

THE FIRST BATTLE FOR RICHMOND: THE RELOCATION OF THE CONFEDERATE
CAPITAL

by

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Introduction

On May 26, 1861, President Jefferson Davis traveled by train from Montgomery, Alabama, to Richmond, Virginia, the newly-selected capital of the Confederacy. During the journey, the train made frequent stops for fuel, and citizens gathered around the train cars, calling for Davis. Yielding to popular demand, the president addressed the crowd with his “flute like voice.” The train continued to chug along to Atlanta and Augusta, Georgia, and then, pressed on to Wilmington, and Goldsboro, North Carolina. In Goldsboro, soldiers formed squares escorting the president and his entourage amidst booming guns. During the procession, music filled the air while ladies fanned the president and garlanded him with flowers during supper at a local hotel.

Richmond patiently awaited Davis’s arrival. Early on the morning of May 29, Davis’s train entered Richmond via the Petersburg Railroad, and a large, eager crowd greeted him as cannon smoke filled the air. When he stepped off the train, a four-horse carriage took Davis and his accompanying guests, the governor of Virginia and Richmond’s mayor, to the Spotswood Hotel. As the president traveled to his temporary residence, he likely noticed music and the surrounding homes festooned with the Stars and Bars. Richmond held no formal ceremony, and Davis had little need for one. He reached room number 83 and found it elegantly decorated with the Confederate coat of arms and flag. However, he had little time to settle due to the chants coming from outside the hotel. As the music stopped playing, the exhausted president made his way to the window, made another speech, and thanked the elated crowd. Thus, the Confederacy’s government, as personified by its chief executive, had completed its relocation from Montgomery, Alabama, to Richmond, Virginia. But why did the Confederacy remove its capital?¹

¹ “The Journey of President Davis to Richmond,” *Richmond Enquirer Semi-Weekly*, May 31, 1861; *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, June 4, 1861; “President Davis in Richmond,” *Daily Dispatch*, May 30, 1861; “Arrival of President Davis in Richmond,” *Richmond Daily Examiner*,

There was no single reason for the removal, but politics and military necessity played central roles in the decision. Confederate politicians resided for several months in Montgomery and quickly recognized that the city had many inadequacies, including subpar hotel accommodations, poor roads, heat, bugs, exorbitant prices, bad food, and small government offices, weakening any chance for that place to remain the seat of government. More importantly, the secession of the Upper South, including Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, and especially Virginia, gave the Confederacy hope in the form of assets that the Lower South, including South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, and Florida, lacked. Virginia was the Confederacy's most important state in terms of population, minerals, agricultural wealth, a sentimental value in the collective memory of the American Revolution's Founding Fathers, and an unrivaled military manufacturing complex. At the same time, Virginia's geographic location within the Confederacy, near the north, placed the state in harm's way of a Northern invasion. Therefore, the nation needed to direct its military might and moral support to shield the Old Dominion from aggression. Understanding Virginia's position as the seat of war is crucial to explaining the reasons for the removal.

The Confederacy transferred the capital in part to honor Virginia's alliance with the Confederacy. The relocation of the capital from a Lower South state to the seat of war expressed boldness, which not only legitimized the Confederate experiment by showing strong character but could potentially garner support from loyal border states or even European powers. Many Confederates believed that Jefferson Davis, as Commander-in-Chief, would play a fundamental role as the leading commander in the field of battle, and that made the president's presence in Virginia essential. Even if Davis did not take command of troops in the field, he still needed to effectively communicate with his military subordinates, a nearly impossible task from a place as

May 30, 1861; Sallie Brock Putman, *Richmond During the War: Four Years of Personal Observation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 38.

far as Montgomery. Lastly, the Confederacy believed there might be opportunities to attack Washington D.C., approximately one hundred miles from Richmond, a perfect base for striking the Northern capital.

This thesis offers a fuller narrative and deeper analysis of the Confederate capital's relocation than do previous histories. I primarily concentrate on one aspect of the story: the reasons for the removal. In order to have a firm understanding of this topic, I chose to examine it from both a political and military perspective and discuss what made Richmond so much more attractive to the Confederacy than Montgomery. Throughout the thesis, I also explain the move not only from the perspective of Richmond and Montgomery, but also that of the South as a whole. From this aspect, I aim to grasp what the Confederacy saw as an ideal capital and the reasons why it elected to remove its seat of government northward toward the seat of war. Understanding the Confederacy's decision to shuttle the capital to Richmond led me to conclude that the decision, although not perfect, remained the only plausible choice. I draw on a wide array of primary sources, including newspapers, correspondence, broadsides, diaries, and letters, as well as many secondary sources.

Generally, Civil War historians offer but a blurb on the capital's relocation, and their works focus on superficial points about the subject with little in-depth analysis. Some sources offer a more in-depth overview on the removal but often remain incomplete by focusing on certain aspects such as political conditions over military ones or Montgomery's point of view instead of Richmond's and vice versa. William Davis's *A Government of Our Own: The Making of the Confederacy* and his article "Richmond Becomes the Capital" provide the best narrative of the removal of the capital as a political process. Davis's book begins with the Confederacy's inception in Montgomery and ends with the decision to relocate the capital. His article

“Richmond Becomes the Capital” mirrors his book and primarily focuses on the removal from Montgomery’s perspective.²

Douglas Southall Freeman’s *R.E. Lee: A Biography* and his essay “The Confederate Tradition of Richmond” do not discuss the removal in detail but reasons that the move “was a serious mistake.” Not only did it place the capital on the “frontier” where Virginia’s rivers made it vulnerable to a Union attack, but, as “the emblem of the Southern cause ... its retention took on a moral significance out of all proportion to the industrial importance of the city, great though that was to the agricultural South.”³ Jerrell Shofner’s and William Warren Rogers’s “Montgomery to Richmond: The Confederacy Selects a Capital” offers good insight about the capital’s removal but with little synthesis for the reasons why the capital was transferred. However, Shofner and Rogers follow Freeman and see the relocation as a strategic and tactical blunder. They argue that Davis became too entangled with his military commanders, which only “exacerbated troubles.” The move also caused Confederates to place emphasis on shielding Richmond, which not only undermined their offensive strategy but also hindered their efforts in the Western theater. Lastly, they assert that perhaps “a foundling government such as the Confederacy would have been best served by a capital, which was capable of shifting its location according to need.”⁴ Rogers later authored the *Confederate Home Front: Montgomery During the Civil War*, offering little insight on the reasons for the capital’s removal and concludes that

² William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own: The Making of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 371-400; William C. Davis, “Richmond Becomes Capital,” in *Virginia at War, 1861*, eds. William C. Davis and James I. Robertson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 113-129.

³ Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), 514-515; Douglas Southall Freeman, “The Confederate Tradition of Richmond,” *Civil War History* 3, no. 4 (December 1957): 369, https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/civil_war_history/summary/v003/3.4.freeman.html.

⁴ Jerrell H. Shofner and William Warren Rogers, “Montgomery to Richmond: The Confederacy Selects a Capital,” *Civil War History* 10, no. 2 (June 1964): 155-166, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=44d11825-c8ec-4b98-9232-6468c743824d%40sessionmgr4001&hid=4108>

Montgomery's limitations coupled with Richmond's strengths proved Virginia's capital worthy of the nation's seat of government.⁵

Ellis Merton Coulter's *The Confederate States of America 1861-1865* explains that Montgomery was selected as the Confederate capital due to its centrality, but he also explores Southern cities' bids and ambitions for the seat of government. Although admitting that "political expedience" played a role in the removal process, Coulter does not detail the debates within the Confederate government and attempts to explain the removal from a military perspective. The removal of the capital, according to Coulter, was the Lower South's recognition of the Upper South's value, and it was a bold move that "would show defiance and strength." Virginia, with all its assets, was the seat of war, and it needed the Confederacy's protection.

In hindsight, Coulter views the removal of the capital as somewhat of a military error. Not only did it make the North's "lines of communication short and easy to defend," but it also turned Richmond into a "beleaguered city." Richmond limited the Confederacy by forcing it to focus on the defense of that city, rather than launching "large-scale war movements." Therefore, Richmond served more as "a symbol of the Confederacy than of any transcending military power." Coulter suggested that perhaps Nashville, or even, Chattanooga, Tennessee would have made a better capital since these locations might have forced Union troops to spread their lines out over a longer distance, making them more vulnerable to attack. Having the capital in either of those places would have forced the Confederacy to concentrate more energy and forces to the Western theater. Even so, Coulter realized the weaknesses with these two locations since it would have forced the South to spread out strategically making it more difficult to defend "vital

⁵ William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front: Montgomery During the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 43-46.

Confederate resources, including the loss of such munitions works as the Tredegar factories in Richmond, and brought about an early defeat.”⁶

In contrast to Coulter’s ambivalence toward the move, Emory Thomas tends to view it more favorably. Thomas takes a different approach from the other authors by focusing on the removal of the capital from a Virginian’s perspective and concentrates more on military matters than political. In *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865*, Thomas gives a quick overview of the removal and emphasizes Virginia’s Robert Mercer Taliaferro Hunter’s “ruling passion” to crown Richmond as the capital. He also cites Montgomery’s poor accommodations and mosquitos for weakening its position but also recognizes that “Virginia was too large, rich, and powerful to ignore....” In addition, the removal of the capital was in some ways a token of gratitude for Virginia’s treaty with the Confederacy. The significance of the Tredegar Iron Works and the close proximity to Washington also played a key role in the removal, especially since President Davis held the role as Commander-in-Chief. Thomas reasons that removal to Richmond might have had a negative impact such as the close distance Union troops had to travel to reach Richmond. It also relegated the Confederacy to a defensive role making Richmond more “vulnerable to enemy attack.” Having the capital located within Virginia, weakened the Confederacy’s support for the Western theater and “diluted the government’s power and influence in the vast Southern hinterland.” Thomas concludes, however, that the removal of the government “was no blunder.” The Confederacy’s protection of Richmond’s industrial power remained vital. He also explains that the short distance between Richmond and Washington could cost the Northern invader dearly, especially with the “dense forests, river obstacles, and swampy areas” aiding the Confederacy’s defensive strategy. In fact, the North’s determined

⁶ Ellis Merton Coulter, *The Confederate States of America 1861-1865*, vol. 7 of *A History of the South*, eds. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and Ellis Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 100-102.

quest to take Richmond, and Northerners' belief that the capture of Richmond would end the war came at great cost. The North's strategy expended much of the aggressor's resources, time, and energy. In sum, Richmond was worth the nation's protection since the city's capture would lead to the collapse of the Confederacy.⁷

Throughout my research I discovered two underlying themes that add to our knowledge and understanding of Confederate history. From the beginning, the story of the Confederate capital shows that the Confederacy used the honor of that seat as a political tool to extract some kind of favorable response. South Carolinians first expressed interest in crowning Montgomery as the capital of the new nation as a political maneuver to unify Alabama with the Palmetto State. South Carolina decided to suggest Montgomery as the capital due to its central location, where the flames of secession could easily spread outward, igniting surrounding states. With a unified Deep South, South Carolina would not have to stand alone and fend for itself. Secondly, Virginia's secession from the Union did not officially unify it with the Confederacy. Davis, realizing Virginia's tardiness in secession, decided not to leave Virginians' compact with the Confederacy to chance. He sent his vice president, the sickly Alexander Stephens, to seal Virginia with the Confederacy. At the Virginia State Convention, Stephens gave a speech strongly hinting that if Virginia joined the Confederacy, Richmond could potentially be the new capital of the nation. Days later, Virginia joined the Confederacy and eventually took Stephens's bait, inviting Confederate officials to make Richmond the seat of government. The suggestion to make Richmond the capital had made unification with the Confederacy a little more enticing for the Old Dominion.

⁷ Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond: A Biography of the Capital* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 32-34; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 98-102.

The struggle to remove the Confederate capital became a contest over Confederate idealism and necessity but exposed a disunifying rift in ideology between the Upper South and Lower South, one that perhaps caused much damage to the Confederacy for the duration of its existence. Many Confederates aimed for a centrally located capital, one that would best represent their new nation politically, culturally, socially, and geographically. When the Old Dominion's capital came into discussion as a potential seat of government, many Confederates protested. They declared that Richmond, located on the periphery and within a state that held moderate convictions about secession, did not ideally represent the Confederacy. Instead according to the *Charleston Mercury*, a capital "is usually in the heart of a country," and "should be farthest removed from aggressive violence of an enemy. No country situated as ours is, ever had its capital on its frontier."⁸ The North made the Old Dominion its primary target, and the Confederacy, although clearly divided, chose necessity over idealism due to Virginia's importance. In order to shield Virginia against Northern invasion, the Confederacy needed to commit military and economic resources to protect its most valued state.

The first chapter begins by explaining the reasons Southerners decided to make Montgomery the capital of the Confederacy. As the first capital, Montgomery played a significant role as the birthplace of the new nation. At this site, politicians busied themselves designing the Constitution and inaugurating their first—and only— president. Politicians and visitors quickly noticed the city's various drawbacks, which became more evident as time passed. Their concerns dissipated the hopes of making Montgomery the permanent capital of the Confederacy. A political tug-of-war ensued over where the permanent capital should be located. Southern politicians, citizens, and local newspapers remained all too eager to replace

⁸ "Washington," *Charleston Mercury*, April 23, 1861, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610423&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

Montgomery with one or another Southern city. The second chapter analyzes Virginia's secession and Vice President Alexander Stephens's speech to the Virginia State Convention, which played a key role in cementing the state's membership in the Confederacy. There Stephens also proposed the idea of making Richmond the capital. The chapter also analyzes Virginia's importance to the new nation and the Virginia State Convention's invitation to the Confederacy to move the capital to the Old Dominion's first city. The final chapter recounts the proceedings of the political debate that took place over the proposition to remove the capital from Montgomery and ends with the reactions of Southerners throughout the Confederacy along with a final analysis on the removal.

Chapter 1: The Confederacy Selects a Capital

On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was elected president of the United States, and Southerners believed that he represented a threat to the institution of slavery. So imbedded was the institution in the Southern way of life that white southerners saw no viable alternatives but to dismember their states from the Union. On November 8, 1860, two days after Lincoln's election, the South Carolina legislature addressed the unfavorable results, calling for "a special convention to meet on December 17." The subsequent convention met on that date and declared South Carolina out of the Union three days later.¹ On December 20, 1860, former U.S. senator and owner of the *Charleston Mercury*, Robert Barnwell Rhett, had proposed a resolution to form a "Southern Confederacy." Four days later, the *Mercury*, acting as Rhett's political mouthpiece, suggested Montgomery, Alabama as the meeting place for all the seceding states.² On December 26, he further proposed to the convention that the states planning to unite with South Carolina meet in Montgomery on February 13, 1861, but the convention failed to adopt the initiative. On December 31, the convention approved Rhett's plan but did not set a time and place. Southerners understood that if their proposed "Southern Confederacy" was going to work, the future seceded states needed to communicate effectively and come together. State governors and secession conventions selected special commissioners and sent them to the more hesitant slave states with messages of disunion and proposals for a convention. South Carolina recommended to each state that intended to join the convention to send an equal "number of representatives [as represented the state] in Congress." Lastly, the convention suggested that the United States Constitution serve as the model for the new slaveholder's republic. Prior to sending the commissioners to deliver their messages, the South Carolina convention partially

¹ William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 7-8.

² "A Southern Confederacy," *Charleston Mercury*, December 24, 1860, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18601224&printsec=frontpage&hl=en; William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 10-12.

reversed itself and agreed to Rhett's original proposal to call a meeting in Montgomery, but the delegates moved the date up from February 13 to February 4, giving the new Congress a full month to settle and work on constructing its new nation before Lincoln's Inauguration.³

The convention selected Andrew Pickens Calhoun as South Carolina's commissioner to Alabama, and assigned him the task of prodding that state out of the Union and then uniting it with South Carolina. On January 8, during the Alabama convention, Calhoun reached out to the state and suggested that it host a convention of the newly seceded states. He told the secession delegates, without authorization, that he heard Montgomery mentioned as a potential site for the meeting. He then proposed the first Monday in February as the designated meeting time.⁴ At the suggestion of South Carolina, Alabama adopted the ordinance of secession on January 11 and formally invited all the slave states to meet in Montgomery on February 4. Mississippi, which seceded two days ahead of Alabama, having become on January 9 the second state to secede, reacted promptly to South Carolina's exhortation and Alabama's invitation, adopting the agreed upon time and place. The other seceding states followed the lead of South Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama, and the delegates of the seceded states converged on Montgomery on February 4. It was official: Montgomery would function as the provisional capital of the embryonic Confederacy.⁵

³ William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 7-12; Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 18.

Charles Edward Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War 1860-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 84-85.

⁴ William R. Smith, *The History of the Convention of The People of Alabama Begun and Held in the City of Montgomery, on the Seventh Day of January, 1861: In Which is Preserved the Speeches of the Secret Sessions, and Many Valuable State Papers* (Montgomery: White, Pfister & Co., 1861), 33, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/smithwr/smith.html>; Armand J. Gerson, "The Inception of the Montgomery Convention," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for Year 1910* (Washington D.C.: American Historical Association, 1912), 184-187, <https://archive.org/details/annualreportofth005479mbp>.

⁵ Armand J. Gerson, "The Inception of the Montgomery Convention," 185-187.

The South Carolina convention had many reasons for suggesting Montgomery as the provisional capital. As the first state to secede, South Carolina could not realistically offer one of its cities as capital without placing too much emphasis on itself. Secondly, South Carolina saw this as an opportunity to gain allies in the secession movement by offering a city within a centrally located state as the meeting place for the Confederacy, even though Mississippi and Florida both exited the Union a few days prior to Alabama. According to the *Mercury*, Montgomery had a central location in the Deep South, and possessed accommodations suitable for any Southern congressman. The paper praised Montgomerians' rabid taste for secession, which served as an attractive attribute for a Confederate city.⁶ The 1860 election results proved this, showing that a majority of Montgomerians voted for Kentucky's John C. Breckinridge, a radical who maintained a strong "Southern rights" stance. Perhaps most importantly, should South Carolina's political ploy work, and Alabama take the bait, its neighboring states would be unable to stop the flames of secession from spreading, and they too would follow suit.⁷

Perhaps Southerners found other attractive features in Alabama's capital, which led them to select it as the seat of government for the Confederacy. Montgomery ranked just twenty-fourth by population in the South, but it was the second largest city in Alabama, behind Mobile.⁸ By 1860, Montgomery's total population equaled 8,843, with the black population slightly outnumbering the white. While white Montgomerians owned 4,400 slaves, the city had over a hundred free blacks living on the periphery.⁹ In 1860-61, two main modes of transportation

⁶ "A Southern Confederacy," *Charleston Mercury*, December 24, 1860, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18601224&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

⁷ William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 18-19; William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 6.

⁸ William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 3.

⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled From the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 9.

existed in Alabama's capital: water and rail. Montgomery is located on the Alabama River, which winds downstream to Mobile and into the Gulf of Mexico, where seagoing vessels could travel west to New Orleans. The *Mercury* claimed that Montgomery was "easily accessible by railroad from all sides." The West Point Railroad ran, as its name suggested from Montgomery to West Point, Georgia, where a passenger could reach a connecting ride to Atlanta.¹⁰ Three additional railroads were under construction during the time, including the Alabama and Florida Railroad and a railway to Eufaula, Alabama, near the border of Georgia. The South & North Alabama project had just commenced and on completion would unite Montgomery with central Alabama, an area devoid of navigable waterways.¹¹

As the newly elected delegates poured into Montgomery, Confederate politicians wasted little time constructing their new nation. Montgomery quickly became the place where the Confederacy matured, giving it legitimacy as the potential permanent seat of government. On February 8, 1861, the delegates adopted a provisional constitution, which mirrored the United States Constitution. The following day, the convention, now styling itself the Provisional Congress of the Confederacy, elected the former soldier, U.S. senator, and Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, along with ex-Congressman Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia as provisional

¹⁰ *Appletons' Companion Hand Book of Travel to the United States and British Provinces* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1861), 194-197, https://books.google.com/books?id=llFBAQAAMAAJ&pg=PP6&dq=Appletons+Companion+Hand+Book+of+travel&hl=en&sa=X&ei=IDTaVMvLNo2ryAS6_4HQAQ&ved=0CDUQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Appletons%20Companion%20Hand%20Book%20of%20travel&f=false; William Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 1; "Montgomery the Provisional Capital of the New Confederacy," *Charleston Daily Courier*, February 20, 1861.

