

CAN WE CALL IT ANYTHING BUT TREASON?
LOYALTY AND CITIZENSHIP IN OHIO VALLEY SOLDIERS

by

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Introduction

When word reached the North that rebels in Charleston had bombarded and forced the surrender of Fort Sumter on April 14, 1861, the nation was galvanized for war in a way it had never been before. The next day President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers to put down the insurrection, and the states responded rapidly. Massachusetts governor John Andrew even wrote to the president that two regiments were already on their way to Washington a mere two days following the call. "It is true," wrote historian Frank Klement, "that partisanship seemed to disappear in the opening days of the Civil War."¹ As in most conflicts, it did not take long for the initial political goodwill to subside shortly after the actual business of war began. Union discontent with the war began soon after the first setbacks, and would ebb and flow with the tide of battle until the spring of 1865, when the end was truly in sight.

The president, for the first time, was a member of the Republican Party. The Democrats were out of power, a position unfamiliar to them since 1853. In addition, politicians from the party's traditional area of strength, the South, had quite literally left town. Suddenly Democrats faced the unenviable option of opposing the coming war led by their political enemies. Some chose not to. Stephen Douglas, nominee of the party's northern faction from 1860, argued before his death that Democrats should rally behind the new president and put down the rebellion. Other notable Democrats, including Governor Horatio Seymour of New York, followed his example. Nevertheless, not all were so willing to sell what they saw as their principles or interests to the new party. Most commonly, they earned the label of "Copperheads." With a power base in the

¹ Frank Klement, *The Copperheads of the Middle West*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 2.

Midwestern states, the Peace faction of the Democratic Party was able to make some electoral inroads, and could even consider doing so in the most unlikely of places: the army.

Disagreement with policy by itself is not exceptional, especially in a nation that prizes free expression. When the opposition comes to a war, it creates its own counteraction, and can have far-reaching consequences even if that opposition does little to stem the tide of military action. Earlier American wars had generated noteworthy opposition, including the infamous Blue-Light Federalists and the Hartford Convention during the War of 1812, and the various antislavery and anti-expansion voices during the Mexican War (a list that included Whig congressman Abraham Lincoln). Even smaller conflicts, such as the 1798 Quasi-War with France and the various Indian wars surrounding Andrew Jackson's removal policies, generated discontent and recrimination, if not necessarily actual results in stopping the conflict.²

During the Civil War, many acts of political resistance met with a strong reaction from state and federal sources. Following the first wave of secession, fear dominated much of the policy emanating from the federal government, most famously in Lincoln's secret passage through uncertain Baltimore in advance of his inauguration. The year would see further arrests in Baltimore surrounding the possibility of armed uprising, including local figure John Merryman on the charges of burning a local bridge. The resulting case *Ex parte Merryman*, as well as the related *Ex parte Milligan*, attempted to restrict the president's ability to attack civil liberties. Authored by Chief Justice, and southern sympathizer, Roger Taney, the decisions provided

² For Federalist opposition to the War of 1812, see J. C. A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 471-480, Donald R. Hickey, *Don't Give Up the Ship!: Myths of the War of 1812* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 211-212 (which suggests that Federalist opposition to the war came to be seen as treasonous after the war), and Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 692-694. Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 256-262 discusses the background for the infamous Sedition Act that surrounded resistance to the Quasi-War of 1798-1800. For Whig and other opposition to the Mexican War, see David A. Clary, *Eagles and Empire: The United States, Mexico, and the Struggle for a Continent* (New York: Bantam Books, 2009), 100-101, 145-156 and Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), especially 195-196. As her title suggests, Greenberg is far more supportive of the antiwar movement, and on p. 263 credits them with the rapid peace treaty signed in 1848.

ample resource for Lincoln's critics, both contemporary and modern, to attack his handling of dissent in violation of Constitutional restrictions regarding executive power and individual liberties. Mark Neely's *The Fate of Liberty* and the more recent *Lincoln and the Triumph of the Nation* defends the President on the points of arbitrary arrests, celebrating Lincoln's attempts at maintaining reverence for the Constitution. Libertarian scholar Jeffrey Rogers Hummel criticizes Neely's conclusions in *The Fate of Liberty* as the "Not as bad as Hitler-Stalin-Mao" interpretation, mocking those like Neely who appear to celebrate that Lincoln did not slaughter all his political enemies, only jailed them in the face of strong judicial opposition.³

But even beyond arrests, which hardly seem out of place in the context of earlier restrictions on civil rights such as the 1798 Sedition Act, Copperheads generated a much more expected verbal reaction from the men fighting the war. Union soldiers not only knew a great deal about political dissent but also by war's end gained the opportunity to defeat it through traditional political means. Antiwar sentiment existed throughout the United States, but the particular characteristics of that resistance in states along the Ohio River made for a unique relationship between Union soldiers and Copperheads at home. Acts of violent dissent directed by and against those familiar to soldiers made Copperheads a real and tangible threat. Politicians, both regionally and nationally, played on these concerns to generate greater support for the Republican Party and Lincoln himself, even in the face of tenuous support for their particular war aims. The unique process of the Union Army's politicization, particularly in the unstable West, was in large part driven by these Copperhead agitators.

³ Jonathan W. White, *Abraham Lincoln and Treason in the Civil War: The Trials of John Merryman* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011) discusses Merryman's arrest and the long-term significance of the *Ex parte Merryman* case, while James M. McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 25-30 explains the lead up to Merryman's arrest, and 49-50 discusses George McClellan's role in later arrests in September 1861. Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and *Lincoln and the Triumph of the Nation: Constitutional Conflict in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American Civil War* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1996), 254-259, and the bibliographic essay on 266-268.

At war's outbreak, general feeling across the North gave the appearance of strongly supporting the war effort. Whether by design or luck, the South had struck first, and as the aggrieved party, the North felt fully justified in invading and reuniting the Union through force. This appearance of unity, though, was an illusion. Driven by myriad motivations, fissures soon revealed themselves across the country, which could quickly complicate the war effort. Use of the term "Copperhead" to describe antiwar activity came as early as 1861, but not for a political movement until the middle of 1862. The term referenced the poisonous snake, particularly common in the United States, usually by calling attention to its slithering low on the ground and perceived sneaky nature. Copperheads should not be confused with pacifists, as few in the United States fit that description. Pacifism, particularly from religious groups such as the Quakers, existed during the Civil War, but this stance was not particularly unique to the period. Copperhead objections to war focused at the ongoing Civil War and not toward any larger antiwar cause. Support and fortunes for Copperhead politicians and their followers would ebb and flow with the successes of Union armies during the war. Copperhead sentiment ran highest when military defeats mounted and casualty lists lengthened, while northern victory seemed to discredit the so-called "peace-at-any-price" Democrats.⁴

Earlier, nationalist historians of Copperheads held largely negative views. Their interpretations glorify Lincoln and the Republican Party as the war's victors, while Copperheads act as roadblocks at best, and usually as far worse. As "a camp follower of the successful army," the historical profession mostly ignored those discredited and unsuccessful movements of the

⁴ Etymology on the term "Copperhead" comes from Charles H. Coleman, "The Use of the Term 'Copperhead' during the Civil War" *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Sept., 1938): 263-264, and Paul H. Smith, "First Use of the Term 'Copperhead'" *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Jul., 1927): 799-800. Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2-3 also mentions the use of "butternut" as geographically restrictive to the Midwest, but also interchangeable with terms for Confederates, suggesting that for many of that region, the difference between Copperhead and Confederate was virtually non-existent.

past. Wood Gray's *The Hidden Civil War* was perhaps the clearest narrative of these conspiracy-minded Democrats. Driven by a distrust of Republicans and a historical affinity with Southerners, many in Gray's Midwest are susceptible to antiwar demagogues. When Union forces struggled and economic life in the Midwest felt the negative impact of the ongoing war, Copperheads in the region became widespread and bold. These works played up the secrecy and dangerous nature of Civil War dissent, and relied a great deal on Republican propaganda of the period. These historians point to the presence of notable Copperhead Clement Vallandigham on the platform committee during the 1864 Convention as evidence of the overwhelming Copperhead influence on Democratic Party politics. Even to the extent that the two groups were not synonymous, their influence was such that differences mattered little. Harold Hyman describes the Peace faction as "massive," and suggests that the Party's moderate wing "deserved the label only by comparison with the Vallandigham type." Harold Dudley's more evenhanded take on the 1864 convention still cannot dismiss the fact that the Peace faction of the party was given full control of the platform, especially important during a period when the convention platform served a critical purpose during the election.⁵

As the supposed consensus began to break apart due to historiographical challenges, the Copperhead movement was ripe for reinvention. Historian Richard O. Curry was especially critical of these old interpretations and attacked them for incomplete analyses and overreliance on Republican sources.⁶ The most important member of the new revisionist school was Frank

⁵ David Herbert Donald, "Died of Democracy," *Why the North Won the Civil War*, ed. David Herbert Donald (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), 81; Wood Gray, *The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads* (New York: The Viking Press, 1942); Alexander Harris, *A Review of the Political Conflict in America*, (1919; repr. Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970); Harold M. Hyman, "Election of 1864: Wartime Election," *The Coming to Power: Critical Presidential Elections in American History*, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1972), 159-160; Harold M. Dudley, "The Election of 1864," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* Vol. 18, No. 4 (March 1932): 512-515.

⁶ Richard O. Curry, "The Union As it Was: A Critique of Recent Interpretations of the 'Copperheads'" *Civil War History*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Mar., 1967): 25-39 and "Copperheadism and Continuity: The Anatomy of a Stereotype" *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Jan., 1972): 29-36, which focused more on attacking

Klement. Focused on the Midwest as was Gray, Klement took the Copperheads on their own terms: as old Jacksonian partisans with local interests. Distrust of Lincoln and the Republicans on issues of economics and abolition easily morphed into opposition to the war. Klement's most important contribution to Copperhead historiography is the discrediting of secret organizations. The Knights of the Golden Circle, Order of American Knights, and Sons of Liberty provided ample ammunition to politicians and historians who wished to tar Copperheads with epithets of defeatism and treason. Klement unveils these conspiracies as antiwar bluster and Republican campaign paranoia. Calls against conspiracy were a regular campaign tactic during this period, and Democrats levied similar unsubstantiated charges against Republicans. By exposing these conspiracies for the frauds many were, revisionists legitimized both Copperheads and Democrats as loyal opposition within the system.⁷

Other narratives emphasized that these antiwar Democrats occupied a normal place in the nation's evolving two-party system. Joel Silbey's *A Respectable Minority* focused on this aspect of respectability rather than conspiratorial danger, while Jean Baker's *Affairs of Party* saw great continuity between Northern Democrats of the Jacksonian and Civil War periods. The presence of the war seems to have exacerbated whatever flaws the Party possessed, but the Democrats did represent a legitimate minority party within the political system, working to maintain that system rather overthrow it. Many Democrats in this period traced their ideological heritage back towards the partisan and nationalist Andrew Jackson. As good Jacksonians, they detested the interference of the federal government in affairs such as abolitionism, and held great distrust of New England

older nationalist interpretations, saw "Copperhead" as a historical slur, an inaccurate modern term carried to unnecessary extremes by these older historians and not at all representative of actual politics during the Civil War.

⁷ Frank L. Klement, *The Copperheads of the Middle West, The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham & the Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970), and *Lincoln's Critics: The Copperheads of the North*, ed. Steven K. Rogstad (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 1999). Klement's full bibliography can be found in *Lincoln's Critics*, 239-251. Frank L. Klement, *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

Puritans, whom they felt to be meddlesome moralists. They held strong suspicions against Republican schemes of “innovation” in government. Democrats of all stripes grew up in a political culture that emphasized being a good party member and supporting the party against opposition. This would not change simply because the opposing Whigs now went by the Republican name.⁸

Works that focused on Copperheads emphasized their distinctiveness. Moderate Democrats were a real faction, truly moderate in their viewpoints, and rejected some of the stronger conservative positions suggested by Vallandigham or other notable Copperheads. A study of party chairman and New York businessman August Belmont made him a representative of this moderate faction who worked to control the conservatives. Other studies emphasize the factional role held by the Copperheads. While their influence shifted with the war, they still represented only their particular interests within the large party structure, and not any real unified front against the war effort. Though generally conservative in its orientation, the party was most concerned with winning elections and maintaining as much of the Jacksonian world as possible. Copperheads, in many of these analyses, never rose beyond the level of fringe. Christopher Dell makes this point by taking the spotlight off Copperheads and putting it on the War Democrats. While maintaining their support for Lincoln’s war, some found it difficult to remain too distant from Lincoln and threw support to his attempted Union Party. By the time Lincoln set out the Emancipation Proclamation, and set a truly radical course for the war, the War Democrats were too tied into the war’s success to oppose him adequately. “Lincoln,” Dell charged with just a hint of hyperbole, “was the Pied Piper of Civil War politics who lured unwary Democrats with

⁸ Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1977); Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Phillip Shaw Paludan, *A People’s Contest: The Union and Civil War 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 90-96. Irving Katz, *August Belmont: A Political Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

Conservative phraseology and Radical intent.” Michael Holt’s discussion of this attempted Union Party also grants the Democrats a degree of agency in wishing to remain separate, and their absence is part of the reason it does not get very far.⁹

Joanna Cowden’s work addresses some of the easier-to-spot weaknesses in revisionist scholarship, and became one of its first modern challenges. She draws on the work of Baker, Klement, and Silbey in identifying Democrats as legitimate opposition and defenders of the Jacksonian tradition. In the vein of Baker and others, but breaking from Klement, she targets dissent outside of the traditional Midwestern focus, such as Connecticut Democrats that identified with southern farmers and slaveholders in protecting a system of government and hierarchical society under attack from Lincoln and the Republican Party. This geographic scope led to many varieties of dissenters. Even Vallandigham becomes less radically conservative when taken out of the center of the Democratic narrative. Among other differences, Vallandigham’s position of a negotiated reunion is significantly softer than fellow Ohioan Alexander Long’s call to let the South leave without any resistance at all. Other Democrats across the Union states such as Delaware’s James Bayard, New York’s Charles O’Conor, Pennsylvania’s William Reed, and Connecticut’s Thomas Seymour challenged Lincoln and the Republicans on the war, and could all arguably carry the Copperhead label.¹⁰

The most compelling new narrative on Copperheads is Jennifer Weber’s eponymous work. Weber targets the claims of revisionists, Klement in particular, and creates a new picture of Copperheads. Rather than some kind of marginal movement within the Democratic Party,

⁹ Christopher Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats: The Grand Erosion of Conservative Tradition* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975), quote from page 9. Michael F. Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ Joanna D. Cowden, “The Politics of Dissent: Civil War Democrats in Connecticut,” *The New England Quarterly* Vol. 56, No. 4 (December 1983): 538-554; Joanna D. Cowden, *Heaven Will Frown on Such a Cause As This: Six Democrats Who Opposed Lincoln’s War* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001).

Copperheads at times were the driving force behind policy and represented a dangerous threat to the war effort. Explicitly avoiding the term defeatist or similar, Weber does chide Vallandigham and other self-proclaimed Unionists for ignoring the expressed desire of the Confederates to form their own country. For the South, there would be no turning back after Fort Sumter, no matter how much effort the Copperheads would put towards restricting the Lincoln Administration's more radical tendencies. There was no better argument against the Copperheads than the progress of Union arms, and Lincoln needed to make those victories part of his regular message, encouraging supporters.¹¹

This more recent scholarship has also seen the return of conspiracy theories. These are not the discredited Knights of the Golden Circle, though. Conspiracies of this nature did involve the Confederates, and did not necessarily attempt to overthrow the government, but instead were about sharing political campaign information. Northern Democrats coordinated messages with Confederate agents with the goal of ending the war as quickly as possible should the Democrats be victorious. Other negotiations attempted to set up peace conferences that, if they could not end the war, at least sufficiently embarrass the administration. Many politicians in the Confederacy had served in government as Democrats with those that remained, and some maintained close ties. The difference in this instance, of course, was that Confederates represented a disloyal enemy. It did not take a great deal of effort for contemporaries to read this, or any, degree of fraternization as treasonous.¹²

Historians tie questions of Copperhead influence to similar ones asked about the whole of the Democratic Party. In a virtual throwaway sentence in a larger essay on the role of politics in Confederate failure, historian David Potter hypothesized the lack of political parties may have

¹¹ Weber, *Copperheads*.

