered Pigott’s hidden contraband. A Union soldier-operated Beaufort newspaper noted that “On being arrested, with consummate impudence, she blustered about the arrest of high-toned *Southern* ladies as though *they* could do nothing wrong.” Union soldiers placed her in the Beaufort jail, before moving her to New Bern.

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<sup>58</sup> Entry dated November 28, 1864, Cleveland Diary (panic at black church); Sing-Nan Fen, “Notes on the Education of Negroes in North Carolina During the Civil War,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 36 (Winter 1967), 26n11 (first quotation); Doyle, *Faulkner’s County*, 269 (second quotation); Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, June 18, 1865, Barlow Papers (third, fourth, and fifth quotations).

In protest, some residents caused such a disturbance at a local store that the provost arrested a number of them, closed down the store, and fined each one \$10. Union authorities then rigorously enforced the oath of allegiance, especially among women. A Northern soldier took a measure of satisfaction in stating, “A great many of the ‘little dears of Beaufort’ swallowed the bitter Yankee pill and took the oath of allegiance this morning.”<sup>59</sup>

This sarcastic attitude hints at the sentiments of Union soldiers by the end of the war. Over the course of the three years of occupation, Union soldiers became fed up with the hostility they encountered from local residents, as well as the drudgery of daily duty. They looked forward to returning home. On April 11, 1865, news arrived in New Bern that Robert E. Lee had surrendered his army at Appomattox. Thomas Carey, a soldier in 15<sup>th</sup> Connecticut, rejoiced, “Such news as this awakens the liveliest emotions in camp. We talk of home with bright anticipations tonight.” Novelist William L. Everett captured this sentiment well in his fictional work on the occupation of New Bern, when he had Major Ferris Jacobs lament, “The people are hostile, the weather is hostile, the bugs are hostile, the whole wretched place is hostile, and the sooner we get this over, the better.” Many Union soldiers undoubtedly shared this sentiment; they wished to leave this unappreciative sandy stretch of North Carolina as soon as possible. Local white residents could not have agreed more.<sup>60</sup>

By the war’s end, Carteret residents had become stubbornly recalcitrant under Union occupation, creating a suspicious uneasiness among Federal authorities. Even after the military suspended martial law in favor of civil government in July 1865, allowing for a civilian mayor,

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<sup>59</sup> Calvin Jarrett, “The Spy Was a Lady,” *Greensboro Daily News*, September 29, 1963; Entries dated February 7, 8, 1865, [Emeline Pigott] Diary, Benjamin Franklin Royal Papers, SHC; Entries dated February 9, 10, and 17 (quotation), Cleveland diary; [Beaufort, N.C.] *Old North State*, February 11, 1865.

<sup>60</sup> Entry dated April 11, 1865, Thomas J. Carey Diary, SHC (first quotation); William L. Everett, *Coolmore: A Historical Novel of Destruction, Reconstruction and Reconciliation* (Rocky Mount, N.C.: E&E Publishers, 1995), 14 (second quotation).

town commissioners, and police force, Union officers were skeptical of the qualifications of the local residents who would fill these positions. One Union official instructed New Bern's military liaison in charge of shifting to civil government that "the greatest care must be taken to enroll only loyal good Union men." "The mere taking the oath of allegiance will not be held conclusive of loyalty," the official wrote, foreshadowing the judgments of the postwar Southern Claims Commission arbiters, "for it is not unreasonable to suppose that a man who has been guilty of treason may be willing to commit perjury." The official wanted to make sure that only good, loyal Unionist men attained positions of police authority, because "to arm and give more power to traitors is worse than doing nothing." The police officers had to be willing to arrest and turn over to military authorities "all persons who have manifested hostility to the government by a continued maltreatment of negroes or by enforcing the rights of masters as distinguished from those of employers."<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, Federal officials distrusted the strength and depth of white loyalty, not only in the region, but also throughout the state. As Sidney Andrews, a northern journalist who toured the Carolinas and Georgia immediately after the war, commented, "The North-Carolinian calls himself a Unionist, but he makes no special pretence of love for the Union. He desires many favors, but he asks them generally on the ground that he hated the Secessionists. He expects the nation to recognize rare virtue in that hatred, and hopes it may win for his State the restoration of her political rights; but he wears his mask of nationality so lightly that there is no difficulty in removing it." Indeed, many in the Carteret-Craven region removed their masks eagerly. Between the destruction of their property, the insulting of local white women, and most

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<sup>61</sup> Solon A. Carter to Colonel John H. Holman, June 22, 1865, Part II, Letters Sent, December 1864—October 1865, District of New Bern, Entry 1660, Polynomous Succession of Commands, RG 393.

trenchantly, the empowerment of their former slaves, the humiliation of Beaufort whites was complete.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War, As Shown by Fourteen Weeks of Travel and Observation in Georgia and the Carolinas*, with an introduction by David Donald (rev., Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1971), 392.