¹¹ William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 32; "Correspondence of the Courier," *Charleston Daily Courier*, April 6, 1861; "A Southern Confederacy," *Charleston Mercury*, December 24, 1860, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18601224&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

president and vice president, respectively.¹² In the beginning of March, Congress adopted the first Confederate flag, consisting of three bars. The two outer bars were red and the inner was white. A blue canton occupied the upper, hoist-side corner of the flag, covering the width of the top two stripes, and bearing seven white stars, one representing each Confederate state, forming a circle within the canton.¹³

Stephens's inauguration took place on his birthday, two days after his election. He penned a few words the morning of his speech, made his way up to the capitol, and presented it in front of a very large crowd.¹⁴ A week later, Davis would take the same oath under the verandah of the capitol. On the day of the inauguration, Dr. Basil Manly, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Montgomery, rode in a horse-drawn carriage with the newly elected president and vice president. Cannons roared and music played as nearly ten thousand people gathered around the steps of the capitol to hear the president speak. Davis sat between Vice President Stephens and Confederate Congressman Howell Cobb of Georgia, while Governor Andrew Moore, along with the members of Congress, sat in front facing the three politicians. Pastor Manly initiated the ceremony with a short prayer. Next, Davis raised his right hand while resting his other on the table beside him, and Howell Cobb administered the oath of office. Celebrations began after the ceremony, and women placed wreaths of flowers around Davis. The *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser* expressed confidence in the new president. "He will not disappoint the just

¹² Basil Manly, "The Diary of Dr. Basil Manly, 1858-1867." Edited by Stanley Hoole. *Alabama Review* 4 (April 1951): 146-147.

¹³ "Our Montgomery Correspondence," *Charleston Mercury*, March 8, 1861, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610308&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

¹⁴ Basil Manly, "The Diary of Dr. Basil Manly, 1858-1867," 146-147; Alexander Stephens to Linton Stephens, February 11, 1861, Alexander Stephens Papers, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York.

expectations of the country.”¹⁵ Jake Weil, of Montgomery, did not share the same confidence. Weil, who had stood no more than five feet from Davis during the ceremony, wrote to his brother expressing ambivalence toward the new Confederate president. He saw Davis as “imposing and impressive” but questioned Davis’s “stomach” and “*verstand*” to guide the new Confederacy.¹⁶

In 1861, newcomers noticed that the town consisted “of some planters, cotton men, a few capitalists, some noted professionals and a large class connected with railroad and steamboat interests.” As in most Southern cities, industry remained on the periphery of Montgomery’s economic system.¹⁷ Mechanics constructed cars for the Montgomery and West Point Railroad, and a local “steam-powered foundry” operated nearby. In sum, Montgomery maintained only thirteen manufacturing establishments and employed 234 workers, 214 men and 20 women.¹⁸ The bulk of Montgomery’s commerce came from sales in cotton. In 1860, over one hundred thousand cotton bales made it to Montgomery’s dock. Warehouses dotted the city, and

¹⁵ Basil Manly, “The Diary of Dr. Basil Manly, 1858-1867,” 147-148; “The Inauguration,” *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, February 20, 1861.

¹⁶ Jake Weil to Josiah Weil, May 16, 1861, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

¹⁷ James P. Jones and William Warren Rogers, eds., “Montgomery as the Confederate Capital: View of a Nation,” *Alabama Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1964): 3; Thomas Cooper De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals: An Inside View of Life in the Southern Confederacy, From Birth to Death* (Mobile, Alabama: The Gossip Printing Company, 1890), 28, <https://books.google.com/books?id=hiVAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Four+Years+in+Rebel+Capitals:+An+Inside+View+of+Life+in+the+Southern+Confederacy,+From+Birth+to+Death&hl=en&sa=X&ei=iF7OVOi5NIW3yQT3xoJ4&ved=0CB8Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Four%20Years%20in%20Rebel%20Capitals%3A%20An%20Inside%20View%20of%20Life%20in%20the%20Southern%20Confederacy%2C%20From%20Birth%20to%20Death&f=false>.

¹⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860; Compiled From the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), 13; William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 5.

Montmerians planned to construct more, which historian William Warren Rogers explained, “bespoke confidence in the future” of cotton.¹⁹

Montgomery was located in the heart of slavery, and free and enslaved blacks played a crucial role in its society. Most slaves toiled in the surrounding fields or worked as day laborers. White Montmerians forced them to comply with tight city ordinances and restrictions, threatening to mete out harsh punishments. Alcohol and weapons were forbidden to slaves, and austere curfews forced them off the streets and into their residencies by 9:00 pm. Some slaves enjoyed a little more freedom than those on plantations, with opportunities to earn money. Montgomery’s free blacks, on the other hand, worked manual labor jobs around the city, but the restraining taxes and strict curfews curtailed their freedom, prohibiting the same autonomy whites enjoyed.²⁰

Confederate politicians could satisfy their needs through Montgomery’s large variety of stores. Fifteen clothing stores sold many varieties of dresses and hats. Montgomery’s six shoe stores gave customers plenty of options to match their newly purchased outfits.²¹ The city also had five candy stores and six druggists. Restaurants, ale houses, and saloons accommodated the weary or those looking for a good time. For those who preferred home-cooked meals, residents had a wide variety of grocery stores from which to choose. Stores dedicated to selling tools provided everyday goods for around the home, and Montgomery had plenty of doctors available for the sick and lawyers for those requiring legal assistance.²²

¹⁹ William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 5-6; William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 37-38; “Montgomery, the Provisional Capital of the New Confederacy,” *Charleston Daily Courier*, February 20, 1861.

²⁰ William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 8-9.

²¹ “Clothing,” *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, April 4, 1861; William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 4-5; William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 36-37.

²² William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 4-5; William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 36-37.

In addition to an educated populace, Montgomery hosted many social events, appealing to politicians' keen taste in entertainment and perhaps making a case to be nominated as the permanent capital. Four newspapers, of varying political views, informed the public about politics, daily events, and advertisements. Montgomery's *Mail* and the *Advertiser*, both supporters of secession, enjoyed a large audience. On the other hand, the *Confederation* and the *Post* held more moderate views and, therefore, lacked the same amount of support. Pfister and White's bookstore allowed residents to educate themselves on a wide array of topics, ranging from history to religion.²³ For those interested in military affairs, the bookstore recently added *The Army Regulations* to its shelves.²⁴ Aside from the plethora of reading material, Montgomery had social attractions, including carnivals, Italian sopranos, agricultural fairs, and theater performances, providing politicians and travelers with entertainment. On Sundays, however, churches remained the main attraction, representing many denominations with blacks and whites often attending the same service.²⁵

Located on Main Street on a high hill, a mile from the river, the capitol, was perhaps Montgomery's most impressive building. From the site, visitors had a panoramic view of the entire city, including the surrounding hills and valleys. Brick and "polished marble" covered the exterior, and it had a "graceful rotunda at the front base of which stands the Town Clock." The Executive Department in one wing and the Supreme Court chamber in the other, occupied the first floor. The second floor lodged the House of Representatives on the southern wing and the Senate in the northern end, which later housed the newly elected Confederate Congress. The Senate Chamber had an octagonal shape that "affords the greatest facilities to persons situate[d] in its body for being heard by the Chair, which commands the central point opposite the only

²³ William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 6-7.

²⁴ "Regulations of the Army," *Montgomery Weekly Post*, March 20, 1861.

²⁵ William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 6-7.

entrance from the lobby.” Thomas De Leon believed the capitol was “not a particularly imposing pile, either in size or architecture, yet it dominates the lesser structures as it stares down the sandy street with quite a Roman rigor.” William Howard Russell, an Irish reporter for the *London Times*, did not find it impressive. He described the capitol as a white structure with a portico held up by “lanky pillars” and a “dejected-looking little cupola.” Russell also found repulsive the tobacco stains outside on the stairs leading up to the capitol.²⁶

Confederate politicians spent much time in the capitol piecing together the new government. Congress usually began its day with a morning prayer at 10:00 and worked until 3:30 or 4:00, after which the members took a three-hour respite. They reconvened at 7:00 and labored four more hours. These long hours strained many congressmen, who felt overburdened, lonely, and stressed. On February 20, Congressman Thomas Cobb explained to his wife in a letter that he would not be able to leave Montgomery to surprise her for her birthday as he had planned because he and Congressman Robert Toombs were the only Georgians present to represent the Committee on the Constitution. This filled Cobb with disappointment, but he also expressed deeper feelings of homesickness. “I never was so sick of any place or business in my life, even hard work does not relieve me for my *heart is not* in the work. I am worn out with it and would freely give a thousand dollars this minute to be at home.” Congressmen’s hard work emotionally tied them to Montgomery and placed a sentimental value in the city as the capital, solidifying its role in Confederate history.²⁷

²⁶ “City of Montgomery,” *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, February 27, 1861; “Sketch of Montgomery,” *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, March 6, 1861; “Correspondence of the Courier,” *Charleston Daily Courier*, February 5, 1861; Thomas Cooper De Leon, *Belles Beaux and Brains of the 60’s* (New York: G.W. Dillingham Company, 1909), 47, http://books.google.com/books?id=iIp2AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false; “Montgomery, Capital of the Confederate States of America, May 8,” *London Times*, May 30, 1861.

²⁷ Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, February 20, 1861, “The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862,” in *Publications of the Southern History Association*, ed. Augustus

When Confederate politicians found time for relaxation and entertainment, they attended lavish parties, balls, theater performances, and concerts. Montgomery's social whirl justified its position as capital by placing politicians at the center of society and perhaps made a legitimate case for the city's permanence as the seat of government.²⁸ Many Montgomerians opened their doors to Confederate representatives and accompanying guests, inviting them for dinner or tea. South Carolina's Mary Chesnut, wife of Congressman James Chesnut, had a calendar chock-full of invitations. The Pollard family invited Chesnut for a meal, which she recalled as "brilliant." After dinner, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William Browne, Eugenia Bethea, the wife of a local elite, invited Chesnut to a reception at her residence.²⁹ After a difficult day at the chamber, Judge Benajah Bibb invited the Georgia delegates to a "small party" at his residence. Colonel John J. Seibels invited Cobb to a large-scale party at his home, and the Georgian expected nothing less than a grand scene. A few weeks later, Judge Bibb again hosted another party this time inviting three to five hundred people.³⁰ Chesnut attended Bibb's party and found it "delightful."³¹ The three rooms had two tables each with food. A typical dinner, according to Cobb, could "commence with oyster soup, then comes fish salad and fried oysters, then grated ham or beef and sardines with waffles and coffee or tea, then cakes and jellies, charlotte Russe and what is considered the greatest delicacy called 'Ambrosia' which is sliced oranges and grated

Longstreet Hull (May 1907): 233-34,

https://books.google.com/books?id=LSALAAAIAAJ&pg=PA145&lpg=PA145&dq=Publications+of+the+Southern+History+Association+%28May+1907%29,&source=bl&ots=oP_PR5hdbO&sig=3Ya5cfhGild_BVhVpvx9mUIPTS0&hl=en&sa=X&ei=tMfSVNOqMY2wsATWvYKADw&ved=0CCQQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Publications%20of%20the%20Southern%20History%20Association%20%28May%201907%29%2C&f=false

²⁸ William Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 230.

²⁹ Mary Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1981), 11; Mary Chesnut, *The Private Mary Chesnut: The Unpublished Civil War Diaries*, eds. C. Vann Woodward and Elizabeth Muhlenfeld (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 34.

³⁰ Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, February 8, 9, 28, 1861, "The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862," 167-169, 244.

³¹ Mary Chesnut, *The Private Mary Chesnut*, 14.

Cocoanut.” After dinner, guests returned to the parlors where they relaxed, smoked, and wined while “the ladies sing and chat.”³²

Residents also demanded the very popular Vice President Stephens’s attention. One evening, the families of Seibels and Henry Hilliard, a local lawyer, invited Stephens to their parties, and the overworked vice president saw the necessity of scheduling two appointments with friends, one in between the two parties and one after. He arrived at Seibels’s party around 5:00 with two hours before his next appointment. Stephens, accompanied by Robert Toombs, waited an hour before the hosts served the meal, but by 7:00 they had eaten only three courses. Much to his annoyance and Seibels’s disappointment, the vice president then had to excuse himself for his first appointment. As the guest of honor, Stephens felt frustrated, walked back to his room, read two letters from his brother, smoked a cigar, and completed his first appointment. He and Toombs then walked over to Hilliard’s residence for their 8:00 engagement. They waited two hours for supper, but it never came. Stephens explained to the host that he had an engagement at 10:00, and Hilliard told him that dinner would arrive shortly. As a man who kept his appointments seriously, the vice president could not wait any longer, and both he and Toombs left as other guests arrived. The hosts did not appreciate Stephens and Toombs abrupt departures, but the irked vice president certainly did not like being held from his appointments.³³

In addition to Montgomery’s social life and hospitality, residents accommodated politicians by turning their warehouses over to the government for its use.³⁴ Many government officials conducted business in the newly constructed Government Building, located a short distance from the Exchange Hotel. According to a correspondent of the *London Times*, the

³² Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, February 8, 9, 28, 1861, “The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862,” 167-169, 244-45.

³³ Alexander Stephens to Linton Stephens, March 1, 1861, Alexander Stephens Papers, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York; William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 270-271.

³⁴ Thomas C. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 28.

building had the appearance of “a handsome first-class warehouse.”³⁵ The Confederacy also acquired a building called “Figh Block” for the Post Office Department on Bibb Street. Eventually, even Davis’s living quarters were upgraded from the dingy Exchange Hotel to the “White House,” a short distance from the capitol.³⁶

Prior to becoming the seat of government, the “inland city” had little importance, but now it possessed a new value as a capital. Storekeepers became busier, and the city had to construct factories, warehouses, and other buildings to support the war effort. Montgomery struggled to grow into its new role and needed time to adjust. De Leon explained that Montgomery’s society transformed from being “provincially content to run in accustomed grooves, [to] quite topsy-turvy.” Some even complained about “the new pressure,” but accepted their new roles and made many sacrifices. Confederate politicians, however, soon realized the capital had many shortcomings, and began to consider Montgomery undesirable.³⁷

Montgomery’s poor roads made life difficult for many visitors. The streets appeared irregular and “uncertain.” A correspondent of the *Charleston Daily Courier* wondered if the city had constructed the streets before the invention of the surveyor’s compass. The city also lacked sidewalks and crossings.³⁸ Where sidewalks did exist, they were often unusable from the debris that cluttered them. For example, shingles and lumber rendered useless a third of the sidewalk at the corner of Bibb and Commerce Streets. Obstructions not only cluttered sidewalks but filled the streets making them impassable. On “Washington street, from Bibb to Church,” broken wagons and carriages sat idly, impeding travelers. The streets’ “sandy composition” and that “of

³⁵ “Montgomery, Capital of the Confederate States of America, May 8,” *London Times*, May 30, 1861; William Warren Rogers, *Confederate Home Front*, 31-32.

³⁶ “Our Montgomery Correspondence,” *Charleston Mercury*, March 28, 1861, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610328&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

³⁷ Thomas C. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 28.

³⁸ Thomas C. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 24; “Correspondence of the Courier,” *Charleston Daily Courier*, February 5, 1861.

a very heavy grade” created mounds of dust during the dry summer months and mud in the wet seasons. In May 1861, the dust became so bad that the City Council appropriated \$150 to water the streets. The situation worsened and damage resulted when residents threw trash on the streets, often resulting in clogged water drains and gutters.³⁹

Since Montgomery became the capital, hotels were in high demand due to the influx of newcomers. Confederate Congressmen, their families, observers from Europe, job aspirants, and curiosity seekers sought rooms. The Exchange, Montgomery Hall, and the Madison House serviced Montgomery as the main hotels, even though a few smaller ones dotted the city. The Exchange had enough room to accommodate more than 300 guests within its 125 rooms. The *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser* bragged, “It is well furnished, and is one of the best ordered houses at which it has ever been our fortune to sojourn.” The *Advertiser* commended the hotel’s courteous owners, its clean facilities, and impressive amenities. Along with complimentary meals, guests could relax in the barroom, smoking room, or the room set-aside for readers. Some believed that the dining room offered the most exquisite food in the city. Montgomery Hall was second to the Exchange in both quantity and quality. It could accommodate only half as many guests as and far fewer amenities at the same rates. Occasionally, Montgomery Hall was capable of piecing together fine dinners, but many guests found the rooms filthy. Like Montgomery Hall, the Madison House could accommodate only 150 guests.⁴⁰

As Montgomery’s population grew, the city became overcrowded and hotel rooms difficult to find.⁴¹ When Russell reached Montgomery, he found the Exchange Hotel “crowded to excess.” Walking into a room with two other gentlemen, he saw that the apartment already had

³⁹Montgomery City Council Minutes, April 22 and May 13, 1861, Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH).

⁴⁰ William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 35-36; “City of Montgomery,” *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, February 27, 1861; Thomas C. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 24.

⁴¹ “All the Hotels,” *Montgomery Weekly Post*, February 20, 1861; “Crowded,” *Montgomery Weekly Post*, March 20, 1861.

two guests, and to make matters worse, there were only three beds available for the five patrons. After some bribery, they obtained mattresses to spread on the floor.⁴² Tobacco smoke filled the rooms, and carpets became moistened from the spit of chewing tobacco.⁴³ Although Russell was happy to get to bed, another problem developed. One of his roommates tended to spit his chew, and being a distance of only eight yards away, Russell feared that he could reach that length since he was “a tremendous projector in the tobacco juice line....” Russell sought comfort only by allowing the man to fall asleep first. In general, he found the Exchange “in a frightful state—nothing but noise, dirt, drinking, [and] wrangling.” In his journal, Russell wrote that the seceding South needed to take “with them some Yankee hotel keepers.”⁴⁴ Thomas Cobb could not have agreed more. He wrote to his wife Marion one evening, “I have not eaten dinner or breakfast, for the filth at the hotel is almost starving me....” Conditions did not improve. Two months later Cobb again wrote, “Our accommodations are decidedly worse at the hotel now than when we were here last and there is no chance for private boarding.”⁴⁵ Visiting the president at the Exchange Hotel, the sickly Alexander Stephens went to Davis’s apartment and found two “bed chamber[s]” with a stove in each. Stephens thought the hotel appeared “very uncomfortable” and declared he “would not have stood it a day.”⁴⁶ Mary Chesnut referred to Montgomery Hall as “that den of horrors” and predicted that “the uncomfortable hotels will move the Congress. Our statesmen love their ease.”⁴⁷

⁴² William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, ed. Eugene H Berwanger (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 117.

⁴³ William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 264.

⁴⁴ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 118, 123.

⁴⁵ Thomas Cobb to Marion, February 22, and April 29, 1861, “The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862,” 237, 259.

⁴⁶ Alexander Stephens to Linton Stephens, March 3, 1861, Alexander Stephens Papers, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York.

⁴⁷ Mary Chesnut, *The Private Mary Chesnut*, 71; Mary Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 62.

