

LONG MARCH TO VICKSBURG: SOLDIER AND CIVILIAN INTERACTION IN
THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN

by

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CONTENTS

I. “Hunger is more powerful than powder and lead”	1
II. “Devastation marked the whole path of the army”	39
III. “This is a cruel warfare”	63
IV. “We were all caught in a rat-hole”	94
V. “A death blow fell upon the Confederacy”	129
VI. “Nothing is left between Vicksburg & Jackson”	164
BIBLIOGRAPHY	202

CHAPTER 1

“HUNGER IS MORE POWERFUL THAN POWDER AND LEAD”

The campaign for Vicksburg, Mississippi, determined the survival of the Confederacy. Successful secession depended on Confederate control of the Mississippi River, the vast waterway historian Terrence J. Winschel acknowledged as “the single most important economic feature of the continent, the very lifeblood of America.”¹ The river separated the South into two distinct sections, presenting an ideal invasion route for northern armies, as General-in-Chief Winfield Scott proposed in his famous “Anaconda Plan.” Union control of the Mississippi would prevent vital supply and manpower transport from one bank to another, reducing the Trans-Mississippi Theater to a detached region of the South powerless to influence the outcome of the war. As the Federal blockade tightened around southern ports, the European trade from Matamoros, Mexico into Texas became increasingly important to the Confederate war effort, and a division of the South would deny these crucial supplies to hard pressed armies in Tennessee and Virginia.² As President Abraham Lincoln observed in 1862, “Vicksburg is the key. . . . The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket. . . . We may take all the northern ports of the Confederacy, and they can still defy us from Vicksburg.” According to Lincoln, Confederate control of the Mississippi River “means hog and hominy without limit, fresh troops from all the states of the far South, and a cotton country where they can raise the

¹ Terrence J. Winschel, *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, Civil War Campaigns and Commanders Series (Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 1999), 13.

² William L. Shea & Terrance J. Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key: The Struggle for the Mississippi River* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 1-2, 17-18; Warren E. Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days: A Geographer's View of the Vicksburg Campaign* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 9. For an excellent discussion of the strategic role of the Trans-Mississippi Theater, see Robert G. Tanner, *Retreat to Victory? Confederate Strategy Reconsidered* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2001), 23-46.

staple without interference.”³ Union Major General William T. Sherman stated even more directly, “The man who at the end of this war holds the military control of the Valley of the Mississippi will be the man.”⁴

Confederate defenses also prevented Midwestern commerce from utilizing the waterway to access international markets, forcing trade to detour along railroads and canals to the eastern seaboard. The blockade of the Mississippi was an invaluable economic and propaganda resource for the Confederacy that weakened war resolve and fueled dissent within the states of the Old Northwest. Rebel control of the river maintained the geographic unity of the seceded states and inspired its populace to continue resistance, presenting a key symbolic stronghold against the North, while a victorious Union invasion would permanently damage the Confederacy’s international prestige and discourage the will to wage war throughout the South. In the bitter conflict of the American Civil War, the Mississippi River occupied a paradoxical position as the Confederacy’s greatest weapon and its greatest weakness.⁵ Indeed, unrestricted northern traffic on the river was so vital to the Union that Sherman declared, “To secure the safety of the navigation of the Mississippi River I would slay millions. On that point I am not only insane, but mad.”⁶

At the outbreak of the war, the North mobilized immediately to secure the Mississippi River and penetrated deeply into the interior of the South with a well coordinated land and naval assault. In 1862, Union victories at Island No. 10, Memphis, and New Orleans gained vital

³ David Dixon Porter, *Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War* (1885; repr., Harrisburg, PA: The Archive Society, 1997), 95-96.

⁴ *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), vol. XVI, part I, 100. Herein after cited as *OR*.

⁵ Thomas L. Connelly, “Vicksburg: Strategic Point or Propaganda Device?” *Military Affairs* 34, No. 2 (April 1970): 49-53.

⁶ *OR* vol. XXXI, part III, 459.

territory along the northern and southern reaches of the river, and on May 18, 1862, Flag Officer David G. Farragut's West Gulf Blockading Squadron appeared below Vicksburg. The military governor of Vicksburg, Lieutenant Colonel James L. Autrey, rejected Farragut's surrender ultimatum by declaring, "Mississippians don't know, and refuse to learn, how to surrender to an enemy. If Commodore Farragut or Brigadier-General [Benjamin F.] Butler can teach them, let them come and try."⁷ The city withstood a sporadic naval siege until late July, but by the summer of 1862 only a tenuous 100 mile section of the Mississippi River between Vicksburg and Port Hudson, Louisiana, remained unconquered. The final campaign to capture Vicksburg would alter the course of the war and significantly transform the nature of interaction between southern civilians and Union soldiers.⁸

In mid-1862, Union military policy toward southern civilians reached a turning point. When the war erupted, northern political leaders expected a swift subjugation of the seceded states and attempted to minimize the damage inflicted by implementing a policy of conciliation toward white civilians not directly associated with the Confederate government. This policy assumed the majority of the southern population to be either secretly Unionist or politically neutral, but deliberately misled and manipulated into supporting a separate "slaveocracy" by an elite minority of aristocratic plantation owners. Throughout the initial campaigns, invading Union forces attempted as much as possible to respect private property and limited foraging for food and other supplies from civilians. Federal commanders officially prohibited stealing and plundering, issued orders protecting private residences, and even respected the human property of slave owners. Indeed, in the First Bull Run Campaign, Union Brigadier General Irvin McDowell permitted southern civilians to "make application for restitution of any damages

⁷ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 1-32; *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), vol. XVIII, 492.

⁸ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 1-32.

incurred to their property.”⁹ In 1861, when the loyalty of the border slave states remained in doubt, President Lincoln rejected early attempts at emancipation and permitted slave-owners to reclaim their slaves that had fled to Union-occupied areas.¹⁰

Still, incidents of looting and pillaging did occur in the first campaigns, especially along the hostile border between Missouri and Kansas, which had been the scene of substantial raiding during the “Bleeding Kansas” troubles in the 1850s. Citizens in Missouri suspected of disloyalty could be arrested and jailed, and in one notorious incident, Union soldiers plundered the Missouri governor’s mansion in Jefferson City, Missouri on June 15, 1861.¹¹ As northern advances penetrated deeper into the South in 1862, Confederate sympathy among non-slaveholding whites proved more extensive than previously thought and the policy of conciliation failed, despite the restraint observed by Federal soldiers.¹²

As the war continued with no end in sight, a harsher policy evolved that Civil War historian Mark Grimsley terms “pragmatic” in his study *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865*. Rather than attempting to persuade rebellious southerners to return to the Union with respectful conduct and political toleration, “pragmatic” commanders focused their efforts on obtaining a military victory and “viewed civilians as peripheral to their concerns.”¹³ As occupation frustrations mounted, particularly in areas rife with

⁹ William C. Davis, *Battle at Bull Run: A History of the First Major Campaign of the Civil War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), 13.

¹⁰ Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 13-38.

¹¹ William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher III, *Wilson’s Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 45, 79.

¹² Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 13-38.

¹³ Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

guerilla resistance, Federal forces adopted measures that actively encouraged commanders to forage for supplies off the occupied countryside and severely increased retributions for guerilla activity. The earliest evidence of a more forceful treatment of secessionist sympathizers occurred in the Trans-Mississippi battleground states of Missouri and Arkansas, where guerrilla warfare remained a perennial problem throughout the war, and in the controversial Union occupation of New Orleans overseen by Major General Benjamin F. Butler. For two weeks in late June and early July 1862, the Union Army of the Southwest under Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis marched across eastern Arkansas without a formal supply base and survived by foraging off the civilian population. Curtis's march through Arkansas marked the first instance of a Union army relying upon civilian resources to sustain itself in the war and this practice would later be replicated by the Army of the Tennessee in the Vicksburg campaign.¹⁴

When Confederate fortunes rose after a series of victories in the summer of 1862, many Union commanders realized that they needed a more forceful policy to break the Rebels' will to resist. In the eastern theater, Major General John Pope ordered his Army of Virginia to requisition supplies from disloyal civilians without restitution and collectively punish communities for guerilla actions. Pope's army compelled secessionists to rebuild destroyed rail lines and pay monetary fines for guerilla acts occurring within five miles of their homes, while directing that houses from which civilians offered violent resistance be burned and guerillas immediately executed if apprehended. Pope's directives elicited hatred throughout the South and clearly illustrate the evolution of Federal policy. In addition, Union soldiers began deliberately liberating slaves in all theaters of the war. Slaves had hitherto provided invaluable labor for the South while the majority of able-bodied white males served in the Confederate armed forces. In

¹⁴ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 23-95; Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 13-37; William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) 301.

January 1863, President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation cemented this transition, and by the middle of the year thousands of former slaves had enlisted as Union soldiers, a transition that the South had feared since the earliest criticism of the "peculiar institution."¹⁵

That same year in the Mississippi River Valley, Major General Ulysses S. Grant perfected a brutal style of economic warfare that Grimsley terms as "hard war." Grant's own Army of the Tennessee had long practiced pragmatic foraging throughout early campaigns in West Tennessee and northern Mississippi, and for the common soldiers in the ranks hard war became a natural, albeit noticeable extension of previous policies conducted toward civilians. Grimsley defines hard war as "actions against Southern civilians and property made expressly in order to demoralize Southern civilians and ruin the Confederate economy, particularly its industries and transportation infrastructure" which "involved the allocation of substantial military resources to accomplish the job."¹⁶ Hard war consisted of the intentional devastation of all possible economic and military resources, public or private, that aided the South's ability to wage war and maintain Confederate morale. In this policy, which continued until the end of the war, the Federal army destroyed any civilian infrastructure employed in supporting the war effort, including factories, warehouses, rail transportation networks, and telegraph communication lines. Generally, Union forces left occupied residential dwellings untouched, but confiscated or destroyed any surplus food and livestock located on the property. Northern soldiers ransacked all outlying buildings such as smokehouses and corn cribs, wrecked implements of agricultural production, leveled fences and burned the rails for fuel, and liberated all slaves. The invading blue host plundered and occasionally torched all unoccupied houses, particularly large plantation manors that

¹⁵ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 23-95; Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 13-37.

¹⁶ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 3.

belonged to the secessionist elite. The upper class planters who held high positions in the Confederate government and had the most to fear from the presence of Federal armies typically fled at the earliest approach of Union forces, leaving their property unoccupied and thus vulnerable to destruction.¹⁷

If the owner of a house or nearby Confederate soldiers or partisans offered any armed resistance, Union soldiers would often burn the dwelling down and take swift retribution upon any captured guerilla. Grimsley asserts that while the Union's high command "usually sought to punish communities in a firm but controlled fashion, the situation was so inherently volatile that it created an upward spiral of violence. . . . When guerillas fired at Union vessels along the western rivers, it became common practice to go ashore and burn the nearest dwellings."¹⁸

Foraging by Civil War armies from either side consisted of both authorized, organized foraging parties under the control of officers and unauthorized foraging by small groups of soldiers without supervision and official sanction. Unauthorized foraging bands generally consisted of stragglers and at times, deserters. At times during the Vicksburg campaign, official foraging expeditions provided southern civilians with receipts for property seized, which often required definite proof of loyalty to the Union be demonstrated to qualify for redemption by quartermasters, a feat that few Mississippians could accomplish by the summer of 1863. For the most part, authorized foraging parties attempted to prevent the actual theft of personal belongings and other depredations against civilians, although the restraint of the soldiers involved ultimately depended upon the will of the officer in command. Throughout the campaign, the worst excesses committed by Union soldiers generally occurred during

¹⁷ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 13-18.

¹⁸ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 118.

unauthorized foraging forays away from the discipline of military officers.¹⁹ Stealing, though not officially condoned, remained impossible to stop, as stragglers and deserters from both armies preyed upon the collapse of law and order after the main body of Union troops had passed through. In areas that suffered hard war, the material devastation of the countryside was astoundingly severe. In a few cases of repeated guerilla violence, Federal soldiers leveled entire towns, such as Greenville, Mississippi, and Randolph, Tennessee, and forced the residents to face an uncertain future as refugees.²⁰

Throughout the war and even during the final hard war phase, reported rapes by invading Federal soldiers were a rare exception and typically resulted in the capital punishment of convicted offenders. In fact, it appears Union occupation forces were much more likely to commit rapes than troops engaged in active campaigns. The demands of continual marching and the constant threat of combat kept frontline Union soldiers under close supervision and made it difficult for a potential rapist to find the time and isolation needed to commit such misdeeds. However, once the likelihood of battle diminished and boredom increased, the number of crimes committed by Union soldiers against Southern civilians rose. Other historians have hypothesized that rape was less common in this conflict than others due to the staggering number of prostitutes that followed both armies.²¹ For example, one soldier in Grant's army, Sergeant Cyrus F. Boyd

¹⁹ Patricia L. Faust, "foraging," in *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War*, ed. Patricia L. Faust, (New York: HarperPerennial, 1986), 266.

²⁰ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 13-18, 50-56; Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 96-142; Michael B. Ballard, *Vicksburg: The Campaign That Opened the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 210-11.

²¹ Thomas P. Lowry, *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell: Sex in the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), 31-32; 129-30; Michael Fellman, "Women and Guerilla Warfare," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 147-65; Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 200; Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 44-57.

of the 15th Iowa, recorded in his diary on February 16, 1863, “Whiskey and sexual vices carry more soldiers off than the *bullet*.”²²

Psychologically, hard war was brutally effective at reducing resistance. If the United States government could not eliminate the Confederacy’s desire to continue the struggle, it would destroy the region’s ability to do so. There could be no greater evidence of the failure of the Confederate government and its army to protect southern citizens than the wholesale devastation of a seceded state by the Union army. Confederate regiments from the areas affected suffered a significant increase in desertions, and many soldiers from Mississippi returned home after reading accounts of misery and hardship from their loved ones. Since Mississippi was one of the first states truly to feel the effects of hard war, its regiments serving in distant fields first experienced a fate that later befell units from Georgia and the Carolinas in a more dramatic fashion. Those areas scorched by the hand of the invader, such as Central Mississippi, bore stark witness to the collapse of the Confederate experiment. The damage of hard war essentially removed most of Mississippi from active participation in the war even after Federal forces relocated to engage other military targets.²³

The civilians encountered by the Union army in Mississippi fell into several distinct classes. Grimsley organizes white southerners into three separate categories of Unionists, neutrals, and secessionists, and observes that each received different treatment from Federal authorities according to their political affiliation. Historian Stephen V. Ash, author of *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865*, divides white southerners into elites, yeomen artisans and farmers, poor whites, and slaves. The upper class slave owners, who were almost universally staunch secessionists and comprised the ranks of Confederate

²² Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry, 1861-1863* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 125.

²³ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 50-56.

government officials, usually fled before Union soldiers arrived. The large planters feared the possibility of northern vengeance for their role in creating the conflict and typically relocated to the southern interior to save as much personal and human property as possible. Yeomen and poor whites divided their allegiance based upon background and personal experiences, and generally sought protection from the dangers of either army. Often poor whites and other small property owners, who had the most to lose from the destruction inflicted by the presence of large bodies of soldiers, sought to avoid confrontation with military authorities and gave their support to whichever side was currently present in their midst. Southern Unionists, while a sizable element in a few areas of the South such as East Tennessee and the western counties of Virginia, most often endured a precarious life as an oppressed minority of dissenters. Most Unionists either fled north or hid their political affiliations until Union forces secured the surrounding countryside.²⁴

In 1860, Vicksburg, Mississippi was a thriving river port containing 4,591 residents, comprised of “3,158 whites, 31 free blacks, and 1,402 slaves.”²⁵ The town contained a diverse population of northern traders and European immigrants, and “only about one-third of its adult population was Southern-born.”²⁶ During the secession crisis, Vicksburg and most other towns along the Mississippi River supported compromise and elected Unionist delegates to the state convention as the local economy depended on trade upriver from the North. Areas farther removed from the river in Central Mississippi were largely pro-Confederate, as wealthy plantation owners in the state’s interior feared the consequences of the election of a Republican candidate for president. It is difficult to calculate the true strength of Unionism in the city, but it is certain that the Vicksburg area contained a sizable population of loyalists. One contemporary

²⁴ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 1-37; Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 3-22.

²⁵ Douglas Lee Braudaway, “A Texan Records the Civil War Siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi: The Journal of Maj. Maurice Kavanaugh Simons, 1863,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 105, no. 1 (July 2001): 96.

²⁶ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 17.

account in the *Atlanta Appeal* blamed the dissent on the presence of “a number of foreigners, comprising Germans, Italians, Irish, etc., who were large property holders, and who all took the first opportunity of exhibiting their disloyalty to the Confederacy,” and “a few original Yankees of less note, whose presence was not of sufficient importance to require much attention, who went back to their first love.”²⁷

As the war continued, the large slave population within the South confirmed the inherent weaknesses of the plantation economy. At the start of the conflict, many owners mistakenly assumed slaves would remain faithful to their masters, even in the presence of the northern army. Despite this false sense of security, as Federal forces captured substantial amounts of southern territory and drove large numbers of refugee planters with their relocated property into the Confederate heartland, more slaves attempted to escape. Tensions rose dramatically, especially in areas where the white male population had decreased significantly due to the manpower needs of the Confederate army. By 1862, authorities in Natchez, Mississippi, had executed forty slaves and imprisoned many others in fear of a possible rebellion. In other areas civilians relied on the militia to control the slave population, limiting its ability to mobilize against the invading enemy. Although a small percentage of slaves remained loyal to their owners after the Union army marched by, the majority fled to the enemy as quickly as possible, especially after the publication of the Emancipation Proclamation.²⁸

While marching with Grant’s army in Mississippi, Colonel Manning F. Force of the 20th Ohio Infantry recorded a typical experience when his regiment arrived at an estate as slaves were plowing in the fields. Force recalled that “The soldiers like mules, and the negroes gladly

²⁷ Ballard, *Vicksburg*, 5-12; “Unionism in Vicksburg,” *Atlanta Appeal*, date unknown, John J. Robacher Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

²⁸ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 149-169; William C. Davis, *Look Away: A History of the Confederate States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), 130-62.

unharnessed them, and helped the soldiers to mount. I said to one, ‘The soldiers are taking your mules.’ The quick response was, ‘An’ dey is welcome to ‘em, sar; dey is welcome to ‘em.’” The Ohio officer remembered that the slaves “looked wistfully at the marching column,” and soon began leaving the fields to join the regiment on the road in hopes of escaping the harsh existence of bondage. In particular, Force noticed that “one tall, stern woman strode along, carrying a wooden tray and a crockery pitcher as all her effects, looking straight to the front. Some one asked, ‘Auntie, where are you going?’ She answered, without looking, ‘I don’t car’ whicher way I go, so as I git away from dis place.”²⁹

White southern civilians faced troubles from the Confederate government as well. The Confederate Conscription Act of 1862 inspired persistent resentment among the populace, especially poor whites, and Confederate commissary officers routinely impressed supplies and often delayed paying compensation with an ever depreciating currency, which only worsened civilian-military relations. Disaffected deserters and draft dodgers unleashed havoc upon communities that only increased as the war progressed and civil authority collapsed. As the supply situation deteriorated in 1862 due to a lengthy drought in the state, Confederate forces in Mississippi increasingly supplied their commissary needs by impressment and authorized foraging, which received legal sanction in March 1863 with the passage of the Impressment Act. Confederate soldiers, perennially ill-supplied by an inefficient commissary department, also practiced unauthorized foraging to add variety to their increasingly poor military diet. For the majority of Mississippian citizens, the presence of either army could be disastrous.³⁰

²⁹ Quoted in Rossiter Johnson, *Campfires and Battlefields: A Pictorial Narrative of the Civil War* (New York: Gallant Books, Inc., 1960), 279.

³⁰ Ben Wynne, *Mississippi's Civil War: A Narrative History* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 95-146; Ethel Taylor, “Discontent in Confederate Louisiana,” *Louisiana History* 11, no. 4 (Fall 1961): 416.

On October 16, 1862, Major General Ulysses S. Grant assumed command of the newly created Union Department of the Tennessee, and on November 26, 1862, he initiated his first expedition southward to capture Vicksburg overland from northern Mississippi with an army of 40,000 men.³¹ Soon thereafter, Grant also ordered his subordinate Sherman to lead an assault on the bluffs north of Vicksburg along the Yazoo River with another 32,000 soldiers. A war correspondent from the *New York Herald*, Thomas W. Knox, accompanied Grant's army south and documented his encounters with several Mississippians. On a march from Corinth to Grand Junction, Mississippi, Knox observed, "Some of the women displayed considerable skill in arguing the question of secession, but their arguments were generally mingled with invective. The majority were unable to make any discussion whatever." One woman in particular accused Brigadier General David S. Stanley, "You-uns went and made the war so as to steal our niggers." As Knox recalled, "The woman acknowledged that neither her husband nor herself ever owned negroes, or ever expected to do so. She knew nothing about Fort Sumter, and only knew that the North elected one President and the South another, on the same occasion." As in most conflicts, neither side in the Civil War could fully understand why the other side was waging war, and Knox's testimony gives insight into the political opinions of Mississippi women at the beginnings of the Vicksburg campaign. For this woman, Knox recorded, "The South only wanted its president to rule its own region, but the North wanted to extend its control over the whole country, so as to steal the negroes. Hence arose the war."³²

³¹ John E. Stanchak, "Tennessee, Union Department of the," in *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War*, ed. Patricia L. Faust (New York: HarperPerennial, 1986), 747; Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 33-43; Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 23-25.

³² Thomas W. Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton-Field: Southern Adventure in Time of War. Life with the Union Armies, and Residence on a Louisiana Plantation* (New York: 1865), Project Gutenberg e-book, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12068/12068-h/12068-h.htm> (accessed August 25, 2011).

Grant's first campaign against Vicksburg ended in a retreat after Confederate Major General Earl Van Dorn led a daring cavalry raid that destroyed the Union supply base at Holly Springs, Mississippi, on December 20, 1862, while another Confederate force under Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest raided Grant's supply lines in West Tennessee. At the same time, Sherman's attempted assault on Confederate defenses in the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou resulted in a bloody repulse on December 29, 1862, forcing another Union retreat.³³ Nonetheless, the overland expedition enlightened Grant's perception of logistics and dramatically increased the maneuverability of his army when his soldiers sought substance from the surrounding countryside. Even before the Holly Springs supply depot was raided, correspondent Thomas Knox observed that "Our soldiers foraged at will on the plantations near our camp. The quantities of supplies that were brought in did not argue that the country had been previously visited by an army. Mules, horses, cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens, and other things used by an army, were found in abundance."³⁴ As Grant later affirmed in his memoirs, "I was amazed at the quantity of supplies the country afforded. It showed we could have subsisted off the country for two months instead of two weeks without going beyond the limits designated."³⁵

However, as Knox noted, "The soldiers did not always confine their foraging to articles of necessity." In one instance when Federal soldiers stumbled upon a minister's library, Knox humorously recounted, "I saw one soldier bending under the (avoirdupois) weight of three heavy volumes of theology, printed in the German language. Another soldier, a mere boy, was carrying away in triumph a copy of Scott's Greek Lexicon." At this stage of the war, Union officers attempted to discourage stealing from southern civilians, with variable results. "In every instance

³³ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 43-55.

³⁴ Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton-Field*, Project Gutenberg e-book.

³⁵ *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* (1885; repr., New York: Barnes & Noble Publishing, Inc., 2005), 243.

when it came to their knowledge” Knox stated, “the officers compelled the soldiers to return the books they had stolen. German theology and Greek Lexicons were not thought advantageous to an army in the field.”³⁶

The Union capture of Holly Springs also allowed Grant’s army to utilize economic warfare against the Confederacy. Knox wrote, “In a public office at Holly Springs our soldiers found a great number of bills on the Northern Bank of Mississippi. They were in sheets, just as they had come off the press. None of them bore dates or signatures.” In short order, “The soldiers supplied all needed chirography, and the bills obtained a wide circulation. Chickens, pigs, and other small articles were purchased of the whites and negroes, and paid for with the most astonishing liberality.” Union soldiers often gladly used captured Confederate money or counterfeit bills produced in the North to procure items in the South as the use of what they considered to be worthless currency allowed them to preserve their own hard-earned greenbacks. Many instances of this practice have been documented in the Vicksburg campaign, and as Knox testified, “Counterfeits of the Rebel currency were freely distributed, and could only be distinguished from the genuine by their superior execution.”³⁷ Likewise, after visiting one plantation with an authorized foraging party, Cyrus Boyd wrote in his diary on December 10, “There was 25 Negroes on the place and they seemed contented and *happy*[.] The boys *bought* a lot of stuff from them and paid for it in *facsimile* copies of Confederate money[.] The copies are manufactured in Phila[delphia] and other places and is used here to *purchase* Confederate *produce*.” However, Boyd did not agree with the use of forged currency and commented that the

³⁶ Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton-Field*, Project Gutenberg e-book.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

practice “is the lowest of all *meanness*[.] Better [to] take the property by force than to impose upon the ignorance of these *poor slaves*.”³⁸

Knox remained with Grant’s army until his published accounts of the Yazoo Pass expedition aroused the wrath of General Sherman, who nurtured a notorious hatred of reporters. Sherman had Knox arrested and tried before a military court-martial on charges of espionage and “Disobedience of orders.” The court exonerated Knox on the charges of aiding the enemy but found him guilty of disobeying Sherman’s orders prohibiting newspaper stories being written without his approval. After the trial, Knox was banished from the Army of the Tennessee, despite the intervention of President Lincoln on Knox’s behalf.³⁹ In response to Lincoln’s appeal, on April 3, 1863, Sherman fumed to his brother John, “I will tell Mr Lincoln to his face that even he shall not insult me.” Sherman declared that “If Knox comes into my Camp he will never leave it again at liberty. I have soldiers who will obey my orders, and Knox shall go down the Mississippi, floating on a log if he can find one, but he shall not come into my Camp with impunity again.”⁴⁰

As casualties and frustration grew, the march through North Mississippi that fall witnessed an escalation in the severity of warfare directed at southern civilians by Union soldiers. On November 4, while marching with his unit from Corinth, Mississippi, to Grand Junction, Tennessee, Sergeant Cyrus Boyd chronicled, “Stragglers burned vacant houses fences cotton mills and almost everything along the road and our track was visible for miles by the great mountains of smoke that rolled up from our rear.” Angered by the wanton destruction, Boyd asserted, “These scalawags and stragglers who fire buildings and burn property unauthorized

³⁸ Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 90-91.

³⁹ Knox, *Camp-Fire and Cotton-Field*, Project Gutenberg e-book.

⁴⁰ Brooks D. Simpson and Jean V. Berlin, eds., *Sherman’s Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999), 438.

should be punished with death.” The apparent outbreak of unnecessary fires did not go unnoticed by the army’s commander, who soon acted to limit straggling and maintain discipline. On November 7, Boyd added, “Genl Grant . . . has issued an order punishing with *death* any man who burns a building without authority.”⁴¹ One anonymous Federal soldier of the 14th Illinois wrote of the advance to Holly Springs on November 9, 1862, “This being the 3rd time we marched this road, perhaps caused the ill will of some wrathful soldier to overflow in such a measure as to cause him to vent his rage upon the property of those who caused so many weary marches.” The observer testified that “not only was every house along our road ransacked but not a foot of rail fence remained unburned the whole line of our march was one flame of fire which consumed fences cotton fields meadows hay stacks and everything combustible.”⁴²

On November 20, Boyd recorded a clear example of unauthorized foraging when he wrote that his friend Sergeant Gray “went out foraging yesterday and found the country so well cleaned up that he gave up finding anything to eat until at last he went into a house and seeing a negro woman boiling something over the fire in a large boiler he asked her what she had there.” When the woman hesitated to answer, Boyd reported that his comrade “took the lid off and found a fine large *turkey* just beginning to cook. Gray not wishing to lose any time grabbed the fowl and started on the double quick for camp and the *wench* yelling after him ‘oh *massa* for de lords sake give up dat turkey.’” Gray did not escape with the purloined turkey entirely unscathed, as Boyd reported that the “hot water almost cooked Grays arm from the wrist to the elbow.” Despite his sore arm, Boyd ended his entry by proudly noting that Gray “did not surrender and brought the fowl safely in and we had it baked in our big *oven* which we covered with live coals[.] Gray says

⁴¹ Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 82-83.

⁴² *Journal of Company A, 14th Illinois Infantry Regiment, May 25, 1861-September 23, 1863*, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, 35.

we should have heard that *wench yell* when he started off with the bird.”⁴³ In early December, 1862, John Merrilees of Battery E, 1st Illinois Light Artillery in the XV Corps wrote, “We are spending our time here very agreeably, and living on the fat (pork) of the land. Rations are beginning to get scarce, so we are compelled to make requisitions on the worthy inhabitants (good Union People!) who are beginning to see a great difference between war on paper and the genuine article.”⁴⁴

On December 2, while on a fruitless march to locate the Rebels, Boyd documented a much larger episode of foraging in Abbeville, Mississippi. There, the Iowan recalled, “in the midst of a cold heavy rain we halted and stacked arms and then every man made for the fences to secure wood to make a fire[.] Some went to killing hogs and chickens and ransacking the village for food,” and soon “The musical notes of the porkers could be heard in all directions and the squalling of the feathered inhabitants around every lot[.]” The affair must have presented quite a spectacle, for Boyd concluded, “Some were holding hogs by the tails and calling for help, and others skinning hogs, and others were hanging up hogs and all around it was a lively scene.”⁴⁵

Within Holly Springs itself, returning Federals exacted harsh vengeance for Van Dorn’s raid and the secessionist support within the village. When he first marched into the town on November 29, Cyrus Boyd complained, “The people there seemed very *haughty* and in a bad humor[.] Some of the women *spit* at us and made contemptuous faces. But few men could be seen.” Despite the provocations, Union commanders restrained their men during the first occupation of Holly Springs, as Boyd documented, “Cavalry men guarded every street and alley and no man was allowed to disturb anything—not even to go inside a yard to get a drink of

⁴³ Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 84.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth K. Miller, ed., *The Diary of John Merrilees 1st Lieutenant Battery E (Waterhouse’s Battery) Illinois Light Artillery (In 3 books)*, bk. 1, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois, 15.

⁴⁵ Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 89.

water.”⁴⁶ However, after Union forces reoccupied the town following Van Dorn’s raid, John Merrilees recorded, “The town is confusion worse confounded, the men swarming all over, and in spite of the efforts of the provo guards, breaking open the stores, plundering and demolishing everything. Tobacco and cigar stores were first attacked, and seem to have yielded well.” The chaos continued throughout the day, as Merrilees reported, “By night nearly all the business part of town had been partially pillaged, and the regiments were moved outside; which restored order again.”⁴⁷

At the same time, Sergeant Cyrus Boyd witnessed several incidents involving civilians immediately after the Union reoccupation of Holly Springs. In his diary, Boyd criticized the Confederate raiders for severely damaging the town and detailed, “There has been a fearful destruction of property and many of the citizens were killed by the explosions.” It is not known if Boyd’s description of civilian deaths in the raid is accurate or if the Iowan simply repeated a camp rumor. As he walked near the “Clayton House,” Boyd then “noticed a great crowd around the front door with their arms full of books and papers. I came around the house and just then a lady raised the window and called to me and asked me if I was an officer.” When Boyd answered that he was not, the anonymous woman cried out, “for Gods sake keep the ‘soldiers from breaking into my room they have possession of the house and I fear they will *Kill me.*” Boyd responded to the woman by telling her “not to fear as no man would disturb her,” and resumed his journey, observing that the lady “was a rather good looking woman and had four little children with her.” Apparently, the terrified woman had a valid reason to fear for her life in the presence of Union soldiers, as Boyd continued his narrative by noting, “This evening this *same* woman was arrested for *shooting* one of our men who was on guard at the ‘Clayton House’

⁴⁶ Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 87.

⁴⁷ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 19.

(2 days ago)[.] She cowardly shot him although he was guarding her property[.] This whole town is literally gutted to-day.” Unfortunately for historians, Boyd’s account does include the fate of either the accused woman in question or her victim, and gives no clear motive for why she shot the Union guard. The soldier may have been an innocent victim of secessionist wrath, or perhaps he had insulted the woman’s honor, stolen her valuables, or even attempted a sexual assault. Though Boyd’s depiction leaves many questions unanswered, this incident stands out as one of the few recorded instances of a southern woman offering armed resistance to a Union soldier during the Vicksburg campaign.⁴⁸

After walking further to the courthouse square, Boyd recorded, “The soldiers were in every house and garret and cellar, store and church, nook and corner. The streets were white with all kinds of paper and men were running with their arms full of books and ledgers.” Some of those men discovered a bank destroyed in Van Dorn’s raid, and Boyd discovered that “one lot of soldiers had their arms full of Confederate *bank notes* which were perfect in all except the Presidents signature (I think the President did not have time to sign) The boys said they could do that *themselves*.” Also at the bank, the Iowan noticed “some gold and silver had been melted among the rubbish and the soldiers were in digging to their knees in the brick bats[.] Sudden and complete destruction has overtaken this city.”⁴⁹

Later that same day, Boyd visited the Roman Catholic Church in Holly Springs. There, most likely in a display of the bitter anti-Catholicism then widespread in the United States, Boyd encountered a group of soldiers who “were taking the organ to pieces and had the pipes out blowing on them and throwing them away[.] Up in the pulpit was a squad playing *cards* and another lot were scattering the library over the floor.” Inside the sanctuary, Boyd located a

⁴⁸ Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 97.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

“daring and reckless soldier” who “climbed to the pinnacle of the temple and took off the little silver image of ‘Jesus’ that stood there. It was at a giddy height but he got it—said to be worth several hundred dollars.” After witnessing the desecration of the church, Boyd lamented, “Every portion of the *fated city* seemed given over to *pillage* and destruction and no hand was raised to save anything from the general *sack and ruin*[.] Finely dressed ladies were leaving on all the streets and going God knows where.” Obviously the chaotic scene of devastation frightened the female residents of Holly Springs, as Boyd testified, “Women and children were standing in their houses wailing with the most piteous cries[.] Young girls whose eyes were red with weeping peered from behind the curtains of the windows and gazed listlessly upon the passing throngs that crowded the streets.” And yet, in contrast to the unrestrained looting and vandalism he recorded, Boyd concluded his account by declaring, “No insults were offered any women or citizen that I saw or heard of.”⁵⁰

The costly effects of Union occupation severely damaged Confederate civilian morale. During the retreat, Lieutenant Henry Otis Dwight of the 20th Ohio witnessed two southern girls venture into the Union camp to complain that Federal foraging parties had seized their only remaining hogs. While the girls were speaking, a party of Confederate prisoners marched past. Dwight observed, “Instantly the girls set up the most alarming series of shrieks: ‘Oh-oo-oo-oh, my darling, my best, my sweetest, Oh-oo-oh: What shall I do, Oh my lord.’ With that they flung themselves about the necks of two of the prisoners, completely demoralizing the guard, and forcing them to stop in the middle of the road.” After some effort, the girls were persuaded to allow the party of prisoners to continue on their way. Then, Dwight stated, “one of the girls turned to our Major, saying, ‘well I don’t care for anything now. You may have the hogs if you

⁵⁰ Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 98.

have got Frank.”⁵¹ The raid at Holly Springs, though a tactical success, would ultimately have disastrous results for the secessionist cause in Mississippi. As Grant recognized, “Our loss of supplies was great at Holly Springs, but it was more than compensated for by those taken from the country and by the lesson taught.”⁵²

As Union morale weakened after bloody defeats at Fredericksburg and Chickasaw Bayou, as well as a near-defeat at Stones River, Tennessee, Federal treatment of southern civilians grew noticeably harsher and an apparent increase in plundering occurred within the Army of the Tennessee. On January 4, 1863, Private John G. Given of the 124th Illinois wrote to his father from his camp near the Tallahatchie River that “We are getting awfully saucy down here and I expect we will kill some of the secesh yet if nothing happens.” Given gave his father an accurate description of an authorized foraging party when he stated, “Beck is on the foraging squad again and I expect he will have a glorious time. The foraging squad is composed of three men from each company (30 in all). The business of which party is to steal anything and ever(y)thing they can from the rebels.”⁵³ On January 15, Cyrus Boyd confirmed that while stationed in Memphis, “A Company will go into a store to fit themselves out in boots and before they get away about one half will have bought boots and the other half stolen about the same amount of stuff.”⁵⁴

Albert Chipman of the 76th Illinois described Grant’s aborted campaign through North Mississippi in a letter to his wife on January 17, 1863, “The most that I regret since I have been in the service is that I was not able to go with the Reg when they went south on their last trip.” He noted that when “they was ordered to return they had fine times Jay hawking from the

⁵¹ Henry Otis Dwight papers, 1861-1900, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

⁵² Grant, *Memoirs*, 243.

⁵³ John G. Given to his father, January 4, 1863, John G. Given Letters, 1862 Sept. 13 to 1863 June 13; 1939 March 31, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, 12.

⁵⁴ Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 107.

Secesh, going into their houses and taking what ever they wanted making them give up their keys to their best rooms.” This occurred in spite of “the women and girls on their knees praying that they would spare them food enough to keep them from starving” and later, “on their return they burned all the bridges on the R Road until they got back to Holly Springs when they burned up the town and came back to Moscow where they are yet.”⁵⁵

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, which permanently altered how Union soldiers would interact with former slaves in areas of the South that were still under Confederate authority. While many Federal soldiers did support the controversial measure, the changing goals of the Union war effort angered a number of volunteers and brought forth expressions of the common racial prejudices of the nineteenth century. Commenting in a letter to his mother about southern society, Darius Hall Dodd of the 83rd Indiana wrote from Gaines Landing, Mississippi on January 8, 1863, “Niggers are plenty Every white man almost in the army has a nigger to cook for him & black his boots. Wash his clothes &c.”⁵⁶ On March 27, Andrew Bush of the 97th Indiana disclosed to his wife Mary, “The next proclamation that old Abe puts out I wish he could make it so we could shoot all the negroes we could see for I hate them worse every day.” Bush frankly admitted, “I intend to shoot one every time that I can get the chance to for I don’t think that they are human beings.”⁵⁷ On April 6, Private Newton S. Smith of the 29th Wisconsin Infantry voiced his support for the creation of African American regiments to his father by recognizing, “If we are agoing to free & feed a negro why not arm him negroes have frequently come within our lines & have received so

⁵⁵ Albert Chipman to wife Sophronia, January 17th, 1863, Albert Chipman Papers, 1862-1893, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, 31.

⁵⁶Darius Hall Dodd to Hatty Dodd, January 8, 1863, Civil War Miscellany, 1848-1927 (bulk 1860-1865), Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁵⁷ Robert M. Harsch, *Ninety-Seventh Regiment, Indiana Volunteer Infantry, 1862-1865*, 1967, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

much poorer treatment than they would under their Masters that they would return to them.”⁵⁸ Sergeant Cyrus Boyd expressed his dismay on February 9 by observing, “Poor creatures these contrabands. . . . The men in our camp treat them worse than *brutes* and when they come into camp cries of ‘Kill him’ ‘drown him’ &c are heard on every hand[.] The prejudice against the race seems stronger than ever.” Boyd condemned those opposing black Union regiments and asserted, “I should like to see all such *idiots* put in the *front* and in the *ditches*[.] If any African will stand between me and a rebel *bullet* he is *welcome* to the honor and the *bullet too*.”⁵⁹ Private Richard R. Puffer of 8th Illinois recorded in a letter to his sister on February 12 that as “time passes & no transports appear meantime the soldiers spend their time to suit-themselves. Some (& they are not a very small class) go to the city & get drunk & spend their money (if they happen to have any) free” while “others plod about camp in the mud & curse Abe Lincoln, Jeff Davis, & everybody else connected with the war. There is not-a little outspoken treason in the army.”⁶⁰

Still, despite the low morale and growing frustration of the common soldiers, the high command of the Army of the Tennessee attempted to prevent the harm of nonthreatening civilians. On January 24, 1863, for example, Sherman wrote to Major General John A. McClernand regarding the health of a Mrs. Grove, the owner of the property where Sherman was establishing a supply base in Louisiana opposite Vicksburg. Sherman asked McClernand, “Cannot we prevail on her to move? She has no substantial cause for complaint other than the burning of rails, the noise, the tumult, and confusion of the mass of men.” Sherman noted that

⁵⁸ Newton S. Smith to his father, April 6, 1863, Newton S. Smith letters, 1862-1863, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

⁵⁹ Mildred Throne, ed., *The Civil War Diary of Cyrus F. Boyd*, 118-19.

⁶⁰ Richard R. Puffer to his sister Idelia, February 12, 1863, Richard R. Puffer papers, Chicago Historical Society Research Center, Chicago, Illinois.

“there is a guard at her house, but the poor woman is distracted and cannot rest. She will soon be as prostrate as her dying daughter.” Though the fate of Mrs. Grove is unknown, Sherman concluded, “Either the army must move or she. Her grievances cannot be alleviated otherwise.”⁶¹ At the same time, reports indicating the harsher treatment of civilians reached Grant’s headquarters. On February 12, 1863, the commanding general issued orders stating clearly that “the too prevalent habit of arresting civilians beyond the lines of the army and bringing them into camp without charge is prejudicial to the service, and must not be continued.” Grant sternly directed, “When citizens are arrested hereafter without charges being preferred warranting the arrest, the citizen will be turned outside the lines, and the officer or soldier causing the arrest will be confined and otherwise punished at the discretion of a court-martial.”⁶²

After the repulse of the first overland expedition, Grant relocated his army to Milliken’s Bend and Young’s Point, Louisiana, across the Mississippi River from Vicksburg. While encamped there, Grant attempted a number of operations aimed at seizing or bypassing the Confederate citadel over the next four months, none of which succeeded. In January, Union engineers endeavored to construct a canal at De Soto Point opposite Vicksburg that would allow northern ships to bypass the Confederate batteries, but the project failed and work ceased on the enterprise in March. That February, construction began on another canal at Lake Providence, Louisiana, in an effort to find a navigable route around Vicksburg through the Louisiana swamps. Like its predecessor, the Lake Providence proposal proved futile, and Grant ended the operation in late March. A more promising venture began on February 3, 1863, when Federal gunboats ruptured a levee and steamed through Yazoo Pass into the Coldwater River to attack Vicksburg from the Yazoo River. Although the Yazoo Pass Expedition initially encountered success, the advance

⁶¹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 10.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 47.

stalled before the hastily constructed bastion of Fort Pemberton, and by early April the Union gunboats had steamed back to where they had started in February. A final offensive, the Steele's Bayou Expedition, occurred in the middle of March 1863 when Commander David Dixon Porter's flotilla of gunboats attempted to reach the Yazoo River via Steele's Bayou. Once again, the offensive failed in the face of Confederate obstructions, forcing Porter to reverse his course back into the Mississippi River.⁶³ Despite the setbacks, each of Grant's "experiments" brought Federal soldiers closer to Vicksburg and into further contact with southern civilians.⁶⁴

One of the participants of the Yazoo Pass Expedition, Brigadier General Clinton B. Fisk, complained to his division commander, Brigadier General Leonard F. Ross, on March 6, 1863, "I am pained to witness the pillaging, plundering, and irregular foraging on the part of some of the commands of this expedition." Fisk described encountering the troop transport *Ida May*, "the men from which steamer were on shore shooting cattle, and many of them rushing pell-mell through and around the house on the plantation, catching chickens, turkeys, geese, pigs, &c." Unlike in many previous instances of plundering, this plantation remained occupied by white southern civilians who endured the Union raid. He continued, "The women at the house were greatly frightened, and fearful that they were to be slaughtered." Fisk explained the dilemma of preserving discipline in the midst of an increasingly costly war by stating, "I have up to this day fully restrained my men within the bounds of propriety, but it is impossible to keep them within proper limits when they discover men from the steamers of the other brigades on shore capturing the delicacies of poultry-yards and pantries."⁶⁵

⁶³ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 60-75; Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 33-42.