¹² Frank van der Linden, *The Dark Intrigue: The true story of a Civil War conspiracy* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2007); Larry E. Nelson, *Bullets, Ballots, and Rhetoric: Confederate Policy for the United States Presidential Contest of 1864* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980).

weakened Jefferson Davis' government, while having the opposite effect for Lincoln and the North. Placed near the essay's conclusion, and without further explanation, Potter's thesis regarding the parties appears at most to be a suggestion for future reference rather than a genuine attempt to consider the point. In a 1967 essay, Eric McKittrick took up Potter's suggestion, and suggested a Democratic Party that acted as an effective foil to Lincoln not as a legitimate opposition, but as a haunting specter the president could use to demand party loyalty. Without organized parties in the South, Jefferson Davis did not have this crutch with which to organize support, and the Confederate war effort suffered from his inability to rally a consistent following. Mark Neely recently mounted an attack on the powerful Potter Thesis in his book *The Union Divided*, citing both Lincoln and Seward as distrustful of the two-party system. If the president, his secretary of state, and others were at least open to the suggestion that the Democratic Party's actions were treasonable, it is hard to see how that would qualify as a strengthening mechanism for the government. At the very least, Neely opens up possibilities for more research into the question, and spaces for new interpretations to fill.¹³

One of the strongest regions for pro-Confederate sentiment was the southern portion of the Old Northwest, the Ohio River Valley. For this project, I define the Ohio Valley as the several Midwestern states bordering the Ohio River: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky. Much of the political policy that dealt with soldiers happened at the state level, and cross-state roads and canals gave these southern regions a physical connection to both the north and Confederate territory south of the river. The Ohio forms at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers in Western Pennsylvania, runs through present-day West Virginia, forms the northern

¹³ David M. Potter, "Jefferson Davis and the Political Factors in Confederate Defeat" in Donald, *Why the North Won the Civil War*, 112; Eric L. McKittrick, "Party Politics and the Union and Confederate War Efforts," in *The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development*, eds. William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Hyman, "Election of 1864"; Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Union Divided: Party Conflict in the Civil War North*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

border of Kentucky and southern border of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois before emptying into the Mississippi near the city of Cairo, Illinois. Major cities located along the river include Pittsburgh at the headwaters, Cincinnati, Ohio and Louisville, Kentucky. All four states had significant Copperhead populations, and all, in some form or another, remained loyal during the war.

Lincoln had won the northern three during the 1860 election, key cogs to his capturing the White House. Kentucky, as befitting their neutral stance, did not go for either party, but instead to John Bell and the Constitutional Union Party. In spite of western Pennsylvania's proximity to Ohio, in many ways the state shares more with its eastern neighbors, including having the vast majority of its men serving in the eastern armies. Carved from seceded Virginia and accepted as a state in 1863, West Virginia has its own complicated history, and while it occasionally filters into histories involving Ohio, it is far closer to Virginia and eastern concerns.

Americans had eyed settling the rich Ohio Valley region as far back as their days as British colonists, and this desire for expansion would play a role in the outbreak of the French and Indian War in 1754, the Proclamation of 1763 that followed the fighting, and at least tangentially, the break from Great Britain in 1776. Though the territory west of the Appalachian Mountains was part of the British cession in 1783, it was not until the 1787 Northwest Ordinance that the national government (such as it was prior to the Constitution), organized and began officially selling the land. The ordinance also famously banned the importation of slavery into the new territories, but slavery existed unofficially into the 19th century. It was not until 1825 (for Illinois) and 1830 (for Indiana) that ownership of slaves vanished from the region. Settlers flowed westward, and settlement in the Northwest followed two general patterns. New Englanders pushed into the northern regions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, encouraging commercial development and making those regions ardently antislavery. The southern regions of these states saw their immigrants come from Virginia, across the mountains to Tennessee and

Kentucky, then north across the river. These settlers retained close family and economic ties to the South, and tightened these bonds as that region itself shifted westward, pushing commerce towards the Mississippi River and New Orleans. What followed was the development of an early American frontier that, though heavily influenced by both the commercialized North and slaveholding South, became something unique.

This uniqueness expressed itself in the region's politics and commerce. On the frontier, many settlers welcomed internal improvements such as the development of canals and railroads to enforce commercial ties. This support for improvements, and especially the federal money desired to aid them, clashed with the smaller government rostrums of Andrew Jackson and his Democratic Party. Westerners represented the independent and rustic yeomanry celebrated by Jackson and his patron saint Thomas Jefferson, and Jackson's supporters found great success railing against the excesses of old "Federalists" and meddling, puritanical "Yankees." Still, the desire for internal improvement generated support for Whigs and later Republicans such as Henry Clay, William Henry Harrison, and Abraham Lincoln. Perhaps most notably, they supported construction and extension of the National Road as part of an effort to tie the nation closer together, and that road (the present day Interstate 70) provided a rough boundary between the northern and southern sections of these states. These men represented the prospects of improvement without the pretentious veneer of older eastern Federalists like John Quincy Adams, and contributed to a diverse and raucous political environment. Loud democracy and constant campaigning were the order of the day, as parties struggled to gain and solidify majorities, even if only temporarily. Even if, as early as the 1840s, Ohioans began to think of themselves as "Buckeyes" (that is, distinct from Illinois "Suckers" or Indiana "Hoosiers") rather than simply "Westerners," their region was still separate and important. Tight economic bonds with the South were not enough in 1861, though, for these states to break free during the

secession winter. Though commerce suffered heavily during the early years of the war, until Union forces could gain full control of the Mississippi River, rumors of a separate western republic would remain just that. Outside of Kentucky's dalliance with neutrality, the West remained an important segment of the national union.¹⁴

Of these regional states, Ohio contained some of the starkest divides and strongest national personalities.¹⁵ Ohio contributed the third highest number of soldiers to the Union cause, trailing only New York and Pennsylvania. It furnished several other notable national leaders, including Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase, influential senators John Sherman and Benjamin Wade, and top generals William T. Sherman and Phil Sheridan, and by 1860 had entered an era of Republican dominance. The state was led first by Republicans William Dennison and David Tod, then by the Union Party's John Brough. All three, in a noteworthy connection to the powerful transportation industry, had served as railroad executives prior to their stint in

¹⁴ For the Ohio Valley as a distinct region see R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1950), especially Volume II dealing with commerce and politics, Andrew R. L. Cayton, "Artery and Border: The Ambiguous Development of the Ohio Valley in the Early Republic" *Ohio Valley History* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter, 2001): 19-26, Nicole Etchison, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), Kim M. Gruenwald, "Space and Place on the Early American Frontier: The Ohio Valley as a Region, 1790-1850" *Ohio Valley History* Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall, 2004): 31-48, and A. L. Kohlmeier, *The Old Northwest as the Keystone of the Army of American Federal Union: A Study in Commerce and Politics* (Bloomington, IN: The Principia Press, Inc., 1938). For the Ohio Valley and a "western" identity, see Paludan, *A People's Contest*, 96 and Gruenwald, "Space and Place": 42-43, which claims that the idea of Ohio and the Old Northwest as the nation's "west" had been replaced by further regions such as the Dakotas by the 1850s. Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson*, Second Edition (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2001), says much about the difficulties of enforcing the Northwest Ordinance's antislavery edict, especially the essays "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance, 1787: A Study in Ambiguity" and "Evading the Ordinance: The Persistence of Bondage in Indiana and Illinois," 37-80. Most Copperhead histories, such as Grey, *The Hidden Civil War and Klement, Copperheads of the Middle West*, identify and pay homage to this regional distinction, and make it an important part of their analysis regarding the uniqueness of Copperheadism in the area. William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 35-53 also looks at the West separately, and contrasts these states with those further north such as Wisconsin and Michigan, which he describes as more abolitionist.

¹⁵ Information on Ohio prior to the Civil War from Jeffrey P. Brown & Andrew R. L. Cayton, eds., *The Pursuit of Public Power: Political Culture in Ohio, 1787-1861* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1994), especially Vernon L. Volpe, "Ohio of Republican Dominance: John C. Frémont's 1856 Victory in Ohio," 155-168. During the war, see Christine Dee, ed., *Ohio's War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, Walter Havighurst, *Ohio: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976), 93-107, as well as various regimental histories from Ohio soldiers cited throughout this dissertation. Cowden, *Heaven Will Frown*, 168 discusses Alexander Long, especially compared to Vallandigham.

Columbus.¹⁶ Still, it was a divided state. Notable Ohio congressmen who were known Copperheads included the truly radical Alexander Long, who argued that the South should simply be let go, George Pendleton, who would be nominated as the Democratic Party's vice presidential candidate in 1864, and Clement Vallandigham, the historical archetype of Copperheadism. Cincinnati, a chief port on the Ohio River, one of the most important commercial cities in the United States prior to the Civil War, and a prewar center of the Underground Railroad, also saw a series of contentious treason trials surrounding the alleged release of Confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas, outside of Chicago.¹⁷

Of the three states north of the Ohio River, Indiana had the largest southern influence. During the war, the state would remain in the Republican column due to the efforts of Governor Oliver P. Morton, who ruled the state as a virtual dictator in contravention of a heavily Democratic legislature. In the early days of the war, the U.S. Senate expelled Indianan Jesse Bright for a letter he had written to Jefferson Davis.¹⁸ Morton replaced him with a War Democrat, Joseph Wright. At least twice, Confederate troops raided Indiana, most famously John Hunt Morgan in July 1863. These raids, combined with nebulous fears over a "Northwest" secession conspiracy and Morton's need to secure re-election led to a series of treason trials in Indianapolis. At the same time, Indiana contributed over 200,000 men to the Union cause, one of the nation's highest per capita numbers in the nation. Hoosiers served in both eastern and western theatres, including the 19th Indiana of the famed Iron Brigade.¹⁹

¹⁶ Kohlmeier, *The Old Northwest*, 220.

¹⁷ Klement, *Dark Lanterns*, 187-217.

¹⁸ Bright's misstep was twofold. First, he had addressed the letter to "His Excellency, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederation," supposedly recognizing the office as legitimate. More seriously, the letter contained a recommendation of an arms dealer to Davis. Bright was the only Senator from a Northern state to be expelled (all others were Southerners from seceded states), and to this day he remains the last expelled Senator in American history.

¹⁹ See Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1949), Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1965), Richard F. Nation and Stephen E. Towne, eds., *Indiana's War: The Civil War in Documents* (Athens: Ohio

Much like Ohio, Illinois was a large, wealthy state that provided both tremendous numbers of men (fourth in the nation, right behind Ohio) and important national leadership. Abraham Lincoln claimed Illinois as his home, and had built his national profile in Springfield prior to winning the presidency. Ulysses S. Grant, though born in Ohio, lived in Illinois prior to the war and initially joined the war effort by helping with the state's recruiting and training of troops before receiving command of the 21st Illinois, from which he would begin his journey to national hero. Even Illinois Democrats, particularly Stephen Douglas, joined ranks with Lincoln to call for reunion. Much as in Indiana and Ohio, though, southern migrants had settled southern Illinois, especially the region at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers at Cairo known as Little Egypt. State authorities needed to move quickly to secure the vital point while avoiding antagonism of the fickle population. Even after gaining control, Union officials in the region regularly dealt with complaints of disloyalty and sedition. Cairo would become the point of origin for early Union incursions south. Chicago also contained a large Copperhead population, and the nearby Union prison at Camp Douglas was the target of several breakout conspiracies.²⁰

Kentucky presents a far more complicated political situation. Rather than seceding to join the Confederacy, Kentucky chose to remain neutral. Kentucky's fate, like the other Border States that did not choose rebellion, was the result of the particulars of geography and population. Maryland, with its border to the nation's capital, could not choose its course, as Lincoln and the Union Army forced the state's loyalty through arrests and other restrictive actions. Delaware never had great interest in secession, though its two Senators James Bayard and Willard

University Press, 2009), Howard H. Peckham, *Indiana: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 67-76, and William E. Wilson, *Indiana: A History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), 134-148. For information on Indianapolis Treason Trials, see Klement, *Dark Lanterns*, 151-186.

²⁰ See Victor Hicken, *Illinois in the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966) and Richard J. Jensen, *Illinois: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 61-75.

Saulsbury kept the state firmly Democratic during the war. Missouri most resembled Kentucky in population. Ardent pro-slavery forces had been one of the flashpoints in ‘Bleeding Kansas’ during the previous decade, and Missouri bushwhackers were experienced fighters. Kentucky though, unlike Missouri, was a strategic location. Its position near the Ohio, Mississippi, Cumberland, and Tennessee Rivers made holding the state a high Union priority. From this, one can see the origins of reports that Lincoln pronounced that while he hoped to have God on his side, he must have Kentucky.²¹

Lincoln would have Kentucky early on. In addition to secret efforts by General William "Bull" Nelson to supply the state's unionists, Confederate General Leonidas Polk made one of the South's first great blunders when he invaded and took the town of Columbus. Polk would compound his mistake by failing both to capture the more important city of Paducah, and to reinforce Confederate defenses at Fort Henry along the Tennessee River, all mistakes on which Ulysses Grant capitalized. Upset at Confederate intrusion, the state government asked Washington for aid, a request with which the President and Congress gladly complied. Kentucky, though divided internally, would remain officially part of the Union. It is for this reason that Kentucky is included in this study. The Bluegrass State's official loyalty made it an important part of electoral politics during the war. Unlike Tennessee or Louisiana, states captured by Union troops during the early years of the war, Kentucky maintained full representation in Congress and a vote in the 1864 presidential election.²²

Kentucky presents a difficult location to understand. It was the only one of these states to allow slavery, and while the practice never existed on the same scale as in deeper South states, it

²¹ William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011). Lincoln quote from James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 284.

²² The one notable exception to this would be Andrew Johnson, from loyal Eastern Tennessee, who remained in the Senate prior to his election to the Vice Presidency in 1864.

remained an important part of the state's economy. Much like the rest of the region, Kentucky divided in the nation's ongoing political debates, trying to balance democratic impulses with the desire for internal improvements that fueled economic growth. Kentuckians fought on both sides of the war. Most of these pro-Confederate Kentuckians, though, would be unlikely to participate in Union elections. The ones that formed official regiments left the state to join Confederate armies farther south. Other Kentuckians remained in the state, acting as guerrilla fighters, and a perpetual thorn in the side of Union troops.²³

The region along the Ohio River became one of the first true borderlands of the war, as the two sides jockeyed for control. This uncertainty further enforces the differences between various regions of the Union, making it hardly united in the way it chose to wage war and the aims it chose to pursue. This notion of borderlands, a region more marked by being an amalgam of separate factions rather than adhering to any hard distinctions, is hardly new to Civil War history. In 1927, Edward Conrad Smith published *The Borderland in the Civil War*, studying this particular region as one torn by strife and confusion, and a region that required Lincoln to tread lightly on issues of slavery and the hard war. Drawing on the region's historical ties to the South, Smith highlights the difficulties Lincoln faced in securing the area's support for the war and maintaining control until federal forces could push further into the Confederacy. The other great study of a Civil War borderland, and the common lack of distinction between towns North and South, is Edward L. Ayers' online project "The Valley of the Shadow" and its companion book *In the Face of Mine Enemies*. Using social data to analyze Franklin County, Pennsylvania and Augusta County, Virginia, the project seeks to find greater nuance in the standard narrative of a modern North and archaic South. Instead, readers and researchers can find a great deal of

²³ James A. Ramage and Andrea S. Watkins, *Kentucky Rising: Democracy, Slavery, and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011), Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975), Steven A. Channing, *Kentucky: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 109-134.

similarity between two otherwise distinct areas. Though these counties are east of the Ohio Valley region, the notion of regional similarities in spite of other political boundaries is important to understanding the persistence of Confederate sympathy in states such as Kentucky and southern Illinois.²⁴

Other studies stretch this notion of "neither North nor South" to civilian-military relations. Susan Hall's *Appalachian Ohio and the Civil War* looks at the advance of Union troops into the Ohio-West Virginia frontier, while Brian McKnight's *Contested Borderland* examines further south between Kentucky and Virginia. In each of these borderlands histories, excepting McKnight, the narrative ends at some point in 1863. By that time, Union military advances had made certain forms of resistance, up to and including the threat of secession, practically impossible. Yet, the potential for political trouble remained through 1864, particularly that year's presidential election, which promised the possibility of Lincoln's defeat. In borderlands regions, civilians tired of both sides' passing armies reacted negatively to any soldiers, and bore some resemblance to the Copperheads Union soldiers had heard so much about. As Copperhead activity in these states helped to politicize Union soldiers, their concerns over trouble at home hardly abated even as their letters began to flow from Tennessee and Georgia instead of Kentucky.²⁵

As the divisions within these states suggests, the army and its members was hardly a Republican organ. Lincoln was the first Republican to assume the mantle of Commander-in-

²⁴ Edward Conrad Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), originally published 1927, Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America 1859-1863* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), "Valley of the Shadow: Two Communities in the American Civil War," University of Virginia Library (<http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu>).

²⁵ Susan G. Hall, *Appalachian Ohio and the Civil War, 1862-1863* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2000), Brian D. McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006). Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict & Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 76-107 discusses the notion of a "no man's land" between towns held by Union troops (as distinct from territory under full Confederate control), where soldiers were under threat of conflict with angry civilians. McKnight in particular cites Ash as instrumental to his understanding of civilian-military relations in the Appalachian borderland.