Visitors and congressmen also found Montgomery's restaurant and hotel food disagreeable. When the Exchange Hotel ran out of food, Russell made his way to a nearby restaurant where he discovered "as many odd dishes as ever I saw, some unknown fishes, oyster-plants, 'possums, raccoons, frogs, and other delicacies, and eschewing toads and the like, really made a good meal off dirty plates on a vile tablecloth, our appetites being sharpened by the best condiments."⁴⁸ When the Exchange Hotel had food, it possessed a poor quality. William Nelson, friend of Congressman William Porcher Miles and a connoisseur of soup, wrote a lengthy letter complaining about the soup served at the Exchange. The greasy soup gave him heartburn and nightmares. Good soup, he declared, "is essential to a clear head and sound judgment," especially for a delegate in Montgomery whose work was crucial to the Confederacy. He speculated that Philadelphia lacked a good cook during the writing of the Declaration of Independence, which potentially led to its mistakes like the statement of "all men being born equal and all that sort of thing." Miles insisted that Congress needed to take action at once, and he suggested that if Congress had any money, it needed to invest in a good cook.⁴⁹

If Montgomery's distasteful food, poor roads, and substandard hotel accommodations were not bad enough, visitors and politicians also had to contend with irritating high prices.⁵⁰ Georgia's Howell Cobb, president of the Congress, jokingly told Mary Chesnut the reason congressmen debated their pay rate in secret session was to "prevent the lodging house and the hotel people from making their bills of a size to cover it all. 'The bill was sure to correspond with the pay....'"⁵¹ Stephens explained to his brother that "prices in this city are exorbitant [sic] for

⁴⁸ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 117.

⁴⁹ William Nelson to William Porcher Miles, March 6, 1861, Miles Papers, Southern Historical Collection at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁵⁰ Thomas C. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 24; Thomas Cobb to Marion, February 22, 1861; "The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862," 237.

⁵¹ Mary Chesnut, *A Diary From Dixie*, ed. Ben Ames Williams (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 19.

everything.” Forced to buy an umbrella, the vice president figured that he could purchase one according to the rate of his hometown, Crawford, Georgia, for \$2.50 or \$3.00, but he found one in Montgomery priced at \$5.50. He also set out to purchase a “tin bathing tub,” which cost \$8.00, \$3.00 more than he estimated, and he opted to pass on it for the free “old fashioned wash tub” in the lot.⁵²

The current capital’s shortcomings added up quickly and weakened any opportunity for it to gain permanency while paving the way for other cities to challenge it by showcasing their attributes. Hoping to attract congressmen’s attention, Southern newspaper presses ran hot with local city and town names, listing rivals’ distinct advantages as alternatives to Montgomery. A correspondent of the *Charleston Daily Courier* claimed that Huntsville, Alabama, rivaled Montgomery in many of its amenities and bettered it in cost-of-living. Although the Confederate capital had better facilities than its challenger, the letter-writer opined, its “exorbitant charges of hotel keepers, and the unusually high prices of goods, she will perhaps, suffer inglorious defeat.”⁵³ The *Southern Watchman* also believed that the high prices would drive the government out of Montgomery and anticipated that the new capital could potentially be located somewhere in Georgia.⁵⁴ Even Montgomery’s newspapers spoke out against the high prices. The *Montgomery Daily Advertiser* warned that Montgomerians should not jump “to the conclusion that Montgomery is to be permanent Capital of the Southern Confederacy....” If the high prices

⁵² Alexander Stephens to Linton Stephens, March 3, 1861, Alexander Stephens Papers, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York.

⁵³ “Correspondence of the Courier,” *Charleston Daily Courier*, March 25, 1861.

⁵⁴ “Montgomery Matters,” *Southern Watchman*, March 6, 1861, <http://athnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/athnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/swm/swm1861/swm1861-0036.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>.

remained consistent, it might be difficult to keep the capital there.⁵⁵ It was now up to Montgomery to raise its standards if it ever hoped to remain the Confederate capital.

Of the many states that offered their cities as a potential new Confederate capital, perhaps South Carolina deserved it the most. After all, the Palmetto State seceded first and initiated the proposition of a “Southern Confederacy.” Columbia and Charleston gained some recommendations for the capital but never became serious contenders. The *Edgefield Advertiser* recommended Pendleton, South Carolina since the modest “village” possessed cool summer months, a picturesque view of the mountains, and would be accessible upon the completion of the Blue Ridge Railroad. The residence of the late John C. Calhoun, Fort Hill, was located a short distance from Pendleton and could perhaps be the Confederacy’s “mecca.” But like South Carolina’s other cities, Pendleton received little attention. Perhaps the Confederacy realized that placing the capital in the Palmetto state would make the nation look like a South Carolina fire-eater society.⁵⁶

Georgia’s delegates and its newspapers backed the idea of having the capital relocated to their state, and, in particular, they made a concerted push to remove the seat of government to Atlanta. Just days after Congress first met, Thomas Cobb wrote home explaining that the Georgia delegation intended to recommend Atlanta as the provisional capital.⁵⁷ It was ideal for those who wanted the capital to be in a central location of all the slave states and within a cotton state. As the ‘Gate City,’ Atlanta provided great communication and accessibility. Besides boasting four railroads, the city could offer the Confederacy a healthy environment, clean

⁵⁵ “A Short Sighted Policy,” *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, March 21, 1861.

⁵⁶ “The Place for the Capital,” *Charleston Daily Courier*, April 13, 1861, quoting the *Edgefield Advertiser*; “The Permanent Capital of the Confederate States,” *Charleston Mercury*, March 9, 1861, quoting the *Richmond Dispatch*, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dlTq9_mQC&dat=18610309&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

⁵⁷ Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, February 6, 16, 1861, “The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862,” 164, 179-180.

drinking water, great markets, copious amounts of corn whiskey, an abundance of peanuts, and a plentiful source of construction materials to strengthen Confederate infrastructure. The Atlanta *City-Gate Guardian* boldly announced that Atlanta could satisfy all of Congress's needs and told anyone who doubted it to see for themselves. Atlanta was not the only recommended city from Georgia. On February 16, Cobb told his wife that he received a letter urging him to have the capital relocated to Athens.⁵⁸ Even Macon had a glimmer of hope when a contributor to the *Charleston Mercury* recommended it as the capital. Unlike most lobbyists who argued for the capital's relocation to a more advantageous place for the purposes of governing, one correspondent wrote to the *Southern Confederacy*, explaining that Stone Mountain, Georgia had the potential of making a good seat of government due to its insignificance. The contributor explained "without intending to call in question the taste and plastic skill of our Stone Mountain friends, I would say *expunge* the present modest little village there, and inaugurate such an order of things as would comport with the wealth and intelligence of the Confederate States." As a final suggestion, the correspondent endorsed renaming the capital "Panola City," a name that

⁵⁸ "The Capital," *Gate-City Guardian*, February 21, 1861, <http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/gcg/gcg1861/gcg1861-0035.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>; "The Capital City," *Southern Confederacy*, March 5, 1861, <http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/asc/asc1861/asc1861-0007.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>; "The Capital," *Gate-City Guardian*, February 28, 1861, quoting the *Waynesboro Independent*, <http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/gcg/gcg1861/gcg1861-0054.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>; William C. Davis, "Richmond Becomes Capital," 115. See Also "The New Capitol—Atlanta the Place," *Georgia Weekly Telegraph*, February 21, 1861, quoting *Atlanta Guardian*, <http://telegraph.galileo.usg.edu/telegraph/view?docId=news/mwt1861/mwt1861-0020.xml&query=&brand=telegraph-brand>; "The Federal City of the South," *Southern Confederacy*, March 9, 1861, <http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/asc/asc1861/asc1861-0022.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>; Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, February 6, 16, 1861, "The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862," 164, 179-180; "Our Montgomery Correspondence," *Charleston Mercury*, February 26, 1861, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610226&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

came from the Indian word for cotton.⁵⁹ Even the Georgia State Convention chimed in, proposing at the recommendation of Luther J. Glenn of Fulton, that the state “cede a portion of the Territory of this State, not exceeding ten miles square, for a Capital and permanent seat of Government....” The convention passed the resolution and forwarded it to President Davis.⁶⁰

A correspondent from Augusta, Georgia believed that city would make a suitable capital but was also willing to sacrifice “local favoritism” for the sake of the Confederacy. The writer placed military strategy at the forefront of his argument, reasoned that the North had advantages over the South, and suggested that the capital should be located somewhere safe. The contributor recommended Chattanooga or Knoxville, Tennessee since the area possessed “long cavernous tunnels.” The rugged terrain would not only make the capital easily defendable, but it would also cause “hecatombs of killed and wounded to any hostile army.” Not only did the seat of government need to be “rendered inaccessible in times of war,” but it also should be “a place easy of access in times of peace.” Besides the advantageous terrain, the Valley of East Tennessee had railroads, a beautiful landscape, and a healthy climate.⁶¹

Not only did Montgomery receive competition from cities outside Alabama, but other municipalities within the state’s borders also made bids. These included Huntsville, Opelika, Tuscaloosa, and the small town of Spring Hill, outside Mobile.⁶² In March, James Williamson

⁵⁹ “Where Shall the Capitol of the Confederate States be Located,” *Southern Confederacy*, April 18, 1861, quoting the *Chronicle & Sentinel*, <http://atnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/asc/asc1861/asc1861-0153.mets.xml#page/1/mode/1up>.

⁶⁰ *Journal of the Public and Secret Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Georgia, Held in Milledgeville and Savannah in 1861* (Milledgeville, Georgia: Boughton, Nisbet & Barnes, State Printers, 1861), 213-214.

⁶¹ “The Future Capital of the Confederate States,” *Charleston Mercury*, May 17, 1861, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dlTq9_mQC&dat=18610517&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

⁶² Jerrell H. Shofner and William Warren Rogers, “Montgomery to Richmond,” 159; “Opelika Ala. In Nomination for the Capitol,” Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia; Ellis Merton E. Coulter, *The Confederate States of America 1861-1865*, 100-101.

hosted a party at Montgomery Hall, and the host gave a toast in honor of Tuscaloosa. In response, Judge William Russell Smith of Alabama rose from his chair and made a small oration, explaining a dream he recently had. In the dream, Smith found the Temple of Delphi to inquire an answer from “the presiding Deity” on an important question. He asked the god, “Where is the future capital of the Southern Confederacy to be located?” He received no answer, repeated the same question, but again did not receive a response. He then remembered that the meticulous deity required a more detailed question, and Smith asked a third time, “At what place is to be located the National Capital of the Confederate States of America?” At that point the god arose, light came in through the windows, and a loud rumble shook the earth almost causing him to collapse. Quiet then ascended as the deity announced “TUSKALOOSA.”⁶³ For many Confederates, Smith’s account of his dream remained antics, but though unrelated to the story, residents of Tuscaloosa attempted to make Smith’s vision a reality. On March 16, the *Charleston Mercury* reported that Tuscaloosa held a public meeting and appointed three commissioners to seek the removal of the capital to the “City of Oaks.” Later, a correspondent from Mobile wrote to the *Tuscaloosa Monitor* and claimed that a Mississippi delegate had announced the removal of the capital to Tuscaloosa, but rumors remained only rumors.⁶⁴

Montgomery and its allies fought back against the rush of contestants and argued in favor of making the city the permanent capital of the Confederacy. In May, the *Montgomery Mail* responded to rumors of removal, which made some Montgomerians think that they had a ‘capitol [sic] on wheels.’ Removing the capital would be risky and appear weak in the eyes of the North, allowing northerners to question the Confederacy’s legitimacy if it relocated the capital.

⁶³ Anne Easby-Smith, *William Russell Smith of Alabama: His Life and Works Including the Entire Text of the Uses of Solitude* (Philadelphia: The Dolphin Press, 1931), 119-120.

⁶⁴ “The Southern Capital,” *Charleston Mercury*, April 5, 1861, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610405&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

“It is rather like a traveling grocery, seeking custom by squatting about various localities. Wonder if it won’t go next to the next seceding State—to Maryland, or even little Delaware, if they will come over to the grocery side? Who ever before saw a pretended government dodging about so? Where will it go next? Who bids the next squat?” However, the *Mail* believed Congress maintained enough sense to stay. Likewise, some newspapers from other areas of the South spoke on behalf of Montgomery and also favored the capital’s permanence. A correspondent to the *Charleston Daily Courier* favored that position on the condition the city took steps to improve its streets. The *Wetumpka* (Alabama) *Spectator* also had words of support, pointing to Montgomery’s well-refined society, attractive scenery, and transportation.⁶⁵

Montgomeryans intended to improve the city to make it more suitable and hoped that these developments would make it the permanent capital, but residents understood that in order to accomplish this goal they had to take action. The City Council hired thirty-one slaves to clean the streets and sidewalks, while enacting enforceable regulations against dumping debris on them. The council also accepted responsibility for cleaning wells, restoring docks, and giving fines for speeding buggies.⁶⁶ Another improvement included converting the artesian basin on Court Square into a reservoir.⁶⁷ Building infrastructure to accommodate the growing population also made it to the to-do list. A correspondent of the *Mercury* heard that members of Montgomery’s elite planned to construct a new hotel on the corner of Bibb and Commerce Streets and boasted that it “shall be [the] largest and most magnificent structure in the Southern

⁶⁵ “Indignant at the Idea,” *Southern Confederacy*, May 14, 1861, quoting the *Montgomery Mail*, <http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/asc/asc1861/asc1861-0242.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>; “Correspondent of the Courier,” *Charleston Daily Courier*, February 13, 1861; “The Capitol,” *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, March 13, 1861, quoting the *Wetumpka Spectator*.

⁶⁶ William C. Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 278-279.

⁶⁷ “Our Montgomery Correspondence,” *Charleston Mercury*, May 8, 1861, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610508&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

States.”⁶⁸ Some Montgomerians attempted to culturally reshape the city around the Confederacy. A few of Montgomery’s ladies asked the City Council if it could change the name of Market Street to Davis Avenue. A few weeks later, a resident suggested changing one of the two Washington Streets to “Davis.”⁶⁹ When Congress announced the Confederate capital’s removal, many Montgomerians grumbled because they had invested much time, effort, and money into improving their city.⁷⁰

Even though Montgomerians made an honest effort to improve their city, the capital’s shortcomings made Confederate politicians uncomfortable and allowed cities and towns across the South to showcase their assets in a positive display of their potential as the seat of government. A tug-of-war for the capital ensued and would not settle until Congress selected Richmond. First, Virginia needed to secede and join the Confederacy before its candidacy could enter the discussion. The location of any capital could not and did not appeal to everyone, but the seat of the government had to be beneficial and practical. As for Montgomery, William Howard Russell summed it up best: “Montgomery has little claims to be called a capital.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ “Our Montgomery Correspondence,” *Charleston Mercury*, April 11, 1861, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610411&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

⁶⁹ Montgomery City Council Minutes, March 4 and April 1, 1861, ADAH.

⁷⁰ “No Removal of the Capital,” *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, May 22, 1861.

⁷¹ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 118.

Chapter 2: Virginia Unites with the Confederacy

Confederate unification with Virginia would provide the nation with much needed assets, and perhaps the new government would reward the Old Dominion's bold action by relocating the capital to that state. William Waters Boyce, a South Carolina congressman, wrote R.M.T. Hunter on February 5, 1861, described political affairs in Montgomery, and explained that Confederate congressmen wanted Virginia to secede and quickly join them. Not only would that prove invaluable to the embryonic nation, but Virginia would also gain a special status within the Confederacy. He explained, "Come in & Virginia shall have things exactly as she wants them capital included." Boyce even hinted that Hunter could be elected president. Moving Virginia into the secession column would take an exhausting effort, but perhaps Hunter, as a future Confederate congressman, remembered Boyce's words when he stepped foot in Montgomery's capitol a few months later.¹

Nonetheless, Virginia needed to secede before Richmond could enter the battle royal with other southern cities for the position of the capital. The Old Dominion flirted with secession, but unlike the Deep South, it engaged in long, tedious, and calculating debates before deciding its fate. Prior to Lincoln's election, Virginia's Governor John Letcher intended to call the General Assembly in mid-January to discuss affairs. As citizens of a state with moderate political views, the majority of Virginians voted for John Bell and even initially denounced South Carolina's secession.² However, Lincoln's election forced delegates to face the crisis, and they urged Letcher to hasten the time of the meeting. The General Assembly met on January 7. Meanwhile, "140 public meetings" met throughout Virginia's counties and "expressed a desire for a

¹ William Waters Boyce to R.M.T. Hunter, February 5, 1861, R.M.T. Hunter Papers, Special Collections University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

² James I. Robertson, "The Virginia State Convention of 1861," In *Virginia at War, 1861*, eds. William C. Davis and James I. Robertson (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 2.

convention.” In response, the assembly passed a bill for an election of delegates for a secession convention. The ballot, besides potential candidates, asked Virginians if they would accept the convention’s resolution as final or if they preferred to authorize their representatives’ decision by popular referendum. On February 4, Virginians selected the latter option and elected the 152 delegates, equal in number to the House of Delegates.³ The newly elected members showed an array of diversity, ranging from farmers to doctors and lawyers.⁴ More importantly, moderates made up the convention’s majority, accounting for sixty percent, while the secessionists and unionists accounted for twenty percent each.⁵

On February 13, 1861, the Virginia State Convention commenced and lasted until a little after Virginia’s secession, two months later. Initially, unionists, moderates, and secessionists each deployed delaying tactics to gain an advantage over the others. Unionists expected an increase in allies, moderates pinned their hopes on Lincoln for a compromise, and secessionists believed delays eroded the patience of Virginians, pushing them towards the precipice of disunion. The convention’s delegates frequently made speeches and even welcomed three secession commissioners from Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina to address them. The convention’s views on the commissioners’ orations were ambivalent. Virginian’s unionists and moderates placed much hope in Lincoln’s inaugural address, hoping that it would allay Southern fears and ease talks of disunion. However, many Southerners found Lincoln’s inaugural speech “argumentative, if not defiant.” In addition to Lincoln’s speech, the failure of the three-week long Washington Peace Conference, an attempt made by Virginians to reconcile the differences

³ James I. Robertson, “The Virginia State Convention of 1861,” 3-4; Henry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia 1847-1861* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie Publishers, 1979), 142, 148-150.

⁴ William H. Gaines, *Biographical Register of Members: Virginia State Convention of 1861 First Session* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1969), 9.

⁵ James I. Robertson, “The Virginia State Convention of 1861,” 3-4; Henry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia*, 142.

of both Northerners and Lower South Rebels, chipped away at Virginia's moderate resolve and calls for secession became more frequent. In the meantime, conservatives, defined as a coalition of moderates and unionists, sought a more active role in seeking compromises while secessionists maintained their delaying campaign, which consisted of long speeches, clogging the system with a copious amount of petty resolutions and the reading of minor details.