⁶⁴ Grant, *Memoirs*, 249.

⁶⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 87.

Fisk informed his superior, “I hand you herewith an order I have just issued, and, with the grace of God sustaining me, I will enforce it if I have to shoot men both in and out of shoulder-straps [referring to the shoulder-straps worn by Union officers].” He further exclaimed, “We cannot make good soldiers of thieves and robbers, neither can we expect success to follow us if we thus outrage every principle of truth and justice. I am ashamed when I see our good cause thus prejudiced.” In closing, Fisk stated his support for the policy of pragmatic warfare and authorized foraging that Grant had thus far conducted. He affirmed, “I fully believe in taking from the enemy whatever he may have that we, as an army, need, or if what is left with him would strengthen the rebels, but I would have it done ‘decently and in order,’ and according to orders.”⁶⁶

“Irregular foraging” became a problem for some units within the Army of the Tennessee, so much so that on March 9, Major General James McPherson’s assistant adjutant-general, Lieutenant Colonel William T. Clark, informed Brigadier General John A. “Black Jack” Logan at Lake Providence, “It has come to the knowledge of the commanding general that regiments and brigades have been in the habit of foraging on orders from regimental and brigade commanders” rather than on orders from the division commanders, and that goods had been seized “without . . . in any way receipting or accounting for them.” Clark instructed Logan, “No team, no officer, no soldier has any right to forage except with a train duly organized and sent out for that purpose, under written orders from the division commander” and supervised by “an efficient and responsible officer, who will be held strictly accountable for all property taken and the disposition thereof.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 87.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 96- 97.

During the Yazoo Pass Expedition, Grant notified Brigadier General Isaac F. Quinby on March 23 that it “may be necessary for you to take more or less supplies from the citizens along the route, but in doing so prevent all the plundering and destruction of property that you can, and only permit such things to be taken as are actually required for the use of the army.”⁶⁸ Despite the prohibition against unnecessary destruction on this mission, Joseph Lester of the 6th Wisconsin Battery witnessed Federal soldiers “appropriating every thing useful or ornamented which they thought they could take care of and then for the rest, it entirely depended upon the caprices of those present, or those coming or going.” Expensive pianos were appropriated by those musically trained, who were soon interrupted by other soldiers, “who would accost it as though it had Life and Intelligence, make requests of it, and receiving no response” would then “in a set speech, declare it to be Secesh, when down would come a clubbed musket, and what was a few minutes before, a thing yielding Pleasure and attuning all persons in hearing of it, is in a few minutes a shapeless wreck.”⁶⁹

Lester commented that “the most amusing of all” activity occurred when a party of soldiers would stand before “a large dressing mirror” where “they would involuntarily begin to pull up their shirt collars or arrange some article of clothing, readjust their hair, step back, put themselves in attitude and admire themselves to their fill” until “a conversation would take place of a similar nature to the above, to the parties seen in the mirror, when sufficient response would be given by standers by to condemn them as Rebels, and ‘Charge Bayonets’ would shiver the glass into pieces.” Lester concluded his letter by adding that “a fragment of such an one now

⁶⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 134.

⁶⁹ Joseph Lester to his family, August 20, 1863, Joseph Lester papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

graces my Tent, it is nearly half an inch thick and was a fine one” and informing his family that “Of course everything in the shape of food was swept clean.”⁷⁰

Further evidence of Grant’s policies is provided by the account of another participant of the Yazoo Pass Expedition, Lieutenant Henry A. Kircher of the 12th Missouri Infantry, who wrote to his mother on March 24, 1863, of a visit to one plantation, where “we laid on next to the house, and since we did not find the ‘old man’ we said to the woman ‘your most obedient servants.’” Kircher humorously noted that “All the chickens, geese and turkeys were taken prisoner and some were immediately sentenced to death and the rest are still incarcerated and are awaiting their fates. Naturally, we considered the whole thing a good joke and continued on without further happenings until yesterday evening.”⁷¹

By April, Kircher had realized the importance that such extensive foraging could have on the outcome of the war when he informed his parents, “I am convinced that we can do much more damage to the South, and thereby bring it to the realization that they were asses and fools to attempt to ruin our country, if our army at the present would concentrate mainly on destroying the Southern plantations and means of production rather than on pressuring them with powder and lead.” Kircher and the rest of the ordinary soldiers of the Army of the Tennessee consistently pressed for “hard war” long before higher ranking commanders, including Grant and Sherman, endorsed such a strategy. “Hard war” was invented and executed by the rank and file, who witnessed firsthand its effectiveness. Kircher concluded, “Hunger is more powerful than powder

⁷⁰ Joseph Lester to his family, August 20, 1863, Joseph Lester papers.

⁷¹ Earl J. Hess, ed., *A German in the Yankee Fatherland: The Civil War Letters of Henry A. Kircher* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1983), 83.

and lead, and according to all appearances they would rather stay healthy than see themselves starve.”⁷²

Kircher’s opinion was not yet shared by Grant or Sherman, both of whom continued to restrain the army within the bounds of pragmatic warfare. After the Steele’s Bayou Expedition, Lieutenant Henry Otis Dwight and the rest of the 20th Ohio returned to their camps to discover that other Federal soldiers had removed the boards used for flooring their tents. The next day, Dwight’s men replaced their boards by confiscating lumber from a nearby gin-house. Dwight recalled, “The owner went to Gen. Logan and got a guard to protect his property. The boards were saved, but during the day some one who did not believe in the protection of property of undoubted rebels, to the hurt of worthy soldiers of the government, set fire to the concern and it was burned to the ground.” Punishment for this violation was swift and effective. Dwight remembered, “Gen. Grant on learning that all efforts to find the culprit had failed ordered that the owner should be paid for the property, and the amount paid by all the troops at that place. The share of our Brigade in this penalty was \$2000, which was stopped from the pay of each.” He admitted, “It was a case of punishing the innocent with the guilty that caused no small impotent and perhaps foolish wrath about our mess tables.”⁷³

Around the same time, on April 22, 1863 division commander Brigadier General Jacob Laumen reprimanded the commanding officer of one of his brigades, Colonel George E. Bryant, for the partial burning of the town of Hernando, Mississippi, affirming, “I regret exceedingly that any part of your command should be guilty of such a flagrant act of vandalism as the burning of a village, which will tend to bring discredit on our troops, and was in direct violation of your

⁷² Hess, *A German in the Yankee Fatherland*, 89.

⁷³ Henry Otis Dwight papers, 1861-1900, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

orders.” Laumen promised his wayward brigade commander, “I assure you the guilty parties will meet with due punishment.”⁷⁴

The harsher measures of war executed by Union soldiers terrorized those southern civilians who witnessed their effectiveness firsthand. Kate Stone, an elite southern woman living at Brokenburn plantation near Tallulah, Louisiana, vented her frustrations in her diary after being visited by two Federal soldiers on March 22. The two soldiers arrived at the plantation and proposed to trade one of their mounts for Kate’s pet horse Wonka, which her family firmly refused, even to the point of offering to pay the soldiers the horse’s price. When the Union soldiers rejected the pleas of Kate and proceeded to seize Wonka, Kate opened a gate in a vain attempt to allow the horse to escape. Despite her best efforts, the Federal soldiers commandeered Wonka. Kate described that one soldier rushed up to her “with the pistol pointed at my head (I thought I had never seen such bright caps) and demanded in a most insolent tone how I dared to open a gate when he ordered it shut.” In a few moments, “the man cursed and said, ‘I had just as soon kill you as a hoppergrass,’” and rode away from Brokenburn on Kate’s horse, after which the young woman “cried the rest of the day and half of the night.” Such humiliating treatment of honorable young women turned civilians against a government that failed to protect them and their property. Kate penned such feelings when she concluded, “This country is in a deplorable state. The outrages of the Yankees and Negroes are enough to frighten one to death. The sword of Damocles in a hundred forms is suspended over us, and there is no escape.”⁷⁵

Caroline Seabury, a French teacher from Southbridge, Massachusetts, who had migrated to Mississippi before the war to teach at the Columbus Female Institute, recorded a similar raid that inspired panic among her southern neighbors. She noted on April 24 that a column of Union

⁷⁴ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 223.

⁷⁵ John Q. Anderson, ed., *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1868* (1955, repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 182-84.

soldiers came through the area and “borrowed all the fast horses which fell in their way—as well as poultry of all kinds.” As soon as word spread of the raid, “Silver disappeared rapidly—down deep in its mother earth has gone many a family relic—placed there by trembling hands. . . . Men as well as ‘helpless women & children[’] were—scared sille.”⁷⁶

Those who fled from the Union army fared little better, and in most cases, lost more property than those who stayed behind in their homes. Southern refugees faced serious dangers from hunger, disease, rebellious slaves, deserters from both armies, and renegade outlaws who took advantage of the collapse in civil authority to rob and plunder. Civilian migrants also placed a severe burden on a Confederate commissary that struggled to supply even the basic needs of the military in Mississippi. On April 18, Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Ferguson of the 28th Mississippi Cavalry informed Major General Carter L. Stevenson from Rolling Fork, “Many families driven from their homes by the enemy, who have destroyed all their means of subsistence, are collected here in pitiable condition, awaiting an opportunity to get off in the steamers.” Ferguson promised to “transport as many as can be done without detriment to the service” and requested “an additional boat be sent for the purpose of removing them.”⁷⁷

Faced with a growing logistical problem, Ferguson realized that the refugees could at least provide the Confederate army with badly needed horseflesh they had saved from Federal confiscation. He recommended, “By this means the Government will be enabled to procure many teams and wagons, which, were they to remain at home, would in all probability fall into the hands of the enemy.” For his own command, Ferguson acknowledged, “I have been compelled to purchase horses for the artillery, and have succeeded in getting some very fine carriage horses from planters whose corn has been burned.” Controlling the planter’s human property proved to

⁷⁶ Suzanne L. Bunkers, ed., *The Diary of Caroline Seabury, 1854-1863*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 75.

⁷⁷ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 762.

be a more difficult proposition, and Ferguson warned Stevenson, “While they remain outside my lines, their negroes flock to the Yankees, who are now arming and drilling them at Greenville.”⁷⁸

In late March 1863, Grant began preparations for an amphibious assault to land in southern Mississippi below Vicksburg to strike at the city from the rear. Reflecting upon his experiences from the previous fall, Grant determined to forage upon the countryside for the majority of his rations while maintaining a formal supply line for ammunition, coffee, hard tack, salt, and medical stores. To confuse the Confederate commander, Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton, Grant unleashed a devastating cavalry raid led by Colonel Benjamin Grierson in mid-April and ordered a division led by Major General Frederick Steele to gather intelligence along the Deer Creek plantations and occupy Greenville that same month. The simultaneous operations provided Grant with a strikingly effective distraction and wreaked havoc upon the state’s rail transportation infrastructure.⁷⁹

On March 31, Sherman communicated his orders for the Greenville Expedition to Major General Frederick Steele, announcing, “If planters remain at home and behave themselves, molest them as little as possible, but if the planters abandon their plantations you may infer they are hostile, and can take their cattle, hogs, corn, or anything you need.” The expensive commodity of cotton required special attention, and Sherman indicated to Steele, “Cotton which is clearly private property should not be molested, but cotton marked ‘C.S.A.’ should be brought away or burned.” Sherman, like Grant, also attacked the logistical support the region provided the enemy, directing that “all provisions which are needed by us or might be used by the army in

⁷⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 762.

⁷⁹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 254-76; Ballard, *Vicksburg*, 206-11.

Vicksburg, unless needed by the peaceful inhabitants, should be brought away, used by your men, or destroyed.”⁸⁰

Sherman admitted that one purpose of the incursion was dealing with the persistent problem of guerilla activity and the civilian network that supported the insurgents. Sherman intended the raid “to let the planters and inhabitants on Deer Creek see and feel that they will be held accountable for the acts of guerillas and Confederate soldiers who sojourn in their country for the purpose of firing on our boats passing Greenville and the section of the Mississippi thereabouts.” Sherman declared, “Let all the people understand that we claim the unmolested navigation of the Mississippi River, and will have it, if all the country within reach has to be laid waste; but that if our boats pass free and unmolested, we will spare them the ravages of war as much as we can consistent with our own interests.”⁸¹ Steele’s men proved particularly effective in their mission, for on April 19 Sherman reported to headquarters, “I think the Deer Creek country has been afflicted enough to make them, in the future, dread the Yankee’s visit.”⁸²

The Greenville Expedition effectively foreshadowed the hard war that would follow. In the first two weeks of April 1863, Union troops looted abandoned plantations, burned cotton and 500,000 bushels of corn, captured over 1,000 head of livestock, and liberated some 1,000 slaves.⁸³ One woman residing on Deer Creek, Lettie Vick Downs, recorded in her journal, “They destroyed every gin and all corn. . . . Four of the negroes left (not as many as I expected to leave). Some little furniture was saved, but the most of it was destroyed.”⁸⁴ One Confederate

⁸⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 158.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 208.

⁸³ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 91-92.

⁸⁴ *The Journal of Lettie Vick Downs in the Year 1863*, Downs (Lettie) Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 6.

soldier, Private John A. Wilson of the 35th Mississippi Infantry, wrote his father that camp rumor asserted that the Union army unleashed “all kinds of depredations” in the raid, “destroying property & abusing helpless women & children. They burnt all of the corn wherever they went. They destroyed Col. Berrys plantation completely burning everything even the negro cabins except one & they put fire in that but it would not burn.”⁸⁵

One Union officer present during the raid, Brevet Major Charles Miller of the 76th Ohio Infantry, remarked, “The valley is rich in corn and cotton; immense quantities of the former were found stored in cribs which the army destroyed. It is estimated that a million dollars worth of property was destroyed or carried off by this expedition.” Miller observed that the returning Federals “marched ‘rout step’ with all they could carry of the products of the country: pigs, chickens, turkeys and honey every day at the mess board.” The Greenville Expedition denied Vicksburg a vast amount of badly needed supplies and proved the efficiency of the campaign Grant would later enact against Central Mississippi. Miller reported, “A great number of mules, horses and cattle were led and driven along, and occasionally an old family carriage was seen in the procession, pulled by a pair of mules and laden with chickens, geese and bacon with ‘bummers’ riding in grotesque style on the cushioned seats,” while “three hundred negroes, men, women, and children, followed the army loaded with bundles of all descriptions.” The civilians along the creek could only react in impotent fury. As Miller wrote, “The natives as on former occasions were very much exasperated, especially the women. We found the same old

⁸⁵ Private John A. Wilson to his father, 17 April 1863, Wilson (John A.) Letters, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

declaration repeated that we would never take Vicksburg. 'You will never take Nashville,' 'Never take Memphis,' 'Never take Corinth,' had been rung in our ears before."⁸⁶

In early April, as Grant prepared his amphibious invasion of Mississippi, he moved his army further southward into Louisiana. On April 5th, a bugler in the Chicago Mercantile Battery, Florison D. Pitts described just how far an organized foraging expedition could extend in a typical day by writing in his diary, "Stopped at a plantation belonging to Gibson. Nobody at home but the niggers, abt 75 in number. Gibson had skedaddled to the interior. Passed on to the next which is also owned by Gibson. No white people around." Continuing on his odyssey, Pitts added, "3rd plantation formally occupied by a Dr. Mitchell who has taken bag and baggage and travelled for parts unknown. 4th plantation the owner had gone to Richmond [Louisiana] in the morning with one of the ladies of the house. Soldiers had taken all of their cattle, and they did not have anything to eat." Still searching for food, Pitts continued, "5th place we got some sweet milk" and from there the party visited a "6th plantation owned by a man who had deserted the place, leaving his niggers to take care of themselves. House furnished beautifully. Furniture had been all smashed up by our soldiers. Made the negroes get us a dinner; paid them in tobacco and whiskey." Finally, Pitts encountered a white civilian with Unionist sympathies, the sole remaining plantation owner who did not flee at the approach of the Federal army. Pitts stated, "Dr. Dancey's was the next place we went to. Had a long talk with the Dr. and his wife. We were treated to buttermilk, and had a bouquet of flowers given to each of us. After enjoying ourselves hugely we took our leave." Pitts did not return empty-handed, as he concluded his entry with, "Bought 10 chickens of the niggers and paid 2/ apiece: 1\$ in green backs and the remainder in

⁸⁶ Stewart Bennett and Barbara Tillery, eds., *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic: A Civil War Narrative by Brevet Major Charles Dana Miller, 76th Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2004), 90-91.

secesh money, which the Dr. said was as good for them as any other money. Put the chickens in a bag and turned our faces home.”⁸⁷

Of course, not all Union soldiers limited their interaction with southern civilians to merely foraging for food. In his postwar memoirs, Corporal Ephraim Anderson of the 2nd Missouri Infantry recalled that one night his regiment was detailed to capture a Union picket and “about twelve hundred contrabands” at a Louisiana plantation near the main body of Grant’s army in early 1863. After the Federal detachment surrendered, Anderson and his comrades stormed into the mansion’s interior and discovered in an upstairs room “a very ludicrous and amusing scene,” consisting of “a tall, spare, grave-looking personage, accompanied by a young, full-grown, athletic and very black negress.” Not surprisingly, Anderson recollected that “The boys indulged heartily in prolonged and boisterous merriment,” which only intensified when the laughing Confederates “discovered that this live and interesting sybarite was the chaplain of a regiment, which our prisoners below fully confirmed—the chaplain of an Illinois cavalry regiment, which was, I believe, the Second Illinois, though in the number I may be mistaken; but of the main fact there is no doubt.”⁸⁸ Undoubtedly humiliated by the circumstances of his capture, the hapless Federal chaplain now found himself conducting his ministry as a Union prisoner of war.

Throughout late April, the Army of the Tennessee’s expanded foraging and preparations for the upcoming amphibious invasion greatly affected the civilians living in the area. On April 17, 1863, Dr. Henry P. Strong, a surgeon in the 11th Wisconsin Infantry, wrote to his wife from Susett’s Plantation in Louisiana, “As the 2d division of our Corps passed a house a lady said to me, ‘are there any more to come?’ I said ‘this is hardly a beginning.’ ‘Why! I did not suppose

⁸⁷ Leo M. Kaiser, ed., “The Civil War Diary of Florison D. Pitts” *Mid-America: An Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 29, (January 1958): 34-35.

⁸⁸ Ephraim Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal; Including the Campaigns of the First Missouri Confederate Brigade*, 2nd ed. rev. (1868; repr., Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshop, 1972), 284-85.

there was as many people in the country,' she said."⁸⁹ Captain Bernard Schmerhorn of the 46th Indiana Infantry wrote on April 19 from Dawson's Plantation, Louisiana, observing, "A certain degree of desolation & destruction, necessarily marks the passage of a large army through an enemy country, which here as elsewhere is greatly increased by the carelessness & wantonness of the troops." Schmerhorn concluded, "If the angel of destruction had passed over this region the blight could not have been more complete."⁹⁰

Such destruction did not go unnoticed by the Confederate Army of Vicksburg. On April 23, Major C. Stephens Croom, a staff officer for Major General John H. Forney, wrote in his journal, "At night towards the west, in the neighborhood of the mouth of the Yazoo we saw two large fires, doubtless houses fired by the enemy, who desolate the whole country."⁹¹ One week later, on April 30, Major Maurice K. Simons of the Second Texas Infantry participated in a skirmish with a Federal landing party of "some 75 sharp shooters" and proclaimed that "it would have done a sick man good to see the raskells make back for their boats. The 'vandles' they set fire to three Houses while I was watching them. It makes ones blood boil to see the villians thus laying our own country at waste."⁹²

On April 11, Grant sent further instructions to Brigadier General Steele at Greenville, and explained, "Rebellion has assumed that shape now that it can only terminate by the complete subjugation of the South or the overthrow of the Government." Grant confirmed his new policy by concluding, "It is our duty, therefore, to use every means to weaken the enemy, by destroying

⁸⁹ Henry P. Strong to wife Sarah, April 17, 1863, Henry P. Strong Letters, 1861-1864, 1875, 1884, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

⁹⁰ Bernard Schmerhorn collection, April 19, 1863, Bernard Schmerhorn papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁹¹ William Warren Rogers, Jr., "'The Prospects of Our Country in This Quarter Are Gloomy Indeed': Stephens Croom at Vicksburg (April 1863)," *The Journal of Mississippi History* LIX, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 48.

⁹² Braudaway, "The Journal of Maj. Maurice Kavanaugh Simons, 1863," 103.

their means of subsistence, withdrawing their means of cultivating their fields, and in every other way possible.”⁹³ On April 20, Grant issued “Special Orders, No. 110,” which detailed the marching orders of the Army of the Tennessee in “the present movement to obtain a foothold on the east bank of the Mississippi River, from which Vicksburg can be approached by practicable roads.” Article 13 of the orders instructed:

Commanders are authorized and enjoined to collect all the beef-cattle, corn, and other supplies necessary for the army on the line of march, but wanton destruction of property, taking of articles, unless for military purposes, insulting civilians, going into and searching houses without proper orders from division commanders, are positively prohibited. All such irregularities must be summarily punished.⁹⁴

Whether Grant’s men would abide by those orders remained to be seen, but the forthcoming campaign would result in the perfection of the policy of hard war against southern civilians with which the Army of the Tennessee had been experimenting for the past few months.

⁹³ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 186-187.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 213.

CHAPTER 2

“DEVASTATION MARKED THE WHOLE PATH OF THE ARMY”

In the dark of night on April 16, 1863, a fleet of eight gunboats and three supply transports under Rear Admiral David D. Porter ran past the batteries of Vicksburg in the midst of a furious bombardment from the Confederate defenses. The Rebel gunners scored several hits on the Union flotilla but only managed to sink one transport, the *Henry Clay*, one coal barge, and wound twelve Federal sailors. A few days later, on the night of April 22, six more supply transports, each filled to capacity with needed provisions, steamed past the cannon of Fortress Vicksburg. The second successful passage cost the Union one transport sunk, two killed, and six wounded. The dramatic venture fatally severed the critical flow of supplies across the Mississippi River from Louisiana to Vicksburg (and thence to the hard-pressed armies in the eastern Confederacy) and provided the Army of the Tennessee with the ability to cross the Mississippi River below Vicksburg.⁹⁵

On April 29, Porter's gunboats attacked and failed to silence the Confederate defenses at Grand Gulf, Mississippi, forcing Grant to cancel an attempted landing on the Mississippi shore. Despite the setback, on the following day, April 30, 1863, Grant landed 24,000 soldiers at Bruinsburg, Mississippi, on intelligence provided by an escaped slave. With the arrival of General William T. Sherman's XV Corps a few days later, Grant's expeditionary force exceeded 40,000 hard-fighting veterans. Until they reached the outskirts of Vicksburg and established a reliable supply line furnished by the United States Navy, the entire army would be foraging for provisions in an area that had never before felt the tramp of Yankee boots. In the decisive period of the campaign throughout early May, the logistical situation of the Army of the Tennessee

⁹⁵ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 90-101; Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 48-49.

represented Grant's greatest weakness and intensified the interaction between Union soldiers and southern civilians.⁹⁶

On May 1, Grant fought and won the small but savage battle of Port Gibson, losing 131 killed, 719 wounded, and 25 missing while inflicting 60 killed, 340 wounded, and 387 missing upon his enemy. Immediately after landing, the invading Federals came into contact with astounded Mississippians. Catching his Confederate opponent unprepared, Grant secured his beachhead and swiftly dispatched requisitioning parties into the surrounding area. The Army of the Tennessee relied on a tenuous supply chain to provide ammunition and provisions that could not be obtained in the blockaded South, such as coffee, hard tack, and salt, but procured foods more difficult to preserve and transport from the local population, such as fresh meat, vegetables, and fruit.⁹⁷ On May 3, Grant outlined his supply situation in a letter to Sherman, writing, "The enemy is badly beaten, greatly demoralized, and exhausted of ammunition. The road to Vicksburg is open. All we want now are men, ammunition, and hard bread. We can subsist our horses on the country, and obtain considerable supplies for our troops."⁹⁸

Lacking a sufficient number of wagons to transport the necessary ordinance supplies, Grant ordered "immediately upon landing that all the vehicles and draft animals, whether horses, mules, or oxen, in the vicinity should be collected and loaded to their capacity with ammunition."⁹⁹ One Indiana soldier, Thomas Durham, later remembered, "It was equal to a circus parade in a country town to see this ammunition caravan." As Durham recalled, the wagon train contained "fine family carriages loaded with boxes of ammunition and drawn by an ox

⁹⁶ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 103-16.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 269.

⁹⁹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 273.

team, or an old mule and horse hitched together, rigged with plow harness, shuck collars and rope lines to drive with.” He noted that “cotton wagons, ox carts and even dog carts—everything that could be found in the country that had wheels, and every kind of animal and harness with which to pull them, were pressed into service. No such sight has ever been seen since old Noah entered the Ark.”¹⁰⁰

When the Federals entered Port Gibson with the improvised wagon train stretching along behind them, townspeople could only stare in disbelief. One Illinois soldier later remarked that when he “passed through the main street of the city, men, women and children filled the walks or gazed anxiously from the upper story windows, as though a monster show had come to town.”¹⁰¹ Osborn Oldroyd, a member of the XVII Corps from Ohio, stated that after entering the town, “The boys found a lot of blank bank currency of different denominations, upon the Port Gibson bank. They signed some of them, and it is quite common to see a private of yesterday a bank president to-day.” Similar to what had occurred in Holly Springs the previous year, Oldroyd observed that the notes “may not become a circulating medium to a very great extent, but it is not at all likely that it will be refused by the inhabitants along our route when tendered in payment for corn-bread, sweet potatoes, etc.”¹⁰²

After continuing the march, one member of the 20th Ohio regiment discovered a coffee-pot filled with silver dollars buried under a corner of the house while chasing “a poor lonely confederate chicken,” and distributed the money throughout his company. Oldroyd asserted the opinions of most Federal soldiers when he exclaimed in his account, “How foolish it is for

¹⁰⁰ Jeffrey L. Patrick, ed., *Three Years With Wallace's Zouaves: The Civil War Memoirs of Thomas Wise Durham* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 151-52.

¹⁰¹ Ira Blanchard, *I Marched With Sherman: Civil War Memoirs of the 20th Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (San Francisco: D. Huff and Company, 1992), 86.

¹⁰² Rebecca Blackwell Drake, ed., *A Soldier's Story of the Siege of Vicksburg: From the Diary of Osborn H. I. Oldroyd* (1885; repr., Raymond, MS: Friends of Raymond, 2001), 9.

southern people to flee and leave their beautiful property to the foe. We only want something to eat.” The Ohioan recognized that in many cases, southern civilians lost more by fleeing the Union army, writing that “There are some who would apply the torch to a deserted home, that would not do so if the owners remained in it. It is quite common here to build the chimneys outside of the houses, and I have noticed them still standing where the house had been burned.”¹⁰³

Throughout the campaign, southern civilians often buried valuables on the grounds of plantations, which prompted numerous treasure hunts by Union soldiers. On many occasions, freed slaves guided the northern prospectors to the location of the hidden riches.¹⁰⁴ However, the former slaves soon learned that they too had to hide precious food and personal goods from Union soldiers, as Grant’s foraging squads weakened their food supply as well. Gabe Emanuel, a slave on a plantation nine miles east of Port Gibson, recalled in an interview for the WPA Slave Narratives that passing Federals would “eat up all de marster’s vit’als an’ drink up all his good likker.” On one particular visit, Emanuel noted that Union foragers “took all de meat out’n de curin’ house. Well sir! I done ‘cide by myse’f dat no Yankee gwina eat all us meat. So dat night I slips in dey camp; I stole back dat meat from dem thievin’ sojers an’ hid it, good. Ho! Ho! Ho!” Emanuel proudly stated that the Federal soldiers “never did fin’ dat meat.” In another instance, Emanuel reported that he and other slaves, most likely at the command of their owner, “sot fire to a bridge de Yankees had to cross to git to de plantation. Dey had to camp on de other side, ‘cause dey was too lazy to put out the fire. Dat’s jus’ lak I figgered it.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 9-10.

¹⁰⁴ Giselle Roberts, *The Confederate Belle* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 141-61.

¹⁰⁵ George F. Ranwick, gen. ed., *Oklahoma and Mississippi Narratives*, vol. 7 of *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (1941; repr., Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972), pt. 2, 47.

An Iowa Federal recorded that “During the march this afternoon, we found a lot of bacon the fleeing rebels had left in the woods. Port Gibson is a pleasant business-looking place of about 2,000 inhabitants. The inhabitants deserted the town on our approach—only a few families remaining.”¹⁰⁶ Port Gibson lost more than bacon during the Union occupation, as the advancing blue host produced episodes of pillage and plunder as well. One Illinois soldier wrote, “They drove the rebels for some distance back across Bayou Pierree taking their works and the town of Port Gibson. The boys looted the town going through the stores and taking whatever suited them best.”¹⁰⁷ Another soldier, Florison D. Pitts, noted in his diary on May 2, “occupied Port Gibson at 9 o’clock. . . . Boys jerked every thing they wanted from the stores.”¹⁰⁸

In 1871, a Unionist storeowner in Port Gibson, Joseph Bolander, filed for \$756.00 in restitution for goods looted immediately after the capture of the town to the Southern Claims Commission, which the Grant administration had established to provide compensation to southern Unionists for property damage inflicted during the war. In his claim, Bolander testified that Federal soldiers had seized or destroyed a number of items from his business, including “1 box of dry goods,” “boots & shoes,” “hats & clothing,” “groceries,” “cutlery,” “1 double barrell gun,” “1 calf,” “2 dozen chickens,” “8 geese,” “1 barrel of flour,” 1 barrel of “meal,” “Kitchen furniture,” and “Lumber.” Bolander described the experience as “I had but little to take but that little they took—[in] my garden they did not leave a single vegetable.” After years of investigation and legal wrangling, the commission acknowledged Bolander’s loyalty and

¹⁰⁶ Mark Grimsley and Todd D. Miller, eds., *The Union Must Stand: The Civil War Diary of John Quincy Adams Campbell, Fifth Iowa Infantry* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 92.

¹⁰⁷ Terrence J. Winschel, *The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier: William Wiley of the 77th Illinois Infantry* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 44.

¹⁰⁸ Kaiser, “The Civil War Diary of Florison D. Pitts,” 38.

approved the claim. Although the commission's agents denounced the sack of Bolander's store as "mere lawless pillage!" they only provided \$101.00 in compensation.¹⁰⁹

The brief occupation of Port Gibson provided the Vicksburg campaign with one of its most enduring legends. According to local tradition, Grant refused to destroy the town because he considered it "too beautiful to burn." This story contains more myth than fact, as Port Gibson did not burn to the ground because there was no justification from the behavior of the residents to warrant the torch. And while the city may have been too beautiful to burn, it was clearly not too beautiful to loot. Certainly during the campaign as a whole, Port Gibson's treatment was no exception to that of most other towns Grant's forces passed through. In actuality, only a few Mississippi cities suffered severe physical destruction on a large scale, the most notable being the state capital of Jackson and Vicksburg itself. Both of these cities were vital transportation and war production centers defended by large bodies of Confederate forces, which turned them into battlefields. The Port Gibson legend does more to illustrate the postwar "Lost Cause" movement, which provided many similar tales throughout the Confederacy. It would not be the last legend to grow out of this campaign.

Some violent resistance from the civilians appears to have occurred, although it was far less than many Confederate officials hoped for. Osborn Oldroyd encountered firsthand the danger from guerillas and Confederate scouts when he wandered away from camp along the banks of the Big Black River on May 5 and recorded that "a bullet flew through the trees not far from my head. I looked across the river from whence it came, but could not see anybody. Did not stay there long, but got back to camp, where I felt safer." While only a few actual attacks took place, enough violence occurred to keep Union soldiers alert to the ever-present threat. When

¹⁰⁹ United States Treasury Department, "Claim of Joseph Bolander," in the *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871-1880*, at Fold3.com, http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#34h-knXjBbfBBQt_jMEUQpsE-tlkutf_uau2Sgq06pk (accessed March 17, 2012).

confronted by Federal soldiers, most Mississippians displayed affirmation of loyalty, as Oldroyd noted: “To our faces these citizens seem good Union men, but behind our backs, no doubt their sentiments undergo a change. Probably they were among those who fired at us, and will do it again as soon as they dare.” Oldroyd complained that he had “not seen a regular acknowledged rebel since we crossed the river, except those we have seen in their army,” and in frustration at the costly war declared, “The South must suffer, but out of that suffering will come wisdom.”¹¹⁰

After capturing Port Gibson and the landing at Grand Gulf, which he intended to use as a supply base for the campaign, Grant received word that he would not receive reinforcements from Major General Nathaniel Banks and his Army of the Gulf for weeks. This development persuaded Grant to alter his strategy, as he later explained in his memoirs: “I therefore determined to move independently of Banks, cut loose from my base, destroy the rebel force in rear of Vicksburg and invest or capture the city.”¹¹¹ The bold resolution to march into the heart of Confederate territory with minimal logistical support demanded immediate execution and forced Grant to act on his own authority without the approval of his superiors in Washington.

Grant’s close friend Sherman believed the audacious maneuver doomed to failure and urged Grant to stop until engineers constructed additional roads to securely connect the Grand Gulf supply base to the army. Grant replied that he did not “calculate upon the possibility of supplying the army with full rations from Grand Gulf. I know it will be impossible without constructing additional roads. What I do expect is to get up what rations of hard bread, coffee and salt we can, and make the country furnish the balance.”¹¹² This decision, while pragmatic in nature, ranks as one of the most influential commands made by any Federal commander during the war, though

¹¹⁰ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 13, 16.

¹¹¹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 275.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 276.

Grant most likely did not realize the substantial impact his orders would have. In one decisive moment, Grant had issued the command that ultimately transformed his army into an instrument of economic and psychological warfare that would attack southern civilians and their ability to continue the war as well as Confederate armed forces.

Grant's troops embarked upon an epic march that historians often describe as a "Blitzkrieg through Mississippi," and the farms of Central Mississippi provided all rations beyond the basic staples of hard tack and coffee.¹¹³ Fortunately for the Union, the area had suffered little during two years of war, and rich bounty awaited the conquering Army of the Tennessee. Sherman informed his wife in a May 6 letter from Grand Gulf, "The Planters never dreamed of our Coming. They had planted vast fields of corn & vegetables, and we find old corn, and some beef cattle. It is folly to suppose the enemy to be suffering for food—They have plenty of Beef and corn."¹¹⁴ As Grant later stated, "Beef, mutton, poultry and forage were found in abundance. Quite a quantity of bacon and molasses were also secured from the country, but bread and coffee could not be obtained in quantity sufficient for all the men." To remedy the shortfall of bread, Grant ordered soldiers to man occupied plantation grindstones and "these were kept running while we were stopping, day and night, and when we were marching, during the night, at all plantations covered by the troops."¹¹⁵

Grant's decision to forage almost entirely off the Mississippi countryside forced Union soldiers and southern civilians into greater and more extensive contact than ever before and substantially increased the amount of damage the Union army inflicted upon civilian property. Foraging and confiscation had occurred before in other areas, but Grant's Vicksburg campaign

¹¹³ James R. Arnold, *Grant Wins the War: Decision at Vicksburg* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1997), 126.

¹¹⁴ Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War*, 468.

¹¹⁵ Grant, *Memoirs*, 275-76.

vastly surpassed any previous campaign, raid, or expedition in its scale of foodstuffs consumed and material ruin, and supplied an army of veterans with the knowledge of how effective hard war could be in suppressing Confederate morale. These veterans would continue to apply these policies in the concluding campaigns of 1864-65 that finally conquered the Confederacy.

This new policy of reliance on the countryside excited some apprehension from the soldiers. Osborn Oldroyd wrote, “My fear is that they may cut our supply train, and then we should be in a bad fix. Should that happen and they get us real hungry, I am afraid short work would be made of taking Vicksburg.”¹¹⁶ To keep the army supplied with rations beyond the hard tack and coffee coming up from the Grand Gulf supply base, Grant kept his army advancing at a rapid pace, continuing to forage and gain ground before his Confederate adversaries could unite superior forces against him.¹¹⁷ The Army of the Tennessee could not remain long in one area once the surrounding population had been stripped of food. McClellan illustrated this predicament on May 3, when he informed Grant, “My corps will be out of rations to-morrow. . . . I ask that you will cause rations to be sent out immediately. . . . Lieutenant-Colonel [Wesford] Taggart is behind, collecting what articles of subsistence he can, but the troops in advance left scarcely anything.”¹¹⁸

Now deep within enemy territory, Grant continued to use all of his available resources to confuse and mislead his opponent. On May 5, Grant wired Major General Stephen Hurlbut, the commander of the XVI Corps, to dispatch reinforcements to the Mississippi beachhead and continue raiding North Mississippi. Grant once again impressed upon his subordinate the importance of maintaining discipline during such forays against civilians, writing, “You have a

¹¹⁶ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 21.

¹¹⁷ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 106-26.

¹¹⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 266.

large force of cavalry; use it as much as possible for attracting attention from this direction. Impress upon the cavalry the necessity of keeping out of people's houses or taking what is of no use to them in a military point of view." Though Grant commanded that personal effects were to be protected from pillage, the Union commander clearly instructed his subordinate to destroy all war-making materials and resources. Grant declared that Hurlbut's cavalry "must live as far as possible off the country through which they pass, and destroy corn, wheat crops, and everything that can be made use of by the enemy in prolonging the war." Grant directed that "Mules and horses can be taken to supply all our wants, and, where it does not cause too much delay, agricultural implements may be destroyed. In other words, cripple the rebellion in every way, without insulting women and children or taking their clothing, jewelry, &c."¹¹⁹ In his dispatches, Grant revealed a surprising lack of concern for the enemy's operations, rarely remarking on any of the Confederate commanders then endeavoring to surround and eliminate his army. Rather, Grant's true dilemma remained the status of his supply chain and his ability to subsist off the countryside of Central Mississippi. The next day, Grant communicated further instructions to Hurlbut and concluded, "Rations now are the only delay."¹²⁰

Federal troops entering deep into Confederate territory inspired a number of rumors and reports of enemy cruelty and atrocities. In some cases the tales reached gruesome proportions. On May 2, 1863, the *Natchez Daily Courier* reported in an article entitled "Yankee Fiendishness" that in areas along the Mississippi River occupied by Union forces "private graveyards are all entered, the graves dug open, the coffins taken out, some much decayed, and broken open and the decomposed remains of them left lying exposed to the weather," all in search of a fabled "rebel treasure." Such ghoulish publications strengthened the terror and panic

¹¹⁹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 274-75.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 279.

in Mississippi by conjuring fears of a supposedly inhuman Yankee invader who violated the rights of both the living and the dead.¹²¹

The incidents that did occur were painful enough for the majority of southerners. The delta regions of Mississippi and Louisiana contained some of the wealthiest plantations in the South, which both impressed and infuriated Union soldiers from much more modest backgrounds. The Bowie plantation in Northwest Louisiana in particular amazed those Federals who marched by it, and several, including Sherman, commented on its opulence. On May 6 Sherman wrote his wife about the condition of the estate: “We have found some magnificent plantations most horribly plundered. Dr. Allen T Bowies Plantation is the first. . . . The house was a palace and furnished as fine as any in New York.” Sherman described what happened to the mansion, noting, “All Rosewood furniture, pier glasses, splendid bedsteads were all smashed, books of the most valuable kind strewn on the floor & about the yard, and every possible indignity offered the palace.” Sherman, who had lived in Louisiana before the war, blamed the outrages on “the cursed stragglers who wont fight, but hang behind and disgrace our Cause & Country,” and admitted that “devastation marked the whole path of the army, and I know all the principal officers detest the infamous practice as much as I do.” In the end, perhaps remembering his friends in the South, Sherman declared to his wife, “Of course I expect & do take corn, bacon, horses, mules and everything to support an army, and don’t object much to the using fences for firewood, but this universal burning and wanton destruction of private property is not justifiable in war.”¹²²

¹²¹ “Yankee Fiendishness” (Editorial) in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers [database on-line], *Vicksburg Whig*, reprinted in *Natchez Daily Courier* (Natchez, MS) May 02, 1863, Issue 155, http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/709/995/126637297w16/purl=rc1_NCNP_0_GT3017308621&dyn=4!bmk_2_0_GT3017308621&hst_1?sw_aep=txshracd2573, (accessed 14 April 2008).

¹²² Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman’s Civil War*, 468-69.

Another eyewitness, artilleryman John Merrilees, recorded in his diary on May 6, “Large and elegant plantations are scattered along the lake, but have almost all been deserted, and plundered by the advance. Steele’s Division, ahead of us today, completes the destruction, a succession of blazing houses indicating his line of march.” Merrilees continued, “About noon halted in front of DR. BOWIE’s mansion, altogether the largest and finest planter’s residence I have seen in the south. . . . great quantities of fine furniture, paintings, mirrors, etc. were left, which are all either mutilated or destroyed, till now everything is a wreck” with “ruins littering the floors from garret to basement.” Merrilees acknowledged that “The most wanton spirit of destruction is indulged in by the men, who are making havoc using the bayonets and butts of their guns to that end,” and “Solid mahogany and rosewood chairs covered with satin damask, tête-a-têtes, marble topped tables, bedsteads, sofas, ottomans, etc. were all being knocked down without regard to cost. Paintings were being thrust with scores of bayonets, and half-inch ‘french plate’ was crashing continuously and carried off for looking glasses.”¹²³

The Union cannoner declared the scene at the Bowie residence to be “perfect pandemonium” until the column received orders to march. Merrilees noted, “After a halt of an hour, the column again moved, during which the gin [for?] cotton, sheds, barns, stables, overseer’s house, indeed everything but the mansion and nigger quarters, were fired and burned down.” Although “Guards were put on the remainder to save it if possible,” the order for protection failed. Merrilees concluded that the guards “didn’t try very hard apparently, for before we were out of sight of the place a cloud of black smoke rose from the house” followed by “a great burst of flame, which told us unmistakably that we were looking for the last time on the noble residence of Dr. Allen Y. Bowie.”¹²⁴ More plantations along the route suffered the same fate as the Bowie estate. On

¹²³ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 36.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

May 7, Private George M. Lucas of the 11th Missouri Infantry noted in his diary, “Marched on the road to Hard Times Landing where we arrived at 2 o'clock and went on board Steamer Empire City and crossing the river landed at Grand Gulf. Many elegant mansions were burned to the ground by our troops on the way.”¹²⁵

While most common soldiers would have had only limited interaction with residents while marching through the unforgiving Mississippi heat, those assigned to authorized foraging parties would have had the most contact with civilians. One soldier, Owen Hopkins from Ohio, described a typical mission in his journal on May 9, 1863, as “a foraging Expedition, alias Stealing tour. I filled my Haversack full of the dainties of the country. We succeeded in Finding a wagon-load of molasses and Bacon which we shipped immediately for the especial Benefit of the Forty-second Regiment Ohio Infantry Volunteers, U.S.A. Returned to camp tired But not hungry.”¹²⁶ Though Hopkins participated in legitimate, authorized foraging upon orders from his commanders, it is significant that he described the actions of the party as “stealing,” a characteristic that many Federal soldiers shared. Certainly, the owners of the plantations visited by the foraging parties would have agreed with Hopkins in this regard.

