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Gettysburg College Journal of the Civil War 2011

Abstract

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The
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Era

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Spring 2011

Civil War Era Studies Department &
Department of History
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Introduction

It is my pleasure to introduce to you the second volume of the Gettysburg College Journal of the Civil War Era. With support from our faculty advisors, this publication had the unique opportunity to solicit papers from outside institutions that dealt with topics concerning any facet of the American Civil War. Although this opportunity is a great one, it also caused the editorial board the added pressure of selecting from a wide spectrum of expertly written manuscripts. In working with the material for this volume, I became increasingly aware and appreciative of the laudable achievements of the members of this editorial board. These students spent their Tuesday or Thursday evenings gathered on the top floor of Weidensall Hall discussing and debating the content of each submission received for publication. The deliberations and comments made during our times spent together truly demonstrated their competence.

Additionally, the papers selected for publication in this volume are masterfully crafted. Shae Adams' *Cultural Distortion: The Dedication of the Thomas Stonewall Jackson Monument at Manassas National Battlefield Park*, explores the memory of the American Civil War in the 1930s, as reflected in the creation of one of the nation's most discussed tributes to the Southern Confederacy. Our second article, *Loose Party Times: The Political Crisis of the 1850s in Westchester County New York* by Zachary Baum depicts the political changes occurring in pre-Civil War society, not among those living within large cities, but rather those inhabiting a relatively small suburban area. In Evan Preston's "*All May Visit the Big Camp*": *Race and the Lessons of the Civil War at the 1913 Gettysburg Reunion*, he explains the lack of African Americans' attendance at the 1913 commemoration exercises in Gettysburg and the presence of a strong white nationalist sentiment that fostered a sense of reunion among the North and the South. And finally, Katherine Titus depicts the major problems inherent in Confederate government and society, especially concerning the South's reevaluation of its traditional identity, in her article, *The Richmond Bread Riot of 1863: Class, Race, and Gender in the Urban Confederacy*.

Those of us connected with the Gettysburg College
Journal of the Civil War Era hope you enjoy our second,
Spring 2011 volume. We believe that our audience will find
these four pieces both enlightening and inspiring.

Rachel Santose
Gettysburg, Spring 2011

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Biographies

Shae Adams is a 2011 graduate of Sam Houston State University where she earned her bachelor's degree in history. She participated in the Gettysburg Semester program in fall 2010. She is interested in pursuing a masters degree in public history with an intent to work in archives following that degree.

Abraham Apfel is a senior at Gettysburg College. He is a history major and a classics and Civil War era studies minor. He plans to graduate in December of 2011 and attend graduate school with the goal of one-day teaching history.

Zachary Baum graduated in 2010 from The George Washington University, where he earned a B.A., *magna cum laude*, in history, and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. He currently works as a legal assistant at a law firm in Washington, DC.

Dallas Grubbs is a junior at Gettysburg College majoring in History and Religious Studies with a minor in Civil War Era Studies. Dallas is originally from the small town of Covington, Indiana. He hopes to attend graduate school to study medieval and ecclesiastical history.

Victoria Kawecki is a senior history and political science double major and Civil War Era Studies minor at Gettysburg College. This is her second year on the editorial board. Next fall she has plans to attend law school.

Evan Preston is a junior at Pomona College, majoring in history with a minor in politics. Evan received a summer research grant from Pomona College to continue his work on the Civil War commemorations of 1913 in Gettysburg and Boston. Evan's interests include civil rights law, labor history, racial politics, and the interpretation of American military engagements.

Mary Roll is a member of the Gettysburg College Class of 2012, where she is an English major with minors in Civil War Era

Studies and History. She is honored to be one of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College's Student Fellows for the 2011-2012 year. As part of the summer internship program at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, she will be spending her summer giving tours of the Chancellorsville Battlefield and Stonewall Jackson Shrine. In addition to her internship, Mary will begin researching and drafting her English honors thesis on William Faulkner and the legacy of Confederate defeat this summer.

Rachel Santose is a senior History major and Civil War Era Studies minor from Broadview Heights, Ohio. In addition to serving as editor of the Gettysburg College Journal of the Civil War Era, Rachel is also participates as a member of the editorial board for the Gettysburg Historical Journal. Next fall Rachel will begin a dual Masters degree program in History and Library Science at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

Nicholas Scerbo is from Howell, New Jersey, and is a member of the Gettysburg College Class of 2012, where he is a history major with a double minor in secondary education and Civil War Era Studies. At Gettysburg Nick manages the football team, and after graduation he intends to use what he has learned at Gettysburg to become a high school history teacher.

MIDN 1/C Katherine R. Titus graduated from the United States Naval Academy in May of 2010 with a Bachelor of Science degree in History. While at the Academy, Katherine focused her studies on the urban and social history of the Confederacy. She is currently a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps and is stationed in Quantico, Virginia."

Elizabeth Ungemach is a senior History major, Spanish minor from Wayne, NJ. She is interested in pursuing a career in archives. She will begin cataloguing in Musselman Library over the summer and then plans to work as an AmeriCorps volunteer next year before starting graduate school.

**Cultural Distortion: The Dedication of the Thomas
“Stonewall” Jackson Monument at Manassas National
Battlefield Park**
Shae Adams

The Stonewall Jackson monument on Henry Hill at the Manassas National Battlefield Park stands as a testament to the propensity of Americans to manipulate history in order to fit current circumstances. The monument reflects not the views and ideologies of the veterans of the Civil War, but rather the hopes and fears of those who spent the prime years of their lives immersed in the Great Depression. Those of the latter generation searched in vain for heroes among the corrupted businessmen on Wall Street who ran the economic affairs of the country, and who, in the eyes of the public, plunged the nation into insurmountable debt. Historian Lawrence Levine observed that fear served as a motivator for 1930s Americans as they struggled to feed their children during the Great Depression. One reflection of this overwhelming fear appeared in President Franklin Roosevelt’s 1933 inaugural address as he insisted “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”¹ In order to cope with this stress, Americans turned to a plethora of heroes as guiding lights for the dark days of the Great Depression. Some turned to gangster heroes like Bonnie and Clyde who undermined the financial and legal systems by lashing out against the institutions. Others devoured the serialized adventures of Superman, a new kind of hero created by the sons of Jewish immigrants in 1938.² Still others turned to literature that reminisced about other crises in American history, namely

¹ Lawrence Levine, “American Culture and the Great Depression,” *Yale Review*, no. 74 (1984-85): 200, 208. As mentioned in Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 10.

² Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 1, 7.

Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, a bestseller in 1938.³ It was in this cultural setting that the Virginia State Legislature conceived and financed the idea for a Stonewall Jackson monument.

During the 1938 legislative session, the state of Virginia appropriated \$25,000 for the construction of a monument to General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson on Henry Hill at the newly created Manassas National Battlefield Park. As of March 19, 1938, the day the federal government took over the deed to the land, the property was bare of even a visitor center that would not be constructed until two years after the erection of the monument.^{4 5} The legislature charged the Virginia Fine Arts Commission with finding a suitable monument for the location. In response, the Commission sent out a call for models for the Jackson monument. For the most part, the Commission left the details of the sculpture to the artist, naming only a handful of guidelines. One guideline stipulated that the sculpture would include both Jackson and his horse, Little Sorrell, cast in bronze. The other demanded that "[t]he nature, quality, and significance of Stonewall Jackson must be considered and expressed in the design of the Monument."⁶ After reviewing eighty entries, the Virginia Fine Arts Commission announced the winner of the contest on March 4, 1939. New York sculptor Joseph Pollia came with the experience of sculpting Civil War era figures; he had

³ Levine, 223.

⁴ Memo to the Director, "*Information Concerning Unveiling of the Statue of Stonewall Jackson*," 12 July 1940, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian Files, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

⁵ Joan M. Zenzen, *Battling for Manassas: The Fifty-Year Preservation Struggle at Manassas National Battlefield Park* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 31.

⁶ Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia, "*Prospectus—The Stonewall Jackson Monument Sculpture Competition and Exhibition*," 29 October 1938, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian Files, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

created a monument to John Brown in North Elba and General Philip Sheridan in New York, in 1935 and 1936, respectively.⁷ The nature of the statue reflected not the General Jackson of the Civil War, but rather the General Stonewall as seen through the cultural eyes of the 1930s.

In Pollia's rendition, a Herculean Jackson sits tall upon an equally muscular horse as he gazes out across Henry Hill. He wears a cape that appears to be lifted by a dramatic wind, lending itself to his heroic stance. The large lettering on the base of the monument boldly declares, "There Stands Jackson Like a Stone Wall," referencing the words purportedly spoken by General Barnard Bee at the Battle of First Manassas, immortalizing Jackson with his nickname. One of the largest monuments on Henry Hill, it commands the attention of any visitor to the battlefield.⁸ The Commission proudly presented the model to the public on March 4, 1939, after awarding Pollia the job.

However, they did not expect the virulent attacks from Confederate organizations and the few remaining Confederate veterans. These attacks began only a few days after the announcement of Pollia's design. One veteran, Colonel John Wesley Blizzard, grumbled that the statue made the famed General appear to be sixty years old, despite the fact that Jackson had died as a young man.⁹ Another veteran, claiming to be the only remaining living veteran to see Jackson and Lee at their last meeting on May 2, 1863, was appalled at the depiction of Jackson's steed, Little Sorrell. "That model makes the horse seem three times as big in front as behind," he remarked in disgust, "It looks more like a buffalo."¹⁰ Still other veterans complained that the depiction

⁷ "Joseph P. Pollia." *New York Times* (1923-Current file), December 14, 1954.

⁸ As observed by the author on a visit to the park on November 10, 2010.

⁹ AP, "Last Vet in Virginia's Confederate Soldiers' Home, Sgt. Jack, Is Dead," *Miami News* (Miami, FL), Jan. 28, 1941.

¹⁰ "Confederate Vets Don't Like Model of Jackson Statue." *Free Lance-Star* (Fredericksburg, VA), Mar. 23, 1939.

resembled General Grant rather than the Jackson.¹¹ Veterans were not alone in voicing their concern. Confederate groups like the Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy united to protest what they considered a monstrosity and an insult to the memory of Jackson. These groups petitioned that the Arts Commission instead favor sculptor F. William Sievers' model that depicted a humanly proportioned Jackson astride a rather dejected but realistic Little Sorrell. The cape, so despised by these Southern organizations, was conspicuously missing in Sievers model.¹² The Commission refused to change its decision, although in the hailstorm of protests, Pollia offered to make any changes to his model the Commission deemed necessary.¹³

The choice of Pollia by the Arts Commission reflected the mindset of 1930s Americans. Confederate groups accused the Commission of selecting a "distorted conception" of Jackson.¹⁴ In this instance, the Commission was guilty of such accusations. Those on the panel chose a distorted image of Jackson because they themselves had created a distorted image of the American past in order to provide cultural succor and guidance during the difficult years of the Great Depression. Over the previous decade, Americans had created a hollow mould for an idealized hero that desperately needed filling; to the Arts Commission, the sentimentalized Jackson of the Civil War could fill that mould. In the era when no heroes seemed to exist, Americans looked to the past for inspiration.¹⁵ The Civil War provided ample romantic figures to ease this burden, despite the distortion of those figures. On the one hand, Jackson symbolized the "spiritual strength" many felt they had lost during the Depression.¹⁶ On the other, he represented a rebel akin to the outlaw heroes Bonnie and

¹¹ Virginius Dabney, "Statue Plans Irk Virginia," *New York Times*, Apr. 9, 1939.

¹² " 'Battle of Manassas' Rages Again in Dixie," *Miami News*, Apr. 23, 1939.

¹³ Dabney.

¹⁴ "Confederate Vets Don't Like Model of Jackson Statue."

¹⁵ Wright, 10.

¹⁶ Dabney.

Clyde. Just like Bonnie and Clyde, Jackson had fought to undermine a government institution he found corrupt and against his state's prosperity. However, while Bonnie and Clyde worked only for themselves, Jackson's memory stood exalted on a pillar of self-sacrifice to country and freedom.

Interestingly, the statue itself bore several similarities to the newly created and popularized Superman comic book character. Jackson's abdominal muscles are comparable to those of the Superman that appeared in Action Comic #1 in 1939. In addition, the heroic looking capes of both men appear oddly similar in cut and dramatics.¹⁷ These similarities point to the need of Americans to see heroes of almost superhuman status within their own past in order to create a cultural mythos that could carry them through the weary drudgery of unemployment and near starvation. Superman did not represent the only embodiment of the physical exaggeration conveying heroic status. Sculptures across the country, including others created by Pollia, reflected the tendency of Americans in the 1930s to idolize the physical strength of cultural icons as the manifestation of moral heroism. For this reason, Pollia may have seemed a socially relevant sculptor for the Jackson monument. In the mid-1930s, Pollia sculpted a number of monuments dedicated to American heroes, each one exaggerating the physical muscularity of the depicted figure. His 1935 statue of John Brown at North Elba, New York creates the image of a figure whose physical robustness reflects his spiritual strength.¹⁸ Two years later, Pollia erected a monument to Admiral Robert E. Peary in Cresson, Pennsylvania, depicting a well-defined explorer, his physical

¹⁷ Wright, 8.

¹⁸ West Virginia Archives and History, "His Soul Goes Marching On: The Life and Legacy of John Brown: John Brown in Print, Stage, Film, and Art," West Virginia Division of Culture and History, <http://www.wvculture.org/history/jbexhibit/playsandbooks.html> (accessed December 8, 2010).

pro prowess matching his courage in facing the arctic unknown.¹⁹ Pollia's monuments represented a trend paralleling other movements in American popular culture during the 1930s. Through the art and literature of this decade, the reshaping of the American hero is apparent. Societies create heroes in order to provide themselves with direction and meaning; some cultures enshrine these heroes in stories for children, while others create works of art to immortalize such individuals. In the case of Virginia, they built a statue to a man whose image they had distorted to give their tribulations meaning and hope.

Once the Commission decided upon the Pollia model, the Park Service went to work planning the logistics that accompanied its placement and dedication. Before the land became a National Battlefield Park, the Henry Hill farm area belonged to the Sons of Confederate Veterans. After the United Daughters of the Confederacy, under the leadership of Mrs. Westwood Hutchinson, gained an option to buy the property at \$25,000, the Sons of Confederate Veterans worked out a deal with the Virginia state government that helped the Sons purchase the land.²⁰ The understanding between the two entities was that after the purchase the Sons of Confederate Veterans would pay for the upkeep of the park.²¹ The original purpose of the purchase was the creation of a Confederate memorial park on the grounds. Once the land was purchased in 1923, it was named the Manassas Battlefield Confederate Park and those involved determined that it would be used for educational purposes concerning the history and memory of all Confederate soldiers.²² However, the organization soon found itself in financial straits that hindered the organization

¹⁹ As observed by Gettysburg Semester student, Dawn Winkler-Pembridge in Cresson, Pennsylvania at Admiral Peary Monument Park on November 28, 2010.

²⁰ "Confederate News," *Confederate Veteran*, no. 28, (October 1920): 397, as noted in Joan M. Zenzen, *Battling for Manassas: The Fifty-Year Preservation Struggle at Manassas National Battlefield Park* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 217.

²¹ Zenzen, 15-6.

²² "Confederate News," as footnoted in Zenzen, 217.

from the barest upkeep of Henry Hill, let alone the erection of monuments across the property. Instead of selling the land, the Sons discussed the possibility of donating the land to the federal government. After much debate and compromise, the Sons voted to confer the land to the National Park Service, demanding that the Park Service maintain a fair interpretation of the battlefield once it passed into Federal hands. The deed for the land passed into federal hands in March 1938, and once the federal government shuffled, signed, and filed the proper paperwork, the Manassas Battlefield Confederate Park became the Manassas National Battlefield Park on May 10, 1940.²³

The land did come with the stipulation that an appropriate monument would occupy Henry Hill, and as a result, the placement of the monument became a matter for the National Park Service to decide. The Regional Director of the Park Service insisted that the placement of the monument be decided before selecting a location for the Museum-Administration building.²⁴ As a result, various Park officers held a conference on April 27, 1940, to reconnoiter Henry Hill for possible locations. They decided to erect the monument on the hill in the location believed to have been held by Jackson and his men on July 21, 1861. Those involved thereupon decided that the Museum-Administration building would be constructed “in such relation to the monument that the monument would become the focal point from the observation-terrace.”²⁵ This decision indicated a tremendous shift in the memory and interpretation of the war. In the years immediately following the war, Union veterans flatly denied the requests of Confederate veterans to erect monuments upon the fields on which they fought. At Gettysburg, for instance,

²³ Zenzen, 24.

²⁴ Memorandum for the Director, “*Attention: Branch of Plans and Design*,” 5 April 1940, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historians Files, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

²⁵ A.J. Ewald to Files, “*Report on Conference Regarding Location of Jackson Equestrian Statue*,” 27 April 1940, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian’s Files, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

the War Commission forced Confederate veterans to place their memorials at their initial line of battle rather than at the location of their military engagement with Federal troops.²⁶ That the National Park Service would allow a Confederate memorial to stand on the field, but more importantly become the focal point of the visitors center spoke to the reconciliatory trend that marked war memory in the 1930s. In addition, the use of the monument as a focal point marked its subject as the key to the interpretation of the battle. This manner of exalting Jackson by a federal body reflected the growing tendency of the nation to accept Confederate symbols as national ones. As the American people drew parallels between their own failures of the 1930s and the failures of the defeated South, figures like Jackson came to embody an American need for validation and justification.

However, the circumstances surrounding the placement of Confederate monuments on Henry Hill also revealed the selective remembrance of the 1930s. In May of 1939, a year before the slated arrival of the Jackson monument, a local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy raised one thousand dollars for the construction of a memorial to General Barnard Bee on Henry Hill. The memorial seemed fitting, dedicated to the man who gave General Jackson his iconic moniker shortly before his own death on the Manassas field. Like any other suggestion made for the decoration of Henry Hill, the proposal caused controversy. Assistant Research Technician for the Park, Joseph Hanson, wrote to Superintendent Branch Spalding complaining about the proposed Bee monument. He argued that the location of the Bee monument, a mere one hundred feet to the south of the Jackson monument, would crowd the memorials.²⁷ Despite Hanson's irritation with the prospect of

²⁶John P. Nicholson to The Secretary of War, "Monument Location at Gettysburg," Document 73, Box 13, Collections at Gettysburg National Military Park.

²⁷Memorandum from Joseph Hanson to Coordinating Superintendent Spalding: "*Concerning Jackson Monument and Proposed Bee Monument*," 8 May 1939, Stonewall

two monuments on the hill, the United Daughters of the Confederacy presented the small obelisk dedicated to Bee on the field on July 21, 1939.²⁸ That no fanfare accompanied the presentation illustrated that while the Herculean Jackson would capture all attention with a large dedication ceremony, Bee would be effectively overshadowed by the grandeur of the man he had a hand in creating. Just as few individuals read into the possible sarcasm of Bee's famous words of "There stands Jackson like a stonewall," few would notice the smaller monument in his honor.

Once the placement of the monument was decided, the park embarked on the selective task of sending invitations to those who would take part in the dedication ceremonies. The Park designated a committee to organize the ceremonies and all aspects related to the dedication. This committee made the decisions concerning who would and would not merit an invitation. While the dedication itself was open to the general public, the committee awarded special groups throughout the community individual invitations as a sign of respect. For instance, the United Daughters of the Confederacy received a private invitation to the unveiling ceremonies. The organization of Confederate Veterans received an invitation as well.²⁹ In addition, several individual Confederate veterans were invited as guests of honor: John Shaw, the oldest Virginian Confederate veteran who had served as J.E.B. Stuart's runner during the war; John B. Cushing; J.A. Spicer; and Colonel John W. Blizzard, who had served as General

Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian Files,
Manassas National Battlefield Park.

²⁸ Observed by the author on visit to the park on November 10, 2010.

²⁹ Letter from Judge Walter L. Hopkins of Sons of Confederate Veterans to Brach Spalding, Superintendent of Battle Field Parks of Virginia, Fredericksburg, Virginia, "Lack of Dedication Invitation," 26 August 1940, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian Files, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

Jackson's runner during the war.³⁰ Blizzard's invitation was of particular interest, as he had criticized the statue shortly after the Commission awarded Pollia the contract for the memorial.³¹ The committee seemingly wanted to make peace with the veterans who had expressed a dislike of the monument while simultaneously honoring them for their service. That the monument barely resembled the General under whom the men had fought did not seem to concern the committee. Their presence would symbolically provide the connection to the past so desperately sought by Americans of the Great Depression era. In a way, the presence of Confederate veterans would validate the distortion of history embodied in the Jackson statue. The choice of invitations reflected the psychological needs of the committee and the community as they sought to assure themselves of the parallels between their own desperate economic situations and the failed, but purportedly righteous, Confederacy.

On the other hand, organizations that did not receive dedication invitations present an equally insightful look into the values of the committee and the national mindset. Only five days before the ceremony on August 31, 1940, Superintendent Spalding received a terse letter from Judge Walter L. Hopkins of the Sons of Confederate Veterans demanding to know why the United Daughters of the Confederacy and Confederate Veterans organizations received invitations to the dedication while the Sons received nothing. Hopkins sharply reminded Spalding that the Sons had bought and donated the Henry Hill property to the United States government, while the United Daughters had not "given one cent" to the purchase of the property.³² Spalding replied, assuring Hopkins the lack of invitation indicated a mere

³⁰ "2,000 See Jackson Statue Unveiled at Manassas Park," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, Sunday, September 1, 1940, as contained in the Stonewall Jackson Folder, Historian's Files, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

³¹ *Miami News*.

³² Letter from Judge Walter L. Hopkins Hopkins of Sons of Confederate Veterans to Brach Spalding, Superintendent of Battle Field Parks of Virginia, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

oversight on the part of the committee. This alleged oversight points to the tendency of Americans to forget the precise events of the past while boldly forging a new future. By forgetting to invite the very organization that provided the funds for the land upon which the monument would stand, the arrangement committee acted out the process of American forgetfulness that in some ways created the very monument being dedicated. The distortion of the Jackson image also represented a forgetfulness of the details surrounding the new national hero.

Other arrangements for the dedication included the types of decorations allowed at the ceremony. Most importantly, the committee requested permission to use the Confederate flag as a drapery on the base of the statue during the unveiling ceremonies. They argued that in other instances the flag was employed as a decorative device and would be appropriate at the Jackson monument dedication. Without hesitation, the Park granted its permission.³³ This assent led to the wide use of the Confederate flag throughout the ceremonies. Not only did the flag drape the statue's base, but also the front of the speaker's podium. Multiple Confederate flags decorated the rest of the stage, while two small American flags waved atop the stage's portico.³⁴ This blatant use of the Confederate flag in a federally sponsored dedication ceremony reflects the approval of Confederate symbolism within 1930s society. The federal demand that all Confederate symbolism, from regimental flags to buttons on uniforms, be relinquished or blackened in the years immediately following the war faded to be replaced by a societal acceptance of the symbols. Not only were the symbols accepted, they were embraced in the fervor to create meaningful and tangible connections to the past. In 1865, a *New York Times* headline cried "The

³³ Memorandum to the Director, "Use of Confederate Flag at Dedication," 8 August 1940, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian's File, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

³⁴ Photograph of Dedication Ceremony, Photographic Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian's File, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

Confederate Flag Disappears from the Continent,” following Kirby Smith’s surrender.³⁵ Only seventy-five years later, the Stars and Bars served as the centerpiece for a federally approved memorial honoring a fallen Confederate general. That the Confederate flag flew alongside that of America adds to the understanding of 20th century American society. By the 1930s, the Lost Cause worked its way into the national memory of the war, creating a society that embraced the valor of both sides and the righteousness of both Northern and Southern convictions. The results of that societal shift converged in 1940 at the dedication of the Manassas Jackson monument as clearly seen through the simultaneous use of Confederate and American flags.

After nearly three years of planning and fundraising, the dedication ceremony took place on August 31, 1940, at two in the afternoon, boasting nearly two thousand observers.³⁶ The program for the ceremony included the unveiling of the monument by Miss Julia Preston, the great-granddaughter of General Jackson, and Miss Ann Rust, the daughter of Senator John A. Rust who sponsored the bill for the Jackson statue. In addition, the Quantico Marine Band played a rendition of “America”, while the Washington Quartet and Band provided music as well. Famed historian, Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman gave the keynote address of the day.³⁷ Each aspect of the program represented the cementation of bonds between the past and the present, and the continued distortion of Civil War history through Lost Cause memory.

The committee in charge of dedication arrangements planned to honor the Jackson family by inviting Julia Preston to unveil the statue of her great-grandfather during the ceremonies. Fifty-three year old Preston provided a link between the Confederate general and the 1930s American

³⁵ "End of the Rebellion: The Last Rebel Army Disbands," *New York Times* (1857-1922), May 29, 1865.

³⁶ "2,000 See Jackson Statue Unveiled at Manassas Park."

³⁷ Memorandum for the Coordinating Superintendent, "Program for the Dedication of the Jackson Monument," 28 August 1940, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian's Files, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

public.³⁸ Her presence symbolized a continuation of the ideals of the Confederacy. Bloodlines tracing directly to the Confederacy remained a point of pride throughout the South in the years following the war, and became a point of interest throughout the rest of the country during the Great Depression. In some ways, the physical manifestations of these bloodlines served to remind the nation that while the Confederacy may have disappeared in 1865, its values and ideologies persisted well into the 20th century. The existence of descendants like Preston indicated that the past still influenced and held meaning decades after the war.

While the role of Preston in the unveiling was self-explanatory given her relationship to Jackson, the choice of Ann Rust was slightly odd. Of course, her father, former State Senator John A. Rust ensured that the statue would receive state funding.³⁹ However, other options existed in selecting the second individual to unveil the monument. As previously noted, four Confederate veterans attended the ceremonies, one of whom served as a Jackson's runner. The participation of one of these men would have illustrated a closer connection to Jackson than Rust. Their participation would have fully forged the bonds between the actual Confederacy's past in the form of a veteran who had had with personal contact with Jackson, and the idealized future of the Confederacy in the form of Preston. By not selecting Blizzard to unveil the monument with Preston, the committee further revealed the distortion of history taking place within American society. Obviously, this was not a monument for the veterans of the war as the Commission dismissed their opinions during the creation of the statue. Similarly, the ceremony did not seek to honor the living veterans of the war. Jackson was no longer remembered as a general who had traitorously fought against the federal government; rather he was honored as a faithful soldier, dedicated to the righteousness of his cause whose character should be emulated by the current generation of American

³⁸ "Julia Preston, Stonewall Jackson Granddaughter, 104." *New York Times*, September 21, 1991.

³⁹ Memorandum for the Coordinating Superintendent, "Program for the Dedication of the Jackson Monument."

youth. By failing to offer Confederate veterans a role in the dedication ceremony, the committee illustrated that while Americans sought vindication and strength in the memory of the Civil War's Confederate figures, they did not seek to tie themselves to the facts of the war, but rather to the distorted memory of the war. The veterans brought the crowd a little too close to history, and while the desire to maintain a connection to the past represents a key aspect of American society, so too does the desire to separate oneself from the direct implications of that history. Perhaps subconsciously, the committee planning the dedication chose to keep the Confederate veterans as mere spectators at the ceremony in order to avoid a possible collision of perceptions concerning the realities of the war.

In addition, the Quantico Marine Band played as part of the dedication ceremony.⁴⁰ The choice of this band in particular indicated an accepted connection between the federal government and the Confederate memory of the Civil War. The band, created by legislation in 1918 to participate in various events, "to improve morale, inspire, motivate, and instill in the audiences, a sense of pride and patriotism, and to re-affirm our core values, customs, and traditions, and best represent the United States Marine Corps."⁴¹ That a band dedicated to promoting patriotism and American values would play at a Confederate dedication is indicative of the meshing of American and Confederate symbolism and values during the 1930s. Their presence at the dedication revealed that honoring the memory of Confederate generals served to enforce dedication to the American nation, something the Confederacy sought to destroy in 1861. Ironically, the band played a rendition of "America," a song that proudly proclaims that America is a nation of freedom for all, a freedom Confederates staunchly denied their African

⁴⁰ Memorandum for the Coordinating Superintendent, "Program for the Dedication of the Jackson Monument."

⁴¹ Marine Corps Base Quantico, "Quantico Band," United States Marine Corps, <http://www.quantico.usmc.mil/activities/?Section=BAND>, (accessed December 4, 2010)

American slaves, a freedom granted by the North in the midst of the war, and a freedom denounced by the ex-Confederates following the war.⁴² That Jackson, a corps commander of the Confederate army, would have been in favor of this display of American patriotism seems unlikely.

The most anticipated moment of the program, aside from the unveiling of the monument itself, came in the form of historian Douglas Southall Freeman's keynote address at the end of the ceremony. Freeman, president of the Southern Historical Society, won renown as a Confederate historian in 1934 with the release of his four-volume book, *R.E. Lee*.⁴³ The historian carried a personal connection to the war. His father, Walker Freeman, fought for the Confederacy in the Piedmont Artillery and was present at Appomattox Court House on the day of Lee's surrender.⁴⁴ This connection to the war no doubt influenced Freeman's views concerning the acts of both the Confederacy and its generals. Steeped in the Lost Cause tradition, Freeman created a widely endorsed view of the war supported by scholarly research that seemed to validate the Lost Cause, and the public's connection to the Civil War South. By selecting Freeman as keynote speaker, the committee further created a ceremony that would rely on the distorted memory of the Civil War while maintaining a direct connection to the war through Freeman's relationship to a Confederate veteran.