## EPILOGUE

In eastern North Carolina, a man's actions during the war served as a litmus test for his postwar success. Those who stood by the Union often found themselves ostracized from the community. Elijah S. Smith, a native of nearby Beaufort County and soldier in the 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Regiment, epitomized such social exclusion. "Since the close of the War of the South," he wrote to Benjamin F. Butler in February 1869, "I have had a hard time of it, for the fact that we were dubbed with the title of Buffalows, and that the Cessionist got temporarily in power, in my Section of the Country, consiquently we have been very much oppressed." An agent for the Freedmen's Bureau in a nearby coastal county predicted unequal treatment for Unionists in the postwar period, stating, "I fear the chance for Buffaloes and Negroes to get Justice done them by... our County Court will be but slim." As one Union officer explained later, "It *cost* something to be loyal to the Union."<sup>1</sup>

Like Smith, men who served in the North Carolina Union Regiments faced even greater danger than just social isolation. Oscar Eastmond, a northern officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Regiment, pleaded to Federal authorities in June 1865 when the local soldiers were scheduled to be mustered out: "Surely the government will not now send them to their home defenseless, leaving them to the mercy of those from whom both themselves & families have suffered taunts, & violence during the rebellion." Eastmond recognized that for local whites who detested the occupation, "the humiliation of defeat & subjugation can never eradicate unprincipled hatred

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<sup>1</sup> Elijah S. Smith to Benjamin F. Butler, February 15, 1869, "Reconstruction Letters from North Carolina, Part 10: Letters to Benjamin Franklin Butler," ed. James A. Padgett, *North Carolina Historical Review* 20 (April 1943): 171 (first and second quotations); Affidavit from Samuel Dowdy in a letter from S.H. Birdsall to the Assistant Commissioner of the North Carolina Freedmen's Bureau, August 7, 1866, quoted in Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*, 124 (third quotation); J. Waldo Denny, *Wearing the Blue in the Twenty-Fifth Mass. Volunteer Infantry, with Burnside's Coast Division, 18th Army Corps, and Army of the James* (Worcester: Putnam & Davis, Publishers, 1879), 227 (fourth quotation).

from their bosom nor prevent secret plots of midnight violence & highway murders.” At the same time, Sergeant Major William H. Eddins, also in Eastmond’s Regiment, wrote to Republican provisional governor William W. Holden requesting his support for the continued service, promotion, and welfare of the North Carolinians who had served in the regiment. In response to Eddins’s request, Holden wrote to Major General John M. Schofield, who then commanded the Department of North Carolina, asking that the men “be retained in the Service to garrison [eastern] Carolina because most of them belong in that portion of the State.” Holden beseeched Schofield to not turn the men out in the potentially hostile region. He declared, “Most of them are men of very small means and volunteered to Stand by the Government, when a failure of the national cause would have cost them their lives and their property and when the men by whom they had usually been controlled were doing every act in their power against the National Government.” Despite the pleas of Eddins and Holden, most of the men were officially mustered out in late June 1865.<sup>2</sup>

As the war ended, local whites tried to redefine their community as one based on their view of the Union *before* the war, not the radical new Union the Federal government had thrust upon them. As Whitelaw Reid, a northern journalist who traveled through the South in the immediate wake of the war, observed, southern whites were Union men only “if they can have the Union their way—if the Negroes can be kept under, and themselves put foremost.” Reid visited with a delegation from Beaufort in late 1865, and listened as the city leaders declared unequivocally that the blacks would “never be able to support themselves in freedom,”

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<sup>2</sup> Oscar Eastmond to J.A. Campbell, June 10, 1865, First N.C. Infantry, Regimental Letter and Endorsement Book, RG 94 (first and second quotations); William H. Eddins to William W. Holden, June 10, 1865, William W. Holden to John M. Schofield, June 16, 1865 (third and fourth quotations), in Horace W. Raper and Thornton W. Mitchell, eds., *The Papers of William Woods Holden, 1841-1868*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, 2002), 1: 182-183, 191-192. See also Judkin Browning, “‘Little-souled Mercenaries’? The Buffaloes of Eastern North Carolina during the Civil War,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 77 (July 2000): 362-363.