The secessionists' strategy partly worked. They stirred popular sentiment in their favor and weakened the conservative coalition. On April 4, the secessionists tested their newfound strength when delegate Lewis Harvey proposed, for the first time, a motion for secession. Eighty-eight voted against the proposition and forty-five members in favor of it. Although, the vote indicated an increase in secessionists' numbers, it was not close due to the conservatives' continued determination within the convention. In part, moderates maintained their views due to Secretary of State William Seward's promise that Lincoln would abstain from reinforcing Fort Sumter. To control the convention, secessionists needed external help to turn many of the moderates in favor of disunion.⁶

That help arrived early on the morning of April 12 when Confederate artillery fired on Fort Sumter, forcing its commander, Robert Anderson, to surrender. Back in rainy Richmond the news caused much "excitement, amounting almost to a mob." The "Secession flag" replaced the United States one on top of the capitol, and that night a torch-light procession snaked its way through Richmond's streets. On April 15, three days following Fort Sumter's surrender, Lincoln called for 75,000 militia from the states, including the border states, to suppress the rebellion, and Samuella Hart Curd recalled that Virginia received the president's proclamation "with great indignation." In a "state of excitement," the secessionist spirit swept over Richmond, and many

⁶ James I. Robertson, "The Virginia State Convention of 1861," 5-14; Henry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia 1847-1861*, 158-190.

homes began to display Confederate flags.⁷ Meanwhile in the convention, moderate delegates began to waver, tilting more towards secession. On April 15, the convention proceeded, and many predicted Virginia's ordinance of secession would pass that day. Despite the secessionists' increasing numbers, they proceeded with caution, as they desired to gain full support from the convention's delegates. In addition, secessionists wanted to confirm the truth of early reports that Lincoln had indeed called for troops. They also sought to gauge the other border states' feelings before acting. On April 16, William Preston "introduced a formal ordinance of secession." The following day, the convention voted on Preston's motion, and it passed 88 to 55. However, some members had a change of heart and others submitted absentee ballots, making the final tally 103 in favor and 46 against. A little more than a month later, Virginia's popular referendum overwhelmingly approved the convention's vote.⁸

After secession, Virginians busied themselves celebrating along with other Confederate states. Approximately 10,000 people gathered around Richmond's City Hall at night and held a second torch-light procession. With burning torches, the crowd followed a band, paraded past Richmond's many "illuminated" homes, and watched ladies "waving their handkerchiefs." A display of fireworks rained over Richmond, lighting the city.⁹ Virginia's secession also caused ample excitement throughout the Confederate states, perhaps as much as the surrender of Fort Sumter.¹⁰ Alexander Stephens reported "great rejoicing" and the "firing of cannon" from

⁷ James I. Robertson, "The Virginia State Convention of 1861," 14-17; Samuella Hart Curd, *Diary*, April 13, 16, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

⁸ James I. Robertson, "The Virginia State Convention of 1861, 17-19; Henry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia 1847-1861*, 191-213.

⁹ "The Torchlight Procession and Illumination Last Night," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, April 20, 1861.

¹⁰ "Correspondent of the Courier," *Charleston Daily Courier*, April 25, 1861.

Montgomery.¹¹ The excited residents of Savannah also celebrated over the additional star added to the Confederate flag and honored Virginia's actions with an eight-gun salute.¹²

Now that Virginia, the foundation of the Upper South, had severed itself from the nation, many throughout the country predicted that the other hitherto loyal slave states would leave the Union. Prior to Virginia's secession, the *New York Times* had asserted, "the action of Virginia is probably more important, to the future of this country, than that of any other State." With Virginia's secession, the *Times* expected North Carolina, Maryland, and perhaps the remaining slave states to secede.¹³ North Carolina's *Spirit of the Age* boldly predicted that its own state, Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Tennessee" would secede and "nothing can now prevent that combination..."¹⁴ The *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser* even added the often overlooked slave state of Delaware to the list of likely secessionist candidates. By May, Tennessee, Arkansas, and North Carolina followed Virginia's lead, completing the Confederacy. But how did Virginia get "the ball rolling?"¹⁵

The Confederacy needed a state that rivaled the North's superiority in agriculture, manufacturing, and wealth. Virginia provided that counterbalance to some degree. A contributor from Georgia understood Virginia's importance to the fledgling government and explained to the *Southern Confederacy* that the nation should not take America as a part of the title Confederate

¹¹ Alexander Stephens to Linton Stephens, April 18, 1861, Alexander Stephens Papers, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York.

¹² "Another Star Added—Virginia A Confederate State," *Richmond Daily Whig*, April 23, 1861, quoting the *Savannah Republican*.

¹³ "What Virginia Will Do.," *Southern Confederacy*, April 3, 1861, quoting the *New York Times*, <http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/asc/asc1861/asc1861-0105.mets.xml#page/1/mode/1up>.

¹⁴ "The North Western States," *Spirit of the Age*, May 8, 1861, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/58050990>.

¹⁵ "The Ball Rolling On," *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, May 8, 1861; Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War & Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 146.

States of America, since Northerners also claimed it. Eager to see a complete separation from the United States, the Georgian suggested that Southern states replace their names with numbers and rename their nation the “Confederate States of Virginia.”¹⁶

In population and manufacturing, Virginia led the South but was dwarfed by many of the Northern states. Virginia ranked fifth nationally in total population and first in the South. In terms of military population, white males ages eighteen to forty-five, the Old Dominion dropped to eighth in the nation but continued to reign over the South.¹⁷ Virginia also carried the weight in manufacturing, boasting more than five thousand establishments and close to twenty-seven million dollars in capital invested. However, the number of establishments that Virginia possessed was only a quarter of what Pennsylvania and New York each mustered, the top two manufacturing states. In capital invested, the Old Dominion fell to eighth nationally, where New York and Pennsylvania outspent Virginia six times over. More specifically in the production of bar, sheet, and railroad iron, Virginia took third place in the South in the number of establishments, trailing Tennessee and North Carolina, but invested nearly twice as much capital as the rest of the region’s states combined and produced nearly seventy percent of the South’s total production of iron. In comparison with the North, Virginia paled, not so much in the number of establishments and capital invested, but in terms of tons produced. The chief iron-manufacturing state, Pennsylvania, along with some smaller states such as Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Ohio, out-produced Virginia by at least eleven thousand tons. In sum, Virginia, far more than any other southern state, could best match the North’s superior numbers in terms of population and manufacturing.¹⁸

¹⁶ “Confederate States of Virginia,” *Southern Confederacy*, June 2, 1861, <http://atnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/asc/asc1861/asc1861-0310.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>.

¹⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population of the United States in 1860*, iv, xvii.

¹⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860*, clxxxiii, 729.

Modern historians also believe that Virginia represented the South's most important state, possessing qualities that no other could furnish. Professor Charles Dew stated that with Virginia, the Confederacy might have success, but "if the seven states of the lower South began armed conflict against the Union without the Old Dominion, there could be little doubt as to the ultimate outcome."¹⁹ More specifically, historian James McPherson explained that the magnitude of Virginia's "industrial capacity was nearly as great as that of the seven original Confederate states combined."²⁰

The Founding Fathers served as icons to the fledgling government, and no state in the South exerted this cultural pull like Virginia. Five of the nation's sixteen presidents, including some other important founders came from Virginia, adding legitimacy to the Confederacy.²¹ Not only did Confederates celebrate President George Washington's Birthday in Montgomery, but secession commissioners equated their cause with the American Revolution and used the founders to convince slave states to secede.²² John Preston, South Carolina's secession commissioner to Virginia, reasoned with the Virginia State Convention that the southern states had an obligation to rise against the North and preserve what the Founding Fathers constructed. To remind the delegates of their ancestor's revolutionary past, Preston unearthed local history, with the words, 'give me liberty or give me death!', which Patrick Henry uttered eighty-six years earlier nearby at Saint Johns' Church.²³ Even southern newspapers picked up on Henry's

¹⁹ Charles Dew, *Apostles of Disunion*, 59.

²⁰ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 280.

²¹ Gary W. Gallagher, "Introduction," In *Crucible of the Civil War: Virginia from Secession to Commemoration*, eds. Edward L. Ayers, Gary W. Gallagher, and Andrew J. Torget (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 3-4. See Also "The Tories of '76 and '61," *Richmond Daily Whig*, April 19, 1861.

²² Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, February 22, 1861, "The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862," 236.

²³ George H. Reese, ed. *Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861, February 13-March 16* 1 (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1965), 86-88; William I. Montague, *Montague's*

ubiquitous phrase and published extracts of Henry's oration, drawing parallels to their own revolution.²⁴

The Old Dominion possessed some of the South's largest agricultural resources. Fielding large armies could quickly deplete a state's resources, and the necessity of maintaining ample supplies at the seat of war remained crucial. With the exception of cotton and rice, Virginia's agricultural yield remained unrivaled in comparison with other southern states. It harvested nearly twice the amount of wheat and rye as the entire Deep South. In addition, the Old Dominion's oat production equaled the rest of the South. Virginia also produced respectable crops of potatoes and corn, though they were not as dominant as its grain yields.²⁵

Salt was another important Virginia product. Prior to the days of refrigeration, salt was a crucial preservative. The mineral also aided individual health and enhanced bland diets. Virginia possessed the only significant source of salt within the Confederacy. Saltville, located in the southwestern corner of the state, had the ability to provide the rebellious nation with the mineral for the duration of the war, if only the manpower could be found to mine it.²⁶

Although tobacco had little use on the battlefield, Virginia could potentially turn the lucrative cash crop into an important export. According to the 1860 census, Virginia yielded nearly thirty percent of the nation's tobacco output and exported much to Europe.²⁷ Before Virginia seceded, the *Richmond Daily Whig*, recognized the plant's significance. The paper

Richmond Directory and Business Advertiser for 1850-1851, vol. 1 (Richmond, 1850), 10-11, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁴ "Liberty or Death!," *Richmond Daily Whig*, May 28, 1861; "Extract from Patrick Henry's Speech Before the Virginia Convention in 1775," *Southern Confederacy*, May 28, 1861, <http://atnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/asc/asc1861/asc1861-0290.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>.

²⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1862), 200-202.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 188; Ella Lonn, *Salt as a Factor in the Confederacy* (Tuscaloosa: University Press of Alabama, 1965), 13-18, 26.

²⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 201; "The Tobacco Trade," *Richmond Daily Whig*, April 5, 1861.

blasted the North for its neglect of tobacco planters and the injurious protective tariffs that the federal government imposed. The author claimed the commodity would thrive much better under the Confederacy, where Virginia tobacco planters could dominate the European markets. The writer claimed that cotton might be king but “Tobacco is premier” and urged producers of the two crops to join forces, predicting that England and France would not stand to see these treasured commodities mowed down by northern cannons.²⁸

Table 1. Southern Wheat and Rye, 1860

	Southern Wheat in Bushels, 1860	Southern Rye in Bushels, 1860
Alabama	1,222,487	73,942
Arkansas	955,298	77,869
Florida	2,808	21,314
Georgia	2,544,913	115,532
Louisiana	29,283	12,789
Mississippi	579,452	41,260
North Carolina	4,743,706	436,856
South Carolina	1,285,631	89,091
Tennessee	5,409,863	265,344
Texas	1,464,273	95,012
Virginia	13,129,180	944,024
Total	31,366,894	2,173,033

Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

²⁸ “The Tobacco Trade,” *Richmond Daily Whig*, April 5, 1861.

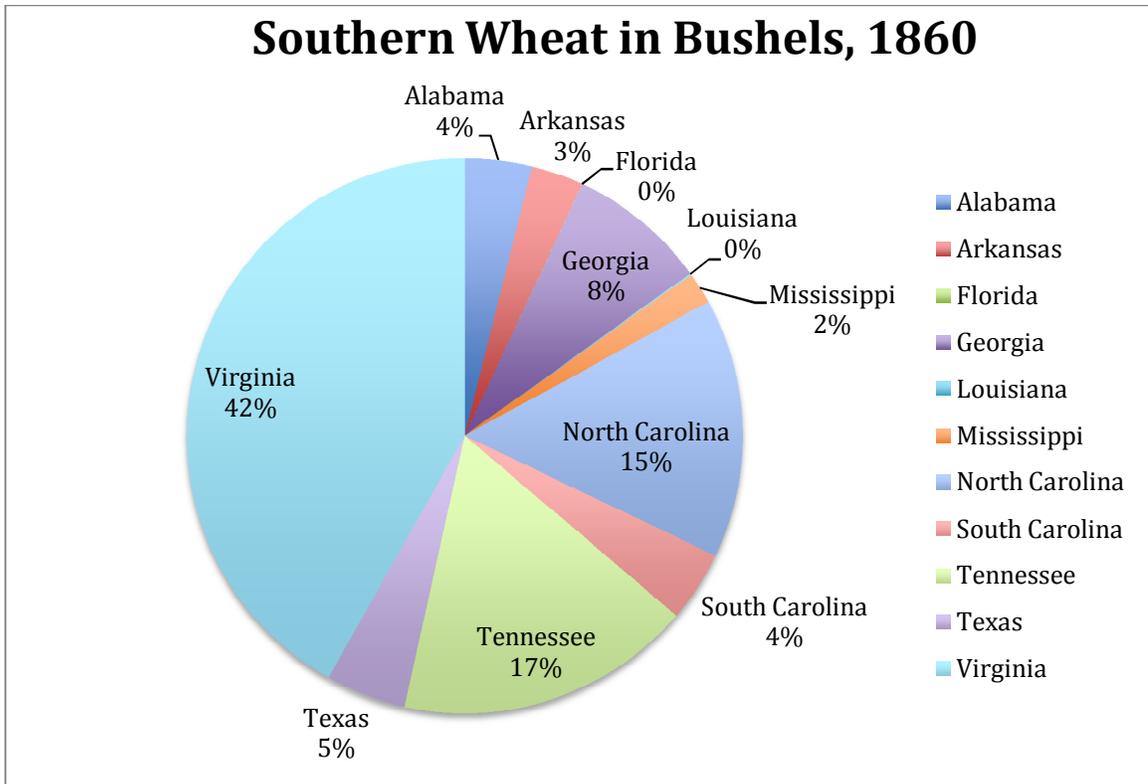


Figure 1. Southern Wheat in Bushels, 1860. Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

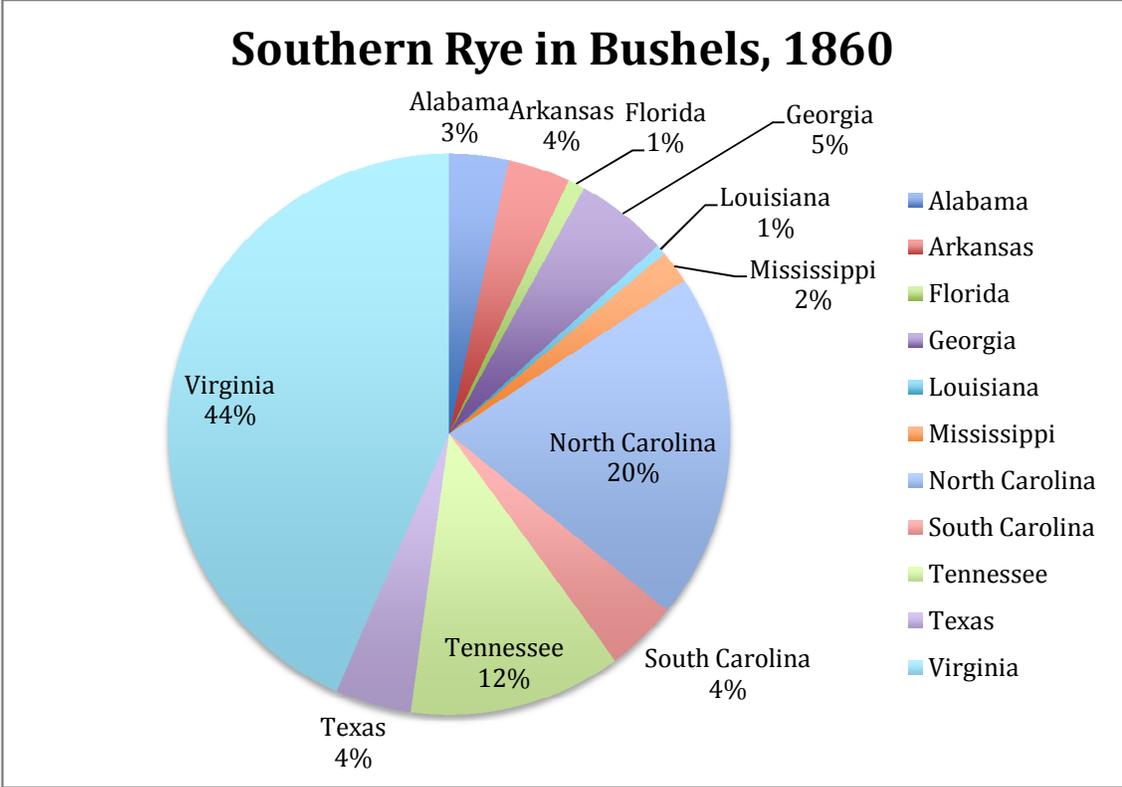


Figure 2. Southern Rye in Bushels, 1860. Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

Table 2. Southern Corn and Oats, 1860

	Southern Corn in Bushels, 1860	Southern Oats in Bushels, 1860
Alabama	32,761,194	716,435
Arkansas	17,758,665	502,866
Florida	2,824,538	46,779
Georgia	30,776,293	1,231,817
Louisiana	16,205,856	65,845
Mississippi	29,563,735	121,033
North Carolina	30,078,561	2,781,860
South Carolina	15,065,606	936,974
Tennessee	50,748,266	2,343,122
Texas	16,521,593	988,812
Virginia	38,360,704	10,184,865
Total	280,665,011	19,920,408

Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

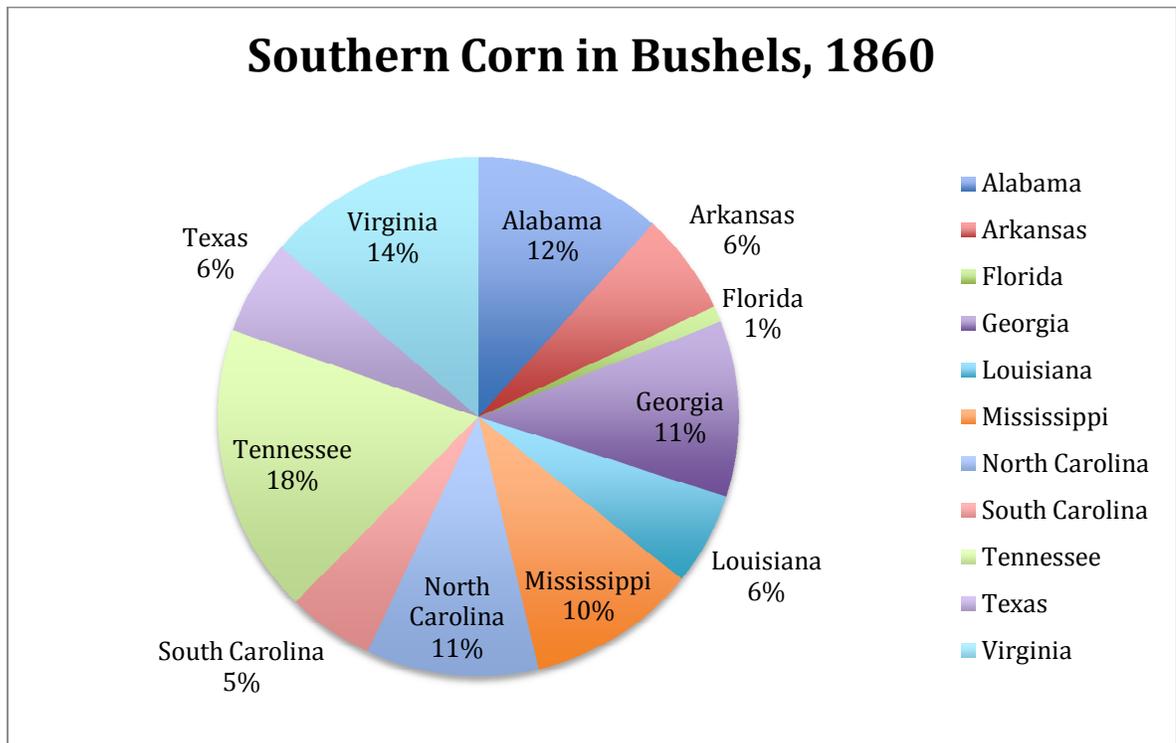


Figure 3. Southern Corn in Bushels, 1860. Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