Freeman did not disappoint. His address focused on the growing fears of impending war as the United States warily watched the increasingly ferocious fighting between the British and the Germans. He offered a call to arms, relying upon the image of Jackson as a national hero to admire and emulate within the ranks of the armed forces as they prepared for a potential war overseas. He emphasized the need for Jackson's leadership style within the army, dependant on "hard and stern discipline". He praised Jackson as "one of the

⁴² Memorandum for the Coordinating Superintendent, "Program for the Dedication of the Jackson Monument."

⁴³ David E. Johnson, *Douglas Southall Freeman* (Grena, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., 2002), 166.

⁴⁴ Johnson, 21, 27.

greatest soldiers of the Anglo-Saxon race,” who fought for freedom and highly valued ideals throughout the great American Civil War.⁴⁵ Such praise of Jackson emphasizes his status not as a traitor to the United States, but rather as a hero dedicated to its traditions and highest morals.

Freeman went on to urge the American people to take strength in the prayer of past Americans embattled by war: “let God defend the right.”⁴⁶ The words seem out of place at a memorial service devoted to those who lost their struggle, and in the antebellum tradition, lacked the righteous cause. However, Freeman was working from within a philosophical construct resulting from the South’s loss of the Civil War. Following the war, the Lost Cause provided vindication for the South as they comforted themselves with the belief that sometimes righteous causes face defeat not because of an inherent wrong in the cause itself, but because at times God chooses to test the faithful and just through defeat. Thus, ex-Confederates warmed themselves from the biting winds of defeat by wrapping the mantle of Job around themselves and their loss. With the crash of the stock market in 1929 and the following Depression, Americans searched for a reason for the suffering of morally upstanding individuals, finding their answer preconceived in the Lost Cause ideology.⁴⁷ Freeman, aware of the shifting notions concerning the Confederacy, encouraged the direction of Civil War interpretation illustrating to Americans that Confederate ideals need not only serve in times of economic strain, but in times of war as well. Freeman promised that Americans could find fortification and succor in the examples of valor and devotion “so beautifully exemplified in the life and service of Stonewall Jackson.”⁴⁸ A few days after his address, Assisting Park Director, A.E. Demaray, wrote to Freeman praising his address as being, “replete with meaning and significance for the American

⁴⁵ “2,000 See Jackson Statue Unveiled at Manassas Park.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Thomas Connelly, *The Marble Man*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1977), 130-31.

⁴⁸ “2,000 See Jackson Statue Unveiled at Manassas Park.”

people at this time.”⁴⁹ The dedication ceremony as a whole, and specifically Freeman’s address, reflected the state of the American historical worldview as the 1940s opened.

However, not all agreed with the entirety of the monument following its dedication celebration. An editorial piece in a local journal condemned the monument for its plaque containing the names of the various politicians who sponsored the Jackson monument legislation. The writer insisted that Jackson, as a “hero of the past” deserved a memorial of his own without added political weight.⁵⁰ The incensed writer reveals more than merely his own belief in the proper memorialization of Jackson. He illustrates the emotional devotion Americans adopted toward Confederate figures throughout the course of the Great Depression. As Thomas Connelly notes in his study of the image of Robert E. Lee, Americans developed strong attachments to figures like Robert E. Lee who appeared to embody enviable dignity in the face of humiliating loss.⁵¹ While Jackson did not reach the same pinnacle of hero memorialization as Lee in the years of the Great Depression, his memory gained a new life during the decade. The erection of the Jackson monument on Henry Hill and the emotions surrounding its creation stand as a testament to that distorted revitalization of the Confederate general.

Every era looks to those that came before for guidance. As time progresses the memories of the actions of previous generations reshape to take on new meaning to fit the situational needs of the current generation. For Americans, this phenomenon holds a particular truth in the case of the Civil War. The meanings of the war changed during the war itself, and in each subsequent generation. At times the reunion of a nation seemed at stake, while at others a national identity

⁴⁹ Letter from Assisting Director, A.E. Demaray to Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman, “Request for Copy of Speech,” 3 September 1940, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian’s File, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

⁵⁰ Article Received by Superintendent Taylor, *The Manassas Journal*, Stonewall Jackson Monument Dedication Folder, Historian’s File, Manassas National Battlefield Park.

⁵¹ Connelly, 130-32.

arose from the ashes of Richmond. The 1930s heralded yet another new interpretation of the war. That generation relied on the romantic, larger than life heroism of the war memory in order to fill the nation with assurance of righteousness and brighter days ahead. The Jackson monument stands as a culmination of that reliance. Jackson himself illustrates a connection to various aspects of American cultural life, making him a relevant figure to that moment in time. His attempt to change the workings of the federal government by revolting outside of its institutions paralleled the escapades of Bonnie and Clyde; his image as a superhuman hero to rise above the common man and protect the country connected to the introduction of new superheroes like Superman; the romance of the war and men like Jackson played itself out in the popularity of *Gone with the Wind*. The monument and its dedication at Manassas provided a look not at Civil War society, but Great Depression society. Those involved in its creation and dedication illustrated their commitment to a distorted historical memory in a myriad of ways. The Jackson of Manassas stands not as a monument to the man, but to the generation that clung to his image for reassurance in times of national uncertainty.

**Loose Party Times: The Political Crisis of the 1850s in
Westchester County, New York**
Zachary Baum

On November 7, 1848 William H. Robertson rose early and rushed to the post office in Bedford, a town in Westchester County, New York. The young lawyer was brimming with excitement because two weeks earlier, the Whigs in the county's northern section had nominated him as their candidate for the New York State Assembly. Only twenty-four years old and a rising legal star, Robertson hoped that holding political office would launch his nascent career. After casting his ballot at the Bedford Post Office, Robertson paid a visit to Sheriff James M. Bates, his political manager, to await the election results. Robertson's intelligence, collected a week before Election Day, that "news from every part of the district is favorable," proved accurate. The Whig attorney heard later that evening that he had defeated his Democratic opponent, with 57% of the vote. To celebrate, Robertson and Bates feasted on "chickens, turkeys, oysters, and Champaign" before retiring around midnight at Philer Betts' Hotel. The following afternoon, they boarded the 3:00 PM train from Bedford to the county seat of White Plains, seventeen miles south. There, the two triumphant Whigs gossiped and caught up with their counterparts from Westchester's usually Democratic southern section. Hearing of their friends' overwhelming victories surprised Robertson, leading him to exclaim, "The Whigs have carried almost everything!" Indeed, the Whigs had swept every elective office in Westchester County.⁵²

The demise of Robertson's party a few years later marked the end of America's Second Party System, characterized by Whig-Democratic competition between 1824

¹William Robertson, "Diary of Judge William H. Robertson," Vol. 3, Oct. 31 (first quotation), Nov. 7 (second quotation), 8 (third quotation), 1848, Westchester County Historical Society, Elmsford, NY. Robertson received with 2,246 votes (57%). For election results, see *Westchester Herald*, "Official Canvass," Nov. 24, 1848.

and 1860. Scholars have extensively chronicled how and why this system rose and fell. Yet historians have overlooked one important area of the American political landscape: the suburb. Despite the recent popularity of suburbs as a subject of twentieth century history, few historians have studied politics in nineteenth century American suburbs. The most complete scholarly account of the county's history, a 1982 Ph.D dissertation, is a genealogical study that includes only scant analysis of voting behavior, political ideology, and party formation. One political scientist's observation, over eighty years ago, that Westchester County was "the unexplored...area of American politics," remains true to this day. Mapping the collapse of the Second Party System in what is perhaps the most famous suburb in America sheds light on how the development of new communities in 1850s New York enflamed political controversies and why the parties of Andrew Jackson's era became extinct.⁵³

Historians continue to debate the causes of this political realignment. One prominent thesis is that the Democrats and Whigs disintegrated because the slavery extension issue fractured the American electorate along sectional instead of party lines. Another group of historians defend the so-called ethno-cultural interpretation, which posits that nativism, temperance, and religious conflict were the primary culprits in the death of the Second Party System. Though Westchesterites, like most other Americans, cared about slavery extension, it was primarily local ethno-cultural

⁵³ Paul M. Cuncannon, "The Proposed Charters for Westchester County, New York," *The American Political Science Review* 22, no. 1 (Feb. 1928): 130; Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue, *The New Suburban History* (Chicago, 2006); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, 2002); Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago, 2002); Matthew Zuckerbraun, "Born to Rule: Aristocracy in New York Politics After Jackson, a Study of Westchester County, New York Families in Office, 1840-1910," (Ph.D diss., Columbia University, 1982).

issues that motivated voters to abandon their old parties in response to the political crises of the early 1850s. But as the Third Party System took form in the late 1850s, it was slavery that gave the Democrats and Republicans shape and substance.⁵⁴

Westchester is a revealing case study of the Second Party System because the county enjoyed robust commercial ties to New York City, the financial capital of the United States and a central political battleground during the transition to the Third Party System. The journey from the county seat of White Plains to the southern tip of Manhattan, the largest market in the U.S., was only thirty-five miles. With the exception of New York and Kings Counties, Westchester had the largest merchant population in the state in the 1850s. As a county that was only beginning to transition from rural to suburban, however, the most common occupation for Westchesterites at the start of that decade remained farming. Though the county contained only an average population of farmers, the aggregate value of Westchester's farmland in 1850 was the sixth highest of any county in the United States, and exceeded that of six entire states. By the end of the decade, Westchester's farmland had appreciated to become the third most valuable of any county nationally. As the 1850s dawned, the county was a

⁵⁴ On slavery extension as the impetus for political realignment, see John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic*, 2 vols. (New York, 2007); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* (New York, 1970); and James L. Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union: Slavery, Property Rights, and the Economic Origins of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003). On the ethno-cultural interpretation, see Ronald P. Formisano, *The Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan, 1827-1861* (Princeton, 1971); William E. Gienapp, *Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York, 1987); and Joel H. Sibley, *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before the Civil War* (New York, 1985).

commercial and agricultural powerhouse in both state and nation.⁵⁵

These developments turned the county into an appealing place to call home. Westchester's population grew by 70% during the 1850s, raising it from the forty-third most populous county in the United States in 1850 to twenty-first most populous in 1860. Much of this growth was concentrated in the three towns adjacent to New York City in what is today the Bronx. One satisfied commuter from Morrisania observed that by 1850, southern Westchester was a desirable "location as a place of residence, for persons doing business in the city, being so easy of access" to midtown and lower Manhattan. Even twenty miles to the north, a White Plains editor complained in 1853 that as a result of Westchester's attractiveness to disgruntled New Yorkers, "the city is pouring out an unbroken tide of population into our midst."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Franklin B. Hough, *Census of the State of New-York for 1855* (Albany: Charles Van Benthuyssen, 1857), 187 (merchants), 313 (farmers); Charles E. Johnson, *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Westchester County* (Yonkers, 1860); for national statistics, see University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, *Historical Census Browser*, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/> (accessed Nov. 24, 2009).

⁵⁶ Nicholas McGraw in *Westchester Gazette*, Sep. 20, 1850 (first quotation); *Eastern State Journal*, Sep. 23, 1853 (second quotation); Rohit T. Aggarwala, "The Hudson River Railroad and the Development of Irvington, New York, 1849-1860" *Hudson Valley Regional Review* 10, no. 2, (Sep. 1993): 67; Evelyn Gonzalez, *The Bronx*, Columbia History of Urban Life (New York, 2004), 1-40; Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse, 1972), 52; Edward K. Spann, *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857* (New York, 1981), 189-191. In 1850, 58,263 people lived in Westchester. In 1860, 99,497 people lived in Westchester. For population statistics, see UVA, *Historical Census Browser* (accessed Nov. 24, 2009). See Table 1 in the Appendix for details about the county newspapers cited in this study.

Political parties struggled to adapt to Westchester's changing demography over the course of the 1850s. Local Whigs and Democrats were largely unable to address the new issues that arose during this turbulent decade. The new suburbanites were typically affluent Protestants who brought their anti-Catholic and pro-temperance proclivities with them, which inextricably altered Westchester's political landscape. Though the Democratic Party remained dominant in Westchester throughout the 1850s, this new constituency gave rise to political conflicts that determined election results, destroyed the Whig Party, divided the Democrats, gave rise to third parties, and reflected national sentiment on a variety of salient issues. The major parties' failure to address important policy issues of the early 1850s led the editor of Westchester's most popular Democratic newspaper, the *Eastern State Journal*, to observe that "we are indeed upon 'loose party times.'" But that same editor correctly predicted three years later, "out of this chaos, [new] parties will take form and shape." This chaos engulfed Westchester County, creating unusual political coalitions and realignments at all levels of government.⁵⁷

Perhaps the most notable theme that permeated Westchester's politics during the early 1850s was antipartyism. This sentiment flourished across the county, but was especially strong in the southern section that had absorbed most of the well-to-do migrants from New York City. Cogswell and Hyde refused to endorse a party ticket during the 1850 national and state contests, instead instructing southern Westchesterites to vote "without distinction of party" for a "Union Ticket" consisting mostly of Democrats and a few Whigs. Even ten years prior to the Civil War, suburbanites generally felt a stronger allegiance to country than to party and expressed a willingness to shed their party ties for the sake of Union. In the aftermath of the 1850 elections, predicted these editors, "new parties will be formed, or...the two great parties of this day will be reorganized." In the new villages adjacent to the City, "party spirit has not yet been allowed to interfere with local affairs...it is no matter whether a Judge, assessor, tax-gatherer,

⁵⁷ *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 31, 1851, June 23, 1854.

Constable, &c. be Whig or Democrat,” declared the *Gazette’s* editors, in 1851. In advance of the April local elections, Cogswell and Hyde supported candidates “without reference to... party politics” and encouraged their readers to “break loose from party trammels, and act an independent party.” The electoral districts that bordered the City supported a so-called “Regular Dem. Whig” ticket that included a Democrat as town supervisor of West Farms and a Whig as town supervisor of Westchester. Though these two candidates were of different parties, they both won handily in nearly identical districts with similar constituencies. The electorate’s weariness of party labels revealed that the new residents of Westchester County had weak local political allegiances years before the slavery-extension crisis challenged the major national parties.⁵⁸

Divisions within the parties posed just as much a threat to the Second Party System as did antipartyism. At the 1850 New York convention in Syracuse, for example, state and county Whigs divided into two groups: the Silver Grays and the Sewardites. Silver Grays represented the party’s conservative members, also known as Cotton Whigs, who bolted when the convention delegates incorporated into their platform William H. Seward’s anti-slavery policies. This faction derived its name from the silver-white hair of Frances Granger, one of the leaders of the bolting faction. Also led by Millard Fillmore, Silver Grays favored a conciliatory approach to southern slaveholders, strong temperance laws, and restricting immigrants and Catholics from civic life. Sewardites, known pejoratively as “Woolly Heads,” were “Conscience Whigs”

⁵⁸ Westchester was the name of both a town in the southern section of the county that is now the south Bronx and the name of the county itself. On local inter-party cooperation, see Gonzalez, *The Bronx*, 39. Quotations in this paragraph are arranged in chronological order, from *Westchester Gazette*, Oct. 18, 1850, Mar. 21, 28, Oct. 31, 1851. For election results, see *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Westchester County*, “Official Canvass,” (Yonkers, 1850); *New York Times*, Nov. 7, 1851; and *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Westchester County*, “Official Canvass,” (Yonkers, 1851).

who opposed the Compromise of 1850, favored restricting the spread of slavery, and were generally indifferent toward foreign influence in domestic politics. This faction derived its name from a prevalent racial slur against blacks because of the faction's anti-slavery political views. Though Sewardites dominated statewide, the county was evenly split between them and Silver Grays: each Whig faction had a paper in the county and half of Westchester's delegates joined Granger's protest.⁵⁹

These factions developed in the county along sectional lines. The Whiggish northern area contained commercial farmers, businessmen, and industrial interests who embraced the political views of Seward, Horace Greeley, and Thurlow Weed. The southern section contained ex-New Yorkers who hated Catholics, enjoyed commercial relationships with southern planters, and were generally evangelicals. In addition, clusters of French Huguenot refugees had long inhabited the southern Westchester communities of Pelham and New Rochelle, forming another crucible in which anti-Catholic sentiment flourished. Though the Silver Grays and Sewardites were ideologically opposed on slavery, when it came to local affairs, said a Democratic editor, they "lovingly embrace each other, and...make no distinctions between their own candidates of whatever faction." In the early 1850s, faction leaders horse-traded by splitting local nominations. But as nativism and slavery destroyed their national and state parties, Westchester Whigs followed their factional leaders into new political parties that upended the local and national party systems.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ On the Silver Grays, see Thomas J. Curran, "Know-Nothings of New York," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1963), v, 40; Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War*, (New York, 1999), 589; and Lee Warner, "The Perpetual Crisis of Conservative Whigs: New York's Silver Grays," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 57 (July 1973): 213-236. On the Sewardites, see *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 11, 1850; Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, "The Seward-Fillmore Feud and the Crisis of 1850," *New York History* 24 (Apr. 1943): 169.

⁶⁰ *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 8, 1852.

Divisions within the Democratic Party also influenced party realignments, though these factional disputes were fueled by slavery and financial policy. The more radical faction, called the Barnburners, favored the Wilmot Proviso to exclude slavery from all new western territories and opposed expanding the public debt to finance the Erie Canal. This faction derived its name from a farmer who burned down his barn to drive out rats. In New York, Barnburners were willing to destroy public works and the banks that funded them to root out waste and fraud. Led by Martin Van Buren, the Barnburners bolted from the Democratic Party in the 1848 presidential election to support the Free Soil Party—a coalition of Barnburner Democrats, abolitionists, and supporters of Henry Clay who fled the Whigs after they nominated Zachary Taylor for President. The conservatives, known as Hunkers, opposed the Wilmot Proviso, supported reconciliation with their southern slaveholding counterparts, and supported the Whig policy of borrowing money to pay for canal improvements. Members of this faction were loyal to William L. Marcy, an ex-governor, senator, and cabinet secretary, and derived their name by “hunkering” after the spoils of office. Westchester sent a Hunker, Benjamin Brandreth, to Albany as state senator while the Democratic Party was split in two.⁶¹

⁶¹ On the Barnburners, see *Peekskill Republican*, June 6, 1848; Herbert D.A. Donovan, *The Barnburners: A Study of the Internal Movements in the Political History of New York State* (New York, 1925), 25, 99. On the Hunkers, see *Peekskill Republican*, May 30, 1848; Dale Baum and Dale T. Knobel, “Anatomy of a Realignment: New York Presidential Politics, 1848-1860,” *New York History* 61 (Jan. 1984): 70-72; Donovan, *The Barnburners*, 9. In 1848, the Hunker ticket in Westchester County polled 2211 votes (29%), the Barnburner ticket polled 1378 votes (18%) and the Whig ticket polled 4030 votes (53%). With the Democratic Party split in two, Taylor coasted to victory in County, State, and Nation. In 1849, Brandreth won election as state senator, with Hunker support. *Westchester Herald*, Nov. 24, 1848; *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 26, Nov. 16, 1849.

Mixed reaction to the Compromise of 1850 within and between the major parties foreshadowed party fragmentation and realignment. The parties were in the midst of such a crisis that a month after the Compromise passed, the Democratic press predicted, in November 1850, that “the two old parties...will entirely break up before the next Presidential election” in 1852. Sutherland’s prediction was incorrect, but his forecast had some convincing evidence: a Silver Gray Whig President had signed the legislation, which passed Congress with the support of Democrats whose views aligned with the Hunkers; Sewardite Whigs and Free Soil Democrats opposed the bills. The unusual coalitions that supported and opposed the Compromise nationally also existed in Westchester. The Silver Gray and Hunker presses predictably observed that “all party feelings and party politics seemed merged” after a meeting of pro-Compromise Westchesterites passed a set of bipartisan resolutions supporting the controversial Fugitive Slave Law but repudiating secession. The Sewardites, of course, decried the Law as “inhuman and revolting,” criticizing the Compromise for “forcing us back into bondage and servitude.” Westchester’s leading Barnburner editor, of course, also considered this piece of the Omnibus Bill “a most gross usurpation of power by Congress; a plan, palpable violation of the Constitution.” Party affiliation, then, was not a reliable indicator of a voter’s views on slavery: Hunker Democrats and Silver Gray Whigs favored compromise with the South, whereas Barnburner Democrats and Woolly Head Whigs sought to restrict slavery’s spread. The evaporation of differences between local parties when it came to national policy had grave consequences for the Second American Party system. “Consensus, not conflict,” according to one historian, destroyed the Jacksonian parties. Without clear differences between Whig and Democratic policies, voters shed their old political affiliations.⁶²

⁶² *Hudson River Chronicle*, Feb. 5, 1851; *Peekskill Republican*, Mar. 4, 1851; *Eastern State Journal*, May 24, Nov. 8, 1850; Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York, 1983), 13.

The other major source of disagreement between the Barnburner and Hunker Democrats, and Silver Grays and Sewardite Whigs, concerned how to finance Erie Canal improvements. In the age of Andrew Jackson, the parties split cleanly on this issue: Democrats resisted government sponsorship of internal improvements, whereas Whigs favored them. But according to one historian, in the 1850 and 1851 statewide contests the canal question surpassed even slavery as a divisive force in the extant party system. The unusual alignment of the parties on this question, with the conservative factions proposing to use projected toll revenues as collateral for a loan and the radical factions proposing a direct tax on canal shipments, confirmed Sutherland's view that "the Canal question is...above party." Westchester became embroiled in this controversy when its state senator, Hunker Benjamin Brandreth, broke with the state party over canal funding. After Whigs forced a vote on a bill to borrow \$9 million to finance improvements, twelve Democratic senators walked out of the chamber. The state senate became paralyzed as it lacked the necessary three-fifths attendance required for a quorum. Though Brandreth did not support the bill, he was one of two Democratic senators who remained in the chamber to vote nay. "It appeared to me contrary to the spirit of Republicanism," Brandreth observed in October 1851, to block a vote. Few Westchester Democrats supported Brandreth's decision, or shared his fear that the bolters would further weaken their already divided party at the polls.⁶³

This clash between Brandreth and his party leadership reflected how local concerns accelerated the crumbling of the Second Party System. Westchester's Barnburner press, which opposed Brandreth because he was a Hunker, "wanted no new

⁶³ Ronald E. Shaw, *Erie Water West: A History of the Erie Canal, 1792-1854* (Lexington, KY, 1990) 361-368; De Alva Stanwood Alexander, *A Political History of the State of New York*, 3 vols. (New York, 1906), 2:163; *Journal of the Senate of the State of New-York at their Seventy-Fourth Session* (Albany, 1851), 603-607; *Eastern State Journal*, May 16, 1851; Benjamin Brandreth to Cogswell and Hyde, Oct. 25, 1851 in *Westchester Gazette*, Oct. 31, 1851.

issue...the party would probably be better off if the contending leaders of both the late sections of the party were overthrown.” The Hunker press, which generally supported the senator, endorsed the bolting senators and correctly pointed out that “the Democracy do not appear to be united in this movement...with such disunion in the Democratic ranks,” there was no such thing as a “majority opinion of the Democracy of this county.” Brandreth’s decision to buck the state party reveals that even the most prominent Westchester politician shared his constituents’ antiparty sentiment. Brandreth paid a steep cost for contravening his leadership: the party denied him re-nomination in 1851, and he was trounced at the polls running as an independent candidate. The near unanimous condemnation of the bolting Democrats, coupled with editors’ rhetorical support for ousting party leaders, would remain a driving force behind the demise of the Second Party System in Westchester.⁶⁴

If political affiliation did not reflect voters’ views on extending slavery and expanding the Erie Canal, party ties were an even more unlikely indicator of Westchester politicians’ views on temperance. Former Whigs in Cortlandt, a town on the county’s northern border, believed that curtailing drunkenness represented “a crisis in which the principles of the two leading parties are not involved.” These temperance advocates encouraged fellow Westchesterites, during the local elections in spring 1851, to support an independent slate of anti-liquor politicians “without reference to creed or party.” The temperance ticket posed such a threat to the major parties that Thomas A. Whitney, the Democratic candidate for Cortlandt Town Supervisor, withdrew two weeks before the race and supported his Whig opponent. Most of these local contests in the twenty-two municipalities across the county, according to Sutherland, were “waged on other than party grounds...the issue was rum or no rum.” The orientation of Westchester’s electorate as either pro-temperance or anti-temperance, instead of Democratic or Whig, indicated that the

⁶⁴ *Eastern State Journal*, Apr. 25, 1851 (first quotation); *Westchester Gazette*, May 9, 27, 1851; *Westchester Herald*, May 20, 1851 (second quotation).

process of party realignment was not solely connected to national debates about slavery. Rather, the breaking up of the Second Party System was deeply rooted in local affairs that affected daily life, and was catalyzed when the two major parties failed to address ethno-cultural issues plaguing northern communities. According to a Hunker editor, Westchester voted “without regard to strict party lines” in 1851.⁶⁵

In the southern section of the county as well, the prevalence of ethno-cultural issues led commuters to drift from their old parties. During the 1852 election, hundreds of West Farms Protestants coalesced around an antiparty prohibitionist ticket. Though this slate was narrowly defeated, the *Eastern State Journal* observed, “the contest was not a party one; it was between the...Maine Liquor Law [Temperance] advocates on the one side and the opponents of the Law on the other.” Many of these commuters, like their northern counterparts, held stronger allegiances to the temperance movement than they did to political parties. “It is a glorious thing that party ties begin to hang loosely on the people, and that considerations other than party interests are beginning to...call out the votes of our citizens,” reported an anonymous temperance advocate in the *Peekskill Republican*. He wanted elected officials to close taverns on Sundays, create strict requirements for obtaining a liquor license, and require any establishment that served alcohol to also provide housing. Neither the Democrats nor the Whigs incorporated these demands into their platforms, causing many voters to flee from their ranks, weakening their own

⁶⁵ Many Friends of Temperance, Peekskill to William Richards, Mar. 29, 1851 in *Peekskill Republican*, Apr. 1 (second quotation), 15 (first quotation), 1851; *Eastern State Journal*, Apr. 18, 1851 (third quotation); *Westchester Herald*, Apr. 8, 1851, Mar. 9, 1852 (fourth quotation); Mark Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Party: Cultures of Antipartisanship in Northern Politics before the Civil War* (Baltimore, 2002), 93-95.

electoral strength, and foreshadowing the rise of new parties that did address issues about which commuters cared.⁶⁶

The salience of the temperance issue, and the Whigs' inability to address it, accelerated the party's disintegration. In the 1852 election, the Westchester County Temperance Alliance held a convention to nominate candidates for statewide office. The first ballot for state assemblyman of the county's northern district was evenly divided between John Collett, a Whig, and George Mason, a Democrat. Collett ultimately won the Alliance nomination and spoiled the election for the Whig candidate: though the Whigs typically won this seat comfortably, they lost to the Democrats by 39 votes out of 4,266. "If the Whigs had nominated a Maine Law Candidate in this District...he would have been elected," lamented J.J. Chambers, the Sewardite editor of the *Peekskill Republican*, a few days after the election. Comparing the split between the Whig and Temperance Parties to "a big Railroad accident," a Silver Gray likewise observed in the *Hudson River Chronicle* that Whigs who defected to the Alliance "find themselves and the Temperance cause crushed...[Collett] will feel that he has injured his own party." By 1852, temperance movements had siphoned thousands of voters from the Whig Party, which was well on its way to extinction.⁶⁷

The debate over temperance intensified in the spring of 1853 when Democratic Governor Horatio Seymour vetoed a prohibitory liquor law. In response, the antiparty County Temperance Alliance passed resolutions to consider nominating any Democrat or Whig for state office who supported the Maine Law. Though Horace Greeley was the group's choice for state senate, he declined the nomination. The convention instead selected William Robertson, the Whig attorney from Bedford, as their candidate. Robertson's original party was still reeling from its 1852 defeat, and so to avoid past

⁶⁶ *Westchester Gazette*, Oct. 4, 11, 1850; *Eastern State Journal*, Apr. 2, 1852; *New York Atlas*, Apr. 6, 1852 (election result); *Peekskill Republican*, Apr. 22, 1851 (third quotation).