notwithstanding their successful efforts during wartime occupation. Reid noted, “Nothing could overcome this rooted idea, that the negro was worthless, except under the lash. These people really believe that, in submitting to the emancipation of the slaves, they have virtually saddled themselves with an equal number of idle paupers.” The journalist further explained white fears about granting blacks political power, especially the right to vote: “Naturally, they believe that to add a requirement that these paupers must share the management of public affairs with them is piling a very Pelion upon the Ossa of their misfortunes.” Instead, whites asserted their power over the local black population as soon as possible. In August 1865, the *Christian Recorder* reported the contents of a letter from New Bern that complained “of the outrages perpetrated upon the people of color.” The editors lamented, “We are indeed sorry that it is out of our power to do any thing further than to advise our people to appeal to a higher authority than they have heretofore applied for redress. Such a state of affairs surely makes our blood boil, but we are utterly powerless, when it comes to aiding our people.”<sup>3</sup>

One Freedmen’s Bureau agent declared that whites adamantly refused to concede any autonomous rights to blacks: “Some think that the only difference between freedom and Slavery is that then the Negroes were obliged to work for nothing; now they have to pay for what they used to have for nothing, not recognizing the right of Negroes to personal liberty, personal security and private property.” Historian Louis Gerteis argued that many Union soldiers acquiesced, reducing rations and government assistance to the blacks after they were no longer

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<sup>3</sup> First Whitelaw Reid quote in Roberta Sue Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen: Race Relations during Presidential Reconstruction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 34 (first quotation); Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Tour of the Southern States, 1865-1866*, edited by C. Vann Woodward (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 33-34 (second, third, and fourth quotations); “Cruelties to the Colored People of Newbern, NC,” *Christian Recorder*, August 12, 1865 (fifth and sixth quotations). Pelion and Ossa are references to Greek Mythology. Otus and Ephialtes, giants and twin sons of Poseidon and a mortal, believed they were superior to the gods. They threatened to pile Mount Pelion on Mount Ossa and climb to the home of the gods, Olympus. Zeus threatened to strike them with a thunderbolt, but Poseidon intervened and got the brothers to stop warring with the immortals. See Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 138.



militarily useful. In addition to ending most agricultural reform efforts, Union officers, such as Department commander John M. Schofield, even “advised the freedmen that when ‘allowed to do so,’ they should remain with their former masters and labor faithfully.” Historian Roberta Sue Alexander agreed that the government did no justice by freedmen after the war; it failed to prosecute many local murders of freedmen, hired unscrupulous local whites as Freedmen’s Bureau agents—many of whom, according to the state’s Freedmen’s Bureau Commissioner, “proved unfit..., not being able to comprehend that a Negro can be a free man, or can have any rights which a white man’s bound to respect”—and allowed whites to systematically exclude freedmen from giving testimony or having their grievances addressed in local courts.<sup>4</sup>

The desire to prevent outside interference in local racial affairs persisted long after the war. In 1898, North Carolina Democrats effectively ran a white supremacy campaign, which disenfranchised African Americans, removing that bulwark of Reconstruction Civil Rights, and reduced their political and social power dramatically. Blacks found themselves having to recast their wartime memories in order to live in an unabashed white supremacist world. In 1903, when two aged veterans of the 25<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment revisited the scene of their wartime North Carolina service, they found the “Negro question” to still be of prime importance to local whites. In Beaufort, one white man admitted to the old soldiers that the people of the South had only given up slavery after the war. But he admonished, “Now, we ask you of the North to let us work out this problem, as to the citizenship of the Negro, in our own way. We are here and have to live with them and must govern them, not be governed by them.” Forty years after the war, Beaufort whites were demanding that outsiders allow locals to dictate racial policy—the social

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<sup>4</sup> Report by Dexter Clapp, October 20, 1865, quoted in Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*, 96 (first quotation), 3 (murders), 5 (third quotation), 146 (proscription of legal rights); Louis S. Gerteis, *From Contraband to Freedman: Federal Policy toward the Southern Blacks, 1861-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1973), 44-48 (second quotation on p. 46).