Hopkins later recorded further information about the day's journey, writing, “We came to a plantation where no Yankees had ever trod, and after putting to flight a pack of blood hounds and frightening half out of their wits a motly group of alternatively black and white darkies, I discovered the *garden*,” while one of his comrades “had the honor of discovering a well-filled smokehouse,” another “accidentally fell over a barrel of dried peaches,” one companion “in the meantime capturing three or four fat hens,” and yet another “encountered a porker with such violence that Porker was killed and his hams amputated with great skill.” Hopkins narrated that

¹²⁵ George M. Lucas diary, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, 16-17.

¹²⁶ Otto F. Bond, ed., *Under the Flag of the Nation: Diaries and Letters of Owen Johnston Hopkins, a Yankee Volunteer* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 57.

the pursuit “extended to the mansion and bureau drawers, where I succeeded in finding a dozen pairs of cotton socks, a welcome discovery as my only pair needed the tender care of a mother who could darn. I’ll be darned if they didn’t!” The foraging party returned to camp, “receiving as a reward from our ravenous comrades a round of hearty cheers, and before morning chickens, turkeys, calves, pigs, and everything had become food for soldiers.”¹²⁷ Similar expeditions stripped the countryside of food, leaving little substance behind for either the Confederate army or population.

John Merrilees documented his experience of a foraging expedition that same day, writing, “In the morning went out foraging, to Mr. Ingram’s plantation, less than a mile from camp. Found plenty of corn and fodder for the horses, but the infantry had got the start of us on eatables, and had cleaned the smoke house and cellar of about everything.”¹²⁸ Despite Grant’s orders prohibiting the “wanton destruction of property, taking of articles, unless for military purposes, insulting civilians,” and “going into and searching houses without proper orders from division commanders,”¹²⁹ Merrilees testified that Union soldiers “were now swarming over the house, carrying off whatever they took a fancy to. A fine library was disappearing very fast, and every third man carried a smoked ham under one arm, and two or three volumes under the other.” Merrilees, like many Union soldiers, justified this disobedience of orders by recognizing that the victim of the pillaging was “a good ‘Secesh” that had to “to take matters philosophically. His sheds and barns are piled full of baled cotton marked C.S.A.—as many as 300 bales altogether.” Like many orders, the enforcement (or lack thereof) of Article 13, Special Orders 110 relied upon subordinate commanders to implement the policy of the commanding general.

¹²⁷ Bond, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 57.

¹²⁸ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 39.

¹²⁹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 213.

Merrilees affirmed that in the case of Mr. Ingram, who had apparently remained within the mansion during the ransacking, “[Brigadier General Peter] Osterh[a]us gave him protection, but [Brigadier General James M.] Tuttle won’t come down with a single bayonet [i.e., refused to place guards on the property].”¹³⁰

Worse than a foraging expedition would be to have units of the army camp on one’s property for any significant amount of time, as Logan’s Division of the XVII Corps did on the Bagnell plantation on the Big Black River from May 3 through 7. In a postwar account written for the Southern Claims Commission listing “Stock & Property Consumed & taken off by Gen. U. S. Grant’s Army,” the estate detailed a total loss of 95 cotton bales either burned or seized, and the confiscation of 15 mules, 2 horses, 40 head of sheep, 15 milk cows, 10 work oxen, 25 calves, 100 hogs, 1 mule wagon, 4 sets of wagon gears, 3800 bushels of corn, 4000 pounds of bacon and hams, 5 tons of fodder, 30,000 feet of lumber used in the construction of tent shelters, and 8000 fence rails burned for fuel. Altogether, the unfortunate plantation owner estimated the loss to total \$29,855, an amount that calculated the damage using the price of cotton in 1863, raised exponentially by the wartime shortage.¹³¹

This account does not include the amount of human property lost, which would have raised the total cost by tens of thousands of dollars. A plantation that produced over a hundred bales of cotton would need a sizable slave labor force, who either were relocated by their owners or gained freedom at the hands of Grant’s army. Interestingly, also missing from this list is any mention of buildings burned or personal property taken, which indicates that the owners most likely stayed during the Union occupation of the property. The damage inflicted by Logan’s division in a few days would have most likely prevented this plantation from producing any

¹³⁰ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 39.

¹³¹ “Amount of Stock & Property Consumed & taken off by Gen. U. S. Grant’s Army, 1863,” Miscellaneous Civil War Documents, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 1-4.

agricultural supplies for the Confederate army until the war ended. With no slave or animal labor to plant with, and no fences to protect the crops, no large scale production would be possible.

Unoccupied plantations suffered even greater devastation.¹³²

On May 9, Sherman wrote to his wife from Hankinson's Ferry, "We are short of wagons and provisions, but in this starving country we find an abundance of corn, hogs, cattle sheep and Poultry. Men who came in advance have drawn but 2 days rations in 10, and are fat."¹³³ On the same day in Rocky Springs, Grant informed his wife Julia, "People all seem to stay at home and show less signs of fear than one would suppose. These people talk a greatdeal about the barbarities of the Yankees but I hear no complaints where the Army has been even of insults having been offered."¹³⁴ Grant apparently did not know about the outbreak of looting in Port Gibson and elsewhere, or did not consider the property loss endured by shopkeepers and plantation owners as comparable to the endless rumors of unspeakable northern atrocities against civilians.

The continued foraging stripped the material possessions of Mississippi and resulted in a larger amount of interaction with former slaveowners which astounded many of the Midwestern Federals who had never before witnessed the nature of slavery in the Deep South. One Union foraging expedition stumbled upon a "young mistress who had just been deserted by her Negroes, all alone, crying with but a scant allowance of provisions left her. She had never learned to cook, and in fact was a complete stranger to housework of any kind."¹³⁵ The liberation of slaves forced many owners, especially upper class women, to rely on their own labor for the

¹³² "Amount of Stock & Property Consumed & taken off by Gen. U. S. Grant's Army, 1863," 1-4.

¹³³ Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War*, 470.

¹³⁴ John Y. Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, Volume 8: April 1-July 6, 1863* (Carbondale, II: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 189.

¹³⁵ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 19.

first time in their lives, which only confirmed their hatred of the Yankees as inhuman savages. The exaggerations of northern brutality, created by the secessionist elite, spread throughout all classes of society. Oldroyd discovered that the majority of southerners “have been led, apparently, to expect to find the Lincoln soldier more of a beast than human. At least such is the belief among the lower sort.”¹³⁶

Undaunted by terrain, weather, or Confederate resistance, Grant’s systematic foraging continued unabated. As war correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader of the *Chicago Times* reported, “Army wagons by scores and hundreds were sent out daily from ten to fifteen miles, escorted by infantry details sufficient to protect them from any sudden foray by Confederate Cavalry.” After scouring the countryside, Cadwallader continued, the wagons “returned at nightfall groaning under the weight of impressed supplies, and increased by the addition to the train of every vehicle, no matter what its description, that could bear the weight of a sack of grain, pieces of salt meat, or pails full of butter, eggs, honey or vegetables.”¹³⁷

Max Kuner, a Bavarian immigrant and Vicksburg watchmaker, fled the city with his wife and family before Grant’s invasion to a friend’s abandoned plantation ten miles away. In 1907, Kuner recounted his experiences in *The Sewanee Review*, writing, “We were just off one of the main roads to Vicksburg; consequently we were exposed to the depredations of everybody, blue or gray, who chanced to be traveling by.” Like many civilians, Kuner’s family suffered severe food shortages before the end of the campaign. He recalled, “We had, in the beginning, three

¹³⁶ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 19.

¹³⁷ Benjamin P. Thomas, ed., *Three Years With Grant: As Recalled by War Correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 72.

cows; one was stolen; another was killed; and only a steak cut out of her. We had chickens, which speedily learned to roost very high.”¹³⁸

Throughout the campaign, Kuner’s temporary home witnessed encounters with soldiers from both armies, freed slaves, and other civilian refugees. One night, Kuner confronted a group of Federal soldiers who were attempting to confiscate his horse, which he “valued at several thousand dollars.” The unauthorized foragers admitted “that they knew they ought not to take such a fine horse, but the orders against stealing had become very strict and yet they wanted some chickens. We had chickens, and if we would give them all they could take, they would return the horse!” Kuner immediately agreed to the offer to save the desired horse, and “producing sacks,” the hungry soldiers “proceeded to grab the poor chickens from the limbs of the trees, wring their heads off, and stuff the bags. With sacks filled they rode away, engaging to come back again the next night. But they didn’t.”¹³⁹

Kuner maintained that he “tried to bear patiently with the depredations,” but when another foraging party seized every bridle he owned, Kuner demanded restitution from the officer commanding the nearest Union camp. Riding with “an apology of a bridle” made from “some carpet yarn and an old bit,” Kuner explained his situation to the officer, who provided a replacement “with a big U.S. upon the buttons.” Satisfied, Kuner returned to his friend’s house only to be halted by another Federal soldier, who exclaimed, “Well, if here isn’t a dashed Johnny Reb going off with a U.S. bridle!” The soldier appropriated the new bridle, and Kuner “rode home with the old rope-yarn contraption after all.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ [Max Kuner?], “Vicksburg, and after: Being the Experience of a Southern Merchant and Non-Combatant during the Sixties,” arranged by Edwin L. Sabin, *The Sewanee Review* 15, no. 4 (October 1907) 488: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27530876> (accessed September 6, 2011).

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 488-489.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 489.

Not every attempt to interact with the civilian population ended in Union triumph, and for some soldiers, would-be bravado resulted in farcical humiliation. Sergeant Ira Blanchard of the 20th Illinois Infantry remembered that on one night march in the Vicksburg campaign, “one of our boys saw something rolled up in a blanket in the corner of the fence. Wishing to have a little fun, he dodged out of the ranks and giving the bundle a kick exclaimed, ‘Hello, old fellow! Where did you get your whiskey?’” To the unnamed soldier’s horror, one of his comrades “shied up and said ‘Look out, that’s General Sherman!’” Blanchard did not record Sherman’s exact response (though one could imagine its intensity given Sherman’s notorious temper and reputation for profanity), but did relate, “The soldier flew back to the ranks in an instant, and was careful how he kicked the next man before he knew who he was.”¹⁴¹

In *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860*, Sam Bowers Hilliard reveals that the region relied largely on livestock for food, which proved a particularly lucrative target for Union foraging parties.¹⁴² Cadwallader affirmed that “Horses, mules and cattle were brought in by droves of hundreds. I frequently saw horses, cattle and mules of all ages and condition; milch cows and calves; sheep, goats and lambs; turkeys, geese, ducks and chickens, driven together in one drove.”¹⁴³ The destruction wrought by Grant’s army not only harmed the pocketbooks of Mississippian secessionists, it also severely affected the fortunes of white loyalists and African Americans as well. Altogether, 11 white Unionists and 8 African Americans in Claiborne County received compensation from the Southern Claims Commission in the 1870s for property lost during the Vicksburg campaign. A number of others, including at least 4 African Americans, applied but had their claims rejected. The nature of the campaign in

¹⁴¹ Blanchard, *I Marched With Sherman*, 87.

¹⁴² Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 37-69.

¹⁴³ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 72.

Claiborne County is best described in the case of a free African American resident, Rosetta L. Newsom, who applied for \$2,441.00 in compensation for confiscated food and livestock. In her file, the commission's agents wrote, "when the Army in May '63 crossed the Mississippi at Port Gibson & Grand Gulf they were obliged to take all they could for subsistence.- But it is also plain, that much of this taking was lawless- mere depredations." In the end, the commission awarded Newsom \$389.00.¹⁴⁴ As Cadwallader declared, "The country was much richer in food products than we had expected to find it. If owners could establish their loyalty they were given regular vouchers for everything taken—if not, not."¹⁴⁵

One observer, War Department official Charles A. Dana, recognized the substantial impact that voluntary military service and conscription had upon the southern population. Writing after the war, Dana recalled, "A fact which impressed me was the total absence of men capable of bearing arms. Only old men and children remained. The young men were all in the army or had perished in it. The South was drained of its youth." Dana also noticed the dramatic effect that Grant's policies had upon the first southerners to endure the innovative measures. Dana described encountering citizens who "had at first sympathized with the rebellion, and even joined in it, now of their own accord rendering Grant the most valuable assistance, in order that the rebellion might be ended as speedily as possible, and something saved by the southern people out of their otherwise total and hopeless ruin." These former secessionists acted more out of self-preservation than from any patriotic turn of heart. Dana quoted them as declaring, "Slavery is

¹⁴⁴ United States Treasury Department, "Claim of Rosetta L. Newsom," in the *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871-1880*, at Fold3.com, http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#34h-knXjBbfBBQt_jMEUQpsE-tle4uWWtS8P2vP4F9W (accessed March 17, 2012).

¹⁴⁵ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 72.

gone, other property is mainly gone . . . but, for God's sake, let us save some relic of our former means of living.”¹⁴⁶

Grant's march introduced the realities of war to the Mississippi home front with a severity that no one could have imagined two years before. Each animal slaughtered and each bushel of corn consumed meant one less that the Confederates could use to sustain the war. Even though Grant's forces had until this point seen little fighting, they were doing more to win the war by depleting the southern home front if they had been defeating the Confederate army on the battlefield. Even if a tactical disaster occurred and Grant's invasion was eventually repelled, those areas of Mississippi through which he had marched would have little value to the Confederacy if recaptured. As Grant pressed on, each step brought his army closer to its ultimate objective of Vicksburg, and each residence visited by the foraging parties brought the Union one step closer on the long road to total victory.

The foraging encounters inspired terrifying rumors of insult and outrage. Sylvanus Cadwallader remembered greeting a collection of children released from school as the Federal army approached, and wrote, “As soon as the children saw me they took to the fence corner thickets, like a covey of quail, and it required considerable persuasion to induce them to come out of hiding and answer some friendly questions. They had been taught to believe that the ‘Yankee Army’ was a horde of vandals.”¹⁴⁷ When the civilians at home endured invasive Union foraging and occupation, the will to continue the southern endeavor in nation building collapsed.¹⁴⁸ A soldier in the 16th Mississippi Infantry from Hinds County, Jerome B. Yates, wrote his wife from Virginia, “I am in hopes we will gorge Lincoln with his own blood and put

¹⁴⁶ Charles A. Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War: With the leaders at Washington and in the Field in the Sixties* (1898; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 51.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 64-65.

¹⁴⁸ Wynne, *Mississippi's Civil War*, 137-39.

an end to the war, but I reckon you think it is most too late for us to gorge the lion since all of our property has been overtaken by the foe.”¹⁴⁹

Women, left at home to manage farms and plantations without male assistance, particularly suffered from deprivation of support from husbands, brothers, fathers, and other male relations. Charles Calvin Enslow of the 77th Illinois wrote to his wife on May 4 from Bayou Pierre, Mississippi, “I visited several places and found that the men had gone leaving the women to call themselves widows. They tell me they have had but little to eat save cornbread and meat. One lady who keeps a millinery shop told me that she has not had any coffee for one year.”¹⁵⁰ British observer Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Fremantle, one of the most fascinating figures then present in the state, asserted after spending the night in a Mississippi residence that “it is impossible to exaggerate the unfortunate condition of the women left behind in these farmhouses. They have scarcely any clothes, and nothing but the coarsest bacon to eat, and are in miserable uncertainty as to the fate of their relations, whom they hardly ever communicate with.” Visiting an area of Mississippi still secure under Confederate control, Fremantle noted, “Their slaves, however, generally remain true to them.”¹⁵¹ Fremantle, quite naively, failed to grasp that the behavior of the enslaved changed dramatically when Union forces and freedom approached.

Historian Giselle Roberts, author of *The Confederate Belle*, asserts that for elite southern women, “patriotic duty compelled them to urge their men to fight. It also required them to

¹⁴⁹ Robert G. Evans, ed., *The 16th Mississippi Infantry: Civil War Letters and Reminiscences* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), 170.

¹⁵⁰ Maud Enslow Dunn, ed., “Excepts of Letters written during Civil War 1861-1865 by Charles Calvin Enslow to his wife, Martha Ann,” Charles Calvin Enslow papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁵¹ Walter Lord, ed., *The Fremantle Diary: Being the Journal of Lieutenant Colonel James Arthur Lyon Fremantle, Coldstream Guards, on his Three Months in the Southern States* (Boston, MA: Little Brown and Company, 1954), 81.

assume the role of custodians of Confederate morale.”¹⁵² The failure of the Confederate army to protect southern women from the “outrages” of the “Yankees” and freed slaves produced a crisis in civilian and soldier morale.¹⁵³ Southern soldiers from Mississippi and Louisiana serving in distant fields found themselves trapped in code of honor that demanded men defend both home and country. While the application of true “total war” would entail the execution of civilians, such atrocities would only encourage southern men of honor to fight unto the death in a quest for vengeance. Grant’s use of hard war, which eliminated the South’s ability to feed itself or continue the war effort, inspired southern women to write anguished letters from home that persuaded thousands of military-age men to abandon the remaining Rebel armies in order to defend their familial honor, if not that of their nation.¹⁵⁴

After marching through the bayous and plantations of Mississippi for ten days, Grant had encountered little opposition from the Confederate commander Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton. As the Army of the Tennessee advanced farther into the heart of the state, the Confederate Army of Vicksburg began preparing to battle its Union adversaries and repel the Federal incursion. On May 11, Grant ordered McPherson to occupy the small town of Raymond, the county seat of Hinds County, and “use your utmost exertions to secure all the subsistence stores you that may be there, as well as in the vicinity. We must fight the enemy before our rations fail, and we are equally bound to make our rations last as long as possible.” Grant reminded McPherson, “Upon one occasion you made two days’ rations last seven. We may have to do the same thing again.”¹⁵⁵ Up to this point, the struggle for subsistence had influenced

¹⁵² Roberts, *The Confederate Belle*, 43.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵⁴ Roberts, *The Confederate Belle*, 126-27; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 234-247.

¹⁵⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 297.

Grant's campaign more than the Confederate Army of Vicksburg. However, that would change in the next five days as the opposing armies finally met in the climatic battles of the Vicksburg campaign.

CHAPTER 3 “THIS IS A CRUEL WARFARE”

On May 12, 1863, Union Major General James B. McPherson’s XVII Corps collided with Confederate Brigadier General John Gregg’s brigade outside the small village of Raymond, Mississippi. While the fighting raged, local residents prepared an extensive meal for Gregg’s men in honor of an anticipated triumph. After repulsing a vicious Rebel attack, the superior numbers of the XVII Corps drove Gregg’s brigade back in a hasty retreat, leaving the elaborate banquet behind. The Battle of Raymond ended in a Union triumph at a cost of 68 killed, 341 wounded, and 37 missing. The defeated Confederates lost 73 killed, 252 wounded, and 190 missing, while the citizens of Raymond had to endure the mortification of witnessing their victory celebration being devoured by hungry Federal soldiers.¹⁵⁶ Ohioan Osborn Oldroyd remembered wryly, “The citizens had prepared a good dinner for the rebels on their return from victory, but, as they actually returned from defeat they were in too much of a hurry to enjoy it.”¹⁵⁷

The jubilant and well-fed Federals camped in Raymond, helping themselves to more than their enemy’s dinner. One Ohioan, Corporal Owen Hopkins chronicled, “By broad daylight, however, the Brigade was astir, and a regular pillaging of the town commenced; the rain poured in torrents, and the streets were a quagmire, rendered so by the tramping of men and mules.”¹⁵⁸ While northern soldiers partook of the shops of Raymond, their wounded comrades filled the largest buildings in town.¹⁵⁹ On May 15 the unauthorized foraging and vandalism continued, as Hopkins recorded on that date, “a general Plundering prevails. Stores and ware-rooms, Kitchen

¹⁵⁶ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 117-24; Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 62-67.

¹⁵⁷ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 24.

¹⁵⁸ Bond, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 60.

¹⁵⁹ Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War*, 109.

and dining-room, Parlor and Pantry, undergo alike the ordeal of being Searched by the prying ‘Lincolnites.’” Hopkins’s diary relates a vivid scene of punitive destruction, which he described as “Furniture and Crockery, Glass-ware and tinware are scattered and Broken promiscuously, and the Forty-second [Ohio] Boys are wreaking their vengeance on the China ware in a Whole Sale establishment just across the Street. . . . Go ahead, boys! It all belongs to Rebels; go in on your ‘mus’ [muscle].”¹⁶⁰

Another Federal, Brevet Major Charles Miller, stated that “We passed through Raymond on our march and saw the marks of conflict near that place. It was here that the boys discovered a stock of fine liquors in a druggist’s cellar, and the canteens of almost the entire Brigade were filled with choice old wine, brandy and whiskey.”¹⁶¹ The alcohol uncovered in Raymond undoubtedly increased the severity of the unauthorized foraging and encouraged additional property damage. One citizen later wrote that Grant’s soldiers “burned all the fences for their cooking pots and emptied the hen houses and the smokehouses. I saw them drive off a cow and calf while my mother begged in vain to spare them.”¹⁶²

A civilian in Raymond during the Union occupation, Anne Martin, wrote to her sister, “I prayed most earnestly for protection during the night for we could hear them tearing down fences, shooting cattle, shouting and going on and we expected every minute to be broken in on.” Despite her prayers, Martin reported, “The doors were locked but they broke them open and took everything but one sidesaddle, even pulled the curtains down and tore them in strings. The remaining sidesaddle was taken by one of those fancy yellow girls, an especial pet of one of the

¹⁶⁰ Bond, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 60.

¹⁶¹ Bennett and Tillery, *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 94.

¹⁶² Letitia Dabney Miller, *The Recollections of Letitia Dabney Miller*, Mrs. Cabe Drew Gillespie Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, Oxford, quoted in Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War*, 109.

officers.” The unnamed Union officer violated the strict racial hierarchy of the Old South by allowing an African American woman of dubious virtue to purloin the property of a white southern lady, which Martin considered to be a grave insult to her honor. Martin complained that “she rode off with the best sidesaddle on the pacing pony and I suppose that hussy is capering around on it now.” Another humiliation came from northern musicians, who played “Yankee Doodle, and, oh the desecration! the Bonnie Blue Flag.” Martin also recorded that Federal soldiers looted personal effects in their ransacking. “We could see them bringing all kinds of plunder, showing around silverware and jewelry they had stolen,” she asserted. As a final note of warning, Martin added, “If you are ever invaded, Emmie, don’t bury anything. Everything that has been hidden in that way has been found.” Martin concluded her letter with reports of Yankee depredations she had gathered. Although her neighbor, “Mrs. Robinson,” had “buried her silverware, they dug up every foot of her garden until they found it” while “Martha Durden’s baby was buried in the yard and would you believe it: that child’s remains were dug [up] no less than three different times in search of treasure.”¹⁶³

After securing victory at Raymond, Grant determined to change the direction of his advance. Rather than striking due northward to sever the Southern Railroad of Mississippi, Grant oriented his columns to the northeast against the state capital and industrial center of Jackson.¹⁶⁴ As the Army of the Tennessee proceeded toward its new objective, vast numbers of runaway slaves continued to join the advance. Sylvanus Cadwallader noticed that “afternoon and night refugee ‘contrabands’ came swarming into our lines by hundreds. They were of all ages, sexes and conditions, and came on foot, on horses and mules, and in all manner of vehicles, from the

¹⁶³ Anne Shannon Martin to Emma Crutcher (May 15 to July 1, 1863?), Philip Crutcher Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, quoted in Peter F. Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War, 1860-1865* (1960; repr., Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1987), 159.

¹⁶⁴ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 124.

typical southern cart, to elegant state carriages and barouches.” Cadwallader witnessed that “Straw collars and rope harness alternated with silver plate equipments, till the moving living panorama became ludicrous beyond description.”¹⁶⁵

The influx of former slaves further drained Mississippi’s labor potential, already severely diminished by the manpower demands of Confederate military service. As each slave became free, the power of the Confederacy to feed itself and produce the necessary articles of war diminished, while conversely, the Federal army gained the potential labor of the freedmen, who served as teamsters, cooks, laborers, and eventually, Union soldiers. The liberation of the servile labor force, while more of a consequence of Grant’s invasion than a cause, depleted additional southern resources without firing a shot. Furthermore, in many instances former slaves appropriated valuable wagons and property from their masters before departing, adding a further material loss upon slave owners. As Cadwallader detailed, “The runaway darkies who had made sudden and forcible requisition upon their old masters for these varied means of transportation, generally loaded their wagons and carriages with the finest furniture left in the mansions when their owners had abandoned them at our approach.” He observed, “Feather beds and tapestried upholstery seemed to possess a peculiar charm and value to the dusky runaways.”¹⁶⁶

By the third week in May, news of Union success in Mississippi began to reach Washington. In a telegram to Hurlbut discussing recent cavalry operations, including Grierson’s raid, General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck opined, “At this season all the cavalry must be kept lively at work, supplying so far as possible the losses of horses in the country passed over. Supplies of forage and provisions should be obtained in the same way.” The effectiveness of pragmatic war had become apparent to “Old Brains,” who observed that such policies “will weaken the enemy,

¹⁶⁵ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 69.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

compel him to scatter his forces, and put our cavalry to the best possible use. In getting remounts, the tired horses should not be permitted to fall into the hands of the enemy. Where they cannot be brought away, they should be shot.” Halleck recognized that the increasing severity of the war made southern civilians bear a far greater burden than ever before and concluded, “We must live upon the enemy’s country as much as possible, and destroy his supplies. This is a cruel warfare, but the enemy has brought it upon himself by his own conduct.”¹⁶⁷

As Union transports loaded with munitions and reinforcements for Grant’s army continued to steam down the Mississippi River, the boats often encountered fire from hidden Rebel cavalry or guerilla forces concealed on shore. A member of the 14th Illinois recorded on May 15 that his steamer had left Helena, Arkansas, and “went up the river a mile or so and Burned a most splended dwelling and all the Houses blong to a plantation. the sight was nice as it was quite a village. Supposed to belong to the Capt of the Guerrillas who fired upon our fleet.”¹⁶⁸ Albert Chipman, a soldier of the 76th Illinois Infantry then on a steamboat 300 miles below Memphis, noted that same day, “we started out and went back up the river to a large plantation a little above where we were fired into the night before, and as near as we could find out the owner of the place was Captain of the band that fired at us the night before.” After landing, the Federals gathered intelligence from “an old negro that was there” and as Chipman noted, “the place was vacated except by a few old niggers and two white women. it was a large cotton plantation, with a steam engine for ginning out cotton, with a good many nigger houses all of which we burned to ashes before we left.” Before leaving, the Union landing party “took one horse which we took aboard, the boys jayhawked a considerable [amount] of stuff, such as blankets, chickens, geese,

¹⁶⁷ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 308-9.

¹⁶⁸ *Journal of Company A, 14th Illinois*, 54-55.

and garden sass, butter and milk, and quite a smart chance of ripe strawberries.” Chipman admitted that he “did not go, as our Company was not ordered out” but stated that he “saw the whole transaction and cannot say that I was sorry to see it, the plantations all the way down the river seem to be all vacated nothing growing on them this year certainly, a great many of them have had their buildings burned down” with “the chimneys left standing, or else it is a new way of building they have in the south, of putting up the chimneys first. at any rate the chimneys are there and they can build around them.”¹⁶⁹

A similar incident resulted in the burning of Greenville, Mississippi, after Rebel artillery in the area fired upon Union steamboats. Lieutenant Anthony Burton of the 5th Ohio Independent Battery inscribed in his diary on May 18, “The infantry had been gone about two hours when an orderly came to say that the boats were to go on around the bend and take on the troops again at Greenville.” Once there, Burton detailed, “the troops were already waiting for us; they had marched some nine miles across the country, burning a number of houses on the road.” Due to a delay, the Federals “did not push out immediately” and as Burton testified, “soon some of them got on shore again and set fire to the town from end to end. But two buildings, a frame in which a family was living, and a church, were left standing.” The burning of the town painted a vivid scene of wartime ruin and created such an intense heat that Burton declared, “The fire was very hot and we were obliged to shove out into the river to avoid danger to the boats.”¹⁷⁰

At the same time, Grant’s advancing Army of the Tennessee continued the vital foraging needed to feed the Union host and deplete the countryside of available resources. Charles Calvin Enslow of the 77th Illinois wrote his wife from Cayuga, Mississippi, on May 14, “Here we camped for the night. We had plenty of good things as no troops had come this way.” That

¹⁶⁹ Albert Chipman Papers, 53.

¹⁷⁰ *Lieutenant Anthony B. Burton diary, May 18, to July 4th, 1863*, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, 1.

morning, Enslow and a comrade began searching for food and “came to the plantation of B. W. Henry, a very fine one but he had gone the Sunday before taking his family and some of the negroes. On going into the house we found everything very fine.” Judging from the damage he described, Enslow may not have been the first Union soldier to visit the Henry plantation, or perhaps the estate owner’s freed slaves had taken advantage of their master’s absence to loot the plantation house. As Enslow informed his wife, “There were two large pianos and every description of furniture with an immense library scattered about the floor. On kicking about among the things I picked up two nice books. One called ‘Token of Friendship’ and the other a ‘Gift Book’ for Ladies.” Looking further, Enslow discovered “a large Bible nicely gilded with a clasp on it. I will get it home if I can. I also got some nice little trinkets. Then we went out to the smoke house and got what we wanted.” Enslow’s companion acquired more than mere food, books, or jewelry, as he proudly disclosed, “Clark got enough China dishes for our whole mess to eat on.”¹⁷¹

Mollie Williams, a slave on a Hinds County plantation near Utica, remembered that a Union detachment “all dressed in blue coats wid brass buttons on dey bosoms ridin’ on big fine hosses, drive right up to our po’ch an’ say to Aunt Delia whar she was sweepin’: ‘Good morning, Madam, no men’s about?’” When the women replied that no white men remained on the plantation, the foragers “ax fer de keys to de smokehouse an’ went out an’ hep’ed deyse’ves an’ loaded dey wagons. Den dey went out in de pasture ‘mongst de sheeps an’ killed off some of dem.” After seizing a satisfactory amount of provisions, the foraging expedition indulged in petty vandalism. Williams recalled that the Federal soldiers “went in de buggy house an’ all

¹⁷¹ Charles Calvin Enslow to his wife, Martha Ann, May 14, 1863, Charles Calvin Enslow papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

together shuek down de carri'ge so we neber could use hit no mo'. Yessum, dey done right smart of mischief 'roun' thar."¹⁷²

By May 13, Grant had maneuvered his army into a central position, completely outgeneraling his opponent and feasting upon the rich surplus of the Mississippi heartland. As Grant's army approached the valuable prize of Jackson, his maneuver divided Confederate forces on either side of his own and presented the Union general with a decided operational advantage. That same day, Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston arrived in the Mississippi state capital with great exaltation to defend Jackson and assess the strategic situation. Johnston, who maintained one of the preeminent martial reputations in the South, along with a correspondingly prominent ego, quickly concluded his position was hopeless and wrote to Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon soon after he entered Jackson, "I am too late."¹⁷³ Johnston determined to evacuate Jackson after a brief rear guard action rather than defend the city, although his command contained enough troops to at least severely delay, if not defeat, Grant's all-consuming advance.¹⁷⁴

It is clear from the correspondence of the commanders of the Army of the Tennessee that delay, rather than defeat, represented their greatest fear. Even if Johnston failed to prevent the capture of Jackson, a stalled Union advance would buy time for Pemberton's forces to unite with Johnston's or perhaps threaten Grant's rear. At the very least, as the logistical survival of the Army of the Tennessee depended on a tenuous supply line stretching all the way back to the Mississippi River, the Union army could not stay long in an area after its initial foraging had

¹⁷² Ranwick, *Oklahoma and Mississippi Narratives*, pt. 2, 162.

¹⁷³ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 215.

¹⁷⁴ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 124-26.

stripped it of provisions. The battle and occupation of Jackson would result in a new degree of destruction and produce the first major urban demolition of the war in the western theater.¹⁷⁵

In 1860, Jackson was a quaint town of 3,191 residents, but three years of war had transformed the city into a major industrial and transportation center for the southern war effort.¹⁷⁶ Jackson contained numerous factories, machine-shops, the state arsenal, and served as the rail junction of the Southern Mississippi Railroad, which ran east to west from Vicksburg to Selma, Alabama, and the Mississippi Central Railroad, which connected New Orleans with Memphis. The fall of Jackson would clearly be a serious disaster for the Confederacy to endure in the Mississippi River Valley, and it certainly contained enough military significance to warrant a defensive battle. Unfortunately for the South, future events would demonstrate that Joseph E. Johnston viewed Vicksburg with the same apparent lack of concern that he possessed for the capital city of Jackson, Mississippi.¹⁷⁷

The city's residents, according to the Jackson *Daily Mississippian*, welcomed such a confrontation with Grant's invaders. On May 7, the editors of the paper assured their readers, "We have no ground for panic. . . . We have men enough in Jackson to set any ordinary cavalry raid at defiance. The Federal army dare not move out in this direction from the river. We wish it would." Indeed, the newspapermen called for courage in the face of the Federal onslaught, proclaiming, "We heard a distinguished Mississippian say yesterday he felt ashamed of the want of spirit manifested at the *State Capital of Mississippi*. *The fact is* our fortunes never looked brighter, or more reassuring than they do to-day." Perhaps aware that such appeals to patriotism

¹⁷⁵ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 124-26.

¹⁷⁶ Timothy B. Smith, "Jackson: The Capital City and the Civil War," *Mississippi History Now: An Online Publication of the Mississippi Historical Society*, <http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/articles/337/jackson-the-capital-city-and-the-civil-war> (accessed March 20, 2012).

¹⁷⁷ Michael B. Dougan, "Herrmann Hirsh and the Siege of Jackson," *The Journal of Mississippi History* 43 (February 1991): 21-23.

might prove unprofitable, the editors then proceeded to call upon the sacred southern system of honor and its reciprocal gender relations, declaring, “Some of our leading matrons were preparing two days ago to notify the *men* of Jackson, if they were too white-livered to defend their homes, the ladies would endeavor to organize and offer the *men* some protection! Have we any manhood left?” In a last theatrical flourish, the *Daily Mississippian* announced boldly, “If Jackson does not maintain its reputation, then the State Capital ought to be located somewhere else!” The article concluded with the question that burned within the minds of most Mississippians in early May when it asked, “Is there no energetic man of brains, with sand in his craw, who can organize and render effective our civil force in aid of the military? Where is he?”¹⁷⁸

On May 10, the newspaper continued to discount the threat posed by the Army of the Tennessee, promising, “The enemy will never reach Jackson—we are satisfied of that.—We only wish he would speedily make the attempt to get here. . . . we feel very sanguine as to the result.”¹⁷⁹ By May 13, Grant had begun preparations to make the repeated wishes of *The Daily Mississippian* come true, although not in the fashion that the newspaper had so optimistically predicted.

Inside the Mississippi state capital, Junius Henri Browne, a war correspondent from the *New York Tribune* who had been captured with a small party of northern reporters on May 3 in a quixotic attempt to run past the Vicksburg batteries, surveyed the panicked evacuation with elation. Browne noted that at “the street corners were knots of excited men, discussing the

¹⁷⁸ “Panic,” (Editorial) in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers [database on-line], *Jackson Daily Mississippian* (Jackson, MS) May 7, 1863, Issue 312, http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/498/179/163771964w16/purl=rc1_NCNP_0_GT3016564943&dyn=4!bmk_5_0_GT3016564943&hst_1?sw_aep=txshracd2573, (accessed September 15, 2011).

¹⁷⁹ “Our Dangers,” (Editorial) in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers [database on-line], *Jackson Daily Mississippian* (Jackson, MS) May 10, 1863, Issue 8, http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/498/179/163771964w16/purl=rc1_NCNP_0_GT3016565075&dyn=4!bmk_7_0_GT3016565075&hst_1?sw_aep=txshracd2573, (accessed September 15, 2011).

prospects of the future with more feeling than logic. To us, who had long been careful observers, it was evident they were at a loss what to do; and you can imagine we rather enjoyed the trepidation of the Rebels.”¹⁸⁰ As the Yankees approached, many Jacksonians fled to the surrounding countryside, and the governor, John J. Pettus, had already ordered the state government relocated to Enterprise, Mississippi.¹⁸¹ Browne commented that he “saw a number of vehicles of various kinds loaded with household furniture, and men, women, children, and black servants, all greatly excited, moving rapidly out of town.”¹⁸²

In stark contrast to the secessionists, the town’s enslaved population welcomed the invaders. Browne declared, “A panic of the most decided kind existed among all classes of society; but we had no difficulty in perceiving that the negroes of both sexes, young and old, enjoyed the quandary of their masters and mistresses.” Despite pleas from the city’s mayor for violent resistance from the civilian population, few Jacksonians undertook any organized defiance against Union forces. Browne sarcastically observed that, “If the citizens were flying to arms, they must have concealed them somewhere in the country, and have been making haste in that direction to recover them. They were certainly leaving town by all possible routes, and by every obtainable means of conveyance.”¹⁸³

One of those fleeing the northern army, six-year-old Thomas Frank Gailor, later remembered that “the shells burst like fire-rockets over the city. Many houses were on fire. It was a gorgeous spectacle. I can see now our old Negro servant dodging behind the lamp-posts every time a shell burst.” Gailor further recounted, “I recall the terror-stricken flight of thousands of women and

¹⁸⁰ Junius Henri Browne, *Four Years in Secessia* (1865; repr., New York: ARNO & *The New York Times*, 1970), 248.

¹⁸¹ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 124-26.

¹⁸² Browne, *Four Years in Secessia*, 248.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

children as we streamed along the roads that hot day, with everything we could carry. I had two suits of clothes on, and mother was wearing her furs—for we did not know whether the house would escape the fire.”¹⁸⁴

After driving back Confederate delaying force in a brief action, on May 14 the Army of the Tennessee entered Jackson as conquerors. The Battle of Jackson cost Grant only 42 killed, 251 wounded, and 7 missing, and inflicted an estimated 845 casualties on Johnston’s retreating Confederates, along with 17 cannon captured.¹⁸⁵ Rather than detach valuable units to remain as an occupying garrison, Grant swiftly determined to eliminate Jackson’s capacity as a war production center and railroad junction. In a foreshadowing of events that would occur the following year in Atlanta, Grant selected Sherman’s XV Corps to destroy the manufacturing facilities. As Grant later explained, “Sherman was to remain in Jackson until he destroyed that place as a railroad centre, and manufacturing city of military supplies. He did the work most effectually.”¹⁸⁶ That day, Grant ordered Sherman to occupy the city and “collect stores and forage, and collect all public property of the enemy. . . . You will direct . . . therefore, to commence immediately the effectual destruction of the river railroad bridge and the road as far east as practicable, as well as north and south.”¹⁸⁷

The first Union occupation of Jackson marked a turning point in the career of William T. Sherman. Although Sherman had ordered small southern towns burned in response to guerilla attacks on the Mississippi River, no large scale urban destruction had taken place previously in the occupation of major southern cities in western theater such as Nashville and New Orleans.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Frank Gailor, *Some Memories* (Kingsport, TN: Southern Publishers, Inc., 1937), 7-13, quoted in James W. Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As Seen in Retrospect* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 186.

¹⁸⁵ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 126.

¹⁸⁶ Grant, *Memoirs*, 283-84.

¹⁸⁷ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 312.

Before the Vicksburg campaign, Sherman had lamented the material damage associated with the subjugation of the South and had believed Grant's audacious attempt to supply his army off the civilian population in Mississippi was doomed to failure. With the capture of Jackson, Sherman learned just how effective the torch could be in reducing the ability of the Confederacy to wage war, and it was a lesson he would later apply with brutally effective results in Georgia and the Carolinas.

At one textile factory, Grant and Sherman watched as workers, mostly young women, labored at looms producing cloth labeled "C.S.A." The two Union commanders stood by silently observing the scene until, as Grant later recalled, "I told Sherman I thought they had done work enough. The operatives were told they could leave and take with them what cloth they could carry. In a few minutes cotton and factory were in a blaze." Later, when Grant served as president of the United States, the owner of the razed factory traveled to Washington in an attempt to gain restitution for the property on the grounds that it had been private, not government property. President Grant promptly denied the request.¹⁸⁸

Grant, preparing to turn his march towards Vicksburg, gave little time or consideration to the concerns of residents for the protection of private property as he slept in the same room in the Bowman House Hotel that Johnston had occupied the previous evening.¹⁸⁹ As war reporter Cadwallader remembered, "Many calls were made upon him by citizens asking for guards to protect their private property, some of which perhaps were granted, but by far the greater number were left to the tender mercies of Confederate friends."¹⁹⁰ Those "Confederate friends" had started Grant's work of ruin before he had even arrived. As Johnston's army retreated they set fire to

¹⁸⁸ Grant, *Memoirs*, 283-84.

¹⁸⁹ Wynne, *Mississippi's Civil War*, 111.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 74.

commissary stores and railroad cars that could not be removed, many of which were still blazing when Federals entered the city. In an appalling case of poor judgment, prison officials released the incarcerated inmates of the state penitentiary at the approach of Grant's forces. The freed convicts took full advantage of the lapse in law and order to pillage freely from Jackson merchants and residents. As the Army of the Tennessee began their mission of wreckage, flames were already spreading throughout the city.¹⁹¹

When Union soldiers embarked upon reducing Jackson's war-making potential, they transformed much of the city into ashes. Cadwallader asserted that "foundries, machine-shops, warehouses, factories, arsenals and public stores were fired as fast as flames could be kindled. Many citizens fled at our approach, abandoning houses, stores, and all their personal property, without so much as locking their doors."¹⁹² In addition to the military supplies, the conflagration consumed an immense amount of cotton stored in the capital. Charles Dana recorded that "I remained with Sherman to see the work of destruction. I remember now nothing that I saw except the burning of vast quantities of cotton packed in bales, and that I was greatly astonished to see how slowly it burned."¹⁹³

As the destruction and fires raged, total anarchy was unleashed before Grant could restore order. Cadwallader watched helplessly as "negroes, poor whites—and it must be admitted—some stragglers and bummers from the ranks of the Union army" looted and "carried off thousands of dollars worth of property from houses, homes, shops and stores, until some excuse was given for the charge of 'northern vandalism,' which was afterwards made by the South." The newspaperman further testified, "The streets were filled with people, white and black, who

¹⁹¹ Dougan, "Herrmann Hirsh and the Siege of Jackson," 22-23; Wynne, *Mississippi's Civil War*, 110-11.