⁶⁷ *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors*, "Official Canvass," 1852; *Peekskill Republican*, Nov. 9, 1852; *Hudson River Chronicle*, Nov. 9, 1852.

mistakes, the Whigs also nominated him. Perhaps party leaders were swayed to support the temperance candidate upon hearing Samuel Wood, a powerful Alliance organizer, declare that “it were better...that existing political parties were annihilated, than that the evils [of liquor] we complain of should be perpetuated.” County Whigs had no choice but to take Wood seriously and cooperate with his anti-liquor party. This marriage proved fruitful: on Election Day, the fusion ticket picked up both a state senate seat and an assembly seat from the Democrats. Reflecting on the temperance organization’s recent victory, one of Wood’s colleagues, D.D. McLaughlin, boasted that they “held the balance of power, and could thus by firm and united action control any election.” Westchester Whigs’ experience with the temperance movement was a microcosm of a national trend that intensified in 1853 and left their party feeble and fragmented. Across the north and mid-Atlantic, voters expressed anti-liquor sentiment not through their traditional parties, but through state and local temperance organizations. By contributing to the destruction of the Whig Party, the Maine Law movement turned the 1850s into an era of realignment.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ *Eastern State Journal*, Nov. 12, 1852; *Peekskill Republican*, Sep. 27, Oct. 18, 25, Nov. 15, 1853; Samuel Wood, President of the Tarrytown Temperance Alliance, “Address of the Tarrytown Temperance Alliance to the Voters of that Town,” in *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 28, 1853; D.D. Tompkins McLaughlin, “Report of the Westchester County Temperance Alliance,” in *Peekskill Republican*, Feb. 28, 1854; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s*, (New York, 1992), 17; Clifford Griffin, *Their Brothers’ Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865*, (New Brunswick, NJ, 1960), 151; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 800; Daniel Walker Howe, “The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North During the Second Party System,” *Journal of American History* 77 (Mar. 1991): 1232; Kyle Volk, “The Perils of ‘Pure Democracy’: Minority Rights, Liquor Politics, and Popular Sovereignty in Antebellum

Westchester's Democratic Party pounced on the fusion of Whigs and the Temperance Alliance in a desperate attempt to woo anti-liquor Democrats back into the party's fold. Attrition from the Democrats began in 1852 when temperance forces came close to installing one of their own as Democratic candidate for state assembly in Westchester's northern district. With the prohibitionist threat to Democratic Party strength fresh in mind, the *Eastern State Journal* noted the "divided and confused condition of the Democratic party on the one side, and the rotten, crumbling state of the Whig party on the other, together with the 'loose party times' prevalent in every quarter" of the county. These three phenomena, continued the editorial, "gave to the Maine Law organization, or 'Alliance,' a potency and effectiveness at the [1853] election just passed, which no clear-sighted sagacious politician could have failed to foresee." The county's other Democratic paper, the *Westchester Herald*, endorsed the Maine Law a month before that election. Ambivalent Democrats now had political cover to vote the Temperance ticket, confirming the *Eastern State Journal's* fears. By providing a political vehicle for anti-liquor advocates, the temperance party enticed voters to abandon the Democrats, and, of course, the Whigs. Flight from the major parties, in turn, led to the unraveling of the institutions that sustained the Second Party System.⁶⁹

As the relative stability ushered in by the Compromise of 1850 gave way to turbulence by the end of the 1853, yet another split emerged in the Democratic Party that facilitated political realignment. Many Barnburners found themselves without a major party affiliation after the disappearance of the anti-slavery Free Soil Party in 1849. Westchester Hunkers, however, needed Barnburner votes in advance of the 1852 Presidential contest. But many Hunkers believed so strongly in supporting Southern slavery policy that they refused to reconcile their differences with the Barnburners. This dispute cut a deep divide within the Hunker camp between Softs, who

America," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29 (Winter 2009): 645; Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Party*, 52, 100.

⁶⁹ *Eastern State Journal*, Nov. 11, 1853; *Westchester Herald*, Oct. 18, 1853; Holt, *The Political Crisis*, 101.

would welcome Barnburner bolters back into the party, and the Hards, who would penalize them. In 1853, Westchester Democrats generally supported the Hards because Softs in Albany had temporarily fused with the Whigs in support of temperance candidates. A week after this unusual coalition of Softs and Whigs won a few state and local offices, the county's Hard press decried "these traitors to the cause of Democracy," who "have led off a portion of the honest masses from us, and defeated our candidates." Stung losing by an important state senate seat, Westchester's leading Barnburner, Edmund Sutherland, attributed his party's 1853 statewide defeat to "the Temperance Alliance...but Free Soil treachery and bolting did more." The division between the Hards and Softs continued to plague Westchester Democrats throughout the mid-1850s, ultimately contributing to the party's only two electoral losses in the county during that decade.⁷⁰

The tumult of 1853 intensified the following year when Stephen Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Act pushed slavery to the forefront of national, state, and local politics. In Westchester, both Democrats and Whigs sought to exploit anti-Nebraska sentiment to win elections. The Sewardite press made the most vocal appeal to anti-slavery advocates by decrying the bill's passage as "the darkest day in the Senate" and promising "political death to every man who lifted his hand or voice in favor of slavery." The largest of many anti-Nebraska meetings in the county took place at the White Plains Courthouse in August 1854, and featured speeches by politicians from both parties. The county's Barnburner organ, the *Eastern State Journal*, also commended Westchester's Democratic Congressman, Jared V. Peck, for voting against the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Sewardites and Barnburners united in opposition. Westchester's Hards, however, split. Most prominent among them, State Senator Benjamin Brandreth encouraged his supporters to remain "true to [their] northern instincts and experience" by opposing the Kansas-Nebraska

⁷⁰ *Peekskill Republican*, Sep. 13, 1853; *Eastern State Journal*, Nov. 17 (traitors quotation), Dec. 2, 1853 (Free Soil quotation); A National Democrat, *New York Hards and Softs: Which is the True Democracy?...* (New York, 1855), 24-26.

Act. But Caleb Roscoe, the editor of the *Westchester Herald*, supported Douglas's bill because it established the doctrine of popular sovereignty, or local referenda on whether or not to permit slavery in the territories. Despite this minor division within an already factionalized Democratic Party, anti-slavery sentiment generally united Westchesterites. Whereas reaction to the Compromise of 1850 was mixed, reaction to the Kansas-Nebraska Act was nearly unanimous. So although slavery became a salient national issue, fault lines between the local parties formed based on ethno-cultural distinctions. In the 1854 contest, nativism and temperance did more than slavery to upend Westchester's party system.⁷¹

Across the North, voters expressed nativist sentiment through a third party called the Know-Nothings. The rank-and-file often belonged to secret fraternal lodges affiliated with the Order of United Americans (O.U.A.) or the Order of the Star Spangled Banner (O.S.S.B). According to a county Know-Nothing, these lodges consisted mostly of former Hunkers and Silver Grays, who coalesced around a conservative political agenda of prohibiting alcohol, creating tough naturalization laws, and limiting Catholic influence in public institutions. In the southern towns of West Farms, Pelham, and Westchester, anti-Catholic, anti-liquor, and antiparty sentiment had flourished since at least 1850, providing a rich pool of voters for the Know-Nothings. "They seem, down in the lower part of the County, to deal in Native Americanism," charged a Peekskill Whig who lived on Westchester's northern border. This sentiment was, in reality, ubiquitous in the anti-Catholic and temperance enclaves along Westchester's New York City border. Commuters who fled the City, in part to avoid Irish immigrants, found a home in the Know-Nothing Party. Likewise, the Huguenot Protestants, who fled persecution from a French Catholic monarchy to settle in Pelham and New

⁷¹ *Peekskill Republican*, Mar. 7, 1854 (first quotation); *Eastern State Journal*, Aug. 11, 1854 (second quotation). Address of Benjamin Brandreth" in *Peekskill Republican*, Mar. 7, Oct. 3, 1854; *Westchester Herald*, Feb. 14, 1854; Michael Kirn, Jr., "Voters, Parties, and Legislative Politics in New York State, 1846-1876," (Ph.D diss., University of Virginia, 2003), 488.

Rochelle, also flocked to the Know-Nothings. Many voters in West Farms, according to a *Peekskill Republican* correspondent feared the “foreign and antagonistic population” a few miles south, whose “noisy and riotous proceedings” disturbed otherwise tranquil country lives. By providing a vehicle to elevate the ethno-cultural issues that neither the Democrats nor the Whigs adequately addressed, the Know-Nothings weakened these two factionalized parties and dominated Westchester politics in 1854 and 1855.⁷²

Though Know-Nothingism thrived in Westchester, some lodges suffered from factional rivalries. These divisions stemmed primarily from previous party affiliations and prevented the Order from establishing itself as a potent political force as the Third Party System took form. “I have tried for the last six or eight meetings to procure an acceptance and endorsement of this ticket,” complained an Ossining Know-Nothing to party leader and 1854 gubernatorial candidate Daniel Ullmann. A week before the election, Know-Nothing cohesion appeared to be unraveling in that town because “two thirds of this council will vote directly for Seymour, and the Whig members insist that a State nomination by our Order is intended to entice the Whig members to throw away their votes on our nominee.” This worst-case scenario became a reality when Ullmann was routed in Ossining, with the Soft candidate and the Whig candidate receiving a combined 80% of the vote. An Ossining Democrat mocked this lodge, in an *Eastern State Journal* column, as being “led by a set of old party hacks and broken down politicians who have managed to crawl into their Order.” Alexander H. Wells, the leader of O.S.S.B Chapter #72 in Ossining, conceded that his fellow nativists would most

⁷² *Peekskill Republican*, Aug. 1 (second quotation), Oct. 3 (first quotation), 17, 1854; *Westchester Gazette*, Sep. 13, 1850, Mar. 28, 1851; Mark Berger, *The Revolution in the New York Party Systems, 1840-1860* (Port Washington, NY, 1979), 2, 63; Gonzalez, *The Bronx*, 24, 38; Bruce Levine, “Conservatism, Nativism, and Slavery: Thomas R. Whitney and the Origins of the Know-Nothing Party,” *Journal of American History* 88 (Sep. 2001): 460; Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Party*, 109.

likely vote “with their previous party predilections.” Though his concern proved valid for his lodge, most others around the county supported Ullmann. O.S.S B members shed their old party ties and united with previous political rivals to vote the Know-Nothing ticket in the fall of 1854. J.P. Sanders, a Peekskill Know-Nothing who assured Ullmann that “everything is smooth in this section,” better measured the Westchester electorate’s pulse than did his Ossining counterpart.⁷³

Both parties feared the Order as the 1854 elections approached. “Every vote given to Ullmann [Know-Nothing] will be taken from *Clark* [Whig] and practically given to Seymour [Democrat], the Rum candidate and advocate of slavery propagandism. Why then should any Whig or Temperance man...worse than waste his vote, by casting it for this altogether useless nomination?” inquired the county’s Whig organ in advance of the gubernatorial election. Though Clark narrowly edged Seymour to capture the governorship, Ullmann likely siphoned hundreds of Westchester voters from his Whig opponent, almost leading to a Democratic victory.⁷⁴ But the Democrats surprisingly had more to fear from the rise of the nativist party. As the election returns demonstrate, from 1853 to 1854, Democrats’ share of the vote was slashed by 25%, whereas the Whig share of the vote declined by 13%, which equaled the Know-Nothings’ 38%. “From the number of Know Nothings, it will be a task of much difficulty to elect a Democrat from Westchester to Congress,” *Eastern State Journal* editor Edmund Sutherland predicted, after observing large defections from his party. His fears were valid. At the 1854 canvass, the Know-Nothing ticket polled pluralities in a majority of Westchester municipalities. Westchester’s

⁷³ Ullmann finished in last place in Ossining with only 61 out of 649 votes. *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1854 (election result); “Letter from ‘A Workingman,’” *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 20, 1854; A.H. Wells to Daniel Ullmann, Oct. 30, 1854, Ullmann Papers, New-York Historical Society; J.P. Sanders to Daniel Ullmann, Sep. 27, 1854, Ullmann Papers, NYHS.

⁷⁴ *Albany Evening Journal*, Nov. 3, 1854; *Peekskill Republican*, Oct. 17 (quotation), Nov. 7, 1854.

Congressman, Bayard Clarke, was now a loyal member of the Order, as were most countywide officials.⁷⁵

By 1854, party lines had become dismantled and traditional political apparatuses were rendered impotent. “A perfect whirlwind seems to have passed over the county, rooting up and tearing down all previous political calculations, electing those in many instances least expecting to be elected,” wrote Sutherland. This editor astutely observed that “from out of the political chaos” of divided Whigs and Democrats, “the Nativist element, with its secret and close organization called ‘Know Nothing,’ sprung up, absorbing materials of every description of opinion and character.” Westchester Whigs boasted that the Democratic Party had become “a house divided against itself” because temperance and slavery overshadowed party lines. Adding the secret political organization of Know-Nothings into this political stew even further clouded the electoral landscape. The large number of parties, and the myriad of diverse issues at stake, represented that the stability created by two-party competition during the Second Party System had given way to chaos by the mid-1850s. After the 1854 election, yet another threat to the Jacksonian political system emerged in the form of a new party.⁷⁶

As anti-slavery sentiment intensified, it cleaved existing fissures in the Whig Party and led to its complete disintegration. The major turning point came in May 1854,

⁷⁵ In 1854, Know-Nothings enjoyed the greatest success at the polls in Massachusetts, followed by New York. Within the state, Westchester County contained a disproportionate amount of Know-Nothings. According to a County Know-Nothing, reported the *Peekskill Republican* on Oct. 17, 1854, “the City of New York and its immediate vicinity held control” at the state Know-Nothing Convention, with Westchester County alone furnishing more than 10% of the delegates. For Sutherland’s analysis, see *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 13, 1854. For election results, see Table 2 in the Appendix; *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1853 and Dec. 21, 1854.

⁷⁶ *Eastern State Journal*, Nov. 10, 1854; *Peekskill Republican*, Oct. 31, 1854.

when Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act along sectional, instead of party, lines. Sewardites, Barnburners, and a few Softs who also opposed the act, joined with anti-liquor politicians to found the Westchester Republican Party in 1855. "Let all party differences be thrown to the winds," proclaimed a Whig-turned-Republican editor, who welcomed anyone "whether hitherto known as a Democrat or Whig." Meeting at the spot in White Plains where the Provincial Congress of New York had received the Declaration of Independence, the men at the first County Republican Convention "disregarded their former party associations by uniting" on a platform dominated by anti-slavery policy. Specifically, Westchester Republicans repudiated the influence of the Slave Power, opposed repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and decried the fighting between pro- and anti-slavery forces in the Kansas territory. Like the handful of other northern suburban counties around New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia, Westchester embraced a moderate brand of Republicanism. The federal government lacked the authority to meddle in states' affairs, the Westchester platform contended, and thus could not abolish slavery in the states where it already existed. Rather, the institution should die gradually by excluding slavery from western territories and rejecting admission of additional slave states. The local 1855 platform almost exactly mirrored the first national Republican one in 1856, which one historian considers the handiwork of the party's moderate wing.⁷⁷

Though free labor dominated Republican ideology, the party in Westchester also organized to counter Know-Nothingism. The county platform contained a unique plank explicitly "repudiat[ing] the order of Know-Nothings." Party leaders considered Know-Nothings more threatening than Democrats. In the first election the local Republicans contested, they joined with Democrats to create an Anti-Know-

⁷⁷ *Peekskill Republican*, July 24, Sep. 11 (first quotation), Oct. 11 (second quotation), 1855; *Hudson River Chronicle*, Oct. 3, 1855 (platform); Republican Party, "Republican Party Platform of 1856," The American Presidency Project, University of Santa Barbara; Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 186-188.

Nothing Union County ticket “in opposition to the apostates and renegades from all parties who have banded themselves together in an oath-bound secret conspiracy.” Though New Yorkers could choose from four statewide tickets in 1855, the *Hard Westchester Herald* analyzed, “the local contest lies between the secret unprincipled, and prospective order of Know Nothings, and the PEOPLE without distinction as to the former party ties.” The anti-Know-Nothing state senate candidate, Benjamin Brandreth, published an editorial in several Westchester papers declaring that, “the contest in this campaign is not between Democrats and Republicans, but between patriots and Know-Nothings.” Brandreth’s appeal to patriotic principles, in addition to his anti-slavery credentials, mollified reluctant Republicans loath to support Democrats. Opposing Know-Nothingism superseded party lines in Westchester. According to the *Eastern State Journal*, “the Whigs are ready to sustain Dr. Brandreth in this contest—not because he is a Whig, for he is not...but to defeat the Know-Nothing[s].”⁷⁸

Though Westchester Know-Nothings consisted primarily of ex-Democrats, they nonetheless enthusiastically supported an ex-Whig for state senator. Their nominee, John W. Ferdon, typified northern Know-Nothingism by supporting the Maine Law and opposing the Kansas-Nebraska Act. But Ferdon appealed to ex-Democrats primarily because he opposed William H. Seward. As state senator in the 1840s, Ferdon had supported Ogden Hoffman, a Democrat-turned-Whig, over Seward for U.S. Senate because the nativist

⁷⁸ *Hudson River Chronicle*, Oct. 3 (platform), Nov. 6 (quotation), 1855; Benjamin Brandreth to Russell Smith, Joseph T. Carpenter and James J. Smalley, Oct. 20, 1855 in *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 26, 1855; *Eastern State Journal*, Oct. 26, 1855; Curran, “Know-Nothings of New York,” 86; Kirn, “Voters, Parties, and Legislative Politics in New York State,” 528-529. Though J.J. Chambers, the editor of the *Republican*, had been disgusted at Brandreth’s “total want of all moral fitness” during the 1849 state senate race, six years later, he declared “the traitor” fit for office, in part because he was not a Know-Nothing. *Peekskill Republican*, Oct. 30, 1849.

opposed Seward's plan to create publicly funded schools for Catholic children. Schooling again played a critical role in the 1855 election, and was perhaps the clearest policy distinction between Ferdon and Brandreth. The Democrat had long supported Seward's policy. Brandreth's status as an English immigrant, moreover, enraged county Know-Nothings who favored extending the naturalization period to twenty-one years. Such a policy would have forced Brandreth to wait one more year before earning citizenship, precluding him from even running for office. Because both candidates opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, national issues were minimized in the 1855 contest. Ethno-cultural issues figured most prominently. On the one side, an ex-Whig Know-Nothing supported embraced nativism and temperance. On the other, an ex-Democrat "Unionist" rejected them.⁷⁹

This strategy had mixed results. In the state senate race, Brandreth narrowly carried Westchester, but in the district, which also comprised Putnam and Rockland counties, Ferdon, the Know-Nothing, won by a mere 62 votes out of 11,116 cast. Nevertheless, the anti-Know Nothing ticket won both assembly seats and a host of local offices. The impressive Republican showing indicated that the new party united the political forces that had paralyzed Westchester Whigs. The opportunity to converge with anti-slavery and temperance men in a new political party opposed to Democrats and Know-Nothings proved attractive to Sewardite Whigs, who shed their old party label.⁸⁰ This temporary coalition of Republicans, ex-

⁷⁹ *Peekskill Republican*, Nov. 6, 1855; *Hudson River Chronicle*, June 5, Oct. 23, 1855; *Eastern State Journal*, Aug. 24 and Sep. 14, 1855.

⁸⁰ The razor-thin margin led to a months-long, yet abortive, legal challenge by Brandreth's supporters who alleged mass voter fraud. James Malcolm, ed., *The New York Red Book* (Albany, 1922), 384; "Report of the Committee on Privileges and Elections in the matter of the contested seat of John W. Ferdon by Benjamin Brandreth," in *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York, Seventy Ninth Session 2*, no. 89 (Albany, 1856), 1-47. As the results indicate, the Republican share of the vote in 1855 was nearly identical to that of the

Whigs, and Democrats sufficiently routed Know-Nothings in local contests for coroner, surrogate, superintendent of the poor, and county treasurer, among others. Joel T. Headley, who headed the American ticket as nominee for secretary of state, polled a plurality in Westchester, and the Know-Nothing ticket polled pluralities statewide. Still hopelessly divided into Softs and Hards, the Democratic Party was too crippled to seriously contend for elective office. In Westchester, the party system that dominated since Jackson's presidency was now dead.⁸¹

The Democrats remained factionalized heading into the 1856 presidential elections. The party's leading organ attacked party leaders. "Setting aside both factitious organizations now existing... which divide the ranks and break down the energies of the party," Sutherland suggested that the decades-old organization "start anew." Such antiparty expressions a few months prior to the presidential election seemed to foreshadow a weak performance at the polls. Fierce inter-party competition in the immediate wake of the Second Party System's collapse also complicated Democratic efforts on two fronts: dissolving the 1855 fusion with Republicans and defeating Know-Nothingism. Engulfed by antipartyism, nativism, and slavery, Westchester became a bloody battleground during the 1856 presidential campaign.⁸²

Whigs in 1854; the Democrats and Know-Nothings saw negligible changes in their party strength between those same years. For election results, see Table 3 in the Appendix.

⁸¹ *Board of Supervisors*, "Official Canvass," 1855; *Peekskill Republican*, Nov. 13, 1855. Whereas the Pearson Coefficient, or correlation, between Whig popularity at the polls in 1854 and Know-Nothing strength in 1855 is relatively weak (.44), the same measurement between Whigs and Republicans is tremendously strong (.89). This difference suggests a preference among Westchester's ex-Whigs for Republican candidates over Know-Nothing candidates in 1855. For election results see *New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1854; *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Westchester County*, "Official Canvass," 1855.

⁸² *Eastern State Journal*, Mar. 21, 1856.

Westchester Know-Nothings met with mixed emotions Millard Fillmore's 1856 nomination for president on the American Party ticket. "There is a strong feeling here favorable to the American candidates," Alexander Wells and Abram Hyatt, prominent Ossining Know-Nothings, wrote Daniel Ullmann. "We have plenty of votes." Wells and Hyatt supported Fillmore because they shared Whig antecedents. But among Democrats who dabbled in Know-Nothingism, Fillmore's nomination was not acceptable. "What Democrat, who wishes well to his country, can vote for Fillmore?" asked a Hard who sympathized with the Know-Nothings. "None surely," he answered, because a victorious Fillmore would dole out patronage only to former Whigs. Paralyzed by internal disputes between ex-Democrats and ex-Whigs, Know-Nothings became crippled and would never again seriously contend for elective office.⁸³

If even Westchester Know-Nothings could not fully shed their old party affiliations, then the American Party lacked the cohesion required to wage a winning national campaign for the presidency. Fillmore's candidacy confronted ex-Whigs with a dilemma regarding slavery. As President he had signed the controversial Compromise of 1850, which precipitated the New York Whigs' split into Sewardites and Silver Grays. Fillmore had led the conservative faction and still favored conciliation with southern slave interests, a position which, by 1856, had become anathema to northern voters. Violent conflicts over whether to allow slavery in the Kansas territory, which came to a head in the months prior to the campaign, persuaded anti-slavery Know-Nothings to cast their lot with the Republican candidate, John Fremont, who ran on a free labor platform. The election results indeed suggest that voters who bolted from the Know-Nothings after 1855 migrated almost entirely into the Republican fold. These mass defections occurred because nativism was "made secondary to the

⁸³ A.H. Wells and Abram Hyatt to Daniel Ullmann, July 12, 1856, Ullmann Papers, NYHS (first quotation); "Whiggery and Nativism Coalesce," *Westchester Herald*, Aug. 19, 1856 (second quotation); *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1855; *Eastern State Journal*, Apr. 25, 1856.

question of Slavery,” analyzed an American Party voter. Amidst this confusion among anti-slavery forces, the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan, squeezed out a close victory in county and a landslide in country.⁸⁴

Little did Buchanan know that Westchesterites ironically elected a Congressman who would become a sharp thorn in his side. In 1856, New York’s Ninth Electoral District, comprised of Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland counties, sent Democrat John B. Haskin to Washington. Born in 1821 into a family of New York shipping magnates, Haskin was raised in Fordham on an estate that is now part of Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. After studying law, Haskin became involved in Democratic politics when the political crisis of the 1850s commenced. As a conservative Hunker Democrat, he resisted agitating the slavery question by refusing to take a position on the Compromise of 1850 and by supporting the Baltimore Platform of 1852, which affirmed the local character of that divisive issue. He also staunchly opposed the Maine Law and was elected to four consecutive terms as Town Supervisor of West Farms, beginning in 1850, before the influx of Protestant immigrants from New York City turned the southern towns into prohibitionist enclaves. When it came to state politics, Haskin opposed the \$9 million bill to finance Erie Canal improvements and considered his fellow Democrat, Benjamin Brandreth, a foe for refusing to bolt the Assembly in protest. By 1854, national events forced Haskin to take a stand regarding slavery, so he supported Stephen Douglas’ Kansas-Nebraska Bill repealing the Missouri Compromise and endorsing popular sovereignty. Now in Congress, Haskin was

⁸⁴ *Hudson River Chronicle*, Dec. 8, 1857 (quotation); Gunja Sengupta, *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals, Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Territorial Kansas, 1854-1860* (Athens, GA, 1996), 132. The New York State Democrats had reconciled their differences in 1856 to present a single united ticket for the presidential election. For election results, see Table 4 in the Appendix; *Board of Supervisors*, “Official Canvass,” 1855; *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1856.

well positioned to take a pre-eminent role in the national debates regarding the extension of slavery.⁸⁵

Though slavery consumed national politics after the election of 1856, in Westchester ethno-cultural issues remained pre-eminent. Fillmore's poor showing made it clear that Know-Nothings would soon cease to exist. And with local elections in April and November 1857 quickly approaching, Republicans sought to envelop the key swing voting bloc—American Party voters. First, leaders re-nominated John Ferdon, the Know-Nothing incumbent, for state senate, even though the Republican rank-and-file had opposed his candidacy in 1855. Second, the Republican-controlled state legislature passed the Metropolitan Police Bill, which unified the police departments of the City and several downstate counties, including Westchester. In West Farms, Westchester, Pelham, and Morrisania, Know-Nothings and Republicans alike supported the bill based on their preference for law and order. These areas' proximity to the City "exposed [them] to the attacks of unscrupulous marauders," most of whom, Rowe charged, were immigrants. "We have come to resemble the city in our moral as well as our physical character," he decried. As early as 1853, Edward Wells, the county District Attorney, acknowledged that these southern towns along the Harlem Railroad were disproportionately plagued by crime committed by New Yorkers. Ferdon's vote in favor of the bill as state senator encouraged Republicans to believe that nativists would consider ethno-cultural issues at the ballot box and migrate into their camp.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ For Haskin's biographical information, see J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Westchester County including Morrisania, Kings Bridge, and West Farms which have been annexed to New York City*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1886), 1:561. On slavery policy, see *Eastern State Journal*, May 9, 1852, Aug. 24, 1855; *Peekskill Republican*, Feb. 4, 1851. On canal policy, see *Westchester Herald*, Aug. 17, 1852.

⁸⁶ *Yonkers Examiner*, Sep. 3, Oct. 22 (American quotation), 29, Dec. 18, 1857 (immigrant quotation); Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York, 1990), 132; Edward Wells to Supervisors of Westchester County,

Democrats, in response, waged a vicious campaign against Republican positions on the Police Bill, slavery, and nativism. They vilified Ferdon for voting with the Republicans to consolidate downstate police forces, which, they warned, would result in Westchester's occupation—similar to the British occupation of the colonies. To make matters worse, county taxes would increase. Describing the “Black Republican Party” as the refuge of aristocratic elites, the *Eastern State Journal* charged that, according to party creed, the government was “the omnipotent source of power, above the people, instituted to control and manage them.” The Democratic editor applied this philosophy to both slavery and temperance. Denying Kansas popular sovereignty would turn territorial residents into subjects of a monarchy in Washington, while legislating morality turned government into a guardian authority. Westchesterites, according to the Sutherland, could either support Brandreth who thought “poor white people are as good as Niggers,” or support Ferdon who was allegedly in favor of black suffrage. As Know-Nothingism waned, the Democrats and Republicans took opposing positions on a host of national and local issues. If consensus destroyed the Second Party System, conflict was fast constructing the Third.⁸⁷

In the battle for the remnants of Westchester's American Party, the Democrats bested the Republicans. Little consensus exists on what caused this peculiar realignment. A Republican blamed his party's 1857 defeat on “the general combination of the American with the Democratic Party.” Low turnout because of the off-year election compounded the Republicans' woes. Sutherland correctly pointed out that Democrats who had become Americans would switch back in 1857. Both Sutherland and contemporary historians have pointed out that these voters had become fed up with the nativists' impasse over slavery. Other historians have stressed

Nov. 22, 1853 in Charles E. Johnson, *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Westchester County, NY* (Yonkers, 1853), 1148.

⁸⁷ *Eastern State Journal*, Mar. 27, May 8, 15, June 19 (government quotation), Aug. 28, Oct. 3, 30 (suffrage quotation), 1857.

opposition to the Police Bill as the major 1857 election determinant. The results for state senate seem to support this conclusion. Though Ferdon polled better than the Republican Party generally, he lost even in municipalities bordering New York City that had the most vested interests in the Police Bill. By 1857, most residents in these southern towns were migrants from the City who still held strong allegiances to the Democratic machine at Tammany Hall, which opposed ceding control of the police force. Whereas most historians agree that northern Know-Nothings generally migrated into the Republican camp, in Westchester it appears that local issues pushed them in droves towards the Democratic Party.⁸⁸

Know-Nothings who flocked there would soon discover that factional divisions regarding slavery once again plagued their party. After disputes between pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers in Kansas erupted in violence, the official territorial legislature met at Leecompton in 1857. There, they passed a constitution allowing slavery and put the document to the territorial inhabitants for an up-or-down vote, which anti-slavery forces boycotted. Amid this uproar, President Buchanan endorsed the Leecompton Constitution. Democrats splintered about whether to follow his lead. Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois led a faction in opposition to the administration. They criticized the Leecompton Constitution because the circumstances surrounding its passage seemed to contravene the principle of popular sovereignty. Westchester's Congressman, John Haskin, was one of twelve House Democrats to cast his lot with Douglas, and against Buchanan.

⁸⁸ *Yonkers Examiner*, Nov. 5, 1857; *Eastern State Journal*, Aug. 21, 1857. On the combination of slavery and local issues determining the 1857 election, see James Huston, *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1987), 50. On the Police Bill, see Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 255; Spann, *The New Metropolis*, 387. On the relationship between County and City, see Zuckerbraun, "Born to Rule," 127-128. For election results, see Table 5 in the Appendix; *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1856; *Board of Supervisors*, "Official Canvass," 1857.