and political legacy of the Emancipation Proclamation was still the source of a local power struggle. Even local blacks had adapted their legacy of the war, in order to extract some benefit and tolerance from whites. The old soldiers “asked one old negro what he was doing during the late unpleasantness, and he replied he was on both sides—was orderly for General Lee and General Burnside.” One of the veterans, John Gray McCarter commented, “We find that all the old colored men with whom we have talked tell the same story. They ‘fit’ on both sides as orderlies for the most noted generals.” These blacks, who were Unionists seeking their own empowerment and autonomy during the war, associated themselves with the Confederate cause as well, in order to appease the ruling race.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to re-establishing racial control, local white residents made certain that those who had allied too closely with the Union occupiers during the war were held accountable afterward. This denouement can be traced most clearly in the postwar fate of the Carteret County merchants; Craven County is more difficult to use because most of its merchants fled the region on the Union army’s approach, and few records exist to prove which merchants returned during occupation, and which did not. Benjamin A. Ensley had navigated the shoals of Unionism in Beaufort, only to find himself shipwrecked on a newly Confederate shore. Though he initially avoided taking the oath of allegiance in 1862 and 1863, Ensley finally relented in 1864 in order to continue to manage his store in Beaufort, and negotiated regularly with Union officials. However, after the war, he could not escape his creditors, many of whom undoubtedly were annoyed by his caving in to Union authorities. After the war, Ensley was “being sued

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<sup>5</sup> John Gray McCarter, *How Rogers and I Made Our First and Second Excursion to the old “Tar Heel” State, 1862-1903* (Boston: John Gray McCarter, 1903), 23 (first and second quotations), 27 (third and fourth quotations).

freely and frequently.” By July 1867, “very badly broke in fortune,” he moved to Hyde County to try carve out an existence in a more strongly Unionist enclave.<sup>6</sup>

Encumbered by large debts before the war, George Taylor, proprietor of the Ocean House, was barely making ends meet. The war solved his immediate financial woes when his establishment became the hub of Union activity, garnering him sizable profits. In December 1865, the boost from Federal contracts had righted him, and he was “worth 10 or 15 thousand [dollars]... [and] doing good business.” Yet, citizens had a long memory, and their rejection of his wartime choices propelled him back into debt. By May 1868 he was out of business, as he sold all of his property to his brother. He went to work as an agent for his brother, but in December 1871, the credit agent commented harshly that Taylor was “worth nothing.” Similarly, the German-born baker John B. Wolf had lived in Beaufort practicing his skills for fifteen years before the war. He remained in Beaufort through the war, and worked for the Union army providing bread for Union hospitals. Wolf recalled that he “was threatened by the secessionists of this place in case the Confederate troops ever came to Beaufort to be reported on account of my union feeling.” The government employment during the war had proved economically beneficial to Wolf. In January 1861, the R.G. Dun credit agent had claimed Wolf was “worth very little”; indeed, Wolf claimed on \$300 worth of personal value in the 1860 census. By December 1865, the credit agent declared Wolf to be worth as much as \$3,000. However, his business steadily declined over the next five years until June 1870, when the agent declared him “broke,” and recommended granting him “no credit.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> E.A. Harkness to Southard Hoffman, March 5, 1863, Box 2, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (Ensley refuses oath); B.A. Ensley to J. Jourdan, January 28, 1864, Part II, Letters Sent, October 1863—March 1864, District and Subdistrict of Beaufort, Entry 940, RG 393 (negotiations); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-E, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (quotations).

<sup>7</sup> North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-A (first quotation and Taylor out of business), p. 185 (second quotation), and p. 165 (Wolf’s credit and fifth and sixth quotations), R.G. Dun & Co. Collection; Deposition of John B. Wolf (third

Anson Davis had joined Josiah Pender's Confederate company on May 13, 1861, while two of his brothers joined other companies, and he served faithfully until captured at Fort Macon. Like many others, Davis (along with one of his brothers) chose not to return to his company after he had been formally exchanged in August 1862. Instead, he opened a small grocery & liquor store in Beaufort. During the war he achieved modest success catering to Union soldiers, and by December 1865 had been deemed worth nearly \$3,000 by the R.G. Dun credit agent. Less than a year later, however, Davis was no longer in business. Thomas Canaday, a grocer and confectioner, was another young man who chose not to leave Beaufort when the Union army arrived. In 1865 the credit agent noted that Canaday had "made money during the war"—about \$10,000 worth. By 1868, however, Canaday's wartime windfall was gone. The agent declared that he was "broke and gone to Kansas."<sup>8</sup>

Joel Henry Davis, who had taken a prominent role as a Unionist in the community, ran a successful dry goods store. After the war he formed a partnership with his son and Henry Rieger, the man who had so graciously helped him whip his freed slave, and their business was "moderately successful." But Davis's defense of white honor was not enough to remove the stain of unionism from his family. By June 1871, the partnership's store had "been burnt out & not resumed business." David W. Morton, a Morehead City grocer, had been the first to greet Union troops entering Morehead, and had even convinced a nephew to desert the Confederate army. Local whites never forgave him. While the R.G. Dun agent claimed that Morton was "doing very well" in business just before the war, in the ledger's first postwar entry, Morton was no longer in business. When a postwar commission asked Morton's nephew if he knew "if Mr.