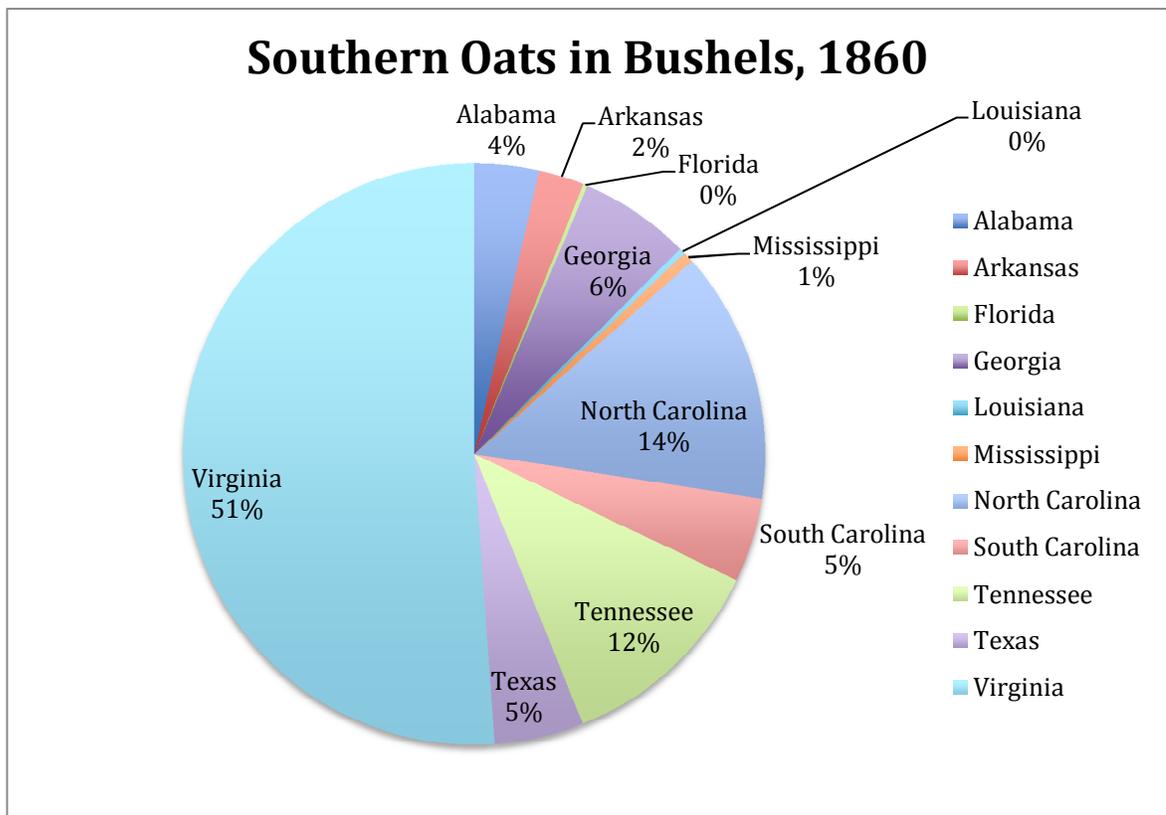


Figure 4. Southern Oats in Bushels, 1860. Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

Table 3. Southern Irish Potatoes, 1860

Southern Irish Potatoes in Bushels, 1860	
Alabama	397,566
Arkansas	418,000
Florida	18,549
Georgia	316,552
Louisiana	332,725
Mississippi	401,804
North Carolina	830,565
South Carolina	226,735
Tennessee	1,174,647
Texas	168,937
Virginia	2,292,118
Total	6,578,198

Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

Southern Irish Potatoes in Bushels, 1860

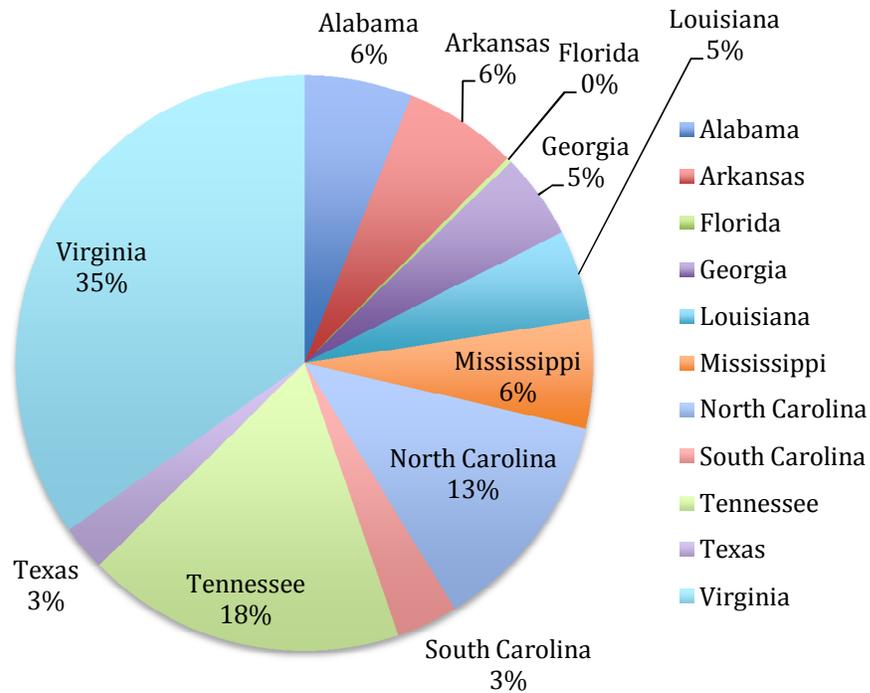


Figure 5. Southern Irish Potatoes in Bushels, 1860. Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

Table 4. Southern Rice, 1860

Southern Rice in pounds, 1860	
Alabama	499,559
Arkansas	215
Florida	223,209
Georgia	52,507,652
Louisiana	6,455,017
Mississippi	657,293
North Carolina	7,593,976
South Carolina	119,100,528
Tennessee	30,516
Texas	25,670
Virginia	8,225
Total	187,101,860

Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

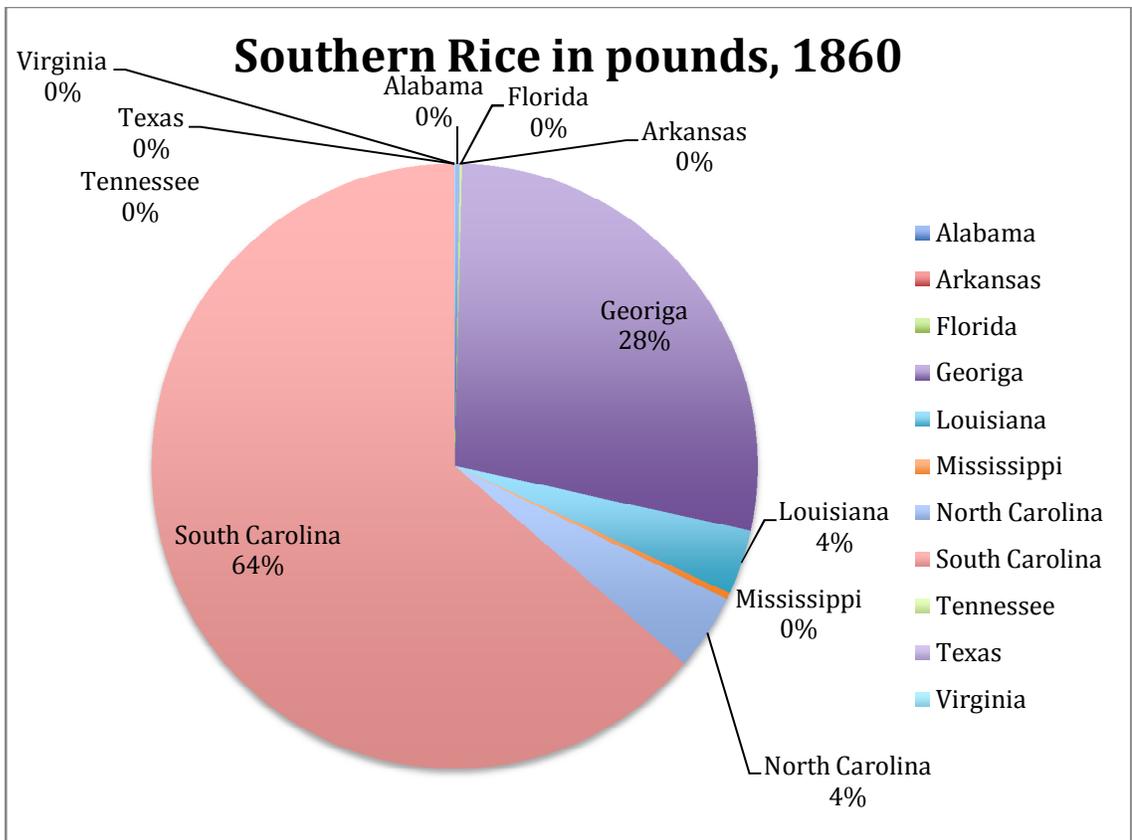


Figure 6. Southern Rice in pounds, 1860. Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 200-202.

Although still maturing, railroads could provide much benefit to the Confederacy by transporting large amounts of logistical materials and troops to the warfront. With nineteen railroads and 1,771 miles of track, the Old Dominion ranked sixth nationally and first in the South, accounting for twenty percent of the region’s total railroad mileage.²⁹ Richmond’s five railroads protruded like spokes on a wheel and allowed the city to expand and increase its industrial and agricultural bases into other states. Running north from Virginia’s capital, the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Petersburg Railroad connected to Washington D.C. via Aquia Creek, and from the nation’s capital, connecting railways passed through other eastern cities as

²⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 221, 230.

far north as Boston. The tracks of the Virginia Central Railroad began at Richmond and ran westward to Gordonsville and Charlottesville. In the opposite direction, the Richmond and York River Railroad went east to West Point, a port city. The Richmond & Danville railway ran down to the South Side, a railroad that ran from Petersburg to Lynchburg. From Lynchburg the Virginia & Tennessee stretched to Bristol, Tennessee and from there to Knoxville and then Chattanooga, where it connected to the Memphis & Charleston providing unbroken rail transport all the way from the Virginia capital to the Mississippi River. The Weldon Railroad, also directly linked to Richmond via the Richmond & Petersburg, consisted of a short ride to North Carolina's border at Weldon. However, with connecting rides it too extended into the Deep South.³⁰

Table 5. Railroad Miles per Southern State, 1860

Railroad miles per Southern State, 1860	
Alabama	743.16
Arkansas	38.5
Florida	401.5
Georgia	1,404.22
Louisiana	334.75
Mississippi	872.3
North Carolina	889.42
South Carolina	987.97
Tennessee	1,197.92
Texas	306
Virginia	1,771.16
Total	8,946.9

Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 230.

³⁰ Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 17-21; Robert C. Black, *The Railroads of the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 6; *Appletons' Companion Hand Book of Travel to the United States and British Provinces*, 150-152.

Railroad miles per Southern State, 1860

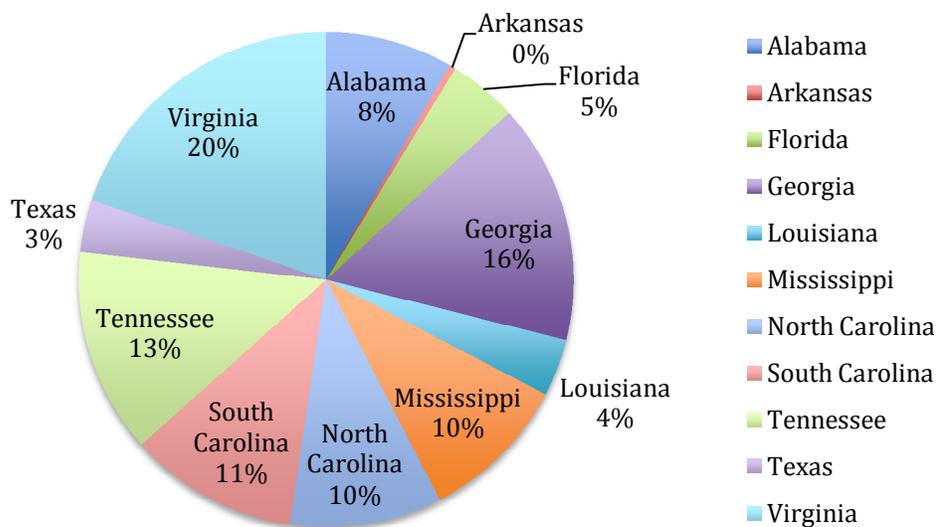


Figure 7. Railroad Miles per Southern State, 1860. Source: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 230.

In May 1861, Thomas De Leon departed Montgomery and entered Richmond a few days later via the Richmond & Petersburg Railroad. De Leon later exclaimed, “no city of the South has grander or [a] more picturesque approach.” As the train neared Richmond, he noted its rolling hills, surrounding forests, “simple houses and towering spirals,” all of which hugged the James River. Before crossing over the island-riddled river, he saw the suburb of Manchester located on the hills to the east of him. Belle Isle, a future Confederate prison, occupied the opposite view. Upon arriving at the train depot, passengers could observe the plumes of black smoke puffing from the stacks of Tredegar, and a short walk to Gambles Hill offered a good view of the ironworks along with Richmond’s flour mills, warehouses, tobacco factories, and Kanawha Canal. Moving further north, away from the river, was the capital’s business and residential area, which tapered out at Shockoe Creek. The creek coiled from the north and curved

its way south dividing the city from west and east. On the eastern edge of the city, Union and Church Hills primarily housed the middling ranks of society. Church Hill earned its name from Saint John's Episcopal Church, where Patrick Henry gave his "give me liberty, or give me death" oration. Located below the hills and on the James River, the docks of Rocketts remained the furthest point a ship could sail. This area housed many of Richmond's poor.³¹

Located in the center of the municipality, the capitol overshadowed the town and offered a panoramic view of the surrounding area from its roof. De Leon described the outside as having "a plain, quadrangular construction, with Grecian pediment and columns on its south front and broad flights of steps leading to its side porticoes." On the first floor, Frenchman Jean-Antoine Houdon's large marble statue of George Washington stood under the rotunda, enclosed by iron fencing. The Senate Chamber and Hall of Delegates were also on the same floor, and the city later turned the rooms over to the Confederate Congress, when it arrived in Richmond. The governor's office, rooms for legislative committees, state library, and council chamber shared the second floor. Finally, the basement had offices for the city's auditors and treasurer. Outside, the Public Square, a popular recreational area, enclosed the capitol, which residents used for leisure. The city hall, mayor's office, governor's mansion, and a bronze equestrian statue of Washington also occupied the Square.³²

In 1860, Richmond boasted fifteen hotels and had the capability of maintaining a higher capacity of patrons than Montgomery. Located on Main Street, the Dime Hotel offered a European plan and charged fifty cents a night for a single room.³³ W.M. Clark of the 20th

³¹ Thomas De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 84-92; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond*, 15-17; Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 33, 74.

³² Thomas De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 87-89; William I. Montague, *Montague's Richmond Directory and Business Advertiser for 1850-1851*, 10-11.

³³ *Business Directory of the Cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia for 1859-'60* (New York: WMF. Bartlett, Publishers.,1859), 28, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Tennessee volunteers arrived at Richmond's Exchange Hotel in late August 1861 and described it as "the finest building I was ever in." He found the mirrors that lined the hallways, the marble floors, and handsome furniture extraordinary.³⁴ Equally impressed, Sophia Dreer, a visitor who recently arrived from Washington D.C., wrote to her brother, exclaiming that the Exchange "is equal to the Presidents house if not surpassing it for richness of furniture, from the top of the building one has a full view of Richmond." Helping to set the scene for dinner, the hotel scattered freshly picked flowers around her family's table and placed elegantly fan shaped napkins on the plates.³⁵ However, not everyone found Richmond's hotels comfortable. De Leon believed that the city's "mediocre" hotels "were always small and plain..."³⁶ One thing remained certain, Richmond's hotels could not be any worse than Montgomery's, and perhaps patrons would find them as somewhat of an upgrade.

Various shops lined Richmond's streets, and they ranged from clothing stores to grocers. On Main Street, J.D. Goodman's clothing store sold a wide variety of apparel and material to furnish homes, and the owner assured customers of low prices for goods. Also located on Main Street, Mitchell & Tyler specialized in metal products, clocks, and glasses.³⁷ J.W. Randolph was one of Richmond's eight bookstores and promised customers "prompt attention."³⁸ Laidley & Robinson was named after its owners both of whom had graduated from the Philadelphia College

³⁴ W.M. Clark, "A Confederate Officer Visits Richmond," ed. Sam L. Clark, *Tennessee Historical Society* 11, no. 1 (March, 1952): 88-89, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42621100>; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond*, 22-23.

³⁵ Sophia Dreer to Henry Dreer, August 8, 1841, Sophia Dreer Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

³⁶ Thomas De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 86-87; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond*, 22-23.

³⁷ Moses Ellyson, *The Richmond Directory and Business Advertiser for 1856* (Richmond, 1856), 1, 9, http://books.google.com/books/about/The_Richmond_Directory_and_Business_Adve.html?id=ePoBAAAAYAAJ.

³⁸ *Business Directory of the Cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia for 1859-'60*, 16, VHS; Moses Ellyson, *The Richmond Directory and Business Advertiser for 1856*, 14.

of Pharmacy and opened a pharmacy on 4th and Franklin Streets, selling products ranging from tobacco to foreign medicines.³⁹ Richmond also had approximately four-dozen dry goods stores, thirty bakeries, over one hundred grocers, and sixteen restaurants.⁴⁰

Richmond maintained more stores and hotels than many cities throughout the South, especially Montgomery, but Virginia's capital also had a larger population than most, maintaining the capacity to engage in a wide variety of businesses including manufacturing. With a population of 37, 910, Richmond, four times larger than Alabama's capital, ranked twenty-fifth among U.S. cities in total population and third in the South, trailing only New Orleans and Charleston. In manufacturing, Richmond ranked thirteenth nationally and first in the South. With a national ranking of seventeen, New Orleans remained the only other Southern city that could remotely challenge Richmond. The city had 7,474 manufacturing workers, making up twenty percent of its population. In comparison, Richmond's manufacturing force dwarfed Montgomery's 234 workers.⁴¹

Richmond had a class system similar to other Southern cities. The elite "possessed of wealth, name, profession, or some combination of the three resided on the high ground near the center of the city." Merchants, storeowners, and manufacturers comprised of the middle class, and day laborers, usually immigrants, consisted of the lower class. Richmond's sizeable slave population occupied the bottom rung of society. Many of the eleven thousand slaves either labored within city factories or worked for their master. Occasionally, the master class rented their slaves to Richmonders who needed an extra hand. Other slaves worked for the city

³⁹ Moses Ellyson, *The Richmond Directory and Business Advertiser for 1856*, 29.

⁴⁰ *Business Directory of the Cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia for 1859-'60*, 15-16, 22-23, 2-28 33-34, VHS.

⁴¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the United States, Including Mortality, Property, &c.: 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns and Being the Final Exhibit of the Eighth Census* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), xviii-xix; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 9; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860*, 13.

operating “the gas works,” cleaning streets, and performing other tasks. Bondspeople also faced hardships, including limited freedom in public. They could not go outside after dark and “were prohibited from smoking in public, swearing, carrying canes, and from purchasing weapons or ‘ardent spirits’.” Moreover, Richmond’s roughly 2,500 free blacks also shared similar limitations with their freedom, and they had to compete against whites and slaves for jobs, often failing to find employment.⁴²

Richmond’s manufacturing, especially in the production of small arms, aided the war effort. As a result of John Brown’s 1859 raid into Harpers Ferry, Virginia, the state planned to resurrect its state armory, located in Richmond, which at that time functioned only as warehouse for weapons. After 1859, Joseph Reid Anderson of Fincastle, Virginia, owner of Richmond’s Tredegar Iron Works, agreed to a contract laid out by the legislature to furnish five thousand rifled muskets for the state, but as a result of rising tensions with the North, Anderson could not obtain crucial northern machinery to begin operations. Therefore, Anderson’s failure to create the Virginia State Armory magnified the significance of the Harpers Ferry armory.⁴³ Alone it manufactured thirty-five percent of the South’s muskets and nearly fifty percent of its rifles.⁴⁴ The day after Virginia seceded, a few dozen Federal troops torched the armory and bolted from there as Virginia’s militia swept down into Harpers Ferry. Under the lead of Colonel Henry W. Clowe, the former superintendent of the armory, the militia extinguished the fire, saving much of the machinery.⁴⁵ The equipment was then transferred to Richmond and Fayetteville, North

⁴² Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond*, 24-29.