On a stifling evening in June 1858, Haskin rose to address a crowd of 250 supporters, who had assembled to re-nominate him for Congress. The Lecompton Constitution, he said “would have entailed upon that virgin territory [of Kansas] the curse of Slavery.” Turning the election of 1858 into a referendum on this issue alone, Haskin accused Buchanan, his fellow Democrat, of abandoning the platform upon which he was elected. Taking cues from Douglas, Haskin argued that the Administration’s policy of supporting a fraudulent constitution denied Kansans the right to exercise democratic control over local issues. Prominent Westchester Democrats, ex-Whigs, Republicans, and Know-Nothings agreed with Haskin. According to Robert H. Coles, an ex-Barnburner Democrat from New Rochelle who attended the meeting, Haskin “exposed one of the most...shameful swindles that was ever perpetuated upon the Government.” Should his opponents “succeed in disturbing and dividing our party, a wound will be opened that will bleed more profusely than the wounds of bleeding Kansas.”⁸⁹

The partisan Democratic press not only opened these wounds, they also poured salt into them. “We are perfectly willing that the Republicans should take [Haskin] up and adopt him as their own,” said Fenelon Hasbrouck, a Peekskill Democratic editor who called for his fellow Democrat’s resignation from Congress. In White Plains, the Second Assembly District convention adopted a resolution condemning Haskin for his “adulterous communion with unscrupulous Black Republicans, or Bastard Know-Nothings.” In the first and third assembly districts as well, Democrats met to condemn Haskin for breaking with the national administration at a time when the major parties were still in flux. In April 1858, Sutherland observed that Haskin was “languishing in the loving embraces of Black Republicanism...he has excited *disgust* in the minds of a large proportion of his constituents, who feel that he has enacted the part of a betrayer of his party.” These

⁸⁹ Speech of the Hon. John B. Haskin and Robert H. Coles to William Cauldwell, June 18, 1858, in “Reception of the Hon. John B. Haskin...” *New York Times*, June 23, 1858.

vitriolic editorials continued throughout the summer and drove a wedge through the county Democratic Party.⁹⁰

What particularly incensed Westchester's Democratic establishment was Republican support for Haskin. "I only mean to make sure that Haskin shall be returned," Horace Greeley confided to a friend in the summer of 1858. The Bedford resident publicly declared his support at the Republican Congressional Convention, where the Committee on Resolutions, which he chaired, reported that "Haskin notably resisted every inducement to give his voice and vote for the enslavement of Kansas....By thus discharging his imperative duty as the representative of a free labor constituency," he had become an ideological ally with Republicans, who published his name at the top of their ticket. "We have only to choose between Mr. Haskin and a full blown Lecompton Democrat. The election of a Republican is an impossibility," the *Yonkers Examiner* conceded before also endorsing Haskin. Westchester Republicans had ample political cover to support a Democrat, for Haskin was now "independent of administrative requirements and party trammels." Though Westchester Republican leaders, especially Greeley, were motivated by policy considerations to endorse Haskin, electoral strategy also factored into this momentous decision. Supporting anti-Administration Democrats, they hoped, would divide the party and pave the way for a Republican victory in the 1860 Presidential contest.⁹¹

⁹⁰ *Highland Democrat*, Sep. 11 (first quotation), "2nd Assembly District Convention, Met at White Plains," Sep. 8, 1858 in *Highland Democrat*, Sep. 11 (second quotation), 1858; *Eastern State Journal*, Apr. 9, 1858 (third quotation).

⁹¹ Horace Greeley to J.S. Pike, July 7, 1858 in James Shepherd Pike, *First Blows of the Civil War: The Ten Years of Preliminary Conflict in the United States* (New York, 1879), 422; *Yonkers Examiner*, May 20 (fourth quotation), Sep. 2 (third quotation), Oct. 28 (resolutions), 1858; *Highland Democrat*, July 24, Oct. 23, 1858; Robert C. Williams, *Horace Greeley: Champion of American Freedom* (New York, 2006), 195-197.

Consistent with their embrace of anti-Lecompton Democrats, Republican leaders and editors now refused to compromise with members of the fledging American Party. “No fusion should take place whereby the Republican Party shall sacrifice...its central principle of opposition to slavery,” Rowe declared, though the local party welcomed nativists who shared the free labor ideology. Westchester Republicans did not incorporate into their platform nativist or temperance policies. After American and Republican Party leaders failed to unite on strong anti-slavery language at the statewide nominating conventions, Rowe rationalized that his party stood “better today because we have not incumbered ourselves with unsympathizing comrades.” Sutherland, of course, spun this impasse as a victory for his party. County Know-Nothings, he editorialized, “regard any sort of connection with Black Republicanism as political prostitution, and are fast arranging themselves on the side of the National [pro-Buchanan] Democracy.” An August declaration by Know-Nothing Council #32 in Peekskill repudiating Haskin’s stance on Lecompton seemed to confirm Sutherland’s analysis. Though most Democratic candidates won in the 1858 contest, the local electorate was sufficiently anti-Lecompton to reward Haskin’s independence with a second term in Congress.⁹²

As Democrats and Republicans took their seats in the Thirty-Sixth Congress, in the summer and fall of 1859, sectional discord hurtled towards climax over the slavery extension issue. Abolitionist John Brown sought to stir up a slave revolt by raiding a federal garrison in Harper’s Ferry, Virginia. Horace Greeley distributed Hinton Helper’s *The Impending Crisis of the South*, in which a southern farmer argued that slavery blocked economic growth in his section. And Haskin continued opposing Buchanan’s Lecompton

⁹² Yonkers Examiner, Aug. 25, Sep. 15, 1858; *Eastern State Journal*, Aug. 20, 1858; George P. Marshall and E.L. Hyatt, “At a meeting of Council #32, held in Peekskill...” Aug. 19, 1858 in *Highland Democrat*, Aug. 28, 1858; Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Slavery Law and Politics: The Dred Scott Case in Historical Perspective* (New York, 1981), 264; Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 254.

policy, proclaiming that he would “sooner co-operate with that [Republican] party than with those who have...endeavored to force a slave State into the Union.” These three events helped re-orient the parties as sectional organizations, convinced the South that the North would stop at nothing to destroy slavery, and, according to Westchester Democrats, threatened the Union, which they feared “cannot hold together under the pressure of...*Helper* and *John Brown*.”⁹³

The stakes for the 1860 Presidential election had been set. Edmund Sutherland, editor of the most widely circulated county paper, astutely predicted that the contest “will reduce the political elements of the district and County into two parties.” On the one side, the Democratic Party was paralyzed regarding slavery: though the Westchester party opposed extending slavery to the territories, southerners who wanted to secure those rights dominated the national organization. Fed up with decades of infighting in county, state, and nation, the *Highland Democrat* lamented, “party strife has...assailed the most sacred compacts of *our* Union.” On the other side, the Republican Party stood in favor of abolishing slavery in western territories and in favor of free labor, which included Whiggish economic policies such as a protective tariff and internal improvements. Choosing a new President was, according to one editor, “the most important crisis through which the country has been allowed to pass.” At risk was “the perpetuity of the Union of these States.”⁹⁴

No campaign typified Democratic infighting better than that of 1860. New York Democrats failed to coalesce around a single candidate for the highest office in the entire country. In July, the party assembled at Schenectady, about

⁹³ John B. Haskin, *Remarks of the Hon. John B. Haskin, of Westchester County, New York, in reply to attack made by the President's Home Organ...* (Washington, 1859), 16 (first quotation); *Highland Democrat* Dec. 17, 1859; *Eastern State Journal*, Mar. 2, 1860 (second quotation).

⁹⁴ *Eastern State Journal*, Nov. 11, 1859 (first quotation), Mar. 2, 1860 (third quotation); *Highland Democrat*, Sep. 24, Dec. 31, 1859, Apr. 28, 1860 (second quotation); *Yonkers Examiner*, Apr. 21, Nov. 10, 1859 (Republican platform).

twenty miles west of Albany, to nominate a so-called People's Union Ticket of presidential electors pledged against Abraham Lincoln. They hoped that a composite ticket of electors for Douglas, Breckinridge, and John Bell, the Constitutional Union candidate, would prevent Lincoln from securing New York's crucial thirty-five electoral votes. Indeed, had Lincoln lost the entire South and the Empire State, he would have been left with 145 pledged electors—just seven shy of victory. The election would then be thrown to the House of Representatives where a Democrat could have won. Which Democrat was unimportant, contended Sutherland, for “the defeat of Lincoln is the great object to be effected.”⁹⁵

The campaign quickly became ugly, even by nineteenth-century standards. Westchester Democrats lobbed racist volleys against Lincoln by suggesting that a Republican victory would usher in black equality, “dragging [whites] down to his low and bestial capacity.” Talk of “Black Republicanism” became commonplace. When it came to slavery policy, Westchester Democrats ignored the issue and focused on developing industry, preserving nebulous “economic rights,” and building a railroad to the Pacific. But each of these issues was wrapped up in sectional controversy. Would the transcontinental railroad, for example, pass through free or slave territory? The Schenectady platform avoided this key question.⁹⁶

Republicans adopted a platform demonstrating that by the end of the 1850s, the ethno-cultural issues that had broken up the Second Party System had faded into the background. Though the *Yonkers Examiner* had supported New Yorker William H. Seward for the 1860 nomination, the editor touted Lincoln's compelling life story and anti-slavery credentials after the Illinoisan secured the nomination. Rowe

⁹⁵ *Highland Democrat*, July 7 (electoral strategy), 21 (Union Ticket), 1860; *Eastern State Journal*, June 20 (electoral strategy), Aug. 31 (quotation), 1860.

⁹⁶ *Eastern State Journal*, “Equal Rights Under the Constitution,” May 11, Nov. 2, 1860; “Schenectady Convention on Behalf of the People's Union Ticket,” July 18, 1860 in *Highland Democrat*, July 21, 1860.

rejected black equality but argued that extending slavery to the territories placed hard-working whites at an economic disadvantage. Popular sovereignty was not an acceptable alternative because it was “destructive to law and order” by frequently degenerating into deadly conflicts brought on by outside agitators. In fact, Rowe’s views more closely paralleled the moderate Lincoln’s than the radical Seward’s. Though his party had never won a major election in Westchester, Rowe clearly drew the battle lines for the Presidential contest.⁹⁷

Lincoln swept the northern states on his way to a landslide victory. But in Westchester, the Democratic/Constitutional Union slate bested that of the Republicans by about 10% of the vote. This rejection of Republicanism took no Westchesterite by surprise; after all, the county Democratic Party had won the previous four elections. Nevertheless, Republicans rejoiced and Democrats sulked. Westchester Democrats regretted the result, “not so much on party grounds, as for the continued peace and prosperity of the country.” The most important question confronting Westchesterites—and all Americans—in the wake of the first Republican presidential victory was whether Lincoln should “attempt by force of arms to coerce [the South] back, and thus plunge the country into all the horrors of a civil war.” Though Sutherland hated Lincoln, he nonetheless concluded that the Union, “which cost our fathers so much toil and sacrifices and blood to establish,” was worth preserving. On this much, both parties agreed.⁹⁸

Yet during the loose party times of the 1850s, the Democratic Party dominated Westchester County’s politics. The candidate at the top of their ticket lost only two elections during the decade—both to a third party that did not survive past 1858. Although the Republican Party emerged out of the chaos of the 1850s as the northern sectional party, Westchester remained an anomalous bastion of anti-Lincoln voters.

⁹⁷ *Yonkers Examiner*, Feb. 23, May 3, Oct. 4 (quotation), 23, Nov. 1, 1860.

⁹⁸ *Eastern State Journal*, Nov. 9, 1860 (quotations); *Yonkers Examiner*, Nov. 8, 1860.

Proximity to New York City accounted for much of this sentiment. As Westchester transitioned from rural to suburban, the county was pulled into the City's political orbit. And City-dwellers, just like their neighbors to the north, overwhelmingly favored the Democrats.

The local transition from the Second to Third Party Systems, moreover, produced unique political alignments. Perhaps no other northern county saw Republicans fuse with Democrats to counter the Know-Nothings. Three years later, Westchester Republicans again endorsed an anti-slavery Democrat for Congress rather than nominate one of their own. These two fusions demonstrated that Westchesterites voted for people who shared their ideology instead of consistently supporting a particular political party. The county's experience with Know-Nothingism also illustrated this peculiar trend. Whereas most historians view the nativist party as a stepping-stone from the Whigs to the Republicans, Westchester Know-Nothings primarily held Democratic antecedents. When the Know-Nothings disintegrated after the 1858 elections, its supporters, who most ardently embraced the party's ideology, migrated almost entirely back into the Democratic fold. Fluid party affiliation weakened political organizations, facilitating the massive realignment of the 1850s.

Ethno-cultural issues bear primary responsibility for realigning Westchester's electorate. Examining issues affecting everyday life, such as nativism and temperance, reveals that the Whig Party began unraveling well before the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed in 1854. The Democratic Party, too, suffered from fissures generated not by slavery, but by Erie Canal financing, the Maine Law, and antiparty sentiment. Slavery may have led to the ultimate extinction of the Second Party System on the national level, but state and local campaigns in off-year elections, such as the unusual 1855 contest, profoundly influenced political realignments. Know-Nothings elevated ethno-cultural issues to thrive in Westchester during two non-Presidential elections. This party, in turn, siphoned voters from the Whigs and Democrats, challenged the nascent Republican Party, and led to the Second Party System's mortality. It is impossible to tell the

story of how these four nationally competitive political parties divided, disintegrated, or formed without considering forces operating on the county and town levels. Most voters had closer ties with elected officials at home than with those in Washington, and thus ethno-cultural and financial issues—the stuff of local politics—induced voters to flee from the Whig Party and to change the complexion of the Democratic Party.

Towards the end of the 1850s, however, ethno-cultural issues had lost salience. By 1856, slavery consumed political affairs at all levels of government, filled the editorial pages of Westchester's partisan press, and strengthened the Republican Party pledged to preserve the principle of free labor. John Jay, grandson of the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, was one of the first Westchesterites to join the local party. On the eve of the 1860 election, Jay addressed a meeting of county Republicans in Bedford, down the block from the Post Office where William Robertson had cast his ballot in 1848. "It will be wise for the slaveholders, instead of harping on dissolution, to prepare for the abolition of slavery," he suggested, "not by the action of the Republican party, but by the operation of natural laws, that neither individuals nor parties can restrain." Although Jay's appeal did not sway his fellow Westchesterites to support Lincoln in 1860, the "natural laws" he cited ultimately triumphed over party and sectional divisions during the Civil War, culminating in emancipation and Union war victory. During the 1850s, Westchesterites transcended, blurred, and erased party lines regarding dozens of issues—most prominently on nativism, temperance, and slavery. After these ten years of loose party times, they again subordinated partisanship to principle. When the south seceded, Westchesterites finally found a universal rallying point: saving the very Union that gave birth to their political parties.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ John Jay, *The Rise and Fall of the Pro-Slavery Democracy and the Rise and Duties of the Republican Party...* (New York, 1861), 37.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Westchester County Newspapers: Parties and Editors

Newspaper	Party	Editor
<i>Eastern State Journal</i>	Democratic (Barnburner, Hard)	Edmund G. Sutherland
<i>Highland Democrat</i>	Democratic	Fenelon Hasbrouck
<i>Hudson River Chronicle</i>	Whig (Silver Gray)/American	William Howe
<i>Peekskill Republican</i>	Whig (Sewardite)/Republican	J.J. Chambers
<i>Westchester Herald</i>	Democratic (Hunker, Hard)	Caleb Roscoe
<i>Westchester Gazette</i>	Nonpartisan/Temperance	Eugene Hyde; John C.
<i>Yonkers Examiner</i>	Republican	M.F. Rowe

Table 2. Percentage of Vote Won by Political Party, 1853-1854

	Whig	Soft Dem.	Hard Dem.	Know-Nothing
(Sec. of State)	39.5	21.7	39.8	--
(Governor)	25.8	30.9	5.7	37.6

Table 3. Percentage of Vote Won by Political Party, 1854-1855

	Whig	Soft Dem.	Hard Dem.	Know-Nothing
1854 (Governor)	25.8	30.9	5.7	37.6
1855 (Sec. of State)	--	7	32.0	37.6

Table 4. Percentage of Vote Won by Political Party, 1855-1856

	Republican	Soft Dem.	Hard Dem.	Know-Nothing
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1855 (Sec. of State)	22.3	7.0	32.0	38.7
1856 (President)	35.3		36.4	28.3

Table 5. Percentage of Vote Won by Political Party, 1856-1857

	Republican	Democratic	Know-Nothing
1856 (President)	35.3	36.4	28.3
1857 (Sec. of State)	27.5	52.6	19.9

**“All May Visit the Big Camp”: Race and the Lessons of
the Civil War at the 1913 Gettysburg Reunion**
Evan Preston

Shaping historical memory means extracting lessons from the past. Those lessons frame the debate about the nature of the present. Just months after the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson, the attention of most of the nation focused on the events scheduled to commemorate the semi-centennial of what was by then increasingly viewed as “the turning point” of the Civil War.¹⁰⁰ The reunion at Gettysburg in 1913 constituted the contemporary public exegesis of the status of American memory of the Civil War. In this respect, the reunion in Gettysburg reflected the erasure of the legacy of emancipation and the unfulfilled promise of equality for African-Americans. Yet, almost all the public discourse at Gettysburg reflected no sense of disappointment; rather, the battle now represented a triumph of the American spirit. The presence of African-American veterans would have complicated the message of white reconciliation at the reunion. Reckoning with the honorable service of black troops was not something mainstream American society felt comfortable with in 1913. Whether or not black veterans attended the fiftieth anniversary of Gettysburg is a small detail which illuminates a profoundly broader pair of subjects: the meaning of the Civil War and the nature of American race relations in 1913. In answering this question of black veterans at the Gettysburg reunion, the broader context of the organization and execution of the reunion, the lessons drawn from the ceremonies in Gettysburg, explicit discussions of race at the reunion and contemporary African-American perspectives must all be explored.

¹⁰⁰ *Gettysburg Compiler* July 9, 1913.

Carol Reardon is the most eminent modern historian to embrace the idea that black veterans were both invited to and attended the 1913 reunion at Gettysburg. Reardon claims the organizers of the reunion in Gettysburg invited black veterans to participate fully in the celebrations, and a few went, but in Jim Crow America, they were housed on their own separate street in the tent camp.¹⁰¹ Reardon further notes that white veterans enjoyed the behavior of the African-Americans in the camp. Reardon's only apparent source for this assertion is Civil War veteran Walter Blake's account of his journey to Gettysburg, *Hand Grips*. Reardon is not the only prominent historian to recently address the question of black veterans in 1913 Gettysburg. In his analysis of race in the memory of the American Civil War, David Blight propounds a conclusion contradictory to Reardon's claim. Blight argues that while according to the main organizers, the Pennsylvania Commission, black veterans were implicitly eligible to attend the reunion, "research has turned up no evidence that any [black veterans] did attend."¹⁰² Writing on earlier reunions at Gettysburg along with 1913, James Weeks writes that "first-person accounts describe black veterans attending the spectacle" of reunions in Gettysburg.¹⁰³ Weeks is unclear as to whether he believes the accounts but he also observes "the ceremonies and official pronouncements disregarded racial matters altogether." In fact, Weeks never directly cites a primary source concerning the 1913 reunion at Gettysburg. Instead, Weeks appears to cite only other works by David Blight in reference to the 1913 reunion in particular. In spite of his reliance on Blight's work, Weeks conveys a subtly different message than Blight by being less declarative about the lack of reliable evidence to substantiate claims of black veterans' attendance in 1913. At the core of this

¹⁰¹ Carol Reardon. *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997), 188.

¹⁰² David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2001), 385.

¹⁰³ James Weeks, "A Different View of Gettysburg: Play, Memory, and Race at the Civil War's Greatest Shrine," *Civil War History*: June (2004), 176.

historiographical debate is the single contemporary account involving black veterans at the reunion.

Walter Herbert Blake was a Union veteran of the Civil War from New Jersey. In 1913, he and other veterans embarked on an expedition to the Gettysburg reunion. Blake wrote a travel narrative of his group's experiences on during the expedition. To assess the credibility of Blake's claims it is helpful to examine his entire account. Blake is illustrative of the spirit of the reunion, believing the "wonderful conclave" of veterans in Gettysburg would allow the North and the South to "understand each other as they never did before".¹⁰⁴ Veterans of each side remembered acts of kindness during the war, though the Southerners remained decidedly unapologetic about their actions. Initially, the Confederate veterans of General George Pickett's Virginians concerned some of Blake's Northern comrades since the Confederates wore an emblem with the phrase "SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS", which many Union veterans associated most with John Wilkes Booth's declaration after assassinating Abraham Lincoln.¹⁰⁵ Blake condescendingly observed that "those better informed realized there was no connection" between the Southerners attire and the assassination of President Lincoln since the phrase in question was *merely* Virginia's state motto, existing on Virginia's State Seal generations before Booth's actions in 1865. Blake noted that the United Confederate Veterans declared the lesson of the war to be a validation of "the utter impossibility of the dismemberment of the Union".¹⁰⁶

Only three pages of Blake's 203-page narrative mentioned African-Americans. In the first half of the narrative, the perceived conduct of the organizers angered Blake because they planned "only for negroes from the Union side, forgetful of the fact that there were many faithful slaves

¹⁰⁴ Walter Herbert Blake, *Hand Grips: The Story of the Great Gettysburg Reunion July, 1913*. Compiled by Frank E. Channon. Vineland, N.J.: G.E. Smith, 1913. 1972 facsimile by University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI. United States Military History Institute, 26.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 44-45.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 170.

who fought against their own interest in their intense loyalty to their Southern masters".¹⁰⁷ Blake noted there were black people in both groups of veterans. In this assertion Blake voiced the well-established trope of the mythic legion of "loyal slaves" but Blake ventured further than the traditional narrative about loyal slaves in his alleged observations of Southerners in the camp. The idea of substantial numbers of African-Americans serving as *soldiers* for the Confederacy has been thoroughly refuted in recent historiography; Blake's desire to claim this myth is not unusual for his era though this point illustrates the ways in which Blake's account must be used cautiously when attempting to establish facts about the reunion based upon his word.¹⁰⁸

Blake's perspective appears limited in more than one instance and his writing on African Americans raises questions about how well he understood the status of race relations from the perspective of blacks in the age of American apartheid. Blake claimed "some colored boys from the Southland" found their way into the camp of veterans and were promptly sheltered by "the big-hearted Tennessee delegation", giving the black men "a special tent" of their own.¹⁰⁹ Blake included a second major act of Southern beneficence toward blacks in his account. Developing the story in an almost stream-of-consciousness transition, it seems writing about the "colored comrades" reminded Blake of other black people in the camp. Blake recalled Confederates walking down near his tent when they encountered "an old negro, Samuel Thompson." Immediately, Thompson saluted the Confederates and the Confederates responded in a manner Blake construed as friendly. The Confederates assured Thompson they were "glad" to meet him and told him "we-all want to shake hands with you, nigger, an' to say as we have some niggers at home just as big as you".¹¹⁰ Blake portrayed

¹⁰⁷ Blake, *Hand Grips*, 66.

¹⁰⁸ Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Army Slaves During the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University, 2006).

¹⁰⁹ Blake, *Hand Grips*, 66.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 67.

the black man's response as amicable, emphasizing that "EVERY ONE of the Southerners" shook hands with the man identified as Thompson.¹¹¹ In the interaction between blacks and white Southerners, as with his other descriptions of Union veterans meeting Confederate veterans, the hand shake represented the ultimate sign of complete reconciliation for Blake, the motif and attestation of friendliness. The mere idea the Confederates could extend a hand to "their dark-skinned brother" was proof to Blake that there was "no color line here".¹¹² On this point however, Blake later contradicted himself. Blake identified a single street of the tent camp for veterans "devoted entirely to negro soldiers".¹¹³ These black men encountered no discrimination and "they were treated just like the others and had the time of their lives", according to Blake.¹¹⁴ Such men proved entertaining as the "great attraction" to their area of the camp since they regularly played "old plantation melodies".¹¹⁵ This paragraph emerged as an interjection in Blake's narrative of the commemoration of the action of July third 1863. Blake did not introduce the lines with any fuller context nor did he dwell on the subject. The possibility that the black men were some of the many laborers in the camp never appears in Blake's writing.

Blake's observations deserve some context in the geography of Gettysburg. Most of the African-American residents of Gettysburg lived in the southwestern district of the town, the Third Ward, proximate to the edge of the veterans' camp. When this fact is considered alongside the well documented evidence of blacks working in the camp during the reunion, a clear possibility emerges to suggest the black men Blake observed were not invited veterans attending the reunion but simply black people who happened to be in or near the camp as workers or local residents. Moreover, the pictures published with Blake's book show black cooks and camp laborers, though Blake never acknowledged the role of

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Blake, *Hand Grips*, 67.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

these blacks. The pictures in Blake's account serve as a narrative unto themselves, sometimes providing a divergent message from Blake's words. In an ostensibly unintentional reflection on the vital role of the labor of African-Americans in American society, Blake's publisher included a poem below the photograph of the black cooks which read: "We can live without friends, We can live without books, But civilized man cannot live without cooks".¹¹⁶ Clearly, Blake's travel journal contained stunning stories, but how many of his most colorful assertions could be corroborated outside his book? Who was invited to Gettysburg?

Organization of the semi-centennial reunion was a joint venture between the Federal government and each individual state government, though the vast majority of responsibility was split between the Federal government and Pennsylvania. The Federal government appropriated money to provide tents and supplies for an estimated 40,000 veterans. In an April, 3, 1912 Concurrent Resolution of Congress, the government planned to provide "material support and accommodation of veterans, including sewage, water, hospital services and policing".¹¹⁷ A "big camp" with centralized latrines and medical care would house the veterans during their stay. Nowhere in the War Department's report are African-Americans mentioned and no trace of a "separate street" for black veterans remains on the maps detailing the layout of the tent camp.¹¹⁸ Instead, veterans were organized by state or territory. The Pennsylvania Commission nominally invited and offered to pay transportation fees inside Pennsylvania of "all honorably discharged soldiers . . . sailors and marines", of either side of the war that enlisted in Pennsylvania, or for those living in Pennsylvania in 1913. The stated purpose of the Pennsylvania commission was to organize "a general reunion of the veterans of the Union and Confederate Armies," for "the first time since the close of the

¹¹⁶ Blake, *Hand Grips*, 151.

¹¹⁷ Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg." War Department: Washington Government Printing Office, 1912.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Civil War.”¹¹⁹ The Field Secretary of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association, Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Beitler, disseminated this list of qualifications and benefits to local and national papers.¹²⁰ Pennsylvania and New York spent the most on the reunion, appropriating \$450,000 and \$150,000 respectively.¹²¹ Pennsylvania spent over \$140,000 on transporting veterans alone.¹²² All told, the States appropriated “about \$1,000,000”, including \$150,000 of Federal funding.¹²³ Pennsylvania estimated 54,928 veterans attended the ceremonies. The Pennsylvania Commission proudly included in its report the invitation issued by General C. Irvine Walker, Lieutenant General Commanding the United Confederate Veterans (U.C.V.), which encouraged Southern attendance since “all surviving soldiers of the war of the South and of the North will be invited guests”.¹²⁴ Pennsylvania and Vermont remained open to veterans who had not served at Gettysburg, and New York gave preference to veterans of the battle, followed by veterans with the longest service records.¹²⁵ Though the initial intention of the gathering was to include all veterans of the Civil War wishing to attend, many states ultimately supported only veterans of the Battle of Gettysburg. The Indiana Commission specifically invited

¹¹⁹ “Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg: Report of the Pennsylvania Commission, December 31, 1913.” Harrisburg, PA: WM. Stanley Ray State Printer, 1915. ix.

¹²⁰ Lt. Col. Lewis Beitler to unnamed paper editor. Gettysburg College Vertical Files: Kramer, Frank H.

¹²¹ “Pennsylvania Commission,” vii. “Fiftieth Anniversary of the Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg: Report of the New York State Commission” (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1916), 18.

¹²² “Pennsylvania Commission,” 114.

¹²³ “On the Field of Gettysburg: Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Great Battle”, *Adams County News* January 4, 1913.

¹²⁴ “Pennsylvania Commission,” 9.

¹²⁵ “New York State Commission,” 92, 96.

individual units.¹²⁶ By choosing to invite only those veterans who fought at Gettysburg, Indiana passed directly over the 28th Regiment Indiana Infantry who became the 28th United States Colored Troops.¹²⁷ By choosing to invite only veterans of Gettysburg, Indiana and other states made it unnecessary to disinvite black veterans. This decision was made despite the fact the bill authorizing the federal government to organize a reunion at Gettysburg encouraged “each State [to] send to Pennsylvania all surviving Veterans of the Civil War resident within such states”.¹²⁸ Cost doubtlessly influenced the decision of states choosing to invite only Gettysburg veterans. Thus it is very difficult to argue race was the fundamental reason some states decided to send only Gettysburg veterans. Logistics and funding would have been a rather substantial obstacle to the inclusion of all living and willing Civil War veterans. Even if it was not the specific intention of state legislatures, the consequence of this decision seems to have been an effective exclusion of many black veterans since they would now have to pay their way to the reunion if they wished to attend. States limiting the eligibility for official support of attendance to Gettysburg veterans would have had to explicitly invite black veterans to the reunion. Neither the New York report nor the Indiana report contained any such invitations and the Pennsylvania report never explicitly invited African-American veterans. While there is no clear evidence of an invitation of black veterans, there is equally no clear evidence in the state commission reports of an explicit prohibition of African-Americans attending the ceremonies in Gettysburg. It is difficult to absolutely prove the negative point that blacks were not invited, lacking a positive statement

¹²⁶ “Indiana at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg: Report of the Fiftieth Anniversary Commission of the Battle of Gettysburg, of Indiana” [Indianapolis?, 1913], 6-7.