Chief, and many of the new Republicans had been Whigs, the party that opposed the Mexican War. Many high-ranking members of the army were Democrats, including two future Presidential candidates. As Klement notes, when the call to serve went out, volunteers from both parties filled the ranks. Some were certainly Republicans. Lincoln voters, they believed in the right and duty of the federal government to preserve the Union. Others, though, were heavily Democratic, including regiments such as the 109th Illinois and 20th Massachusetts. The Midwest in particular was a hotbed for the Copperhead movement, in part due to the area's pro-Democratic populace, especially so when compared to the eastern states, in particular those of New England. As the war progressed, and news from home blurred any distinctions between "Copperhead" and "Democrat," many soldiers with Democratic leanings began to question their loyalty to the party. Part of my contention is that the view of many soldiers tilted towards the Republican Party due to the overwhelming perception that all Democrats were Copperheads, in spite of potential Democratic leanings from the soldiers themselves.²⁶

Any look at the study of Civil War soldiers must begin with Bell Irvin Wiley's *Life of Johnny Reb* and its successor *Life of Billy Yank*. Wiley's two volumes, and the later *Soldiers Blue and Gray* from his student James I. Robertson, study the everyday life of Civil War soldiers and create a fascinating picture of their habits, weaknesses, and activities. These works also, though, take much away from the men. Wiley in particular views the men through a more modern prism, concluding that soldiers cared little for politics or causes, but rather focused on survival. Wiley compares Civil War soldiers to their more cynical counterparts in the twentieth century

²⁶ Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats* includes an appendix listing all the Union generals he could categorize as Democrats. Though some of his evidence is tenuous, it does illustrate the widespread appeal of the Party, and includes more notable and definite Democrats such as George McClellan and Winfield Scott Hancock. Joseph Allan Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet: The Political Socialization of American Civil War Soldiers*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), also mentions the high number of Democrats in the officer corps, and identifies the relationship between Republican soldiers and Democratic officers as a source of strain within the army. Frank is also the one who identifies the Copperhead regiments.

(particularly World War II), drawing little distinction between the decades. Robertson barely gives any mention to politics beyond some simple patriotic themes during enlistment.²⁷

James McPherson challenged this viewpoint with *For Cause and Comrades*, arguing that soldiers were anything but apolitical, and spoke glowingly about their causes and the survival of the nation. Reid Mitchell's *Civil War Soldiers* does similar, and sees soldiers quick to express political opinions, especially if it meant complaining about opposition from the home front. McPherson and Mitchell both spend time examining soldier reaction to the peace movement, and quickly conclude that many soldiers voted for Abraham Lincoln in 1864 due to the tainted view of his opposition, as well as the president's ability to cultivate support among the men. Joseph Allan Frank also examines popular politics amongst the soldiers in *With Ballot and Bayonet*, though he does it on an even broader scale. Where McPherson and Mitchell see politics as an important, but small, part of the soldiers' world, Frank put them at the center of Civil War experience. Comparing the mass volunteerism of the war's early years with the *levee en masse* of the French Revolution, Frank sees nothing but politics. Even more so than the others, Frank rejects the conclusion of soldiers as anti-political that Wiley describes. Politics shaped every aspect of life for all in the army, from the highest-ranking officers to the newest enlisted men.²⁸

²⁷ Two good overviews of soldier historiography are Aaron Sheehan-Dean, "The Blue and Gray in Black and White: Assessing the Scholarship on Civil War Soldiers," in Aaron Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View From the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 9-31 and Reid Mitchell, "'Not the General but the Soldier': The Study of Civil War Soldiers," in James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr., eds., *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 81-95. Both tend to skim over politics, focusing on broader issues of motivation, while Mitchell tries to call for further work on the interpretation of soldiering itself, especially the experience of warfare itself. Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995) originally published 1952, and *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987) originally published 1943; James I. Robertson, *Soldiers Blue and Gray* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988).

²⁸ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers: Their Expectations and Their Experiences* (New York: Viking, 1988). Lincoln's relationship with the soldiers will be covered in Chapter 2, though William C. Davis, *Lincoln's Men: How President Lincoln Became Father to an Army and a Nation* (New York: The Free Press, 1999) and Matthew Pinsker, *Lincoln's Sanctuary: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers' Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) are good sources. Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 17.

This dissertation attempts to bring these various historiographical trends together. Soldiers, heavily invested in the war's political outcome, volunteered from across this diverse and contested region of the country. Not easily pigeonholed as particularly North or South, states in the Old Northwest contributed soldiers who believed that they fought for Union and the broader nation as they conceived it. Copperhead agitators, who grew out of those same regional divisions, represented not only a threat to the war effort, but perhaps more importantly a threat to the lives and safety of friends and family members. While today we may dismiss the conclusions of Wood Gray for historical accuracy, they can also provide some sense of the world as soldiers saw it, and in the politics that grew from this period, perception was reality. That soldiers disliked Copperheads is hardly a new or surprising conclusion. I want to gain a more complete picture of the relationship between American fighting men and their alleged detractors at home, especially as it relates to this region. National overviews of soldiers have much to say about the Civil War's broad experience, but can ignore or miss many of the unique regional variations that make the war's effects on the nation so fascinating. Neither the North nor South were monolithic wholes, and it is important that some studies reflect those internal differences, as well perhaps as external similarities.

The first section deals with the relationship between soldiers and Copperheads on the home front. It also tracks soldier reaction to this news from home, and the overwhelming negativity with which the men viewed such actions. The second chapter builds on this, looking at the broader debate regarding soldiers' participation in politics. This chapter also describes the ways in which politicians, and especially Republican ones, attempted to cultivate support in the ranks. The third chapter deals with the experience of soldiers in the field, and the relationships they had with civilians in the divided state of Kentucky, comparing those citizens to Copperheads at home. Having established a negative feeling towards Copperheads, the fourth

chapter shows where such reactions did not automatically pigeonhole men as staunch Republicans, certainly not the war's controversial conscription and emancipation policies. Finally, in chapter five, soldiers join the electoral process, and stake their political positions. Using the 1863 Ohio gubernatorial and 1864 Presidential elections as marks, the vote went heavily Republican, based in part by the general negative reaction generated by Copperheads and the belief that such men had taken over the Democratic Party. As such, in these elections, the choice was not between Democrat and Republican, but rather Copperhead and not.

The sources used in this work are letters written to and from Union soldiers who resided in the states in question. Letters were an important part of the soldier's daily life. Wiley discusses the importance of writing home to many Union soldiers. Men wrote on various topics, mostly sharing the experience of battle and camp life to those who would know little of it. Many of these letters were long and discussed all aspects of army life. A single letter could include news on the newest town entered, recent battles, and interesting conversations recently had, in addition to thoughts on politics of the day. References to Lincoln, Copperheads, or other political topics could be as simple as several lines or a paragraph in a four-page letter. The high literacy rate of the Civil War armies has provided the historian with a wide variety of sources beyond the basic reports of generals and politicians. The average "Billy Yank" was more literate than his "Johnny Reb" counterpart was, and his letters express a variety of motivations for fighting. The letters are filled with creative spelling and invented words, while some manage to lack punctuation. For the most part, I have corrected misspellings only so far as to avoid complete misunderstanding on the part of the reader, and punctuation to create a better sense of comprehension in the author's intended point. Soldiers also received mail from home, the arrival of which was one of the most exciting moments of the day. Soldiers begged their families to write more and letters, especially when supportive, played an important role in morale. Much like the soldier's own writing, his

letters from home contained a great deal of news. Family stories and local gossip filled pages. This study also includes reports from home of local political activities. Especially in rural parts of the Midwest, where the local politicians were or could be recognizable figures, soldiers learned of rallies and speeches. These letters formed the basis for their understanding of the Copperhead movement.²⁹

These men served in all theaters of the war. Though most of these Midwesterners went south with the Armies of the Cumberland, Ohio and Tennessee, as well as local home guards throughout Kentucky, such as the Louisville Home Guard, many of the Ohioans and Indianans fought with the Army of the Potomac in northern Virginia. While it is probable that the western armies' success played into a greater optimism regarding the chances for Union victory and made soldiers less amenable to Copperhead arguments about the "failure" of the war effort, this does not account for the eastern theater men who shared their backgrounds and home front concerns. Their ranks included prolific letter-writers, the occasional gem of thought, diaries both comprehensive and sparse, and the general assortment of individual personalities found in any large group. Men such as the dour Robert Winn and the enthusiastic William Henry Pittenger, families with large letter collections such as the Dows and Dunns, both with many members adding their opinions, all added to the collection and narrative of these tumultuous times. All had something to add when the discussion turned to politics.

²⁹ Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank*, 183-190 and McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 132-133.

Chapter 1
"A Fire in Our Rear"
The Union Soldiers' Copperhead Experience

Because they gathered around enemies of our country to the cause for which I have sacrificed my all to defend. If not friends of our country, they much need be enemies of mine, for who oppose the government for which I fight, oppose me so surely as twice two make four. I have and will make them. They cannot take the soldier by the hand and look him square in the eye and bid him welcome home. I've met them. I tell them by their greeting, those are wounds that outlive the wounds of mortal combat on the battlefields of our country. They will live upon the memory of the soldier whilst he breathes the breath of life for they can never be forgiven or for forgotten. To think that those whose lives and property we have saved and protected by standing as a wall of fire before or between them and enraged foe for nearly 3 years – to think that they will act and treat us thus is almost intolerable. Can we call it anything but treason? Yes, and they are traitors and to be consistent should seek protection beyond our lines and under the detestable rag of our enemies.¹

While on leave at home in early 1864, Ohio soldier William Henry Pittenger lamented the lack of support he felt from the home front. While he had been in the field fighting for the Union, there were those at home working not to support the cause, but actively to undermine it. Pittenger's diary entry for that January day reveals the full spectrum of emotions many soldiers felt when news came from home regarding these Copperheads. His sadness, resentment and anger all boiled over when confronted with direct contact of the news he had been hearing. While soldiers had a number of opportunities to be at home, most of their experience with Copperheads came from the experience of others. All forms of written communication from home provided a base of knowledge for soldiers on the subject of political opposition. Their reaction to letters and newspapers helped to form soldier sentiment toward Copperheads.

Eagerly as soldiers devoured information, the slightest lack of it promoted concern. Even at their best, newspapers dealt heavily with rumor and innuendo. With their exposure to the home-front limited to the reception of mail, soldiers relied heavily on the occasionally biased and incomplete reports from home. When not regular or complete, unfounded accusations and

¹ Entry of January 15, 1864, "William Henry Pittenger Diary," Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, hereafter cited as OHS.

unfulfilled rumors became part of the information trade within the camps. This is not to denigrate or sneer dismissingly at the soldiers or their sources of information. These caveats to the information received by and bandied about within the army demonstrate the difficulties in projecting soldiers' views onto politics. This is, of course, hardly a catchall, as many people with access to more complete information consciously limit themselves due to a variety of factors. Still, when the flow of such information is limited by the time, it forms an important factor in the creation of political opinion. In this case, the limited access to information regarding Copperheads helped to target soldier wrath upon them. The limited view of Copperheads, and the Democratic Party to which they claimed allegiance, became vital as the war progressed, particularly at election time.

Newspapers were a relatively common source of information from home and were common reading material for soldiers in camp. Aided by the literacy of Union soldiers, newspapers were exceedingly popular within the camps. Soldiers would receive local papers as supplements to their letters from home. They also had access to the larger national papers, such as the New York *Herald* and *Tribune*. A soldier with some money, or a group of soldiers with enough money pooled together, could purchase a subscription, or simply a copy from the many sutlers that roamed Union camps. The acquired papers could then either be passed among the men for individual perusal or shared via a man with a strong voice.² In addition to word from home, lax regulations regarding the report of military maneuvers made the papers a perfect source of information for the curious soldier. "We were, for the most part," remembered the 125th Ohio's Ralsa Rice after the war, "dependent upon our mail for all the movements of our arms." He continued, noting that, "Northern journals had their correspondents at headquarters

² Wiley, *Billy Yank*, 153-154.

who, as a more privileged class, were given this information.”³ Correspondents mostly came from papers with larger circulation, but local papers were also occasionally sent south to the men by both family and publishers, providing a taste of home.⁴ Sometimes the very arrival of printed pages was considered significant news. “Mail today,” wrote Lt. Chesley Mosman of the 59th Illinois. “I got two *Ledgers* and letters from Aunt Mary and A. W., the *Atlantic Monthly* for August, *Washington Chronicle* and the *Conspiracy of the Copperheads*, he continued, “so [I] have lots of reading matter.”⁵ A letter from William Shepherd, of the 1st Illinois Light Artillery, to his parents noted that, “[t]he Telegraph of the 21st came this morning-and was well inspected.”⁶

Shepherd’s notation of receiving the *Telegraph* came several days after the reported print date, a common problem in reading newspapers. Lucky troops, especially those camped further north, usually earlier in the war, reported papers from the previous day. George Benson Fox, in February 1862, complained of the Cincinnati papers arriving, “the day after they are printed at noon.”⁷ Two months later, with his 75th Ohio regiment having moved further from his Cincinnati home, the delay extended, as he reported receiving copies of the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, “from seven to nine days after their date.” In spite of this lateness, Fox limited his complaints, remarking, “That is the latest and most responsible news we get.”⁸

³ Ralsa C. Rice, *Yankee Tigers: Through the Civil War with the 125th Ohio*, edited by Richard A. Baumgartner & Larry M. Strayer (Huntington, WV: Blue Acorn Press, 1992), 58.

⁴ Thomas E. Pope, *The Weary Boys: Colonel J. Warren Keifer and the 110th Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2002), 24, notes that Sgt. Richard Pearson thanked the local *Troy Times* for sending its paper to the 110th during the war.

⁵ Entry of October 21, 1864, Chesley A. Mosman, *The Rough Side of War: The Civil War Journal of Chesley A. Mosman, 1st Lieutenant, Company D, 59th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment*, edited with biographical sketch by Arnold Gates (Garden City, NY: Basin Pub. Co., 1987), 295.

⁶ “Willie to Father and Mother,” August 26, 1862, William T. Shepherd, *To Rescue My Native Land: The Civil War Letters of William T. Shepherd, First Illinois Light Artillery*, edited by Kurt H. Hackemer (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 218.

⁷ “Ben to Father and Mother,” February 14, 1862, George Benson Fox Correspondence, Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati, Ohio, hereafter cited as CHS.

⁸ “Ben to Father,” April 24, 1862, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS.

Worse than late newspapers was missing them altogether. Alvin Voris complained of the days without receiving papers. “Nothing to do, and nothing to do it with...We have no newspapers – dull! dull! vacant day.”⁹ D. Leib Ambrose of the 7th Illinois echoed Voris with his own colorful complaints over, “the cry...from the ‘P.O.’ ‘no mail’-‘no papers.’ Oh! cruel fates!”¹⁰ Voris at least would find solace several weeks later, as he advanced further south into Virginia. “I feel quite relieved at realizing that I am not quite beyond the pale of civilization for since we left Fredericks burg a month ago we have been shut out from mail facilities, from news and newspapers till we got to this place [Front Royal, Virginia] day before yesterday.”¹¹ The worst part of not receiving papers, understandably, was the frustration of not knowing anything. “[W]e are kept in the dark as regards events occurring with out shotgun range of us,” complained Ohioan E. P. Sturges.¹² Thomas Edwin Smith sounded similar concerns to his brother, claiming, “I have no doubt you know almost as much about the movements of our Brigade as I do, and almost as soon too.” Smith’s complaints are less convincing, though when he followed by saying, “It seems to me almost impossible to keep the run of affairs even tho’ we had a Cincinnati Commercial every morning fresh from the press”¹³

Newspapers held a significant place in American society in the mid-nineteenth century. They provided a news source for the community, advertising for local business, and a forum to debate the public’s favorite contest: politics. Unlike the modern press, with its professed emphasis on balance and nonpartisan coverage, nineteenth-century newspapers relished their politics. Individual papers served as organs of parties, as well as outlets for the egos of their

⁹ February 10, 1862, Alvin C. Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier’s Civil War: The Letters of Brevet Major General Alvin C. Voris*, edited by Jerome Mushkat (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 27.

¹⁰ Entry of January 18, 1863, D. Leib Ambrose, *From Shiloh to Savannah: The Seventh Illinois Infantry in the Civil War*, introduction and notes by Daniel E. Sutherland (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 94.

¹¹ June 19, 1862, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier’s Civil War*, 63.