⁴³ “City Intelligence,” *Richmond Enquirer*, October 11, 1861.

⁴⁴ *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series III, I, 1. Cited hereafter as O.R.

⁴⁵ “City Intelligence,” *Richmond Enquirer*, October 11, 1861; James I. Robertson, *Civil War Virginia: Battleground for a Nation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 9.

Carolina. In Richmond, the armory employed over two hundred workers, and by October 1861 began furnishing one thousand rifles a month.⁴⁶

Table 6. Muskets, 1859

Muskets, 1859	
Harpers Ferry	14,056
Fort Monroe, Va	321
Fayetteville, N.C.	7,678
Charleston, S.C.	2,413
Mount Vernon, Ala.	2,364
Baton Rouge, La.	11,672
San Antonio, Tx.	1,301
Little Rock, Ark.	349
Total	40,154

Source: Data from *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series III, I, 1.

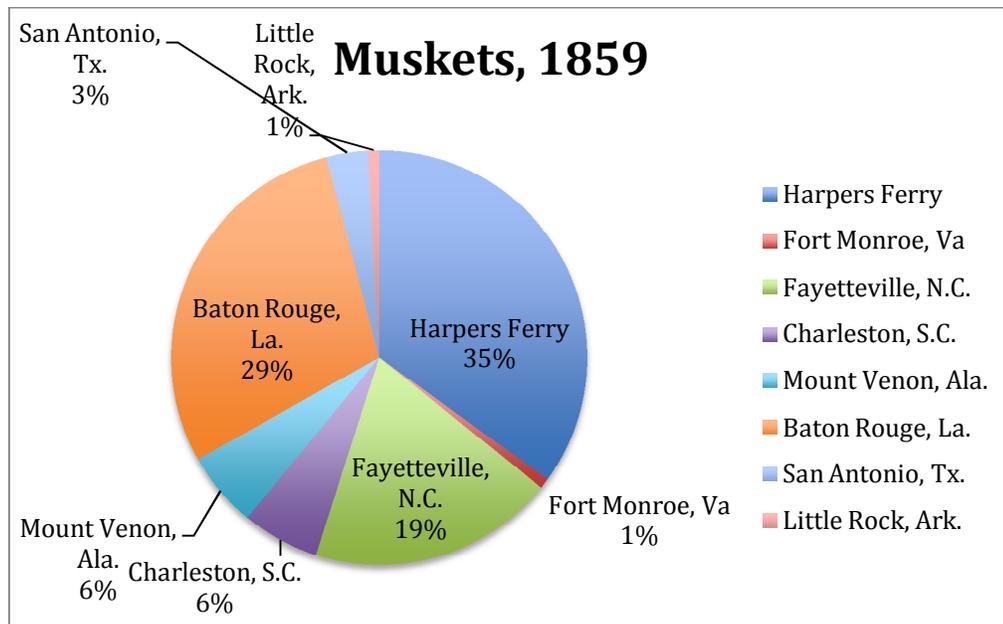


Figure 8. Muskets, 1859. Source: Data from *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington D.C, 1880-1901), Series III, I, 1.

⁴⁶ “City Intelligence,” *Richmond Enquirer*, October 11, 1861; Josiah Gorgas to R.M. Cuyler, October 14, 1861, O.R., Series I, 53, 182-183; Guelzo, *Fateful Lighting*, 152.

Table 7. Rifles, 1859

	Rifles, 1859
Harpers Ferry	4,266
Fort Monroe, Va.	51
Fayetteville, N.C.	1,685
Charleston, S.C.	814
Mount Vernon, Ala.	32
Baton Rouge, La.	1,488
San Antonio, Tx.	260
Little Rock, Ark.	54
Total	8,650

Source: Data from *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series III, I, 1.

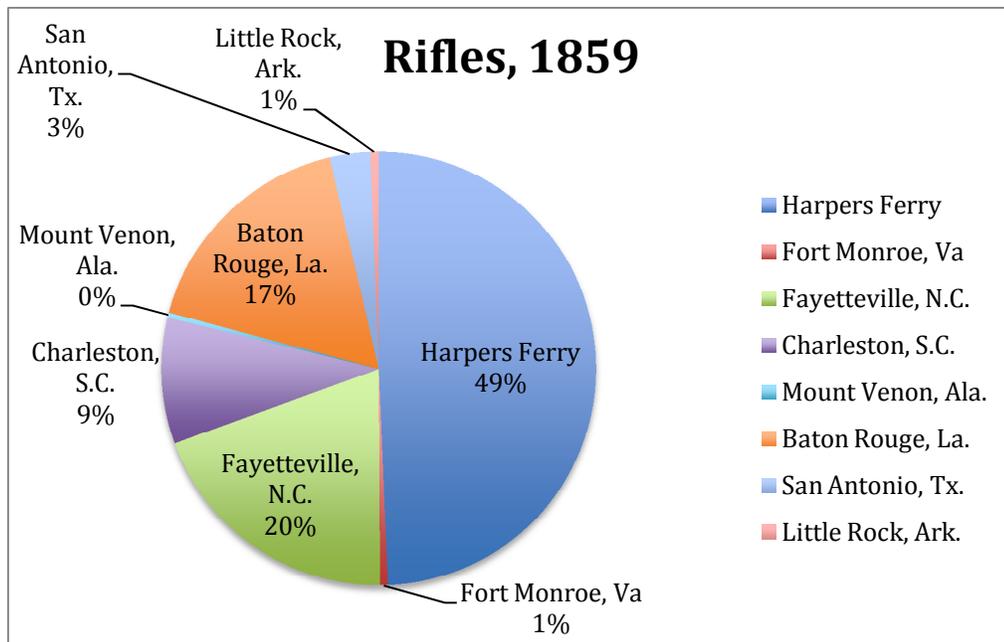


Figure 9. Rifles, 1859. Source: Data from *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series III, I, 1.

The Tredegar Iron Works led the way in southern manufacturing of iron and maintained the only substantial machinery for the fabrication of ordnance. In the 1840s, Joseph Anderson took control of Tredegar and transformed it from a modest mill to one of the nation's best.⁴⁷ Manufacturing nearly twenty-three percent of the South's iron by 1860, the Tredegar Iron Works dwarfed other foundries and cast almost double the amount as the Lower South combined.⁴⁸ By 1860, the factory had "four rolling mills, fourteen foundries and machine shops, a nail factory, six works for manufacturing iron railing, two circular saw works, and fifty iron and metal works."⁴⁹ Tredegar also employed nine hundred employees or one out of every ten Richmonders involved in manufacturing.⁵⁰ Even President Davis realized Tredegar's capabilities in 1861 and commented, "In field artillery the manufacture was confined almost entirely to the Tredegar Works in Richmond."⁵¹ During the war, the Confederacy had mills scattered throughout the South to produce heavy ordnance and field pieces but none of these could rival Tredegar.⁵² In fact, the first sales to the Confederacy came before Virginia seceded when Anderson furnished South Carolina with heavy cannons, which took part in the action against Fort Sumter.⁵³ Tredegar also rolled plates for ironclads, produced ammunition for the cannons, and manufactured torpedoes.⁵⁴ Even more importantly, the plant had the ability to scatter its seeds of success by providing new foundries, like the Augusta Powder Mill, with the necessary

⁴⁷ Ibid., 4-21. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 9.

⁴⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860*, clxxxiii; Charles Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works* (Richmond: The Library of Virginia, 1999), 88.

⁴⁹ Kathleen Bruce, *Virginia Iron Manufacture in the Slave Era* (New York: Augustus M. Kelly Publishers, 1968), 323.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 342; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the United States, Including Mortality, Property, &c.: 1860*, XVIII.

⁵¹ Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881), 473.

⁵² Charles Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy*, 86-87.

⁵³ "Arrival of Heavy Ordnance," *Charleston Daily Courier*, March 1, 1861; "Effect of the News at Richmond," *Charleston Daily Courier*, April 17, 1861.

⁵⁴ Thomas De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 92.

machinery to begin operation. It also supplied the Selma, Alabama mill with a steam hammer, enabling it to cast heavy ordnance. According to historian Steven Newton, “none of the munitions plants or navy yards that sustained the Confederate military economy despite the blockade could have been built without the support of the Tredegar Iron Works.”⁵⁵

Table 8. Tons of Iron Produced, 1860

Tons of Iron Produced, 1860	
Alabama	93
Georgia	2,030
North Carolina	1,096
Tennessee	5,144
Tredegar, Richmond	6,000
Other Virginian Works	1,709
Western Virginia	10,180
Total South	26,252

Sources: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860*, clxxxiii; Charles Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy*, 88.

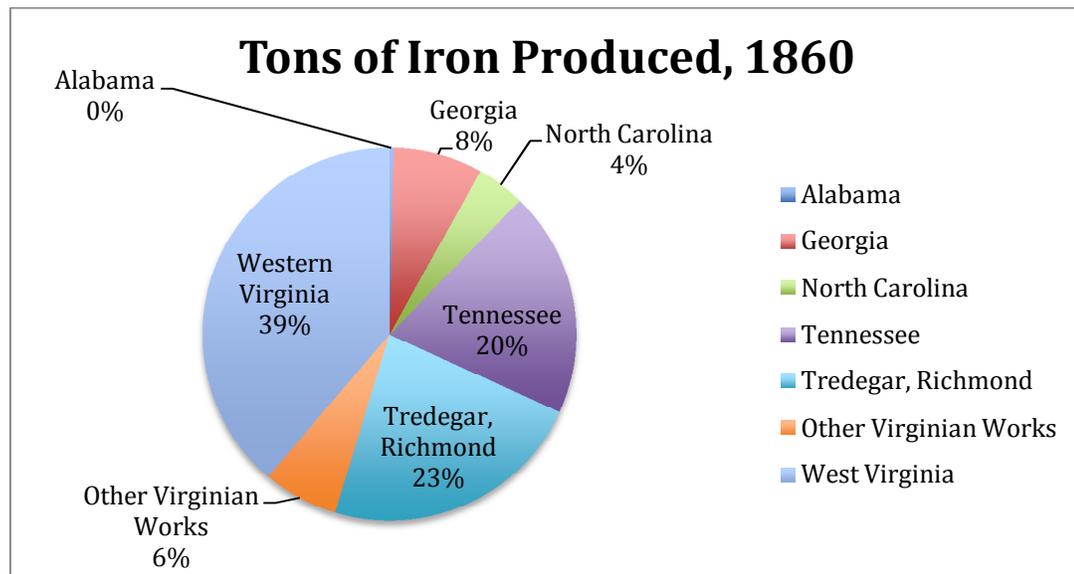


Figure 10. Tons of Iron Produced, 1860. Sources: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860*, clxxxiii; Charles Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy*, 88.

⁵⁵ Steven H. Newton, *Joseph E. Johnston and the Defense of Richmond* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 32-33.

Tredegar could also tap local coal mines needed to fuel the factory. The Old Dominion alone mined more than twice as much coal as the rest of the South combined.⁵⁶ The 150-square-mile Richmond coal basin, located a few miles west of Virginia's capital stretched from the Appomattox River northward across the James for a total of more than thirty miles and provided much of the Confederacy's coal during the war.⁵⁷ Prior to the war, Virginia and Tredegar primarily imported Pennsylvania's anthracite coal, and in 1859 Anderson's ironworks used over 1,500 tons but ceased at the onset of the Civil War when Pennsylvania cut off its coal supply to Virginia, forcing Tredegar to seek it from the nearby basin.⁵⁸ According to historian Kathleen Bruce, without the Richmond coal basin "it is doubtful the Confederacy could have persisted."⁵⁹

Perhaps even larger and yet often overlooked was Richmond's flour industry. The abundance of Virginia's wheat yield allowed Richmond's flour mills to grow and thrive during the antebellum era. The growth of the railroad industry also allowed Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina to ship wheat to Richmond to be processed into flour.⁶⁰ Richmond had eight flour mills, but the Gallego and Haxall mills out-produced the others by a wide margin.⁶¹ The Gallego mill was "94 by 164 feet in ground dimensions and stood 127 feet high," and by the eve of the war, it produced 190,000 barrels of flour, ranking second in the nation behind a mill in Oswego, New York. The slightly smaller Haxall mill followed closely behind Gallego, taking third place

⁵⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860*, clxxiii; Charles Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy*, 34.

⁵⁷ Sean Patrick Adams, *Old Dominion, Industrial Commonwealth: Coal, Politics, and Economy in Antebellum America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 26-28.

⁵⁸ Charles Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy*, 34; Sean Patrick Adams, *Old Dominion, Industrial Commonwealth*, 208-210.

⁵⁹ Kathleen Bruce, *Virginia Iron Manufacture in the Slave Era*, 109.

⁶⁰ Thomas S. Berry, "The Rise of Flour Milling in Richmond," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 78, no. 4 (Oct., 1970), 389, 405, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4247594>.

⁶¹ *Business Directory of the Cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia for 1859-'60*, 23.

nationally, with an output of 160,000 barrels annually. These mills would surely help feed the Confederate army and perhaps lead the future nation to prosperity in times of peace.⁶²

To a lesser degree, Richmond possessed other types of manufacturing businesses that Confederates could find useful while preparing for war. Textiles remained an important type of manufacturing in Richmond. According to E.M. Coffield's *Business Directory* for 1858-59, the Virginia Woolen Company with 76 looms and 200 employees yearly produced 500,000 yards of flannel and 100,000 blankets. The larger Manchester Company had 256 looms and 375 operators, using 1,200,000 pounds of cotton for the production of 3,600,000 shirts and sheets. The James River Manufacturing Company produced the same products as the Manchester Company but on a smaller scale.⁶³ The Crenshaw Woolen Mills sat next to Anderson's ironworks and it "was one of the most extensive and valuable for the production of woolen goods in the Confederacy...." In the beginning of the war, it produced clothes for soldiers and officer uniforms.⁶⁴ So important was the Crenshaw plant that historian Douglas Southall Freeman asserted after Richmond's collapse in 1865 "not a blanket could be manufactured in the South."⁶⁵

Other Richmond manufactures included paper, soap, and tobacco. The Franklin Paper mill had approximately four-dozen employees and produced various types of envelopes, wrapping paper, and printing paper. Soap factories made over one million pounds a year, which

⁶² Thomas S. Berry, "The Rise of Flour Milling in Richmond," 405-408; Arthur G. Peterson, "Flour and Grist Milling in Virginia: A Brief History," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 43, no. 2 (Apr., 1935), 105-106, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4244636>; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report on The Eighth Census 1860*, 65.

⁶³ E.M. Coffield & Company, *Business Directory and Merchants and Manufactures' Advertiser: Wherein are Classed the Principal Mercantile Houses, Extensive Manufacturing Establishments and every Business Contributing to the General Welfare of this Metropolis* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph, 1858), VHS, 155-156.

⁶⁴ Stanley Kimmel, *Mr. Davis's Richmond* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1958), 144-145.

⁶⁵ Douglas Southall Freeman, "The Confederate Tradition of Richmond," 370.

could help cleanse a smelly rebel army.⁶⁶ The city maintained 43 tobacco factories along with many warehouses, employed over 2,000 workers, and manufactured 14,500,000 pounds a year.⁶⁷ The sizeable tobacco processing plants had large dimensions and could reach “one hundred and fifty feet in length, and fifty to seventy feet wide, and from three to five stories high.”⁶⁸ Richmond and its home county, Henrico, reaped over four-and-a-half million dollars, making the crop the county’s most lucrative commodity.⁶⁹

As the South’s largest industrial base, Richmond possessed wealth that came along with manufacturing, and in a poorer South, great capital could help build a fragile Confederate economy. In 1861, Richmond’s four banks had more than a million dollars each and possessed a combined wealth worth ten million dollars.⁷⁰ Six insurance companies dotted Richmond in 1861. W.B. Knowles life insurance company office was located on Pearl Street and boasted in an 1856 advertisement of the \$75,000 it had paid out to Richmonders. With the exception of a small percentage, the city folk were well off and “owned real property worth 19 million in 1861.”⁷¹

With extra wealth, residents could invest money in newspapers and possibly seek education. By 1861, Richmond boasted four daily newspapers with varying political views. The *Richmond Daily Whig* initially did not support secession, but by spring 1861, it attached itself to Richmond’s growing disunion sentiment. With more moderate views, the *Daily Dispatch* was the city’s most widely read paper. At the other end of the political spectrum, the *Daily Richmond*

⁶⁶ E.M. Coffield & Company, *Business Directory and Merchants and Manufactures' Advertiser*, 155-156.

⁶⁷ E.M. Coffield & Company, *Business Directory and Merchants and Manufactures' Advertiser*, 156.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁶⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860*, 617.

⁷⁰ *Richmond Daily Examiner*, May 23, 1861; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond*, 23.

⁷¹ *Business Directory of the Cities of Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia for 1859- '60*, 29; Moses Ellyson, *The Richmond Directory and Business Advertiser for 1856*, 8; Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond*, 23-24.

Enquirer and *Richmond Daily Examiner* held strong pro-secessionists views.⁷² Richmond's extensively circulated newspapers also indicated an educated populace. Richmond "had long been committed to the idea of public education" and often pursued the idea through holding public meetings and petitioning the state government.⁷³ Richmond also maintained higher educational institutions, which included a college with approximately one hundred students, located on the outskirts of the city close to the Fredericksburg Railroad. The city also supported a medical college that was established in 1838 and whose buildings were said to exhibit "the purest style of Egyptian architecture." It showcased a dissecting room used for surgeries and a lecture hall. With war clouds looming over Virginia's soil, the Confederacy might take this asset seriously.⁷⁴

However, the sovereign nation of Virginia, and its primary city meant little to the Confederacy until it formally joined the new government. Jefferson Davis recognized that in order for his nation to survive he needed Virginia on the Confederacy's side. Simultaneously, Virginia struggled with secession and might show more caution than he wanted in uniting with the Confederacy. Regardless, Davis could not leave the opportunity to fate and took a cautious approach, hoping to reel Virginia safely into the Confederacy.⁷⁵ On April 19, 1861, two days after the Virginia convention's secession vote, he replied to Governor John Letcher's request for a commissioner, explained that he wanted "to enter into an alliance" with the Old Dominion, and chose his second in command, Vice President Stephens as the diplomat.⁷⁶ Stephens was a good candidate for the position. He, like Virginia, came to terms with secession slowly and only did so

⁷² Ibid., 17-19.

⁷³ Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond*, 29-30.

⁷⁴ E.M. Coffield & Company, *Business Directory and Merchants and Manufactures' Advertiser*, 156-160.

⁷⁵ William C. Davis, "Richmond Becomes Capital," 117.

⁷⁶ Jefferson Davis to John Letcher, April 19, 1861, O.R., Series 1, 51, part 2, 19; Alexander H. Stephens to Linton Stephens, April 19, 1861, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections.

after Virginians believed they could compromise no more.⁷⁷ On the same day that Davis replied to Governor Letcher, Stephens departed Montgomery and reached Richmond three days later. On the evening of his arrival, Richmonders serenaded the vice president in front of the Exchange Hotel, and he reciprocated the welcoming gesture with a lengthy speech.⁷⁸

On April 23, the state convention scheduled Stephens to speak at 1 pm in secret session.⁷⁹ He explained that the geographical position of Virginia dictated the state as “the theatre of large and extensive military operations, if not the scene of the bloodiest conflicts that this continent has ever yet witnessed.” The vice president predicted that Virginia would seek aid from the Confederacy “whether you become a member of it or not.” However, joining forces with the nation he represented guaranteed southern support in the form of money, munitions, and troops. Towards the end of his speech, Stephens sweetened the deal “The enemy is now on your border—almost at your door—he must be met. This can best be done by having your military operations under the common head at Montgomery—or may it be Richmond.” Acknowledging that he did not have authorization to announce anything, he predicted that if Virginia joined the Confederacy “the seat of our government will, within a few weeks, be moved to this place.” He reminded the convention, “there is no permanent location at Montgomery.”⁸⁰ On April 25, Stephens, filled with apprehension about Virginia’s indecision in joining the Confederacy, gloomily explained to his brother that he did not know what course to take if Virginia rejected his proposal. He complained, “the Virginians will debate & speak though war be at the gates of

⁷⁷ Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond*, 17.