¹⁹² Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 74-75.

¹⁹³ Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War*, 53.

were carrying away all the stolen goods they could stagger under, without the slightest attempt at concealment, and without let or hindrance from citizens or soldiers.”¹⁹⁴ Certainly, Union soldiers were not solely responsible for the acts of plunder that occurred in Jackson, as Confederate deserters, lower class whites, released prisoners, and freed slaves took full advantage of the lapse of civil authority to sack storefronts, shops, and private homes at will. The looting of Jackson lasted throughout the night of the 14th, and it was not until the night of the following day that Sherman established order under martial law.

In the midst of the ransacking, a group of soldiers entered the Jackson Masonic Lodge. Private J. W. Greenman of the 8th Wisconsin Infantry wrote that they “soon were decorated with aprons and sashes and collars, and then started to go out on the street for a parade but Col. Mower heard of the business and met the Boys just as they came down the stairs from the Lodge room.” Mower apparently felt a deal of regard for the fraternal organization, as Greenman recorded, Mower “ordered the Boys to take everything back and then get out, which was quickly done.”¹⁹⁵ Another northern eyewitness, Sergeant Ira Blanchard, wrote, “The place was sacked by the cavalry and many of the public buildings burned, and the army under Johnson completely routed.”¹⁹⁶

Another Federal present, Charles A. Wilson, wrote of the Jackson inferno, “What grieved me most I think was to see the sugar warehouses with their tiers upon tiers of sugar hogsheads, going up in fire and smoke. I loved sugar—it had always been a luxury with me.” Despite the reigning confusion, Wilson managed to leave with “eight or nine canteens of it, hung to my shoulders, as we marched out of the city. But my endurance proved not equal to my zeal for sugar. One by one

¹⁹⁴ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 74-75.

¹⁹⁵ Greenman (J.W.) Diary, 14 May 1963, Manuscript Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 91-92.

¹⁹⁶ Blanchard, *I Marched With Sherman*, 90.

the canteens had to go as the straps cut into my shoulder.” The Federals also uncovered a large supply of tobacco in Jackson, as Wilson affirmed, “An immense amount of plug tobacco was brought out by the soldiers, their hankering for the weed evidently on the same scale as mine for sugar. I think enough was left strewed over the ground at our first camp to thatch a good-sized village.”¹⁹⁷ Before retreating, Johnston’s forces burned the Pearl River railroad bridge, and Grant’s army tore up the remaining railroad tracks that entered the city for at least three miles out. Sherman’s men placed the rails upon burning ties to twist the track beyond repair into a worthless pile of metal termed “Sherman’s neckties.”¹⁹⁸

As in Raymond, Union soldiers once again discovered and subsequently consumed captured supplies of alcohol in Jackson. The free flowing spirits only fueled the mayhem. Edward Stanfield described the scene in a letter to his father on May 22: “The boys lived high that afternoon. Plenty of tobacco, corn meal & pea nuts to say nothing of whiskey (a very poor article by the way).”¹⁹⁹ Likewise, Private George M. Lucas depicted an intoxicated landscape in his diary on May 15, writing, “Bivouacked in the Public Square at Jackson, Miss. All is confusion and tumult. The confiscated whiskey is suffering severely and three fourths of the men are drunk [.] Deliver me from another such a place as this.”²⁰⁰ The stock of cheap whiskey apparently lasted until the morning of May 16 for those brave enough to partake of it. Private Jacob Gantz of the 4th Iowa Cavalry (the unit that drew the unenviable duty of reinstating military discipline and halting the plundering) detailed in his diary that day, “this morning we left jackson. about left the town on fire we had a hard time getting the drunk men out. a great many was left because

¹⁹⁷ Charles A. Wilson, *Reminiscences of a Boy's Service with the 76th Ohio* (Huntington, WV: Blue Acorn Press, 1995), 53-54.

¹⁹⁸ Wynne, *Mississippi's Civil War*, 111; Dougan, “Hermann Hirsh and the Siege of Jackson,” 22-23.

¹⁹⁹ Edward P. Stanfield to his father, May 22, 1863, Edward P. Stanfield papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

²⁰⁰ George M. Lucas diary, 18.

they was drunk. they could not walk well.”²⁰¹ The affair gave the units responsible quite a dubious reputation in the Army of the Tennessee. Lieutenant Henry Kircher of the 12th Missouri Infantry wrote his mother on June 17, “In Jackson, all of Sherman’s corps masqueraded and got drunk and played the fool.”²⁰²

Not even the state library escaped unscathed during the orgy of destruction. Charles Dana Miller remembered that on May 16 he “visited the Mississippi State Library where the soldiers were helping themselves to books apparently without objections being made by General Sherman. I secured a few small volumes such as I could carry conveniently, but saw a good many expensive works I would have liked, could I have obtained transportation.”²⁰³ Books were common items always desired by soldiers who had little reading material to help pass the long hours of drudgery in camp. On the march to Jackson, Osborn Oldroyd wrote that “The boys frequently bring in reading matter with their forage. Almost anything in print is better than nothing. A novel was brought in to-day, and as soon as it was caught sight of a score or more had engaged in turn the reading of it.”²⁰⁴

The fires that raged within Jackson did extensive damage and smoldered for days afterward. On the evening of the 14th, Private Greenman recorded in his diary, “Some one started a fire just at dark, and the City is burning, and although every effort is being made to put out the fire it is spreading, and it looks as though the whole City will be destroyed.”²⁰⁵ While the Union army did labor to prevent fires from threatening residential areas, controlling the flames proved

²⁰¹ Kathleen Davis, ed., *Such Are The Trials: The Civil War Diaries of Jacob Gantz* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991), 26.

²⁰² Hess, *A German in the Yankee Fatherland*, 107.

²⁰³ Bennett and Tillery, *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 95.

²⁰⁴ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 16.

²⁰⁵ Greenman, *Greenman Diary*, 91-92.

impossible. Osborn Oldroyd wrote that “Some of the boys went down into the city to view our new possession. It seems ablaze, but I trust only public property is being destroyed, or such as might aid and comfort the enemy here-after.”²⁰⁶ One Confederate observing the scene in Johnston’s retreating army wrote, “Throughout the silent watches of the night, the twinkling stars looked down upon the merciless conflagration kindled by the enemy. Much of Jackson was laid in ashes.”²⁰⁷ After Johnston’s army reoccupied the city, a soldier in the 19th Louisiana Infantry, Lieutenant Rufus W. Cater, wrote to his cousin from Jackson on June 2, “I could see from where I stood the rubbish and ashes of buildings that had been demolished by the brutal and fiendish foe—Among these were the Bank and the state penitentiary.”²⁰⁸ The first Union occupation of Jackson lasted only thirty-six hours, yet it reduced invaluable industrial and transportation resources to rubble. Governor John Jones Pettus calculated the total costs of the damage at ten million dollars.²⁰⁹

Before leaving, Sherman directed Brigadier General Joseph A. Mower on May 15 to “push the work of destruction, especially of types, presses, sugar, and everything public not needed by us. The work should be all done by 10 a.m. to-morrow.” Sherman reminded his subordinate to “be sure to destroy all tents by burning them in a pile to the rear of the State-house to-morrow about noon. You may release all prisoners (citizens) whom we don’t want to carry along; some

²⁰⁶ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 29.

²⁰⁷ Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers, and Speeches* (Jackson, MS: Printed for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1923) 6:2-6, quoted in John K. Bettersworth, *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As They Saw It* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 204.

²⁰⁸ Rufus W. Cater to Cousin Fannie, June 2, 1863, Douglas Cater and Rufus W. Cater papers, 1859-1865, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁹ Dougan, “Hermann Hirsh and the Siege of Jackson,” 23-24; Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War*, 111.

now, others just as you start.” As a final word of encouragement, Sherman instructed Mower, “You must work at night, if necessary, to destroy what might be useful to an enemy.”²¹⁰

That day, artilleryman John Merrilees recorded in his diary, “Details have been at work all day, collecting all government property and destroying it, throwing the ammunition into the Pearl River, and burning everything else. Great quantities of stuff were found, little or nothing having been got away.” Mower’s men apparently did not restrict their destructive activity to Confederate government property, as Merrilees documented, “Enormous quantities of sugar and tobacco were stored all over town, which the men made free with. The town all day was a scene of wildest confusion, plundering going on universally among the stores, which the guards made very feeble efforts to prevent.” Along with mercantile businesses, Federal soldiers also raided private residences. Merrilees maintained that “By night everything valuable of government property had been destroyed, but private property was still being pillaged by the men. Stores and private houses were gutted, buildings fired, and the terrible scene of uproar and violence prevailing everywhere.”²¹¹

William Roberts, an Irish immigrant and Unionist who owned a grocery store on Pearl Street, detailed in a claim filed to the Southern Claims Commission in 1872 that a detachment under Captain George Henry of Company K, 11th Missouri Infantry in Mower’s Brigade seized a large quantity of food and supplies from his store during the first Union occupation of Jackson. Roberts registered the loss of large quantities of tobacco, sugar, flour, molasses, ham, coffee, and tea and calculated the total damages at \$4,868.00. Roberts reported in his account, “While the Provisions were loaded and in front of the store Captain Henry was in the act of giving a receipt for the same . . . some soldiers were in the Store at the time and they broke a showcase on the

²¹⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 314-15.

²¹¹ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 45-46.

counter.” Apparently the soldiers broke the showcase intentionally, for Roberts recorded that his wife exclaimed, “If I had thought your men would act this way after giving you all the Provisions in I had in the store I would have been on the breastworks against you. Captain Henry then tore the receipt in pieces.” Despite not having a formal written voucher for the confiscated goods, the commission awarded Roberts \$474.00.²¹²

In response to hearing reports of pillaging, later on May 15, Sherman wrote again to Mower, “It is represented to me that the provost-marshal is giving license to soldiers to take the contents of stores, taking things not necessary or useful. This, if true, is wrong.” While often forgotten by later critics, during the Vicksburg campaign Sherman attempted to respect the property rights of southerners as much as possible, and he ordered, “Only such articles should be taken as are necessary to the subsistence of troops, and the private rights of citizens should be respected.” Indeed, Sherman went so far as to request Mower to “Please give the matter your attention. The feeling of pillage and booty will injure the morals of the troops, and bring disgrace on our cause. Take every possible precaution against fires at the time of our leaving to-morrow.”²¹³ Based on the testimony of witnesses, it appears that Mower was either unwilling or unable to enact Sherman’s orders for restraint until late into the night, when Federal cavalry finally restored order. As Merrilees detailed, “This state of things went on till 11 o.c. at night, when the 4th Iowa Cavalry were ordered to clear the streets and arrest every man without a Brigadier’s pass; which they at once proceeded to do and with good success, charging up and down with drawn sabres.”²¹⁴

²¹² United States Treasury Department, “Claim of William Roberts,” in the *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871-1880*, at Fold3.com, http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#34jh-knXjBbfBBQt_jMEEnIO47X5KS0OwruNWW5f_XtTl (accessed March 20, 2012).

²¹³ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 315

²¹⁴ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 46.

After eliminating Jackson's capability as a Confederate industrial and supply depot, Grant turned his army westward toward his long sought after prize, Vicksburg. As the Union columns marched out of the city, Sherman noted that "a very fat man came to see me, to inquire if his hotel, a large frame-building near the depot, were doomed to be burned." Sherman informed the man that he "had no intention to burn it, or any other house, except the machine-shops, and such buildings as could easily be converted to hostile uses." Sherman recalled that "he professed to a law-abiding Union man, and I remember to have said that this fact was manifest from the sign of his hotel, which was the 'Confederate Hotel;' the sign 'United States' being faintly painted out, and 'Confederate' painted over it!" Despite the offensive sign, Sherman concluded that "I had not the least purpose, however, of burning it, but, just as we were leaving town, it burst into flames and was burned to the ground."²¹⁵ One of the guilty parties, Brevet Major Charles Dana Miller, recorded that his company "found a hotel here called the 'Confederate House' as the large sign indicated on its front. This had been painted over the words 'United States House.' The boys concluded that it had better close up business under its new title and accordingly applied the torch."²¹⁶

As with Union occupations of other cities in the Vicksburg campaign, Jackson residents who had left their residences unoccupied lost much more than those who remained behind to protect their property. On May 16, John Merrilees encountered a "Mrs. Freeman" who had left her home in Jackson before the battle and "returned last night, and is in a terrible state of mind to find it gutted from top to bottom: all the wealth of dry goods and finery of every description, with which it was filled, disappeared, the wrecks littering the floor a foot or two deep." Freeman's guest, "Miss Lucy Gwin" appeared to Merrilees to be "in deep tribulation over the loss of her

²¹⁵ *Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman*, (1875; repr., New York: The Library of America, 1990), 347-48.

²¹⁶ Bennett and Tillery, *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 95.

new bonnet, splendid velvet cloak, bracelets, earrings, and Lord only knows what not; all of which she says, the miserable Yankees have got.” For her losses, Miss Gwin reproached the failure of southern men to protect honorable ladies from such humiliating treatment. Merrilees wrote, “The rebel authorities also came in for a share of her fiery indignation. ‘It is getting to be a pretty state of things, when a few miserable Black Republicans can come and take the capital of the State’, says she.” Still, her resolve to continue the struggle had not died completely and Merrilees reported that in her last defiant prophecy, “She took great consolation though, in letting us know that we wouldn’t be here long: that terrible General Joseph Johnston would soon be back, and then—not one of us would get out of Mississippi alive.”²¹⁷

Impressed by his enemy’s fortitude, Merrilees confessed, “It is hard to see such wholesale plundering without feeling sorry for the sufferers.” However, noting the strong secessionist beliefs of the Freeman family and their connections with the Confederate government, he concluded, “Still, the misfortunes of war could not have fallen where there would be less reason to regret them than in this case. . . . they couldn’t very well play Union, and even lacked impudence to ask redress of Sherman, or a guard.” Such secessionist sentiments ultimately proved costly for the Freeman women. As Sherman’s columns began marching out of Jackson, Merrilees recorded, “Freeman’s house on fire—some of our men’s work I am afraid.”²¹⁸

On May 18, British observer Arthur Fremantle entered the city on his three-month tour throughout the South and entered in his famous diary, “I saw the ruins of the Roman Catholic church, the priest’s house, and the principal hotel, which were still smoking, together with many other buildings which could in no way be identified with the Confederate government. The whole town was a miserable wreck, and presented a deplorable aspect.” Fremantle gave great

²¹⁷ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 46-47.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

sympathy to the residents, who appeared to have suddenly regained their desire to fight the Federal army after it had vacated. He observed, “Nothing could exceed the intense hatred and fury with which its excited citizens speak of the outrages they have undergone—of their desire for a bloody revenge, and of their hope that the Black Flag might be raised.” Surveying the wreckage in the city, Fremantle confirmed that “during the short space of thirty-six hours, in which General Grant occupied the city, his troops had wantonly pillaged nearly all the private houses. They had gutted all the stores, and destroyed what they could not carry away.”²¹⁹

Fremantle also chronicled an account of one Jacksonian who protected his house during the Union occupation from a mob of looters by sitting next to the front door armed with a loaded double-barreled shotgun. As the spoils-seeking crowd confronted the owner, the man aimed the shotgun at the multitude with the declaration, “No man can die more than once, and I shall never be more ready to die than I am now. There is nothing to prevent your going into this house, except that I shall kill the first two of you who move with this gun. Now then, gentlemen, walk in.”²²⁰ The mass of plunderers, whom curiously Fremantle does not specifically identify as Yankees, left the residence unmolested.

Other citizens were less successful in their attempts to retain personal property. Fremantle described meeting one despairing planter, “mounted on a miserable animal which had been left him by the enemy as not being worth taking away.” Fremantle observed that “The small remains of this poor old man’s sense had been shattered by the Yankees a few days ago. They cleaned him completely out, taking his horses, mules, cows, and pigs, and stealing his clothes and anything they wanted, destroying what they could not carry away.”²²¹ Embittered as they were,

²¹⁹ Lord, *The Fremantle Diary*, 87-88.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 87.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

the citizens of Jackson no longer presented a viable threat to the Union and the city would be essentially useless to the South for the rest of the war. In fact, when Federal soldiers vacated the area and forced local and state authorities to provide for the thousands of refugees and an ever growing indigent population, the strain on Confederate authority reached the breaking point.

The Mississippi press reacted to the news of Grant's reduction of Jackson with outrage. The *Natchez Weekly Courier* reported on May 20 that the Federals "burnt the Penitentiary, the Confederate House, and destroyed the lower portion of the city." The paper also stated, quite inaccurately, that "They also attempted to blow up the State House, but did not succeed. Gen. Johnston has whipped them badly at Raymond and Brandon."²²² On May 22, the *Courier* expanded their coverage of the story on the testimony of "other sources" to include that the Federal occupation "presented more the appearance of a raid . . . than the march of an army in force to take possession and occupy. From first to last it assumed that character, and desolation and destruction appeared to be their whole aim." The paper assured their readers, "There is no doubt of the Yankee intentions; they calculated largely on destroying the whole city, but were prevented by the near approach of Gen. Johnston and the Confederate army."²²³

On May 27, the Natchez newspaper further detailed the damage from after receiving a copy of the relocated Jackson *Appeal*, noting that "On Main street, says the dispatch, Pettus building and Green's banking house were burned. Green's loss is estimated at a quarter of a million dollars. We presume this included the loss of his cotton factory, which was destroyed." The

²²² "Still Later News" (Editorial) in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers [database on-line], *Natchez Daily Courier* (Natchez, MS) May 20, 1863, Issue 22, http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/152/918/159896371w16/purl=rc1_NCNP_0_GT3016593221&dyn=90!xrn_2_0_GT3016593221&hst_1?sw_aep=txshracd2573 (accessed April 26, 2008).

²²³ "Things About Jackson" (News) in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers [database on-line], *Natchez Daily Courier* (Natchez, MS) May 22, 1863, Issue 23, http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/152/918/159896371w16/purl=rc11_NCNP_0_ke_Things+about+jackson_AND_ke_AND_ke_5/1/1863+to+8/31/1863_mississippi%26fuzzy1=%26fuzzy2=%26fuzzy3=&dyn=sig!2?sw_aep=txshracd2573 (accessed 26 April 2008).

Courier also recorded, “The Confederate House and all buildings in front of it are burned, together with the Penitentiary and all machine shops in the city. Every store but two were gutted and houses robbed indiscriminately.” The editors displayed a natural interest in the fate of the Jackson newspapers during the brief occupation and reported that “The Baptist printing office was saved by a Federal Guard being placed around it. The Mississippian office was gutted, the presses being broken to pieces and the type thrown into the street.” The escaped editors of the *Appeal* gladly proclaimed, “The material of the Appeal office left behind was not disturbed, except the large safe, which was blown to atoms. Fortunately we had removed the contents, and the Yankees did not rob us of much in its destruction.”²²⁴ The Natchez edition also related the plight of speculators in the city who lost their wares during the Federal occupation after failing to unload them in the panicked evacuation. The article declared, “Flour, for which they had before demanded \$110 per barrel, was offered for four dollars! and no purchasers.” The *Courier* asserted that “The truth is, the Federals carried off the provisions of the speculators, to feed their army.”²²⁵

In June, a much more curious and less factual article appeared in the Natchez press. Observing that Grant’s army failed to level every building in the capital, the editors remarked, “The failure of the Yankee vandals to burn up the entire city of Jackson is perhaps attributable to the indefatigable exertions of Col. Yerger.” According to the *Courier*, “this gentleman went to a Yankee General and demanded to know, not in subdued or discreet tones, if it was their intention to destroy the houses of the poor, consume the helpless women and children, and see the

²²⁴ “The Fall of Jackson” (News) in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers [database on-line], *Natchez Daily Courier* (Natchez, MS) May 27, 1863, Issue 23, http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/152/918/159896371w16/purl=rc11_NCNP_0_ke_the+fall+of+jackson_AND_ke_AND_ke_5/1/1863+to+8/31/1863_mississippi_%26fuzzy1=%26fuzzy2=%26fuzzy3=&dyn=sig!4?sw_aep=txs_hracd2573 (accessed 26 April 2008).

²²⁵ Ibid.

hospitals, filled with invalids, ruthlessly burned up!” Supposedly, Colonel Yerger confronted the unnamed general and stated, “If they did not intend to affix such a foul and damaging stigma not only to the Yankee name, but to humanity itself, he demanded a thousand of men to arrest the besom of destruction.” The authors concluded, “His demand was complied with, and thus the lives of many helpless women and children and invalids were saved, and the whole city, perhaps, prevented from falling into a heap of ruins.”²²⁶ No northern report confirms the story, and it appears that the editors or their sources exercised a good degree of hyperbole to explain why much of the city remained standing. Apparently the gallant actions of Colonel Yerger were forgotten by Jacksonians, as no monument stands commemorating the fanciful account.

Despite the inflammatory statements in the southern press, the true extent of the destruction was limited. Sherman’s men burned such government buildings as the arsenals, “the government foundry, a gun-carriage foundry, the railroad depot, and the state penitentiary building that housed a cotton-processing operation,” but did not torch either the Governor’s Mansion or the Mississippi State Capital building.²²⁷ Union eyewitness Sylvanus Cadwallader testified from his perspective, “On our occupation of Jackson in May, pains were taken to leave all private, and much of the public property of the place uninjured. No buildings were burned by us that did not contain Confederate property or were in some way in the use of the Confederate government. Many even of these escaped.”²²⁸ While the Federals did set fire to a few private residences, and others accidentally burned as fires got out of hand, most civilian dwellings survived. Certainly,

²²⁶ “The Battle of Jackson-Burning of the City” (News) in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers [database on-line], *Natchez Daily Courier* (Natchez, MS) June 10, 1863, Issue 25, http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/152/918/159896371w16/purl=rc11_NCNP_0_ke_the+battle+of+jackson_AND_ke_AND_ke_5/1/1863+to+8/31/1863_mississippi%26fuzzy1=%26fuzzy2=%26fuzzy3=&dyn=sig!5?sw_aep=txshracd2573 (accessed 26 April 2008).

²²⁷ Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War*, 111.

²²⁸ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 124.

while the damage inflicted in May shocked Jacksonians, it would pale compared to later Federal occupations of the city.

As the Army of the Tennessee drew closer to Vicksburg with each passing day, Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton and the Army of Vicksburg marched out of the fortress for a climactic confrontation. On May 16, Grant defeated Pemberton at the decisive battle of Champion Hill and drove the Confederate army back in serious disorder. The Army of the Tennessee inflicted casualties of 381 killed, 1,018 wounded, and 2,441 missing on the Army of Vicksburg while losing 410 killed, 1,844 wounded, and 187 missing, as well as capturing 27 cannon. The following day pursuing Federals routed Pemberton's rear guard at the Battle of the Big Black River Bridge and chased the retreating Rebels into Vicksburg itself. The rout at the Big Black resulted in another 1,751 Confederates captured along with another 18 artillery pieces, all at a cost of only 39 Union soldiers killed, 237 wounded, and 3 missing.²²⁹ In order to cross the river after fleeing Confederates burned the bridge, Union soldiers confiscated necessary building materials from nearby homes and constructed three temporary bridges. Sylvanus Cadwallader noted that the engineering "was done by tearing down the dwelling houses, barns, stables and cotton gins nearest at hand, and flooring the cotton bale and timber floats which were bound together and anchored in the river."²³⁰ By the afternoon of May 18, Grant's men were finally within sight of the Vicksburg defenses.²³¹

During the march from Jackson to Vicksburg, the Army of the Tennessee for the first time during the campaign felt the effects of hunger. The Confederate army had stripped this region of

²²⁹ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 127-139; National Park Service, "Battle of Big Black River Bridge (May 17)," Vicksburg National Military Park, <http://www.nps.gov/vick/historyculture/bigblack.htm> (accessed September 15, 2011).

²³⁰ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 82.

²³¹ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 142-43.

most of its edible resources by this point in the war, leaving little for Federal foraging parties to commandeer. Charles Dana Miller remembered, “The troops were short of rations and many went hungry. The country was bare of supplies after two armies had passed over it. It was very difficult especially for the officers to obtain food, and in some instances they paid fifty cents apiece for crackers.”²³² Lacking an established supply line, Grant knew he had to reach the Mississippi River before the effects of the short rations began sapping the fighting strength of his army. As members of the 31st Illinois Infantry recalled after the war, “Not more than five days’ rations had been issued to the army since May 1st, and everything along the line of march from water mill to farm house had been eaten.” The region had been scoured to the point where “Everything that grunted, squaked, gobbled, or cackled had found its way into the mess pan, or had been stewed in the camp kettle, or roasted on a ramrod, for the soldier must eat before he can march or fight.” The men in Grant’s hungry army realized that they must now fight for their survival, as “The country had been stripped from Port Gibson to Jackson, and thence to the Mississippi; hence, all felt a yearning for Haines Bluff where supplies from the Mississippi and the Yazoo would now be brought.”²³³ Osborn Oldroyd wrote on May 17, “We are fighting hard for our *grub*, since we have nothing left but flour, and slapjacks lie too heavy on a soldier’s stomach.”²³⁴ Another soldier, Sergeant Flavius J. Thackara of the 95th Ohio Infantry, wrote in diary on May 18, “We have scarcely anything to eat, nothing at all for supper and no prospect of any breakfast. If we don’t succeed in getting Vicksburg we are in a bad fix.”²³⁵

²³² Bennett and Tillery, *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 95.

²³³ W. S. Morris, L. D. Hartwell, Jr., and J. B. Kuykendall, *History 31st Regiment: Illinois Volunteers Organized by John A. Logan* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 68.

²³⁴ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 34.

²³⁵ Flavius J. Thackara diary, 1863 Feb. 3-May 22, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

For those well supplied with currency, appetizing food was easier to locate. Correspondent Cadwallader recalled that during the march he “never paid less than ten dollars in Confederate money for a single meal, although that much was never demanded, and I was quite as willing to give twice that for a satisfactory dinner.” As to his generosity, Cadwallader admitted that he “had an abundance of it that cost me nothing, and there was no other way in which I could properly use it.”²³⁶

As the army approached the ever-defiant Confederate bastion of Vicksburg, the Federals discovered a surprising amount of Unionist support among local residents. On May 18, while riding with Grant, Cadwallader observed that “As we approached a tumble-down sort of log cabin near the road a poor sickly looking woman stood at the gate waving a little Union flag.” Intrigued, Grant directed a staff officer to investigate the flag bearer’s identity, who proved to be the wife of an Illinois river pilot who had moved South before the war. The piloted had suffered conscription at the hands of Confederate authorities, and at that moment lay in the cabin extremely ill. Grant immediately ordered his staff surgeon to render medical aid to the couple and then later detached another official to “place a guard to protect the premises; and still another to see that the family was supplied with needful commissary stores. The sick man received daily medical attention till he was able to bear the trip north, when Grant furnished the family free transportation and subsistence as far as Cairo.”²³⁷

Marching at the rear of Grant’s army, Sherman’s XV Corps followed behind after completing the destruction of Jackson. When Sherman passed through the small village of Bolton, he discovered an exceptional souvenir. While enjoying a drink of water mounted on his horse, Sherman stumbled across a discarded book which upon examination he discovered to be

²³⁶ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 76.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis's personal copy of the United States Constitution. Federal soldiers had evidently acquired and discarded the volume when ransacking the Davis plantation along the Mississippi River or had located the document when looting the personal effects of the Confederate president stored further inland in vain hopes of protection. Sherman authorized a small unit to inspect Davis's property, which visited the premises and promptly returned with two horses formerly belonging to the southern president's older brother, Joseph Davis.²³⁸

Until Grant reached the Mississippi River and established a secure supply line with the United States Navy, the growing commissary crisis confronting the Army of the Tennessee continued to worsen. As Grant inspected the spreading Union investment of Vicksburg, his soldiers made their hunger known to the commanding general. Grant later acknowledged in his memoirs, "I remember that in passing around to the left of the line on the 21st, a soldier, recognizing me, said in a rather low voice, but yet so that I heard him, 'Hard tack.' In a moment the cry was taken up all along the line, 'Hard tack! Hard tack!'"²³⁹ Grant quickly explained to his men that rations were forthcoming, and by that night, every soldier in the Army of the Tennessee was fully supplied for the first time since they first set foot in Mississippi.

In the span of three weeks, from May 1 to May 18, the Army of the Tennessee had marched more than two hundred miles, won five engagements with the enemy, conquered and reduced the capital city of Jackson, inflicted nearly eight thousand casualties, destroyed miles of invaluable railroad tracks, divided the opposing Confederate forces and trapped Pemberton's entire army in Vicksburg. As he traced the ground along Hayne's Bluff, where he had endured the worst defeat thus far in his career the previous December at Chickasaw Bluffs, Sherman admitted to his friend Grant on May 18, "Until this moment, I never thought your expedition a success; I never could

²³⁸ Wynne, *Mississippi's Civil War*, 116.

²³⁹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 296-97.

see the end clearly till now. But this is a campaign; this is a success if we never take the town.”²⁴⁰ As the two commanders prepared to assault the elaborate fortifications of Vicksburg, the civilians trapped within the city resigned their futures to an uncertain fate and waited anxiously for the northern assault to begin.

²⁴⁰ Quoted in Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 143.

CHAPTER 4

“WE WERE ALL CAUGHT IN A RAT-HOLE”

As the Army of the Tennessee rapidly invested the Confederate fortress of Vicksburg, the surrounded Rebels made their final preparations for the inevitable Federal assault. Before the roads were blocked, Lieutenant General Pemberton ordered the evacuation of the city’s non-combatants. Few residents obeyed the command, as fears of the approaching Union army surpassed the mounting threat of siege. Mary Loughborough, a displaced civilian from St. Louis seeking refuge in Vicksburg, expressed the opinion of many citizens when she wrote, “Where can we go? Here we are among friends—we are welcome, and we feel in safety. Let us at least share the fate of those we love so much.”²⁴¹ Remaining in the city entailed the risk of shells and starvation, but fleeing into the anarchic Mississippi countryside offered little hope of security. In the case of southern white women, a panicked flight into the unknown hazarded a fate worse than death. As Loughborough stated, “If we leave, we cannot tell to what we may be exposed—even now, probably, the Federal army occupy Jackson; if we go into the country, we are liable at any time to be surrounded by them; and to whom can we apply for protection from the soldiery?” A majority of the residents concluded, as did Loughborough, that “we must stay, come what will.”²⁴²

On May 17, the civilians staying within the town encountered the defeated remnants of the Army of Vicksburg streaming down the roads in panicked disorder. Mary Loughborough recorded that supply wagons were “rattling down the street—going rapidly one way, and then returning, seemingly, without aim or purpose: now and then a worn and dusty soldier would be seen passing with his blanket and canteen; soon, straggler after straggler came by, then groups of

²⁴¹ Mary Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg: With Letters of Trial and Travel* (1864; repr., Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1989), 25; Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 96.

²⁴² Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg*, 25.

soldiers worn and dusty with the long march.” When Loughborough and her companions anxiously inquired the cause of the flight, the retreating Rebels exclaimed, ““We are whipped; and the Federals are after us.”” After enduring successive disasters, the morale of Pemberton’s army collapsed in confusion and utter despair. Recalling the chaotic scene, Loughborough observed, “where these weary and wornout men were going, we could not tell. I think they did not know themselves.”²⁴³

A large number of southern refugees trailed behind the defeated army, joining those who had already fled to the protection of the Vicksburg defenses. One of those, Reverend Dr. William Wilberforce Lord, journeyed with his wife Margaret and their children Eliza (known to her family as Lida), Sarah, William Jr., and Louisa. Reverend Lord, an Episcopal priest and rector of Christ Church in Vicksburg, had ministered in the city since 1853. Though born in New York, at the outbreak of war Lord remained with his congregation and had briefly served as a chaplain with the First Mississippi Light Artillery in 1862.²⁴⁴ As William Lord Jr. explained, “My father, though a Northern man by birth, had spent the greater part of his young manhood in ministering to the people of the South . . . and . . . felt spiritually wedded to them as the people of his adoption, and morally obliged to remain with them in the time of their most urgent necessity and direst trouble.”²⁴⁵ After the war, Lida Lord remembered the scene of the retreating army and declared, “Strange as it seems now, we were in a tremendous hurry to follow them.” Writing in 1901, in an age of reconciliation between the sections, she remarked, “I don’t believe the people of the North could ever be made to comprehend what an awful bugaboo their armies were to the

²⁴³ Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg*, 34-35.

²⁴⁴ Terrence J. Winschel, *Triumph and Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign, Volume 2* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2006), 93-96.

²⁴⁵ William W. Lord Jr., “A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, December 1908, 53.

women and children of the South—unless some few upon the borders still remember their own horror of the ‘rebels.’”²⁴⁶

In the summer of 1862, Reverend Lord had relocated his family to the Flowers’s plantation to escape the naval siege of Vicksburg. Once the immediate threat ended, the family returned only to flee once again to Flemens Granger’s plantation *Oakland* when Grant landed on the Mississippi shore.²⁴⁷ After witnessing the Confederate retreat, the Lords and their servants quickly packed a small number of belongings and drove back to Vicksburg, where Lida Lord recalled “thousands of camp-fires” in the darkness, “so closely blended in a gloom of haze and smoke that we literally seemed to be within the hollow center of a great star-sprinkled sphere.” Lida asserted that it “was a beautiful, even wonderful sight, but we did not linger to admire it, for behind us on the dark road to Bovina crept closer and closer the awful shadow of—Grant.”²⁴⁸

The day Vicksburg residents had dreaded for so long had finally come to pass, and outside the fortifications, a seemingly unstoppable northern juggernaut stalked in wait as if an instrument of Old Testament judgment. On May 18, the first day of the siege, Rear Admiral David D. Porter wired Major General Stephen Hurlbut that Grant “will have the hardest fight ever seen during the war. The attention of the nation should now be devoted to Vicksburg.”²⁴⁹ Despite the military reverses, morale among the defenders and civilians in town slowly began to rise once the army entered the extensive Vicksburg fortifications. On May 20, the *Natchez Weekly Courier* predicted, “With Gen. Johnston in the field, and Gen. Pemberton in the fortifications at Vicksburg, the enemy will have lively times before they reach the Mississippi river again, We’ll

²⁴⁶ Lida Lord Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” *Century* 61 (April 1901): 922-28, quoted in Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg, eds., *The Women’s War in the South: Recollections and Reflections of the American Civil War* (Nashville, TN: Cumberland House Publishing, Inc., 1999), 82.

²⁴⁷ Winschel, *Triumph and Defeat*, 96-99.

²⁴⁸ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 82.

²⁴⁹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 325.

wager a hat that the Yankees get badly-whipped.” The optimistic editors went so far as to boast, “General Grant is said to be a ‘lucky dog,’ but if he gets off with a whole skin this time, it will be more than we expect.”²⁵⁰

For those civilians trapped inside Vicksburg, all false hope of avoiding those “lively times” was shattered when the first shells from Grant’s artillery landed in their midst. One evening early in the siege, Lida Lord and her family prepared to eat dinner when “a bombshell burst in the very center of that pretty dining-room,” before the family could sit at the table. The shell hit the house, “blowing out the roof and one side, crushing the well-spread tea-table like an egg-shell, and making a great yawning hole in the floor, into which disappeared supper, china, furniture, and the safe containing our entire stock of butter and eggs.” Thankfully, no one received injury, and as Lida explained, “At first we were too much stunned to realize what an escape we had made. I think I speak only the literal truth in saying that one minute later we should have been seated about that table, now a mass of charred splinters at the bottom of that smoking gulf.”²⁵¹

Vicksburg had endured Union bombardments since the summer of 1862, and by March 1863 sheltered caves had appeared dug into the slopes of city’s hills. As Grant’s army approached closer and closer during the early weeks of May, the small business of cave construction boomed.²⁵² Mary Loughborough reported that “Caves were the fashion—the rage—over besieged Vicksburg. Negroes, who understood their business, hired themselves out to dig them,

²⁵⁰ “With Gen. Johnston in the field, and Gen. Pemberton in the fortifications at Vicksburg, the enemy will have lively times before they reach the Mississippi river again, We’ll wager a hat that the Yankees get badly-whipped,” (Editorial) in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers [database on-line], *Natchez Weekly Courier* (Natchez, MS) May 20, 1863, Issue 22, http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/300/733/127294231w16/purl=rc1_NCNP_0_GT3016593217&dyn=19!z_oom_2?sw_aep=txshracd2573, (accessed September 22, 2011).

²⁵¹ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 83.

²⁵² Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War*, 144-46.

at from thirty to fifty dollars, according to the size.”²⁵³ The caves varied in size and in some cases became quite elaborate, containing many features of home, including furniture, decorations, and servants. Mrs. Loughborough described her new abode as “an excavation made into the earth, and branching six feet from the entrance, forming a cave in the shape of a T. In one of the wings my bed fitted; the other I used as a kind of dressing room.”²⁵⁴ Missourian Ephraim Anderson detailed in his recollections of the siege that “These holes, or underground houses, were of considerable extent, and frequently had several rooms in them, which were provided with beds and furniture—often carpeted—and were, for the time, the principal abodes of many of the inhabitants.”²⁵⁵

The Lord family’s first bomb shelter “consisted of five short passages running parallel into the hill, connected by another crossing them at right angles, all about five feet wide, and high enough for a man to stand upright. In this nest of caves were eight families, with children and servants.” The Lord’s own shelter contained “three white adults and four children, with our maid Minnie and cook Chloe and Chloe’s two little girls.”²⁵⁶ Most caves had multiple openings to allow escape in the event of a cave in, which remained a constant threat during the siege. One child in the Lord’s cave, Lucy McRae, nearly died one night when “a shell came down on top of the hill, buried itself about six feet in the earth, and exploded.” McRae, who had just lain down to sleep, described that the shell “caused a large mass of earth to slide from the side of the archway in a solid piece, catching me under it. Dr. Lord, whose leg was caught and held by it, gave the alarm that a child was buried.” Instantly McRae’s mother rushed to save her daughter,

²⁵³ Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg*, 64.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁵⁵ Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal*, 325.

²⁵⁶ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 84.

and with assistance from other civilians in the cave succeeded in freeing the girl. After her rescue, McRae reported that “the blood was gushing from my nose, eyes, ears, and mouth. A physician who was then in the cave was called, and said there was no bones broken, but he could not then tell what my internal injuries were.”²⁵⁷ Forced into close quarters, the residents of Vicksburg had to learn to coexist in conditions few could have imagined possible before the war. As William Lord Jr. recorded, “A common danger abolished the unwritten law of caste. The families of planters, overseers, slave-dealers, tradespeople, and professional men dwelt side by side, in peace if not in harmony.”²⁵⁸ Such caves were dark, damp, depressing, and dangerous, but residents had no other means of protection from Grant’s escalating artillery fire. When Confederate Brigadier General Stephen D. Lee asked diarist Emma Balfour if she had relocated her family to a “rat-hole,” Balfour remembered, “I told him it seems to me that we were all caught in a rat-hole.”²⁵⁹

Sometime later in the siege, Lida Lord and her family relocated to a newly constructed cave in a safer location. She remembered with pride that “it was the coziest cave in Vicksburg, and the pride of our hearts from that day until the fatal Fourth of July.” She described it as having “an open walk, with a parapet six feet high cut into the hillside. In one wall of this was a low and narrow opening overhung by creeping vines and shaded by papaw-trees. This was our side door.” Lord further added that the cave “ran about twenty feet underground, and communicated at right angles with a wing which opened on the front of the hill, giving us a free circulation of air. At the

²⁵⁷ Lucy McRae Bell, “A Girl’s Experiences in the Siege of Vicksburg,” *Harper’s Weekly*, Vol. LVI, June 8, 1912, 12-13, in HarpWeek, [http://app.harpweek.com/viewarticletext.asp?webhitsfile=hw19120608000046.htm&xpath=%2FTEI.2\[1\]%2Ftext\[1\]%2Fbody\[1\]%2Fdiv1\[15\]&xml=HW\1912\19120608.xml&titleid=HW&volumeid=1912&issueid=0608&pagerange=0012ad-0013a&restriction=&pageIDs=HW-1912-06-08-0012|HW-1912-06-08-0013](http://app.harpweek.com/viewarticletext.asp?webhitsfile=hw19120608000046.htm&xpath=%2FTEI.2[1]%2Ftext[1]%2Fbody[1]%2Fdiv1[15]&xml=HW\1912\19120608.xml&titleid=HW&volumeid=1912&issueid=0608&pagerange=0012ad-0013a&restriction=&pageIDs=HW-1912-06-08-0012|HW-1912-06-08-0013) (accessed April 25, 2012).

²⁵⁸ Lord Jr., “A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg,” 46.

²⁵⁹ Emma Harrison Balfour, *Vicksburg, A City Under Siege: Diary of Emma Balfour May 16, 1863-June 2, 1863* (Philip C. Weinberger, 1983), 6.

door was an arbor of branches, in which, one a pine table, we dined when the shelling permitted.” Due to the confined space, the Lord family and their servants did the cooking outside of the bomb shelter. She noted that nearby to the cave lay “a dug-out fireplace and an open-air kitchen, with table, pans, etc. In the wall of the cave were a small closet for provisions, and some niches for candles, books, and flowers.” Like most Vicksburg residents, the Lord family only used the cave when necessary to escape the bombardment and stayed outside for the most part when the shelling slackened. She stated, “Our cave was strongly boarded at the entrances, and we had procured some mattresses which made comfortable beds. For a time we slept in the tent, and only used the cave for a shelter.”²⁶⁰

In front of the earthworks, defending Rebels burned houses that obstructed lines of fire and secured as many provisions as possible from the area. On May 19, Emma Balfour chronicled, “Last night we saw a grand and awful spectacle. The darkness was lit up by burning houses all along our lines. They were burnt that our firing would not be obstructed. It was sad to see.”²⁶¹ One notable house that escaped the torch, the white-painted home of Unionist James Shirley, would later become a famous symbol of the siege. Shirley, born in New Hampshire, had long endured local distaste for his staunch political beliefs and had nearly lost his son to a lynch mob when the younger Shirley refused to serve in the Confederate army. As the Grant’s forces approached the Rebel lines, the resulting crossfire trapped the Shirley family inside the house. The residence survived after Union gunfire struck a Confederate soldier attempting to set fire to the building, and soon thereafter Federal soldiers relocated the Shirley family to a safer area behind the lines.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 85-86.

²⁶¹ Balfour, *Balfour Diary*, 6.