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quotation), in *John B. Wolf v. United States* (case file no. 12389), Court of Claims, RG 123; 1860 U.S. Census, Carteret County, N.C., Population Schedule.

<sup>8</sup> Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1:116 (Davis's company), 128 (brother's), 4: 174 (brother's); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-R (Anson Davis) and p. 176-Q (Thomas Canaday and quotations), R.G. Dun & Co. Collection.

D.W. Morton was ever persecuted for his Union sentiments,” the nephew replied, “I think he sold out and went away from here on that account.”<sup>9</sup>

Conversely, those who steadfastly maintained their Confederate allegiance during the war found the postwar region to be a friendly place. Stephen Decatur Pool had led the efforts to organize a Confederate company as much to salvage his honor as for patriotic reasons. However, once he embraced the Confederate cause as his own, Pool never looked back. He distinguished himself under fire during the siege of Fort Macon in 1862; he brazenly taunted Union officers outside New Bern in 1863; and he edited a “rebel” newspaper in New Bern after the war. James Rumley, the secessionist diarist, returned to his old post as Clerk of the Carteret County Court without complication, as residents knew his true sentiments even though he had begrudgingly dealt with the Union authorities. James L. Manney had served as lieutenant, and then Captain of the company that Josiah Pender had raised in 1861. Manney had been captured at Fort Macon, but returned to duty when exchanged. After the war, he returned to Beaufort and practiced medicine, never attaining dazzling wealth, but he owned a comfortable home, enjoyed a spotless professional reputation, and was universally acknowledged by the locals and credit agents to have good character and to be “in very good standing.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, September 8, 1862, in Browning and Smith, eds., *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist*, 34 (Davis as Unionist); *New Bern Weekly Progress*, September 20, 1862 (Davis as Unionist); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-L (first and second quotations) and p. 176-D (third quotation), R.G. Dun & Co. Collection; Deposition of Lewis McCain (greeting Union soldiers), Deposition of J.T. Dennis (desertion), and Deposition of Josiah L. Bell (fourth and fifth quotations), all in *David W. Morton v. United States* (case file no. 6935), RG 123. Joel Henry Davis, Sr., died in 1868, but his son, Joel Henry, Jr., who had left the Confederate service and taken the oath of allegiance in April 1862, continued to operate the business with Henry Rieger. The stigma of Unionism had probably clung to them both since the war.

<sup>10</sup> Journal of James Monroe Hollowell, April 25, 1862, in Janet B. Hewett et al, eds., *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (100 vols.; Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1994-2001), Pt. 1, Vol. I, 602-604 (Pool at Fort Macon); Tom Stevenson to Hannah, October 9, 1862, Walcott Family Papers II, MHS (taunting Union officers); Daniel R. Goodloe to B. S. Hedrick, April 24, 1867, Benjamin Sherwood Hedrick Papers, DU (editing newspaper); Testimony of James Rumley, Claim 15562 (Benjamin Roberson), Carteret County, RG 233 (Rumley as clerk); Manarin and Jordan, comps., *North Carolina Troops*, 1: 115 (Manney’s military service); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 176-Z, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (quotation).

Perhaps the most remarkable example of wartime actions influencing postwar success is that of Rufus W. Bell. Bell had been arrested aiding the spy Emeline Pigott, led groups of men on clandestine guerrilla raids against Union forces, and had once told a New Jersey soldier “that he would rather have his right hand cut off than take the oath of allegiance.” Local whites rewarded his defiance. Once the war ended, Bell, who had never been a merchant before, opened a store in December 1865 and gained a level of success that no prominent Unionist could attain. Within a few years of the end of the war, Bell had amassed over \$5,000 in business wealth.<sup>11</sup>