¹²⁷ “Indiana’s 28th Regiment: Black Soldiers for the Union” in *The Indiana Historian*: February (1994), (Indiana Historical Bureau), <http://www.in.gov/history/files/7023.pdf>, accessed on November 15, 2010.

¹²⁸ “Indiana at Gettysburg,” 15.

of their prohibition. As a result, events, tone and message of the reunion are important pieces of circumstantial evidence about the question of an invitation as they are fundamental direct evidence for determining if blacks attended.

The theme of reconciliation animated the public actions at the reunion. Some began to refer to the event as the “great peace reunion”. With the possible exception of a drunken stabbing in a bar, the reunion was peaceful.¹²⁹ UCV leader Gen. Walker welcomed “the hand of peace” offered by Union veterans in inviting the Confederates to come en masse.¹³⁰ William E. Mickle, Adjutant General and Chief of Staff of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.), joined Walker in calling for all those of his organization who were capable to attend the reunion to do so.¹³¹ The G.A.R. and the U.C.V. worked together to, in the words of G.A.R. Commander-in-Chief H.M. Trimble, erase “forever any lingering prejudices and bitterness that may have survived” from the War.¹³² More than one local reporter wrote of the story also mentioned by Walter Blake of one Union veteran and one Confederate veteran meeting at the reunion, buying a hatchet in Gettysburg and literally “burying the hatchet” on the battlefield.¹³³ The potent imagery of this story gained national attention. Another local paper exhorted any veteran still with “bitterness in his heart” to “bury it on the battlefield where the ashes of brave men have found sepulchre”.¹³⁴ Northern reporters seemed eager to obtain the opinions of former Confederates, finding subjects sincerely interested in reconciliation. One former Confederate confessed he and his comrades “love our country not because of the great war but because of what has happened since the war.” Crucially, the veteran referred to the *United States*, rather than the South or

¹²⁹ *Gettysburg Times*, July 3, 1913.

¹³⁰ “Pennsylvania Commission,” 9.

¹³¹ “Pennsylvania Commission,” 10.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³³ “Bury the Hatchet,” *Gettysburg Times*, July 3, 1913.

¹³⁴ “G.A.R. Encampment,” *Gettysburg Star and Sentinel* July 2, 1913.

his state, when he spoke of “our country”.¹³⁵ Here, the former Rebel stated perhaps more than he meant. “What” had occurred since the war was nothing less than an easing of sectional tension at the expense of black rights by means of a political retreat from Radical Reconstruction’s promise of greater racial equality and a legal evisceration of the most egalitarian legislation from the post-war period by the Supreme Court. Nonetheless, Southerners had not forgotten the threat of racial equality and many *Northerners* felt compelled to admit their former policies were misguided at best. The Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island, Roswell B. Burchard, actually issued an encomium to the South because it did not remain bitter about “the errors of reconstruction, where they were committed more than the North”.¹³⁶ Though Burchard declared that “brothers cannot forget the death of brothers”, he also argued that it is the shared recognition of loss on each side that allows for reconciliation.¹³⁷

Mutual recognition of strenuous loyalty to principles, shared loss and manly gallantry constituted this reconciliationist “soldier’s faith” which overwhelmed the ideological legacy of the War.¹³⁸ Margaret Creighton explained this cultural shift to mean that “Gettysburg’s importance... was not that it helped deliver a death blow to slavery; rather, it helped tighten white blood ties”.¹³⁹ The “bloody shirt” rhetoric, urging remembrance of the war dead along with the reasons for war and the fault of Southerners for bringing the carnage of battle, had largely passed out of use by 1913, with the exception prominent African-Americans. At Gettysburg, strands of the rhetoric of loss were woven into a new fabric of nationalism as the “bloody shirt” became the family tablecloth in a feast of reunion. Virginia Governor William Hodges Mann articulated a new desire for

¹³⁵ “The Celebration Message,” *Gettysburg Compiler* July 9, 1913.

¹³⁶ *Gettysburg Compiler* July 9, 1913.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Blight, *Race*, 208-210.

¹³⁹ Margaret Creighton, *Colors of Courage: Gettysburg’s Forgotten History* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 211.

cooperation and a new belief in the national spirit. The North and South could now work together in war, as they had in 1898. Mann confidently proclaimed that “if we have to call for troops to repel a foreign enemy” he was sure “that our sons will meet them at the gate”.¹⁴⁰ White supremacy formed the bedrock of that nationalism. One local publication ventured so far as to quote famed abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher’s wartime explanation of the difficulty of conquering the South; speaking to a British audience, Beecher was quoted as explaining that “Northern armies had to fight men of their own race”, a fight of equals.¹⁴¹ This was not an entirely accurate assessment of Beecher’s views on race; he may have been referring to a “national” race of “Americans”. Even so, the local paper wanted to read Beecher out of context to make its point.

National press coverage reflected the sentiments of nationalism expressed in Gettysburg. Helen Longstreet, widow of Confederate General James Longstreet, delineated an interpretation of the Civil War which expanded from Beecher’s supposed elucidation of white supremacy to include a celebration of white nationalism without ever even addressing the subject of African-Americans. Mrs. Longstreet argued that the meaning of Gettysburg ought to inspire all true “white” Americans because at Gettysburg the white race again proved its worth. In the context of giving an account of the commemoration of Pickett’s Charge, which Helen claimed for her late husband, Mrs. Longstreet argued that “the mettle that wrestled and triumphed here is the mettle that for twelve centuries has kept the hope of the Anglo-Saxon undimmed”.¹⁴² Gettysburg was glorious and important because there fought “Anglo-Saxon against Anglo-Saxon” and proved each side’s continued commitment to “the cause of human liberty”. Longstreet proffered a strong argument for white nationalism but it was not wholly original. Edward Linenthal, historian of

¹⁴⁰ “Pennsylvania Commission,” 146.

¹⁴¹ “The American Review of Reviews: Gettysburg Fifty Years After,” July, 1913. Adams County Historical Society.

¹⁴² “Says Famed Charge Was Longstreet’s” *New York Times*, July 4, 1913.

battlefields and memory, notes that the Gettysburg *Compiler* argued as early as 1903 that the field should be preserved as a reminder of “immortal Anglo-Saxon bravery”.¹⁴³ Even G.A.R. chief, Alfred B. Beers argued the war was a “conflict waged by men of the same race”, but Beers spoke no words about African-American soldiers in this statement.¹⁴⁴ *The Outlook* echoed the nationalism of Governor Mann’s speech but appeared moderate in comparison with the widow Longstreet. *Outlook* boasted Teddy Roosevelt as contributing editor, still promoting his “New Nationalism” after an electoral defeat in 1912. *Outlook*’s editorial board embodied the reconciliationist interpretation of the Civil War. *Outlook* editors cited the most succinct declaration of the meaning of the reunion in the statement of one Union veteran that the reunion was his last chance to do something “for the Union”.¹⁴⁵ The same veteran remembered the battle of Gettysburg as “the time the Union was saved”.¹⁴⁶ *Outlook* editors, either out of ignorance or purposeful omission, noted the importance of veterans decorating the graves at the National Cemetery but failed to mention the fact this was an entirely one-sided endeavor as the Confederate dead were not buried there. In a later edition, Herbert Francis Sherwood reported that the true lesson of the reunion lay in the speech by Secretary of War Lindley Garrison who said “the field of enmity has become the field of amity”.¹⁴⁷ Sherwood remarked how veterans could tease one another about shooting each other and literally bury the hatchet, in one case; he viewed this as the greatest “proof that the war is over”.¹⁴⁸ Even someone identified as a “citizen of Richmond” testified that “we are one people now”.¹⁴⁹ Neither

¹⁴³ Edward Tabor Linenthal. *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1993), 108.

¹⁴⁴ Blake, 37.

¹⁴⁵ *The Outlook*, July 12, 1913. Vol 104, 541.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Herbert Francis Sherwood. “Gettysburg Fifty Years Afterward.” *The Outlook*, July 19, 1913. Vol. 104, 610

¹⁴⁸ Sherwood, “Gettysburg”, 610.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 612.

the correspondent nor the Southerner ever broached the topic of African-Americans, much less African-American veterans; the “people” now united did not refer to the experience of blacks during the war or in 1913. Woodrow Wilson felt no need to mention the racial legacy of the Civil War. Wilson’s speech in Gettysburg unified the themes of nationalism and American progress while still ignoring any concept of racial tensions. Wilson extolled the triumph of America in a new age in which “there is no one within its borders, there is no power among the nations of the earth, to make it afraid”.¹⁵⁰ Yet, Wilson mixed his triumphalism with a challenge to America to live up to “its own great standards”, a bitterly ironic comment given Wilson’s record on race.

Though the themes of nationalism and reconciliation dominated the national narrative the white press coverage was not completely unanimous. Though Wilson shared some elements of liberalism with the editors of *The Independent*, they drew distinctly different lessons from the reunion in Gettysburg. *The Independent* continued, to some degree, the legacy of its Civil War era editor, Henry Ward Beecher. *The Independent* offered a more complicated reflection on the reunion at Gettysburg than most national press coverage. *Independent* editors chose to open their publication for the week of July 3, 1913 with a reprinting of their editorial from July 9, 1863. Written by Henry Ward Beecher’s successor at *The Independent* Theodore Tilton, the 1863 piece offered a rousing partisan celebration of the defeat of the Confederates. Tilton explained that the Union army had blocked Lee and the South on their “triumphal way to the establishment of the Slave Power”.¹⁵¹ In republishing this editorial, the 1913 editors of *The Independent* did not shrink from Tilton’s position. Rather, the paper affirmed Beecher’s fight for “justice and freedom for the slave”.¹⁵² Thus the editors reaffirmed not only the ending of slavery, something not

¹⁵⁰ *Gettysburg Star & Sentinel* July 9, 1913.

¹⁵¹ Theodore Tilton. “Victory!!” *The Independent*, July 9, 1863. Republished in July 3, 1913. Vol. 75, 2.

¹⁵² “Fifty Years After Gettysburg.” *The Independent*, July 3, 1913. Vol. 75, 3.

mentioned by *Outlook*, but also the promise of *justice* for former slaves. The editors of *The Independent* agreed that the reunion at Gettysburg was a “very happy” occasion.¹⁵³ *Independent* editors credited “the God of armies” for bestowing the twin blessings of “union of all the states, and liberty for all the people”. In this statement however, the editors overestimated the degree to which “liberty” had been realized by blacks in America; their declaration evoked accomplishment but not continued struggle. Still, *The Independent* stood out for its courage as a non-black paper addressing the emancipationist legacy of the war in 1913. Moreover, *The Independent* re-introduced the concept of race while mentioning African-Americans, with at least some agency, in the discussion of the meaning of the Civil War.

Racial identification, racial hierarchy and racial pride all found expression in Gettysburg. The racial dynamics of the reunion comprise perhaps the most powerful circumstantial evidence to support the position that black veterans were at least indirectly disinvented to the reunion. Blacks visited Gettysburg regularly, usually in September around the anniversary of the issuance of the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.¹⁵⁴ Thousands of blacks rode into Gettysburg on trains at least once a year. These “colored excursions” were not palatable to many white Gettysburg residents. In 1913, local papers warned residents that “part of Baltimore’s innumerable colored population” would be “dumped” on the town.¹⁵⁵ The arrival of black tourists invariably corresponded with a rash of news covering any and all, or more than actually existed, of their debauchery. The excursion of 1910 proved especially heinous to the white locals. The *Adams County News* patronizingly praised some black tourists for their “far and passable” behavior only to highlight a black man acting like “a four-legged animal” and as a “half-clad” black woman

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ “Happenings of the Past Year” *Adams County News* January 4, 1913.

¹⁵⁵ “Expect Busy Fall Season” *Adams County News* September 13, 1913. “Colored Folks Here in Force” *Adams County News* September 17, 1913.

slatternly flaunted herself in the town square.¹⁵⁶ The same paper was sure to record every member of the tourist contingent indulging in alcohol. Considering the climate of suspicion about any black visitors to Gettysburg, it seems highly probable that if there had been any noticeable number of black veterans in attendance at the 1913 reunion, at least one of the local papers would have warned the population. While there were many events occurring during the reunion which hypothetically could have distracted local reporters, the *Gettysburg Times* managed to notice the single Native-American veteran in attendance. “Chief Dwan-O-Guah”, or David Warrior of the 1st New York Light Artillery, received enough attention to merit a small but separate article. If the *Times* noticed one Indian veteran, would the paper not also, in all likelihood, have noticed the multiple black veterans mentioned by Blake? It is possible the papers simply purposefully neglected to report the presence of black troops. Certainly most of the coverage of the reunion ignored the blacks working at the camp, despite the pictures proving the efforts of African-Americans during the massive spectacle.¹⁵⁷ Nowhere in the reporting on the thousands of food workers or tent builders are African-Americans identified in print as the laborers.¹⁵⁸

Northerners, in general, had not always ignored African-Americans. Immediately after the Civil War, white Union veterans “routinely collaborated with African-Americans in honoring the war dead”.¹⁵⁹ However, by 1900, “there were just three monuments to black soldiers in the

¹⁵⁶ “Excursionists Disorderly” *Adams County News* September 17, 1910.

¹⁵⁷ The one exception to this is a personal account of a woman who wrote about the pleasant service of black servants on the train ride to Gettysburg in “The Gettysburg Reunion: Dedicated To My Husband, H.D. Tucker, Only Surviving Confederate of Manatee County [FL]” by Annette Tucker. Adams County Historical Society.

¹⁵⁸ “Army of Cooks Arrive in Town”, *Gettysburg Times* June 28, 1913.

¹⁵⁹ Creighton, *Colors*, 218.

northern United States and none in Pennsylvania".¹⁶⁰ While the North tried to forget African-American "service" in the war, attempting to forget even their very existence after Reconstruction, the South expanded its active remembrances of a type of African-American. Monuments to "loyal slaves" were built by Southerners reconstructing their history.¹⁶¹

In Lumberton, North Carolina, merely weeks after Gettysburg's commemoration in 1913, locals organized "a sumptuous dinner" to be served in honor of "former servants".¹⁶² In the reporting of this event, local journalists used the terms "slave" and "servant" interchangeably, suggesting their opinion of the degree of new liberty for African-Americans. The North Carolinians agreed with Walter Blake and lamented the fact "hitherto no public recognition has been given to the loyalty and devotion of the slaves, the 'colored veterans' whose number is rapidly diminishing".¹⁶³ Southerners at Gettysburg fought to spread a similar understanding about the true legacy of the war and its implications for race relations in 1913. In an address published by the Pennsylvania Commission another North Carolinian and Confederate veteran, Sergeant John C. Scarborough, conceded that during the Civil War Southerners had been "afraid that the negroes would rise behind us".¹⁶⁴ Scarborough assured the Gettysburg audience that "our fears were all misplaced because the negro was quiet and as safe and thoroughly imbued with the idea of the principle that was involved and was loyal to the South as he was to his master and mistress".¹⁶⁵ Scarborough articulated a version of the "white man's burden" but his imagery painfully invoked the physical memory of slavery; he argued that whites must take the lesson of the Civil War to be the greatness and

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² "Reunion of Former Slaves" in *The Semi-Weekly Robesonian*, August 21, 1913.

¹⁶³ "Reunion of Former Slaves" in *The Semi-Weekly Robesonian*, August 21, 1913.

¹⁶⁴ "Pennsylvania Commission," 125.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

indissolubility of White America. Using their renewed strength, white Americans must uplift blacks and “show to [the negro] that we are his friends and *tie him to us with hooks of steel* [emphasis added] and he will reward us for what we do for him”.¹⁶⁶

Scarborough’s message would have doubtless seemed repugnant to the African-Americans of Gettysburg. Gettysburg contained black veterans, including John Watts, Lloyd Watts and Randolph Johnston.¹⁶⁷ The service of black men was not always ignored. In fact, “during the war, the borough’s Democratic paper had devoted considerable column space to these men”. Yet even during the war this attention was degrading. Black troops were depicted as quick to “turn tail and run” at Petersburg and elsewhere; though, being a Democratic paper it possessed some potential incentive in addition to racism to attack the Union war effort.¹⁶⁸ Black residents of Gettysburg faced severe dangers on the home-front as well. In a compendium of oral histories of Civil War battles, some interviews of African-Americans from Gettysburg survived. The accounts were published in 1915 but the oral histories were conducted near the time of the reunion in 1913. While the lack of proper names in the accounts is disconcerting, the details of the accounts do not on the surface appear ridiculous. In fact the compiler, Clifton Johnson, demonstrated noteworthy tact for his time by seeking to probe “the comments of the blacks on the whites and those of the whites on the blacks, though sometimes uncharitable and unjust”.¹⁶⁹ In one account, a black man identified merely as “the colored farm hand” recalled his surety during July of 1863 that “if the Rebels had happened to come through they’d have took [horses] and me, too”.¹⁷⁰ For other local blacks, the potential positive or negative consequences of the war seemed

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Creighton, *Colors*, 216.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Clifton Johnson, ed., *Battleground Adventures: The Stories of Dwellers on the Scenes of Conflict* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), vi.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

an almost absent concept in remembering the battle. A black woman identified as “the colored servantmaid [sic]” offered only one paragraph of reflection on the war beyond her vivid account of some of the violence of the battle; she repeated that the war years were “rough times” and that “if they ever fight again in this country I don’t want to be around”.¹⁷¹ In 1866, black veterans from Gettysburg formed a fraternal society called the “Sons of Good Will” but by 1913, no record of any fraternal organization of black veterans appeared in local papers in connection with the reunion activities.¹⁷² This decline in black organization was met with an increase of white organization when the Ku Klux Klan established itself in Gettysburg in the 1920s.¹⁷³

Instead of focusing on Gettysburg, many black Americans turned their attention to the events in Boston in late July. While Gettysburg and most of white America celebrated the reunion at Gettysburg, an African-American paper, the *Chicago Defender*, dedicated its weekly issue to the persecution of boxing champion Jack Johnson. The headline of the July fifth edition read “JACK JOHNSON IS CRUCIFIED FOR HIS RACE”, referring to Johnson’s conviction for traveling across state lines with a “prostitute” who was actually his white girlfriend.¹⁷⁴ The events of July 18, 1863, the battle of Fort Wagner, concerned the black community represented by the *Defender* much more than the events of Gettysburg in 1913. In this action the famed 54th Massachusetts led an ill-fated but tremendously courageous assault on a coastal defense bastion at Charleston. In Boston, a proud celebration of the service of African-Americans presented reflections on the current state of affairs in the nation. The *Defender* noted that although the rest of the nation focused on the “elaborate celebrations” at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, the memory of Fort Wagner was equally important because it was “an equally pivotal battle”. Whether this

¹⁷¹ Johnson, *Battleground Adventures*, 191.

¹⁷² Creighton, *Colors*, 217.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ “Jack Johnson Is Crucified for His Race,” *Chicago Defender* July 5, 1913.

assertion is true in the narrow military sense was and is perhaps debatable but the significance of acknowledging black heroism in the War was evident. The most important duty of people at that time was, for the black writers at the *Defender*, the need to remember “the cause these soldiers represented”. This cause was not that both sides of the Civil War fought gallantly and for equally valid principles but rather that the Union cause represented “freedom and equality in all things for the class of Americans whose liberty and equality were won by that war and are now being abridged”. Unlike the speeches and press coverage at Gettysburg, the *Defender* emphasized “both races” commemorated the memory of the black and white soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts, their leader Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, and Governor John A. Andrew who commissioned the unit. The celebrants laid wreaths at Andrew’s statue and at Shaw’s memorial while singing hymns such as “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “John Brown’s Body”. Even in this celebration, the reporter included an acknowledgement of the tension in Andrew’s begrudging acceptance of “men who were sometimes rough and not cultivated” into the black regiment. Still, the *Defender* assessed the legacy of Fort Wagner to be proving “to the world that the American Negro soldiers had the valor, patriotism and courage of other American soldiers”.¹⁷⁵

If black veterans had attended the Gettysburg reunion in an organized way or in any substantial numbers, a publication such as the *Defender* ought to have written about it. There are simply too many reasons why Walter Blake might have grossly misunderstood what he may or may not have seen to base an entire argument about black veterans solely on *Hand Grips* as Carol Reardon has done. The lack of documented evidence of explicit invitations of black veterans, the growing sense of nationalism among white Americans embedded as it so often was with the vicious qualifying notion of *white* nationalism, race relations in Gettysburg before, during and after the reunion all strongly suggest the improbability of the notion black veterans were either explicitly invited to the reunion or attended on the assumption

¹⁷⁵*Chicago Defender*, July 19, 1913.

of an implicit invitation. Gettysburg in 1913 never truly wrestled with the “negro problem”. The character of the reunion would have been dramatically different with a few thousand black veterans in attendance, as Carl Eeman speculates.¹⁷⁶ Nonetheless, this was not the case. If blacks were present it is extremely challenging to explain the possibility of a large amount moving about the camp without attracting notice from someone other than Walter Blake. Edward Linenthal’s reflection on reunions captured the true spirit of 1913 as it was remembered by most of its attendees. Linenthal observed how “patriotic rhetoric on numerous ceremonial occasions, and monument building” allowed Northerners and Southerners “to celebrate Gettysburg as an ‘American’ victory”.¹⁷⁷ The gallantry of each side could be acknowledged and celebrated because it signified “a uniquely American form of commitment to heartfelt principle” but also because being a true and full *American* meant being “white”, as that term had been defined by 1913.¹⁷⁸ To praise American courage was not necessarily to imply African-Americans were capable of real courage because courage requires agency. The effects of reconciliation confirmed Frederick Douglass’ trepidation about what would happen when whites clasped “hands across the bloody chasm”.¹⁷⁹ This was the slogan of the reconciliationist Horace Greely in his presidential campaign of 1872. Fort Wagner, and Boston by extension, was the locus of black pride in the summer of 1913, not Gettysburg. Certainly by 1913, it seemed most white Americans planned to write African-Americans out of American history or only include them in a subservient status deprived of any rational agency. In response, black people and their relatively few white allies would become active builders of their own historical memory, a memory which struggled for decades to enter the mainstream of American culture.

¹⁷⁶ Carl Eeman. *Encampment*. Round Lake: New York Mélange, 2009.

¹⁷⁷ Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 90.

¹⁷⁸ Linenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 90.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 126.

The Richmond Bread Riot of 1863: Class, Race, and Gender in the Urban Confederacy
MIDN 1/C Katherine R. Titus

This morning early a few hundred women and boys met as by concert in the Capitol Square, saying they were hungry, and must have food. The number continued to swell until there were more than a thousand. But few men were among them, and these were mostly foreign residents, with exemptions in their pockets. About nine A.M. the mob emerged from the western gates of the square proceeded down Ninth Street, passing the War Department, and crossing Main Street, increasing in magnitude at every step, but preserving silence and (so far) good order. Not knowing the meaning of such a procession, I asked a pale boy where they were going. A young woman, seemingly emaciated, but yet with a smile, answered that they were going to find something to eat.¹⁸⁰

Confederate war clerk, J.B. Jones's description of the Richmond Bread Riot of 1863, clearly highlights the suffering which permeated the urban centers of the Confederacy by the midpoint of the Civil War. The production and transportation of goods became increasingly difficult in the war torn nation. Inflation undermined the value of Confederate currency and made it difficult for those on fixed wages to provide for themselves and their families. The influx of thousands of refugees into Richmond created a deficit of housing in the city and raised the already inflated prices of goods. By 1863, most citizens remarked that they found it almost impossible to feed

¹⁸⁰ J. B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott & Co., 1866), 284-285.

themselves. As Emory M. Thomas has observed, “a nation of farmers could indeed go hungry.”¹⁸¹

Although the Confederates ended 1862 militarily on a high note with the victory at Fredericksburg in December, the staggering casualties at Antietam and the ensuing Emancipation Proclamation combined to create undercurrents of doubt in the fledgling nation.¹⁸² The military’s

¹⁸¹ Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: History Book Club, 1993), 206.

¹⁸² The military circumstances had a significant impact on the morale of the people on the home front according to historian Gary W. Gallagher; Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 85. The fall of 1862 witnessed several important battles. Late in August, General Robert E. Lee decisively defeated the Union forces at the Second Battle of Manassas. The victory prompted a significant boost in confidence on the home front and within the army itself. Furthermore, the Union was encountering severe leadership problems.

The Confederates were unable to take advantage of the Union’s disorganization following Second Manassas. Furthermore, the Battle of Antietam did not end well for the Army of Northern Virginia. Although the battle ended indecisively, the South suffered a severe blow to morale because of the high casualties and the army’s ensuing retreat back into Virginia. The Union pounced on the opportunity to claim a Union victory and President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, a mere five days after the battle. This only intensified the feelings of hatred between the two sections. J.B. Jones wrote on September 30, 1862, “Lincoln’s proclamation was the subject of discussion in the Senate yesterday. Some of the gravest of our senators favor the raising of the black flag, asking and giving no quarter hereafter,” J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary*, 159.

The Confederates made their comeback at the Battle of Fredericksburg, December 11-15, 1862. The Confederate troops managed to inflict massive casualties on the assaulting

performance, however vital to the Confederacy's hope for survival, did not affect the lives of the citizens on the home front to the extent that the government's domestic policies did.¹⁸³ In fact, much of the Confederacy's legislation, passed in the opening months of 1863, only accentuated whatever feelings of resentment existed at the end of the previous year. In pursuit of success on the battlefield, the Confederacy abandoned many of the principles on which the nation had been founded. The Richmond Bread Riot demonstrated that Confederate domestic legislation and treasury policies combined to create a level of discontent on the home front which spurred people to step outside traditional notions regarding gender roles and social norms.

Class, Race, and Gender: The Trinity of Southern Society

In order to understand the consequences and implications of the actions taken by the women who participated in the Richmond Bread Riot, a certain understanding of antebellum social norms is needed. Southern

Federal troops. The Union army lost over 12,000 men and retreated back across the Rappahannock River. The military's superb performance left the morale of the army high as it ended the 1862 campaign and went into winter quarters.

¹⁸³ This thesis contradicts Gallagher's argument that by the middle of the War, General Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Army had become the sole focus of nationalism for Southern patriots. I echo Paul D. Escott's argument and assert that class conflict, Confederate legislation, and domestic suffering dominated the minds of the home front citizens, whose support was imperative for the successful undertaking of a massive military campaign. The hardships of these wives and mothers encouraged many soldiers to desert and, ultimately, detracted from the efficiency and fighting capability of the Confederate military machine. The suffering of these individuals undermined the support for the Southern cause and directly contributed to the defeat of the Confederacy; Paul D. Escott, "'The Cry of the Sufferers': The Problem of Welfare in the Confederacy," *Civil War History* XXIII (Spring 1977): 228-240.

individuals determined their role and position in society according to race, gender, and class. Drew Gilpin Faust, one of the foremost scholars of women in the Confederacy, notes:

White men and women of the antebellum South had defined and understood themselves in relation to a number of categories: race, which marked the difference between bound and free, superior and inferior; gender, which was designed to distinguish independent from dependent, patriarch from subordinate; and class, more subtle and hidden in a society that rested within a democratizing America but present nonetheless in distinctions of wealth, power, education, and refinement, in claims to honor and gentility.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-4. Faust notes that many scholars disapprove of the present reliance upon race, class, and gender in historical inquiry; however, after extensive primary source research, she has found that the women of the antebellum era consistently based their identities on these principles. She asserts, “Their persistent acceptance and articulation argues for their fundamental importance. As the nineteenth-century women’s voices that fill this book amply demonstrate, these were the categories by which women of the South’s slaveholding classes consciously identified themselves. The intertwined features of race, class, and gender were the defining characteristics of ladyhood; these were also assumptions directly assaulted by the social and cultural forces unleashed by the Civil War” (see page 260). My research confirms her assumptions. The diaries written by Richmond ladies regularly used the language of class, race, and gender in their entries. Moreover, the Richmond Bread Riot supports Faust’s assertion that the Civil War undermined traditional notions about these categories. The poor women leapt outside of the antebellum norms regarding acceptable female behavior by participating in a violent uprising and challenged the longstanding norms about female propriety.

Each of the three categories was intimately connected to the other two. An assault on one category fundamentally challenged the others as well. Thus, when the Civil War mobilized the population and took men away from their families, it undermined the entire Southern social system.

The War noticeably affected gender roles in Southern society. In the antebellum era, strict notions with respect to gender permeated Southern culture; men and women had explicitly defined roles. Ladies were to remain uninvolved in politics and business.¹⁸⁵ They were also expected to be educated, refined, and genteel. Daniel Hundley attempted to detail the delicate dynamics of the Southern social system. He used terms of the utmost admiration for the Southern woman when he wrote,

Ah! thou true-hearted daughter of the sunny South,
simple and unaffected in their manners, pure in
speech as thou art in soul, and ever blessed with an
inborn grace and gentleness of spirit lovely to look
upon, fitly art thou named:

“A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warm, to comfort, and
command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Although women did not participate publicly in politics, many pursued an active private interest in current affairs. Mary Chesnut, for example, felt no qualms about critiquing the politicians in the early days of secession. She wrote, “One of the first things which depressed me was the kind of men put in office at this crisis, invariably some sleeping deadhead long forgotten or passed over. Young and active spirits ignored, places for worn-out politicians seemed the rule—when our only hope is to use all the talents God has given us.” See C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 5.

¹⁸⁶ Daniel R. Hundley, *Social Relations in our Southern States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 72.