⁷⁸ “Serenade,” *Richmond Daily Whig*, April 23, 1861; *Daily Dispatch*, April 23, 1861.

⁷⁹ Alexander H. Stephens to Linton Stephens, April 22, 1861, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections.

⁸⁰ Alexander H. Stephens, “Speech Before the Virginia Secession Convention,” April 23, 1861, ed., Henry Cleveland, *Alexander H. Stephens in Public and Private with Letters and Speeches, Before, During, and Since the War* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1866), 733-734, 744.

their city.”⁸¹ Luckily for Stephens, the Virginia State Convention ratified the resolution the same day and officially joined the seven other Confederate states.⁸²

After choosing to side with the Confederacy, the delegates of the Virginia State Convention also took Stephens’s bait. John Goode of Bedford offered a resolution to the Confederacy that “respectfully invited, whenever, in their opinion, the public interest or convenience may require it, to make the city of Richmond, or some other place in this State, the seat of Government of the Confederacy.” However, it did not pass as easily as one would expect. Ephraim Hall of Marion immediately rose and without explanation attempted to table the resolution. Norfolk’s James Holladay also expressed reservations about the proposal, explaining that as a new addition to the Confederacy, it appeared that Virginia already attempted “to reap pecuniary advantages by the location of the capital within the State of Virginia,” and he hoped for the defeat of the “humiliating” initiative. Following the lines of Alexander Stephens’s intimation, Jeremiah Morton of Orange, aligned himself with Goode, arguing that Virginia should not feel shame since Georgia’s secession convention offered a similar resolution. More importantly, since Virginia was to be the seat of war, Morton saw the removal of the capital to Virginia as a “necessary” measure. He acknowledged that the Old Dominion needed the Confederacy’s help especially in terms of money and hoped the convention would accept the proposal. Charlotte’s Wood Bouldin rose and reworded Goode’s proposition to read as a simple acceptance of Stephens’s suggestion thereby voiding the argument that Virginia offered itself as the capital for the “spoils.” Just as quickly as Goode seconded his motion, Bouldin, without explanation, withdrew it. Williams Wickham of Henrico implied that the proposal was untimely since Virginia would not officially secede until Virginia’s popular referendum confirmed the

⁸¹ Alexander H. Stephens to Linton Stephens, April 25, 1861, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections; William C. Davis, “Richmond Becomes Capital,” 117-118.

⁸² Alexander H. Stephens to Jefferson Davis, April 25, 1861, O.R., Series 1, 51, part 2, 32-33.

convention's vote, and Morton quickly directed the convention back to the original question. To end the day, Robert Conrad of Frederick called for a vote on Goode's resolution, and it passed sixty-three to thirteen. However, the convention did not have a quorum until the following day, and Morton, eager to see the resolution pass, took the lead role in asking the convention for a vote. This time it passed seventy-six to sixteen.⁸³ That same day, the president of the convention, John Janney of Loudoun, telegraphed Davis, inviting the Confederacy to relocate its capital somewhere in Virginia.⁸⁴

In February, William Boyce had a vision of making Richmond the capital, with a broader goal of luring Virginia out of the Union, and thrusting it in line next to its sister Confederate states. Alexander Stephens played the same card several months later. Perhaps both understood the crucial assets Virginia offered and also recognized that it struggled committing itself to the cause. Ultimately the decision to move the capital rested with Congress. However, many questions loomed, and the choice would not be easy. Would Congressmen be willing to turn down a more ideal capital from the original seven Confederate states in favor of Virginia, a state that as yet had seemed lukewarm about secession and the new slaveholders' republic?

⁸³ George H. Reese, ed. *Proceedings of the Virginia State Convention of 1861, April 16-May 1* IV, 546-548, 566-567.

⁸⁴ John Janney to Jefferson Davis, April 27, 1861, *Jefferson Davis Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers and Speeches*, ed. Dunbar Rowland (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1923), 5, 67; "Capital of the South," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, April 30, 1861.

Chapter 3: “If she falls, we shall all fall:” The Confederacy Selects Richmond as the New Capital

Rumors began to circulate about the removal of the capital, intensified after Alexander Stephens’s departure from Richmond, and by May grew into a serious discussion within the halls of Congress.¹ On April 29, Thomas Cobb explained to Marion that once the Virginia delegates reached Montgomery, they would make a concerted effort to push for the removal of the capital. Besides, he claimed, they had President Davis’s backing.² Alexander De Clouet of Louisiana added his name to the list of forecasters and wrote to his son in Virginia “it is probable that our Congress will in a few weeks remove to Richmond.”³ On May 1, the first proposition in Congress to make these predictions reality came not from a Virginian, but from a South Carolinian, William Boyce, and congressmen agreed to place it on the calendar for discussion.⁴ Three days after Boyce’s proposal, Stephens wrote his brother also predicting the removal of the capital to a new home in Richmond sometime during the summer since Virginia “will be near the theatre of war.”⁵

Moving the capital to Richmond would not be easy due to the prejudices of Deep South congressmen. Virginia’s slowness to secede led the Lower South to distrust the state. As the Old Dominion’s delegates arrived in Montgomery, many representatives feared Virginia’s sizeable

¹ “Capital of the Southern Confederacy,” *Charleston Mercury*, April 25, 1861, quoting the *Richmond Examiner*, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dlTq9_mQC&dat=18610425&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

² Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, April 29, 1861, “The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862,” 321.

³ Alexander De Clouet to Paul De Clouet, May 1, 1861, De Clouet Family Papers, Edith Garland Dupré Library, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, LA.

⁴ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), I, 173-174.

⁵ Alexander Stephens to Linton Stephens, May 4, 1861, Alexander Stephens Papers, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York.

unionist minority could impose ideas of reunification with the U.S., or worse yet, taint the new nation with abolitionism. Stephens was not far off when he predicted that congressmen would give “Va the cold shoulder.”⁶ Thomas Cobb acknowledged, “our Congress look[s] with suspicion upon this Virginia delegation.” He also complained about the delegates, especially Timothy Rives, who sold his slaves and maintained family connections living in the North.⁷ Some legislators, according to historian William Davis, took it as far as not even wanting Virginia in the Confederacy. Governor John Letcher’s heavy drinking and uncooperative attitude with the Confederacy did not help win any favor. Despite hard feelings towards the Old Dominion, Congress accepted Virginia’s alliance with the Confederacy on May 6 and granted it statehood the following day.⁸

The heat rose in Montgomery as summer approached, and it served as another reminder to politicians why the Confederate capital had to be relocated. Thomas Cobb complained that he “drank so much ice-water yesterday that my bowels have been annoying me.” Many delegates told Cobb that they did not want to bring their families to Montgomery to subject them to the heat, but rather they “all want to go to Richmond so that our families can stay at the springs close to us....”⁹ He even informed Marion that she and the children could not visit Montgomery since the heat could jeopardize their health. Once the Virginians made it down to Montgomery, they became “alarmed for their health” and put together a campaign “to remove the entire

⁶ Alexander Stephens to Linton Stephens, May 4, 1861, Alexander Stephens Papers, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York; William C. Davis, “Richmond Becomes Capital,” 121-122.

⁷ Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, May 4, 1861, “The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862,” 321; William C. Davis, “Richmond Becomes Capital,” 121-122.

⁸ William C. Davis, “Richmond Becomes Capital,” 121-122.

⁹ Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, May 1, 1861, “The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862,” 316; Thomas R.R. Cobb to Marion Cobb, May 12, 1861, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

Government to Richmond.”¹⁰ One member, Robert Mercer Taliaferro Hunter, minded the heat more than most, perhaps because he had “four inches on his ribs.” His fellow congressmen made jokes about him and claimed that every time he passed the cemetery on the way up to the capitol “he groans in agony, and predicts that he will get sick and die here.” Confederate war clerk, John B. Jones, had confidence that Hunter could move the capital to a cooler climate since he had “a way of moving large bodies.”¹¹ In fact, Hunter was one of the most influential delegates orchestrating the removal of the Confederate capital. The heat also bothered Varina Davis, the First Lady of the Confederacy, and her children. She believed that Montgomery stood as a “pretty place,” but the intense heat made “all my patriotism ooze out” of her pores.¹² In May, Mary Chesnut and Varina attended a luncheon and discussed the politics surrounding the removal of the capital to Richmond. There the First Lady expressed her hope for relocation due to the unbearable heat.¹³

John B. Jones arrived in Montgomery on May 10, and he was surprised when he found “Mosquitos in the Middle of May!”, which “bled” him “all night.”¹⁴ William Howard Russell was actually happy for the flies since they helped neutralize the fleas.¹⁵ Bugs increased the levels of illnesses and diseases. The *London Times* found Montgomery an unhealthy place due to the “deadly fevers,” which “prevail at certain seasons of the year.”¹⁶ Some time after the removal,

¹⁰ Thomas R.R. Cobb to Marion Cobb, May 11, 12, 1861, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

¹¹ John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital*, vol.1 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), 41, 43-44, <https://archive.org/details/arebelwarclerks01jonegoog>.

¹² Varina Davis to Clement Claiborne Clay, May 10, 1861, Clement C. Clay Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

¹³ Mary Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 62.

¹⁴ J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital*, 35.

¹⁵ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 117.

¹⁶ “Montgomery, Capital of the Confederate States of America, May 8,” *London Times*, May 30, 1861.

Chesnut reflected back on her time in Montgomery, and she concluded that “Flies and mosquitoes and a want of neatness and a want of good things to eat did drive us away.”¹⁷

Also by May, Montgomery’s newness as the capital wore off, and its social life died down, leading many to depict the capital as a “dull” place. Russell described it as a “small Russian town in the interior,” a “dull, lifeless place.” Thomas Caffey joined Montgomery’s Metropolitan Guards and claimed that Montgomery was “perhaps the dullest place” in the Confederacy.¹⁸ By May, Thomas Cobb complained of “a perfect stagnation in the way of social life” and claimed that few people invited him to tea parties or social events.¹⁹ Perhaps the *Mercury* depicted the Confederate capital best: “Montgomery is dull—dull to the citizens, dull to the traders, dull to the strangers, and dull to everyone else but the hotel keepers and the heads of the various departments.”²⁰

With Virginia’s delegation present in Montgomery, pressure to remove the capital mounted. On May 10, Hunter presented the same resolution adopted by the Virginia State Convention, which invited the Confederate states to relocate their capital to Richmond.²¹ As Cobb later explained to his wife, Hunter believed Letcher was “an imbecile with a half a heart in this cause,” and Cobb added that the government “must be where it can overlook him.”²² Congressman Francis Bartow of Georgia followed Hunter and reasoned that the looming conflict called for the relocation of the government to protect the Old Dominion militarily “from

¹⁷ Mary Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 94.

¹⁸ Thomas Caffey to Mary, “Letters from the Front.” *Confederate Veteran* 36 (January 1918), 26.

¹⁹ Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, May 1, 4, 1861, “The Correspondence of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb, 1860-1862,” 316, 322; Thomas R.R. Cobb to Marion Cobb, May 9, 1861, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

²⁰ “Our Montgomery Correspondence,” *Charleston Mercury*, March 14, 1861, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610314&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

²¹ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, I, 206.

²² Thomas Cobb to Marion Cobb, May 10, 1861, in R.A. Brock, ed. *Southern Historical Society Papers* 28 (Richmond: Southern Historical Society, 1900), 288.

invasion.” On May 11, a heated debate arose in Congress, but it was not enough to stop the resolution from passing. The bill called for Congress to adjourn on May 23 and to reconvene in Richmond on July 20, unless the president needed congressmen to meet sooner. Next, the bill went to the judiciary committee to confirm the resolution’s legality, and the committee responded four days later with its consent.²³

To everyone’s surprise, President Davis had grave issues with the resolution and handed down a veto on May 17. Although acknowledging Congress’s constitutional right to move the capital, Davis pointed out that the impracticable motion called only for Congress and not the executive branch to go to Richmond. Having one branch of government located at such a long proximity to the other would not only be an “embarrassment,” but it would also require an exhausting effort to communicate. Even worse, some of Davis’s cabinet members belonged to Congress, making it impossible for them to fulfill their dual roles.²⁴

On May 18, despite Davis’s veto, Congress rekindled its campaign to move the government but instead chose May 20 as the date to resume the debate on the proposition. On the designated day, Congress went into secret session and debated a resolution to adjourn the following day, reconvening at the time and place President Davis decided. The vote received little support from the states and lost six to two. Next, President Davis handed down a proposal from the mayor and alderman of Memphis to move the capital to that city. Congress decided to shelve it and proceeded to pick up where it left off, again taking up a resolution for the removal of Congress to Richmond “or at such other place in Virginia or North Carolina.” Again, the bill only limited itself to Congress and required some adjustments, which led to a second resolution, this time including the entire government. After more refinement, the bill called for an

²³ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, I, 208, 211-13; Davis, *A Government of Our Own*, 389.

²⁴ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, I, 242-243.

adjournment on May 21 and included the whole government to reconvene in Richmond on July 20. Next, Louisiana called for a vote on the proposition. Arkansas, Georgia, Texas, and Virginia voted in favor of the move. Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and South Carolina voted against it, and Louisiana's delegation evenly split its four votes.²⁵

The voting procedures played a crucial role in the removal of the capital. On February 4, the first day Congress met in Montgomery, Stephens enacted an effective voting method, one that emphasized saving time. Congress counted votes by states, not heads, and only one delegate needed to be present in order for the state to cast a vote. If a particular state's delegation tied, the state did not vote. Furthermore, a tie between the states killed the resolution, which was exactly what happened during the May 20 vote. Louisiana's delegation had an equal number of representatives voting for the move and against the move, disqualifying it from the final tally. At the same time, four states voted in favor and the same number voted against, killing the motion.²⁶

Even though the day's initial vote to move the capital to Richmond failed, a crucial shakeup in Congress provided enough support for the bill to squeak by in a second vote. The delegates had begun a discussion of other matters, and some members left while others entered the convention, providing a different makeup. South Carolina's William Miles asked for a vote on removing the capital to Richmond. Louisiana's Alexander De Clouet was one of the members that entered the Congressional chamber for the second vote and supported the move, breaking Louisiana's tie and placing the state in the yes column. Florida's George Taliaferro Ward changed his mind, also adding another state in favor of the removal. The final tally had six states—Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and Virginia—in favor of the bill.

²⁵ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, I, 254-257.

²⁶ William C. Davis, "Richmond Becomes Capital," 125-126; U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, I, 254-257.

Mississippi, South Carolina, and naturally Alabama voted against it.²⁷ The resolution reached Davis's desk the following day and this time received his approval.²⁸

Elated, Richmonders praised Congress's decision. The *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner* expressed joy over the removal and anticipated that the citizens of the new capital would show their gratitude and appreciation. A correspondent for the same paper explained that "to be the seat of a great Government is an excellent thing for a city." He reasoned that the city would attract wealth, the most prominent people within the Confederacy, and ornate buildings and monuments. He warned, however, that Richmonders had the ability to make their city the permanent capital of the Confederacy, granting that they abstain from overcharging politicians. He understood that if Richmonders became greedy, politicians would look again to move the capital to Columbia, Nashville, or even Charleston.²⁹ On hearing Congress's decision to move the capital, the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* made the announcement with an excited, welcoming tone. The author of the column expressed optimism for the Confederacy, mentioning not only Richmond's healthy climate but also its military and manufacturing capabilities.³⁰

Others throughout the South came out in support of the decision. Varina Davis believed that the removal "would strengthen the weak fleshed but willing spirited Border States."³¹ The *Georgia Weekly Telegraph* praised Richmond's cooler climate, which now permitted the newly arriving politicians to work in a more favorable environment. It also argued that Virginia, located near the seat of war, would have to meet the conflict head on, and reasoned that the Confederacy should be present for "moral, material, and financial support." The paper's final point

²⁷ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, I, 255-256.

²⁸ A Resolution to provide for the removal of the seat of Government, May 21, 1861, O.R., Series IV, 1, 342-343.

²⁹ *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, May 28, 1861; *Richmond Examiner*, May 27, 1861.

³⁰ "Richmond the Southern Capital," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, May 23, 1861.

³¹ Varina Davis to Clement Claiborne Clay, May 10, 1861, Clement C. Clay Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

characterized the move to Richmond, a place under threat of invasion, as bold.³² The *North Carolina Western Democrat* believed the move would “greatly encourage our troops,” and display an unshaking boldness toward the enemy.³³ North Carolina’s *Semi-Weekly Standard* referred to the move as “a good one,” reasoning that Davis’s military skill would instill inspiration, courage, and at the same time “greatly intimidate the enemy.”³⁴ A correspondent for the same paper also chimed in, referring to the removal of the capital as brave, considering its close proximity to the enemy’s position.³⁵ The *New Orleans Delta* praised the deed and complimented Richmond as a “delightful city.” In addition, the move would provide Virginia with a new energy from the fire-eaters of the Lower South, and at the same time, Virginia would cool the extremism of the Deep South with its moderate attitude.³⁶

Crowning Richmond as the capital also meant stripping Montgomery of that same position, and according to Thomas De Leon, Montgomery responded with a “wail.”³⁷ Writing to his brother Linton, Vice-President Stephens recalled “great or rather strong objections” to the removal of the capital.³⁸ A correspondent to the *Charleston Daily Courier* remarked that “Montgomeryites are dreadfully displeased” with the decision, and “they grumble louder about this than anything I ever heard them oppose.”³⁹ Montgomery’s newspapers fearlessly expressed

³² “Removal to Richmond,” *Georgia Weekly Telegraph*, May 24, 1861, <http://telegraph.galileo.usg.edu/telegraph/view?docId=news/mwt1861/mwt1861-0041.xml>.

³³ *North Carolina Western Democrat*, May 28, 1861, <http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn84020712/1861-05-28/ed-1/seq-3/>.

³⁴ “The Confederate States,” *North Carolina Semi-Weekly Standard*, June 1, 1861, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045450/1861-06-01/ed-1/seq-3/>.

³⁵ “The Confederate Congress,” *North Carolina Semi-Weekly Standard*, June 1, 1861, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045450/1861-06-01/ed-1/seq-2/>.

³⁶ “The Capital of the Southern Confederacy,” *Richmond Examiner*, May 30, 1861, quoting the *New Orleans Delta*.

³⁷ Thomas C. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 76.

³⁸ Alexander Stephens to Linton Stephens, March 22, 1861, Alexander Stephens Papers, Manhattanville College Library Special Collections, Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York.