²⁶² Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War*, 125-26.

On May 19, Grant ordered his men to storm the northeastern section of Vicksburg defenses. After decisively winning the battles of Champion Hill and Big Black River Bridge, Grant believed a vigorous assault might capture the city quickly, avoid a costly siege, and allow him to concentrate his forces against Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate army then lurking in his rear. Sensing a fleeting opportunity, Grant determined to strike before Pemberton could stabilize morale in his routed army. Behind the formidable earthworks, Pemberton reorganized his forces and deployed fresh troops to the front lines from the two divisions he had left behind to defend Vicksburg when he marched to Champion Hill. The reinforced Rebels dug into their trenches and waited, ready for any Federal assault. With little preparation, at 2:00 PM Sherman's XV Corps charged into a well-designed killing field. Sherman's men endured heavy losses and failed to breach the Confederate line. The futile effort cost the Federals 942 casualties, while their opponents only lost an estimated 200 men.²⁶³ The ill-planned attack also had the unintended consequence of restoring morale in Pemberton's heretofore luckless army. Lida Lord detailed this transformation when she reminisced, "Then began the morale reconstruction of our army. Men who had been gloomy, depressed, and distrustful now cheerfully and bravely looked the future in the face. After that day's victory but one spirit seemed to animate the whole army, the determination never to give up."²⁶⁴

Despite the bloody repulse, Grant determined to try again. On May 21, after gathering more intelligence on Confederate defenses, he issued orders for a frontal assault by all three corps in the Army of the Tennessee along the entire defensive line. Grant encouraged his soldiers that "if prosecuted with vigor, it is confidently believed this course will carry Vicksburg in a very short time, and with much less loss than would be sustained by delay. Every day's delay enables the

²⁶³ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 142-47.

²⁶⁴ Reed, "Woman's Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg," 83.

enemy to strengthen his defenses and increases his chance for receiving aid from outside.”²⁶⁵ At 10:00 AM on May 22, the attacking Federals marched out to conquer the Confederate stronghold.²⁶⁶ The enormous offensive terrified the civilian residents, who nonetheless left the safety of their caves to view the action. Emma Balfour wrote that “we were all so interested in the result of the general attack which was then made all around the lines that no one thought of personal danger. That was a glorious day for us.”²⁶⁷

Although Union forces fought valiantly and in one case breached the Confederate line, the Rebels drove the Federals back in bloody fighting. The second assault ended with the same result as the first, but this time Grant’s army suffered 502 killed, 2,550 wounded, and 147 missing, while the defending Confederates likely did not lose more than 500 men. After realizing that storming Vicksburg would cost too much in human life, Grant determined to starve the secessionists out.²⁶⁸ On May 23, the day after the failed assault, the Union general wired Admiral Porter, “There is no doubt of the fall of this place ultimately, but how long it will take is a matter of doubt. I intend to lose no more men, but to force the enemy from one position to another without exposing my troops.”²⁶⁹

Before surrounding Vicksburg, Grant’s main concerns had dealt with supplying his rapidly moving army with provisions. Once the Army of the Tennessee trapped Pemberton’s army within the city and secured a viable supply line from the Mississippi River, Grant now recognized the need for reinforcements to secure the hard-won gains of the May campaign. On May 31, Grant wrote to Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, who was then besieging the

²⁶⁵ OR vol. XXIV, part III, 333-34.

²⁶⁶ Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 90-94.

²⁶⁷ Balfour, *Balfour Diary*, 11.

²⁶⁸ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 147-52; Ballard, *Vicksburg*, 332-50.

²⁶⁹ OR vol. XXIV, part III, 343.

Confederate garrison at Port Hudson, “Vicksburg is the vital point. Our situation is for the first time during the entire Western campaign what it should be. . . . All I want now are men.”²⁷⁰ As the general later stated in his memoirs, “I now determined upon a regular siege—to ‘outcamp the enemy,’ as it were, and to incur no more losses. . . . As long as we could hold our position the enemy was limited in supplies of food, men and munitions of war to what they had on hand. These could not last always.”²⁷¹

The Union commander continually tightened his noose around Vicksburg, to the point where on June 9, Sherman issued “General Orders, No. 44” that outlined the position the XV Corps would occupy along the “north front.” In an effort to “prevent communications between the enemy, now closely invested in Vicksburg, and their friends and adherents without,” Sherman insisted, “Soldiers or citizens (not regular sutlers within the proper limits of their regiments) found peddling will be put under guard, and set to work on roads or trenches, and their wares turned into the hospital or distributed among the soldiers on duty.”²⁷² It is not known how many, if any, would-be Mississippi peddlers found themselves working as forced labor upon the Federal entrenchments, but the Union barricades did seriously restrict, though not completely eliminate, Pemberton’s ability to communicate with Joseph E. Johnston and their superiors in Richmond.

As the siege unfolded, Federal forces bombarded the town night and day, from both land-based artillery and naval gunfire. By the end of the siege, Grant’s army alone had 220 artillery pieces firing at Vicksburg, ceasing only when the gunners stopped to eat.²⁷³ A typical day’s

²⁷⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 367.

²⁷¹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 298.

²⁷² *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 394-95.

²⁷³ Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 97, 101.

bombardment is illustrated in orders given by Major General John McClernand to the XIII Corps on June 11, directing that “The 20, 24, and 30 pounder batteries will fire eight guns per hour from each battery, commencing at 6 a.m. and ceasing at 6 p.m. The other batteries will fire five guns per hour, commencing and ceasing fire at the same hours.” McClernand commanded his gunners to “direct their fire in such a manner as to prevent the enemy from mounting additional guns or erecting additional works, if practicable, and also to throw as many projectiles into the enemy’s intrenchments and camps as possible.”²⁷⁴ The continual cannonade terrorized the civilians within the town and even elicited sympathy from Union soldiers. One Wisconsin soldier, James K. Newton, wrote after witnessing the nightly shelling of Vicksburg that “at such times I can distinctly hear the shells crash through the houses. Indeed some of the boys went so far as to say they could hear the screams of the women and children. but their *ears must have been better than mine.*”²⁷⁵ Ohioan Osborn Oldroyd recorded that “the inhabitants are now living in caves dug out of the sides of the hills. Alas! For the women, children and aged in the city, for they must suffer, indeed, and should the siege continue several months, many deaths from sickness as well as from our shells, must occur.”²⁷⁶

Inside the besieged city, the ongoing cannonade drove civilians and soldiers to the breaking point. On May 24, Surgeon Benjamin D. Lay of the City Hospital in Vicksburg wrote to his superiors, “It becomes my painful duty to notify Lieutenant-General Pemberton that the enemy have for three days past been shelling my hospitals, and to-day their fire is becoming very accurate. My different houses have been struck twenty-one times. I have had 6 wounded men re-wounded.” The tragic nature of the siege condemned many wounded men to death who would

²⁷⁴ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 401.

²⁷⁵ Stephen E. Ambrose, “A Wisconsin Boy at Vicksburg: The Letters of James K. Newton,” *The Journal of Mississippi History* 23, (January 1961): 5.

²⁷⁶ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 57-58.

have likely survived their wounds. Lay lamented, “Men in their condition, whose nerves are already shattered by wounds, bear this very badly, and I shall have great mortality among my amputations and serious operations.” Although grieved at the situation, the surgeon realized that there was little the commanding general could do to alleviate the constant shelling. Lay concluded, “The wounds we are having are generally of a very grave character . . . being from serious, severe, dangerous, to mortal—some 26 of the last. I do not know that you can help me in this matter; but feel it my duty to notify you of these facts.”²⁷⁷

On June 10, Dr. Joseph Dill Alison recorded a typical day’s entry in his diary, writing, “Our situation now becoming desperate. No place of safety, if you stand still there is danger from the pieces of shell that fill the air, and if you move the danger becomes greater. The whole town is enfiladed.” As a medical provider, Alison also witnessed the suffering of the wounded within Vicksburg, testifying that, “The wounded are killed in the hospitals, Surgeons wounded while attending to their duties. Two days since Major Hoadley was killed in Camp twenty feet of where I was dressing a wound. . . . Night is almost as bad as day. The air is filled with missiles of destruction.”²⁷⁸ After enduring weeks of siege, Alison concluded, “I have read of besieged cities and the suffering of the inhabitants, but always thought the picture too highly painted. But now I have witnessed one and can believe all that is written on the subject.” Alison ended his entry with the repugnant observation, “Rations though short, are still enough, and we have good water most of the time, so do not as yet suffer on that source. But the stench from dead mules and horses (killed by shell) is intolerable.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 913.

²⁷⁸ Joseph Dill Alison Diary, Manuscript Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 15-16.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

A possible explanation for the Federal artillery fire on hospitals is found in a letter Sherman wrote to his wife on June 27 where he stated, “The enemy in Vicksburg in my judgment shows no abatement of vigorous resistance or short food—with every house in sight of our lines marked with the Hospital Flag—Orange Yellow. We cant show a hand or cap above our rifle pits without attracting a volley.”²⁸⁰ It may be possible that Federal forces suspected the Confederate Army of Vicksburg of deliberately misusing the protected status afforded to hospitals to store valuable supplies, and therefore some units may have ignored the marked hospital flags. However, historian Peter F. Walker argued that as “there were almost one hundred of them in the city . . . they would have been difficult to miss.”²⁸¹ Whether the Vicksburg defenders intentionally committed such misdeeds is unknown, but it is clear that the unrelenting Federal bombardment did strike Confederate hospitals and did so with lethal results.

Another Vicksburg resident, Emma Balfour, declared, “every shell from the machines as they came rushing down like some infernal demon, seemed to me to be coming exactly on me, and I had looked at them so long that I can see them just as plainly with my eyes shut as with them open.” On May 24, she reported that a “child [possibly Lucy McRae] was *buried in the wall* by a piece of shell, *pinned* to it,” and that in one of the Vicksburg hospitals, where many “wounded had just undergone operations, a shell exploded and six men had to have limbs amputated. Some of them that had been taken off at the ankle had to be taken off to the thigh—and one had lost one arm had to have the other taken off.” The strain of daily shelling is poignantly evident in her entry, particularly when she observes, “It is horrible and the worst of it is—we cannot help it.”²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War*, 491.

²⁸¹ Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War*, 193.

²⁸² Balfour, *Balfour Diary*, 10-16.

Another civilian, Mary Loughborough affirmed, “But this was unexpected—guns throwing shells from the battle field directly at the entrance of our caves. Really, was there to be no mental rest for the women of Vicksburg?”²⁸³ Likewise, Lida Lord recorded hearing accounts that “a mother, rushing to save her child from a bursting shell, had her arm taken off by a fragment. Another mother had her baby killed on her breast.” Though the rumors may have been exaggerated, she reported that she herself witnessed, “My own little brother, stooping to pick up a Minie ball, barely escaped being cut in two before our eyes, a Parrott shell passing over his back so close that it scorched his jacket.” Despite the constant shelling, Lord acknowledged, “There were many other narrow escapes and some frightful casualties; but, taking the siege as a whole, there was among the citizens a surprisingly small loss of life.”²⁸⁴ Her brother, William Lord Jr., asserted that “while comparatively few non-combatants were killed, all lived in a state of terror.”²⁸⁵ On July 12, Emilie McKinley, a Pennsylvanian who had migrated south to become a teacher in Mount Alban, Mississippi, seven miles east of Vicksburg, recorded in her diary, “Dr. Coffee says he amputated several limbs for ladies in town struck by shells.”²⁸⁶ In the end, although reports vary and the numbers may have been larger, at least three civilians died from Federal shellfire and twelve suffered wounds during the siege.²⁸⁷

Outside of the Vicksburg defenses, Mississippi civilians endured a bitter occupation from their northern conquerors. As the Army of the Tennessee received reinforcements from other Union armies, Grant subsequently detailed expeditions to harass Johnston’s army and complete

²⁸³ Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg*, 64.

²⁸⁴ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 86.

²⁸⁵ Lord Jr., “A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg,” 50.

²⁸⁶ Gordon A. Cotton, ed., *From the Pen of a She-Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Emilie Riley McKinley* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 41.

²⁸⁷ Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 501.

the wreckage initiated on his march to Vicksburg. On May 19, Major General Hurlbut ordered Brigadier General William S. Smith's cavalry to raid into northern Mississippi from Memphis and "take all the horses and mules, wagons and provisions that can be found, and drive off the cattle from any portion of Mississippi they may pass through." Hurlbut, in keeping with Grant's practice at the time, notified Smith, "Women and old persons must be respected, and no firing of towns or houses will be permitted. Impress wagons to bring in forage and provisions captured, and destroy what cannot be brought it." Although Hurlbut had no sympathy for the Rebels, even he admitted, "It is a hard warfare, but my orders from General Halleck are to pursue this course as the enemy has done in West Virginia. If horses give out, do not turn them loose, but shoot them, as otherwise they may recover and be used by the enemy."²⁸⁸

On June 12, Hurlbut sent another detachment under Major General Richard J. Oglesby to strike south of the Tallahatchie River with instructions to "take all horses, mules, and means of transportation; destroy or bring away all provisions and forage. Leave no horses there. If any horses or mules give out, shoot them, and supply from the country." The seizure of horses not only hindered the production of southern agriculture, it also severely affected the ability of the Confederate army to transport its supplies and replace lost mounts in its vaunted cavalry forces. The growing attrition of horseflesh would become a key factor in the Confederate defeats of 1864 and 1865. Hurlbut's directives called for stern measures to eliminate the ever-present threat of guerillas in occupied Mississippi, commanding Oglesby to "take three days' provisions. After that, live upon the country; make the work thorough and complete. Crush out these roving bands of guerrillas sharply and decidedly."²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 330.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 407.

The success of these operations is clearly indicated in a communication from H. P. Atkins to the Confederate Chief of Subsistence Major Theodore Johnston on May 27, 1863, condemning recent Federal incursions as “more for the purpose of destroying the supplies, stealing horses, &c., than for any purpose of just and honorable warfare.” In order to protect and harvest the valuable wheat crop of northern Mississippi, Atkins requested a force of five thousand men but warned, “In some few instances impressments might have to be resorted to in order to get the supplies that the parties could well spare.” Nonetheless, Atkins conceded the effectiveness that such economic warfare had on the civilian population of Mississippi by concluding, “I think they ought to be impressed, for such parties have been smuggling cotton into Memphis and otherwise trading with the Yankees, until they now estimate our currency by the Yankee standard greenbacks. In fact, to say in moderate language, they are demoralized.”²⁹⁰

In late May, Grant sent 11,000 men commanded by Major General Frank Blair along the Yazoo River to drive a small force of Rebels in an area that he described as “rich and full of supplies of both food and forage.” As Grant confirmed in his memoirs, “Blair was instructed to take all of it. The cattle were to be driven in for the use of our army, and the food and forage to be consumed by our troops or destroyed by fire; all bridges were to be destroyed, and the roads rendered as nearly impassable as possible.”²⁹¹ On May 26, Grant instructed Brigadier General Osterhaus to “direct Colonel Johnson . . . to go by way of Bolton, and destroy all the cars, Confederate cotton, grain, and provisions in store there” and to “let the cavalry destroy all the railroad bridges as far out as they go beyond the Black. All forage beyond Black River that can be reached should be destroyed. All negroes, teams, and cattle should be brought in, and

²⁹⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 932-33.

²⁹¹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 304-5.

everything done to prevent an army coming this way supplying itself.”²⁹² On May 29, Grant further commanded Osterhaus to “burn up the remainder of Big Black River bridge” along with the railroad. As Sherman had done before in Jackson, Grant directed Osterhaus to “pile the ties up, and lay the rails across them and burn them up. Wherever there is a bridge or trestle-work, as far east as you send troops, have them destroyed. Effectually destroy the road, and particularly the rails, as far east as you can.”²⁹³ Grant’s campaign devastated southern morale throughout the state so effectively that on May 25, Confederate Brigadier General States Rights Gist in Johnston’s Army of Relief wrote to General P. G. T. Beauregard, “We move as soon as we are strong enough to be effective. . . . The people, I regret to say, are somewhat desponding, but the presence of Johnston is rapidly restoring confidence.”²⁹⁴

In early June Grant directed Brigadier General Joseph Mower’s brigade, followed by a force of three infantry and one cavalry brigades under Brigadier General Nathan Kimball, to march to Mechanicsburg, a region that provided a significant amount of supplies to the Confederate military. On June 2, Grant explicitly ordered Mower to “destroy or bring in for your own use all the forage, provisions, and transportation you can reach,” and on the following day, he advised Kimball to “collect all the forage, cattle and provisions you can and destroy what you cannot bring away. It is important that the country should be left so that it will not subsist an Army passing over it.” Grant further instructed that “wagons horses & mules should be taken from the Citizens to keep them from being used with the Southern Army.”²⁹⁵ On June 8, Grant informed

²⁹² *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 351.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 362.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 919-20.

²⁹⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 375-79; Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 308-9.

Halleck, “I will make a waste of all the country I can between the two rivers. I am fortifying Haynes’ Bluff, and will defend the line from here to that point at all hazards.”²⁹⁶

The expeditions achieved extremely successful results and removed the vital agricultural produce along the Yazoo River from supplying southern armies, further weakening the ability of Mississippians to continue the war. In late June Grant ordered another expedition against Greenville, and his directives precisely display the means and methods of “hard war” that would later be utilized throughout the South. Grant decreed that Union officers “Keep your men out of the houses of citizens, as much as possible, and prevent plundering. Give the people to understand if their troops makes raids necessary, all their crops and means of raising crops will be destroyed.”²⁹⁷ Although the plundering prohibition proved impossible to enforce, the practice of “area denial” during the Vicksburg campaign rarely resulted in actual physical harm to residents.²⁹⁸

The operations in the Yazoo region brought Federal soldiers into contact with a strongly secessionist population which incited the soldiers to engage in punitive warfare against civilians. One Wisconsin soldier, Chauncey H. Cooke, wrote his parents from Hayne’s Bluff, “The boys went wild raiding and foraging the country for anything they could eat or wear or destroy, and it was all right, for every white man and woman was ready to shoot or poison us.” Cooke related a story of Federal vandalism that indicates how the stress of war could lead to a breakdown in discipline among the young men that filled the ranks of the Union army: “Some of our boys raided a big plantation, took everything in sight, and came into camp with a mule team and wagon loaded with a fancy piano. They put the piano on board a steamboat and blindfolding the

²⁹⁶ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 41.

²⁹⁷ Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 426.

²⁹⁸ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 105.

mules, which were wild, turned them loose in camp.” After enduring a hard campaign, Cooke and his comrades sought any release from the boredom and fear within military life they could find, and Cooke admitted in his letter, “It was a crazy thing to do.” He noted, “There was some bee hives in the wagon full of honey and bees. The mules ran over some tents nearly killing a lot of soldiers and scattering bees and boxes along the way. It was fun all right for some of the boys got badly stung.”²⁹⁹

On June 2, Private Arthur Vanhorn of the 95th Ohio Infantry described his foraging activities in a letter to his wife Mary from Vicksburg and confessed, “It looks hard to see the boys go in the houses And take every thing that they have a[n]d then they have to come to hed quarters to draw things to eat[.] all the citizens through here wants peace for it leaves them in a bad fixe.”³⁰⁰

More evidence of the hard war enacted upon Mechanicsburg comes from Captain James Lawrence of the 61st Illinois Infantry, who wrote to his wife on June 10, “we marched from Mechanicbugh to this place and laid waste the entire Country Burning Houses Barns Cotton and everything.” The following day, Lawrence provided additional information when he added, “I had forgot to tell you we make our mark somebody set fire to the town after the Battle of Mechanicsbugh and burnt up the town and we brough[t] up all the the Nigers and Mules burnt all the Cotton and laid waste the County.”³⁰¹

Another Federal participant in the Mechanicsburg expedition, Samuel Henry Eells, the assistant surgeon of the 12th Michigan Infantry, recorded in a letter to his family on June 9, “The village shared the fate of most Southern places that our men find deserted by the inhabitants,

²⁹⁹ William H. Mulligan, ed., *A Badger Boy in Blue: The Civil War Letters of Chauncey H. Cooke* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2007), 61.

³⁰⁰ Arthur Vanhorn to wife Mary, June 2, 1863, Arthur Vanhorn family papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

³⁰¹ James Lawrence to wife, June 10-11, 1863, James Lawrence papers, Chicago Historical Society Research Center, Chicago, Illinois.

who are presumed to be secesh or they would not run from us. One house after another was plundered and fired that afternoon and evening, till only three beside the church were left,” and those only “because they were used as headquarters and for hospital purposes.” Writing further, Eells detailed, “Every house was plundered and the contents pretty much destroyed, as of course the soldiers could carry very little away with them. The commanding officers made some effort to stop the plundering but to little use.” While some Union soldiers expressed remorse at the actions they witnessed, Eells displayed no regrets at all for the behavior of the Federal soldiers and instead blatantly stated, “I was not at all sorry myself to see the houses gutted and burned except as I thought the soldiers had better quarter in them first while they stayed there. They made very pretty bonfires in the night.” Clarifying his opinion, Eells added, “I wouldn’t want to turn women and children out of doors for the sake of a bonfire but when the owners desert the place entirely, they must expect us to destroy it as the property of an enemy, and I for one should be sorry to disappoint them.”³⁰²

Far from being an impartial bystander, Samuel Eells took advantage of the situation to enhance his own personal collection of medical equipment. He announced proudly, “I got some plunder here myself, from the house of a secesh doctor who has a son in the rebel army, a pair of nice saddlebags such as country practitioners use, some valuable medical books and instruments, and a white Marseilles counterpane” and “could have got lots more but the trouble was to bring it away.” Exhibiting the bitterness that long wartime service engenders, the assistant surgeon pondered, “Do you think this looks like stealing? I don’t have any compunctions about it at all as long as it is from secesh. They have done me and my friends too much harm for me to be very tender of them or their friends feelings or property.” In the end, Eells concluded, “I wish I could

³⁰² Samuel Henry Eells to family, June 9, 1863, Samuel Henry Eells papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

send the stuff home to you. I could steal us all rich in a very short time with a few such expeditions.”³⁰³

Such episodes only increased the terror and hatred that southern civilians felt for their fellow Americans. One southern woman, Ida Barlow Trotter, recounted years later, “Our home was surrounded by Yankee’s both day and night, as the head-quarters of Gen. Grant were only about a mile from our home. We were utterly in their power and in a constant state of uneasiness for fear we would be killed.” One day, a party of Federals rode by her home outside of Vicksburg and asked her father if he knew of any Confederate soldiers nearby. When her father answered honestly that he did not, and the northerners subsequently rode into a Rebel ambush a few miles further down the road, the Yankees returned seeking vengeance. Trotter remembered with horror “that they at once put the torch to our home and told my father that if he was on the premises at sun-down they would hang him. Leaving our home a mass of smouldering ashes, we went bare headed with nothing except what we had on.”³⁰⁴

After burning the house, the Federals foraged for the farm for any food they could locate, taking “all the provisions they could find, all the stock and fowls and the gardens, orchards and growing fields had been turned into pastures for their horses.” Left with no stocks of food, Trotter’s family had no choice but to rely on their enemies for sustenance. Trotter described their humiliation at eating Federal fare: “We drew our rations just like the soldiers did (and awful living it was to) fat pickled pork, hard tack so old it had bugs in it, a little flour and coffee.” In order to eat the unpalatable rations, Trotter’s grandmother “soaked the hard tack in water over night to soften it, then fried it in the grease that came out of the meat and drank the coffee

³⁰³ Samuel Henry Eells to family, June 9, 1863, Eells papers.

³⁰⁴ Ida Barlow Trotter, *The Siege of Vicksburg, and Some Personal Experiences connected therewith*, Ida Barlow Trotter Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 2.

without sugar.”³⁰⁵ Another woman, Lettie Vick Downs, recorded with anger, “The Yankees ripped up my carpets and used them for saddle blankets; took one chair off and threw my dining-room table into the house while it was on fire. Yankees have all of Deer Creek negroes except 4 or 5 old ones.”³⁰⁶

The least restrained Federal soldiers freely searched houses for possible treasure, such as gold, silver, and other items, and often utilized intelligence gathered from freed slaves to discover the hidden valuables, which were most often buried somewhere on the property. After losing her house to a Union torch and relocating to her grandparent’s residence, Ida Trotter noted, “My grand mother had hid every thing in the house and store rooms that she could possibly hide, and curious were the places in which she secreted them. She had a few shingles taken from the roof, and had many things put in on the ceiling.” Trotter recalled that “She had all the silver and jewelry buried, in boxes under the house and to keep some meat where we could get it to eat, she put two mattresses on a bed and placed a layer of bacon, hams between them.” With the supply of meat safely stashed, Trotter’s grandmother then “had my aunt, a Mrs. Hall . . . feign sickness” and ordered Ida to “take the great pea-fowl fly brush used in the dinning room and keep the flies from off the make believe patient—who spent her time patiently reading novels.”³⁰⁷

While Trotter’s grandparents apparently retained their expensive possessions, Emilie McKinley recorded several instances of pillaging by Federal soldiers during the campaign at the Batchelor plantation where she resided. On May 18, the first day of the siege, Emilie recorded that several parties of Union soldiers arrived and searched the house for arms and “the first

³⁰⁵ Trotter, *The Seige of Vicksburg*, 3.

³⁰⁶ *The Journal of Lettie Vick Downs in the Year 1863*, 7.

³⁰⁷ Trotter, *The Seige of Vicksburg*, 4.

question they asked was, ‘Where are the horses?’” The repeated humiliations of having her personal effects searched as well as a large amount of food foraged inspired McKinley to rage, “Can the people in the North know or conceive what we suffer? We are tried beyond endurance, and suffer more than we can tell. We will be obliged to coin words to express our utter detestation of the hated.” McKinley, a native northerner and sister of a Union soldier, went so far as to ask herself, “Can I ever visit the North again, with my present feelings, unnatural as they may be? I cannot ever go there again. I will not, my blood boils as I write, I can hardly write.”³⁰⁸

On May 21, McKinley complained, “The wretches have desecrated our beautiful church at Bovina. They have cut the organ pipes; they gave the prayer books to the negroes. . . . How can anyone dare to desecrate the House of God. I wonder they were not afraid that their hands would be palsied in the attempt.” Aside from desecrating churches and humiliating their parishioners, the invaders also relentlessly hunted for buried Rebel treasure. On May 23, McKinley entered in her diary, “There were some men here today who were determined to find silver in the garden. One fellow with a gun went trampling all over it, knocking his gun down. He said his gun had something in it to find where something was buried.” The treasure hunts continued despite the ongoing siege, and on June 14 she confirmed, “The Yanks have found all of Mrs. Lane’s silver, also Mrs. Sexton’s and her jewelry, all buried. Took Mrs. Frank Gibson’s dead son’s clothing, which she had kept for years.” In the midst of the chaotic situation, at least one southern woman resorted to her own creativity to protect her property. McKinley detailed on May 29 that “Mrs. Booth had gone to Gen. McClelland to get protection. He told her he could not protect her as she had two sons fighting against the U.S. She went home and wrote one [an order for protection] for herself. She drives the Yanks off with it.”³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ Cotton, ed., *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, 1-9.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-29.

Of course, there were other ways to obtain protection from the Union army, and McKinley identified such practices on May 31 when she wrote, “Mrs. Folkes has scraped up a relationship with Col. Hammond on Gen. Sherman’s staff. She had his Ambrotype. . . . A Yankee also made her a present of a gingham dress, one he had stolen. Imagine, she had it on when we met her!” The repeated acts of thievery and the complete inability of the Confederate military to retaliate inspired McKinley to rage in her diary, “I pray God will visit these devils with punishments equal to those they are inflicting on us.” She bitterly exclaimed, “I would call down curses on their heads. I wish we had guerillas so that these men could not so securely tramp around. I would willingly see my house burnt (if I had one) rather than see the wretches so secure from harm.”³¹⁰ Indeed, in the postwar era, many of these white southern women would become the most ardent defenders of the Lost Cause and enthusiastically implanted their embittered anger of the North into the cultural identity of the defeated South.³¹¹

Another Mississippi woman, Tryphena B. Fox, endured the destruction of her home and accompanied her family to the Woodburne Plantation on the Big Black River. Although she, like Emilie McKinley, was born in the North, she received the same harsh treatment from the occupiers as her southern born neighbors. In a July 3rd letter to her mother in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, she wrote that her family had “drawn no rations from the northern army but we shall be obliged to do so soon. Many of the negroes have left, the corn & meat were taken the first week the Yankees came in here & they are driving off cattle & sheep & killing the hogs every day.” To make matters worse, Fox lamented that “the garden is a perfect waste & nothing

³¹⁰ Cotton, ed., *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, 20-29.

³¹¹ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 248-257.

is left but a few green apples & the flowers & weeds. We are not allowed to pass outside the pickets to gather berries.”³¹²

Four other families stayed at the plantation, and the extra mouths further strained the limited food. Fox writes, “The cows are yet left to us, but may be taken any day & I cannot but shudder to think—how are these nine children to be fed then—they are all under six years of age.” Fox agonized to her mother, “Older people can get along with a piece of dry corn-bread, but the little ones will soon suffer from diarrhea & dysentery. Oh! Mother! You Northern people know nothing of the horrors of war & may you be spared what I have suffered during the last year.”³¹³ Bavarian immigrant Max Kuner, then a refugee on an abandoned plantation outside of Vicksburg, recalled that after his provisions ran out during the siege, “Finally I was reduced to riding into the Federal camp, and asking for supplies. ‘Hey! What you coming here for, Johnny Reb?’ would tease the soldiers. ‘For something to eat,’ I would reply bravely; and it was the honest, even if humiliating, truth.”³¹⁴ Certainly, as historian Peter F. Walker concludes in his study *Vicksburg: A People at War*, poor diet and malnutrition increased civilian death rates from disease in the area, especially from an outbreak of measles within besieged Vicksburg, but exact fatality figures are impossible to calculate.³¹⁵

Rumors of Yankee atrocities and crimes against humanity permeated the landscape. Ida Trotter remembered being told of the tragedy of the Cook family, whose freed slaves “had reported their Master’s cruelty to them and the result was, a squad of soldiers went to the Cook home and over-powered the entire family except one little girl who hid under the house.”

³¹² Tryphena. B. Fox letter to her mother, July 3, 1863, T. Fox Papers, Mississippi Division of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 93.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ [Kuner?], “Vicksburg, and after,” 490.

³¹⁵ Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War*, 194.

According to the story, Trotter relates, “The father was most horribly mutilated, both arms and legs were cut off—a candle was put into a gun and shot into the Mother—a bayonet was thrust through one child—pinning her to the wall.” Another alleged episode of Yankee barbarity involved taking revenge on a paralyzed Confederate sympathizer with numerous sons in the Rebel army. Trotter detailed that after tarring and feathering the man’s wife with molasses, “They rolled the old gentleman out on his gallery in his rolling chair—they then set fire to the house. . . . leaving her thus to watch her husband burned to death—sitting in his own gallery.”³¹⁶ As a child during the war, Trotter’s tale is most likely more legend than fact, but as Peter F. Walker recognizes, “These stories were part of the mind of Vicksburg; that they were unfounded made no difference, the mind believes what it chooses to.”³¹⁷ Such stories represented how the white citizens of the Vicksburg community remembered the war in later years, regardless of historical accuracy.

Outside of Vicksburg, the peculiar institution was collapsing at a rapid pace that shocked many of those who had known no other way of life. During the campaign, rumors flew that Grant’s army intended to instigate a slave insurrection to aid the Union advance and was encouraging the bondsmen to tear up railroad tracks, cut telegraph lines, and wreak havoc behind Confederate lines.³¹⁸ Lettie Vick Downs wrote on May 29, “Heard today that General Ried of the Yankee army had organized 600 negroes and intended on turning them loose upon the country, whereupon Pa decided that if possible he would send Katy, Matty, self and two children to Kentucky.”³¹⁹ On June 2, Union Surgeon John A. Ritter of the 49th Indiana Infantry informed his

³¹⁶ Trotter, *The Siege of Vicksburg*, 5-6.

³¹⁷ Walker, *A People at War*, 190-191.

³¹⁸ Davis, *Look Away*, 151.

³¹⁹ *The Journal of Lettie Vick Downs in the Year 1863*, 7.

family that “I havea been attending an Alabama gentleman by the name of Townson who was shot by one of his own negro[.] he is at his sons near our camp.”³²⁰

Only a few miles away, Emilie McKinley reported on May 22, “Kezziah attacked her mistress and said, ‘You have had me beat enough,’ or something to that effect. Her mistress asked her why she did not go with the Yanks. She said she was not going, she wasn’t going to leave her property.” Relations between the freed slaves and their former owners only worsened as the summer continued, and on June 7 McKinley documented in her journal of being told the fate of the McGaughey family, whose “negroes came to the house to whip Mrs. McG. Mr. Brick defended her as long as he could, but finding himself overpowered, he told her to run for her life. . . .When they got Mr. Brick down, they whipped him and made him call them Master and Mistress.” The incident ended only when two Federal soldiers arrived in time to intervene to prevent the slaves from further violence. As the former slaves departed, one warned that “Mrs. McG had better leave as the negroes said they were coming again.” The experiences shocked McKinley, who could never have imagined the rage slaves repressed behind their forced obedience. She proclaimed in exasperation “What we are brought to, how humiliating. I feel that I cannot stand it. I am not afraid at all, but the disgrace almost—oh, it is horrible. Negroes rule the land.”³²¹

Although the rumored slave revolt never occurred, in areas where the Union army approached, slaves frequently began resisting their owner’s authority on their own accord and often aided the Federal invaders as much as possible. At Haynes’ Bluff, Union soldier Chauncey Cooke reported, “The negroes were our only friends, and they kept us posted on what the whites were doing and saying.” Cooke stated that white plantation owners told their bondsmen that the

³²⁰ John A. Ritter to Margaret, June 2, 1863, John A. Ritter Papers, 1863, Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas.

³²¹ Cotton, *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, 11-24.

Yankees had “horns, that they eat nigger babies, and that they lived in the North in houses built of snow and ice, and that the Yankee soldiers were fighting to take the niggers back north where they would freeze to death. It is a fright what stories the whites tell their slaves.” Despite the propaganda, most liberated African Americans welcomed the Union army. Cooke observed that the former slaves “seem to know what the boys want. They bring in chickens, turkeys, eggs, molasses, sugar corn pones, smoked meat, and honey.” Nonetheless, the majority of the Federal army had no conception of racial equality, and as Cooke remarked, “The boys don’t treat them right. They cheat them out of a lot and their excuse is they stole the stuff from their white masters.”³²²

While marching with his company on one of the expeditions into the Yazoo River bottom Osborn Oldroyd and his comrades arrived at a large plantation. In the surrounding fields, a large number of slaves were plowing with a number of mules. Oldroyd later recalled, “As our boys, accordingly, were unhitching the mules, some ‘dutchy’ in an officer’s uniform rode up yelling, ‘mens! You left dem schackasses alone!’” While the German officer demanded restraint and attempted to protect the owner of the mules, his efforts were in vain. Oldroyd commented sardonically, “I doubt whether he had authority to give such an order, but whether he had or not he was not obeyed. When we marched off with our corn-bread and ‘schackasses,’ some of the darkies insisted on following.”³²³

The actions of Union soldiers provoked scattered, but disturbing episodes of civilian and guerilla retaliation, which only hardened Federal treatment of southern civilians. When ordered to stand guard one night near Haynes’ Bluff, Chauncey Cooke reported that the soldier he relieved advised him that it “would be nice during daylight, but to look out to-night. He said he

³²² Mulligan, *A Badger Boy in Blue*, 61.

³²³ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 49.

had seen the glint of a gun barrel last night in the edge of the cane brake. He advised me to keep my eyes peeled and stay as much as possible in the shadow of the trees.” When Chauncey questioned how he would do this and continue to march his beat, the Federal replied “I don’t give a damn for orders when I am alone here at midnight, and the officer of the guard asleep in his tent miles from here.” As a final word of advice, Chauncey recalled, “One thing he said, you will hear a lot of hogs grunting in the cane brakes. Maybe they are hogs and maybe they ain’t. Some of the boys have been shot by those hogs so look out.”³²⁴ The exact number of violent incidents that occurred was likely small, but enough violence occurred to keep Union forces vigilant, especially at night.

As the siege of Vicksburg continued, Grant detailed 34,000 men under Sherman to defend against Joseph E. Johnston’s lingering army that still remained east of Vicksburg. In June, Sherman and his newly created Army of Maneuver constructed an “Exterior Line” of defenses to prevent Confederate reinforcements from rescuing Pemberton’s trapped army. The “Exterior Line” ran from Haynes’ Bluff in the north to the Big Black River in the south, and permitted Sherman to interact with numerous residents coping with the new Union occupation.³²⁵ On June 27, Sherman wrote to his wife of one meeting with several southern women who implored him, “Do, oh do General Sherman spare my son, in one breath, and in another, Lincoln was a tyrant and we only Murderers, Robbers, plunderers and defilers of the houses and altars of an innocent & outraged People.” Throughout the war, southern women proved to be a constant annoyance to Sherman, who complained, “She and all the women were real secesh, bitter as gall & yet Oh do

³²⁴ Mulligan, *A Badger Boy in Blue*, 65.

³²⁵ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 167-69.

General Sherman protect my son. The scene set all the women crying. . . . I doubt if History affords a parallel of the deep and bitter enmity of the women of the South.”³²⁶

Sherman observed the damage he and his soldiers had inflicted upon Mississippi and commented, “No one who sees them & hears them but must feel the intensity of their hate. Not a man is seen—nothing but women, with houses plundered, fields open to the cattle & horses, pickets lounging on every porch, and desolation sown broadcast.”³²⁷ It is interesting that Sherman would become the most reviled northern commander during the Lost Cause era for his application of “hard war” in Georgia and the Carolinas, while Grant, who killed thousands more Confederate soldiers on the battlefield and perfected the exact methods Sherman used to break the civilian will to continue the struggle, would garner more respect in the later remembrance of the conflict.

Sherman, who had warned his southern friends in Louisiana that secession was madness, surveyed a scene that must have confirmed his earlier forebodings of doom, stating, “Servants all gone and women & children bred in luxury, beautiful & accomplished begging with one breath for the soldiers Ration and in another praying that the Almighty or Joe Johnston will come & kill us, the despoilers of their houses and all that is sacred.” Although Sherman had many friends from before the war serving in the Confederate ranks in Vicksburg, he had little sympathy for the cause for which they fought. He wrote, “Should it fall into our hands I will treat them with kindness, but they have sowed the wind & must reap the whirlwind. Until they lay down their arms, and submit to the rightful authority of their Government, they must not appeal to me for mercy or favors.”³²⁸

³²⁶ Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War*, 492.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid., 492-493.

Opposite Vicksburg in the aptly named “Interior Line,” Union soldiers continued the siege, shoveling closer to Confederate lines each day. From his vantage point in the trenches, Osborn Oldroyd noted the growing effectiveness of the siege: “If they have had to eat mules such as we have killed in the trenches, I pity them, for they are on a tough job. Several cows which I suppose had served families there with milk, we had to kill for browsing too close to our lines.”³²⁹ On June 8, Surgeon John A. Ritter wrote in a letter, “we have destroyed all that an enemy could live in pretty much from Jackson to this place” but added that to his surprise, “I find more Union people here than I expected to find one made his way to our camp to day that had been confined in jail in Jackson for 7 months.”³³⁰ Ritter, like many Union soldiers, never realized that Warren County contained a diverse population with strong business interests in northern commercial trade along the Mississippi River. While Vicksburg suffered from the effects of “General Starvation,” Union soldiers enjoyed a veritable feast. Grant recalled in his memoirs that many prominent northern visitors to the army would “bring a dozen or two of poultry” to boost the morale of the soldiers. As Grant remarked dryly, “They did not know how little the gift would be appreciated. Many of the soldiers had lived so much on chickens, ducks and turkeys without bread during the march, that the sight of poultry, if they could get bacon, almost took away their appetite. But the intention was good.”³³¹

Within the city, conditions deteriorated rapidly. Food and clean water became scarce, and soon Confederate soldiers were dining on the butchered flesh of mules, horses, household pets, and for some, the occasional rat. However, the soldiers complained the most about the infamous

³²⁹ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 65.

³³⁰ John A. Ritter to family, June 8, 1863, Ritter Papers.

³³¹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 303.

“pea bread,” a thoroughly miserable substitute for cornbread concocted from ground cow peas.³³²

A Louisiana rebel later recounted, “This food was very unhealthy, as it was almost impossible to thoroughly bake the mixture so that both pea flour and meal would be fit for consumption.”³³³

Ephraim Anderson agreed, sarcastically stating, “There was a good supply of this pea in the commissariat at Vicksburg, and the idea grew out of the fertile brain of some official, that, if reduced to the form of meal, it would make an admirable substitute for bread. Sagacious and prolific genius!” Anderson wryly noted, “Perhaps he never swallowed a particle of it. . . . the nature of it was such, that it never got done, and the longer it was cooked, the harder it became on the outside” while “at the same time, it grew relatively softer on the inside, and, upon breaking it, you were sure to find raw pea-meal in the centre.” The unpalatable concoction aroused the ire of soldiers and cooks alike who “protested that it had been on the fire two good hours, but it was all to no purpose; yet, on the outside it was so hard, that one might have knocked down a full-grown steer with a chunk of it.”³³⁴

Diseases such as malaria and dysentery became common inside the city, and eventually even the city’s newspaper, the *Daily Citizen*, appeared published on wall paper.³³⁵ Mary Loughborough remembered, “Some families had light bread made in large quantities, and subsisted on it with milk (provided their cows were not killed from one milking time to another), without any more cooking, until called on to replenish.” Loughborough herself “lived on corn bread and bacon, served three times a day, the only luxury of the meal consisting in its warmth, I had some flour, frequently had some hard, tough biscuit made from it, there being no soda or

³³² Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War*, 194-196.

³³³ W. H. Tunnard, *A Southern Record: The History of the Third Regiment Louisiana Infantry* (1866; repr., Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 212.

³³⁴ Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal*, 337.

³³⁵ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 86-88; Winschel, *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 95-104.

yeast to be procured.”³³⁶ The hot Mississippi summer greatly diminished water supplies, to the point that Lida Lord affirmed, “We had to buy water by the bucketful and serve it out in rations, so that we realized what thirst meant, and were often hungry. . . . We tasted a mule-steak once, but did not like it; it was very dry and tough.”³³⁷

There were other dangers within Vicksburg beyond the Union shells and growing hunger. Lida Lord testified that “We were almost eaten up by mosquitos, and were in hourly dread of snakes. The vines and thickets were full of them, and a large rattlesnake was found one morning under a mattress on which some of us had slept all night.”³³⁸ Most residents had to sacrifice cleanliness and personal hygiene to the cause in the cramped, claustrophobic caves, and on June 1, Lida’s mother, Margaret Lord, chronicled in her journal, “I have not been undressed now for nearly two weeks and we all live on the plainest food—but we are all to learn (as) a child willing to endure far more than yield to the enemy—the children bear themselves like little heroes.”³³⁹ But still, despite the hardships, Lida acknowledged, “our greatest misery was the suspense and inaction. The worst sufferers during a battle are the non-combatants. The victors and victims suffer afterward.”³⁴⁰

As rations decreased and “the gaunt skeleton of starvation commenced to appear,” Confederate soldiers began to forage within the town for food, and several incidents of thievery occurred. Several members of the Third Louisiana Infantry dodged shells to collect cabbage from a resident’s garden, while two soldiers from Missouri admitted to running a gauntlet of Minnie

³³⁶ Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg*, 52-53.