Thus, Hundley, in the manner of most men, attributed to the women of the South a certain divine quality and mission. This purpose involved the support of the nation and the spiritual development of its citizens. Hundley postulated:

When the Apostle commanded that women should not be suffered to speak in public, but on the contrary to content themselves with their humble household duties, he not only spoke as the inspired servant of God, but also as a man possessed of uncommon common-sense. For since to the family belongs the education and gradual elevation of the race, it is most important that mothers should be pure, peaceable, gentle, long-suffering and godly—which they never can be, if permitted or inclined to enter the lists and compete with selfish and lustful man for the prizes of place and public emolument.¹⁸⁷

Both the men and women of the South accepted these assertions. The War's manpower requirements, however, undermined these norms. In the absence of men who were consistently serving on the front, women assumed unprecedented positions of leadership and responsibility.

In antebellum Richmond, strict notions of class also existed. As in many of the long-established cities of the South, the elite circle allowed for very little social mobility. Richmonders themselves recognized the division of their society along these class lines and the language of class abounded in the literature, editorials, and diaries from the antebellum period. Hundley attempted to depict the social structure of the South in his 1860 work, *Social Relations in Our Southern States*. He concluded that eight categories existed in the South: the Southern gentleman, the middle classes, the Southern Yankee, cotton snobs, the Southern yeoman, the Southern bully, poor white trash, and the negro slave. Hundley came from an elite background because of his birth into a landholding and slave owning family in Alabama and, consequently, he glorified the qualities of the Southern

¹⁸⁷ Hundley, *Social Relations in our Southern States*, 74.

gentleman, while demeaning the middle classes, the yeomen, and the poor whites.¹⁸⁸ This represented a typical upper class perspective on other tiers of society.

Richmond possessed a unique social structure because of its position as an industrial and manufacturing center. Richmond was, in fact, the nation's largest manufacturer of tobacco and the second largest miller of flour.¹⁸⁹ According to historian Virginius Dabney, "Richmond was the industrial center of the South and the region's wealthiest city, based on per capita property valuation."¹⁹⁰ Further, the city was an important junction of many rail lines. This urban and industrial character contributed to the development of a distinctly urban class system.

Whereas in the rural environment class was based on slave and land ownership, in Richmond membership in the upper class was based on birth.¹⁹¹ According to T. C. DeLeon,

¹⁸⁸ Hundley, *Social Relations in our Southern States*, xv.

¹⁸⁹ Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 133.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Historians generally agree that those who owned twenty or more slaves constituted the elite twelve percent of the population based on the distinctions made in the 1850 and 1860 census. James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1982). James Oakes analyzes the progression of American slaveholders from the Revolutionary era to the end of the American Civil War. He attempts to accurately portray the upper class in the rural South while neglecting the influence of dominant stereotypes. He also seeks to "elicit larger patterns of political, ideological, economic, and demographic development without doing violence to the evidence of diversity within the slaveholding class" (see page ix). *The Ruling Race* remains the authoritative work on the upper class in the antebellum and wartime era of the South

In reference to the rural class structure, he writes, "In 1860 perhaps a third of all southern whites owned little more than the clothing they wore, while fewer than four percent of the adult white males owned the majority of black

“In the country districts habit and condescension often overrode class barriers, but in the city, where class sometimes jostled privilege, the line of demarcation was so strongly drawn that its overstepping was dangerous.”¹⁹² DeLeon also believed that class determination was based almost solely on familial standing, rather than entrepreneurial endeavors. He wrote,

Trade, progressive spirit and self-made personality were excluded from the plane of the elect, as though germiniferous. The “sacred soil” and the sacred social circle were paralleled in the minds of their possessors.¹⁹³

Hundley also observed the rigidity of the Southern class structure. With regard to the members of the upper class, he concluded, “Indeed, to state the matter fairly, he comes usually of aristocratic parentage; for family pride prevails to a greater extent in the South than in the North.”¹⁹⁴

This elite, urban class prided itself on its refinement and high standards, which hailed back to the earliest days of Southern settlement. Hundley described the Southern

slaves...The majority of slaves were held by the one-fifth of slaveholders who owned twenty or more bondsmen” (see page 36). Thus, the South possessed a distinct class of people who appeared to be much better off than the majority of citizens. This class system dominated not only social interactions, but politics and occupations as well. In this rural setting, the class system was not entirely insurmountable. Social standing was based on possession of land and slaves and, thus, anyone with an entrepreneurial spirit could buy their way into the upper class. Oakes writes that most Southerners in the west and in rural settings expected to own slaves and land, even if they arrived with little or no property. That expectation was feasible (see page 41). Conversely, rich planters could sink into poverty if they mismanaged their estates.

¹⁹² T.C. DeLeon, *Belles, Beaux, and Brains of the 60's* (New York: G. W. Dillingham Company, 1907), 59.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ Hundley, *Social Relations In Our Southern States*, 27.

gentleman as a man of the highest education, manners, and generosity. These individuals were articulate and maintained an active interest in world affairs and their communities.¹⁹⁵ The rigidity of the class structure was such that even Mrs. Jefferson Davis, the first lady of the Confederacy, was never fully accepted into Richmond's elite circle. Mary Boykin Chesnut, one of the best known ladies of the Southern upper class, commented that "Mrs. Davis and Jeff Davis proved themselves anything but <well-bred by their talk>."¹⁹⁶ Mary Chesnut was herself not a Richmond native. She and her husband moved from South Carolina to the capital after her husband became an aide to President Jefferson Davis.¹⁹⁷ Mrs. Chesnut was accepted into the Richmond elite only because she was a prominent member of the South Carolina upper class. The elite of well-established eastern cities were more acceptable in Richmond than those individuals from the West. Mississippi, Texas, and the rural areas of Louisiana were still considered, in many cases, the frontier regions. Thus, the long established elite of Richmond considered even the wealthy or landed elite from the west unequal.

Conceptions of class also carried into the physical division of Richmond. Richmond was a city of several hills: Union, Church, Oregon, Council Chamber, Shockoe, Gamble's, and Navy.¹⁹⁸ The upper class lived in certain areas of the city, specifically on Marshall, Cary, Franklin, and Grace Streets. Mary Wingfield Scott wrote, "By 1850 Grace and Franklin were already the handsomest streets in Richmond and certainly the most sought after by wealth and fashion."¹⁹⁹ The lower classes tended to live near Union, Church, and Shockoe Hills. Location had much to do with the class composition of

¹⁹⁵ Hundley, *Social Relations In Our Southern States*, 20-76.

¹⁹⁶ Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 85. Woodward uses the symbol < > to "enclose effaced or erased passages restored by the editor."

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, xxxix.

¹⁹⁸ Alfred Hoyt Bill, *The Beleaguered City: Richmond, 1861-1865* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1946), 296.

¹⁹⁹ Mary Wingfield Scott, *Old Richmond Neighborhoods* (Richmond: The Valentine Museum, 1975), 167.

the neighborhoods. Scott noted that the Tredegar Ironworks, located near Oregon Hill, had a distinct interest in maintaining housing near the factory. She asserted, "So far as we know, the Tredegar Iron Works had no actual financial part in the development of Oregon Hill. But it needed workmen's homes within walking distance."²⁰⁰ Thus, Richmond was not only divided by class in terms of society, but also along physical location.

This traditional class system worked with surprisingly few episodes of lower class discontent in the antebellum era. Whereas in the North, class based riots erupted fairly frequently, no riots of this kind surfaced in the South.²⁰¹ In his analysis of American riots in the antebellum era, historian David Grimstead concludes that different patterns of riots existed in the North and South. Many riots and mobs did erupt in the South; however, they were often based on racial fears. Grimstead writes, "Of the 403 Southern riots, about 66 percent fall into three distinctively Southern categories: mob punishment of alleged criminals (68); insurrection scare mobs (35); and mobs against those labeled

²⁰⁰ Scott, *Old Richmond Neighborhoods*, 55.

²⁰¹ Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 71-75. Notable instances of class based riots which erupted in the North prior to the Civil War included the Flour Riot in New York City on February 12, 1837, the destruction of Philadelphia railroads in 1840 and 1841, and most significantly the Astor Place Opera House Riot on May 10, 1849. George C. Rable also notes the infrequency of social uprisings in the antebellum era. "Despite the South's long history of violence," he writes, "there was no tradition of mass uprisings comparable to the food riots in Europe. In general, Southerners had favored more personal kinds of retribution such as dueling, lynching, or brawling to organized revolts directed at bringing about social change. The premium place on individual and family honor left little room for either collective action or the direct expression of class hostilities." See George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 108.

abolitionist, although usually there was no evidence of abolition activity (162).²⁰² Thus, although Southerners incorrectly asserted that their society did not experience any episodes of violent outburst, they accurately noted that few instances of class-based insurrections erupted in the seemingly harmonious antebellum era.

Many scholars argue that the contentedness of the lower classes revolved around the third category of the Southern social system: race. The existence of black slaves meant that those individuals occupied the lowest class of society. This automatically elevated the social position of even the poorest of whites in the South. Scholars dub this concept *Herrenvolk Democracy*.²⁰³ Although Hundley was not familiar with the term, he described the lower classes' support for slavery in almost identical language:

Were you situated as the Southern Yeomen are—humble in worldly position, patient delvers in the soil, daily earning your bread by the toilsome sweat of your own brows—would you be pleased to see four millions of inferior blacks suddenly raised from a position of equality with yourselves?²⁰⁴

The lower class whites were relatively content with their position because, regardless of whether they were poor or yeomen, they were never considered the dregs of society. That classification was reserved for blacks alone. Consequently, the elite of the South were an aristocracy based fundamentally on race.

Richmond's antebellum conceptions of class, race, and gender proved unable to stand the stresses of war. War magnified the disparity between the upper and lower classes because it undermined the three fundamental components of the seemingly harmonious society and required women to step

²⁰² David Grimstead, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 101.

²⁰³ 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), 68.

²⁰⁴ Hundley, *Social Relations In Our Southern States*, 219.

into roles which previously had been unacceptable. In the face of starvation and the loss of loved ones on the battlefield, the poor, able in the antebellum years to accept their lower status, refused to tolerate the privileges that the upper class seemed to enjoy. They demonstrated their willingness to defy convention by taking drastic action in the Richmond Bread Riot.

Confederate Domestic Legislation: 1861-1863

The Confederate government, overwhelmingly composed of elite members (see Table 1), produced legislation which accentuated the feelings of lower class resentment. The first signs of discontent emerged as a result of the first Confederate Conscription Act, passed on April 16, 1862. The loss of every major battle in the West, combined with the loss of the major southern port city, New Orleans, served to convince the Confederate Congress of the necessity of a slightly more drastic solution. From the first days of secession, the South had been at a serious disadvantage in terms of manpower, and although Southerners voluntarily enlisted in impressive numbers, by 1862, the number of soldiers fit for duty did not meet the required criteria. The government's solution, the Conscription Act, mandated "all persons residing within the Confederate States, between the ages of 18 and 35 years, and rightfully subject to military duty, shall be held to be in the military service of the Confederate states..."²⁰⁵ In September, Congress expanded the act to the ages of 18 to 45.

The drafts served mostly to arouse fear of military despotism in the South. Many citizens believed the draft conflicted "with the individualistic instincts of Southerners and with their conceptions of genuine manhood."²⁰⁶ Voluntary enlistment, they contended, was the height of fulfilling one's duty to country. Hence, the draft conveyed to many a sense of cowardice. Loyal citizens held that the government's utilization of a draft only proved its lack of faith in the honor

²⁰⁵ *Journal of Congress II*, 220, quoted in Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, 152.

²⁰⁶ Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: Hillary House Publishers Ltd., 1963), 17.

of its people. Furthermore, several prominent men believed that the act violated the Confederate Constitution. Vice President Alexander Stephens and Governor Joseph Brown of Georgia were among the most prominent dissidents. They protested that the act violated the rights of the states. Although the drafts evoked significant resentment, the ensuing amendments prompted harsher accusations of class bias.

The policy of substitution, approved by the Conscription Act, allowed anyone to purchase a substitute to serve in place of one drafted to serve. The availability of this option gave the distinct impression of government favoritism. Although the Confederate government's intention was "to utilize the potentialities of men along industrial lines,"²⁰⁷ most Southern citizens could not afford to procure a substitute and were, therefore, obligated to serve when conscripted. Substitutes were often offered over \$4,000, a sum which, in the war torn south, only the wealthiest citizens could pay.²⁰⁸ The government's refusal to regulate or alter the policy of substitution only fueled the claim that the war had evolved into "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight."²⁰⁹

The first amendment to the draft, the "class exemption" system, also generated significant resentment among the people. This amendment allowed men of certain occupations to evade the draft. These occupations included "national and state officers, railroad employees, druggists, professors, schoolteachers, miners, ministers, pilots, nurses, and iron-furnace and foundry laborers."²¹⁰ Many citizens who could not escape the draft and were unable to procure an exemption believed that the amendment served only to shield those too cowardly to enter the service. Historian Stephen Ambrose believed that the exemption acts actually undermined the Confederate war effort because they highlighted the inequality within the legislation. He wrote,

²⁰⁷ Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy*, 29.

²⁰⁸ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 387.

²⁰⁹ Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy*, 33-34.

²¹⁰ Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, 153.

The ‘Scarcity [*sic*] of Men’ was indeed a major problem for the yeomen. Men were needed to raise crops, protect the families, from unfair governmental levies, and to ward off roving raiders from both armies. But although the Confederate Congress was willing to exempt large numbers from conscription, small farmers were not among the privileged group.²¹¹

Congress’s approval of these exemptions fueled the discontent which emerged as a result of conscription and the perception of an unequal burden of service became more prevalent among the lower classes.

By far the most hated amendment was the “Twenty Negro Act,” passed in October of 1862, which exempted “owners or overseers of twenty or more slaves.”²¹² The act exhibited blatant class favoritism because in the rural South, ownership of twenty or more slaves constituted planter status. The majority of Southerners did not own twenty slaves; many did not own any slaves at all. Although Congress passed the exemption in hopes of stimulating food and crop production, it served mainly to aggravate the class resentment which had been growing slowly. The outcry of the poor grew louder against the perceived inequality of sacrifice.

Also augmenting the poor’s disapproval of class based legislation were the currency issues which plagued the Confederacy throughout its existence. Eventually, the shock of the Federal blockade of the Southern coasts contributed to a notable reduction in the supply of goods which were produced outside the South.²¹³ Eugene Lerner asserts, “The blockade

²¹¹Stephen E. Ambrose, “Yeoman Discontent in the Confederacy,” *Civil War History* 8 (1962): 264.

²¹² Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, 154.

²¹³ Initially, the Northern blockade had little chance of success. According to Emory Thomas, “In July of 1861 the United States, which possessed about a hundred ships, was attempting to seal the 189 openings along the 3,549 miles of Confederate coastline with fewer than thirty-three vessels.” See Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, 129. The United States

was felt in every corner of the southern economy.”²¹⁴ Many of the luxury items which citizens were used to enjoying on a regular basis became almost impossible to find. Likewise, necessities such as coffee, salt, and paper became difficult to procure.

Southern exports also declined significantly because of the blockade. Lerner writes, “As the war continued, the invading Union armies, the northern blockade, and the reallocation of southern labor tended to reduce output.”²¹⁵ The war effort became the primary focus of the fledgling nation and it mobilized all of its forces for the pursuant military effort. This made it extremely difficult to maintain the pre-war levels of production, and therefore, profit decreased.

The Confederacy’s own financial mismanagement compounded the nation’s problems with supply. Generally, Southerners and nineteenth century Americans abhorred taxation. Any tax mandated at the national level directly contradicted the policy of state rights and impinged upon individuals rights. Although the Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, Christopher G. Memminger, promoted taxation as the most effective means of raising money for the war effort, he never managed to convince either the people or President Jefferson Davis of its necessity. He did, however, persuade Congress to pass a tax law in April of 1863. This law

Levied a license tax on just about every form of occupation or business, a graduated income tax whose scale varied from 1 percent of incomes less than \$500 to 15 percent of incomes over \$10,000, and a tax-in-kind tithe on agricultural produce and livestock: 10 percent of everything grown or slaughtered in 1863.²¹⁶

however, quickly built up an effective fleet of 300 ships by January, 1862. The blockade then became much more efficient at blocking both Southern exports and foreign imports.

²¹⁴ Eugene M. Lerner, “Money, Prices, and Wages in the Confederacy, 1861-65,” *The Journal of Political Economy* 63, no. 1 (February 1955): 27.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

²¹⁶ Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, 198.

The Tax-in-Kind affected almost the entire Southern population, but its enforcement varied significantly from region to region; the collectors often abused their responsibilities and took more than the law mandated. Many citizens believed the Confederate government had far outstepped its bounds. Taxation, they contended, was under the jurisdiction of the states. That Congress passed a national act of such scope convinced many Southerners that the government had, by 1863, abandoned many of the principles that had originally justified secession.

Because of this dedication to state rights and individual liberties, the Confederacy funded its war effort primarily by issuing treasury notes and loans. Often, the government did not collect on its loans, and the Treasury Department flooded the economy with empty treasury notes. Confederate currency became valueless. After conducting extensive statistical research, one scholar has concluded that “for thirty-one consecutive months, from October, 1861, to March, 1864, the general price index of the Confederacy rose at an almost constant rate of 10 per cent a month.”²¹⁷ Yet, while inflation increased rapidly, the issue of treasury notes did not cease. Instead, the government continued to produce the valueless notes. The Confederacy based these notes on the anticipated money to be made by selling cotton to Europe. Emory Thomas postulates, “Beyond the limited amount of specie, estimated at \$27 million, and the uncertain potential of cotton, the Confederacy had little in the way of economic resources, hence its reliance on fiat money and popular faith in its domestic economy.”²¹⁸ As the war progressed, that faith decreased drastically.

A notable aspect of Southern inflation is the fact the wages increased disproportionately to inflation. After studying wage quotations and account books from large Southern firms, one economist concluded, “the average wage increased approximately ten times during the four years of the war, or at

²¹⁷ Lerner, “Money, Prices, and Wages in the Confederacy,” 23.

²¹⁸ Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, 138.

a rate of 4.6 per cent a month.”²¹⁹ This increase was less than half of the price index (percentage) increase. Citizens on fixed wages felt the brunt of this reality. T.C. DeLeon noted the disparity in his journal:

The pinch began to be felt by many who had never known it before; and almost every one, who had any surplus portables, was willing to turn them into money. In this way, those who had anything to sell, for the time managed to live. But the unfortunates who had only what they needed absolutely, or who were forced to live upon a fixed stipend, that did not increase in any ratio to the decrease of money, suffered terribly.²²⁰

An analysis of one of the major firms in Richmond, the Tredegar Iron Works, also displays the inadequate increase in fixed wages. Historian Charles Dew, the authority on Tredegar, writes:

The Tredegar provided a small increase to \$4.50 in January 1863. These advances did not begin to cover the rise in the cost of living in the Confederate capital, however. By the beginning of 1863, Tredegar wages were up only 80 per cent over antebellum levels while the general price index for the eastern Confederacy had risen to seven times the level of the first four months of 1861.²²¹

These low wage workers in Richmond were unable to provide for themselves or their families. Their suffering contributed to the growing cynicism about the Confederate government’s inability to adequately support its citizens.

²¹⁹ Lerner, “Money, Prices, and Wages in the Confederacy,” 32.

²²⁰ T.C. DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals: An Inside View of Life in the Southern Confederacy, From Birth To Death* (Mobile: Gossip Print Co., 1890), 236.

²²¹ Charles B. Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 239.

The presence of citizens willing to take advantage of the financial chaos only added to the people's frustration with the Confederacy's deteriorating fiscal situation. Many citizens saw the potential for profit in the economic uncertainty of the South. These people, deemed speculators, bought goods and hoarded them. They took merchandise off of the market and drove prices still higher. Many Southerners used the speculators as scapegoats and blamed all of the Confederacy's economic problems on these "wicked" individuals. The *Richmond Dispatch* attributed the price increase specifically to the speculators, whom the paper referred to as "those pests of society."²²² One article laid out two tables comparing prices for basic items in 1860 to the cost of the same items in 1863 (see Table 2). It read, "So much we owe the speculators, who have staid [sic] at home to prey upon the necessities of their fellow citizens."²²³ Despite the animosity toward speculators which permeated all of Southern society, their activities did not contribute to the financial problems to the extent that inflation did.

Impressment also aroused a great deal of discontent in the Confederacy. On March 26, 1863, Congress approved an "act to regulate impressments." The act stated: "impressments of forage or other property authorized, when necessary for the army. Value thereof to be determined by appraisement."²²⁴ The War Department created a standard price for common items; these prices, however, were often well below the market price. The act even allowed for the impressment of slaves. Because slaves fell into the category of "other property," they could be seized at any time in the name of military necessity. This irked many citizens, especially because many of these Southerners had supported secession on the basis of the sanctity of private property. Thus, many

²²² *Richmond Dispatch*, 16 January 1863.

²²³ *Richmond Dispatch*, 29 January 1863.

²²⁴ James M. Matthews, ed., *The Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America...Third Session...First Congress* (Richmond: R. M. Smith, Printer To Congress, 1863), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/22conf/1863stat.html> (accessed December 6, 2009), 102.

farmers and merchants came to fear an encounter with a government impressment agent as much or more than Union invasion.

The Impressment Act also required that merchants possessed a passport to either enter or leave the cities. These passports were often difficult to attain. The *Richmond Enquirer* reported:

The owners of a number of country carts that used to bring supplies to this market have of late ceased to come, though the markets are destitute of vegetables common to the season. As many carts as formerly start for the city, but many now stop before reaching their destination, haul up at some convenient place by the roadside, sell their goods and put for home instantly. The market men allege, with show of justice, we presume, that when they come into the city, they are bothered half out of their wits to get out again. When applying for a passport, they have to produce somebody who knows them, as a voucher, a thing not easy to do. Then, again they say they are stopped on every corner of the street and subjected to cross questioning by the military guard whose importunities are not always to be resisted.²²⁵

Thus, the Confederacy's problem, in some instances, was not a deficiency of supply, but a paucity of policy. The continued enforcement of offensive legislation sustained public criticism of the government. Moreover, a large proportion of the population wondered why the government refused to amend policies which so obviously added to the suffering in crowded urban centers. Many reached the conclusion that the government had abandoned its responsibilities, especially to those least able to provide for themselves. Essentially, the Confederacy abdicated its duty to the home front in pursuit of military success.

²²⁵ *Richmond Enquirer*, June 15, 1864.

Richmond: Spring, 1863

The city of Richmond itself changed significantly because of wartime stresses. The rapid increase in the population compounded the problems of food supply, housing, and inflation. The city had a population of approximately 38,000 in 1860.²²⁶ However, after Richmond's selection as capital of the Confederacy, it attracted an abundance of visitors and new residents and the population of Richmond doubled only a year after secession: by 1863, the population had reached 100,000 inhabitants.²²⁷ Midori Takagi believes that the bulk of the population was due to the influx of Confederate soldiers; at least ten to fifteen thousand troops traveled to Richmond rapidly after its designation as the Confederate capital.²²⁸ The swollen population, however, did not return to normal after the departure of the troops. Refugees moved to Richmond from everywhere in the South (specifically from Maryland and rural areas of Virginia) due to the city's abundance of both government and industrial employment opportunities. In addition, Richmond's designation as one of the prominent social centers attracted foreigners and job seekers. Thus, historian Mary Elizabeth Massey contends that Richmond remained the most crowded city in the South for the duration of the war.²²⁹

The availability of housing did not increase at a rate which corresponded to the population increase. As early as 1862, residents noted the dearth of space for newcomers. Judith McGuire, a refugee searching for lodgings in Richmond, found it almost impossible to find a place to stay in February, 1862. She remarked, "The city is overrun with members of Congress, Government officers, office-seekers,

²²⁶ John S. Wise, *The End of An Era* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 63; Midori Takagi, "Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction": *Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782-1865* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1999), 126; Bill, *The Beleaguered City*, 3.

²²⁷ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 277.

²²⁸ Takagi, "Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction," 126.

²²⁹ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 74.

and strangers generally. Main Street is as crowded as Broadway, New York; it is said that every boarding house is full.”²³⁰ The next day she wrote, “I do not believe there is a vacant spot in the city.”²³¹ McGuire’s statements were not an exaggeration: housing was extremely scarce and demand was high. Prices for boarding soared to extreme levels. The City Council echoed McGuire’s sentiments. It noted in February, 1863, that rent had quadrupled in the years since the war erupted.²³² Many worried they would not be able to continue to pay the required fees. Margaret Brown Wight expressed her relief at receiving a letter containing money from her husband who was in the army:

A letter came from John enclosing \$15 which was handed him by a gentleman, saying it was money put in his hands for me, that John must ask no questions about it, he could only tell him it was for me... It is certainly respectable for we have not enough to pay for our own board much less supply ourselves with necessary clothing.²³³

Wight’s appreciation for such a small sum shows that previously well-established citizens, like Margaret Wight and Judith McGuire, worried that they could no longer support themselves or their families. By early 1863, many urban Southerners concurred with J. B. Jones’s assertion: “How we, ‘the people,’ are to live is a thought of serious concern.”²³⁴

Other notable problems also arose as a result of the population increase. Crime rates skyrocketed; gambling, gang activity, prostitution, thievery, and murder all permeated the

²³⁰ Judith W. McGuire, *Diary of A Southern Refugee During the War* (New York: Arno Press Inc., 1972), 88.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Louis H. Manarin, ed., *Richmond at War: The Minutes of the City Council* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 285.

²³³ Margaret Brown Wight Diary, Mss# 1W6398a2-4, 14 February 1863, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

²³⁴ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary*, 261.

Confederate capital. Women moved into the work force in unprecedented numbers. The war and its effects overturned both antebellum standards of behavior and the accepted social order.

One example of this change was the evolution of prostitution in Richmond. In the antebellum era, prostitutes kept to themselves and practiced their trade discreetly in order to avoid severe social stricture and prosecution. One scholar writes, “On the eve of the Civil War...Richmond prostitution could be characterized as a relatively invisible occupation.”²³⁵ The prevalence of soldiers, isolated from their families and looking for female companionship, changed that “invisible occupation” into a commonplace career in wartime Richmond. Historian Catherine Clinton notes, “The Civil War created the largest increase in the sex trade in nineteenth-century America, perhaps the largest growth spurt in the nation’s history.”²³⁶ As the war progressed, these women, secure in their numbers, ventured unashamedly into unfamiliar territory, and alarmed many of the more conventional citizens. The *Richmond Daily Dispatch* noted the unprecedented behavior and complained,

It has been well known for some time past that cyprians, resident and accumulated since the removal of the seat of Government to this place, as well as loose males of the most abandoned character from other parts of the Confederacy, have been disporting themselves extensively on the sidewalks and in hacks, open carriages, &c., in the streets of Richmond, to the amazement of sober-sided citizens compelled to smell the odors which they exude, and witness the impudence and familiar vulgarity of

²³⁵ Susanna Delfino and Michele Gillespie, eds., *Neither Lady nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 163.

²³⁶ Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 61.

many of the stime [*sic*] faced of the prostitutes of both sexes.”²³⁷

The distinction between “respectable” ladies of Richmond and the “unmentionables” blurred as wartime stresses necessitated the drastic increase in working women.

Children’s gangs also presented a significant challenge to the local and state governments. The gangs had existed prior to the outbreak of the war, and as one local noted, “There never was such a place as Richmond for fighting among small boys...the boys of particular localities associated in fighting bands...there were the Shockoe Hill Cats, the Church Hill Cats, the Basin Cats, the Oregon Hill Cats, the Navy Hill Cats, etc.”²³⁸ The absence of active parental figures produced predictable results: the frequency of violence increased. Attempts to quell this gang activity had little effect. Even President Jefferson Davis had an unsuccessful encounter with the “Hill Cats” and the “Butcher Cats.” The Davis’s young black servant boy was beaten while attempting to negotiate with the children of the gangs. The President, upset about the violence, tried to reprimand the gang members. His speech had no effect, and the hostility continued. These gangs and their complete lack of respect for authority showed the extent to which crime had permeated the wartime city of Richmond.

The weather in the winter and spring of 1863 only compounded the problem of morale in the city. The weather cut supply to the city off almost entirely. Throughout February, March, and April, Virginia sustained heavy storms of both snow and rain. Almost every diarist noted the severe weather. One Richmonder, Herbert Augustine Claiborne, as did many other diarists during the Civil War, dutifully recorded the temperature and weather conditions for every day of 1863. According to his notes, over half of the days in March and February brought heavy rain or snow. The snow was over eight inches deep on March 21. The warm weather in the opening days of April melted the snow rapidly.

²³⁷ *Richmond Dispatch*, 13 May 1862.

²³⁸ Wise, *End of An Era*, 59.

Although at the outset, the warmth may have seemed a welcome relief, in fact, it created vast problems for supply.²³⁹

The unusually wet, spring weather had already saturated the dirt roads leading to Richmond. The rain, in conjunction with the preponderance of melting snow, made the roads an impassable mud trap for those attempting to deliver supplies into the city. Margaret Wight mused about the effects of the weather and wrote about her fears of starvation. She concluded that the spring of 1863 brought “The gloomiest state of weather I ever saw.”²⁴⁰ Robert Garlick Hill Kean, head of the Confederate Bureau of War, made similar observations. He noted, “High water and deep mud will be the consequences which will postpone military operations until in April.”²⁴¹ The unusual weather was also a common subject in the newspapers. The *Richmond Dispatch* reported, “The supply of vegetables, poultry, fish, and butchers' meat, have all been cut short by the difficulty experienced in making headway against the acres of mud and slush encountered in the attempt to get to Richmond.” These sources all display the serious concern evoked by the further decrease in supply due to the dreadful weather conditions. The price of necessary items in Richmond, already remarkably high on account of inflation, speculation, and impressment, rose dramatically.