³⁹ *Charleston Daily Courier*, May 25, 1861.

their discontent with the legislature's decision in the newspapers. The *Montgomery Weekly Post* chastised the government for choosing "individual convenience and comfort" over the common good. The paper asserted that if the South deemed the move essential to the well being of the Confederacy, it would not only support the move, but also recommend the transfer of the government. The *Weekly Post* concluded that the removal was "unwise, impolitic, and hazardous of the public interest" since the government moved towards the seat of war. The proximity not only placed the government in danger, but it now required an "extraordinary force," one that strips troops from other strategic places, weakening the Confederacy as a whole. Finally the move, through the eyes of the loyal border states, would appear one of "restlessness and instability."⁴⁰ The *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser* similarly attacked the relocation, arguing that constantly moving the government weakened it and would cost the Confederacy respect, not only from other states but also from European powers. The removal to the periphery of the Confederacy allowed for the neglect of other important strategic areas like the Mississippi River and Pensacola. The *Weekly Advertiser* went on the defensive concerning its hot climate, asserting that the heat allowed cotton to grow and that the crop gave reason for the cause. The writer concluded that the move to Richmond would not only be a bad choice, but it "might be the beginning of great disaster."⁴¹

The *Charleston Mercury*, the same paper that recommended Montgomery as the capital of the new Confederacy months prior, now found itself aligned with Montgomery in fighting against the move. The *Mercury* asserted that the removal "precipitate[d] and intensifi[ed] the conflict." The editor, using an analogous explanation, reasoned that, "There may be enemies, and they may abuse each other very innocuously when separated: but let them meet at the Court

⁴⁰ "The Removal of the Capitol," *Montgomery Weekly Post*, May 22, 1861. Also see the *National Intelligencer*, May 27, 1861, quoting the *Montgomery Mail*.

⁴¹ "Removal of the Capital," *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, May 22, 1861.

House on a sale day, or in a bar-room, and they soon manifest their hostility in other ways than words.” The paper recognized the move as “a vain demonstration,” in which Confederates aimed to potentially take Washington. The editor argued, however, that this was not the way to conduct military operations, and instead the Confederacy needed to make a more precise, calculated attack. Furthermore, the government’s new location was within the seat of war, and the author questioned its role dabbling in military affairs, arguing with the exception of granting money, political leaders should leave strategy to the military professionals, signaling it would constitute a better decision if politicians kept themselves out war’s way.⁴²

The *Augusta Weekly Chronicle & Sentinel* was one of the most outspoken critics of the move. Despite the editor acknowledging the lack of information due to congressmen holding the debate in secret session and the possibility of the move being a good one, the author called it “a piece of egregious stupidity.” The paper explained, “we have no fancy for a *traveling* government, going from town to town, like a menagerie or Dan Rice’s circus,” since the effect could only “be very demoralizing to our new Government.” The writer explained that his attack on the move was not about Richmond or Montgomery but the “moral effect we fear this *itinerancy* may have.” Furthermore, a “possible” Richmond evacuation would only augment the idea of an itinerant government, making the Confederacy appear even weaker thereby making the removal of the capital unwise.⁴³

On May 23, two days after Jefferson Davis approved the move to Richmond, James H. Smith of Alabama, not only rejected the idea of the Confederate capital moving anywhere near a border state, but also proposed a last-ditch effort to maintain the capital in the cotton south by

⁴² “Richmond and the Government,” *Charleston Mercury*, May 27, 1861, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dlTq9_mQC&dat=18610527&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

⁴³ “The Removal,” *Augusta Weekly Chronicle & Sentinel*, May 29, 1861; Jerrell H. Shofner and William Warren Rogers, “Montgomery to Richmond: The Confederacy Selects a Capital,” 164.

offering Shelby Springs, Alabama, as a suitable place for the seat of government. Describing its attractive attributes, Smith depicted an ideal capital. Sixty-six miles north of Selma, Shelby Springs was centrally located within Alabama and the larger Confederacy, and it possessed all the amenities that a successful capital needed such as health, mild summers, springs, good soil and timber, coal mines, lime works, and an unending amount of iron ore for the local Weir's Iron Works. Smith claimed that Shelby Springs' fruits and vegetables along with its beef and mutton were unrivaled in the region. The new capital would find itself the most "accessible point in the South" upon the completion of nearby railroads. The location placed it near Pensacola, the assumed "principal Naval Station" of the Confederacy and retained a far distance from the northern borders, which would buffer the nation from a Union invasion. If the government accepted his proposal, he would donate up to five hundred acres of land, allow the Confederacy to utilize surrounding building materials, contribute a quarter of the profits gained from the sale of the remainder of his land for building projects, and allot personal land for Davis's cabinet members and congressional delegates to compensate for the modest income they voted for themselves.

After describing the potential of Shelby Springs as capital, Smith revealed his political motives. He asserted that many advantages came with his plan, including "the idea of PERMANENCY in our new and promising Confederacy." The capital at Shelby Springs would ease Northern minds as to the Confederate threat to take Washington. Washington, Smith claimed, was not suitable "because of the exposed border location: and because the poison of Abolitionism has been too thoroughly infused into the minds of its inhabitants for it to ever be safe...." Shelby Springs would establish the capital in a cotton state "before influences could be brought to bear to locate it in a Border State—a policy that might, in the future be much regretted...." Finally, the capital at Shelby Springs would put an end to the debates and rivalries

between all other Southern cities vying for the position. Adding to the final touches of honoring Southern heritage, Smith recommended naming the capital Calhoun, after the great South Carolina politician.⁴⁴

Other Confederates, like James Smith, showed their opposition to the removal on the grounds of it being relocated to a border state, where the Lower South questioned the Upper South's commitment to war due to delays in joining the cotton states in the cause. After hearing these reservations, J.B. Jones penned in his diary that those Southerners who believed there would be little fighting feared the "tardy" border states "will strive to monopolize the best positions and patronage of the new government." Jones remained "quite certain" that if the Confederacy was not united in fighting the north the sectional rift would cause "a party—among the politicians, not the people—opposed to confederating with the border slave states."⁴⁵

A correspondent for the Charleston *Daily Courier* explained that Montgomerians did not believe the reasons for the removal of the capital were legitimate, and they questioned not only Virginia's commitment to the Confederacy but even asserted that Virginians "are somewhat divided among themselves." They concluded, "A Cotton Confederacy, for which alone they say they struggled, should have its Capital in a Cotton State...."⁴⁶ Approximately three weeks after the vote, Louisiana Bradford wrote to Mary Chesnut from Talladega, Alabama, and vigorously opposed the capital's relocation. She hoped that the Congressmen would not make Richmond the permanent seat of government and argued for its establishment in the Cotton States since "*they* fought the first battle—established the government and deserve it." Bradford would have approved of settling the capital in South Carolina, but the state was situated on the periphery of

⁴⁴ James H. Smith, "The Capital of the Confederate States," May 23, 1861, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia; Merton E. Coulter, *The Confederate States of America 1861-1865*, 100-101.

⁴⁵ J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital*, 41.

⁴⁶ Charleston *Daily Courier*, May 25, 1861.

the Confederacy. Therefore, Huntsville, Alabama, she reasoned, remained the most ideal for the location for its accessibility, wealth, beauty, and its “elegant and refined” society.⁴⁷

A deeper analysis of Congress’s vote to move the capital gives a better understanding of how Southerners perceived the decision to relocate to Richmond. When examining the failed initial tally and the final successful vote to remove the capital, one realizes it appeared much closer, especially when taking the headcount into consideration. The initial vote yielded twenty-three votes against the move and twenty in favor. Ironically, the successful vote was the reverse of the failed one. Not only do these votes suggest a hotly contested debate, but a deeper examination exposes a socio-political division between the upper and lower states of the South. Virginia’s and Arkansas’s delegates, representing the Upper South, voted in favor of the move both times, without a dissenting vote cast, forcing the Lower South to determine the outcome of the bill. Even though the Deep South delegates, in coordination with the Upper South, elected to replant the capital in Richmond, they, on both occasions failed to reach a majority of the votes in favor of the move. In fact, the first vote yielded twenty-three dissenting votes or approximately sixty-four percent against the proposition, while the second successful vote garnered twenty opposing votes or approximately fifty-seven percent against the bill.⁴⁸

From a Northern viewpoint, the move was viewed optimistically, and Northerners determined that it would shorten the war. Some even predicted that the Union army would celebrate Independence Day in Richmond.⁴⁹ The *New York Times* saw the move as “a crowning blunder” for the Confederacy and argued that Montgomery’s distance from the North would have “secured to it a sort of immunity from punishment.” The *Times* predicted that the Union army would not have been able to reach Montgomery within one or two years at the least, and

⁴⁷ Louisiana Bradford to Mary Chesnut, June 13, 1861, in *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 74.

⁴⁸ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America*, I, 255-256.

⁴⁹ J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk’s Diary at the Confederate States Capital*, 48.

once down there, the troops would have had to face an “insalubrious climate.” Northern cities, on the other hand, only remained a two-day’s journey away from Virginia, and Union troops not only presently commanded its estuaries, but they traveled the Potomac River “from its outlet to Washington” without any contest. The *Times* concluded that it could not have wished for a better place for a Northern attack, and the Confederacy chose “to risk all where it is really the weakest, and the North the strongest.”⁵⁰

Politically, socially, and geographically, Richmond did not ideally represent the Confederacy, and from a military perspective both the North and much of the South realized that moving the capital to Virginia, or anywhere near the seat of war could potentially spell disaster. So why did Congress and Davis decide to move it to such an unidealistic and vulnerable place? Various factors played a role in deciding the move, but one could divide the decision into two overarching spheres: political and military.

To fully understand the reasons for the capital’s removal, one needs a short explanation of its geographical position within the context of the war. With the Upper South’s secession and unification with the Confederacy, the North redirected its aim from the Lower South and turned to the Confederate border states, in particular Virginia. Well before the decision to remove the capital, Northerners turned their attention to Richmond. *Harper’s Weekly* explained that Richmond was important not only as the capital of Virginia, but it also maintained the greatest “dépôt of arms and flour in the Southern States.”⁵¹ Kentucky’s Albert T. Bledsoe, an official of the Confederate War Department, wrote Jefferson Davis on May 10, 1861, predicting that

⁵⁰ “A Short War Probable,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1861.

⁵¹ “The War,” *Harper’s Weekly*, May 4, 1861, <http://app.harperweek.com/IssueImagesView.asp?titleId=HW&volumeId=1861&issueId=0504&page=274>.

“Virginia is to be the principal seat of war, and to bear the brunt of its great battles....”⁵² The term, “seat of war” became ubiquitous throughout the South and used interchangeably with Virginia, especially within newspapers.⁵³

Perhaps Georgia’s Howell Cobb, president of the Confederate Congress, provided the best and most detailed explanation of the reasons for the capital’s removal. Once the Confederacy selected Richmond as the new capital, Cobb took a train from Montgomery to Atlanta, where he settled at a hotel for supper. As he ate, a crowd formed outside calling for him to address them, and once he finished eating, Cobb exited the hotel and spoke to the crowd. He explained that he did not have much to say, but on second thought, Cobb “suppose[d]” that the crowd “want[ed] to know something of what has taken place at Montgomery.” He then described “why the government was removed to Richmond....”

I can say, circumstances have arisen that have rendered it proper. We received the Old Dominion into our Confederacy. Her soil will perhaps be the battle ground of this struggle. Her enemies are gathered around her to force her into subjection to their foul dictates. We felt it our duty to be at the Seat of War. We wanted to let Virginia know that whatever threats or dangers were presented to her, filled our hearts with sympathy for her, which we were willing to exhibit, to show that there was not a man in the Confederacy who was afraid to be at his post on Virginia soil. We also wanted to be near our brave boys, so that when we threw off the badge of Legislators, we might take up arms and share with them the fortunes of war. We felt the cause of Virginia to be the cause of us all—If she falls, we shall all fall; and we were willing to be at the spot to be among the first victims. We were ready to say to Lincoln, when he attempts to put his foot on Virginia soil, ‘Thus far shalt thou come and no farther.’⁵⁴

⁵² Albert T. Bledsoe to Jefferson Davis, May 10, 1861, vol. 7, in *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, Lynda Lasswell Crist and Mary Seaton Dix eds. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 160-162.

⁵³ “The Seat of War,” *Southern Confederacy*, May 7, 1861, <http://atlnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/atlnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/asc/asc1861/asc1861-0218.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>; “News From the Seat of War,” *Charleston Mercury*, May 27, 1861, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dlTq9_mQC&dat=18610527&printsec=frontpage&hl=en; “Interesting from the Seat of War,” *Charleston Mercury*, May 30, 1861, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dlTq9_mQC&dat=18610530&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

⁵⁴ “Eloquent Speech of Hon. Howell Cobb,” *Richmond Daily Examiner*, May 29, 1861, quoting *Atlanta Confederacy*; “Speech of Hon. Howell Cobb,” *Richmond Daily Whig*, May 31, 1861;

By joining the Confederacy, Virginia not only voluntarily placed itself on the sacrificial table by taking the conflict head on but also transferred its sources, energy, and patriotism to the new nation. In turn, the Confederacy not only had a moral obligation to reward the Old Dominion's treaty with the Confederacy, but it also needed to shelter Virginia's manufacturing, crops, and home front from Northern blows. The *Richmond Daily Examiner* explained that as long as the war was to take place in the border states, "and alone threatened with invasion...it is clearly just that the Government should place itself in their midst." Therefore, "Justice demands" the capital's removal to Richmond. Considering the information on Virginia's military might from the last chapter, it would not be unreasonable to assume, even if the capital remained somewhere in the Lower South, the Confederacy would still do its utmost to protect its greatest asset. From this point of view, removing the capital to Richmond only seemed to be a transfer of the political machinery from Montgomery and the title, capital, since it appeared highly unlikely that the Confederacy would allow the North to trample over Virginia's soil unimpeded. This symbolic move might not have been ideal, but taking into consideration the Confederacy's options, the move to Richmond was the only realistic choice.⁵⁵

The Confederacy recognized the capital's transfer spoke in terms of confidence, a characteristic that had potential in scoring support from loyal border states and international allies, a move that could tip the odds in the Rebel's favor. A capital as far away as Montgomery, according to the *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, "would betoken timidity," and the *Richmond Daily Examiner* added, "Timidity is not permitted to the Congress of the Southern

"Eloquent Speech of Hon. Howell Cobb," *Southern Banner*, May 29, 1861, quoting *Atlanta Confederacy*, <http://athnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/athnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/sbn/sbn1861/sbn1861-0084.mets.xml#page/n0/mode/1up>.

⁵⁵ *Richmond Daily Examiner*, May 23, 1861; *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, May 21, 1861; "Correspondence of the Courier," *Charleston Daily Courier*, May 4, 1861.

Confederacy.”⁵⁶ The removal not only intended to placate and instill confidence in Virginians, but its boldness was meant to radiate throughout, proving to potential allies that the Confederacy “felt neither doubt nor fear.” In fact, the *Semi-weekly Examiner* expressed that Alexandria, Virginia, a distance of six miles from Washington, would make a better capital than for the government to reside a far distance from the seat of war. Davis’s presence in Virginia added another layer to the boldness of the removal as to say in “as plain as language can speak it, ‘come and take me.’” The removal “will at least smack a little of audacity; its presence here, a plucky thing in itself will give and inspiration to our whole military affairs.”⁵⁷ The seat of war required the commander-in-chief’s presence to oversee and “direct operations of the campaign upon full, reliable and early information.” According to the *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, Davis could not effectively communicate with an army in Virginia from a remote location like Montgomery.⁵⁸ Not surprising considering the Mississippian’s military background, many Confederates believed that Davis planned on handing down his civil presidential role to Stephens to take more direct control of the army in fields of Virginia. By this logic, Davis’s presence remained absolutely necessary, and perhaps this explained why he remained so determined to remove the entire government to Richmond.⁵⁹

Some Confederates hoped to take Washington D.C. and begin an invasion northward. Richmond, as a base of operations, would serve as the launching pad for a Confederate attack on the United States’s capital. Claiming, “war is aggressive,” the *Charleston Mercury* urged an

⁵⁶ *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, May 21, 1861; *Richmond Daily Examiner*, May 23, 1861.

⁵⁷ *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, May 21, 1861.

⁵⁸ *Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, May 21, 28, 1861.

⁵⁹ “The President in Virginia,” *Southern Federal Union*, June 4, 1861, <http://milledgeville.galileo.usg.edu/milledgeville/view?docId=news/fuw1861/fuw1861-0091.xml>; “Cabinet Session—Call for 32,000 Troops—Mr. Stephens to be President and Gen. Davis to head the Army,” *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, April 17, 1861.

attack northward toward Washington, and from there, invade Ohio and Pennsylvania.⁶⁰ Some even intended to capture Washington and crown it as the Confederate capital. The *Richmond Daily Examiner* claimed that if the Confederates did not declare Richmond the capital, “Washington would have been the proper place.”⁶¹ Richmond, according to *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, should only be the capital because the Confederacy would not be able to “hold” onto Washington.⁶² The *Richmond Daily Examiner* chimed in, claiming that “Washington should be the capital of the Southern Confederacy,” and once victorious, the editor reasoned, foreign powers would define the Confederacy as “the victorious party—the real United States.”⁶³

Though the Confederacy never made Richmond its permanent capital, the Virginia city remained the seat of government for almost the entire duration of the war. Montgomery certainly had deficiencies in terms of poor roads and hotels, distasteful food, high prices, heat, and bugs. These inadequacies helped pave the way for other potential capitals throughout the South to challenge Montgomery. However, the capital moved out of political and military necessity. Virginia, the nation’s most important state, required the Confederacy’s protection as the primary Union target. In turn, Virginians gave the Confederacy entitlements in the form of military, wealth, cultural, and agricultural assets. Militarily, Davis needed to be near the seat of war to conduct military operations, and many believed that Richmond could perhaps help project an attack on Washington. Politically, the Confederacy realized that moving the capital close to the seat of war, not only provided a sense of self worth, but also showed a tenacity that could potentially lure allies to join or aid their cause. Placing the capital within a close proximity to Union lines forced the Confederates to expend much of their energy, sources, and time into

⁶⁰ “War is Aggressive,” *Charleston Mercury*, June 25, 1861, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=vG0dITq9_mQC&dat=18610625&printsec=frontpage&hl=en.

⁶¹ *Richmond Daily Examiner*, May 25, 1861.

⁶² “Richmond as the Confederate Capital,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, May 11, 1861.

⁶³ *Richmond Daily Examiner*, April 26, 1861.

defending Virginia and the capital. At the same time, this extra focus caused a military unbalance, especially in the Western theater, where the Union armies took advantage of this weakness by exploiting it and successfully bringing the war to an end. However, the Confederacy was an inferior opponent in the face of a superior foe, and perhaps they were doomed from the beginning. After analyzing other options for the Confederate capital, it can perhaps be agreed that Richmond was not ideal, but in the end, it remained the most practical decision.

The narrative of the capital parallels the growth—or in this case—the death of the Confederacy. Southerners agreed to make the inadequate but centrally located Montgomery their seat of government. There the Confederacy was born. A heated debate ensued in Congress over the removal, representing the growing pains of the Confederacy. Or perhaps, it along with the Deep South's protests against the relocation of the capital represented the disease of disunification, which would later result in the premature death to the ideal of a Confederate nation since the South's conflict with the North appeared to be the only form of adhesion between the two southern regions. The decision to remove the capital, on a basis of military and political necessity, was a choice to fight for what the Confederacy already established months earlier. Once Richmond fell, the Confederacy soon shared the same fate. However, in failing to establish a capital on permanent grounds, the Confederacy failed to establish itself as a legitimate nation.

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ABSTRACT

THE FIRST BATTLE FOR RICHMOND: THE RELOCATION OF THE CONFEDERATE CAPITAL

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In 1861, the Confederacy elected to move its capital from Montgomery, Alabama, to Richmond, Virginia. Montgomery had many inadequacies, weakening its potential as permanent capital. Shortly after joining the new nation, Virginia invited the government to move the capital from Alabama to the Old Dominion, and the Confederacy eventually passed a bill permitting the removal to Richmond. The move not only allowed the fledgling government to better protect Virginia within the seat of war, but it also partly served as a reward for the state's alliance with the Confederacy. Indicating boldness to potential allies and allowing better communication between the president and his generals, Richmond also provided a base in which the Rebels could easily attack Washington D.C. The narrative of the capital's removal adds another layer to historians' understanding of Confederate history by highlighting the discontent the Lower South held towards the decision to move the capital to an Upper South state.