³³⁷ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 88.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ “Copy of a Journal Kept by Mrs. W. W. Lord, during the Siege of Vicksburg by the forces of General U. S. Grant May and July, 1863,” Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 4.

³⁴⁰ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 84-88.

balls and guard dogs to hunt unsuccessfully for local chickens.³⁴¹ As Louisianan William H. Tunnard later declared, “Such incidents are, perhaps, not very flattering to the morality of the regiment, and will serve to explain how the ‘boys,’ at times, had an abundance, while their less venturesome and wondering comrades of the Mississippi regiments suffered the pangs of extreme hunger.”³⁴² The merchants of Vicksburg were particularly hated for their hoarding of food and wartime exploitation, and during the night of June 1, a fire broke out that destroyed an entire block of Vicksburg businesses. Historian Peter F. Walker concludes, “The gutted block contained several of the city’s grocery stores, owned by merchants suspected and accused of profiteering, and it was common knowledge that the fire was set by persons who were incensed by the merchants’ speculation on food.”³⁴³

For many of the citizens in Vicksburg who endured the strain of constant shellfire and a seemingly endless siege, prayer proved to be the only source of solace available. Lida Lord confirmed that “service was held daily in the Episcopal church, and was always well attended by citizens, ladies, and soldiers off duty. No one seemed to be deterred by fear of casualties, though the church was pretty badly riddled by fragments of shell and cannon-balls. However,” she added, “it was struck only once during prayers, and then there was no great excitement or damage.” Thankfully, Reverend Lord and his congregation escaped serious injury, and Lida reported, “Before the siege ended a great deal of the beautiful ivy that had covered it for years had been torn, scorched, and killed, and every pane of glass was broken; but no drop of blood ever stained its sacred floor.” Lida poignantly concluded, “That daily church service was very impressive. The responses were often drowned by the rattle of musketry and the roar of bombs. .

³⁴¹ Tunnard, *A Southern Record*, 215; Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal*, 340.

³⁴² Tunnard, *A Southern Record*, 256.

³⁴³ Walker, *Vicksburg: A People at War*, 179.

. . . Many of the women were in deepest black; for Bull Run and Manassas, Fort Donelson and Chickasaw Bayou, had already desolated Mississippi homes.”³⁴⁴ According to William Lord Jr., his father declared that “there never were more devout or attentive auditors” in his ministry than that “assemblage of power-grimed and often blood-stained soldiery” during the siege of Vicksburg.³⁴⁵ Grant’s shells did not spare Vicksburg’s Catholic residents either. W. H. Tunnard of the 3rd Louisiana Infantry recalled that after one Mass when the “congregation was emerging from the building, the Argus-eyed enemy across the river discovered the unusual number of people in the streets, and instantly opened on them with a Parrott gun. . . . Several persons were struck by fragments of shells, but, fortunately, no one killed.” After witnessing such scenes, the Louisianan furiously declared, “Such an unheard-of, ruthless and barbarous method of warfare as training a battery of rifled cannon upon an assembly of unarmed men and worshipping women, is unparalleled in the annals of history.”³⁴⁶

Despite the earnest prayers of the defenders, the siege continued throughout June with no end in sight. Under the unforgiving southern sun, the surviving soldiers and civilians of Fortress Vicksburg waited anxiously for Confederate reinforcements under General Joseph E. Johnston and in the Trans-Mississippi Department to come to their deliverance and lift the blockade. These efforts to save the city from the east and across the Mississippi River in Louisiana and Arkansas would result in perhaps the worst destruction of the campaign and ultimately condemn Vicksburg to its fate.

³⁴⁴ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 87-88.

³⁴⁵ Lord Jr., “A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg,” 51.

³⁴⁶ Tunnard, *A Southern Record*, 231.

CHAPTER 5

“A DEATH BLOW FELL UPON THE CONFEDERACY”

As Grant’s Army of the Tennessee slowly strangled the life out of Vicksburg, Confederate forces across the Mississippi River in the region many southerners came to know as “Kirby Smithdom” desperately attempted to save the vital city.³⁴⁷ Under intense pressure from Richmond, the Confederate commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, Lieutenant General Edmund Kirby Smith, organized two separate expeditions to strike at Union supply depots on the west bank of the river in Louisiana and Arkansas. Unfortunately for the Confederacy, Smith’s efforts occurred too late to influence the campaign as by this point Grant now received his supply shipments along the much safer Yazoo River north of Vicksburg.³⁴⁸

In mid-April 1863, Union Major General Nathaniel Banks had driven Confederate Major General Richard Taylor’s small army northwestward across Louisiana, capturing Alexandria on May 7 and preventing Taylor from interfering with Grant’s own advance that month southward along the Mississippi River. Throughout the march, as historians William L. Shea and Terrence J. Winschel assert, “The soldiers of the Army of the Gulf consumed or destroyed huge amounts of food and forage and confiscated much-needed boats, wagons, and draft animals. Banks, like Grant before him, discovered that certain bountiful areas of the Confederacy were capable of supporting an army on the march.” Similar to what occurred in Mississippi, the authors prove that in Louisiana, “Foraging degenerated into vandalism, and the fertile Bayous Teche country

³⁴⁷ John C. Waugh, *Sam Bell Maxey and the Confederate Indians*, Civil War Campaigns and Commanders Series (Fort Worth, TX: Ryan Place Publishers, Inc., 1995), 16.

³⁴⁸ Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 107-8.

was devastated. The Federals liberated about six thousand slaves, many of whom joined in the orgy of destruction.”³⁴⁹

The Union advance created another successful distraction that prevented Confederate forces in the Trans-Mississippi from uniting against Grant’s army and achieved significant results in depleting the southern supply base. Shea and Winschel affirm that “Banks devastated a large swath of Louisiana and gobbled up or destroyed immense amounts of food that otherwise would have gone to Confederate forces.”³⁵⁰ Nonetheless, in late May, Smith ordered Taylor to assault Union garrisons on the Mississippi River at Milliken’s Bend, Young’s Point, and Lake Providence in northeast Louisiana. Taylor believed that his small band of 5,000 men could accomplish little, but as he later remembered, “Remonstrances were to no avail. I was informed that all the Confederate authorities in the east were urgent for some effort on our part in behalf of Vicksburg, and that public opinion would condemn us if we did not *try to do something*.”³⁵¹

Taylor’s small army consisted of Major General John G. Walker’s Texas Division, the only division formed during the Civil War comprised solely of units from the same state. Walker’s division contained two brigades commanded by Brigadier Generals Henry E. McCulloch and James M. Hawes, reinforced in this campaign by Colonel Horace Randal’s Texas brigade and Brigadier General James C. Tappan’s Arkansas brigade.³⁵² One Texan in Randal’s brigade, Theophilus Perry, described the war-torn landscape of northeast Louisiana as being as “desolate as can be.” The Texan depicted the destruction as “fences and the houses broken in many places. Only a few old Negro women & children to be seen any where. Horses and cows and hogs all

³⁴⁹ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 87-88.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁵¹ Richard Taylor, *Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War*, ed. Richard B. Harwell (1879; repr. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), 165.

³⁵² Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 383-407.

destroy[ed] and carried off. The most of the negroes, have been sent away to places of safety.”³⁵³ As Grant’s army had passed through the region in the opening months of 1863 before landing on the Mississippi shore, the lasting effects of thousands of Union boots were clearly evident.³⁵⁴

Taylor intended to seize desperately needed supplies at the outposts, defended only by a small force of a few Midwestern units and recently recruited African American regiments. On June 7, Taylor ordered Walker to attack Milliken’s Bend and Young’s Point, while Confederate cavalry assaulted Lake Providence. The attacks against Young’s Point and Lake Providence stumbled through the swamps, forcing Taylor to ultimately abandon each. Only McCulloch’s Brigade at Milliken’s Bend actually assaulted its assigned target. At dawn, the Texans stormed into Union defenses consisting of cotton bale breastworks positioned along a levee and broke through the Federal line in a savage hand to hand struggle. The charging Texans reportedly shouted, “No quarters for white officers, kill the damn Abolitionists, but spare the niggers,” as they intended to return the former slaves to bondage.³⁵⁵ The inexperienced and barely trained African American soldiers, armed with old smoothbore muskets and well aware of their fate if captured, resisted with courageous determination. After falling back from the first line, the Federals retreated to a second levee and the protection of two Union gunboats, the *Choctaw* and the *Lexington*. The gunboats’ artillery fire ripped into Confederate ranks and forced McCulloch to retreat.³⁵⁶

The small battle of Milliken’s Bend, while overshadowed by the larger battles of the campaign, was extremely costly for its size and had far-reaching consequences. McCulloch

³⁵³ M. Jane Johansson, ed., *Widows by the Thousands: The Civil War Letters of Theophilus and Harriet Perry, 1862-1864* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 139.

³⁵⁴ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 163.

³⁵⁵ Quoted in Richard Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division, C.S.A.: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 97.

³⁵⁶ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 164-165; Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 397-407; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division, C.S.A.*, 87-101.

reported losses of 44 killed, 131 wounded, and 10 captured, while Union defenders suffered 101 killed, 285 wounded, and 266 missing out of 1,061 engaged, some of whom undoubtedly returned to slavery against their will.³⁵⁷ The Battle of Milliken's Bend, along with Union assaults at Port Hudson earlier in the year, represented the first large-scale combat in the Civil War in which African American regiments played a major role. The performance of the controversial recruits at these two battles greatly altered the perception of black soldiers in the United States Army. Union observer Charles Dana reported that Milliken's Bend "completely revolutionized the sentiment of the army with regard to the employment of negro troops. I heard prominent officers who formerly in private had sneered at the idea of the negroes fighting express themselves after that as heartily in favor of it."³⁵⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, who would later utilize significant numbers of black troops in his campaigns in Virginia, wrote in his memoirs, "This was the first important engagement of the war in which colored troops were under fire. These men were very raw, having all been enlisted since the beginning of the siege, but they behaved well."³⁵⁹

On the opposing side, the presence of armed freedmen provoked a reaction of enormous anxiety and extreme fury among white Confederates. "All the reports which came to us," remembered Charles Dana, "showed that both citizens and soldiers on the Confederate side manifested great dismay at the idea of our arming negroes. They said that such a policy was certain to be followed by insurrection with all its horrors."³⁶⁰ In many ways the sudden end of slavery and the creation of black Federal soldiers represented the southern slaveowner's worst

³⁵⁷ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 164-65; Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 397-407.

³⁵⁸ Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War*, 86.

³⁵⁹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 305.

³⁶⁰ Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War*, 86-87.

nightmare. Surviving accounts differ as to the fate of black prisoners at Milliken's Bend, and it is impossible to determine how many, if any, black soldiers suffered execution at the hands of their Confederate captors. Nevertheless, reports of rumored atrocities persisted and remain a subject of heated debate among historians today.

On June 16, Lieutenant Commander E. K. Owen reported to Admiral Porter that a Confederate deserter, Thomas Cormal, had "witnessed the hanging at Richmond, La., of the white captain and negroes captured at Milliken's Bend. General Taylor and command were drawn up to witness the execution." The message also included intelligence from Cormal stating "that the sergeant who commanded a company of contrabands, and who was captured by Harrison's cavalry some weeks ago, was also hung at Perkins' Landing."³⁶¹ When these accounts of war crimes reached Grant, he sent a direct communication to Taylor, stating, "I feel no inclination to retaliate for the offenses of irresponsible persons, but if it is the policy of any general intrusted with the command of any troops to show 'no quarter,' or to punish with death prisoners taken in battle, I will accept the issue."³⁶² Grant threatened retaliation upon captured Confederate soldiers in response, which provoked Taylor to vehemently deny the accusation on June 27 as "a fabrication" that would be "thoroughly investigated," and if necessary, answered with "summary punishment." Taylor notified Grant that his orders were to turn the captured African Americans over to "the civil authorities, to be dealt with according to the laws of the State wherein they were captured."³⁶³ Grant replied, "Having taken the responsibility of declaring slaves free and having authorized the arming of them, I cannot see the justice of

³⁶¹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 425.

³⁶² Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 400; *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 425-26.

³⁶³ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 443-44.

permitting one treatment for them, and another for the white soldiers.”³⁶⁴ For the rest of the war the treatment of black prisoners remained a bitter dispute between North and South, and eventually became a predominant factor in Grant’s decision to cease the prisoner exchange system in 1864.

After failing to capture Milliken’s Bend, Taylor and Walker’s division spent the rest of the summer thrashing around in the Louisiana swamps, fighting heat, hunger, mosquitoes, malaria, and snakes, but achieving little else of value. After driving Taylor’s Rebels out of Richmond, Louisiana, on June 15, Union Brigadier General Joseph Mower burned the town to the ground, transforming the remaining residents into despondent refugees.³⁶⁵ One Union eyewitness, William Van Meter of the 47th Illinois Infantry, stated that during the battle the Confederates “fired from windows and from behind houses, in which there were women and children, and we were compelled to charge them with bayonets or run the chance of killing women or children.” As a result of the urban combat, Van Meter recorded that “after the inmates had taken all that was of value out of the houses, we were ordered to burn the village, most of the women and children went with us to Youngs Point where they were sheltered and feed [fed].”³⁶⁶

The surviving citizens never rebuilt the small settlement after the war. The burning of Richmond and other towns in the region demonstrated how far Union commanders would go when moderate policies failed to secure stability or end conflict. As tensions mounted in an occupied region plagued with continued guerilla violence and suspected disloyalty, the presence of Confederate troops provided Mower with the opportunity to end permanently the secessionist resistance of Richmond. Such instances of deliberate, punitive destruction of entire southern

³⁶⁴ Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 468.

³⁶⁵ Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division, C.S.A.*, 79-106; Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 383-407.

³⁶⁶ William H. Van Meter, “A Condensed History of the 47th Regiment of Illinois Vol. Infantry,” John Nelson Cromwell Papers, 1861-1925, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, 13-14.

cities by Union forces were rare, but when they did occur they inspired a resonating fear that coerced submission and a lasting bitterness that lingered on long after the war ended.³⁶⁷

With no feasible hope of rescuing Vicksburg, Taylor's force raided along the west bank of the Mississippi River during the last days of June, employing a devastating scorched earth policy to eliminate the area's usefulness to the North and distract as many Federals as possible. On many occupied Louisiana plantations, the United States government had leased the fields to northern investors who employed former slaves as a paid labor force to produce valuable cotton that had skyrocketed in price due to the Union blockade of the South. In response, Walker's division seared the landscape, capturing badly needed mules and horses and returning an estimated two thousand African Americans to slavery. In his report, General Walker candidly informed his superiors, "I am now engaged in burning all the cotton I can reach, from Lake Providence to the lower end of Concordia Parish, and shall endeavor to leave no spoil for the enemy." Walker further detailed, "I have also instructed the cavalry to destroy all subsistence and forage on abandoned plantations, that, from its proximity to the river, may give the enemy facilities for invasion."³⁶⁸

The desolation created by the Confederates in the area equaled any yet inflicted by the Yankees. Witnessing the ruin, Texan Theophilus Perry wrote his wife, "Our cavalry has destroyed the country between here and the Mississippi. They have burnt every thing I hear. It looks very silly to me for us to burn and destroy our own country. But this is the policy here."³⁶⁹ Another soldier from Arkansas wrote, "The torch was applied to *every* building: Gin houses, cotton, fences, barns, cabins, residences, and stacks of fodder. Mules were taken from the plows

³⁶⁷ Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division, C.S.A.*, 79-106; Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 383-407.

³⁶⁸ Quoted in Joseph Palmer Blessington, *The Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division* (Austin, TX: State House Press, 1994), 126.

³⁶⁹ Johansson, *Widows by the Thousands*, 149.

where the Negroes had left them at the approach of danger, and driven off to the rear of our lines.”³⁷⁰ One Confederate officer in the expedition complained that the “enemy burns awhile then some of the planters take [the] oath of allegiance then our men [burn] them out and the plunderers and robbers end by sweeping what is left and the country once in the highest state of cultivation and pride of the South is nothing but a desert.”³⁷¹ As historian Warren E. Grabau observed, “Not even the Shenandoah Valley was scorched as thoroughly as this small region of Louisiana.”³⁷²

While soldiers on both sides burned civilian buildings and looted private property during the war, only Rebel forces forcibly kidnapped freed slaves to return them to bondage or executed blacks for bearing arms. Again, as in the case of Milliken’s Bend, rumors of murdered freedmen and white Unionists at the hands of rampaging Confederate soldiers surfaced after the raids along the Federal plantations, but the truth of the accused atrocities and the exact number of victims has been lost in time. For white civilians residing in the war-torn South, the approach of either army could be ruinous, as both armies regularly foraged for supplies and confiscated needed goods. In contrast, from the perspective of African American slaves, the different armies presented vastly diverse policies of treatment. The Confederate army re-enslaved or occasionally killed escaped slaves, while the Union army, at least after 1863, actively liberated, hired, and in some cases, enlisted African Americans into the military, though instances of racism and mistreatment certainly lingered. It was in the Mississippi River Valley that black troops first engaged their former masters in large-scale combat, which helped transform the struggle to

³⁷⁰Junius Newport Bragg, *Letters of a Confederate Surgeon, 1861-1865*, ed. Mrs. T. J. Gaughan (Camden, AR: Hurley, 1960), 143, quoted in Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division, C.S.A.*, 107.

³⁷¹ John T. Stark to Martha, June 14, 1863, Stark Letters and Diary (13th Texas Cavalry file), Confederate Research Center, Hill College, Hillsboro, Texas, quoted in Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division, C.S.A.*, 107.

³⁷² Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 396.

preserve the Union into a social revolution that forever altered race relations in the United States.³⁷³

During one skirmish with Confederate cavalry in Young's Point, Louisiana, on June 16, a curious incident occurred that demonstrated a remarkable degree of magnanimity within one unit of Union soldiers. After the engagement, Federal Private J. W. Greenman recorded, "We saw one of the rebel Cavalry coming toward us, we met him, and of course I took him prisoner, his wife and child were with him." When the Confederates retreated, Union soldiers set the torch to the town, which motivated the reluctant Rebel to leave his unit, collect his family, and defect. Greenman noted "that when he saw the town on fire he left his command as everything he had was in the town and he begged us to hurry with him and try to save something from the fire." Surprisingly, Greenman and his comrades quickly aided the former enemy, who had moments before been shooting at them. Greenman recalled, "We took him to the town and his house was just beginning to burn. We rushed into the house and got out everything of value so that his loss was not much, as he did not own the house." After retrieving the southerner's meager possessions, Greenman delivered the unlikely squad of prisoners to Brigadier General Mower and explained the unusual circumstances. "The General gave me the horse saddle and bridle," Greenman wrote, "and the man and his wife and child came back with us to this place where we returned last night and today our prisoner with his family and goods were put on board an upriver steamboat and they went away happy."³⁷⁴ In this instance, Union soldiers were remarkably forgiving of a former enemy and reluctant Rebel.

Life deteriorated among southern Unionists as well. Threatened by retaliation from both secessionist neighbors and Confederate soldiers, planters who took the loyalty oath still suffered

³⁷³ Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 396.

³⁷⁴ Greenman, *Greenman Diary*, 101.

the confiscation of goods and supplies from Union foraging parties, and in mid-1863, became eligible for Federal draft. From that point on, eligible men of military age in the South faced forced conscription from both sides, which forced many to hide in the interior swamps and wilderness areas of the region and further eroded civil authority.³⁷⁵

To the north in Arkansas, Kirby Smith's other offensives achieved even less success than the Louisiana escapades. The Confederate commander of the District of Arkansas, the elderly Lieutenant General Theophilus Holmes, collected a small force of some 7,600 men to launch an attack on the Federal garrison at Helena, another important Union supply depot located along the west bank of the Mississippi River. On July 4, 1863, Holmes's veterans conducted a fruitless frontal assault against well prepared fortifications consisting of felled trees, rifle pits, five well-designed redoubts bristling with heavy artillery, the Union gunboat *Tyler*, and 4,000 Federal rifles. The poorly coordinated Confederate charge resulted in severe casualties of 1,528 men and a humiliating defeat. Union losses were minor in comparison, consisting of 239 killed, wounded, and missing. Although neither offensive in the Trans-Mississippi achieved success in rescuing Vicksburg, at least Lieutenant General Kirby Smith made a serious effort, which is more than can be said of Joseph E. Johnston and his ironically named Army of Relief.³⁷⁶

In Arkansas, Union soldiers treated southern civilians just as harshly as they did in Mississippi. In July, at Cypress Bend, Arkansas, a Federal party landed in search of Confederates responsible for attacks on Union shipping down the Mississippi River. One Federal soldier, Private Chauncey Cooke of the 25th Wisconsin Infantry, recorded that he and a group of soldiers entered a plantation mansion after finding horse tracks and extinguished camp fires nearby, only

³⁷⁵ Taylor, "Discontent in Confederate Louisiana," 419-428; Donald S. Frazier, "'Out of Stinking Distance': The Guerilla War in Louisiana," in *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*, ed. Daniel E. Sutherland (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 151-70.

³⁷⁶ Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 477-491; Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 165-67.

to be greeted by an older woman and two young females imploring the Union men not to enter the house. The terrified women feared retaliation for the actions of the Rebels. In a letter to his father Cooke explained, “The oldest one pleaded pitifully, wringing and rubbing her hands first one and then the other, and then reaching out her hands toward us as far as she could urging us to stay out, all the while crying and at times screaming as if her heart was breaking.” According to Cooke, the eldest daughter “said her mother was sick and likely to die and begged us to go away. I never felt meaner in my life.” Despite the women’s emotional supplication and his own regrets, Cooke and the remaining Federals forced their way into the house. Cooke admitted, “One of the boys pushed by the girls and opened a closet in the wall. The girl jumped into the door and with tears streaming down her face begged him to stay out. There is nothing in here she said but the wardrobe and relics of my dying mother.” The Federal search continued with little success, and Cooke reported, “The house was soon crowded with soldiers and the door of the closet opened and examined but we found nothing but dresses and cloaks and bonnets and blankets.”³⁷⁷

The whole dismal affair depressed Cooke, and he confessed to his father, “I got ashamed and wished that I was out of it. I went back into the big hall and found a bookcase. I stuck Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* in my pocket and Ed. Coleman and Elder Harwood took turns with me reading it on our return to Snyder’s Bluff.” The bitter episode ended just as fruitlessly as many other futile searches for Confederate partisans ended along the river. Cooke concluded his account stating, “When I went outside I found several buildings on fire. The orders had been not to set any fires, but nobody cared and nobody would tell.”³⁷⁸ The female residents of the Confederate home front, who likely were either unaware or unable to stop the attacks of guerillas and Rebel cavalry from their property, bore the brunt of the resulting reprisal.

³⁷⁷ Mulligan, *A Badger Boy in Blue*, 72-73.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

In Central Mississippi that summer, Confederate soldiers in General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Relief anxiously awaited orders to challenge Grant's Army of the Tennessee and lift the ongoing siege. Unfortunately for John C. Pemberton and his trapped Army of Vicksburg, Johnston neglected to attempt any real challenge to the besieging Yankees. For reasons still debated today, Johnston refused to risk his recently created 32,000-man Army of Relief against Grant and spent the better part of May and June idle, accomplishing nothing more than arguing with President Davis for more reinforcements and supplies while Union forces steadily increased. When a despairing Pemberton asked when aid would arrive, Johnston coldly responded, "I am too weak to save Vicksburg; can do no more than attempt to save you and your garrison."³⁷⁹ On June 15, Johnston wired his superiors in Richmond, "I consider saving Vicksburg hopeless," and left the doomed Army of Vicksburg to survive on its own accord.³⁸⁰

A few days later, on June 26, Johnston wrote Kirby Smith, grumbling, "It is impossible with the force the Government has put at my disposal to raise the siege of the city. The most that I can do is possibly to extricate the army, leaving the place in possession of the enemy." Despite Kirby Smith's failed attempts to interdict Union supply lines in Louisiana at Milliken's Bend, Young's Point, and Lake Providence, Johnston informed his Trans-Mississippi colleague that the "only hope of saving Vicksburg now depends on the operations of your troops on the other side of the river." Using strong language that ignored the suffering of Walker's Texas Division at Milliken's Bend and his own inertia, Johnston stated that if Smith could "contrive to plant artillery on the Mississippi banks, drive beef into Vicksburg, or join the garrison . . . we may be able to save the city. Your troops up to this time have done nothing."³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 965-66.

³⁸⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part I, 227.

³⁸¹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 979.

While Johnston criticized the commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department for not doing enough to save Vicksburg, his own army was having troubles simply maintaining basic military discipline. Despite the often romanticized affection for Johnston among his soldiers that appeared in Lost Cause literature, by July 4, morale in the Army of Relief had plummeted to the point that Major General John C. Breckinridge had to issue a circular to his division regarding “the straggling which prevails in this command.” Breckinridge notified his subordinates, “The commanding general yesterday saw hundreds of men wandering through the country, many of them miles from their camps, and complaints have reached him from several quarters of serious depredations.” While Breckinridge did not provide any description of the “serious depredations,” it is likely that Johnston’s men took advantage of the lack of activity to forage and possibly even pillage from the surrounding civilian population. While it is impossible to know the exact details of how the Army of Relief treated southern civilians, the problem had become acute enough to force Breckinridge to remind his brigade commanders, “Unless this is arrested at once, the presence of the army will be regarded as a curse instead of a protection, while the bonds of discipline will be broken and the troops become demoralized and uncontrollable.”³⁸² Still, Johnston’s army remained the only hope of salvation for those trapped within besieged Vicksburg. As siege survivor Lida Lord remembered, “Joseph E. Johnston was our angel of deliverance in those days of siege, but alas! we were never even to touch the hem of his robe.”³⁸³

However, as Grant did not realize Johnston would more willingly fight his own commander-in-chief than the invading Yankees, the Union general continued to dispatch a series of raids to confuse the enemy and strip the region of the sustenance that Johnston’s army needed. On June 17, Brigadier General James Veatch ordered an expedition south from Memphis to Hernando,

³⁸² *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 988.

³⁸³ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 89.

Mississippi, to “attract the attention of the enemy and turn him from gathering his forces on the river.” In an effort to increase support for Tennessee’s Unionist government under military governor Andrew Johnson, Veatch directed his subordinate to “suffer no property to be disturbed in Tennessee.” However, once the northern column entered Mississippi, Veatch instructed the commander to “seize all the horses and mules and able-bodied male negroes that you can find, and destroy all crops and implements of agriculture that you will find below Hernando. . . . Suffer no pillage of houses or insult to defenseless people.”³⁸⁴

The Union raids into northern Mississippi effectively disrupted the ongoing wheat harvest that Confederate forces in the state desperately needed to supply Johnston’s army, and may have indirectly inspired the depredations that Breckinridge complained of. On June 23, Hurlbut wired Halleck, “My cavalry is actively at work, with varying fortunes, but generally successful. The telegraph for 20 miles below is broken and destroyed, crops of wheat burned, and the country desolated, in anticipation of a movement from Joe Johnston.”³⁸⁵ That same day, Sherman advised Grant, “Should Johnston come, we want to whip him, if the siege has to be raised to do it,”³⁸⁶ and on June 26 the red-bearded general issued Special Orders, 135, which detailed in one section that Johnston “must be fought desperately. . . . Let all guards and sentinels be carefully instructed, all wandering about stopped, and all citizens found away from their homes be arrested and sent to the rear, Haynes’ Bluff, or Vicksburg.”³⁸⁷

On June 22, Grant began making preparations to thwart a possible escape attempt by Pemberton’s army across the Mississippi River on hastily constructed boats, and on June 25, he

³⁸⁴ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 416-17.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 433.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 430-31.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 442-43.

issued orders to Lieutenant Colonel Samuel J. Nasmith to capture a rumored Rebel battery near Greenville. At the same time, Grant instructed Nasmith to “destroy all bridges and corn-cribs, bring away all negroes disposed to follow you, and teams of rebels [horses] to haul them and their plunder.” Acknowledging the ongoing problem of Union pillaging, Grant added, “Keep your men out of the houses as much as possible, and prevent plundering. Give the people to understand if their troops make raids necessary, all their crops and means of raising crops will be destroyed.”³⁸⁸

Grant was good to his word. One Union soldier stationed near Vicksburg, Private John F. Brobst of the 25th Wisconsin Infantry, wrote a letter home on June 18 that described a raid on Sartartia, Mississippi, in which the Federals “took fifty prisoners and only lost one man killed on our side and he was out of the 8th Wis and took about 75 head of beef cattle 100 mules [mules] a large amount of cotton [cotton] about 100 slaves came away with us we burned the town.”³⁸⁹ On June 28, Hurlbut wired Grant from Memphis of obtaining intelligence from a spy in Jackson who reported, “The feeling throughout Mississippi is despondent, and they all talk of the line of the Tombigbee River as the next last ditch. Vicksburg and Port Hudson seem to be given up by everybody. Nothing now looks dark except the movement of Lee into Maryland and Pennsylvania.”³⁹⁰ Indeed, for the Union, the situation had become so favorable that Grant could indulge in a small amount of humor with his most trusted commander. On June 29, Grant joked with Sherman, “You need not fear, general, my tender heart getting the better of me, so as to send the secession ladies to your front.” Instead, the commanding general counseled, “I rather think it advisable to send out every living being from your lines, and arrest all persons found

³⁸⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 426, 437-38.

³⁸⁹ John F. Brobst to Mary E. Inglesby, June 18, 1863, John F. Brobst Correspondence, 1863-1865, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

³⁹⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 448.

within who are not connected with the army,” as a further deterrent against possible Rebel spies.³⁹¹

To make matters worse for southern civilians, armed bands of outlaws and renegades roamed through the war-torn counties of Mississippi where law and order had collapsed and anarchy reigned. On June 17, Richard T. Archer of Claiborne County sent a letter of protest to Governor John J. Pettus complaining, “The County is a prey to thieves and robbers. . . . Armed organizations of men such as Barry’s Company of Copiah and individuals alike are engaged in seizing on our stock of mules, horses &c and running them out of reach of the owners.” These predatory gangs purloined property previously confiscated by Grant’s army, as Archer affirmed, “Our mules horses and oxen were taken by the enemy and negroes and turned loose at Grand Gulf and could easily have been reclaimed, but have been seized on by these thieves as property captured from the enemy when really there was no danger in reclaiming them.” In many instances, the criminals devastated southern plantations just as brutally as Grant’s foraging parties. According to Archer, the rogues stole livestock and left the residents of Claiborne County to suffer “our fences thrown down and stock let into our fields to distroy corn potatoes &c on on [*sic*] which we hoped to subsist.”³⁹²

Revealing a side of the war in the South often forgotten in later depictions of the Lost Cause, Archer bitterly conceded that “The difference between the Federals and our own citizens is that the latter if they had the courage to do so would possibly robb both enemies and friends but really robb our people only. Some men of property are engaged in these infamous robberies.” Not only did common thieves take advantage of the chaos, but Confederate deserters and even

³⁹¹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 449.

³⁹² Richard T. Archer to Governor Pettus, June 17, 1863, Governor John J. Pettus Correspondence and Papers, 1859-1863, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, quoted in Bettersworth, *Mississippi in the Confederacy*, 295-296.

officers participated in the lawless plundering. Archer lamented, “The country is full of deserters from our army most of them it is believed officers and many of them engaged in these robberies. I was surprised to hear a furloughed officer say he would like to join in an expedition of this kind as money might be made.”³⁹³

In fact, if Archer’s account is accurate, the situation in Claiborne County had degenerated to the point where neighboring Mississippians threatened to burn down Port Gibson, which Grant had refused to put to the torch when he occupied the town in May. Archer informed Pettus, “It is charged that the people of Port Gibson aided our negroes in escaping to the enemy and arrested those who attempted to stop negroes on their way to Grand Gulf,” which created “such excitement on the part of those who have lost their negroes that it is believed that Port Gibson will be burnt.” The lack of law and order further eroded support for the Confederacy upon the home front. Archer pleaded to Pettus, “Many women and children whose sons husbands and fathers are in the army fighting in defense of the country will be the victims of this outrage. Can you not arrest these lawless proceedings?” In the end, Archer implored for aid and avowed, “Claiborne Jefferson and Copiah have been disgraced by these dastardly & infamous men. Good men are not able to resist them.”³⁹⁴

Inside besieged Vicksburg, Pemberton’s army continued to suffer from ever-decreasing rations and ever-increasing Union shellfire throughout late June and early July. On June 20, Union soldier Osborn Oldroyd wrote, “Even if the defenceless women and children in Vicksburg are protected, or feel as if they were, such a screeching of shot and shell must prove a terror to them, and my heart has not yet grown so hardened that I can not feel for them.”³⁹⁵ On June 26,

³⁹³ Richard T. Archer to Governor Pettus, June 17, 1863, 296.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 69.

Major Maurice Simons of the 2nd Texas Infantry added to his diary an account of how he amused himself by counting the number of heavy shells that Porter's gunboats fired into the city the previous night, which he listed as 166. He calculated from the estimated weight of the projectiles that the total would "just make Thirty three Thousand two hundred pounds (33200) of iron that they fired at us last night Exclusive of the shot & shell thrown from their land Batteries." Simons concluded his computations by observing, "We have been under this fire for forty days which would make (3984000) three million nine hundred and Eighty four thousand pounds of Iron that the Mortars have thrown at us which would require (498000) lbs of powder. This only the doings of the Mortars which has not been half."³⁹⁶ After two shells exploded "almost simultaneously" near their cave, Margaret Lord comforted her youngest daughter, Louisa, by saying, "'Don't cry, my darling. God will protect us.' 'But, mamma,' sobbed the little girl, 'I's so 'fraid God's killed, too!'"³⁹⁷

To pass the time, the civilians within the city sought any distraction possible from the screaming shells and growing hunger. Lida Lord recalled that one soldier who visited her cave "was an artist, and carved our profiles in bassorilievo [bas-relief] on the cave walls. A candle was held so as to throw a shadow, and with a penknife the work was very cleverly done. Even the baby in her nightgown was immortalized in clay."³⁹⁸ Her brother, William, told the story of one young girl who suffered a slight wound from a spent minié ball. Medical attention soon removed the bullet, and "a clever convalescent soldier at the hospital transformed it later into a set of Lilliputian knives and forks, to the girl's infinite pride and delight." William himself spent

³⁹⁶ Braudaway, "The Journal of Maj. Maurice Kavanaugh Simons, 1863," 118.

³⁹⁷ Lord Jr., "A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg," 49.

³⁹⁸ Reed, "Woman's Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg," 89.

his free time acquiring a collection of souvenirs from the siege, including one shell that failed to explode after it “passed so near the top of my head as to stir my hair.”³⁹⁹

As the garrison and residents lingered on the edge of starvation, any edible animal, including rats, entered the daily fare. Lucy McRae asserted that by this point in the siege, “Our provisions were becoming scarce, and the Louisiana soldiers were eating rats as a delicacy, while mules were occasionally being carved up to appease the appetite. . . . Wheat bread was a rarity, and sweet-potato coffee was relished by the adults.”⁴⁰⁰ William Lord Jr. noted that “fabulous prices were asked and paid for all kinds of food. Our own supply of provisions was reduced to a half-barrel of meal and about the same quantity of sugar; so that, like every one else, we began to look forward with anxiety to what might await us in the near future.”⁴⁰¹ Diarist Mary Loughborough observed, “A certain number of mules are killed each day by the commissaries, and are issued to the men, all of whom prefer the fresh meat, though it be of mule, to the bacon and salt rations that they have eaten for so long without change.” She explained, “There have already been some cases of scurvy: the soldiers have a horror of the disease; therefore, I suppose, the mule meat is all the more welcome.”⁴⁰²

Isaac Stier, a slave from Jefferson County who had accompanied his young master into the Confederate army as a servant, related his experience during the siege in an interview conducted for the WPA Slave Narratives. “De hongriest I ever been was at de Siege o’ Vicksburg,” he declared. Stier referred to the 47 day-long ordeal as “a time I’d lak to forgit. De folks et up all de cats an’ dogs an’ den went to devourin’ de mules an’ hosses. Even de wimmin an’ little chillun

³⁹⁹ Lord Jr., “A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg,” 50.

⁴⁰⁰ Bell, “A Girl’s Experiences in the Siege of Vicksburg,” 13.

⁴⁰¹ Lord Jr., “A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg,” 51.

⁴⁰² Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg*, 109.

was a-starvin'. Dey stummicks was stickin' to dey backbones." Stier's testimony provides insight into the methods slaves within Vicksburg utilized to survive the siege. He stated, "Us Niggers was sufferin' so us took de sweaty hoss blankets an' soaked 'em in mudholes where de hosses tromped. Den us wrung 'em out in buckets an' drunk dat dirty water for pot-likker. It tasted kinda salty an' was strength'nin', lak weak soup."⁴⁰³

W. H. Tunnard described the effects of the siege upon the city in dismal terms, writing that by the final days of the siege, "Vicksburg presented a fearful spectacle, having the appearance of being visited with a terrible scourge. Signs wretched from their fastenings; houses dilapidated and in ruins, rent and torn by shot and shell; the streets barricaded with earth-works, and defended by artillery, over which lonely sentinels kept guard." The city that had thrived on the cotton trade just a few years prior now contained streets that "were almost deserted, save by hunger-pinched, starving and wounded soldiers . . . indifferent to the screaming and exploding shells. The stores, the few that were open, looked like the ghost of more prosperous times, with their empty shelves and scant stock of goods, held at ruinous prices." Tunnard mourned for the decayed mansions "crumbling into ruins, the walks torn up by mortar-shells, the flower-beds, once blooming in all the regal beauty of spring loveliness, trodden down, the shrubbery neglected," while reluctantly confessing that "even the enclosures around the remains of the revered dead, were destroyed, while wagons were parked around the grave-yard, horses tramping down the graves, and men using the tombstones as convenient tables for their scanty meals, or a couch for an uncertain slumber." Looking back at the siege from the more peaceful postwar period, Tunnard concluded, "Human language is impotent to portray the true situation of affairs."⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ Ranwick, *Oklahoma and Mississippi Narratives*, pt. 2, 146-47.

⁴⁰⁴ Tunnard, *A Southern Record*, 228-29.

On June 18, Vicksburg's sole surviving newspaper, *The Daily Citizen*, began to print its issues on wallpaper, and on June 28, a petition entitled "Appeal for help" arrived in Pemberton's headquarters. Signed by "MANY SOLDIERS," the letter expressed confidence in Pemberton's generalship and the cause but warned, "A crisis has arrived in the midst of our siege. Our rations have been cut down to one biscuit and a small bit of bacon per day, not enough scarcely to keep soul and body together, much less to stand the hardships we are called upon to stand." The anonymous soldiers complained, "We are, and have been, kept close in the trenches day and night, not allowed to forage any at all, and, even if permitted, there is nothing to be had among the citizens." The plea ended with the admonishment, "If you can't feed us, you had better surrender us, horrible as the idea is, than suffer this noble army to disgrace themselves by desertion. . . . This army is now ripe for mutiny, unless it can be fed."⁴⁰⁵ With no hope of outside relief remaining, and Union approach trenches drawing closer each day, the end of the siege was in sight. It was only a question of whether Pemberton would surrender before Grant ordered the final assault that both commanders knew would succeed.⁴⁰⁶

During the waning days of the siege, Union soldiers continued their foraging expeditions into the countryside while battling heat and boredom along with the Rebels. One Federal officer, Colonel Marcus Spiegel of the 120th Ohio Infantry, disclosed to his wife in a letter from the Big Black River, "We are at present more excited about Hookers Army and the Raids into Maryland and Pennsylvania than we are about Vicksburg, because the latter is sure to fall, while Hooker

⁴⁰⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 982-83.

⁴⁰⁶ Richard Wheeler, *The Siege of Vicksburg* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1978), 209; Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 444-46.

seems in a precarious position.”⁴⁰⁷ As the drudgery of the siege continued, some homesick Federal soldiers found solace in the muddy waters of the Mississippi River. Private Chauncey Cooke informed his parents in a letter that while aboard a steamer on June 26, “The boys made a rush for the boiler deck to get a drink of the water that came from the lakes and springs of Wisconsin and Minnesota.” Cooke admitted that though the water “was dirty and muddy and we saw dead mules and cattle floating by and knew that it was the sewer for all the filth of the northern states,” he and his companions, “whether we were dry or not, drank, and drank, until it ran out of our nose just because it came from the glorious North.”⁴⁰⁸ Ohioan Osborn Oldroyd described the extremes taken by Federal soldiers to make a comfortable bed at night: “Everything possible is done by the soldier to secure a good night’s sleep. I have seen straw stacks torn to pieces, sheds pulled down, and fences melt away in the twinkling of an eye, about camp time.” Fences were the most common target, and Oldroyd recounted the story of one particular officer who “ordered his men to take only the top rail, which was obeyed to the letter, yet every rail disappeared—the bottom rail finally becoming the top one. I have seen half a regiment bearing rails, boards and straw toward camp before even the end of the day’s march was reached.”⁴⁰⁹

On a separate occasion, Oldroyd and his comrades encountered a group of eleven young women celebrating a birthday party while roaming through rural Mississippi on a hunt for blackberries. The Ohioan recalled, “We asked, of course, where ‘the boys’ were, and they replied, as we expected, ‘out hunting Yanks.’ Well, we found it a treat to get a taste of sociality

⁴⁰⁷ Colonel Marcus M. Spiegel to wife, June 29, 1863, quoted in Glenn M. Linden and Thomas J. Pressly, eds., *Voices from the House Divided: The United States Civil War as Personal Experience*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995), 107.

⁴⁰⁸ Mulligan, *A Badger Boy in Blue*, 71.