An explosion in one of the Confederate Ordnance Department's laboratories added to the unrest among the working class in the capital throughout the spring of 1863. On March 13, over 69 women and children were killed or injured in an explosion at the laboratory on Brown's Island, in the James River, at Richmond. According to the Chief of the Ordnance Department, Josiah Gorgas, “The accident was

²³⁹ Herbert Augustine Claiborne Diary, Claiborne Family Papers, Ms# 1C5217c9, February 15, 17, 22, 26, 27; March 1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 1863, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁴⁰ Margaret Brown Wight Diary, March 20, 24, 1863, Virginia Historical Society.

²⁴¹ Edward Younger, ed., *Inside the Confederate Government: The Diary of Robert Garlick Hill Kean* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 46.

caused by the ignition of a friction primer. The primer stuck on the varnishing board and [Mary Ryan] struck the board three times very hard on the table to drive out the primer.”²⁴² The first explosion caused a chain of explosions due to the presence of an excess of combustible material. Initially, over 40 people died, but the numbers rose significantly each day as the injured expired from serious burns. Gorgas had few words of condolence for the casualties, focusing instead on his admiration for his wife: “Mamma has been untiring,” he wrote, “in aiding visiting & relieving these poor sufferers, & has fatigued herself very much. She has done an infinite deal of good to these poor people.”²⁴³

Local resentment increased as a result of the government’s failure to provide safe conditions for these women and children. The casualties were consistently referred to in terms reminiscent of female helplessness. The *Richmond Daily Dispatch* called the victims, “poor creatures,” and J.B. Jones accurately dubbed them “little indigent girls.” These women and children made only meager wages, which “varied from \$1.50 to 2.40”²⁴⁴ per day. The over 300 women and children whom the laboratory employed continued to work although their salary was insufficient to provide them with the means to procure food for their families. Yet, these workers could not hope for better paying jobs because they were largely illiterate.

Contrast the experience of the Ordnance Department workers with that of the women who worked for the Confederate Treasury Department. The so-called “Treasury Girls” signed thousands of worthless Confederate treasury notes and bonds each day and they earned as much as \$65 a month for their work. The applications for the relatively few positions arrived at the department in astounding numbers. Consequently, the positions were extremely competitive.

²⁴² Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins, ed., *The Journals of Josiah Gorgas 1857-1878* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1995), 57.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Mary A. DeCredico, “Richmond Goes To War: 1861-1865” (unpublished manuscripts), 21.

Literacy was an obvious requirement, and it automatically precluded many poor women from the office. Similarly, employment depended upon social standing. Many members of the lower strata of society viewed the distinction with disdain. One woman wrote,

Why is it that ... poor women engaged in a perilous and hazardous occupation ... are denied a living compensation for their labour, when so many of the departments are filled with *young ladies* (not dependent on their pay) with nothing to do, at salaries equal to and in some cases better than the best male clerks in the different departments?²⁴⁵

The explosion at Brown's Island only highlighted the dangers associated with many lower class professions. It illuminated the inequalities related to employment opportunities and hazards. Consequently, many citizens believed their needs and safety were not a significant concern to their employers or to the Confederate government.

The Richmond Bread Riot

On the evening of April 1, 1863, a group of women met at Belvidere Hill Baptist Church in Richmond. The church was located on Church Street in Oregon Hill, a notably working class section of the city.²⁴⁶ The women resolved to gather the next morning in order to demand food at government prices from Virginia Governor John Letcher. Mrs. Burton Harrison, a Richmond resident, described the mob as comprised mostly by "women and children of the poorer class."²⁴⁷ As evidence of the working class nature of the participants, one of the leaders, Mary Jackson, was employed as a huckster and another participant, Barbara Idoll, made tents for a living. Additionally, although most women came from the neighborhoods of Oregon Hill, Sydney and

²⁴⁵ Elizabeth Maxwell et al. to Zebulon Vance, October 8, 1864, Vance Papers, NCDAH, quoted in Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 90.

²⁴⁶ Scott, *Old Richmond Neighborhoods*, 206.

²⁴⁷ Mrs. Burton Harrison, *Recollections Grave and Gay* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 137.

Penitentiary Bottom, and Sheep Hill, some women traveled from the outskirts of the city in order to attend the meeting.²⁴⁸

The next morning, April 2, 1863, these frustrated women gathered as planned in Capitol Square, near the Governor's mansion. They demanded to speak to Governor Letcher. Instead, they were met by Colonel S. Bassett French, a member of the Governor's staff. He seemed reluctant to speak to the women, and informed them that the Governor had already left for work at the Capitol. Many of the leaders

²⁴⁸ Michael B. Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines? A New Look at the Richmond Bread Riot," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 92, no. 2 (April 1984), 139-143. "Harlots and Heroines" is considered the authoritative article concerning the Richmond Bread Riot. Emory Thomas, George Rable, and Alfred Hoyt Bill also discuss the riot. See Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond: A Biography of the Capital* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971); idem (idem is used to reference the same author as the previous citation) *The Confederate Nation*; and Rable, *Civil Wars*; However, their coverage is dated and not as detailed as Chesson's article. Many of the secondary sources contain major errors. Ella Lonn's 1965 publication, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, not only reports that the riot occurred in the spring of 1862, but also succumbs to the primary source bias and classifies the rioters as "a mixed crowd of Germans, Irishmen, and free Negroes," see Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965), 342. Chesson's article seeks to detach itself from these obvious biases and delve into the facts. The major weakness of "Harlots and Heroines" is Chesson's reliance on the *Richmond Examiner's* 1888 reexamination of the Richmond Bread Riot. The paper questioned known participants and observers approximately 25 years after the riot had occurred in an attempt to create a more accurate summary of the event. But, the paper conducted these interviews during a period when the Cult of the Lost Cause flourished and glorification of the Confederacy was often the ultimate goal. In general, however, Michael Chesson provides the most detailed and accurate portrayal of the Richmond Bread Riot.

immediately approached the Capitol building. As the crowd increased in both magnitude and riotous intention, the Governor eventually appeared in Capitol Square and addressed them. He informed the women that it was impossible for him to mandate that goods be sold at government prices. Angered by Governor Letcher's words, the women rushed out of Capitol Square and toward the business district. The group rapidly transformed into an angry mob of rioters. Most carried weapons, which ranged from clubs and axes to knives and pistols. They began looting stores on both Main and Cary Streets, and seized as many goods as they could manage to carry on their person or load into the carts they stole along the way.²⁴⁹

As the rioters proceeded down Main and Cary Streets, spectators joined in the looting and many who heard the disturbance went out into the streets to investigate. Local thoroughfares became so crowded, it was impossible to determine the actual number of rioters; hence, conflicting reports about the size of the mob emerged. William Walter Cleary estimated that the crowd numbered "7 or 800 women aided by a few men."²⁵⁰ Catherine Ann Devereux wrote she heard "that the riot in Richmond was more serious than we supposed, 20,000 persons assembled in the streets."²⁵¹ It is possible that 20,000 people were present in the streets at the time of the riots. The population increase in Richmond had crowded the city with more inhabitants than it could contain. The average estimate, however, and the most likely approximation, neared 5500 participants.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?", 143-145.

²⁵⁰ William Walter Cleary Diary, Mss# 10 no 74, April 2, 1863, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁵¹ Beth G. Crabtree and James W. Patton, eds., "*Journal of a Secesh Lady*": *The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston: 1860-1866* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1979), 379.

²⁵² William Walter Cleary Diary, April 2, 1863, Virginia Historical Society; Crabtree and Patton, "*Journal of a Secesh Lady*," 379; Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 284; Stephen E. Ambrose, "The Bread Riots in Richmond," *Virginia*

As rioting continued on Main Street, city officials took decisive action. Richmond's mayor, Joseph Mayo, addressed the crowd on Cary Street and read the Riot Act. His words had little effect, and the rioting persisted on both Main and Cary Streets. As the mob grew, the violence increased.

According to historian Michael Chesson, the women targeted both supposed speculators and government agencies: "Some of the looters continued down Cary, breaking into a Confederate commissary and into another government warehouse."²⁵³ Other stores looted included bakeries, shoe stores, grocery stores, and jewelry stores. Many Richmond citizens believed that a significant number of the city merchants had procured draft exemptions out of cowardice and in order to make profits. Business was indeed profitable for those who remained in operation throughout the War.

Richmond citizens also targeted foreigners and Jews. The city had a tradition of blatant anti-Semitism. Once the War erupted, many Richmond citizens openly blamed the Jews and foreigners in the city for speculation and charged them with disloyalty.²⁵⁴ Sallie A. Putnam, for instance, believed that the Jews in Richmond profited from the war. She exhorted, "They were not found, as the more interested of the people, without the means to purchase food when the Confederate money became useless to us from the failure of our cause."²⁵⁵ Major John W. Daniel contended that local stereotypes allowed the rioters to target Richmond Jews. After the War, he reminisced, "certain people down there were

Magazine of History and Biography 71, no. 2 (April 1863), 203; Mrs. Roger A. Pryor, *Reminiscences of Peace and War* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904), 239.

²⁵³ Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?", 145.

²⁵⁴ Michael B. Chesson, "Richmond Jews and the Bread Riot of April 2, 1863: Myth and Reality" (Paper for the Sixth Annual Conference on the Jewish experience in the South for the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Mobile, Alabama, November 7, 1981), 2-4.

²⁵⁵ Sallie Brock Putnam, *Richmond During the War: Four Years of Personal Observation* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 105.

credited with great wealth. It was said that they had made barrels of money out of the Confederacy, and the female Communists went at them without a qualm of conscience.”²⁵⁶

According to the Richmond City Council minutes, the rioters actually did significant damage to several businesses they targeted. On April 13, the council noted, “Accounts for the property taken by the late rioters in this City, one in the name of J. T. Hicks amounting to the sum of \$13,530.00 and one in the name of Tyler & Son amounting to the sum of \$6,467.55, were laid before the Council and referred to the Committee on Claims.”²⁵⁷ Several instances of violence also occurred. Eyewitness Hal Tutwiler wrote,

One woman knocked out a pane of glass out of a shop window, of which the door was fastened, & put her arm in to steal something, but the shopman cut all four of her fingers off. I was right in the middle of the row all the time, it was the most horrible sight I ever saw...²⁵⁸

The *New York Herald* also reported a bloody encounter between the women and those attempting to pacify them. In its April 11th report, the *Herald* read, “A few individuals attempted to resist the women, but without success. One man who struck a female was wounded in the shoulder by a shot from a revolver, and the threatening attitude of those armed with hatchets, &c. intimidated others from attempting force.”²⁵⁹ For the most part, however, the women damaged property, but harmed few individuals.

Government officials’ attempts to put a stop to the riot continued. After the Mayor appeared, the next public

²⁵⁶ *Richmond Dispatch*, December 16, 1888.

²⁵⁷ Manarin, ed., *Richmond At War*, 321.

²⁵⁸ Ambrose, “The Bread Riots in Richmond,” 203; Ernest Taylor Walthall, *Hidden Things Brought To Light* (Richmond, VA: Press of the Dietz Printing Co., 1933), 24; Putnam, *Richmond During the War*, 208.

²⁵⁹ *New York Herald*, April 11, 1863 cited in Frank Moore, *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events*, Vol. 6 (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1863), 523.

official to approach the rioters was Governor John Letcher. Most primary accounts attribute Letcher to calling out the Richmond Public Guard. According to Chesson, the primary responsibility of the Public Guard was the defense of important institutions in Richmond, notably the “Capitol and Capitol Square and the state (now Confederate) armory and penitentiary in the western part of the city.”²⁶⁰ Although Lieutenant Edward Scott Gay was the commander in charge at the time of the riot, the Public Guard ultimately reported to the Virginia Governor. According to many accounts, the Governor ordered the women to disperse. When they refused to comply, he threatened to order the Public Guard to shoot into the crowd. War clerk J.B. Jones recorded,

Thus the work of spoliation went on, until the military appeared upon the scene, summoned by Gov. Letcher, whose term of service is near its close. He had the Riot Act read (by the mayor), and then threatened to fire on the mob. He gave them five minutes’ time to disperse in, threatening to use military force (the city battalion being present) if they did not comply with the demand.²⁶¹

Other eyewitnesses, including Judith McGuire, Sallie Putnam, Sara A. Pryor, Hal Tutwiler, and Ernest Taylor Walthall all gave the credit to the Governor.

Letcher’s aide at the time, Colonel French, believed that his former employer was not only influential, but solely responsible for taking drastic action in order to save the city. In 1878, in response to renewed attention on the Bread Riot, he wrote to Letcher, “If Mr. Davis attempted to quell the mob I was not witness to it, nor did I over hear of it, until I read it in the paper you sent me; that you did quell it by decisive measures you threatened is beyond dispute.”²⁶² As Governor, it is logical that Letcher called out the Public Guard and had

²⁶⁰ Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines?”, 146.

²⁶¹ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary*, 285.

²⁶² John Letcher Papers, Mss # 1L5684aFA2, Letter from S. Basset French to John Letcher, April 17, 1878, ser. 7, folder 452, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

the authority to issue the five minute ultimatum; however, many eyewitnesses credited Confederate President Jefferson Davis with calling out the Public Guard.

Most scholars believe Jefferson Davis also addressed the mob. While some accounts seem to depict Letcher as primarily responsible for dispersing the crowd, others, notably Varina Davis's biography of her husband, actually portray the President as primarily responsible for the dissolution of the riot. Varina Davis wrote:

He concluded by saying: "You say you are hungry and have no money. Here is all I have; it is not much, but take it." He then, emptying his pockets, threw all the money they contained among the mob, after which he took out his watch and said: "We do not desire to injure anyone, but this lawlessness must stop. I will give you five minutes to disperse, otherwise you will be fired on."²⁶³

Her account, however, is unique in its crediting Davis. Most journals and letters portray Davis giving a compassionate speech to the rioters, rather than taking a definitive military stance. Sara Pryor's friend, "Agnes," wrote Sara a letter which depicted the president as sympathetic and deeply moving in his speech. "The President then appeared," Agnes recalled, "ascended a dray, and addressed them. It is said he was received at first with hisses from the boys, but after he had spoken some little time with great kindness and sympathy, the women quietly moved on, taking their food with them."²⁶⁴

Other officials of lesser importance also appeared on the scene and took measures to end the riot. According to his

²⁶³ Varina Davis, *Jefferson Davis: A Memoir by his Wife*, vol. 2 (Baltimore: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1990), 375. Davis most likely wrote the biography of Jefferson Davis in an attempt to portray her husband in favorable terms. Additionally, as Michael Chesson notes, she wrote when the Cult of the Lost Cause sought to glorify every aspect of the Confederacy. See Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?", 147.

²⁶⁴ Pryor, *Reminiscences of Peace and War*, 239.

wife, Colonel John B. Baldwin, a Confederate congressman, was actually responsible for suppressing the mob. In her account, Colonel Baldwin rushed toward the riot and “made another earnest [*sic*] appeal to them promising to do all in his power to aid those who were in want.”²⁶⁵ According to this portrayal, by the time the Mayor and Governor addressed the crowd, Baldwin had already dispersed the rioters.

There is no doubt that several government officials addressed the crowd at different points during the Richmond Bread Riot. The mob was so extensive that different individuals may have subdued the crowds in different locations. Mrs. Burton Harrison believed that “President Davis, Governor Letcher, General Elzey, and General Winder, with Mr. Seddon, Secretary of War” all appeared on the scene and spoke to the rioters.²⁶⁶ Similarly, the Richmond City Council counted all officials equally responsible for dissipating the mob. During the special session on April 2, called in response to the bread riot, the Council resolved,

that the Council do tender their thanks and gratitude to President Davis, Governor Letcher, Mayor Mayo, and Honorable John B. Baldwin, for their timely and appropriate addresses and exertions during the continuance of this disgraceful affair, and by which the Council believe it was more speedily quieted.²⁶⁷

The different accounts make it impossible to determine which individual was primarily responsible for the ultimate quelling of the riot. The common denominator throughout the evidence is that many public officials found their appeals to the crowd unsuccessful and hence, they were forced to resort to threats of violence in order to subdue the masses. The riot destroyed the façade of class harmony, and the elite found their influence over the poor significantly reduced.

²⁶⁵ Thomas David Ranson Papers, Mss# 1R1752a1, Virginia Historical Society. Richmond, Virginia.

²⁶⁶ Harrison, *Recollections Grave and Gay*, 137.

²⁶⁷ Manarin, ed., *Richmond At War*, 312.

After the crowd finally dispersed, the Richmond police force quickly proceeded to arrest known and suspected participants. The threat of riot remained even after the crowd dissipated. Many eyewitnesses noted the formation of unruly women on the morning after the riot, April 3rd. Herbert Augustine Claiborne reported, "Riotous Spirit again manifested to day. Several women gathered. Doubtful whether the spirit assunder [*sic*] will cease until blood is shed. The government will do it if necessary. The actual suffering used by the rioters is a pretext."²⁶⁸ Others reported that the women attempted to resume rioting. On April 3, John Waring wrote, "The women started to brake [*sic*] in a store this morning but the officers stopped them."²⁶⁹ However, the Richmond City Council and the Confederate government took several steps to prevent the outbreak of any riots in the future. The councilmen placed cannon on Main Street and called Confederate troops into Richmond.²⁷⁰ Ultimately, the authorities arrested forty-three women and twenty-five men.²⁷¹ These individuals stood trial in the Richmond Hustings Court throughout the months of April and May 1863.

In the aftermath of the riot, the Confederate Secretary of War, James A. Seddon, issued a notice ordering the

²⁶⁸ Herbert Augustine Claiborne Diary, April 3, 1863, Virginia Historical Society.

²⁶⁹ Waring Family Papers, Mss# 2W2334b, Letter from John Waring to "Brother" and Addie, April 3, 1863, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁷⁰ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 286; Putnam, *Richmond During the War*, 209; Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?", 173. Chesson notes that troops under Major General Arnold Elzey were ordered to report to Richmond in order to prevent the eruption of further violence.

²⁷¹ Werner H. Steger, "'United to Support, But Not Combined to Injure': Free Workers and Immigrants in Richmond, Virginia, During the Era of Sectionalism, 1847-1865" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbian School of Arts and Sciences of The George Washington University, 1999), 291.

suppression of all public reports concerning the riot.²⁷² The government and the local elite believed reports of the riot would allow the Northern press to exaggerate accounts of suffering on the Southern home front. Catherine Edmondston elaborated on common perceptions of the Northern press: “Their hope now is to starve us out. They think we are suffering, ignore the fact of the depreciation of our currency, & quote the high price of provisions to prove it, [they] are jubilant over some mobs & riots which they call ‘bread riots.’”²⁷³ Thus, the day after the riot, April 3, J.B. Jones recorded, “No account of yesterday’s riot appeared in the papers to-day [*sic*], for obvious reasons.”²⁷⁴ He was slightly mistaken. The first report appeared in the *Richmond Examiner* on April 3. In some respects, this account was not surprising given the editor’s open anti-administration position. On the other hand, the *Richmond Enquirer*, *Sentinel*, *Dispatch*, and *Whig* complied with the government’s request not to print articles related to the riot.²⁷⁵ Those dailies did, however, publish accounts of the riot once the trials began.

The local press and diary portrayals of the riot conveyed a markedly biased tone against the rioters. Almost all of the diarists who included descriptions of the Bread Riot believed many citizens in Richmond suffered, but they did not think the riot participants were actually desperate for food. William Walter Cleary noted, “while provisions are scarce and prices high there is no doubt much suffering by the poor—the persons engaged in this were not poor or starving—but were actuated by motives of plunder, dry goods, jewelry, and Fancy goods seeming to be the objects of their Robbery.”²⁷⁶ Margaret Brown Wight also suspected the rioters had ulterior motives:

²⁷² Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, 204; *idem.*, “The Richmond Bread Riot of 1863: ‘A Manifest Uneasiness in the Public Mind,’” *The Virginia Cavalcade* 18 (Summer 1968), 46.

²⁷³ Crabtree and Patton, “*Journal of a Secesh Lady*,” 378.

²⁷⁴ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary*, 286.

²⁷⁵ Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines?,” 169-170.

²⁷⁶ William Walter Cleary Diary, April 2, 1863, Virginia Historical Society.

“The worthy women among the poorer class had not concern in it.”²⁷⁷

Similarly, the absence of beggars in Richmond convinced many that starvation was not a serious problem in the city. J.B. Jones commented, “To-day [sic] beef was selling in market at *one dollar* per pound. And yet one might walk for hours in vain, in quest of a beggar.”²⁷⁸ He went on to elaborate, “Not a beggar is yet to be seen in this city of 100,000 inhabitants!”²⁷⁹ Judith McGuire, another Richmond resident, concurred with Jones’s analysis. She wrote:

I saw the Rev. Mr. Peterkin, who is perhaps more thoroughly acquainted with the state of the poor than any man in the city. He says that they are admirably attended to. Large sums of money are put in the hands of the clergy for their benefit; this money is disbursed by ladies, whose duty and pleasure it is to relieve the suffering. One gentleman gave as much as \$5,000 last winter. Besides this, the industrious poor are supplied with work by the Government, and regularly paid for it.²⁸⁰

McGuire failed to recognize two things. First, although most individuals were indeed employed by the government, their wages were not sufficient to provide the necessary food and clothing for their families. Secondly, she, like many of the elite, underestimated the pride of the poor. They were not seeking charity. T.C. DeLeon conveyed his surprise when a poor woman refused to accept his money. He wrote,

A poor, fragile creature, still girlish and refined under the pinched and pallid features of starvation, tottered to me one day to beg work.

²⁷⁷ Margaret Brown Wight Diary, April 2, 1863, Virginia Historical Society.

²⁷⁸ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary*, 257.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 277.

²⁸⁰ McGuire, *Diary of A Southern Refugee*, 204.

“It is life or death for me and four young children,” she said. “We have eaten nothing to-day; and all last week lived on *three pints of rice!*”

Will Wyatt, who was near, made a generous offer of relief. Tears sprang into the woman’s eyes as she answered, “You mean kindness, major; but I have never asked charity yet. My husband is at the front; and I only ask a right—to be allowed to work for my children!”²⁸¹

DeLeon, had difficulty understanding this reaction, but attributed it to her dedication to the Southern cause, rather than to pride. In a similar manner, the Bread Riot began when women attempted to procure the right to *purchase* food at reasonable prices. These individuals were not accustomed to receiving aid and were often too proud to beg.²⁸²

This misconception carried into the printed media’s view of the rioters as foreigners, “Yankees,” and prostitutes. The rhetoric of the press was decidedly biased against the rioters. The *Examiner* depicted the leader of the riot, Mary Jackson, as “a good specimen of a forty year old Amazon, with the eye of the Devil.”²⁸³ Even the Confederate First Lady utilized these stereotypes in her description of the incident. Varina Davis also described Mary Jackson as “a tall, daring, Amazonian-looking woman.”²⁸⁴ The term “Amazonian” evoked notions of public women—prostitutes, not worthy of the sympathy of the community.

In its representation of the Richmond Bread Riot, the *Examiner* similarly depicted the crowd as composed solely of “prostitutes, professional thieves, Irish and Yankee hags and gallows birds from all lands.”²⁸⁵ Many of the diarists used the same descriptions. In an attempt to deny that serious need existed in Richmond, the elites used stereotypes to blame the motivation on external agents. After the riot, Catherine

²⁸¹ DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 234.

²⁸² Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines?,” 136.

²⁸³ *Richmond Examiner*, April 4, 1863.

²⁸⁴ Davis, *Jefferson Davis: A Memoir by his Wife*, 374.

²⁸⁵ *Richmond Examiner*, April 4, 1863.

Edmondston wrote, “We call them mobs for plunder & believe that they were instigated by the Yankees. They are composed of low foreigners, Irish, Dutch, & Yankee and in place of wanting bread they threw Rice, flour, etc., in the street & mobbed dry goods & shoe stores!”²⁸⁶ Sallie Putnam also made dubious claims about the composition of the mob. She wrote, “The rioters were represented in a heterogeneous crowd of Dutch, Irish, and free negroes—of men, women, and children...”²⁸⁷ T.C. DeLeon blamed the mob on the hated speculators and turned his description into praise for the loyalty and dedication of the Confederate soldiers. He recorded,

Suffice it that the human hyenas of speculation did prey upon the dying South...that thrice they stored the flour the people felt was theirs, in such great quantities and for so long, that before their maw for gain was gutted, serious riots of the starving called for the strong hand to interfere. And to the credit of the Government and southern soldier, be it said—even in that dark hour, with craving stomach and sickening soul—“Johnny Reb” obeyed his orders and guarded the den of the hyena—from his own hungering children, perhaps!²⁸⁸

These classifications allowed the upper class members of Richmond to legitimize the riot as externally motivated.

These illustrations were extremely inaccurate.

Historian Elizabeth R. Varon is highly critical of the portrayal of the rioters. She writes, “The response of the Confederate authorities, press, and elite to the riot reflects a distinct lack of empathy for the poor, a virulent sexism, and deep anxiety about the machinations of the ‘secret enemies’ of the South.”²⁸⁹ Varon’s conclusion, although harsh in her criticism,

²⁸⁶ Crabtree and Patton, “*Journal of a Secesh Lady*,” 378.

²⁸⁷ Putnam, *Richmond During the War*, 208.

²⁸⁸ DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 237-238.

²⁸⁹ Elizabeth R. Varon, *The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, A Union Agent in the Heart of the Confederacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 104.

is accurate. The Richmond elite, in an attempt to deny that any fissures existed in the Southern social system, blamed the riot on outsiders and social outcasts.

Contrary to the descriptions provided by the elite, the women who participated in the riot came mostly from the local poor of Richmond. Scholars detect only one instance of a wealthy individual's participation. One member, Mrs. Margaret Adeline Pomfrey did actually possess land and property which made her fairly wealthy. According to the United States Census of 1860, she owned a total of 127.5 acres and a few slaves.²⁹⁰ Mrs. Pomfrey, however, was an anomaly.

The majority of rioters did not own slaves or substantial property. One protester, Martha Jamieson, testified that over 300 women employed by Weisiger's clothing factory took part in the riot.²⁹¹ Indeed, many of the rioters were starving, according to both J.B. Jones and Sara Pryor's friend, Agnes.²⁹²

In terms of starvation, historian Paul D. Escott believes that it was a real possibility in the Confederacy. He writes, "The extent of suffering was staggering...Some idea of the dimensions of poverty can be grasped from the fact that at the end of the war more than a quarter of Alabama's white citizens were on relief."²⁹³ Hospital matron Phoebe Pember believed soldiers' concerns about providing for their families encouraged desertions from the army. She wrote,

Almost all of these letters told the same sad tale of destitution of food and clothing, even shoes of the roughest kind being too expensive for the mass or unattainable by the expenditure of any sum, in many parts of the country...how hard for the husband or father to remain inactive in winter quarters, knowing

²⁹⁰ 1860 Census, New Kent County, p. 33, quoted in Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?", 162.

²⁹¹ *Richmond Examiner*, April 24, 1863, quoted in Steger, "Free Workers and Immigrants in Richmond", 297.

²⁹² Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 284-285; Pryor, *Reminiscences of Peace and War*, 238.

²⁹³ Escott, "The Cry of the Sufferers," 230.

that his wife and little ones were literally starving at home—not even at home, for few homes were left.²⁹⁴

In Richmond, as much as in the regions Escott describes, a similar situation emerged. Even middle class members observed the suffering. In reference to President Davis's designation of March 27, 1863, as a day of fasting and prayer, J.B. Jones despaired, "Fasting in the midst of famine! May God save this people!"²⁹⁵ Even the middle classes, previously comfortable, could not afford to provide sufficient nourishment for their families. Jones described a common dinner for his family. It consisted of "...twelve eggs, \$1.25; a little corn bread, some rice and potatoes. How long shall we have even this variety and amount?"²⁹⁶ Richmond's rampant inflation due to overcrowding, impressment, and speculation made it impossible for an increasing number of citizens to provide for themselves and their families. Jones relayed a chilling narrative about his daughter's encounter with a starving rat:

Some idea may be formed of the scarcity of food in this city from the fact that, while my youngest daughter was in the kitchen to-day, a young rat came out of its hole and seemed to beg for something to eat; she held out some bread, which it ate from her hand, and seemed grateful. Several others soon appeared, and were as tame as kittens. Perhaps we shall have to eat them!²⁹⁷

This suffering permeated throughout the middle and lower classes of the city. Although working class women and children from the city of Richmond composed the majority of the mob, men also participated in the Richmond Bread Riot.

²⁹⁴ Phoebe Yates Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story: Life in Confederate Richmond* (Jackson: McCowat-Mercer Press, Inc., 1959), 60.

²⁹⁵ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 280.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 268.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 257.

Chesson postulates that historians have estimated the role of men incorrectly. He writes, “The role played by men in the bread riot may have been somewhat understated. Although the organizers and leaders were women, the riot had masculine support.”²⁹⁸ Almost every eyewitness commented that men aided the women. Often, these men received harsher judgments than the women involved. Margaret Brown Wight wrote, “They were accompanied by men of the worst character who no doubt were at the bottom of this infamous proceeding.”²⁹⁹

Similarly, a few women from outside the city of Richmond participated in the riot. Margaret Adeline Pomfrey lived over 11.5 miles away from the city.³⁰⁰ Most likely, she traveled to her home in Port Mayo (directly outside Richmond) the night before the riot in order to take part the next morning. Her participation in the Richmond Bread Riot proves that word of the April 1st meeting had spread throughout the city. Regardless of the elite observers’ attempts to dismiss the riot as a spontaneous, insignificant event, it was, in actuality, a protest planned in advance as a result of general discontent among the poorer citizens of Richmond. Disapproval existed in the city and the women refused to continue complying with the outrageous demands which the government placed on its citizens.