¹² “E. P. Sturges to Folks,” November 17, 1862, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

¹³ “TE Smith to Brother,” November 13, 1862, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS.

editors. It is most telling that newspaper editors served as political advisors, Secretary of State William Seward's advisor Thurlow Weed being perhaps the most noteworthy of the time. Major cities had several newspapers, which represented divergent positions even within the parties. In Indianapolis, for example, three major dailies provided opinions on the war's progress. Perhaps most notable here is that all three favored the war, both the Democratic *Daily State Sentinel* and *Indiana State Guard*, along with the Republican *Indianapolis Daily Journal*.¹⁴ Having been drawn directly from civilian backgrounds, soldiers identified with the divergent views presented by publications both local and national. F. A. Wildman from Norwalk, Ohio, near the northern city of Sandusky, commented on the papers coming into camp, noting his reception of "a 'Harpers Weekly,' 'Sandusky Register' and that stinking organ of Jeff Davis." Wildman criticized publisher W. W. Redfield, suggesting that if he, "could hear the deep muttered curses of the brave boys in the field...when they chance to see his dirty sheet...he would not feel very much complimented."¹⁵

Beyond reading newspapers, soldiers also actively used the press for publication of their war stories. In a series of columns, the soldier would provide a running commentary on the war to friends and family at home, highlighting the exploits of local troops and offering his opinion on whatever topics crossed his mind. Many of these letter series have been reprinted in their entirety in recent years, providing a single narrative of an individual's wartime experience. Sergeant Stephen Fleharty was one such example, providing dispatches to the *Argus* of Rock Island, Illinois. German newspapers particularly desired soldier letters and used the correspondence to promote the activities of German immigrants in preserving the Union. These letters went to major German newspapers in large cities, such as the Louisville *Anzeiger* and

¹⁴ William Thomas Venner, *Hoosier's Honor: The Iron Brigade's 19th Indiana Regiment* (Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 1998), 17.

¹⁵ "F. A. Wildman to Sam," December 31, 1862, Wildman Family Papers, OHS. The "stinking organ of Jeff Davis" is likely the *Norwalk Experiment*.

Cincinnati Volksfreund.¹⁶ This close relationship, though, was not unbreakable. In summer 1863, Fleharty broke off his correspondence with the *Argus*, as the paper had begun turning against Lincoln's conduct of the war.¹⁷

Knowing the wide spectrum of opinions put forth in the papers, occasionally Union officials attempted to restrict access to certain materials. In early 1863, the XVI Corps under General Stephen A. Hurlbut attempted to block soldiers from receiving the *Chicago Times*, a notoriously anti-Lincoln paper. "I am glad they have," remarked Hezekiah Clock to his brother, continuing, "any man that will call a northern soldiers traitors, ought to be shot, and if he would come into the army here he would be mighty quick."¹⁸ Clock's comments, though, did not match the opinion of Hurlbut's superiors, or even, it appears, other soldiers. Following threats from soldiers over the restriction of information, the order was rescinded. Democratic soldier D. Myers celebrated the paper's unbanning with his brother, saying, "I Suppose you have seen how they tried to Stop the Chicago Times from coming in to military Districts & the reason of that was simply because it tells the truth but it could not Be Stoped."¹⁹ The *Times* was hardly the only anti-Lincoln paper to receive rough treatment from authorities. Indiana papers suffered several noteworthy bans from military officials, particularly Ambrose Burnside and Milo Hascall.

¹⁶ August Willich, *August Willich's Gallant Dutchmen: Civil War Letters from the 32nd Indiana*, translated and edited by Joseph R. Reinhart (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2006); Friedrich Bertsch and Wilhelm Stängel, *A German Hurrah!: Civil War Letters of Friedrich Bertsch and Wilhelm Stängel, 9th Ohio Infantry*, translated and edited by Joseph R. Reinhart (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ S. F. Fleharty, *Jottings from Dixie: The Civil War Dispatches of Sergeant Major Stephen F. Fleharty, U.S.A.*, edited by Philip J. Reyburn and Terry L. Wilson (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 9.

¹⁸ "Hezekiah Clock to Brother," February 15, 1863, Hezekiah Cole Clock Letters, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield, IL, hereafter cited as ALPLM. The *Times* would likely have been referring to northern soldiers as traitors due to their invasion of the South, which the *Times* would have recognized as American territory, and therefore an attack on American citizens.

¹⁹ Brother D Myers to Brother," March 8, 1863, D. Myers Letter, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, IL, hereafter cited as CHM. Craig D. Tenney, "To Suppress or Not to Suppress: Abraham Lincoln and the Chicago *Times*" *Civil War History* Vol. 27, No. 3 (Sept., 1981): 248-259 puts Lincoln's suppression of the *Times* in the context of Clement Vallandigham's May, 1863 arrest by General Ambrose Burnside. Lincoln's lifting of the order came not from First Amendment concerns, Tenney argues, but rather from commentary of friendly editors and other political considerations. The question of motives aside, Lincoln did remove the order quickly, even as he regretted doing so.

Though given the appearance of tacit support by political figures, historian Stephen Towne asserts that Indiana's governor Oliver Morton, himself no friend to Copperheads, worked tirelessly in private to have the offending generals removed.²⁰

In both styles of complaint, these letters were part of those chosen by pro-Union societies and printers to distribute widely. Printers used the soldiers as vehicles to promote the Republican viewpoint that Copperheads and Peace Democrats were traitors. Soldiers in this way indirectly became part of the Republican Party's campaign to win elective office, helping to politicize the Army. One, titled "Echo From the Army," made clear soldiers' concern at the aid being given to the Southern cause. Soldiers had quickly come to realize, or "to awaken to the consciousness," in the parlance of the day, "that a set of men who had carefully remained at home, were conspiring, with double-dyed treachery, to sell them to the enemy."²¹ Accusing Copperheads of cowardice and scolding the grumbling heard from home, soldiers were angry at those who chose not to aid the cause "by their presence in the ranks," instead staying behind in order that they might be "aiding and abetting rebels by keeping up a fire in our rear."²² These concerns were likely a case of preaching to the choir. While in some cases family members disapproved of the war or the reasons for it, many were devoted to the success of the Union in the hopes that by supporting the Union, they were supporting their soldier relative. A soldier could charge that, "[t]he rebels of

²⁰ Stephen E. Towne, "Killing the Serpent Speedily: Governor Morton, General Hascall, and the Suppression of the Democratic Press in Indiana, 1863" *Civil War History* Vol. 52, No. 1 (March, 2006): 41-65. Towne does also assert that Morton was certainly willing to restrict press freedoms when necessary, but that he rejected the efforts of Hascall and Burnside due to their clumsy nature and general ineffectiveness. David W. Bulla, *Lincoln's Censor: Milo Hascall and the Freedom of the Press in Civil War Indiana* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008) tries to place Hascall's actions in the broader context of the nineteenth century press, particularly its openly partisan nature. Bulla is certainly sympathetic to Hascall's efforts, considering them the efforts of an earnest civilian trying his hardest to maintain national unity with uncertain parameters and a tenuous national situation. Neely, *The Union Divided*, 62-117 has a broader discussion revolving around press freedom during the war. He likens it to much of the rest of the war, a strange combination of legal and violent means of resolving disputes, depending on the proclivities of those who believed themselves wronged. Neely generally recognizes the press's ability to argue for and maintain its freedom against temporary restrictions.

²¹ *The Echo From the Army: What our Soldiers say about the Copperheads* (The Loyal Publication Society: New York, 1864), 3, OHS.

²² *Echo From the Army*, 4.

the South are leaning on the northern democracy for support, and it is unquestionably true that unjustifiable opposition to the Administration is giving aid and comfort to ‘the enemy.’”²³ The home folks had good reason to oppose Copperhead ambitions.

By means of letters, soldiers stayed in regular contact with friends and relatives back home, and these letters can teach us a great deal about the way in which many soldiers experienced the Copperhead movement. Very few soldiers came into direct contact with the dissenting forces. Instead, they relied on friends and relatives to provide news of their actions. Much as soldiers would take the opportunity to detail their exploits in battle, letters from home discussed politics and campaigning. These letters back and forth expressed the wide range of emotions and opinions evoked by the presence of openly antiwar members of society.²⁴ In most cases, these were negative reactions. Anger was the most common response, as soldiers expressed their dislike of Copperhead activists and politicians undermining their efforts in the field. This anger sometimes even morphed into threats against Copperheads, with soldiers boasting of actions they would be sure to take against these traitors when they returned from the war. But there could be more than just simple anger.

Soldiers regularly dealt in revealing stories and rumors of Copperhead activity on the home-front. Friends and family readily supplied the men in the field with stories of determined Copperheads, venting their frustrations about the struggles at home to a certainly agreeable audience. “Just now I am dreadfully exasperated with the Democrats who want... a distinct Confederation,” wrote Mary Cheney Hill. She related a story of her own confrontation with a local Peace man, remarking how fortunate it was that “I had gathered only a day or two before a

²³ *Echo From the Army*, 4. “The Democracy” refers, here, to the Democratic Party.

²⁴ Steven R. Boyd, *Patriotic Envelopes of the Civil War: The Iconography of Union and Confederate Covers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010) notes that in addition to their content, stationary in the Civil War reinforced themes of Union, family, and victory through various illustrations on the paper and envelopes.

lot of statistics, that pored as good as columbiads and as deadly to his arguments.” Worse, she noted, was his background: “If he had been a Western born, or was a Border Stater...I could have been democratic enough to have conceded to him the rights of opinion, but [he was] a Yankee renegade!”²⁵ Following a crackdown on anti-war sentiment, Allie Ladley wrote to her brother, “The Copperheads around here [Dayton, Ohio] are as mute as they can be.” She did note, “Some of them are pretty bold strutting around with their butternut pins on.”²⁶

The lack of letters written to soldiers (many were likely lost during the long marches and other hardships of war far from home) allows for the use of letters from the men to highlight what news came to the camps. William Bentley wrote in his diary of a rumor “of the Peace Meeting, which the Butternuts tried to hold in Frankfort.” Bentley was clearly unimpressed with what he heard, as he noted, “The meeting didn’t amount to much.”²⁷ Other men provided information as well. Humphrey Hood related to his wife a conversation with “Cap. Kinsey of Our Reg’t,” who had reported “a great change in Public Sentiment.” Hood wrote that Kinsey’s task was to arrest deserters, saying, “At first there was talk of resisting the arrest – but this all died away – and he had no trouble at all.”²⁸ Though their sources of information were different (Bentley, an enlisted man, relied on rumor and reports, while Captain Hood, an officer, spoke directly to another officer), the news of Copperhead activity came.

Some of the initial reactions in the army expressed more regret than anger. “I [am] sorry to hear,” wrote John Crist to his sweetheart Ellen Lane, “of so many traitors in the North.” He revealed further the depths of their depravation, relating rumors that “some of the citizens of

²⁵ “Mary C. Hall to My dear Friend,” January 20, 1863, Mary Cheney Hall Papers, CHM.

²⁶ “Sister Allie L. to Brother,” May 24, 1863, Oscar Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack: The Ladley Letters, 1857-1880*, edited by Carl M. Becker and Ritchie Thomas (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1988), 133.

²⁷ Entry of February 20, 1863, William Garrigues Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased: The Civil War Letters of William Garrigues Bentley, 104th Ohio Volunteer Infantry*, edited by Barbara Bentley Smith and Nina Bentley Baker (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2004), 35.

²⁸ “H. H. Hood to My Dear Wife,” February 15, 1863, Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM.

Lancaster went so far as to wear butter nuts on their watch chains.”²⁹ It is possible that this relatively tame crime accounts for the less angry reaction. David Stathem of the 39th Ohio offered similar remorse, saying that he was, “sorry Marie’s folks are such copperheads.” Rather than use his letter as a platform to berate Copperheadism (while pointing out that he had done so in a previous letter), Stathem offers admiration for his neighbor, saying, “My only wonder is that a woman of her temperament could bear up as she has done.”³⁰ These kinds of sad responses, though, were rare in contrast to angry denunciations, or fears of a far more sinister threat.

Other reactions focused exclusively on the existence of Copperhead sentiment amongst friends, family, and other locals. John Lane responded to news of a party at home near Lancaster, Ohio (southeast of Columbus) by harping on its attendees. “You say that they were nearly all rebel boys that were at the party. They hardly ought to be allowed to associate with loyal people.”³¹ For William Bement, even visiting home in LaPorte County, Indiana would be cause for disappointment. “I have been on north this summer,” he wrote, “and visited my friends there perhaps for the last time. I shall not willingly visit some of them again unless they meet with a political conversion”³² From Reuben Townshend’s pen, the relief is palpable upon hearing news that his brother was “strong on the union,” fearing that, “if we do not sustain Government we are an un done people.”³³ A. E. Graham sounded a similar note to his brother in Bloomington, Indiana. “How much better it would be,” he wondered, “if all would stop disputing about questions of policy until this war is over.”³⁴

²⁹ “John E Crist to Ellen Lane,” February 9, 1863, Crist Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, hereafter cited as Lilly.

³⁰ “D. T. Stathem to Sister,” April 21, 1864, David T. Stathem Papers, OHS.

³¹ “John E Lane to Ellen,” April 26, 1863, Crist Collection, Lilly.

³² “Wm B Bement to Isaac Bush, Esq.,” September 5, 1864, Bement Collection, Lilly. Emphasis in original

³³ “Reuben Townsend to Brother,” August 12, 1864, Horatio Hill Papers, CHM. For Townsend, sustaining government refers to supporting the war effort, conflating the two points together.

³⁴ “A. E. Graham to Brother,” May 10, 1863, John Graham Collection, Lilly.

Soldiers certainly had plenty to say about the men still staying at home. “The people of the loyal states,” offered Colonel Ralph Buckland, then commanding the 72nd Ohio, “have the power if they choose to use it to crush this Rebellion but they must act unitedly and speedily.”³⁵ Charles Dana Miller was so unnerved by antiwar sentiment he encountered while on leave in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, that he refused to leave home, “for fear that such aggravations would lead me to do something desperate.”³⁶ J. L. Harris took a different tack, almost expressing disappointment when noting, “I heard but little of it [Copperhead sentiment] my self... they did not try me on.”³⁷ Solomon Hamrick remarked on the need for Union victories in late 1862, commenting that “it would have a good effect on the Sentiments of the people every where especially in Indiana.”³⁸ Soldiers leaving for the front were sure to cast their actions as noble, as A. W. Hostetter wrote upon leaving home. “Leaving home this time was harder work than it was the first time,” he wrote to his siblings, “but it could not be helped...and this is no time for those who can do their country a service, to be lying at home idle.”³⁹

Soldiers in the field were more than willing to highlight those at home they believed were not doing their part, or worse. Humphrey Hood inquired into the allegiances of a recently deceased Dr. D’Arcy. “He was the leader of the Ultra Democrats in the days of Buchanan,” the soldier mentioned, further commenting, “My prejudice was always strong against him.”⁴⁰

Benjamin Webb Baker urged his mother to “Tell me the names of those Copperheads.”⁴¹ Named

³⁵ “R. P. Buckland to My dear wife,” September 13, 1862, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, Spiegel Grove, Fremont, OH, hereafter cited as RBH.

³⁶ Charles Dana Miller, *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic: A Civil War Narrative by Brevet Major Charles Dana Miller, 76th Ohio Volunteer Infantry*, edited by Stewart Bennett and Barbara Tillery (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2004), 133-134.

³⁷ “J. L. Harris to Miss Susan,” September 21, 1863, John L. Harris Papers, ALPLM.

³⁸ “Simp S Hamrick to Father and Family,” November 2, 1862, Solomon Simpson Hamrick Civil War Letters, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN, hereafter cited as IHS.

³⁹ “A. W. Hostetter to Brother + Sister,” March 9, 1864, Amos W. Hostetter Letters, ALPLM.

⁴⁰ “H. H. Hood to My Dear Wife,” April 20, 1863, Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM.

⁴¹ “Webb to Mother,” September 15, 1863 in Benson Bobrick, *Testament: A Soldier’s Story of the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 233.

individuals, though, were not necessarily those doing wrong. Charles Sellon received a letter from his aunt extolling the Unionist efforts of a local man, G. M. Lucas.⁴²

Neighbors held a special place in the mindset of a concerned soldier. S. A. Hamilton of Putnam County, Illinois, wrote to his friend Neals Olson about local Copperheads. “I believe you was acquainted with the Myres boys also a family by the name of Withers who live two mile south of us,” he reminded Olson, highlighting them as “our nearest secesh neighbors since Wm Robertson died.”⁴³ The role of disloyal neighbors took a sinister turn in the mind of Lt. Isaac Rule. Writing to his brother, Rule cautioned that he “must burn this sheet as soon as you have read it, for it might be a heavy weapon in the hands of an enemy.” Not willing to leave any room for error, Rule warned that not even “your nearest neighbor [should] know what it contains.”⁴⁴ In an era of very open communication between soldiers and civilians regarding military activity, Rule’s concern for the enemy’s use of information is unusual and would likely earn him the respect of information officials in later American wars, even as they undoubtedly disapproved of Rule including what he believed to be sensitive information.

Copperheads in the North did not restrict their proselytizing to the home front. Some took their campaign to the field, even as far south as the Union camps around Vicksburg, Mississippi.⁴⁵ Others even directed their appeals at family members who served. John Dow told of “a fellow in our company that gets the most discouraging letters you ever heard of from his sister.” Her arguments, as Dow understood them, were straightforward, claiming the war was one about blacks and not Union. “[S]he writes and tells him how fast the niggers are coming into

⁴² “Linda Colburn to My dear nephew,” October 23, 1864, Charles J. Sellon Letters, ALPLM.