⁴⁰⁹ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 79-80.

once more, after being so long famished.” In keeping with true southern hospitality, and shrewdly avoiding trouble, the young women politely invited the Federals to stay, and the soldiers gladly accepted. Oldroyd joyfully recalled, “The eatables were good, and we had a splendid time—all the while, of course, keeping one eye on the girls and the other on the window. . . . They assured us we had nothing to fear from them, for they were all ‘for the Union.’ No doubt they will be whenever their ‘boys’ come home.”⁴¹⁰ On June 17, Emilie McKinley recorded a female perspective of such visits in her diary when she wrote, “The other day Mrs. Downs told a Yankee officer who was eating his dinner at her house, while his men were rushing furiously around the house shooting the poultry, that these were terrible times to live in.” The officer replied, “‘Yes, they are rather uncomfortable.’ ‘Uncomfortable!’ exclaimed Mrs. Downs. ‘That word does not give any idea of the times at all.’”⁴¹¹

Other Federals besieging Vicksburg enjoyed the fruits of victory in a literal fashion. On June 21, Union soldier B. B. Beard noted a typical day’s foraging in his diary when he wrote, “I went out in the country today and got some green apples so we have apple sauce,” while on June 23 he added, “I was out in the country and got all the blackberries I could eat and some plums and I and one of our boys drank three quarts of milk, so I guess I done pretty well today.”⁴¹² Another illustration of the improved Federal diet appeared on June 26, in a letter from Musician Byron J. Smith of the 11th Wisconsin Infantry to his mother. Smith stated, “Black Berries are thicker than I ever saw them before and we have pies 3 times a day.” In addition to the pies, Smith also

⁴¹⁰ Drake, *Osborn H. Oldroyd*, 81.

⁴¹¹ Cotton, *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, 31.

⁴¹² B. B. Beard diary 1863, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi, 11.

included that he “had some ripe peaches yesterday and they were fine there is any amount of [them?] around here and all we have to do is to go and pick them off the trees.”⁴¹³

One enterprising Union sutler soon discovered a more profitable use for the ever-popular blackberries. Outside of Vicksburg, Max Kuner’s wife used the fruit to make blackberry cordial, until one day when a Federal soldier “saw the cordial, and immediately besought that my wife put up some for the field hospital. He begged so hard, and said that he would furnish the liquor and the spices and sugar that he won my wife over—particularly as it was for the hospital.” Kuner recounted that his wife toiled under “the burning, blistering southern summer sun” to make the medicinal spirit, until one day when Kuner had to visit the Federal hospital in order buy quinine for his sick daughter. Upon explaining that he was the husband of the woman who supplied the blackberry cordial, the Union doctor exclaimed, “‘Thunderation!’ . . . ‘That’s why my patients have been getting drunk!’ For the soldier had been the sutler, and not a drop of the cordial had reached the hospital save by an ‘interior’ route!’” After further discussion with the surgeon, Kuner obtained his quinine and worked out an arrangement to furnish blackberry cordial to the proper medical authorities.⁴¹⁴

On July 3, 1863, Pemberton entered into negotiations to surrender Vicksburg and its garrison to Grant. When word of the possible end of the siege reached Union commanders, they could hardly refrain from erupting into spontaneous celebration. Even the normally stern Sherman wrote his friend Grant that day, “If you are in Vicksburg, glory, hallelujah! the best Fourth of July since 1776. Of course,” the pragmatic Sherman reminded Grant, “we must not rest idle, only

⁴¹³ Byron J. Smith to mother, June 26, 1863, Byron J. Smith Civil War Letters, 1861-1865, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

⁴¹⁴ [Kuner?], “Vicksburg, and after,” 490.

don't let us brag too soon."⁴¹⁵ Later that same day, Sherman sent a second communication, adding, "If Vicksburg is ours, it is the most valuable conquest of the war, and the more valuable for the stout resistance it has made; if complete, we should follow up rapidly, but should leave nothing to chance. Of course we should instantly assume the offensive as against Johnston."⁴¹⁶ Upon reaching a final agreement, on July 4, at 10:00 AM, the Army of Vicksburg surrendered after enduring forty-seven days of siege.⁴¹⁷

Within the city, the citizens regarded the unusual silence of the cannon during the negotiations as an ominous sign but still hoped against hope for the appearance of Joseph E. Johnston. On July 3, a Major Hauer visited Margaret Lord to thank her for embroidering the "wreath round the stars" on Major General John S. Bowen's collar. After learning that Bowen had attended an interview with Grant to discuss the capitulation of the garrison, Lord requested the Major to notify Bowen that she "had felt it an honor to be employed in such a manner for so brave a man, but if he had worn it in an interview with Gen. Grant for the surrender of Vicksburg I could only wish that I could take out every stitch I had put in."⁴¹⁸ When confirmation arrived of the surrender, the stunned civilians could hardly believe that Pemberton would capitulate on Independence Day, and many considered the action as evidence of the native Pennsylvanian's treason. Lettie Vick Downs inscribed in her journal on July 8 that Vicksburg had been "sold by a traitor, our brave men to have such a commander. Several have said (and no doubt they expressed the feelings of all) that rather than surrender to such thieving villains as the Yankees,

⁴¹⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 461.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 461-63.

⁴¹⁷ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 173-78.

⁴¹⁸ Mrs. W. W. Lord journal, 7-8.

they would fight three days after their provisions were out. Noble men.”⁴¹⁹ Pemberton defended his actions in his official report by explaining, “I believed that upon that day I should obtain better terms. Well aware of the vanity of our foes, I knew they would attach vast importance to the entrance on July 4,” and on that day “to gratify their national vanity they would yield then what could not be extorted from them at any other time.”⁴²⁰

Years after the war, Lida Lord recalled, “It was therefore a great shock to us all when the rector, pale as death, came into the cave, and said, with almost a sob, ‘Take the children home. The town is surrendered, and the Union army will march in at ten o’clock.’” Soon the Lord family began walking to their homes and encountered several of the defeated Confederate soldiers. Lida described the scene as, “We were crying like babies, while tears rolled down their dusty cheeks, and eyes that had fearlessly looked into the cannon’s mouth fell before our heartbroken glances. ‘Ladies,’ the soldiers dejectedly announced, “we would have fought for you forever. Nothing but starvation whipped us.”” When the small party arrived at their home, she declared the building, “almost uninhabitable” from the Union shellfire.⁴²¹ At the same time, Mary Loughborough safely exited her cave, awestruck at the incredible magnitude of the Union artillery bombardment. “On the hill above us,” she noted, “the earth was literally covered with fragments of shell—Parrott, shrapnell, canister; besides lead in all shapes and forms, and a long kind of solid shot, shaped like a small Parrott shell.” She further described how “Minie balls lay in every direction, flattened, dented, and bent from the contact with trees and pieces of wood in

⁴¹⁹ *The Journal of Lettie Vick Downs in the Year 1863*, 8.

⁴²⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part I, 285.

⁴²¹ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 90-91.

their flight. The grass seemed deadened—the ground plowed into furrows in many places; while scattered over all, like giants’ pepper, in numberless quantity, were the shrapnell balls.”⁴²²

As the victorious Union soldiers marched into the streets of Vicksburg, they strode past bewildered citizens and bombed-out buildings. Lida Lord testified, “The hardest trial of that bitter Fourth was the triumphant entrance of Grant’s army, marching, with banners waving and drums beating, through streets plowed by their cannon-balls and strewn with the ruins of our homes.”⁴²³ Lida’s mother, Margaret, reported, “All that day tey [they] were streaming through town and in and out of my yard and so drunk.”⁴²⁴ Federal soldier Thomas Wise Durham later recalled, “It was interesting, if not amusing, to see the women in hysterics, raving, pulling their hair, stamping their feet and cursing the Yankees.” According to Durham, the women acted as though the Earth “had come to an end and they wanted to die hard, but they mellowed down a little when we began to feed them. We not only fed the army that had surrendered but all the citizens of the city, for they were all quite hungry when the surrender was made.”⁴²⁵ Once within Vicksburg, the Federal army immediately began distributing food to both Pemberton’s army and the residents of the town. One Yankee soldier, Ira Blanchard, remembered, “The inhabitants were in a famishing condition, and when we opened a bakery where we made fresh bread for our regiment, the women, those too who had been wealthy before, would come out and beg a loaf as we carried it through the streets.”⁴²⁶ Lida Lord admitted her humiliation at having to rely on her enemy for sustenance when she recounted, “The day of the surrender we were in a pitiable

⁴²² Loughborough, *My Cave Life in Vicksburg*, 130-31.

⁴²³ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 91.

⁴²⁴ Mrs. W. W. Lord journal, 10.

⁴²⁵ Patrick, *Three Years With Wallace’s Zouaves*, 147.

⁴²⁶ Blanchard, *I Marched With Sherman*, 106.

plight, having neither food nor candles; but within twenty-four hours we were, with many others, receiving rations as ‘a family in destitute circumstances’!”⁴²⁷

As Grant’s men entered the city, a few instances of looting occurred by renegades from both armies until the victors restored order. Major Maurice Simons recorded in his diary on July 4, “The yankees going in to every house. Plunder & pillage seems to be their fort.”⁴²⁸ One Missouri Confederate, Corporal Ephraim Anderson, stated that from his perspective, none of the “dwellings in the place were disturbed except those from which the families had removed for safety; and the furniture in these was appropriated by the soldiers.” The Federals “unhesitatingly removed from the handsome bureaus their large mirrors, and placing them about their camps, seemed to survey themselves and surroundings with evident complacency, and used these new luxuries with the most nonchalant air.” Anderson added further that “sugar belonging to the Confederate government, and also some that belonged to private parties, were rolled out into the streets by the Federal soldiery, the heads of the hogsheads knocked out, and the rebs around were invited to come up and help themselves.”⁴²⁹ Lida Lord asserted, “Just at first the Federal soldiers gave some trouble, trooping in and out of yards and houses, passing rough jokes with colored women, and bragging not a little.” But she did acknowledge that “the officers were uniformly kind and considerate, General McPherson especially exerting himself to make the lot of paroled prisoners and unfortunate people more endurable.”⁴³⁰

After the surrender, Union Private J. W. Greenman toured the secessionist stronghold in order to “see the effects of our attack.” “I went all through the City,” he noted in his diary, “and saw

⁴²⁷ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 91.

⁴²⁸ Braudaway, “The Journal of Maj. Maurice Kavanaugh Simons, 1863,” 124.

⁴²⁹ Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal*, 358-59.

⁴³⁰ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 91.

the shattered stores, Warehouses and dwellings, and saw and went into some of the Caves in the side of the hill where the wealthy people lived during the siege.” Greenman, impressed with the handsomely decorated caves, chronicled that “some of the underground rooms were richly furnished, and Pianos and Organs and other musical instruments were there, and fine carpets and furniture.” After visiting the caves, Greenman preserved an account of one interesting interview he conducted with a war-weary woman of Vicksburg when he stopped at a battered residence for a drink of well water. He asked the tenant if she was in the house when the shells landed behind her home and “she replied that she was, and very spitefully told me that all the nasty yankees in the North could not scare her away from her home. I admired her grit, but did not have much respect for her discretion.”⁴³¹

The damage inflicted by Grant’s bombardment awed many Federal soldiers. One northern sight-seer, Thomas Durham, commented, “There was hardly a house in the city that was not riddled by our cannon balls and shells,” while another Yankee, William Winters of the 67th Indiana Infantry, recorded, “I saw one house that had 27 round shot holes in it and I don know how many from musket balls and fragments of shell, but it was an awful sight.”⁴³² On July 4, Lieutenant Joseph A. Savage of the 83rd Ohio Infantry wrote to his wife, “Vicksburg looks like it had been sowed with cannon balls. I dont think I saw a house that was not torn more or less with shot, some completely demolished the people all had caves in the Ground with carpeted floors and sides covered with canvas.”⁴³³

⁴³¹ Greenman, Greenman Diary, 105-6.

⁴³² Patrick, *Three Years With Wallace’s Zouaves*, 148; Steven E. Woodworth, ed., *The Musick of the Mocking Birds, the Roar of the Cannon: The Civil War Diary and Letters of William Winters* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 63.

⁴³³ Joseph A. Savage Papers, 1863, Pearce Civil War Collection, Navarro College, Corsicana, Texas.

On July 4, Max Kuner returned to Vicksburg and realized that the “bombardment had done its work. I saw my own store a mere heap of ruins.” Continuing on his odyssey, Kuner next “rode on to the family home. The house had a great hole in the side, where a shell had penetrated. This shell burst in the basement, which had been our dining room, and had splintered the table there so that the remains were about the size of matches.” To make matters worse, Kuner soon noticed that a group of Union soldiers occupied the house. The Bavarian approached one Federal officer “well sprawled out” upon his sofa and inquired, “By what authority, sir, do you take possession of another man’s house?” “That’s none of your damned business,” the officer replied. After Kuner had announced that he owned the premises, the uninvited guest asked, “Are you a loyal citizen?” “That,” the aggravated homeowner responded, “is none of *your* damned business!” Kuner’s outburst prompted the Federal to “swear violently” and stand, “lifting his foot” in an attempt to kick the civilian out of his own home. Before that blow could land, Kuner left and immediately sought an interview with General Grant. Fortunately for Kuner, Grant issued an order directing that the house be returned to its owner. Though Kuner did not take immediate possession of property, he asserted that when he did return, “I found that the house had been repaired, and that not a thing in it, even to a gold pen which had been left upon the mantel, had been molested.”⁴³⁴

Lida Lord documented her own encounter with two Federal soldiers soon after the surrender. After returning to her home, she discovered “two men, common soldiers, on our back porch, turning over with their bayonets the contents of a basket of clean clothes.” Despite being admonished for disturbing a lady’s home, “one of them grinned, and said, pointing to gaping walls and starting planks, ‘Do you call that a lady’s house? You ought to keep it in better order.’” Before any trouble occurred, Lida reported that the soldiers “were promptly ordered off by a man

⁴³⁴ [Kuner?], “Vicksburg, and after,” 490-92.

standing near, who wore shoulder-straps and seemed to have authority. After that day every family had protection papers from the provost marshal, and good order and discipline reigned.”⁴³⁵

While the white civilians of Vicksburg regarded the surrender of the city with despair, the African American residents welcomed the Union conquerors as liberators. The freed slaves’ open interaction with Grant’s victorious Army of the Tennessee astounded many white southerners. W. H. Tunnard observed that on July 7, “A new spectacle to the brave boys of the Third Louisiana was to-day witnessed in Vicksburg, which was the free intermingling between the Yankees and negroes on terms of equality.” Aside from equal interaction, Tunnard further revealed that he “saw a United States officer walking through the streets with a negro woman leaning on his arm. . . . How such a scene affected a Southerner then can better be imagined than described. Now, it would scarce elicit a passing glance.”⁴³⁶ Major Maurice Simons agreed with Tunnard when he wrote in his diary on July 8, “I am getting very impatient to get away from the sight of Yankees. Its truly disgusting to see them walking the streets with negroes as if there was no distinction in the races.” Simons ended his entry by observing, “It really disgusts me as I think it would any one who had respect for himself or others.”⁴³⁷

Former slave Isaac Stier expressed his opinion of the capitulation as “dem Yankees took us by starvation. Twant a fair fight. Dey called it a vict’ry an’ bragged ‘bout Vicksburg a-fallin’, but hongry folks aint got no fight lef’ in ‘em. Us folks was starved into surrenderin’.” Although previously a servant with the Confederate Army, Stier, like many other former slaves in the Vicksburg area, soon found himself serving in the Union Army. “I was captured at Vicksburg

⁴³⁵ Reed, “Woman’s Experiences During the Siege of Vicksburg,” 91.

⁴³⁶ Tunnard, *A Southern Record*, 245.

⁴³⁷ Braudaway, “The Journal of Maj. Maurice Kavanaugh Simons, 1863,” 126.

an' hel' in jail 'til I 'greed to take up arms wid de Nawth. I figgered dat was 'bout all I could do, 'cause dey warnt but one war at Vicksburg an' dat was over," he recounted. Like many soldiers in both armies, Stiers had grown weary of war and only wanted to return home after the fall of Vicksburg. He admitted, "I was all de time hopin' I could slip off an' work my way back home, but de Yankees didn't turn me loose 'til 1866."⁴³⁸

A few days into the Union occupation, Missouri Confederate Ephraim Anderson was appalled during a visit to the Vicksburg cemetery to discover plundered family mausoleums and ransacked tombs, which he derided as "a very barbarous and desecrating act." Anderson narrated that the tombs lay "above the ground, and could be opened at any time; and I had looked into them on one occasion during the siege: the bodies were arranged on shelves upon either side, in metallic cases, and were tolerably well preserved, as could be distinctly seen through the covering of glass." The deceased inside "were richly dressed, and upon the hands and persons of nearly all was very fine and costly jewelry. Upon entering these depositaries sacred to the dead, a day or two after the surrender," the Missourian chillingly recalled, "I observed, to my horror, that the glasses had been broken and the bodies had been disturbed and desecrated by the foul touch of the ruthless invader," and that "the hand of the robber had torn from its sacred resting-place the jewelry that had been committed to the tomb as memorials of love and affection, the last tribute of the living to the memory of the dead." Although Anderson blamed the "shameless sacrilege" on a "Federal regiment encamped close by," in the momentary chaos following Vicksburg's capitulation any number of dissatisfied Confederates, Union bummers, resentful freed slaves, or simply common criminals may have been responsible for the grave robbing.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁸ Ranwick, *Oklahoma and Mississippi Narratives*, pt. 2, 147-48.

⁴³⁹ Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal*, 362.

On July 4, Sherman sent a dispatch to Grant stating, “The farmers and families out here acknowledge the magnitude of this loss, and now beg to know their fate. All crops are destroyed and cattle eaten up. You will give their case your attention as soon as more important business is disposed of. At least I promise them this.”⁴⁴⁰ On the day after the surrender, Sherman wrote to his wife a more detailed depiction of how southern civilians regarded Pemberton’s surrender. He related to her, “Oh the wail of these secesh Girls when Vicksburg surrendered. They cried and tore their hair, but I told them they had better not—they would survive the humiliating thought and eat whatever bread with as much relish as they ever did the corn dodgers of Aunt Dinah.” In his letter, Sherman admitted it was “hard to see as I do” the fate of one southern minister and planter who had fallen on hard times since Union soldiers had visited the area. Sherman related that “Two months ago he had a dozen house servants & 40 field hands, but now all gone, fences open & corn eaten up—garden pillaged by soldiers, house gutted of all furniture &c., indeed desolation, and he & his family compelled to appeal to us for the Soldier’s Ration.” Observing the effectiveness of his new “hard war” policy, Sherman wryly concluded that “this you will say is the judgment of God, but stiff necked he dont see it.”⁴⁴¹

The fall of Vicksburg stunned southern civilians across Mississippi, and many at first refused to believe that the city would ever surrender, especially on the Union’s patriotic Fourth of July. On July 4, Emilie McKinley inscribed in her journal, “Report says Vicksburg has fallen, but I cannot and will not believe it.” A few days later, on July 10, she confessed, “It is horrible to think that Vicksburg is really gone.”⁴⁴² Ida Barlow Trotter remembered after the war that “on July 4, 1863, Vicksburg was given over into the hands of the enemy, and a death blow fell upon

⁴⁴⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 474.

⁴⁴¹ Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman’s Civil War*, 502.

⁴⁴² Cotton, *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, 39-41.

the Confederacy for from that day those in authority knew that hope was vain and the cause for which so many brave men had given up their lives, was lost.” Trotter mournfully described the defeat as “the death knell of the beloved Confederacy.”⁴⁴³

The victory, along with Major General George G. Meade’s repulse of General Robert E. Lee’s second invasion of the North at Gettysburg, electrified the northern population and devastated morale among soldiers from Mississippi throughout the Confederacy. One member of the 16th Mississippi Infantry serving in the vaunted Army of Northern Virginia, Jerome B. Yates, wrote home to his sister from Pennsylvania, “What is the use of us fighting so hard and whipping the enemy up here when through the neglect of those down at home we are to lose everything that we are fighting for?” The disgruntled Rebel further declared, “I for one am wishing to stop the thing unless the Southern army will give us a little help.”⁴⁴⁴ Another Mississippi Confederate, James Johnson Kirkpatrick wrote in his diary, “Got Richmond papers of the 13th stating again and more positively that Vicksburg capitulated on the 4th. The news is very discouraging.”⁴⁴⁵ As word of the disaster spread, desertions within Mississippi units rose noticeably. One Magnolia State Rebel, J. B. Crawford, lamented, “News reached hear that vicksburg has gon up the spout. If it has wee had just as well quit and give up the Confederacy.”⁴⁴⁶ As historian Ben Wynne concludes, “For some soldiers who had entered the service as part of a community enterprise, it was the successful federal invasion of their home

⁴⁴³ Trotter, *The Seige of Vicksburg*, 7.

⁴⁴⁴ Evans, *The 16th Mississippi Infantry*, 160.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

state in 1863, not the subsequent fall of Richmond or the surrender at Appomattox, that marked the end of the war.”⁴⁴⁷

Desertions increased in Louisiana and Texas units as well, particularly after the fall of Port Hudson on July 9.⁴⁴⁸ One Texas Rebel, Private Samuel Farrow, realized the magnitude of the defeat when he observed, “they have got full control of the Mississippi river from its fountain head to where it empties into the Gulf and the Northwestern states now will pour down their forces upon us in such numbers that we will be compelled to retreat before them as far as they choose to follow.”⁴⁴⁹ By the summer of 1863, Vicksburg had become more valuable as a political symbol of southern resistance than as a mere strategic location, and Grant’s capture of the city became an invaluable propaganda tool to break the southern will to continue the war. Throughout Mississippi, southern civilians now anxiously pondered what their fates would be under a Union occupation that showed no appearance of ending in the near future.

⁴⁴⁷ Wynne, *Mississippi’s Civil War*, 138.

⁴⁴⁸ Taylor, “Discontent in Confederate Louisiana,” 421; John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 301-6.

⁴⁴⁹ S. W. Farrow to Josephine, July 11, 1863, Farrow Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, quoted in Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division, C.S.A.*, 110.

CHAPTER 6

“NOTHING IS LEFT BETWEEN VICKSBURG & JACKSON”

After the surrender of Vicksburg, Grant immediately ordered Sherman to turn the 46,000 men of the “Exterior Line” eastward against Joseph E. Johnston and his Army of Relief. At long last, and under intense pressure from Richmond, Johnston had reluctantly started his columns marching west toward a confrontation with Grant’s army on July 1. When word of Pemberton’s surrender arrived on July 5, the cautious Johnston quickly called the operation off.⁴⁵⁰ Johnston’s retrograde movement affected both Union soldiers and southern citizens along the route of retreat when Confederates poisoned the few reliable sources of drinking water, but the desperate effort failed to halt the relentless Federals. Sherman pursued Johnston back to the hastily rebuilt defenses of Jackson and on July 10 began a seven day-long siege of the capital.⁴⁵¹

On the march from Vicksburg, Sherman attempted to restrain his men from repeating the excesses they had committed during their first march through the area. On July 6, Sherman issued “General Orders, No. 53” to direct the movements of his army over the same war-torn area they had traveled in May. In Article VIII, Sherman asserted that “private pillage and plunder must cease; our supplies are now ample, and there is no use or sense in wanton damage.” Although Sherman consented that “brigade quartermasters and commissaries may collect by regular foraging parties such forage and provisions as are needed by the troops,” he firmly declared, “The people of the country should be protected as far as possible against the cruel and wanton acts of irresponsible parties. Stragglers and camp-followers found out of place should be dealt with summarily.”⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Winschel, *Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar*, 112-13; Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 179-80.

⁴⁵¹ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 179-86.

⁴⁵² *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 481-82.

Due to the intensive campaigning of May and June, few provisions remained in the immediate vicinity of Jackson and Vicksburg. On July 11, Sherman wrote to Grant from the trenches at Jackson, “By our former trip, and the demands of Johnston’s army, the country is stripped of food and forage.”⁴⁵³ Although both armies had foraged heavily from Warren and Hinds counties on the march to Vicksburg, enough food remained in the surrounding counties for Sherman to continue organized foraging. For example, on July 15, Sherman ordered Colonel Charles R. Woods and his brigade to march north to Canton, Mississippi, in Madison County to destroy the railroad depot and then rejoin the main army, “loading on your return the wagons with corn or property useful to this army” while collecting “beef, cattle, sheep, and hogs.”⁴⁵⁴ On the day before, July 14, Sherman provided a detailed report of his activities to Grant, stating, “Our foraging parties now go out about 15 miles. . . . We are absolutely stripping the country of corn, cattle, hogs, sheep, poultry, everything, and the new-growing corn is being thrown open as pasture fields or hauled for the use of our animals.” In the letter, Sherman admitted, “The wholesale destruction to which this country is now being subjected is terrible to contemplate, but it is the scourge of war, to which ambitious men have appealed, rather than the judgment of the learned and pure tribunals which our forefathers had provided for supposed wrongs and injuries.” “Therefore,” the red-bearded general concluded, “so much of my instructions as contemplated destroying and weakening the resources of our enemy are being executed with rigor, and we have also done much toward the destruction of Johnston’s army.”⁴⁵⁵

One of the soldiers detailed on these foraging expeditions, Elisha Hamilton of the 118th Illinois Infantry, described his experiences in his diary on July 15: “We go out about seven

⁴⁵³ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 521-22.

⁴⁵⁴ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 515-16.

⁴⁵⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 525-27.

miles: find a large crib of corn. While the wagons are being loaded, the way the chickens, ducks, Geese, pigs, Honey and all sorts of veatables [vegetables] suffer, is a caution; the boys not having their breakfast.” At this residence, Hamilton and his comrades discovered hidden weapons which they promptly seized. He dryly recorded in his journal, “I jay-hawk quite a lot of vegetables, salt, a duck, a chicken & a pig. One of the boys finds a double-barrelled shotgun, a pistol, powder flask, carpet sack &c. under the house. I get the Pistol & powder flask. See no rebs.” Unfortunately, Hamilton provided no information as to the presence of civilians during the Yankees’ uninvited visit and ended his account with the simple statement, “After taking all that we care for, we start for Camp about one o’clock.”⁴⁵⁶

On July 9, Joseph E. Johnston issued a written proclamation to his soldiers, announcing, “An insolent foe, flushed with hope by his recent successes at Vicksburg, confronts you, threatening the people, whose homes and liberties you are here to protect, with plunder and conquest. . . . This enemy it is at once the mission and duty of you brave men to chastise and expel from the soil of Mississippi.” Despite his repeated efforts to improve morale, the recent defeats continued to inspire desertions and absenteeism within the Army of Relief. The lack of discipline and confidence in the cause had become so acute that Johnston had to warn his soldiers that the “vice of straggling he begs you to shun, frown on, and, if needs be, check by even the most summary of remedies.” Although his own feeble efforts to “expel” Grant “from the soil of Mississippi” had utterly failed, Johnston nonetheless opined, “The country expects in this, the great crisis of its destiny, that every man will do his duty.”⁴⁵⁷

Upon reaching Jackson, Sherman’s men surrounded the city on three sides, once again utilizing the shovel and spade to draw closer to Confederate fortifications each day. Despite

⁴⁵⁶ Daniel Richard Ryan, “A Hancock County, Illinois Citizen Soldier’s Experiences in the Civil War: The Diaries of Elisha Bentley Hamilton,” (master’s thesis, Western Illinois University, 1970), 32.

⁴⁵⁷ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 994-95.

constant skirmishing and frequent bombardments, little actual fighting took place during the siege except for a fruitless assault on Johnston's earthworks by Colonel Issac Pugh's brigade on July 12. When Johnston learned of a Union supply train carrying sufficient ammunition for a massive artillery bombardment from Sherman's heavy guns, and Rebel cavalry failed to intercept the column, the Confederate commander ordered the evacuation of the Mississippi state capital for the second time on July 16. Once again, Johnston deliberately destroyed badly needed supplies and equipment that his soldiers could not transport and also burned the remaining bridges over the Pearl River in the process. On July 17, Sherman reentered the city and immediately began completing the work of destruction he had begun in May.⁴⁵⁸

Once Johnston retreated, Sherman outlined the occupation of Jackson on July 17 in "General Orders, No. 59," which called for Sherman's own XV Corps under the command of Major General Frederick Steele to "occupy the town with one division," and in order to avoid a repetition of the lawlessness that had occurred during the first occupation of Jackson, directed Steele to "maintain order and good discipline within the limits of the place, repressing all pillage, plundering, and rowdyism." Furthermore, Sherman instructed Steele "to collect all stragglers and men on horseback having no orders or business from proper authority, taking the horses for the use of the quartermaster's department, and putting the men to work on the destruction of the railroad." As a final precaution, Sherman mandated that "Roll-calls will be carefully made at retreat to-day, and all men properly accounted for." Sherman's directives indicate that the Federal commander planned to preserve order in the city and allow every available man to concentrate on demolishing Jackson's ability to support the southern war effort rather than waste valuable time plundering stores and private homes. Sherman intended Union victory in the war to come through a highly organized destruction of southern resources rather than a chaotic spree

⁴⁵⁸ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 179-86.

of random violence and criminality. At the end of his orders, Sherman inspired his soldiers with the reminder, “One day’s work of the Fifteenth Army Corps at Jackson in May prevented Johnston handling his troops and materials in the campaign, now made complete by the retreat from Jackson. Let us now so destroy this railroad that it cannot be used ‘during the war.’”⁴⁵⁹

The Confederate army had torched several residences to clear fields of fire, and the Federals thoroughly wrecked the few manufacturing and rail facilities that had survived the original occupation or had undergone any repair since. Sherman noted the destruction his retreating foe had created in a letter he wrote to Grant on July 18 that stated, “The enemy burned great part of Jackson, and we have done some in that line. The place is ruined.”⁴⁶⁰ The next day, Sherman elaborated on the burning of Jackson in a message to Admiral Porter, writing, “The enemy burned nearly all the handsome dwellings, round about the town, because they gave us shelter or to light up the ground to prevent night attacks.” Sherman also informed Porter that Johnston’s army “set fire to a chief block of stores in which were commissary supplies, and our men, in spite of guards, have widened the circle of fire, so that Jackson, once the pride and boast of Mississippi, is now a ruined town.”⁴⁶¹ In his report of the siege, Sherman asserted, “Indeed, the city, with the destruction committed by ourselves in May last and by the enemy during this siege, is one mass of charred ruins.”⁴⁶²

In his memoirs, William R. Eddington of the 97th Illinois provided more information on the second Union occupation of Jackson. Eddington recounted, “The Rebels set the city of Jackson on fire in about a dozen places before they left, what confederate supplies they had there, they

⁴⁵⁹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 524-25.

⁴⁶⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 529.

⁴⁶¹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 531-32; Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman’s Civil War*, 505.

⁴⁶² *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 532-38.

destroyed to keep us from getting them.” In their efforts to destroy southern war material, Sherman’s men added to the conflagration, and Eddington stated that the “city was on fire in so many places, and what with the water mains, fire fighting apparatus pump and everything destroyed by our shells, there was only one way left to put the fire out, and that was to tear down the buildings ahead of the fire.” As Eddington’s men attempted to control the blaze, he observed that the “citizens seemed to be paralyzed, and incapable of doing anything and well they might be for shot and shell had been poured into the city for the last seven days.” Still, despite the efforts of Eddington’s command, the fires spread. As he remembered, “The boys went to work and the more they worked, the worse the fire got. Some one would always throw a fiery board far enough to reach another house, thus causing the fire to start again.” Eventually, recognizing the futility of the effort, Eddington’s superiors “sent the boys all back to their company’s and left the fire to burn itself out with what help the citizens could give. I saw the biggest portion of the city of Jackson, Mississippi burned up.”⁴⁶³

Upon entering Jackson, a member of the 14th Illinois recorded, “we have had the pleasure to see the City and Capital in flames and ashes we destroyed all the rail roads within 20 miles and are now ready to return to Vicksburg or rejoin our old Corps.”⁴⁶⁴ John Merrilees chronicled in his diary that while “the business part of the town is literally demolished, a miserable looking spectacle,” Sherman had posted “heavy guards on today, and better order than usual is kept; private houses all guarded.”⁴⁶⁵ However, despite Sherman’s strict orders against plundering, some Union soldiers took advantage of the occupation to pillage Jackson for a second time. Lieutenant George Hale of the 33rd Wisconsin wrote in his diary on July 17, “When we arrived

⁴⁶³ *My Civil War Memoirs, and Other Reminiscences as written by my Father, W. R. Eddington*, ed. Norman O. Eddington (Brigton, IL: 1934?), 13.

⁴⁶⁴ *Journal of Company A, 14th Illinois*, 62.

⁴⁶⁵ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 86.

on the line found that Jackson had been evacuated during the night and our men were in their works. The boys did a good deal of jayhawking. Capt. Thayer came in with about 100 pounds of sugar on his back.”⁴⁶⁶ That same day, Private Henry Wilmer Franks of the 96th Ohio Infantry wrote home that a “great excitement prevails this morning. Our men are stripping the town of all they can get and carrying it off and selling and speculating as fast as they can.” The following day, he added, “Well yesterday was a day of much excitement the boys made a play day of it, or rather a day of plundering for they carried off everything that was in the city.”⁴⁶⁷ Sherman later commented in his official report that “The conduct of the troops, so far as fighting is concerned, was all that any commander could ask . . . but there was and is too great a tendency to plunder and pillage, confined to a few men, that reflects discredit on us all.”⁴⁶⁸

Franks justified by the actions of Federal soldiers as revenge for Johnston’s use of crude land mines placed near wells, so that “when our boys went to get a drink they went off and killed some.” In his report of the occupation, Sherman maintained that Johnston’s army “burned all the bridges, and had placed loaded shells with torpedoes in the roads leading out from the river. The explosion of one of these wounded a citizen severely, and another killed a man and wounded two others of Lightburn’s brigade.”⁴⁶⁹ According to John Merrilees, Union soldiers forced captured Confederate prisoners to remove the improvised land mines.⁴⁷⁰ Other historians, including Mark Grimsley, have argued that Union soldiers from the Midwest took their revenge upon Jackson at least partly as retribution for depredations committed by the Rebels in Confederate Brigadier

⁴⁶⁶ George Hale Diary, 1863, May 17-July 23, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

⁴⁶⁷ Henry Wilmer Franks to family July 17-18, 1863, Henry Wilmer Franks Civil War Letters, 1863-1894, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

⁴⁶⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 532-38.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 532-38.

⁴⁷⁰ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 86.

General John Hunt Morgan's raid into Indiana and Ohio, which occurred from July 2-26, 1863.⁴⁷¹ One Federal soldier, Darius Hall Dodd of the 83rd Indiana Infantry, wrote to his sister on July 28, "Some men in our Co had their houses in Ripley County [Indiana] plundered their horses stolen &c Wo! be unto the Rebs here after where the 83d goes. We have already made good Morgan's damage Even if he had of taken all Ind[iana]." In addition, Dodd commented that "there is ½ dozen horses left in Jackson every farm house almost between Vicks & there has been burned. The property all taken Negroes not excepted."⁴⁷² It is also possible that some of the destruction in Jackson may have been accidental, as Henry Franks contended that "the houses that were burned had some shell[s] in them and they burst and burnt a good many."⁴⁷³

One Federal, Thomas Wise Durham, wrote, "From the night of the evacuation until the 21st we were busy destroying railroads and public buildings. We destroyed everything that could be of benefit to the enemy."⁴⁷⁴ Grant approved of Sherman's actions and on July 18 detailed to his friend, "When you leave, leave nothing of value for the enemy to carry on war with. I would like the [rail]road destroyed east of Jackson as far as possible."⁴⁷⁵ According to Sherman, his men tore up the rails "40 miles north and 60 south; also 10 miles east," while the "10-miles break west, of last May, is still untouched, so that Jackson ceases to be a place for the enemy to collect stores and men from which to threaten our great river." So great was the wreckage that Sherman

⁴⁷¹ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 160-62.

⁴⁷² Darius Hall Dodd to Sister, July 28, 1863, Civil War Miscellany, 1848-1927 (bulk 1860-1865), Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁴⁷³ Henry Wilmer Franks to family July 17-18, 1863, Henry Wilmer Franks Civil War Letters.

⁴⁷⁴ Patrick, *Three Years With Wallace's Zouaves*, 150.

⁴⁷⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 528.

could assure Admiral Porter that “the good folks of Jackson will not soon again hear the favorite locomotive whistle.”⁴⁷⁶

Interestingly, Sherman did note that “State house, Governor’s mansion and some fine dwellings, well within the lines of intrenchments, remain untouched,” and a small number of those buildings are still standing in Jackson today.⁴⁷⁷ Although Sherman eliminated the industrial resources of the city, many private residences survived the siege and the extensive looting that occurred. Indeed, war correspondent Cadwallader defended Union behavior during the second occupation, reporting that “the behavior of Johnston, and the citizens of Jackson, absolved Sherman from obligations in that direction, and his troops were inclined to finish what Johnson had begun, and reduce the place to smoldering ruins. But discipline restrained them.”⁴⁷⁸

Northern newspapers blamed much of the destruction on the retreating Confederates. On August 15, 1863, *Harper’s Weekly* reported, “It would beggar description to attempt to portray the appearance of Jackson after the rebels retreated. Destruction was visible on all hands.” The periodical continued, “The rebels burned up fifty or sixty buildings on the street fronting the Capitol, on the ground of military necessity, to accomplish the destruction of large quantities of army stores which they were not able to transport in their retreat.”⁴⁷⁹ After reducing the Mississippi capital’s war-making capabilities, Sherman could safely state to Grant, “Jackson will no longer be a point of danger. . . . The inhabitants are subjugated. They cry aloud for mercy.

⁴⁷⁶ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 531-32; Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman’s Civil War*, 505.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 124.

⁴⁷⁹ “The Capture of Jackson, Mississippi,” *Harper’s Weekly*, New York, NY, August 15, 1863, Issue 08/15, in HarpWeek [database on-line]; 526, <http://app.harpweek.com/viewarticletext.asp?webhitsfile=hw18630815000031%2Ehtm&xpath=%2FTEI%2E2%5B1%5D%2Ftext%5B1%5D%2Fbody%5B1%5D%2Fdiv1%5B21%5D&xml=HW%5C1863%5C18630815%2Exml&itleid=HW&volumeid=1863&issueid=0815&pagerange=0526bc%2D0526bc&restriction=the+capture+of+jackson+mississippi+&pageIds=%7CHW%2D1863%2D08%2D15%2D0526%7C> (accessed April 26, 2008).

The land is devastated for 30 miles around.”⁴⁸⁰ Sherman finally departed from Jackson on July 23, and from then on the heavily damaged city would be known by a new name:

“Chimneyville.”⁴⁸¹

As Johnston’s army marched, some Confederate soldiers within the disorganized retreat took the opportunity to steal from local residents. The ongoing problem became so pronounced that on July 22, Johnston’s Assistant Inspector-General, Major E. J. Harvie, had to issue a circular to Major Generals John C. Breckinridge and William W. Loring criticizing “the loose manner officers have of discharging their duties. Robbery and plunder are resorted to by the men composing the divisions of this army, and apparently nothing is done to check it.” Apparently angered by the repeated failures of his subordinates to maintain discipline in the army, Johnston ordered that his division commanders must “always post guards around property about which their troops may be encamped, with orders to shoot down any man caught in the act of depredating upon such property.” In the end, Johnston demanded that Breckinridge and Loring “at once take steps to find out the company and regiment of every man engaged in stealing, and have their pay stopped at the next pay-day.”⁴⁸²

On July 24, on his return to Vicksburg from Jackson, Sherman addressed the problem of restoring stolen property to southern civilians in “Special Orders, No. 147.” One section of the orders gave authority to Lieutenant Colonel J. Condit Smith to prepare for the crossing of the Big Black River by constructing “a large corral, in which to collect horses, mules, &c., now in the possession of soldiers and officers belonging to this army, which have been plundered and taken from the inhabitants of the country.” Sherman required that Smith “appoint suitable officers or

⁴⁸⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 529.

⁴⁸¹ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 186.

⁴⁸² *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 1023-24.

agents of the quartermaster's department to take, by force if necessary, all horses ridden by any officer or soldier of this army not entitled by law to be mounted." Sherman's army must have acquired much more than stolen horses during the second occupation of Jackson, for the commanding general also ordered Smith to "collect out of the wagons all articles of furniture, chairs, tables, books, papers, &c.,—anything not belonging to the usual equipment of an officer or soldier."⁴⁸³

After Smith secured the property, Sherman appointed three officers to "assemble at the corral thus provided near the bridge at 8 a.m., July 26, to hear and determine all rights to horses, mules, or other property claimed as private, and their decision shall be final, and property thus pronounced by said board of survey as private shall be restored to the claimants." As Sherman issued the orders on July 24, that left two days for any southern civilian who had lost property to Sherman's army to learn of the claims process and travel to the location. Given the fact that the wealthiest southerners had likely fled as refugees at the first approach of the Union army in May, those who had lost the most property probably never learned of their chance to reclaim it. It is unknown how many, if any, southern civilians arrived in time and successfully convinced the board to restore their stolen goods. Those who did most likely already lived in the area and since they had not become refugees, they would have been most likely either lower class farmers or possible Unionists, and in some cases, perhaps both.⁴⁸⁴

For those southerners who did not present their case in time, Sherman directed that the goods and livestock "will be taken possession of by the quartermaster and properly branded and accounted for. A schedule or inventory thereof will be made out and filed at these headquarters, and the property will be taken up on the quarterly returns and accounted for as if purchased." In

⁴⁸³ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 548-49.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

other words, for all private property seized but not reclaimed, Sherman's men filed paperwork accounting the goods or animals as properly purchased by the United States government. For the property not needed by the army, Sherman decreed that "the same board of survey may order it burned, or sent to Vicksburg for sale for the benefit of the United States." Even medical transportation fell under the thorough inspection. In closing, Sherman noted, "Should sick men be conveyed in carriages, buggies, or vehicles other than the usual army wagons or ambulances, they must be taken out, and the carriages, buggies, &c., disposed of according to this order. . . . No excuse will be received for the passage of any unauthorized vehicle until its title is ascertained in the manner herein set forth."⁴⁸⁵

Interestingly, apparently Sherman's men also seized the vehicles and horses of former slaves following the army. Maria Carter and Milton Stamps, two Hinds county slaves who fled with Sherman's army after the Siege of Jackson, each later filed a claim with the Southern Claims Commission for wagons and horses confiscated at the Big Black River. In Maria Carter's case file, the commission's agents testified that "in July 1863, when Gen. Sherman's army passed through Jackson to Vicksburg, it was followed by large numbers of colored people, with horses, mules, wagons, &c. When they reached the Big Black river the animals & wagons were taken from them by a guard of federal troops stationed there."⁴⁸⁶ At least in these two cases, it appears that Federal soldiers did not believe Carter and Stamps actually owned the horses and wagons, though in the end both successfully proved that their owners had allowed them to acquire

⁴⁸⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 548-49.

⁴⁸⁶ United States Treasury Department, "Claim of Maria Carter," in the *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871-1880*, at Fold3.com, http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#34h- knXjBbfBBQt_jMEnIO47X5KSool8J03vN2EI20E (accessed March 24, 2012).

property and each received compensation.⁴⁸⁷ It is unknown how many other slaves lost personal property at the Big Black River, nor if Sherman knew such activities occurred.