Although the riot was deemed a “bread riot,” the participants needed much more than just food. The price of clothing increased in a manner comparable to all other prices in the Confederacy. Kate Cumming, a Confederate nurse, noted in her diary, “In the matter of dress we are pretty ‘hard up,’ and if the war lasts much longer, I for one will have ‘nothing to wear.’”³⁰¹ Phoebe Pember noted that many wives

²⁹⁸ Chesson, “Richmond Jews and the Bread Riot,” 10-11.

²⁹⁹ Margaret Brown Wight Diary, April 2, 1863, Virginia Historical Society.

³⁰⁰ Henry Steele Commager, ed., *The Official Atlas of the Civil War* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1958), XIX.

³⁰¹ Kate Cumming, *A Journal of Hospital Life in the Confederate Army of Tennessee from the Battle of Shiloh to the End of the War: With Sketches of Life and Character, and*

applying for furloughs for their husbands cited the deficiency of clothing and shoes on the home front. She wrote, "Almost all of these letters told the same sad tale of destitution of food and clothing, even shoes of the roughest kind being either too expensive for the mass or unattainable by the expenditure of any sum, in many parts of the country."³⁰² J.B. Jones noted that in Richmond specifically, many individuals suffered for lack of clothing. He wrote, "We are all in rags, especially our underclothes."³⁰³ Although food presented a more immediate concern, clothing was a matter of more than mere fashion in the Confederacy.

In actuality, clothing represented the most basic sense of social standing for women in the South. Werner Steger cautions scholars not to underestimate the importance of clothing in the minds of the female rioters. He writes, "On the one hand, good and clean clothes were a symbol of respectability for many women; on the other, women were often socially judged solely based on their physical appearance."³⁰⁴ By April 1863, many women were clothed in threadbare material that barely sufficed to cover their bodies. Shoes were also an almost unheard of luxury. Thus, the looting of clothing and shoe stores during the Richmond Bread Riot did not constitute rampant thievery as many of the accounts portrayed. Instead, the women seized goods which were a necessity for their survival and for their standing as respectable women.

The trials of many participants confirmed the importance of clothing in Richmond society. The better dressed and more attractive women often received more

Brief Notices of Current Events During that Period
(Louisville, KY: John P. Morton and Co., 1866), 160.

³⁰² Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story*, 60.

³⁰³ Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary*, 278.

³⁰⁴ Steger, "Free Workers and Immigrants in Richmond," 301-302. Steger conducts the most in depth analysis of the importance of clothing in terms of social standing. He bases his conclusions on Michael Chesson's evaluation of the effects of fashion on sentences received by the rioters.

lenient sentences from the Richmond Hustings Court.³⁰⁵ The cases of Laura Gordon and Mary Woodward display this tendency. Mary Woodward was described as “genteel looking” and “pretty and handsomely dressed.” Although she was charged with assaulting a police officer and was caught with stolen goods including flour, soap, and bacon, she was quickly released after her prosperous mother-in-law posted her bail.³⁰⁶ Similarly, Laura Gordon was depicted as “a young lady of some means” and “neatly dressed.” The police discovered stolen items in her home and she was originally sentenced to thirty days in jail. After she fainted in the court room, however, the judge reduced her sentence to four hours.³⁰⁷

By way of contrast, older women often received harsher sentences. Chesson notes, “Middle-aged and elderly women, even if nicely dressed and able to afford an attorney, did not escape so lightly.”³⁰⁸ Two older women, Mary Johnson and Frances Kelley, were indicted despite the fact that they were well represented by lawyers. Johnson, a mother of two older children, received the harshest punishment of all of the individuals tried in court: five years in the Virginia State Penitentiary. Kelley, a widow, was sentenced to thirty days in jail even though she was convicted of stealing goods worth less than twenty dollars.³⁰⁹ These older women received notably harsher sentences than the young, well-dressed

³⁰⁵ Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines?”, 163.

³⁰⁶ *Richmond Examiner*, April 3, 4, 7, 8, 1863, quoted in Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines?”, 163.

³⁰⁷ *Richmond Dispatch*, May 8, 1863; *Richmond Examiner*, April 16, 28, 1863; *Richmond Enquirer*, April 18, 27, 1863 quoted in Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines?”, 164.

³⁰⁸ Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines?”, 164.

³⁰⁹ *Richmond Examiner*, April 6 and October 12, 1863; *Richmond Sentinel*, April 14, May 22, June 17, and November 12, 1863, February 11 and March 1, 1864; *Richmond Enquirer*, April 14 and October 10, 1863; *Richmond Dispatch*, June 17, 1863, January 28, February 11, and March 1, 1864 quoted in Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines?”, 164-165.

women. This obvious bias underscores the importance which clothing and outward appearance held in Richmond society.

These women's complaints about the scarcity of clothing represented their desire for relief and assistance. The Confederacy's detached policy regarding support for the poor created a distinct sense of abandonment. Paul Escott believes that the Confederate government unwisely took an inactive stance toward poverty. The elite members of the government did not foresee the problems their legislation created. Escott notes, "Jefferson Davis and his administration were slow to recognize poverty as a major internal problem which demanded their attention, and they tended to respond to it in a piecemeal way."³¹⁰ Moreover, the government supported private or state-run charities rather than assuming an active, visible role. Many of the people who would have benefited from Confederate poor relief were the families of Southern soldiers. Proper measures for the support of families on the home front would have decreased desertions from the Confederate army and aided the Confederate war effort.

One factor which contributed to the inactivity of both the government and the elite was the notion of shared sacrifice. The rhetoric of the Richmond press was steeped with accolades for Confederate women's untiring sacrifices on behalf of their country and their soldiers. Among the upper classes, many believed that shared suffering lessened class distinctions. The *Richmond Dispatch* reported, "All classes, because of the impossibility of procuring delicacies, have to go without them, but the substantial of life, such as meats, bread, and vegetables, are plentiful, and the few that cannot purchase them readily find aid in their more fortunate neighbors and friends."³¹¹ The Richmond Bread Riot illuminated the errors in this assumption. Often, the elite could afford to arrange for goods to be delivered from country plantations. Mary Chesnut wrote in the fall of 1863, "We had sent us from home wine, rice, potatoes, hams, eggs, butter,

³¹⁰ Escott, "The Cry of the Sufferers," 233.

³¹¹ *Richmond Dispatch*, June 26, 1863.

pickles. About once a month a man came on with all that the plantation could furnish us.”³¹²

This disparity between the goods available to the poor and wealthy members of society only increased as the war progressed. Many of the upper class continued to host elaborate parties with an abundance of meat, fruit, and cakes. Although the elite contended they supported the war effort by attending starvation parties (parties where no food was served), they fed themselves in the privacy of their homes prior to attending.³¹³ Mary Chesnut, as well as many of the elite in Richmond, complained about high prices, yet continued to procure the delicacies. For example, as late as December 1863, Mary Chesnut recorded the food provided at dinner on Christmas Day. She wrote, “Today my dinner was comparatively a simple affair—oysters, ham, turkey, partridges, and good wine.”³¹⁴ Chesnut and others believed in the nobility of their monetary sacrifice in purchasing such goods, but they failed to notice that the lower classes could not afford to purchase items of basic necessity such as bacon, corn, or peas.³¹⁵

³¹² Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 434.

³¹³ DeLeon, *Belles, Beaux, and Brains of the 60's*, 61.

³¹⁴ Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 515.

³¹⁵ Cumming, *A Journal of Hospital Life in the Confederate Army of Tennessee*, 159; Harriet E. Amos, “‘All-Absorbing Topics’: Food and Clothing in Confederate Mobile,” *The Atlanta Historical Journal* 12, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1978), 24. Amos’s conclusions regarding the problems of food distribution in Confederate Mobile show that the deficiency of goods on the Richmond market was not an isolated incident. In Mobile, Amos also observes the same pattern of disparity between classes which existed in Richmond. She writes about a young woman named Mary Waring who was offered fruit at a party. Amos concludes, “Though people of limited means found it difficult to obtain special food as the war progressed, those who moved in fashionable circles still enjoyed as late as August 1863 treats such as those offered to young Mary Waring.” The fact that Mobile experienced many of the same problems as Richmond proves that the Confederacy as a whole

Another notion which influenced the Confederate government to take a detached stance toward relief was the antebellum tradition of paternalism. As Drew Gilpin Faust notes, “The farm or plantation also served as the primary site of social and political organization.”³¹⁶ The Southern elite adhered to the notion that those who possessed the means were responsible for caring for the less fortunate members of society. Thus, the many small farmers or squatters on the outskirts of plantations often looked to the plantation owners for both advice and support. According to one scholar, George Wythe Randolph served on in the Richmond City Council because of “a sense of enlightened social responsibility. His elitist sense of responsibility required him to do what he could for society when the able-bodied men were in the field.”³¹⁷ As the war progressed, however, and the notion of universal suffering dominated the minds of upper class Southerners, many neglected their responsibility of assisting the poor. The rich also felt the stresses of war and often chose to provide for themselves and their families rather than fulfilling the antebellum responsibility of aiding the poorer members of the community. The poor’s sense of abandonment only contributed to the idea circulating among the lower classes that the War was essentially a “rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.”

Although the poor contended that the elite had neglected their paternalistic responsibility, Richmond actually had a distinct tradition of poor relief in the antebellum era. Samuel Mordecai, in his description of pre-war Richmond, emphasized the city’s dedication to the care of those who had difficulty providing for themselves. He wrote, “*The Amicable Society* was instituted in 1788, with the benevolent object of relieving strangers and wayfarers, in distress, for whom the

experienced difficulty adapting its class system to the stresses of war.

³¹⁶ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 32.

³¹⁷ George Green Shackelford, *George Wythe Randolph and the Confederate Elite* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), 81.

law makes no provision.”³¹⁸ He also noted the existence of other charitable organizations, including the Male Orphan Asylum and the Female Humane Association.³¹⁹

In the patriotic afterglow of secession, however, the wealthy lost sight of the tradition of assisting the poor. The Richmond City Council demonstrated its lack of consideration for the city’s lower class citizens when, on June 5, 1861, it resolved, “That the Committee on the Alms House be authorized to stop the work, or any part of it, on the said Alms House... That the said committee be authorized to allow the use of the Alms House as a temporary hospital for sick soldiers...”³²⁰ Thus, Richmond’s leaders proved that their priorities lay in supporting the Confederacy and the Confederate Army, rather than providing security for their own domestic poor.

Although the reaction came too late, the Richmond Bread Riot spurred an alteration of both city and Confederate policies regarding poor relief. The Richmond City Council took the first measures to create a long term solution. On April 13, 1863, the council passed “An Ordinance For the Relief of Poor Persons Not in the Poor House.” It established a free market and provided relief in the form of “provisions or fuel.”³²¹ The ordinance made it explicitly clear, however, that it would provide relief only to the deserving and “worthy poor.” The “unworthy poor” were those individuals who had “participated in a riot, rout, or unlawful assembly.”³²² Thus, the Council asserted the notion that riots were not the proper forum of popular protest. The councilmen refused to accept the legitimacy of the claims of the participants in the Richmond Bread Riot. Their reaction, however, proved they acknowledged that at the time of the riot, the city did not employ sufficient relief measures for the lower classes.

³¹⁸ Samuel Mordecai, *Richmond in By-Gone Days; Being Reminiscences of An Old Citizen* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 181.

³¹⁹ DeCredico, “Richmond Goes To War: 1861-1865,” 30-32.

³²⁰ Manarin, ed., *Richmond at War*, 44.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 321.

³²² *Ibid.*, 320.

The sense of neglect was not isolated to Richmond. The Richmond Bread Riot coincided with numerous other Southern food riots in places as diverse as New Orleans, Louisiana, Dalton, Georgia, Salisbury, Greensboro, and Durham, North Carolina, Mobile, Alabama, and Atlanta and Savannah, Georgia.³²³ Historian E. Susan Barber believes that the riots corresponded to the shortage of supplies that occurred every winter.³²⁴ The riots that erupted in the early spring months of 1863 may have encouraged the women of Richmond to undertake similar action. Moreover, the *Richmond Enquirer's* favorable portrayal of the Salisbury rioters in March 1863 may have contributed to the women's initiation of the Richmond Bread Riot.³²⁵

The Confederate Congress also reacted to the Bread Riot. Soon after, on May 1, 1863, the Confederate government passed another exemption act that "gave Confederate officials another means to alleviate individual cases of poverty."³²⁶ This act exempted individuals "in districts...deprived of white or slave labor indispensable to the production of grain or provisions."³²⁷ Essentially, this change in policy allowed more men who were necessary for the survival of their families to remain home and continue farming. These acts did little to reverse the damage to public morale, however. One historian classifies this Confederate government initiative "as offering

³²³ These other food riots also achieved constructive results. The riots in New Orleans, Savannah, and Mobile, for example, prompted the cities to create free markets. See E. Susan Barber, "The Quiet Battles of the Home Front War": Civil War Bread Riots and the Development of a Confederate Welfare System" (M.A. Thesis, University of Maryland, 1986), 17-18.

³²⁴ Barber, "Civil War Bread Riots and the Development of a Confederate Welfare System," 17.

³²⁵ Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?," 137.

³²⁶ Escott, "The Cry of the Sufferers," 233.

³²⁷ Matthews, *The Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America*, 158-59.

too little, too late.”³²⁸ The Confederacy had already lost much of its support on the home front. The failure of the elite and the Confederate government to provide for its needy citizens from the beginning of the war contributed to the outbreak of the Richmond Bread Riot. The legislative responses could not repair the sense of abandonment the poor classes felt.

* * *

The Richmond Bread Riot and the other food riots that wracked the Confederacy were visible signs of the inability of the Southern elite and the Confederate government to adapt to changing wartime requirements. The policies of the government and the stresses of a wartime atmosphere created a volatile social environment. The massive mobilization of war took the elite’s focus off support for the community and toward the war effort at all costs. The poor felt neglected, and had a difficult time providing for themselves and their families. Confederate policies aroused dissent among the lower classes, fuelled discontent, and spurred accusations of a “rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.” The ineptitude of the government in dealing with financial matters contributed to rampant inflation and speculation, which further accentuated the disparity between the upper and lower classes. The stresses of war added to the overcrowding in Richmond and drove prices to even more unrealistic levels. These factors, in combination with the brutal weather of the spring of 1863, made an uprising of some sort almost inevitable. The riot, then, was the result of both Confederate mismanagement and the inaccurate elite perception of the plight of the poor.

The major consequence of the government’s shortcomings was the reinforcement of loyalty to the state governments at the expense of loyalty to the Confederate government. Escott believes that the states provided for the welfare of its poorer citizens when they saw that the government in Richmond failed to do so. According to Escott, Responding to their constituents’ needs, state leaders attempted to shield their citizens from further sacrifice, and when they came into conflict with

³²⁸ Barber, “Civil War Bread Riots and the Development of a Confederate Welfare System,” 79.

Confederate programs, they raised the familiar cry of state rights as justification. Thus, the quarrels over state rights in 1864 were a symptom of the welfare problem rather than an independent cause of difficulties.³²⁹

Stephen Ambrose reached a similar conclusion. He also believed that the refusal of the Confederate Congress to incorporate the concerns of the common man in its legislation undercut the war effort. According to Ambrose, “The government had forfeited the support of the Yeomen, and without them the South could never win.”³³⁰ Hence, the harmonious society on which the South had prided itself in the antebellum era proved a mere illusion. The “aristocracy of color” served only as an instrument to hide the fissures of class in Southern society; the requirements of war shattered this illusion. Drew Gilpin Faust summarizes the consequences: “The upheavals of war created conceptual and emotional as well as social dislocations, compelling Southerners to rethink their most fundamental assumptions about their identities and the logic of their places in the world.”³³¹ The Richmond Bread Riot was the most obvious example of this destruction of traditional identity. It forced both women and the poor to re-evaluate their role in society.

After the War’s end, the remaining men returned to their homes and their families; however, they found life much different than they had left it. Their wives had been forced to assume previously unacceptable duties in their absence. Blacks were no longer bound in slavery. Many of the members of the elite stood side by side with the working class in destitution. The boundaries between class, race, and gender, on which Southerners had previously determined their place in society, had shifted beyond recognition. Thus, Southern society remained forever changed and the Reconstruction South became a world of uncertainty and doubt.

³²⁹ Escott, “The Cry of the Sufferers,” 238.

³³⁰ Ambrose, “Yeoman Discontent in the Confederacy,” 268.

³³¹ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 4.

Table 1
Relative Values of Estate of Confederate Congressmen³³²

<i>Relative Value of Estate</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	Percentage
No Estate (0%)	1	.4

³³² Thomas B. Alexander and Richard E. Beringer, *The Anatomy of the Confederate Congress: A Study of the Influences of Member Characteristics on Legislative Voting Behavior, 1861-1865* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1972), 20. Alexander and Beringer compare the congressmen's estates with the average estate in their home counties. According to the authors, and as the above table illustrates, "More than half (130, or 54 percent) of the congressmen for whom this information has been located held estates that were at least 600 percent of the average ownership in their home counties." See page 18.

Below Average (1-50%)	11	4.1
Average (21-200%)	35	13.1
Above Average (201-600%)	64	24
Much Above Average (601%+)	130	48.67
Unknown Estate Category	26	9.7
TOTAL	267	100

Table 2
Comparison of Food Prices for Small Family
Richmond, Virginia, 1860 and 1863.³³³

Item	1860	1863	% Increase
Bacon, 10 lbs.	1.25	10.00	700
Flour, 30 lbs.	1.50	3.75	150

³³³ Barber, "Civil War Bread Riots and the Development of a Confederate Welfare System," 20. Barber cites the *Richmond Dispatch* article from 29 January 1863 for the information in the above table. The prices only continued to rise as the effects of weather and impressment increased throughout the spring of 1863. However, the *Dispatch* article blamed only the speculators for the sharp increase in prices. It reported, "So much we owe the speculators, who have staid [sic] at home to prey upon the necessities of their fellow citizens." It never mentioned the government's responsibility for inflation.

Sugar, 30 lbs.	.40	.75	88
Coffee, 4 lbs.	.50	20.00	3900
Green Tea, ½ lb.	.50	8.00	1500
Lard, 4 lbs.	.50	4.00	700
Butter, 3 lbs.	.75	5.25	600
Meal, 1 peck	.25	1.00	300
Candles, 2 lbs.	.30	2.50	733

Appendix I
A Factual First-Hand Observation

Letter from Hal Tutwiler to Nettie Tutwiler, April 3, 1863

We have had a dreadful riot here yesterday, & they are keeping it up today, but they are not near as bad today as they were yesterday. But I will begin at the first.

Thursday morning I went to the office as usual. A few minutes after I got in, I heard a most tremendous cheering, went to the window to see what was going on, but could not tell what it was about & So we all went down into the street. When we arrived at the scene we found that a large number of women had broken into two or three large grocery establishments, & were helping themselves to hams, middlings, butter, and in fact every thing they could find. Almost every one of them were armed. Some had a belt on with a pistol stuck in each side, others

had a large knife, while some were only armed with a hatchet, axe or hammer. As fast as they got what they wanted they walked off with it.

The men instead of trying to put a stop to this shameful proceeding cheered them on & assisted them all in their power. When they [the women] found that the guards were on Cary st. they turned around & went up on Main street and broke into several stores. In the morning before they began they went up to the Capitol, & Governor [John] Letcher made them a speech, but it was like pouring oil on fire. After that the Prest. [Jefferson Davis] made them a speech, and while they were engaged in their robbery the mayor of the city [Joseph Mayo] came down to make them another. But it did no good.

I think there were fully 5000 persons on Cary st., if not more, besides that many more on Main and Broad. This morning they began again but they were told that if they did not disperse they would be fired on.

One woman knocked out a pane of glass out of a shop window, of which the door was fastened, & put her arm in to steal something, but the shopman cut all four of her fingers off. I was right in the middle of the row all the time. It was the most horrible sight I ever saw...

Have heard how the riot ended this morning. Gov. Letcher told them he gave the five minutes to disperse & if they did not disperse he would have them fired on by the city guards. They immediately began to leave the streets & in a few minutes they were comparatively vacant. The stores have been closed for the last two days.³³⁴

³³⁴ Ambrose, "The Bread Riots in Richmond," 203. This is one of the most straightforward depictions of the riot. It contains few editorial comments and bears a striking contrast to Sallie Putnam's judgmental tone.

Appendix II
An Upper Class Observation

Sallie Brock Putnam

Originating in Richmond in the Spring of this year, (1863,) a most disgraceful riot, to which, in order to conceal the real designs of the lawless mob engaged in it, was given the name of the “bread riot.”

The rioters were represented in a heterogeneous crowd of Dutch, Irish, and free negroes—of men, women, and children—armed with pistols, knives, hammers, hatchets, axes, and every other weapon which could be made useful in their defence, or might subserve their designs in breaking into stores for the purpose of thieving. More impudent and defiant robberies were never committed, than disgraced, in the open light of day, on a bright morning in spring, the city of Richmond. The cry for bread with which this violence commenced was soon subdued, and instead of

articles of food, the rioters directed their efforts to the stores containing dry-goods, shoes, etc. Women were seen bending under loads of sole-leather, or dragging after them heavy cavalry boots, brandishing their huge knives, and swearing, though apparently well fed, that they were dying from starvation—yet it was difficult to imagine how they could masticate or digest the edibles under the weight of which they were bending. Men carried immense loads of cotton cloth, woolen goods, and other articles, and but few were seen to attack the stores where flour, groceries, and other provisions were kept.

This disgraceful mob was put to flight by the military. Cannon were planted in the street, and the order to disperse or be fired upon drove the rioters from the commercial portion of the city to the Capitol Square, where they menaced the Governor, until, by the continued threatenings of the State Guards and the efforts of the police in arresting the ringleaders, a stop was put to these lawless and violent proceedings.

It cannot be denied that want of bread was at this time too fatally true, but the sufferers for food were not to be found in this mob of vicious men and lawless viragoes who, inhabiting quarters of the city where reigned riot and depravity, when followed to their homes after this demonstration were discovered to be well supplied with articles of food. Some of them were the keepers of stores, to which they purposed adding the stock stolen in their raid on wholesale houses.

This demonstration was made use of by the disaffected in our midst, and by our enemies abroad, for the misrepresentation and exaggeration of our real condition. In a little while the papers of the North published the most startling and highly colored accounts of the starving situation of the inhabitants of Richmond. By the prompt preventive measures brought into requisition this riot was effectually silenced, and no demonstration of the kind was afterwards made during the war.

The real sufferers were not of the class who would engage in acts of violence to obtain bread, but included the most worthy and highly cultivated of our citizens, who, by the suspension of the ordinary branches of business, and the extreme inflation in the prices of provisions, were often reduced to abject suffering; and helpless refugees, who, driven from comfortable homes, were compelled to seek relief in the crowded city, at the time insufficiently furnished with the means of living for the resident population, and altogether inadequate to the increased numbers thrown daily into it by the progress of events. How great their necessities must have been can be imagined from the fact the many of our women, reared in the utmost ease, delicacy and refinement, were compelled to dispose of all articles of taste and former luxury, and frequently necessary articles of clothing, to meet the everyday demands of life.

These miseries and inconveniences were submitted to in no fault-finding spirit; and although the poverty of the masses increased from day, to-day there is no doubt that the sympathies of the people were unflinching with the revolution in all of its phases. Our sufferings were severe, and the uncomplaining temper in which they were borne was surely no evidence that there was in the Southern masses a disposition of craven submission, but rather of heroic devotion to a cause which brought into exercise the sublime power 'to suffer and be strong.' While our enemies in their country were fattening upon all the comforts of life, faring sumptuously every day, clothing themselves in rich garments, and enjoying all that could make existence desirable, they made merry over the miseries endured by the South, and laughed at the self-abnegation of a people who surrendered luxuries and comforts without a murmur for the cause of the revolution.³³⁵

³³⁵ Putnam, *Richmond During the War*, 208-210. Sallie Putnam's description of the Richmond Bread Riot is colorful

Appendix III Comparison to European Food Riots

The Richmond Bread Riot bears a striking resemblance to the European food riots of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. However, few modern accounts of the Richmond Bread Riot incorporate this comparison. Michael Chesson briefly references the European riots; however, E. Susan Barber conducts the most extensive analysis. She seeks to understand whether the Richmond Bread Riot follows patterns similar to the ones exhibited by the European food riots and she concurs that the two do, indeed, correspond in both form and motive.³³⁶

Barber correctly concludes that the riot exhibits many of the characteristics of the European food riots of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the foremost

and critical in its incriminating language. She blames the mob on citizens with criminal intentions rather than considering the fact the many of the rioters may have been suffering. Many of the diary entries and newspaper editorials also contain many of the same stereotypes. The common theme in all of the portrayals is the tendency of the author to deny the legitimacy of the rioters' complaints. The riotous actions of the women violated that long standing veneer of class harmony in the South. Many of the upper class members refused to accept that transition and justified the actions of the women by blaming it on external agents or citizens of ill repute. They developed the concept of the "worthy poor": those who suffered silently and did not engage in unconventional behavior.

³³⁶ Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?", 136-137; Barber, "Civil War Bread Riots and the Development of a Confederate Welfare System," 106-109.

historians on women's studies in Western Europe, Louis A. Tilly, proposes that three classifications of food riots existed in France in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. According to Tilly, the first type of riot, the market riot, took place in the cities and "was usually aimed at bakers whose prices were too high and whose loaves were too few, at city residents who were suspected of hoarding supplies of grain in their houses, and at government officials who failed to act swiftly to ease a food shortage."³³⁷ The next classification, the entrave, occurred only in rural settings. In this form, the rioters took the grain from wagons on their way to market. Tilly calls the last kind of food riot, *taxation populaire*. In this type, the rioters seized goods, set a fair price, and sold the goods in order to reimburse the original seller.³³⁸

The Bread Riot in Richmond most closely resembles the market riot. The riot took place in an urban environment and the women first approached the government officials who they believed had not done enough to solve the problem of unreasonable prices. There is also evidence that the rioters did, in some instances, target known speculators, foreigners, and Jews.³³⁹ The class tension which had been building in Richmond created resentment among the poor toward the successful merchants in the city. The less prosperous members of society believed that these speculators and wealthy merchants were merely profiting from the war effort and had little cause for patriotism, loyalty, or sacrifice. The newspapers were rich with exhortations against these individuals. Many of the women involved in the bread riots had at least one, and in most cases, multiple family members involved in the war and thus, wealthy merchants and those with no apparent ties to the Confederacy constituted the prime targets for looting and violence.³⁴⁰ This targeting reveals that the Richmond Bread Riot closely resembles the market riots

³³⁷ Louise A. Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1971): 23.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

³³⁹ Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines?," 171-172.

³⁴⁰ Walthall, *Hidden Things Brought To Light*, 24.

which occurred in France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The riot also closely resembles the qualities of the English crowd in the eighteenth century as described by E.P. Thompson. He believed that:

It is possible to detect in almost every eighteenth-century crowd action some legitimizing notion. By the notion of legitimation I mean that the men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs; and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community.³⁴¹

Essentially, every community possesses a set of moral norms. When these norms are violated, the crowd believes that unprecedented action becomes permissible. Thompson elaborated on this idea by defining what he calls the “moral economy of the crowd.” He writes that a violation of societal standards and responsibilities, “taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor. An outrage to these moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action.”³⁴² In the case of the Richmond Bread Riot, the legitimizing notion was the belief that every individual deserved the opportunity to purchase necessary items at a reasonable price. Thus, the rioters exactly resembled Thompson’s descriptions of the rioters in the English crowds.

Another similarity between the European riots and the Richmond Bread Riot was the existence of political motives. Both George F. E. Rudé and Louise Tilly believe in the close correlation of political undercurrents and food riots. Tilly states, “The emergence of the food riot marked the nationalization and politicization of the problem of subsistence, and was based on a popular model of how the

³⁴¹ E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present*, no. 50 (1971): 78.

³⁴² Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd,” 79.

economy should work.”³⁴³ The first connection between motives of hunger and political change surfaced during the French Revolution. Public animosity rose first over the price of bread in April, 1789. However, this unrest evolved into political upheaval.³⁴⁴ The trend did not cease with the end of the Revolution. Rudé wrote, “there are political, ‘patriotic,’ and antiroyalist undercurrents and accompaniments (particularly in the riots of November 1792) ... In Paris, too the grocery riots of 1793, at least, had political undertones.”³⁴⁵

These political motives also surfaced in the Richmond Bread Riot. The women desired the availability of reasonably priced food at government prices. They abhorred the legislation that legalized impressment and the Tax-in-Kind. They first desired to bargain with the Governor, but when he took no direct action, the women took what the government refused to provide them. The rioters took direct action toward remedying the problem of affordable goods.

The Richmond Bread Riot bears a striking resemblance to the European food riots in both form and motive. Although the women of Richmond may not have known about the utilization of the food riot in Europe, they undertook the same method in order to achieve change. Thus, the food riot was an effective mode of protest in both America and Europe.

³⁴³ Tilly, “The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France,” 26.

³⁴⁴ George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 63.

³⁴⁵ George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (London: Serif, 2005), 119.