⁴³ “S. A. Hamilton to Friend,” October 7, 1862, Neals Olson Letters, ALPLM.

⁴⁴ “I. P. Rule to Brother,” September 8, 1863, Isaac P. Rule Papers, RBH.

⁴⁵ Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing But Victory: The Army of the Tennessee 1861-1865* (New York: Random House, 2005), 296 makes mention of a Copperhead at Vicksburg, and mentions that the soldiers responded to his presence by chasing the man out of their camp.

Ohio and how they [unintelligible] the White Women.”⁴⁶ Any family member could be a Copperhead, as Ambrose lamented. “My father was a cowardly northern copperhead, who denounced the defenders of the Union as hirelings and vandals.”⁴⁷ Copperheadism even divided families not on the front. “My Brothers are as good rebels as ever I never mention politics to them,” complained Sally Ross to her friend Lt. James Hill, 33rd Indiana. “I feel as though I were cut off from my family by these troubles. None of them love me as they once did, but I cannot go against my convictions of what is right.”⁴⁸

Being family or friend did not put Copperheads above serious reproach or even threats from individual soldiers, though usually such threats passed through third parties. “If I had a brother that was a rebel or a father [that was a Rebel],” offered Milton Crist of the 17th Ohio, “I would rejoice to See them die before Justice, and Yankees.” He continued by threatening, “I would never come home to see any of you if you would turn butternut. I would be happy to torment all you trators and burn all your, and my property.”⁴⁹ The extent of Crist’s threatening is extreme, particularly the suggestion of destroying his own property, but on the whole the general feeling of soldiers towards Copperhead relatives did not differ greatly from their feelings toward other Copperheads. Soldiers would offer the same insults and remedies, including accusations of cowardice and unmanly activity. “[T]ell my Copperhead Relation if I have any Such and no doubt I have Just tell them that I say they had better climb the fence and go for the union like men,” implored Jonathan Harrington of the 72nd Ohio.⁵⁰

In some instances, these leanings toward anti-war sentiment came from divided families. As the nicknames suggest, the Civil War did pit families against one another, and while they

⁴⁶ “John Dow to Maria,” May 22, 1863, Dow Family Letters, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY, hereafter cited as FHS.

⁴⁷ Ambrose, *From Shiloh to Savannah*, 114.

⁴⁸ “Sallie Ross to Mr. Hill,” May 9, 1862, Hill Collection, Lilly.

⁴⁹ “Milton to Sister Ellen,” September 7, 1863, Crist Collection, Lilly.

⁵⁰ “J. F. Harrington to Brother,” September 27, 1863, Captain Jonathan F. Harrington Papers.

were not always brother against brother, cousins could very easily find themselves fighting for, or at least supporting, different sides. The Dunn family in Kentucky was one such family. From Grayson County, Kentucky, the Dunn family, led by patriarch Vincent Dunn, lived on both sides of the nation's cultural (if not physical) divide. John Walker, a cousin of the Dunns, writing to extended family, expressed the hope that, "I will get to meet some of my old 'Cesesh' Friends." His visitor list was not just confined friends, though. "As I understand," he continued, "Uncle George & John are both in the 'Cesh' patch. If we ever get in that country I intend to Call and see them"⁵¹ Several months later, John repeated his desire to visit his Rebel relatives. "I want you to give me uncle George Watts' address. I want to write him. I understand that him and uncle John are both Rebels but I Cannot help that I will write to him any how." Though interested in reconciling with his cousins, Walker still could not muster sympathy for them or their cause. "I do think it is too bad that we have two in our number that turn against as good a government as this and use their influence to try to assist those southern fire eaters in tearing down those Glorious old Stars and Stripes that waved over and protected them so long, but so it is."⁵²

This idea of protection from the government harkens to other complaints made about Copperheads, suggesting their support for the Confederacy would weaken considerably if only they knew the truth of Confederate action. The divided family also had some Confederate sympathies. A relative of the family, James, writing to his brother in 1863, expressed his feelings on the matter. "I love the constitution and the union," he said. "As it was it was the best in the world. We can have no better." James then revealed his affiliation by saying that same Constitution, which he loved as the best in the world, "is in tatters from top to bottom." "I am a

⁵¹ "John H. Walker to Uncle and Aunt," September 4, 1862, Dunn Family Papers, FHS. The terms "cecesh" and "cesh" in this instance are different spellings of "Secesh."

⁵² "John H. Walker to Uncle," December 12, 1862, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

Rebel,” he concluded, “I can not help it.”⁵³ James was not alone in his declaration. “I have almost Came to the conclusion,” wrote John Walker in his earlier letter, “that this is a fulfillment of the scripture we are taught that brother shall rise against Brother and father against son and son against father. Have we not a full specimen of that in this present rebellion?”⁵⁴ Indeed, it seems, they did.

Other soldiers even received treasonable sentiments from home coming from people not related to them. Reuben Prentice of the 8th Illinois Cavalry expressed considerable concern regarding the wording of a letter from Miss Lovina Eyster. “I can not Exactly understand you whether you think I have become Demoralized and degraded that you have to condescend so low to write to me...& yet our Friends will persist in telling us when they write that they lay aside their pride in writing to us.” Stung by the apparent condescension, Prentice added that, “for my part I would rather have no friends at all than those who have to condescend so much to write to me it must certainly hurt them to lower their pride so.” Prentice at least considers the possibility he had misread Miss Eyster’s previous letters, but ended by saying that if, “you do not wish to continue this correspondence let me know at once & I will act accordingly.” This was certainly a misunderstanding, as the two continued to correspond, and were married after the war.⁵⁵ Charles Poffenberger of the 66th Ohio also complained of treasonable sentiment in letters from home, publishing his concerns publicly in the *Citizen and Gazette*, an Urbana, Ohio paper.⁵⁶ John Dow mentioned a soldier named Dave who received letters from female Vallandigham supporters.⁵⁷ Knowing the role that women could play in a man’s decision to enlist, it can easily be seen how such letters would prove potentially effective. Nevertheless, Dow seems to have doubted the

⁵³ “James P. to Brother, April 16, 1863, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

⁵⁴ “John H. Walker to Uncle,” December 12, 1862, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

⁵⁵ “Sergt. Ruben T. Prentice to Friend,” September 26, 1863, Reuben T. Prentice Letters, ALPLM.

⁵⁶ David T. Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold: A History of the Sixty-Sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999), 122.

⁵⁷ “John Dow to Sister,” October 2, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

overall efficacy of these letters. “What Soldiers are left,” he observed, “are true Blue. What few Butternuts we had have either disserted or resigned.”⁵⁸

Soldier fears over violence were well grounded, as word coming from home would demonstrate. “The Butternuts have burned one meeting house and partly tore down another,” wrote Sarah Lundy to a friend, “because the minister preached good Union sermons and not in favor of Vallandigham.”⁵⁹ Kentuckian Robert Winn retells a story for his sister of “a dark picture of rebel chivalry.” When a Kentucky man had “got a little too much liquer,” he started to talk about his support of Lincoln and the Union “and would have told them more but they knocked him down and stamped him until he had to be carried away.”⁶⁰

A number of Copperheads took it upon themselves to damage the war effort by preventing recruitment and drafting. Southeast of Akron, local Copperheads threatened Levi Gaerte with violence and even death when he announced his intention to join the army in 1863, digging an empty grave in his school yard with a note suggesting that he would be in it. Perhaps the hole was only a bluff, but Gaerte slept under guard the night before his enlistment.⁶¹ The soon-to-follow draft created other news of violence and threats. “The Copperheads,” wrote Jesse Handley to his son in the 99th Indiana, “are making big threats,” and included the possibility that they would, “doo there fiting [*sic.*] At home.”⁶² Hiram Ambler reported a more orderly and potentially productive plan from Copperheads in Bethel, Illinois. When the town voted for a \$300 bounty to each man drafted and mustered into service, the Copperheads tried to extend the offer of “\$300 voted to every drafted man, in order to defeat the government in raising men.”⁶³

⁵⁸ “John Dow to Bro. Tho^s,” May 30, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

⁵⁹ “Sarah Lundy to Mr. J. O. Martin,” June 8, 1863, Sarah Lundy Correspondence, OHS.

⁶⁰ “Robert Winn to Sister,” September 7, 1863, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

⁶¹ Jack K. Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort: The 87th Indiana in the War of the Rebellion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 22.

⁶² “Jesse Handley to son,” June 29, 1863, Handley Collection, Lilly.

⁶³ “Hiram Ambler to Uncle,” August 13, 1863, Mary Cheney Hall Papers, CHM.

Most Copperhead activity revolved around the disruption of Republican and Union political events. Not content to hold their own rallies, the anti-war faction targeted the opposition party's events for agitation and even violence.⁶⁴ Sarah Lundy described an Ohio rally that the Copperheads tried unsuccessfully to stop from meeting. Once this objective failed, they resorted to pelting the convention goers with stones as the event ended. Lundy noted, "some of the Ladies were hurt severely with stones."⁶⁵ It appears stone throwing was the disruption of choice, as Ann Dow told of a similar event, also in Ohio, where someone she and her brother John knew had his arm broken by a stone. "[T]he butternuts disturbed the meeting," she said, noting, "there was a group of men hollering for Vallandigham."⁶⁶ Indeed, a meeting not disrupted by Copperheads appears to have been news of its own, as M. L. P. Thompson took the time to relate that "not a copperhead hissed" at a Republican rally in Cincinnati.⁶⁷

As stories such as these made their way into the minds of soldiers, they combined with previously examined fears of a northern civil war started by these southern sympathizers. "I'm afraid the butternuts will make trouble in the North this fall," stated one soldier succinctly.⁶⁸ Luther Thustin expressed his concerns that the "violent & defying" Copperheads were ready to exploit dissatisfaction with the war and begin rioting in the North.⁶⁹ Some of these concerns were slightly exaggerated. In the aftermath of elections, being able to look back on their earlier concerns, some soldiers readjusted their views of Copperhead brazenness, while still attempting to justify their earlier worries. S. C. Alden does such when he writes in October 1863, after the Ohio gubernatorial election, "I did have some fears that after all the blowing there might possibly

⁶⁴ Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 249-250 notes that Republicans could give as well as they got, and that nineteenth century political rallies were regularly violent. The war's presence only intensified the stakes, and soldiers on leave were more than willing to jump in and carry out their personal desires for revenge when granted the opportunity.

⁶⁵ "Sarah Lundy to Friend," August 12, 1863, Sarah Lundy Correspondence, OHS.

⁶⁶ "Ann Dow to John," August 10, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

⁶⁷ "M. L. P. Thompson to Forhan," February 24, 1863, M. L. P. Thompson Papers, OHS.

⁶⁸ Thomas Honnell to Friend," August 23, 1864, Thomas C. Honnell Papers, OHS.

⁶⁹ "Mr. Garnett to Major L. T. Thustin," June 3, 1863, Luther Thayer Thustin Papers, FHS.

be some violence offered on election day but when it came to the test they [the Copperheads] were too peaceable in principle to make any disturbance, though they had threatened to make Abolition blood run like water.”⁷⁰

Letters and diaries made note of rallies and events throughout the Midwest. Even brief statements reveal a level of newsworthiness for either soldiers or their loved ones. Pittenger’s diary contains the entry, “Copperheads making more demonstrations in Logan Co., Ohio,” while a letter from Sarah Lundy notes a “secesh meeting” in a nearby town.⁷¹ Others wrote of the Copperhead rallies, describing themselves as less than impressed at what was seen and heard. Robert Winn described a Democratic meeting to his sister, called it, “characteristic of the Copperhead Party.” His complaint regarded the speeches that were given there, which he considered “too silly to pass my kind of review.” He closed his thoughts with his hope that such sentiments as were expressed there would not carry the day, though it is possible with his pessimism that he was not ready to believe that.⁷² Ann Dow, writing to her soldier brother, was also not taken by the rallies, calling them “so insulting.”⁷³

Sometimes, Copperheads held rallies in response to Republican campaigning, or the other way around. Both sides dueled with campaigns, and used them almost as primitive polling. When talking about a Republican meeting in Ohio, Sarah Lundy expressed a concern that a “week previous to that the Copperheads had a large meeting and it was feared by many that Tuesdays meeting would fall below theirs in regard to numbers.”⁷⁴ Copperheads held rallies for similar reasons. A letter from Illinois told of a Copperhead picnic “about 5 or 6 miles from there

⁷⁰ “S. C. Alden to Miss Jane Berry,” October, 1863, Samuel S. Miner Papers, OHS. This assertion that Copperheads were “too peaceable in principle” echoes the paradigm illustrated in Neely, *The Union Divided*, where he asserts that respect for the Constitution and the electoral process helped to control anti-Administration and anti-Republican violence.

⁷¹ Entry of March 28, 1863, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS; “Sarah Lundy to Friend,” July 6, 1863, Sarah Lundy Correspondence, OHS.

⁷² “Robert Winn to Sister,” October 21, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

⁷³ “Ann Dow to John,” October 15, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

⁷⁴ “Sarah Lundy to Friend,” August 12, 1863, Sarah Lundy Correspondence, OHS.

[the place where Republicans were holding a picnic] so as to get the men to go there, and so they would not have enough men to raise the pole.”⁷⁵ Sometimes, the two even held parades in front of the other, leading to direct confrontation. This confrontation need not be violent, as Isaac Wilson Dow described, saying:

Week ago last Monday night I was over to Alleghey[?] to a republican meeting. They had a nice time, big crowd, good speeches and fine music. The copperheads had a meeting there the same night. It did not amount to much. they come over from Pittsb. in great array with all kinds of devices on their banners, marched up to the Democrat Head Quarters. They had one speech when the Republican Band played Rally Round the Flag which made the copperheads mad. They gave three groans for Old Abe then started for Pittsburgh. The republicans had the best band of music I ever heard. They played Red White + Blue, Hail Columbia, Star Spangled Banner mighty nice.⁷⁶

Sometimes this violence extended even against soldiers. Ann Dow described to her soldier brother John an incident in which a number of Copperheads in Holmes County, Ohio, crashed a Union camp and stole a cannon from nearby Bladensburg. The situation was apparently serious enough that the governor sent troops to help calm the situation.⁷⁷ While guarding railroads with the 122nd Illinois Lansden Cox noted that the residents of certain towns expressed concerns when they left, “for the Copperheads are very bold...they cut the rope out of the flag pole and spiked the Canon.” Cox does note that the perpetrators were arrested shortly thereafter.⁷⁸

Occasionally, soldiers and Copperheads clashed openly. Alexander Ewing reported news from camp that, “a young war has almost sprung up in Indiana.” Copperheads hoping to hide deserters had attacked a detachment of Union troops arresting such men. In addition to the deserters, the soldiers managed to arrest nine of their assailants. “If this is so,” he offered, “these

⁷⁵ “Bella to Brother, Ike,” June 24, 1863, Rockbridge, Illinois Papers, OHS.

⁷⁶ “Isaac Wilson Dow to Sister,” October 20, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

⁷⁷ “Ann Dow to Bro. John,” June 21, 1863, Dow Family Papers, FHS; Kenneth H. Wheeler, “Local Autonomy and Civil War Draft Resistance: Holmes County, Ohio” *Civil War History*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (June, 1999): 147-159 also relates the story of the so-called “Fort Fizzle” rebellion.

⁷⁸ “L. J. Cox to My Dear Wife,” July 13, 1863, Lansden J. Cox Papers, ALPLM.

men should be swung from the first tree they come to and let them scoundrels in Indiana see what the penalty is for resistance and opposition to the government.”⁷⁹ In spring 1864, Chesley Mosman recorded in his journal, “a thrilling account of a disgraceful affair at Charles[ton], Ill. between Copperheads and soldiers.” This was not a small affair, as it included the death of Shubal York, surgeon of the 54th Illinois.⁸⁰ The potential for clashes even existed early in the war. William Wiley reported on the 77th Illinois’ unusual travelling schedule to Cincinnati after muster:

[A]bout two o’clock that night when we stopped at a small station in southern Indiana and remained until morning. The citizens of that part of Ind were generally bitter copperheads and they [the military authorities] were afraid they might try to wreck our train so we waited until daylight and proceeded on our way arriving in Cincinnati at about noon pretty badly worn out not having slept any for two nights and our sitters were getting pretty tender.⁸¹

These concerns over the possibility of additional violence only grew as the war continued. Many became quite fantastic, suggesting estimates of 300 armed men prepared to start trouble.⁸² James Drish even reported “an account of the diabolical attempt to assassinate Governor Yates.” He warned his wife that “if that thing had been done Grant could not have prevented his army from going to Ills and Killing Ever Coperhead in the State.”⁸³

The military took many of these additional threats quite seriously, as the wartime experience of Jacob Ammen demonstrates. A West Point graduate and instructor at several colleges including Indiana University, Ammen began the war fighting under McClellan in West Virginia and briefly in Tennessee and Mississippi. In July 1862, he was promoted to brigadier general and transferred to command camps of instruction in Ohio and Illinois. While in those

⁷⁹ “A. K. Ewing to Uncle,” February 7, 1863, Alexander K. Ewing Papers, ALPLM.