While Sherman pursued Johnston across Mississippi and reoccupied Jackson, Grant busied himself with administering his conquests and continuing raids into Confederate occupied territory to further weaken the enemy. On July 14, Grant ordered Major General Francis Herron in Yazoo City, Mississippi to return to Vicksburg bringing “such Government stores as you can, and destroy all others. You may bring along the cotton mentioned in your letter, and particularly bring all the negro men you can.”⁴⁸⁸ Grant’s subordinate, Major General McPherson, continued this policy on July 17 when he instructed Brigadier General Thomas Ransom at Natchez to “collect all the cattle, arms, ammunition, lumber, &c.; in fact, stores of every kind which will be of advantage to us and damage the enemy.” McPherson’s orders also stated, “With regard to the contrabands, you can say to them that they are free, and that it will be better for them, especially the women and children, old and infirm, to remain quietly where they are, as we have no means of providing for them at present.” McPherson added, however, “With regard to the men (black) who are strong, able-bodied, and will make good soldiers, you can bring them along with you if they are willing to come and will leave their families behind them.”⁴⁸⁹ Most of the supplies mentioned in these dispatches likely belonged to the Confederate government, but it would certainly be possible that Union forces confiscated some civilian property as well. Even if they did not, the freeing of slaves and their subsequent use by the Federal army created a severe

⁴⁸⁷ United States Treasury Department, “Claim of Maria Carter,” in the *Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871-1880*, at Fold3.com, http://www.fold3.com/browse.php#34j-knXjBbfBBQt_jMEEnIO47X5KA8fArOOVOb4flwm3 (accessed March 24, 2012).

⁴⁸⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 509.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 521.

economic loss to southern planters, who lost their investments in slave labor and now had no workforce to plant and harvest their crops.

Across the state, Union forces also increased punishments for those civilians suspected of being guerillas or in any way aiding the hated partisans. At Corinth on July 20, Brigadier General Grenville Dodge ordered his subordinate Colonel Mersy, “Any band of rebels or single person caught interfering with the railroad or telegraph, in any way, who are not regularly in the Confederate service, shoot on the spot. I don’t want any prisoners of that kind.”⁴⁹⁰ It is not known if Union forces actually executed alleged guerillas on Dodge’s orders, or if so, how many. But regardless of the mounting reprisals, guerilla warfare would plague Union commanders in Mississippi until the end of the war and become a key factor that drove ordinary Union soldiers to engage in the more punitive hard war. A dispatch from Hurlbut to Grant on July 25 illustrated this predicament when the general admitted, “I hardly know what course to pursue. If I send cavalry, they break up and scatter, and my own cavalry commit depredations in following them. The people of the country themselves are more afraid of the guerillas than of our troops, and therefore will not report them.” Showing himself to be in a like mind with Dodge, Hurlbut advised his commander that “If I was authorized to make serious examples of such as are caught in acts of robbery and violence, it would be beneficial.”⁴⁹¹

At the same time, as the summer heat continued unabated, Confederate forces burned supplies and cotton in northern Mississippi to prevent the resources from falling into Union hands. On July 18, in Carrollton, Captain A. H. Forrest received instructions to “burn all cotton, whether belonging to the Government or individuals, leaving the owners only sufficient for the use of

⁴⁹⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 538.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 551-52.

their own families. . . . commence by burning that nearest the enemy.”⁴⁹² Likewise, on July 20, in Panola, Confederate authorities ordered Brigadier General James George to “send out detachments in different directions to burn cotton, commencing with that nearest and most exposed to the enemy. . . . giving certificates to the owners for the amount burned, and leaving a small quantity with each family for domestic use.”⁴⁹³ Such destruction may have prevented expensive cotton from falling into enemy hands, but it undoubtedly increased the growing war weariness and suffering of the civilian population within the state.

With his army in control of the Mississippi state capital for a second time and Johnston’s army eliminated as a potential threat, Grant could afford to be generous in the much more difficult campaign to restore the loyalty of the local populace. The effects of the constant campaigning left many residents destitute. On July 21, Sherman wrote to Grant from Jackson, “We have desolated this land for 30 miles round about. There are about 800 women and children who will perish unless they receive some relief.”⁴⁹⁴ In his report of the Siege of Jackson, Sherman wrote that he “remained two days longer . . . to complete the destruction of the railroad piers and to regulate somewhat the disordered and shattered condition of the inhabitants, whose homes had been ruined by war, and whose supplies had been utterly exhausted by the demands of two hostile armies.”⁴⁹⁵

In Jackson itself, Sherman furnished “200 barrels of flour and 100 barrels of mess pork” for starving residents along with medicine for Confederate sick and wounded left behind.⁴⁹⁶ In Vicksburg on July 11, Major General James McPherson issued “Special Orders, No. 135,” which

⁴⁹² *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 1016-17.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1020.

⁴⁹⁴ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 530.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 532-38.

⁴⁹⁶ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 539; Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 186.

commanded Major General John Logan to “immediately appoint three persons, one a commissioned officer, one a chaplain, to be selected from his command, and one citizen of reliable character, who will constitute a committee to visit the citizens of the town, point out the most needy and destitute, and issue to them provisions.” McPherson ordered his quartermaster to “furnish to them a storehouse,” and once the committee had made its selections, rations would be “issued on requisitions approved by the commanding officer of the post.”⁴⁹⁷

Also on July 11, Grant wrote to Brigadier General Elias Dennis in northeast Louisiana to inquire on the status of a Unionist family, the Duncans. After receiving a wire “from Washington [D.C.] stating that the Duncan estate had been visited by the press-gang, or recruiting parties from your district, and their negroes carried off,” Grant reminded Dennis that the family had “been loyal from the beginning of the rebellion, and as loyal persons have had safeguards given them by myself and Admiral Porter, and I have further received instructions from Washington to protect all loyal persons found in the South, and mentioning the Duncans, in particular, as being entitled to protection.” Apparently the Duncans had already accepted the provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation, as Grant noted that “They have gone so far as to acknowledge the freedom of their slaves, and made, as I understand, regular contracts with them to pay wages, and employ them just as negroes are employed on leased plantations.” The Duncans’ powerful friends in Washington and Grant’s forceful response prove that not all southern civilians suffered hardships during the Union occupation. Grant went so far as to inform Dennis, “I want the matter fully investigated and a report made to me. . . . If their negroes have been carried off, find out where they are and who carried them off. Return to them as far as possible everything that has been taken.” It is possible that the Duncans’ former slaves fled from their former owners once becoming free or had been mistakenly seized by Federal soldiers as enemy property used against

⁴⁹⁷ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 501-2.

the United States government (“contrabands”) and either relocated to a contraband camp, used in Union labor parties, or for the able-bodied males, perhaps recruited or conscripted into the U.S. Army.⁴⁹⁸ In the end, Grant ordered Dennis to “arrest the parties engaged in this transaction, and all officers among them send to me under guard.”⁴⁹⁹

Grant’s forces also issued Union relief supplies to the citizens in the countryside, as the region that the Army of the Tennessee stormed through on its epic march to Vicksburg lay in utter ruin. As Grant later stated in his memoirs, “Medicine and food were also sent to Raymond for the destitute families as well as the sick and wounded, as I thought it only fair that we should return to these people some of the articles we had taken while marching through the country.”⁵⁰⁰ In addition to the supplies forwarded to Raymond, in late July the Federals provided another fifteen thousand rations for the citizens of Clinton, Mississippi.⁵⁰¹ Grant went so far as to direct Sherman to remind his soldiers to “create as favorable an impression as possible upon the people,” and later asserted that “provisions and forage, when called for by them, were issued to all the people, from Bruinsberg to Jackson and back to Vicksburg, whose resources had been taken for the supply of the army.”⁵⁰²

Mississippians desperately needed those Union supplies, as the physical desolation of central portion of the state reached a level that shocked even northern observers. As war correspondent Sylvanus Cadwallader testified, “No subsistence of any kind remained. Every growing crop had been destroyed when possible. Wheat was burned in the barn and stack whenever found.

⁴⁹⁸ Patricia L. Faust, “Contrabands,” in *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War*, ed. Patricia L. Faust (New York: HarperPerennial, 1986), 161-62.

⁴⁹⁹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 500-1.

⁵⁰⁰ Grant, *Memoirs*, 324.

⁵⁰¹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 546.

⁵⁰² Grant, *Memoirs*, 324.

Provisions of every kind were brought away or destroyed. Livestock was slaughtered for use, or driven back on foot.” Cadwallader reported that “thousands were already applying for food to sustain life; and such heart-rending destitution had never been witnessed on the American Continent as in the region indicated.”⁵⁰³ Even Sherman admitted in a letter, “Our men are now all Expert thieves, sparing nothing not even the clothes of women, children & Negroes. Nothing is left between Vicksburg & Jackson so I can have peace here.”⁵⁰⁴

On July 22, Private Richard R. Puffer of the 8th Illinois Infantry wrote to his sister Idelia from Vicksburg, “The larger part of citizens draw U.S. rations having been rob[b]ed by one army or the other of all they had. Some of them look rather humble, But hunger brakes down all rules of etiquet[te].” In the letter, Puffer told his sister of meeting one southern family consisting of “an old lady & her daughter & a little son. . . . They were mounted on three miserable looking animals, had come in 17 miles to draw rations.” As a comrade helped the young woman dismount, Puffer noted, “She was graceful & appeared to be refined & cultivated. As we walked along my partner said I thought these Southern people were the chivalry & rode in carriages. Yes said I but-it-is altogether proverable? [probable] that some federal soldiers is riding in their carriage.”⁵⁰⁵ On August 10, a member of the 14th Illinois chronicled in his journal that he toured “the ruins” of Vicksburg and observed “the citizens who have to be supported by the Gov. It is quite humiliating to some who have to beg for subsistence. Me thinks it cuts their pride and humbles that Bragadocio to which the southern people are so much adicted.”⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 124-25.

⁵⁰⁴ Simpson and Berlin, *Sherman's Civil War*, 508.

⁵⁰⁵ Richard R. Puffer to sister Idelia, July 22, 1863, Richard R. Puffer papers.

⁵⁰⁶ *Journal of Company A, 14th Illinois*, 64.

One of those southern families receiving Union rations, the Lords, found themselves forced to call upon General Grant to request permission to travel to Union-occupied New Orleans. Somewhat to her surprise, Margaret Lord recorded that the general “received us with every courtesy and gave us papers which would secure us transportation through his lines.” In her meeting, Lord quoted Grant as stating that he was “desirous of aiding the people all he could ‘for instance Mrs. Lord besides I am supplying all the citizens with rations.’” “True, Gen,” the lady indignantly replied, “but if you will look back you will see a good reason for that.” In her fury, Lord angrily asked, “Where are the contents of my well filled storehouses and pantrys? Do you think I should need your rations if your soldiers had not carried off my provisions and do you think these poor rations can repay me, though I appreciate your kindness in ordering them for us[?]” Though Margaret did not record Grant’s reply to her outburst, she did admit that the Union commander “behaved throughout our interview as a brave soldier and gentlemen should, admired the heroism and self sacrifice of our army and people as much as I could ask, and as for the women of the South, he said they could not be conquered.”⁵⁰⁷

Passing through Port Gibson after receiving his parole, Ephraim Anderson observed, “As Grant’s army had passed up to the rear of Vicksburg, many of the houses had been visited by squads of cavalry, who were hunting ‘pretties,’ as they call it: this meant money, plate, watches, jewelry, spoons, and other valuables.” The Missourian recalled that “visiting down toward Port Gibson, we found scarcely a house had been passed without receiving a call. The negroes had left the plantations, and all the fine equipages had been carried off by the Federals.” The residents who remained were in dire straits, as Anderson maintained that “the handsome estates were in ruins; all the houses in the vicinity had been burnt, except one, and every means of living completely destroyed.” Stunned by such sights, Anderson complained bitterly, “This was a sad

⁵⁰⁷ Mrs. W. W. Lord journal, 12.

state of affairs, and one well calculated to impress the beholder with a conviction, that the worst pestilence was preferable to a visitation from the Federal army.”⁵⁰⁸

After surviving the Siege of Vicksburg, Margaret Lord received distressing reports that the Flowers’s plantation outside of the city where her family had stored their valuable possessions had been sacked by Union forces.⁵⁰⁹ In her journal, she recorded that within “an incredible short space of time after we left all was destroyed, scarcely a vestige left except the heaps of fragments of Dr. Lord’s valuable books, torn from their covers and scattered around, even the trunks broken to pieces, carpets cut up into scripts with their pen knives” along with “china and glass dashed against the wall, barrels of molasses broken open that their contents might be wasted upon the ground, and last but not least to me, our clothing torn into strips not even a flannel skirt left us.” Then, the distraught diarist continued, Union soldiers “passed into the rooms and dashed into fragments the large looking glass of my dressing table, and tearing the curtains from the windows with their bayonets[.] My bonnets were torn in two and the pieces tied to the post of the bed.” According to Margaret’s account, the soldiers “even went so far as to kill a sheep and bringing it into Mr. Flemin’s [Flemens Granger] parlor cut it up in pieces on his carpet and on his handsome table; when they could do no more they left and this was but one of thousands of cases.” In the end, in an afterthought most likely added after the war, the southern lady asked rhetorically, “Can you wonder that our hearts were full of bitterness towards them? I had never believed the reports we heard of such outrages, looked upon them as men’s paper stories gotten up for excitement, and as I knew our soldiers incapable of such conduct, believed the same of our enemies.”⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁸ Anderson, *Memoirs: Historical and Personal*, 368-69.

⁵⁰⁹ Lord Jr., “A Child at the Siege of Vicksburg,” 52-53.

⁵¹⁰ Mrs. W. W. Lord journal, 11-12.

Another civilian in Vicksburg, Max Kuner, recalled that after the surrender he attempted to return to his watch repair store and the valuable contents of his personal safe within it but could not do so as “guards posted about the block prevented me from approaching.” Kuner asked permission to reclaim his property from General Grant, who Kuner quoted as replying, “If I were you I wouldn’t touch the safe at all. The things in it are much more secure than if in your personal possession. The guard has been posted to prevent depredations, and when you are ready for your safe then you probably can open it.” Kuner accepted Grant’s advice and waited to reopen the safe, until, as he remembered, “one day I noticed that the safe had a hole right through the bottom! Somebody had been into it. The guards offered no objection, now, to my investigating further; and I found that the safe had been emptied!” Kuner reported the theft to Major General John A. “Black Jack” Logan and returned to his work as a watch repairman, only to soon encounter a customer requesting the repair of Kuner’s own watch which he had “left in the safe.” Kuner questioned the customer, who stated that he had purchased the watch from a Federal soldier. Kuner reported the new evidence to Logan’s adjutant, who “claimed that very soon now the whole mystery was to be cleared up. But shortly thereafter came marching orders,” Kuner recounted, “and in the confusion my little affair was lost sight of; and so out of my store and my business, all that came to me was one watch.”⁵¹¹

Disappointed by the loss of his safe, Kuner nonetheless attempted to relocate his family to Vicksburg. Borrowing a team of mules to pull “a wagon piled high,” Kuner set off for the town. But, as he narrated, “I had gone but a few miles, when two soldiers sprang out upon me from the roadside. . . . One mule was branded ‘C.S.’ the other ‘U.S.’ ‘Great Scott!’ reprimanded the two soldiers. ‘*This* team won’t pull together, Johnny!’” After which, Kuner narrated, “they detached

⁵¹¹ [Kuner?], “Vicksburg, and after,” 492-93.

the mules from the wagon and took them away, leaving me there stalled in the middle of the road. I had to find another team.”⁵¹²

The disaster at Vicksburg and the resulting Union occupation broke many Mississippians’ will to continue armed resistance. On July 19, Hurlbut wired Halleck in Washington that he had read in southern newspapers, “Davis is much blamed. . . . Bragg’s and Johnston’s armies demoralized and destitute. Advise planters of Mississippi to make terms with us, and not to leave home. . . . Influential farmers of Mississippi determined to stay at home.”⁵¹³ On July 21, Hurlbut added in a second telegram, “Citizens expect us to take possession of the country. Papers of the 17th show great consternation all over the country.”⁵¹⁴ On July 20, Sherman testified to Grant that the citizens of Jackson “are subdued, and ask for reconstruction. They admit the loss of the Southern cause.”⁵¹⁵

Other evidence of declining popular support for the war appeared in a July 20 dispatch from Union Brigadier General Ransom in Natchez to Lieutenant Colonel W. T. Clark, which stated, “The people of the country are secreting cotton, stock, &c., in the swamps and out-of-the-way places, and an expedition would have to remain out several days to accomplish anything.”⁵¹⁶ A few days later, on July 24, Ransom wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Clark, the assistant adjutant general of the XVII Corps, “The people through the country are reported by Major Worden to be discouraged and hopeless of the rebellion, and ready to do almost anything that will keep their

⁵¹² [Kuner?], “Vicksburg, and after,” 493.

⁵¹³ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 535.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 540.

⁵¹⁵ *OR* vol. XXIV, part II, 530.

⁵¹⁶ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 537-38.

negroes in the fields. There was a large public meeting at Hamburg on the 22d, to consider the question of abandoning the Confederacy. I have not heard the result of it.”⁵¹⁷

The discontent in Mississippi greatly worried Confederate officials. On July 29, Brigadier General James Chalmers wrote his superiors from Grenada, “I regret to say that I am informed that there is some disaffection among the people in the northern part of this State, and that a few persons are openly advocating the policy of reconstruction.” In desperation, Chalmers asked, “Is it advisable to attempt to suppress such expressions of sentiment; and, if so, what course shall I pursue toward persons who are guilty of using them?”⁵¹⁸ Chalmers received his answer on August 9, when Johnston ordered his subordinate to “arrest all disaffected persons in your district who are openly advocating the policy of reconstruction.”⁵¹⁹ Such measures doubtless did little to increase support for the Confederacy.

The situation continued to deteriorate throughout August, and on the 10th, Brigadier General Daniel Ruggles notified his commander from Grenada that “the spirit of volunteering has ceased to exist, and although there are numbers of able men apparently within conscription limits, few go forward to swell the ranks of our armies, there being no public sentiment sufficiently potent to impel them to enter the service.” Ruggles blamed the recruiting woes on recent defeats and “the ruling desire of saving property.” The general also added that the lack of patriotism for the Confederacy was especially prevalent among the lower classes, who refused to risk their lives when wealthier men, especially large slaveholders, hired substitutes to avoid military service. The disaffection had grown so great that Ruggles warned that if no reforms were enacted, the Confederacy “shall cease to have that cordial support from this class of citizens, who constitute a

⁵¹⁷ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 549-50.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1036.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1051.

majority of our fighting forces, whose services are so necessary to insure success to our cause.” The dire nature of Confederate logistics only added to the burden on southern civilians. Ruggles noted that the “large amounts of outstanding debts for public supplies due citizens . . . which have been for a considerable period accumulating, has been another source of discontent among the people, and tended in some degree to demoralize portions of the community, and especially citizens of small means” and that the “irregular manner in which supplies have been obtained . . . has been a source of almost constant complaint, and has produced much irritation in the community, and the outstanding debts thus incurred are still a matter of complaint.”⁵²⁰

Indeed, as war correspondent Cadwallader remembered, “the people of that part of Mississippi were the worst-whipped communities on the face of the earth. They were completely humbled and begged for mercy on every hand.” According to Cadwallader, Grant’s and Sherman’s application of a hard war policy was extremely effective, as the citizens “acknowledged themselves thoroughly conquered; admitted their inability to longer oppose the Federal government; expressed their willingness to come into the Union again on any terms; and begged of him [Sherman] in the name of everything held sacred to oppress them no further.”⁵²¹ Grant himself wrote to Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase on July 21, “The people in the Mississippi Valley are now nearly subjugated. Keep trade out but for a few months, and I doubt not but that the work of subjugation will be so complete that trade can be opened freely with the States of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.” Grant’s hard war policies had worked so well, as the general astutely explained to Chase, that “the people of these States will be more anxious for the enforcement and protection of our laws than the people of the loyal States. They have experienced the misfortunes of being without them, are now in a most happy condition to

⁵²⁰ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 1053-54.

⁵²¹ Thomas, *Three Years With Grant*, 124.

appreciate the blessings.”⁵²² In the span of three months, Grant had essentially eliminated Mississippi’s role in the war, and later that year he would lead his armies into other states of the South to enact the methods he had perfected in his conquest of Vicksburg.

In early August, as the Union military began preparations to conquer the few remaining strongholds of the South, Grant began instituting the first, cautious policies of organized reconstruction in Mississippi. On August 1, 1863, in “General Orders, No. 50,” Grant announced, “The citizens of Mississippi . . . are called upon to pursue their peaceful avocations, in obedience to the laws of the United States. Whilst doing so in good faith, all United States forces are prohibited from molesting them in any way.” Grant encouraged the creation of labor contracts between plantation owners and their former slaves, and in a stark departure from his earlier policies in May, promised, “All private property will be respected except when the use of it is necessary for the Government.”⁵²³

Grant’s effort to increase loyalty in Mississippi, especially among lower class non-slaveholding whites, is evident in the new guidelines he proclaimed for confiscating property. Grant’s new rules directed that from then on private property had to be “taken under the direction of a corps commander, and by a proper detail under charge of a commissioned officer, with specific instructions to seize certain property and no other.” Further, he ordered officers from the quartermaster and subsistence departments “to receipt for such property as may be seized, the property to be paid for at the end of the war, on proof of loyalty, or on proper adjustment of the claim, under such regulations or laws as may hereafter be established.” The new policies foreshadowed the eventual establishment of the Southern Claims Commission in 1871 during Grant’s first term as president, though it is important to note that by the time the commission

⁵²² *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 538.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 570-71.

finally heard the claims, only a small number of Mississippians could offer an authentic “proof of loyalty.” Grant’s proclamation instituted a legal trade of cotton overseen by agents of the Treasury Department and directed that within Vicksburg itself, Major Generals Sherman and McPherson would each “designate a commissary of subsistence, who will issue articles of prime necessity to all destitute families calling for them, under such restrictions for the protection of the Government as they may deem necessary.” To offset the costs of feeding the indigent families of Warren County, Grant added that “families who are able to pay for the provisions drawn will in all cases be required to do so.”⁵²⁴

“General Orders, No. 50” also recognized the depredations committed by Union forces during the Vicksburg campaign and made a serious effort to prevent their reoccurrence within the Army of the Tennessee. In his final paragraph, the general admitted, “Conduct disgraceful to the American name has been frequently reported to the major-general commanding, particularly on the part of portions of the cavalry.” In response to the repeated complaints, Grant asserted, “Hereafter, if the guilty parties cannot be reached, the commanders of regiments and detachments will be held responsible, and those who prove themselves unequal to the task of preserving discipline in their commands will be promptly reported to the War Department for muster-out.” In the end, Grant concluded, “Summary punishment must be inflicted upon all officers and soldiers apprehended in acts of violence or lawlessness.”⁵²⁵

One civilian who benefited from this change in policy, Emilie McKinley, wrote in her diary on August 4, “The guard came down this evening and already he has found work to do. His orders are very strict—nothing to be touched on the place. If they refuse to obey his orders, he must shoot them.” The new Union strategy became an unexpected blessing for McKinley, who

⁵²⁴ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 570-71.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

inscribed the following entry on the very next day, “A crowd has already been running around this morning—took the cows, went to the mill where they were grinding and into the orchard, but the guard righted it all.” Ultimately, even the ardent Rebel McKinley had to acknowledge, “These guards are a great institution.”⁵²⁶

Sherman agreed with his superior’s new strategy to win the hearts and minds of Mississippians, and August 3, he responded to a communication from a Hinds County committee by writing to the delegation, “You have seen enough of armies to know that they are so intent on overcoming their opponents that the poor people receive very little consideration at their hands.” Sherman stated further that he did “not believe we will again have occasion to visit Hinds County” and earnestly recommended that “the people who have wives and children to feed and protect should, as soon as possible, begin to reorganize a government capable of protecting them against the bands of scouts and guerillas that infest the land, who can do no good, and may do you infinite mischief.”⁵²⁷

Sherman put the new policies into practice immediately, and on August 8, when he issued instructions for a detachment to seize Confederate locomotives, he reminded Colonel E. F. Winslow of the 4th Iowa Cavalry, “You carry money with you, as it is now to the interest of our Government that all plundering and pillaging should cease. Impress this upon your men from the start, and let your chief quartermaster and commissary provide liberally and fairly for the wants of your command by paying.” While Sherman is usually depicted as cold and uncaring, his instructions to Winslow went beyond the restraint dictated by Grant. Rather than merely issue receipts that could only be redeemed sometime in the future on absolute proof of loyalty, Sherman ordered his cavalry to pay directly for provisions. The new regulations on foraging

⁵²⁶ Cotton, *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, 45.

⁵²⁷ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 571-72.

stood in stark contrast to earlier Union practices or even those of the Confederate government. Sherman, like Grant, recognized the potential to encourage class hostility in the Confederacy, and as a result he advised Winslow that “Union people, and the poorest farmers, without being too critical as to politics, should be paid for their corn, bacon, beef, and vegetables.” Sherman refused to extend the same considerations to the secessionist elite, however, and declared, “But where the larger planters and farmers have an abundance to spare, you can take of the surplus, giving in all such cases a simple receipt, signed by your chief quartermaster and commissary” and that “when your horses break down, you can take a remount, exchanging the broken-down animals, and giving a certificate of the transaction, fixing the cash difference in value to boot.” As a final note of instruction, Sherman counseled, “Deal firmly but fairly with the inhabitants. I am satisfied a change of feeling is now going on in this State, and we should encourage it. . . . Punish on the spot and with rigor any wanton burning of houses or property without your specific orders.”⁵²⁸

Not every officer obeyed Sherman’s strict regulations, however. On August 4, Sherman wrote to headquarters regarding a court-martial of three soldiers of the 35th Iowa Infantry for “the burning of a cotton-gin” during the march from Jackson back to Vicksburg and called for the dismissal of the major of the regiment. According to Sherman, “The burning of this building in no way aided our military plans. No enemy was within 50 miles. . . . He [the major] knew that he had no right to order this burning, or if ignorant, he is unworthy of a commission.” Though Sherman testified that he “caught the man in the act” of setting the fire, the court-martial acquitted all three of the defendants. As Sherman explained to Grant, the soldier who set the fire “is acquitted because his superior officer ordered it. The superior officer is acquitted because, I suppose, he had not set the fire with his own hands, and thus you and I and every commander

⁵²⁸ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 582-83.

must go through the war justly chargeable with crimes at which we blush.” Displaying his notorious temper, Sherman fumed, “The amount of burning, stealing, and plundering done by our army makes me ashamed of it. I would quit the service if I could, because I fear that we are drifting to the worst sort of vandalism.” The irascible general insisted to his friend and commander that he had “endeavored to repress this class of crime, but you know how difficult it is to fix the guilt among the great mass of an army.” Furious at the court-martial’s decision, Sherman bluntly stated, “I should have executed the soldier on the spot.”⁵²⁹

An eyewitness account of the incident appears in the diary of artilleryman John Merrilees, who recorded after his battery arrived at Bolton they “halted for an hour, which Sherman took advantage of to haul the 35th Iowa over the coals.” Merrilees observed that Sherman “had just caught one of the men setting fire to a cotton gin, and was proceeding to shoot him, when the fellow begged a chance to explain, and told him he did it by order of the Lieutenant.” Sherman, acting with a dramatic flourish that attracted a crowd, gave an “order for the Colonel to have the regiment drawn up immediately. This was done, and curiosity led us all to go and see what was up, the cause of it being known only to a few.” After questioning the lieutenant, who professed that he acted on the orders of the major, Sherman proceeded to interrogate the hapless major, who “after trying to get around giving a direct answer, finally concluded he ‘suggested it would be a good thing to burn it,’ upon which Sherman told him that was enough and ordered him off his horse.” Watching Sherman with growing interest, Merrilees continued, “He then tore off his shoulder straps, made him unbuckle his belt and hand over his sword and pistol to an orderly, and then ordered the guard to take charge of the whole party, and he would court martial them in half an hour.” Sherman used the occasion to issue a stern warning to the regiment, announcing “the reason of his doing what they had just witnessed, and said he was glad to find the order

⁵²⁹ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 574-75.

came from no higher authority than the Major; had the Colonel done so, he should have taken their colors from them, and sent them to the rear in disgrace.” Sherman added that he would prosecute the guilty soldiers “to the full extent of the law. Arson was death, and if a court martial finds that, he would shoot them.” Merrilees quoted Sherman as declaring that it was “bad enough to burn and destroy when we had an enemy to fight; but now when we had overrun to [the] country, and had the population on their knees praying for mercy, it was disgraceful to human nature to see men perpetrating such acts, and he would have it stopped.” Sherman’s vivid action had its intended effect, as Merrilees wrote that he was “glad to hear him talk so, for the way the army has been going through the campaign is disgraceful, and they ought to have some such check as this put on them long ago.”⁵³⁰

Another example of deliberate arson in violation of Grant’s orders appears in a letter written on August 2 by Samuel Cotter Kirkpatrick of the 11th Wisconsin Infantry from Vicksburg that described “lots of fun going on in town today.” Kirkpatrick detailed that his comrades discovered “a large steam saw mill just out of town and it was full of sick darkies and they had been ordered out of it but they would not go so some of the boys burned it and then you bet they came out of there in a hurry.” Clearly, a saw mill containing sick freedmen hardly constituted a realistic threat to Union forces, and Kirkpatrick’s account states that the Wisconsin soldiers “burnt down the whole bilding and now all you can see it [is] the chimneys. The boys call them Grant’s monuments.”⁵³¹ One must wonder how Grant regarded this dubious tribute.

Kirkpatrick’s letter presents only one man’s perspective, but many Federal soldiers continued treat former slaves in the racist manner so prevalent among nineteenth century Americans. In one case, a Union soldier appeared to have changed his negative opinion of slavery after

⁵³⁰ Miller, *The Diary of John Merrilees*, 90-92.

⁵³¹ Samuel Cotter Kirkpatrick to James G. Kirkpatrick, August 2, 1863, *The Civil War letters of Samuel Cotter Kirkpatrick: transcripts of letters, 1861-1865*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

encountering it firsthand. On July 23, Private James Plowman of the 39th Illinois Infantry wrote to his family that he “youse [used] to think negarouse ort to be free but now I think different now I been down south.” Russell blasted the region as “not fit for a white man to live in” and accused the recently freed slaves of being lazy, writing, “You have to kick the black devils and pound them to make them do a little work.” Russell, like many of his contemporaries, could not envision the survival of a multi-racial society and asserted that “if they send the black devil up north they will have to clar [clear] out when the soldiers come home they will kill them . . .they hate them worse than poisen.”⁵³²

Still, despite the difficulties in enforcement, the new Union procedures did achieve significant results. On August 11, Grant wrote to Halleck, “This State and Louisiana would be more easily governed now than Kentucky or Missouri if armed rebels from other States could be kept out. In fact the people are ready to accept anything.” Though the war would continue, the Union victory at Vicksburg produced dividends across the Confederacy as it encouraged many Rebel soldiers, especially those from Mississippi and Louisiana, to desert and return home. Grant explained this to Halleck by stating, “The troops from these States, too, will desert and return as soon as they find that they cannot be hunted down.” Grant’s own firsthand experience with the citizens of Mississippi presented the most persuasive evidence of his success. He reported to the general-in-chief, “I am informed that movements are being made through many parts of Mississippi to unite the people in an effort to bring the State into the Union. I receive letters and delegations on this subject myself, and believe the people are sincere.”⁵³³

Common soldiers in the Union army recognized the changes in the southern population as well. On August 17, Private Henry Robinson of the 100th Indiana Infantry wrote to his family

⁵³² James Plowman to family, July 23, 1863, Russell brothers letters [manuscript] 1862-1864, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

⁵³³ *OR* vol. XXIV, part III, 587-88.

from Vicksburg, “There is springing up more and more of a union sentiment than there was before and every time our army moves they tell on the country as they make their mark and the record is plain destruction and devastation follow in their wake.” Robinson assured his relatives on the Union home front that “the longer they remain in their rebellious attitude the worse it will be for them and the more vigorous will be the prosecution of the war and the greater will be our effort to subdue them.” Robinson provided a simple definition of the new methods of hard war when he concluded, “I have always heard it said that to touch a man’s feelings you must touch his pocket and this they are feeling most sensibly and this the whole country shows and exhibits.”⁵³⁴

Grant’s Vicksburg campaign resounds as the most devastating catastrophe to befall the Confederacy. Not only did the Union secure the opening of the Mississippi River for Midwestern commerce, which greatly increased support for the war and substantially reduced the threat of anti-war Copperheads in the region, Grant’s victory produced the largest surrender of Confederate soldiers during the entire war—29,491 men, the largest total in American history. The loss of an additional 6,340 Rebels surrendered to Major General Nathaniel Banks at Port Hudson, which capitulated promptly after Vicksburg, along with the battle casualties endured in the Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas battles, added up to an appalling sacrifice for the Confederacy. An estimated total loss of manpower killed, wounded, and captured would likely exceed 46,000, almost double that lost by General Robert E. Lee at Gettysburg, and that total does not include the growing number of southern desertions that accompanied Grant’s victory. Many of the soldiers in the Army of Vicksburg simply returned home and remained there for the rest of the war after receiving their paroles, despite Pemberton’s vain attempts to restrain them.

⁵³⁴ Henry A. Robinson to family, August 17, 1863, Henry A. Robinson Papers, 1863-1977; bulk 1863-1864, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

The material losses to Confederate forces are almost incomprehensible. At Vicksburg, Grant's army seized 172 artillery pieces, 38,000 artillery rounds, 58,000 pounds of gunpowder, 4,800 artillery carriages, 50,000 arms, 600,000 rounds of ammunition, 350,000 percussion caps, along with another 51 guns and 7,500 small-arms captured at Port Hudson, and 3 cannon, 1,396 weapons, and 23, 245 artillery rounds acquired after Johnston's second evacuation of Jackson, much of which would be employed against their previous owners in battle.⁵³⁵

The economic, agricultural, political, and psychological damage inflicted by the burnings of Jackson, the widespread foraging throughout the region, and the emancipation of an enormous number of slaves is incalculable. Grant accomplished all of this in the heart of enemy territory, with no clear avenue of retreat, and until reinforcements arrived during the siege, in the face of two opposing armies that when combined would outnumber his own. No other campaign in the entire war, not even the famous Overland campaign in Virginia, so weakened the Confederacy as the Union's effort to seize control of the Mississippi. And ultimately, the man who was most responsible for the success of the campaign was the North's foremost military commander, Ulysses S. Grant. No one person in the North, with the exception of President Abraham Lincoln, contributed more to the Union's triumph in the Civil War.

Perhaps even more decisive than the destruction of military resources, the campaign against Vicksburg transformed the way in which the war affected the civilian population of the South. The drastic amount of damage inflicted upon the population and infrastructure by Grant's decision to forage intensely and deprive opposing armies of sustenance effectively removed this area from the conflict and created the means that would enable the Union to win the war in the next two years. The Vicksburg campaign cemented the transition from pragmatic to hard war in

⁵³⁵ Shea & Winschel, *Vicksburg is the Key*, 178-204; Grabau, *Ninety-Eight Days*, 502-6.

the western theater, which would later spread throughout the dying Confederacy. As historian Mark Grimsley concludes, the Mississippi River Valley was the “Cradle of Hard War.”⁵³⁶

One important element of this campaign was that the common soldiers of the Army of the Tennessee almost universally approved of Grant’s hard war and implemented the strategy without hesitation. In many respects, it appears that individual soldiers actually exceeded the orders instituted by Grant and Sherman to protect civilian property and were practicing more of a punitive, rather than pragmatic, policy toward civilians far earlier in the campaign than previously believed. These two Union commanders only expressly authorized hard war policies after the Vicksburg campaign when the apparent effectiveness of the stricter methods had become clear. A minority of soldiers drove the policies to a dangerous extreme not intended by Grant, but by and large a strong degree of restraint resounded throughout the entire campaign. Although repeated instances of plunder and arson occurred during the Vicksburg campaign, when compared to European experiences in the Napoleonic and World Wars, or even the contemporary frontier struggle against Native Americans within the United States, the treatment of civilians in the American Civil War was remarkably restrained. For example, at the Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado Territory in 1864, Union soldiers brutally killed between four hundred and six hundred Cheyennes and Arapahos, including several women and children, and in some cases, gruesomely mutilated the bodies.⁵³⁷ Nothing in the Vicksburg campaign compares to such an atrocity, though some instances of this type of brutality occurred in the bloody border wars in Missouri and Kansas.

Though stealing and burning of civilian property took place, there appears to be no actual rapes reported during the campaign. Though no rapes were apparently recorded, that does not

⁵³⁶ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 153.

⁵³⁷ Patricia L. Faust, “Sand Creek Massacre, Colorado Territory” in *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War*, ed. Patricia L. Faust, (New York: HarperPerennial, 1986), 161-62.

necessarily prove they did not occur. As Thomas P. Lowry theorized in *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell: Sex in the Civil War*, soldiers engaged in an active campaign had little time or opportunity to engage in such crimes, so long as enemy soldiers remained nearby and posed a clear threat. Rapes during the war most often occurred in occupied areas by garrison soldiers who plied their boredom with alcohol. Also, the severe punishments enacted upon those caught and the ready availability of prostitutes likely diminished the number of rapes.⁵³⁸ Still, given the era's reluctance to discuss sexual topics, especially dishonorable subjects as rape, those crimes that did occur may not have been reported. For example, on May 23, 1863, Emilie McKinley recorded in her diary that Union soldiers "came and took nearly all of my provisions, still I took it patiently—but now I have to tell you an act, that will make any gentleman blush," but then someone, possibly the diarist herself, cut the next two pages out of the diary. What act did the Union soldiers commit on their visit that McKinley refused to preserve an account of? Historians can only speculate.⁵³⁹

Also, while upper class women of the South enjoyed a protected status as honorable ladies, such security did not extend to the lower ranks of southern society containing "poor white" and African American women. As these women rarely left any written records behind, it is impossible to know if any suffered rape during the campaign. Though there is the limiting factor of illiteracy, historian Deborah Gray White proves in *Ar'n't I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* the common sexual exploitation of black women in the Old South. It is safe to conclude that during the Civil War, the most likely victims of rape by soldiers of either army

⁵³⁸ Lowry, *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell*, 31-32; 123-31.

⁵³⁹ Cotton, *From the Pen of a She-Rebel*, 13-16.

were African American women who lacked the legal protections afforded to white women.⁵⁴⁰ Further evidence of this hypothesis appears in Lowry's study, as the author reports an attempted rape of freedwomen in Vicksburg in August 1865 by a party of U.S. Marines.⁵⁴¹ As result of all of these factors, no conclusions regarding instances of rape during the campaign can be made with any degree of certainty.

Interestingly, it appears that Grant's soldiers accelerated the severity of their treatment of southern civilians beyond that practiced at the same time by Federal armies in Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. There are several factors responsible for this discrepancy, including the more reliable supply system in other theaters, a costly and seemingly endless guerilla war along the Mississippi Valley, and a strong Unionist presence in the Upper South, but one motivation that drove the Army of the Tennessee to this heightened degree of chastisement resulted from the extreme culture clash between middle or lower class Midwestern soldiers and the wealthy plantation owners within the Deep South.⁵⁴²

Mississippi, the second state to secede after South Carolina and the home of President Jefferson Davis, was one of only two southern states to contain more slaves than white residents, and conversely supported the institution of slavery and the Confederacy far more intensely than the Upper South. In 1860, some 48 percent of white families in the state owned slaves, and many obtained vast fortunes in the cotton trade.⁵⁴³ Federal soldiers in the Army of the Tennessee were the first major Union armed forces to penetrate into the Deep South and encounter the harsh nature of the plantation system practiced there, and the discovery horrified many northern

⁵⁴⁰ Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985), 78-79; 89-90; 164-65.

⁵⁴¹ Lowry, *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell*, 129-30.

⁵⁴² Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 142-70.

⁵⁴³ James L. Abrahamson, *The Men of Secession and Civil War, 1859-1861*, The American Crisis Series: Books on the Civil War Era, no. 1 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2000), 85.

soldiers. As Charles Dana admitted, “I had seen slavery in Maryland, Kentucky, Virginia, and Missouri, but it was not till I saw these great Louisiana plantations with all their apparatus for living and working that I really felt the aristocratic nature of the institution, and the infernal baseness of that aristocracy.”⁵⁴⁴ Also, the immense wealth on display at these large states generated enormous rage within the ranks of the Army of the Tennessee, who blamed the owners for causing the war and consequently felt little remorse for destroying the ostentatious mansions that they had little hope of owning in the North. When Grant’s forces entered Central Mississippi, the Emancipation Proclamation and the realistic threat of African American soldiers heightened tensions between Mississippians and the invaders, and serious guerilla activity lingered throughout the campaign. The combination of a seemingly endless war, a frustrating guerilla struggle, and growing animosity against the civilian population who sustained each resulted in the creation and adoption of hard war in the Vicksburg campaign.

After enduring two years of bloodshed and bitter hostility from the local populace, it is not surprising that Union soldiers executed hard war before their officers understood or accepted its use. The amount of destruction rose markedly as Federal units entered this region and remained in practice until the accomplished results became evident. When Pemberton’s army surrendered and Johnston’s army retreated, the punishment slackened as Federal control stabilized and the Union began providing food and medicine to the defeated civilian population. Sherman’s later and better known “March to the Sea” in Georgia utilized the exact same strategy and means to achieve similar results.⁵⁴⁵

Grant, who would go on to command the victorious Army of the Potomac in a bloody campaign against General Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, declared after the

⁵⁴⁴ Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War*, 29.

⁵⁴⁵ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 142-70.

war that “the fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell. Much hard fighting was to be done afterwards and many precious lives were to be sacrificed; but the *morale* was with the supporters of the Union ever after.” Year later, while contemplating the event that had transformed the war and created the means to win it, even the usually non-religious Grant would admit, “It looks now as though Providence had directed the course of the campaign while the Army of the Tennessee executed the decree.”⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁶ Grant, *Memoirs*, 319-23.

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ABSTRACT

LONG MARCH TO VICKSBURG: SOLDIER AND CIVILIAN INTERACTION IN THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN

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The Vicksburg campaign marked a key transitional phase of Union policy toward white Southern civilians. Initially, Northern military commanders instituted a conciliatory approach to Southern civilians and property, but by late 1862 this policy had evolved to a pragmatic form of warfare that allowed stricter measures but still attempted to limit the physical and monetary damage inflicted upon civilians. In the Mississippi River Valley in early 1863, Major General Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee perfected a punitive policy concerning civilians known to historians as "hard war," which authorized the destruction of all Confederate economic and transportation resources. This dissertation examines the creation of hard war policy by the lower ranks of the Union army and concludes that the Army of the Tennessee developed hard war before other Union armies due to its deeper penetration of the Lower South.

The campaign against Vicksburg transformed the way in which the war impacted the civilian population of the South. The drastic amount of damage inflicted upon the population and infrastructure by Grant's decision to forage intensely and deprive opposing armies of sustenance effectively removed this area from the conflict and created the means that would enable the Union to win the war in the next two years. The Vicksburg campaign cemented the transition from pragmatic to hard war in the western theater, from which it would later spread throughout the Confederacy in 1864.