The irony for Carteret and Craven counties is that residents were more firmly sympathetic with the Confederacy at the war’s end than they had ever been during the heady days of secession. Only *conditional Confederates* in 1861, they became *confirmed Confederates* during the very Union occupation that was supposed to cultivate and encourage loyal feelings among the inhabitants. This was not the only region in which the presence of the Union army failed to stifle Confederate sentiment. Historian Jacqueline Glass Campbell notes that General William Sherman’s 1865 campaign through the Carolinas did not destroy civilian support for the Confederacy as he intended, but actually served as “the first stage in a process of rededication to Southern independence” that extended well beyond the war. Similarly, James C. Cobb argues that throughout the South, the ideals of Confederate nationalism became much stronger once the war was over than they had been during the conflict. Cobb asserts, “it seems clear that the Confederacy’s defeat contributed to the postwar strength of southern patriotism (defined as loyalty to the collective southern white cause).” Noting the irony of southern nationalism, Cobb

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<sup>11</sup> Entry dated February 9, 1865, Cleveland Diary (Bell arrested); “Statement of Amanda Gaskill, thos. Rudderforth & B.F. Bloodgood in relation to force on Adams Creek,” October 21, 1862, Box 1, Part I, Letters Received, Department of North Carolina, RG 393 (clandestine raids and quotation); North Carolina, Vol. 5, p. 164 and 176-T, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection (success as a merchant).

declares that it took a bitter defeat “to forge anything approaching the sense of unity and common grievance and cause that the white South’s leaders had tried to instill” before the war.<sup>12</sup>

These nationalistic memories remain strong even unto this day. Paul Branch, author and park service ranger at Fort Macon State Historic Park in Beaufort, has assisted many visitors in their efforts to track their Confederate ancestors’ service in the fort’s garrison before and during its siege in April 1862. However, for several Confederate enthusiasts, “tracking their ancestor’s military service at Fort Macon ended in a manner for which they were completely unprepared.” The knowledge that one’s great-great-grandfather served in a Yankee North Carolina regiment can be startling, and at times emotionally crippling, to his modern descendants. Branch relates one particular episode when he had to inform a genealogist that her ancestor who had served in the 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Regiment and been stationed at Fort Macon in 1864 actually wore a Union uniform. According to Branch, the revelation left the woman “completely and utterly devastated.” Either ignorant of the Unionism in the region or just assuming that all true southerners would naturally repudiate the Yankees, the woman was bitterly disconsolate that her ancestor had failed to live up to this mythic ideal of southern resistance. “You mean he was a traitor to the South?” she incredulously asked. Certainly many contemporary white residents held the same condemnation of their neighbors who had aided the Union army. These same residents would ensure that northerners did not successfully dictate terms in the Reconstruction period as they had during wartime occupation.<sup>13</sup>

Instead of serving as a model of how benevolent Union occupation could foster harmony in the South, Carteret and Craven counties became two of the regions most hostile to the Federal

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<sup>12</sup> Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 69 (first quotation); James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 59-60 (second and third quotations).

<sup>13</sup> Paul Branch, “Fort Macon as a Shelter for Buffaloes,” *Ramparts* 1 (Spring 1997): 1-2.

government during Reconstruction in North Carolina. This community case study exposes the degree to which the sentiments of southern Unionists were altered by freedpeople asserting their rights and being supported by Federal authorities. The actions of local white residents revealed that white superiority was much more important than economic stability and presaged the contentious Reconstruction years to follow. That those who could most demonstrably prove their Confederate proclivities were the most successful in the immediate postwar years indicates the limited role the Federal government was able to play in constructing a successful Republican interracial coalition. By fomenting violence, local whites, angry from perceived betrayals during wartime occupation, refused to allow such a coalition sustain itself. The recalcitrance of white southerners suggested to Federal officials that perhaps the only way the Union could prevent dissent and open revolt was to allow southern whites to dictate racial policy. This was a hard lesson, but one the North eventually learned by 1877, when it cast aside Reconstruction and in turn abandoned African Americans throughout the South to disfranchisement, lynching, segregation, and Jim Crow.<sup>14</sup>

The experience of Craven-Carteret not only enlightens the understanding of Reconstruction but also extends beyond the Civil War. As this community study suggests, even the noblest intentions of an occupying force (or liberating force, depending on one's point of view) can create hostility and resentment on the ground. As the American government discovered during the Civil War (and has often rediscovered in the years since), people under

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*, 16, 44-45. The best comprehensive work on Reconstruction and its failures remains Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). For a work that conveys how whites used racial violence to accomplish their conservative political ends during Reconstruction, see George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984). For works that discuss how sectional reconciliation and postwar politics shifted the focus away from African American civil rights, see Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2001); and Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).



military rule have a peculiar habit of deciding for themselves what they believe is in their own best interests, and often resent an outside entity that tries to impose significant social and cultural transformations on their society.

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