⁸⁰ Entry of April 2, 1864, Mosman, *The Rough Side of War*, 175.

⁸¹ Entry of October 5, 1862, William Wiley, *The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier: William Wiley of the 77th Illinois Infantry*, edited by Terrence J. Winschel, transcribed by Mike Edwards (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 12.

⁸² “W H. Pierce to Hon. N. Bateman,” March 11, 1863, Newton Bateman Papers, ALPLM.

⁸³ “J. F. Drish to My Dear Wife,” July 10, 1863, James F. Drish Letters, ALPLM.

states, it was also apparently his duty to field concerns of local citizens regarding potential Copperhead insurrection. These concerns ranged from the vague (“I deem it my duty to report to you an exhibition of disloyalty – which I witnessed as Pana Ill while laying over yesterday on my way to this City,” from A. B. Webber) to the potentially significant (“information of the movements of the Copperheads in ‘Egypt’ and their organization by Dr. White of Salem Marion Co Ill. and also of the arms expected to arrive at Tonti Station on the Ill. Central R. R.”).⁸⁴ Even some of his subordinates got into the spirit of the period. “I have evidence that we have a population in Southern Illinois,” reported General Napoleon B. Buford, “ready to spring up and join any organization opposed to the Government that offers itself.” He continued by offering, “If I had authority, and the troops, I would make a cavalry raid through about 5 counties...and capture all...that could be found”⁸⁵

While General Ammen no doubt took these complaints seriously, the volume of chargers could suggest overkill to a modern audience. Coupled with actual violent acts, as recorded by other soldiers, these possibilities did represent a serious concern. The political atmosphere in the Ohio Valley was not quite the poisonous situation in Washington, where even George McClellan could be the subject of whispers regarding his loyalty as he trained the Army of the Potomac.⁸⁶ In many ways, though, it remained quite dangerous. The close proximity of the Confederacy, the ferocity of fighting in the western theater, and the demonstrated existence of real political division contributed to an uncertain region where isolated-at-best violence combined with rumor to create a situation where the potentially explosive appeared routine.

⁸⁴ “A. B. Webber to Genl. Ammen Sir,” April 21, 1863, Jacob Ammen Papers, ALPLM; “Asboth to General,” April 22, 1863, Jacob Ammen Papers, ALPLM.

⁸⁵ “N. B. Buford to Gen J Ammen,” June 4, 1863, Jacob Ammen Papers, ALPLM.

⁸⁶ McClellan’s inability to deal with these rumors, combined with his otherwise uninspiring leadership, form a significant portion of Bruce Catton, *Mr. Lincoln’s Army* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1951, reprinted by Pocket Books, Inc., 1964).

These concerns over violence were compounded by persistent rumors of organized resistance to the war effort from secret societies. The concept of secretive, quasi-official political support groups was quite common, and Republicans ran groups such as Union Leagues to promote the war effort. Those for the Democrats entered history as shadowy revolutionaries, prepared to overthrow the Lincoln government at their first opportunity. Groups such as the Sons of Liberty, Order of American Knights (OAK), and Knights of the Golden Circle (KGC) could trace their organization to pre-war filibustering expeditions.⁸⁷ Though historians initially regarded such organizations as influential and dangerous, modern reinterpretations from Frank Klement and Jennifer Weber present them as relatively harmless.⁸⁸ It is not difficult, though, to see how Union soldiers would accept and fear such rumors. Though not terribly common, mentions of the KGC occasionally appear in letters. Fears over disloyalty in all corners of the North led to the accusation of base motives whenever possible, including a charge that George McClellan was a member.⁸⁹ Soldiers regularly accused states in the Old Northwest, particularly with larger Copperhead populations like Indiana, of headquartering resistance groups.⁹⁰ Rumors of these groups persisted even without direct mention, as Benjamin Webb Baker suggested when he tried to clarify a rumor, “that six hundred drilled in Mattoon,” Illinois, to resist the draft.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Klement, *Dark Lanterns*, 8-12 asserts that the “Golden Circle” name referred to American expansion over the Caribbean.

⁸⁸ Gray, *The Hidden Civil War* essentially applies the “Fifth Column” label to the KGC and other groups, though this is heavily based on contemporary Republican Party propaganda. Klement, *Dark Lanterns* is the best deconstruction of secret society myths, and while Weber, *Copperheads* suggests greater influence from the Democrats’ Copperhead faction in political issues, she mostly agrees with Klement’s conclusions regarding the threat posed.

⁸⁹ “Ben to Father,” April 24, 1862, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS; Fox’s 75th Ohio served under McClellan in Virginia, which probably increased the number of rumors regarding the General’s loyalty.

⁹⁰ “John L. Harding to Kind Parents,” May 6, 1863, J. L. Harding Collection, Lilly; “Wm H Ringwalt to Brother,” January 23, 1863, in Nation and Towne, eds., *Indiana’s War: The Civil War in Documents*, 136-137 tells of Ringwalt’s 13th Indiana Light Artillery Battery being called to defend the statehouse from suspected Democratic attack, firing several blank shots to intimidate would be troublemakers.

⁹¹ “Webb to Mother,” August 8, 1863, Bobrick, *Testament*, 231.

The alleged damaging activities of Copperheads did not always extend to violence. A. S. Wisdom reported passing Copperheads in Buckhorn, Illinois, and hearing, “Repeated hurrahs for Jeff Davis and Secesh at two different times”⁹² General Ammen waded through less than worrisome complaints revolving around “Cheers open and loud for Jeff Davis.”⁹³ Charles Dana Miller related his personal pain at having, “to witness the feeling of disloyalty exhibited by so many people.” Not content to cheer for Vallandigham and Davis, “they cast upon us the vilest epithets such as ‘Lincoln hirelings,’ ‘Lincoln dogs’ and ‘nigger worshipers.’” Miller recorded that the cheering crowds took note of uniforms, being sure to give their Copperhead cheers, “[w]henever they caught sight of blue coats and brass buttons.”⁹⁴ Within the army, the extension of the war made significant differentiation between the Copperheads’ rhetoric and resistance unlikely.

Soldiers took the opportunity to suggest their responses to these Copperheads for when they finally did return home. While spending the war at home in Indiana, Stephen Emert received these warnings from his friends and family in the army. Joseph Airhart singled out a John Whitely as the target of his wrath and asked Emert to “just save him till I come home and I will straiten him out.”⁹⁵ Upon learning that there were many Butternuts at home, S. C. Lee told his friend Emert, “I should like to bee [sic] there and have sum of My Friends there with Me.”⁹⁶ Even if Lee’s intentions were not violent, the statement that he would not be going alone suggests the need for backup should nonviolent plans go awry. Oscar Ladley was more than willing to cite a local Copperhead named Marsh he hoped would be targeted. “When the war is

⁹² “A. S. Wisdom to John C. Bagby,” September 11, 1862, John C. Bagby Correspondence, ALPLM.

⁹³ “J. F. Dunn to Gen Ammen,” April 25, 1863, Jacob Ammen Papers, ALPLM.

⁹⁴ Miller, *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 133.

⁹⁵ “Joseph Airhart to Brother and Sister,” June 5, 1864, Stephen Emert Letters, IHS.

⁹⁶ “S. C. Lee to Friend,” June 18, 1863, Stephen Emert Letters, IHS.

over,” he stated, “I should like to help drive them all into Canada.”⁹⁷ “I would like to See every last one of them took out and Shot,” complained Alden Lindsey. He further offered, “to Shoot Old Jack Fisher my self.”⁹⁸ Matthew Goodrich asked his father for names of some Copperheads, so that when he returned home he would “have the pleasure of letting them know what I enlisted for.”⁹⁹

Soldiers regularly offered suggestions of violence and promises of retribution to come. Valedictions containing curses and threats to copperheads existed, sometimes without any statement in the preceding letter regarding them.¹⁰⁰ Many threats were vague, suggesting merely that Copperheads would receive punishment of a nature to be determined later. William Kennedy of the 50th Illinois wrote, “I was sorry to hear...that the copperheads are so troublesome up there,” and suggested, “if a few of our boys were up there they would give the cops a dose that would settle them right quick.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, Captain Horace Long from the 87th Indiana complained to his wife, “I would have liked to come along with Company F and cleaned out” the Copperheads of Fulton County. Revealing the depths of his animosity, he claimed that “If it were not for a few, I wish Fulton County would sink down to the lower part of H—I.”¹⁰² George Cram offered his 105th Illinois for duty to “set to work among the Northern villains awhile and perhaps we may straighten out their disordered brains a little.”¹⁰³ The 21st Ohio’s William Caldwell

⁹⁷ “O. D. Ladley to Mother & Sisters,” April 4, 1864, Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 169.

⁹⁸ “Alden Lindsey to Cousin Hattie,” December 20, 1863, John and Alexander Harper Papers, ALPLM.

⁹⁹ “Matthew Goodrich to Father,” May 24, 1863, Matthew Goodrich Papers, FHS.

¹⁰⁰ Entry of August 7, 1863, Owen Johnston Hopkins, *Under the Flag of the Nation: Diaries and Letters of Owen Johnston Hopkins, a Yankee Volunteer in the Civil War*, edited by Otto F. Bond (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 79; Entry of October 20, 1863, Franklin A. Wise Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, hereafter cited as WRHS.

¹⁰¹ “W P Kennedy to friend,” September 18, 1864, Lease Family Letters, ALPLM.

¹⁰² Captain Long quoted in Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 22.

¹⁰³ “George to Mother,” February 15, 1863, George F. Cram, *Soldiering with Sherman: Civil War Letters of George F. Cram*, edited by Jennifer Cain Bohrnstedt, introduction by Orville Vernon Burton (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 40.

further threatened that “if the Rebel sympathizers at home do not stop talking about ‘peace measures’ it will be necessary for us to carry the war north of Dixie.”¹⁰⁴

Specific outside events, especially those that earned a reaction on the home front, brought further potential threats. The unpopular draft sparked riots across the north, most notably in New York City, where immigrants and other lower class workers rioted for nearly a week, necessitating the presence of Federal troops to restore order and ensure the draft’s execution. Word of the riots prompted James Drish of the 122nd Illinois to request a trip there “to See how many of those Copper heads I could Kill.”¹⁰⁵ In 1864, with the Confederacy potentially on its last legs, F. A. Wildman suggested, “If we can subdue the Copperheads at home, the war will soon end.”¹⁰⁶ Wildman’s sentiment plays further into the idea that soldiers saw Copperhead resistance as interconnected with the resolve of the Confederacy to resist reunion, as well as other activities of the Lincoln government.

Other soldiers were far more specific in their threats. John Murray Nash responded to news that a Copperhead passed by a friend by saying, “if he would only walk pas[t] my post some time when I am on skirmish I would shoot my Minnie at him,” with “Minnie” being a nickname for his gun.¹⁰⁷ A hospitalized soldier named Everson made a similar threat, saying that while “these devilish Copperheads are not worth noticing,” his compatriots would, “much rather notice them with powder and ball, than in any other way.”¹⁰⁸ Ormond Hupp in the 5th Indiana

¹⁰⁴ “William to Mother,” February 12, 1862, Caldwell Family Papers, RBH.

¹⁰⁵ “James Drish to My Dear Wife,” July 18, 1863, James F. Drish Letters, ALPLM.

¹⁰⁶ “F. A. Wildman to Sam,” August 26, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

¹⁰⁷ “Murray to Miss Shelby,” July 23, 1864, Remley Collection, Lilly.

¹⁰⁸ “Everson to Ely,” May 27, 1863, Letter: Hospital, to Ely, 1863 May 27, ALPLM.

Light Artillery had a slightly different tack. After reading a Copperhead address, “I got mad enough to cut the rope for the last one of his followers.”¹⁰⁹

Not all soldiers were limited to dreaming about the possibility of revenge. Soldiers home on leave, rather than discuss the reasons for their enlistment and fighting with rhetoric, were expressing themselves in a decidedly rougher fashion. “I find the Copper-Colored Brethren in Ohio are taken and done,” a Sergeant Gregg wrote to his family, “for Uncle Sams boys returned from the field – Some of them [Copperheads] get justly rough lessons once in a while.”¹¹⁰ Even the army’s presence at home quieted anti-war noise, noted John Erastus Lane to his future wife Ellen Crist, suggesting that Copperheads at home were feeling, “considerably better since the soldiers have gone to the front to fight rebels, instead of home traitors.”¹¹¹ Similarly, Jonathan Harrington wrote to his parents that the Copperheads “don’t have much to Say to the Soldiers for fear of getting upset.”¹¹² The extent to which soldiers would “upset” Copperheads was more apparent in a letter Harrington sent shortly thereafter to his brother, suggesting that he might see “those Butternuts gowing [*sic.*] around with their mug about the Size of a man’s fist and one Eye hanging down on the cheek and one side of their face all caved in.”¹¹³

Men on furlough, especially in groups, were more than willing to make life difficult for Copperheads they encountered, even those not specifically causing anything that would resemble trouble. David Thackery’s history of the 66th Ohio notes two particular incidents. In the first, the men of the 66th took it upon themselves to fire blanks into a group of Democrats leaving a political rally. One member of the tormentors remembered, “They thought they were to be

¹⁰⁹ Entry of July 21, 1863, Ormond Hupp, *In the Defense of This Flag: The Civil War Diary of Pvt. Ormond Hupp, 5th Indiana Light Artillery*, transcribed and annotated by John Lee Berkley (Bradenton, FL: McGuinn & McGuire, 1994), 52.

¹¹⁰ “Sergt. Major Gregg to S. C. G. and Family,” February 22, 1864, Gregg Family Papers, FHS.

¹¹¹ “Erastus to Ellen,” March 20, 1864, Crist Collection, Lilly.

¹¹² “J. F. Harrington to Parents,” September 7, 1863, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

¹¹³ “J. F. Harrington to Brother,” September 27, 1863, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

massacred sure,” a reasonable expectation given the circumstances. Thackery also related that the devious 66th would have, “one of their fellows to cry out, ‘Three cheers for Vallandigham!’ on a station platform and then to pelt with stones and pieces of coal anyone who responded affirmatively.”¹¹⁴ In his post-war memoirs, Captain John Hartzell remembered the efforts of individuals in the 105th Ohio to capture the butternut pins worn by Copperheads and other symbols of anti-war sentiment:

By letters from home the boys at the front heart of these carryings-on, and each man, as he received his thirty days furlough, put himself on a special order to gather and bring back as many butternut trophies as possible, and, without more ado, he began to work upon arrival at home, and when he returned to duty he brought his trophies with him, properly labeled and with a narrative of the capture attached to each, which never failed to highly interest his companions. Often the crop was too much for one to gather. He would hunt up some other comrade, invalid or furlough man, and, sticking well together, they would go to public meetings, sales, and the like, reap the harvest together and divide the spoil.¹¹⁵

Acting in groups, Union soldiers were able to exact retribution on individuals they had identified as their enemy at home. Where Pittenger saw reason for sadness and despair, others found an opportunity for what could be darkly called productive fun.

These forms of retribution were mostly undertaken by the enlisted men. William Tanner told the story of an incident where the regiment met a Copperhead while in camp. “[T]he boys put a rope around an [his] neck and drew him up.” Tanner then somewhat disappointedly noted that the incident ended when “the officers came along and stopped,” the soldiers.¹¹⁶ Officers in the Union army generally frowned upon poor treatment of civilians, even after the transition to Grant and Sherman’s hard war campaigns in the summer of 1864. William Pittenger noted a similar moment while his regiment encamped. A scout from his regiment captured “a blackhearted Secessionist” while on patrol, a man the soldiers promptly put up as an

¹¹⁴ Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 160.

¹¹⁵ John Calvin Hartzell, *Ohio Volunteer: The Childhood & Civil War Memoirs of Captain John Calvin Hartzell, OVI*, edited by Charles I. Switzer (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 191-192.

¹¹⁶ “William Tanner to Brother and Sister,” August 5, 1863, William Tanner Papers, FHS.

“exhibition.” The next day, a dissatisfied Pittenger noted, “The man who we had on exhibition yesterday was released last night by Gen. Sturgess.”¹¹⁷ Notably, instances of officer interference tended to take place before soldiers left their home states for the fields of the South, when their presence was far more immediate and influential.

Broadening the definition of violence brings in the legal harassment of Copperheads by military and other government officials. Mark Neely’s *The Fate of Liberty* knocks down most of the Democratic myths surrounding the restriction of civil liberties by the Lincoln Administration. Far fewer instances occurred than had been generally believed, and those that did occur hardly constituted any kind of pattern, or truly conscious effort, from the administration. The most extreme cases resulted mostly from over-zealous local authorities or a situation like that in Missouri, uncontrolled due to ignorance and higher priority concerns.¹¹⁸ One of the most commonly cited overzealous attacks on political dissenters was the arrest and temporary exile of Clement Vallandigham. The textbook archetype of Copperheadism, Vallandigham harangued Lincoln and the war effort from his seat in the House of Representatives. Hailing from Dayton, Ohio, Vallandigham routinely caught the ire of Republicans, soldier and civilian alike.

Vallandigham pressed his luck too far on May 1, 1863, when a speech charging “King Lincoln” and his generals with “usurpation of arbitrary power” earned him the notice of General Ambrose Burnside.¹¹⁹ Citing his own recently-issued General Order No. 38, which forbade “The habit of declaring sympathies for the enemy,” Burnside arrested Vallandigham. The news, and its subsequent fall-out, was related to Oscar Ladley by his sister Mary:

One piece of good news I have to tell you is, old Vallandigham has been arrested by Gen. Burnside. He is in Cincinnati under guard. Also the editor of the “Dayton Empire.” Dayton

¹¹⁷ Entry of May 8, 1863, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS.

¹¹⁸ Neely, *The Fate of Liberty*, 32-50 deals specifically with Missouri in the chapter “Missouri and Martial Law.”

¹¹⁹ Vallandigham’s May 1 speech quoted in Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 152-155, which also includes sources for more complete reports, from both Vallandigham-friendly papers and Burnside’s agents.

is under “Martial Law” and there are about 800 men there guarding it. When Vallandigham was arrested, a mob was raised. The “Journal Office” was burned and several other buildings. One man a “butternut” tried to cut the Engine hose. He was shot and has since died. They have arrested about 70 or 80 of the mob, and have them in jail in Dayton. I think these arrests are about the best things that have happened lately.¹²⁰

Though support for jail (or worse) for the unrepentant Copperhead was strong amongst Republicans, Lincoln was of a different mind. Faced with the difficult task of choosing between criminalizing speech and undercutting the authority of one of his own generals, Lincoln attempted a Solomonic course. The president had Vallandigham exiled to the Confederacy, however temporary a solution that may have been, in the hopes he could do less damage there.¹²¹

Word of Vallandigham’s arrest spread through the army. “The boys rejoice at the enforcement of ‘Order No 38,’ especially in his case,” reported an Ohio soldier. He added that if the Copperheads wanted “to make a martyr of [Vallandigham], let them send him here. We’ll martyr him.”¹²² D. Lieb Ambrose from the 7th Illinois could not have been surprised, as he offered upon learning of General Order No. 38 that it was “a good cure for treason and traitors,” and correctly predicted, “C. L. Vallandigham, will become a victim to its force.”¹²³ Upon news of the arrest, other soldiers from the Old Northwest commented quite favorably on its occurrence. Several Ohio soldiers referred to the arrest in terms of “the best” event of recent weeks. Henry Kauffman probably reflected the views of many of his compatriots when he offered his opinion “that this ought to have been done long ago.”¹²⁴ John Beatty expressed his pleasure “to see the authorities commencing at the root and not among the branches.”¹²⁵ Other

¹²⁰ “Mary to My Dear Brother,” May 11, 1863, Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 124.

¹²¹ Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, particularly 154-159, contains a slightly pro-Vallandigham narrative of the arrest and exile. Details of Vallandigham’s career following the exile will come in Chapter 5.

¹²² “B. A. Cummings to Friend Lough,” May 17, 1863, Lough Family Papers, CHS.

¹²³ Ambrose, *From Shiloh to Savannah*, 113.

¹²⁴ Entry of May 18, 1863, Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased*, 51; “Henry Kauffman to Brother and Sister,” May 30, 1863, Henry Kauffman, *The Civil War Letters (1862-1865) of Private Henry Kauffman: The Harmony Boys Are All Well*, edited by David McCordick (London: E. Mellen Press, 1991), 30.

¹²⁵ John Beatty, *The Citizen-Soldier: The Memoirs of a Civil War Volunteer*, introduction by Steven E. Woodworth (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 266.

soldiers commented on their good fortune to see Vallandigham pass through their lines on his way south. While it appears the army tried not to create a great deal of publicity about his passage, many soldiers became aware when he actually arrived.¹²⁶ While Chesley Mosman noted only, “Some were lucky enough to see him,” he also suggested that Vallandigham “was lucky in not being seen as many of us would have the greatest privilege to spoil one cartridge in doing what...the government should have done.”¹²⁷

The soldiers’ emotional response to the Copperhead movement also took the form of a concerned sadness. Many soldiers felt concern that by openly criticizing Lincoln or the war effort, Copperheads were giving aid to the Confederacy. White southerners, they reasoned, would be emboldened by the continued undermining efforts from the northern home front and thus become even more determined to hold out. Soldiers also expressed concerns over the actions of local government. This was one instance where their separation became most evident, as they were prone to react negatively to news of any possible resistance to the war effort from within state governments.

Most soldier reaction pegged the Copperheads as cowards. Oscar Ladley ignored their statements of political opposition. Though he allowed that “[t]here are some that no doubt are sincere,” the Ohioan avowed his opinion “that they are all too cowardly to fight, so they take that ground as an excuse to fall back on.”¹²⁸ Jonathan Harris conceded political aims but remarked, “They are really secessionists,” and then declared these men, “too cowardly to defend their principles”¹²⁹ Wallace Chadwick refused even to consider the Copperheads as men. Responding to a report that another regiment had refused to fight, he denied that such a thing happened. There were some companies, he noted, “that wanted to get up a remonstrance; but they were

¹²⁶ “E. P. Sturges to Folks,” May 26, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

¹²⁷ Mosman, *The Rough Side of War*, 55.

¹²⁸ “Dear Mother and Sisters,” May 29, 1863, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 135.

¹²⁹ “J. L. Harris to Miss Susan,” April 3, 1863, John L. Harris Papers, ALPLM.

hooted down by the other companies.” He added, “If there was a single man laid down his gun it is news to me, the Copperheads not withstanding.”¹³⁰ Late in the war, the absence of some men from the front became a greater sticking point for the soldiers. Cursing “the dam copperheads” after the September 1864 fall of Atlanta, Benjamin Walker of the 86th Illinois referred to them as “to dam big a set of cowards,” and suggested, “that if Some of them would of bin in the charge at Kenesaw Mountain and at...Jonesborrow I think they would throw there foolish thoughts a way.”¹³¹ The wide range of sentiment regarding the reasons and expressions of cowardice reveals importance they felts such a change would have, though a variety of opinion is hardly unexpected in such a large and diverse group as the men who fought in blue.

This disloyalty, more often written as “treason,” became a common charge leveled against these home front agitators. “[O]ur Government finds itself assailed by a class of persons at home who would yield it, Judas-like, into the hands of the enemy, or sully it by a dishonorable compromise with the hosts of treason,” warned a soldier letter printed in *The Echo From the Army*, a pro-Union pamphlet distributed in 1863.¹³² “Let every man be branded as a traitor,” called William Caldwell, “who is not in favor of using any and every measure necessary to the successful and speedy crushing out of this Rebellion.”¹³³ Captain Peter Troutman of the 87th Indiana admonished those at home, “Stay at home, you cowardly traitors, until the rebellion is gasping in the agonies of a terrible death...then, with tender emotion come forward and clamor for peace!”¹³⁴

¹³⁰ “Wallace W. Chadwick,” 138th Ohio, June 23, 1864, in *A Hundred Days to Richmond: Ohio's "Hundred Days" Men in the Civil War*, edited and with an introduction by Jim Leeke (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 92.

¹³¹ “Benjamin F. Walker to Kind Uncle,” September 19, 1864, W. H. Gilligan Letters, ALPLM.

¹³² “A Voice From the Army on the Opposition to the Government,” in *The Loyalist's Ammunition*, Philadelphia, 1863, OHS.

¹³³ “William Caldwell to Father,” July 13, 1862, Caldwell Family Papers, RBH.

¹³⁴ Troutman quoted in Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 151.

Some calls even came for those at home who did support the Union cause to keep Copperhead materials away from the army, again calling it treasonous. An Ohio soldier wrote that he and his comrades “want none of their vile letters, speeches, or papers here.”¹³⁵ E. P. Sturges wrote to his parents of how, “[t]he peace democracy have thoroughly disgusted the army with their treason, which ... so plain & universally understood.”¹³⁶ Indiana soldier George Vanvalkenburgh wrote to his wife, “They are crying peace peace, but still they are doing all they can to prolong the war...so that they can have the manner of settling the war themselves.” He was certain it would be detrimental to the North, “because [the Confederates] are their southern brethren” and “their northern democrats want to give them what there is left.”¹³⁷

So noteworthy were Copperheads in the minds of the soldiers that the use of Copperhead as an epithet would appear without lengthy political thoughts or even prodding from the recipient. Early in the war, the journal of John Ellen recorded a reaction to the Union victories at South Mountain and Antietam. A native of Painesville, Ohio, and member of the 23rd Ohio, Ellen read as the battles’ outcome, “new strength to Republican Government; they were terrible blows to Democratic anarchy, and ambitious Demagogueism [*sic.*].”¹³⁸ John Harper, serving in the 113th Illinois, reported a celebration at the capture of Vicksburg and managed to squeeze in a comment that “Copperheadism was on the discount that night.”¹³⁹ Seemingly random anti-Copperhead sentiment, tacked on to the valediction of letters, came both from officers like Ralph Buckland and from Walter Scates, an enlisted man.¹⁴⁰ Soldiers were more than willing to blame Copperheads for any problems they had. Humphrey Hood complained to his wife, “I sat down

¹³⁵ *Echo From the Army*, 1.

¹³⁶ “E. P. Sturges to Folks,” February 11, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

¹³⁷ “George Vanvalkenburgh to Wife,” March 30, 1863, George W. Vanvalkenburgh Papers, FHS.

¹³⁸ Entry of October 1, 1862, John S. Ellen Journal, WRHS.

¹³⁹ “Brother John Harper to Sister,” July 10, 1863, John and Alexander Harper Papers, ALPLM.

¹⁴⁰ “R. P. Buckland to wife,” October 3, 1863, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH; “Walter B. Scates to My dear Colonel,” February 25, 1863, Walter Bennet Scates, CHM.

with the intention of writing to you to night, but got into a dispute with a Copperhead and it is now 11 O’C.”¹⁴¹

Not all emotions were negative, though. Especially when discussions turned toward the punishment they were ready to give out to Copperheads, a perverse kind of hope seeped through their writing. Soldiers were ready to finish the job out in the field so as to return home and deal with the traitors behind them. This also became an opportunity for many soldiers to express their own superiority and worldliness. Should Copperheads find themselves in the field, their objections to the war, and especially their support of the Confederacy, would likely evaporate. As the Confederates launched raids into parts of the Union such as Kentucky and Ohio, Union soldiers openly wondered if perhaps now, faced with the reality of the Rebel army, the Copperheads would still be such ardent sympathizers. “What do they want? Do they want war in Indiana?” complained “W” of the 87th Indiana. “Just let them come down here in Tennessee and pass over the grounds,” he continued, “and see if they would want...Indiana cursed with the ravages of war. They certainly will see the error of their ways and turn before it is too late.”¹⁴² George Benson Fox thought similarly. While noting the prospects of Confederate raiders in northern territory, whatever concern he expressed was papered over by the hope that “something will happen to bring the public to their senses.”¹⁴³

During the summer of 1863, something finally did happen. Confederate Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan took his band of Confederate cavalry first into Kentucky, then across the Ohio River into Indiana and Ohio. William Pittenger announced the news in his diary, “We [the soldiers] learn that Morgan with 10,000 men has crossed the Ohio, into Indiana.” His follow-up was more telling. “Good, just what we need, the one thing which will bring people to their

¹⁴¹ “H. H. Hood to My Dear Wife,” April 1, 1863, Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM.

¹⁴² Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 56.

¹⁴³ “Ben to Father,” July, 1862, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS.

senses. Let them see the show, not without paying. They seem to have forgotten that there's a monstrous death struggle going on for the life of this nation."¹⁴⁴ Just in case the message was not clear enough, he repeated it a week later. "The tramp of the Morgan horse and the clank of the sabre came home to the Copperheads, good – good."¹⁴⁵

Other soldiers echoed Pittenger's hopes for Morgan's presence. "I hope that he (Morgan) will just raise Ned there and maybe it will bring some of the butternuts to their milk," wrote Captain Horace Long of the 87th Indiana. He continued with his "wish (if it were not for my folks) that he would get up in Fulton County and burn about half of it up and see what kind of effect it would have on them."¹⁴⁶ "A raid into Ohio will open the eyes of the peace men a little," was a similar comment from Albert Voris.¹⁴⁷ After Morgan's passage, John L. Harding of the 7th Indiana drew a comparison to Gettysburg, remarking, "I [have] always said that when Lee went into Penn and Morgan into Ind it was the best thing that had happened for the North since the breaking out of the War. It let our Northern Citizens know what war was and of course they went to work."¹⁴⁸ Even civilians took part in the wishing, "I suppose the people of Ohio are a little frightened about the Morgan Raid are they not?" wrote Ezrie Fowler to Brig. Gen. Ralph Buckland, a brigade commander in Sherman's XV Corps. "I hope he will frighten them a little. It will wake them up and let them know that there is a war going on in the United States."¹⁴⁹ Not all soldiers saw the raid solely in Copperhead terms. Augustus Van Dyke, from Gibson County, southwest Indiana, worried about Morgan's presence. "I hope...that his passage was so rapid that

¹⁴⁴ Entry of July 13, 1863, "Diary of William Henry Pittenger," OHS.

¹⁴⁵ Entry of July 20, 1863, "Diary of William Henry Pittenger," OHS.

¹⁴⁶ Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 22. Morgan's infamous raid never strayed far from the Ohio River, and thus he never threatened Fulton County in north central Indiana.

¹⁴⁷ Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 127.

¹⁴⁸ "John L. Harding to Father," August 5, 1863, J. L. Harding Collection, Lilly.

¹⁴⁹ "Ezrie Fowler to Brig. Gen. R. P. Buckland," April 28, 1863, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH.

he did not have time inflict any injury to your property. I look anxiously for an account of his doings in your neighborhood.”¹⁵⁰

Federal troops finally tracked down the raider near Salineville, Ohio, near the Ohio River but also quite far north.¹⁵¹ His capture brought expressions of relief from northern soldiers but also occasional twinges of regret. “Last night’s paper brought us good news again. Morgan captured within a few miles of New Lisbon,” celebrated William Bentley. “I only wish he could have stayed in the neighborhood a few days so as to have given some of the butternuts a little taste of war.”¹⁵² The Confederate raider eventually escaped his Union prison and made his way back south, though he would never again threaten the North. After Morgan’s capture, Union soldiers again tried to emphasize the incident as a lesson against Confederate sympathizing. “I hope,” offered William McKnight of the 7th Ohio Cavalry, “this will be a warning to our men at home & not to Preach Reble Sympathy.”¹⁵³ McKnight later expressed concern for the loyal locals who suffered at the Rebels’ hands, but warned again, “there are men no doubt that invited and welcomed them.”¹⁵⁴

News of Morgan running around the Midwest again, though untrue, would occasionally circulate in the region. In June 1864, nearly a year later, F. A. Wildman of the 55th Ohio noted to his son Sam news “that Morgan is making another raid in Kentucky.” Wildman hastened to add, “I hardly think he will want to cross the Ohio River again.”¹⁵⁵ Even so, news of Morgan moving north again brought out in some the desire to see home front Copperheads taught a lesson. As late of July 1864, Ohio soldier William Helsley mentioned to his wife, “we got the news today

¹⁵⁰ “Gus to Father,” July 17, 1863, Augustus M. Van Dyke Papers, IHS.

¹⁵¹ Narrative of Morgan’s Raid and capture found in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 763.

¹⁵² Entry of July 28, 1863, Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased*, 61.

¹⁵³ “William McKnight to Mary,” Undated, William McKnight, *Do They Miss Me at Home?: The Civil War Letters of William McKnight, Seventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry*, edited by Donald C. Maness and H. Jason Combs (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 114.

¹⁵⁴ “William McKnight to Ever Dear and Beloved Samaria,” August 4, 1863, McKnight, *Do They Miss Me at Home?*, 116.

¹⁵⁵ “F. A. Wildman to Sam,” June 11, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

that old Morgan was in Ohio at or near camp Dennison [near Cincinnati]...if it be true he will make some of the old copperheads squirm.”¹⁵⁶ Helsley’s information was untrue.

News of Copperhead agitation in the North was as much a part of the soldier’s news from home as family happenings, local business, and other war events. Most of this Copperhead news was reliably negative, and the idea that soldiers, especially volunteers, would react accordingly seems fairly self-evident. For this narrative, though, the specifics of Copperhead stories take on greater importance. News of riots, verbal and physical attacks on Unionists, and even the potential for armed resistance created an undeniably (and understandably) negative image of Copperhead activities. It was the type of negativity that drove soldier reaction. Copperheads did not represent an annoying political faction, though one that soldiers could characterize as within the bounds of proper wartime discourse (though undoubtedly those would have been fairly tight limits). Instead, soldiers would perceive Copperheads and other anti-war factions as a legitimate threat to their mission of reunion, and a very real danger lurking behind them on the home front.

As that news filtered down, soldiers reacted with an explainable negativity. Anger, sadness, betrayal, disillusionment, and vengeance characterized their responses, both amongst themselves and to those on the home front. The few soldiers who found an opportunity to respond on behalf of themselves and their comrades did so with relish. This agitation also created a sense of unity among the military independent of civilian society. It was the soldiers who fought to preserve the nation, who bled and died for its survival. That the Copperheads stood in the way, and did so through political means, made them political enemies just as southern Rebels had become military foes. Historians debate the role and influence of Copperheadism on the Democratic Party, but for soldiers there was no debate. The very presence of Copperheads presupposed the Democrats’ acceptance, and for many appears to have blurred whatever

¹⁵⁶ “William Helsley to Wife,” July 28, 1864, William Jefferson Helsley Papers, FHS.

distinctions may have actually existed. If the soldiers had to fight Confederate forces with equivalent military strength, then the influential presence of Copperheads on the home front required that military men fight back through the political system.

Chapter 2 "Here I Am Two Things at Once" Politicizing the Army

You may be surprised to receive a line from me as stranger & having no business with you. My object in writing is to offer you the thanks of a soldier for a speech you made in the Illinois legislature last winter near the close of the session. I did not see it when it first came out in the papers, and just happened to get it yesterday. I read it with pleasure & handed it over to my men to read. Every man in my company shall read it or hear it read. Many of them are poor men with families depending on their wages for support. But that speech does them as much good as two months wages. I watched the proceedings of the Illinois legislature with interest & concluded that there was as vile a nest of traitors there as ever breathed the breath of life, & it does me good to know that there was at least one man there whom they could not sneer down or bully down. I was born in Mclean Co., but left there about 12 years ago, & know you only by reputation. Pardon my intrusion. I am your friend as of every union man.¹

On February 14, 1863, Isaac Funk had delivered a scathing rebuke of Copperheads in the Illinois legislature. This kind of address to legislatures, both at the state level and within the halls of Congress, was hardly unusual. Like many inflammatory remarks, Republican and Unionist societies reprinted Funk's address in a pamphlet and distributed it throughout the North. As Chapter 1 illustrates, many of these pamphlets reached the willing hands of Union soldiers, looking for anything to read. An address like Funk's, attacking Copperheadism at home, stirred the hearts of many soldiers. Captain A. B. Conway of the 10th Iowa was one of those who felt sufficiently moved not only to distribute the address among his men, as detailed above, but also to write to Funk to express gratitude for the sentiment. The Isaac Funk papers at the Illinois state library, in fact, consist mainly congratulatory letters in response to that particular speech, many from Union soldiers such as Captain Conway.²

American society perceived a significant gap between soldier and civilian life during the early days of the republic. A distaste for large standing armies gleaned from their English

¹ "Capt. A. B. Conway to Mr. Funk," April 17, 1863, Isaac Funk Papers, ALPLM. Though Conway is a member of the 10th Iowa, outside of this work's stated range, he does claim to be from Illinois.

² Isaac Funk's address was titled "Speech of a Brave Old Patriot," and published in *The Loyalist's Ammunition* (Philadelphia: Printed for Gratuitous Distribution, 1863). The copy referenced in this chapter was found at OHS, but is available at many Midwestern state archives and online.

political roots bred distrust of military institutions, even as early cultural lodestones such as the Kentucky rifleman or the Society of the Cincinnati celebrated the citizen in arms and sacrifice for the national good. A small class of professional officers led the small military force built during the republic's early days. These officers competed for prestige with the leadership of local militia companies. Though to the modern eye West Point professionalism outweighs the informality (and general disarray) of the local militia, contemporary observers celebrated the militia's close community ties and volunteer spirit. Marcus Cunliffe's *Soldiers & Civilians* argues that professional military men, in fact, were frowned on in some parts of society. He particularly cites this "Quaker" ideal rising in the North, contrasting it with the older and more martial "Rifleman" and "Chevalier" archetypes. Soldiers were something kept away from society and politics, lest they corrupt the process in the manner of Julius Caesar destroying the Roman Republic to replace it with the Empire.³

This division between soldier and civilian suffered damage in the years prior to the Civil War. What some saw as the unjust nature of the Mexican War stimulated much dissension on the home-front, as did the political squabbling between the Democratic President James Polk and his Whig generals Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott (to say nothing of the flamboyant eventual Republican nominee John C. Fremont). The increased sectionalism of the 1850s led to the outbreak of a war that could only be considered political. Soldiers fought for political ideals, especially the somewhat nebulous cause of Union, though the ideological crusade of ending slavery played some role as well. Still, old-line officers and soldiers may not have expected the

³ Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers & Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (New York: The Free Press, 1968). Though Cunliffe suggests the North was becoming less martial than the South prior to the Civil War, he does take the time to dismiss the notion of a particularly "Southern" military tradition (Chapter 10, pages 335-385). Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 119-141 discusses what the author refers to as the "Caesarist Impulse." Additional statements on Americans' traditional distrust of standing armies and the importance of the militia come from John Morgan Dederer, *War in America to 1775: Before Yankee Doodle* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), and Davis, *Lincoln's Men*, 33-37. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) mentions the political impact of the Society of the Cincinnati, while commenting on the irony of using the self-denying Cincinnatus as the symbol of an explicitly elitist military society.

level of anti-war vitriol they experienced from the home front. Faced with prodding from Copperheads, as well as local and national politicians trolling for support, soldiers had many opportunities to refine their opinions and enter the political arena. If Copperheads insisted on making the actual war an issue, soldiers convinced of their cause's righteousness were prepared to respond in kind.⁴

For their part, soldiers certainly discerned some difference between their new position and their old lives as civilians. Life in camps of instruction and then out in the field created a distinct sense of separation between the two lives. The camps may have pulled men into the soldier life, but as Reid Mitchell's *The Vacant Chair* points out, many retained a sense of home through regiments drawn from similar areas.⁵ Still, the men recognized a difference in their social standing and lifestyle. "I am leading a very different life now," wrote John L. Harris of the 14th Illinois, "to that which I lead when on fancy creek."⁶ Such distinctions became more obvious for soldiers on leave, who began to see the difference in their new lives and those left behind. Oscar Ladley of the 75th Ohio, writing to female relatives, offered that such men should be able to enjoy what little time at home they had, for "[t]hey will be restricted soon enough when they get into the hands of their officers, then they are no longer themselves, but Soldiers."⁷ The 90th Ohio's Henry O. Harden spelled out the changes in his history of the regiment written in 1902:

Thirty-nine years – nearly forty – have elapsed since we assembled by companies at Camp Circleville, on the Evans farm, on the pike three miles southeast of Circleville, O., where quarters had been erected, or were being erected. Here all was hurry and excitement. Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives and sweethearts came to bid adieu to their loved ones, and, in

⁴ Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet* attributes the war's wide-ranging political implications with spurring volunteer recruitment. This leads to a particular kind of "people's army," which he compares to the *levee en masse* of the French Revolution, and he suggests this plays heavily into the hard war philosophy that grew later in the conflict.

⁵ Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 21-23.

⁶ "J. L. Harris to Miss Susan," April 3, 1863, John L. Harris Papers, ALPLM.

⁷ "O. D. Ladley to Mother & Sisters," March 27, 1864, Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 168.

many cases, here it was that they saw each other for the last time on earth. Can we, who are still living, ever forget those memorable scenes? They are printed on our memories with blood and tears, of hardships, privations and sorrow, and when we meet in our annual reunions is it any wonder that we display a more than ordinary friendship for each other?⁸

Other soldiers noticed the distinction by counting down the days to when they did not have to soldier any longer. “9 months longer,” wrote John L. Harding of the 7th Indiana, “then I am going to be [a] Citizen a while.”⁹ “One year ago today, we were popping Vicksburg,” offered Owen Hopkins of the 42nd Ohio in May 1864, “four months more in the United States service, and we are ‘civilians. Bully for the four months and the Citizen!’”¹⁰ Johnston would serve his four months until October 1864, and then re-enlist later that month with the 182nd Ohio.

It would not take terribly long for soldiers to feel truly alienated from their lives and the people at home. Brigadier General Albert Voris, writing of the folks at home in Ohio, offered that, “[n]one are so anxious for peace as those in the army & their families. Yet,” he continued, “how the soldiers vote contrasted with that of the people at home.” Voris concluded the thought by blurring the difference between military and civilian life by declaring, “I shall always honor the patriotism, bravery and fidelity of the volunteer citizen soldier.”¹¹ These feelings echo those seen in Chapter 1 when discussing the sadness some soldiers felt towards the rise of Copperheadism, and how their resentment could even boil over into attacking their own loved ones who, in the soldiers’ eyes, simply could not understand what they had experienced.¹²

Transitioning from civilian to soldier did not exclusively cut these Union men off from politics both local and national. Promotions were still believed to be very much politically

⁸ H. O. Harden, *History of the 90th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Great Rebellion in the United States, 1861 to 1865*, edited by Scott Cameron (Kent, OH: Black Squirrel Books, 2006), 13.

⁹ “John L. Harding to Sister,” December 9, 1863, J. L. Harding Collection, Lilly.

¹⁰ Entry of May 28, 1864, Hopkins, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 128.

¹¹ Letter of November 26, 1863, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier’s Civil War*, 149.

¹² McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 140-147 discusses the soldier perspective on this alienation between themselves and those at home (with special attention given to Copperheads), while Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 65-66 identifies incidents during the war where civilians sneered at soldiers on leave.

biased. Augustus Van Dyke of the 14th Indiana, assigned to the 1st Brigade of the Department of Western Virginia, wondered about Colonel Nathan Kimball, his brigade commander. Kimball was undoubtedly in line for a brigadier general's commission, but Van Dyke wondered if because Kimball was, "not a Republican," his promotion might be blocked.¹³ John Beatty criticized Ohio Governor David Tod for his influence, and attacked the governor for his promotions of "complaining, unwilling, incompetent fellows."¹⁴ Even the creation of regiments was politically motivated, as William Venner's *Hoosier's Honor* mentions that Solomon Meredith received a commission for the 19th Indiana based on his relationship with Governor Oliver Morton.¹⁵

Soldiers themselves had hardly been apolitical before joining the military. Benjamin Webb Baker of the 25th Illinois had attended the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debate in Charleston as a Republican.¹⁶ Men who would become officers tended to be well connected locally, which helped to account for their commissions.¹⁷ Edward Wood of the 48th Indiana was the son of a strongly Whig farmer, who also served as doorkeeper of the Indiana legislature, which historian Stephen Towne opines played a large role in Edward's devout Unionism and desire to join the war effort. Wood was quite common in this regard, as many of those who enlisted to join the war came from Republican backgrounds.¹⁸ Jack Overmyer's history of the 87th Indiana notes the Democratic sweep in Fulton County (the regiment's home country) in 1862, and suggests quite strongly that this came because while many Republicans enlisted, many Democrats stayed home,

¹³ "Gus to Father," February 2, 1862, Augustus M. Van Dyke Papers, IHS.

¹⁴ August 17, 1862, Beatty, *The Citizen-Soldier*, 173.

¹⁵ Venner, *Hoosier's Honor*, 17. This is but one example of a fairly common relationship, as many regiments, especially in the war's early days, earned their commissions through political influence and patronage.

¹⁶ Bobrick, *Testament*, 20.

¹⁷ Citations include Pope, *The Weary Boys*, 25 and Venner, *Hoosier's Honor*, 17.

¹⁸ Edward J. Wood, *A Fierce, Wild Joy: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Edward J. Wood, 48th Indiana Volunteer Infantry*, edited by Stephen E. Towne (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 125.

particularly Democrats in rural towns such as Newcastle Township and Bloomingsburg (now Talma).¹⁹

Though Republicans almost certainly made up a majority of enlisted men, Democrats signed up in large numbers as well, particularly in the war's early days. Prominent Democrats such as defeated presidential candidate Stephen A. Douglas openly supported Lincoln's efforts to restore the Union. Historian Frank Klement, the most widely published scholar on the Copperhead movement, wrote simply "that partisanship seemed to disappear in the opening days of the Civil War."²⁰ Colonel Francis Sherman of the 88th Illinois was a Democrat, his father an ardent Jacksonian who loved the cutthroat world of Chicago politics and even served as the city's mayor.²¹ Even within regiments, such as the 110th Ohio, mixed political backgrounds were not unheard of. The regiment's lieutenant colonel, William Foster, had served as the Democratic mayor of Piqua, Ohio, while Company A's commander, William D. Alexander, was an influential Democrat in Miami County. The regiment's officer corps, though, also contained Republicans, particularly Colonel J. Warren Keifer and Major Otho Binkely, the latter a post-war Republican mayor of Troy, Ohio.²² Delazon Ketchum, who served with the 29th Wisconsin, complained "There have been too many Copperheads...at the head of our Army...We like the Style of Rosecrans & Grant."²³ Politics at the lowest military levels may have been "one sided," as Roger Hannaford of the 2nd Ohio Cavalry called them, or at least leaned Republican.²⁴

¹⁹ Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 21.

²⁰ Klement, *The Copperheads of the Middle West*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 2.

²¹ Francis T. Sherman, *Quest for a Star: The Civil War Letters and Diaries of Colonel Francis T. Sherman of the 88th Illinois*, edited, with commentary by C. Knight Aldrich (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 2.

²² Pope, *The Weary Boys*, 25; Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 126-127 offers some discussion on divisions within the officers, though this work broadly considers soldiers from all sides of the conflict, rather than this work's regional focus.

²³ "Delazon S. Ketchum to My Dear Wife," March 8, 1863, Delazon Ketchum Letters, CHM.

²⁴ Memoirs, 16b, Roger Hannaford Papers, CHS.

Still, soldiers were quite capable of debating issues. "Politics were talked a little every day," reported Andrew Powell of the 123rd Ohio. He took the opportunity to contrast favorably soldiers with civilians by adding, "no such slandering of men and principles has been indulged in here among the soldiers as we were used to hear at home."²⁵ As late as 1864, issues from well before the war still received a hearing among the men of the 59th Illinois. "We got into a big argument in our mess about Lincoln, Fremont, Blair, and Douglass, and Kansas and the 'Missouri Compromise' and 'Mason and Dixon Line,' Carl Schurz and 'Jigadier Brindles' generally," wrote Chesley Mosman. If nothing else, Mosman speculated that such arguments were useful, letting the men "all air our views which might otherwise get musty this damp weather."²⁶ Others saw little reason to separate military and political affairs, especially when they disagreed with the politics. Kentuckian Samuel Miller, a surgeon with the 5th Kentucky expressed a desire to put aside those distinctions, and offered a "wish [that] McClelland would play the part of Oliver Cromwell, dissolve Congress, set Old Abe aside, & then settle this difficulty at once."²⁷

A discussion of politics in this region during nineteenth-century America would not be complete without a brief mention of recent German immigrants. Driven out of Europe after the failed 1848 revolutions, these immigrants carried radical politics to America and were hardly unfamiliar with the idea of military sacrifice for the purpose of political gain. Indeed, when many found the condition of America below their lofty expectations, these Forty-eighters had agitated

²⁵ "A. Powell to My Dear Brother," November 11, 1864, Andrew Powell Letters, RBH.

²⁶ Entry of June 13, 1864, Mosman, *The Rough Side of War*, 213. "Jigadier Brindles" appears to be a derisive version of "Brigadier Generals." Whether this is Mosman relating his own thoughts, or summarizing a mocking tone from the men is unclear.

²⁷ "SJFM to Sister," December 18, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS. Miller is referencing Oliver Cromwell, leader of the New Model Army during the English Civil War of the 1640s, and later leader of the Commonwealth following the execution of Charles I. Cromwell's use of military authority provides much of the basis for England's traditional distrust of standing armies. According to Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Enlarged Edition (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), originally published 1967, many American colonists inherited this distrust prior to the Revolution.

for abolition and other social reforms. Certainly they at least appeared similar to the moral reformist segment of the Whig (and later Republican) Party. Their partisan affiliation, though, was malleable. Though the abolitionist center of the Republican Party appealed to their liberal leanings, the anti-immigrant sentiment of the party's Know-Nothing faction prevented too much in the way of a cozy relationship. Of course, many German immigrants had come prior to 1848. Their Catholicism and opposition to Whig moralizing had already driven them into the waiting arms of the Democratic Party, while Lincoln's anti-slavery policies only further drove a wedge between Germans and Republican.²⁸

Many political complaints from soldiers dealt not necessarily with Copperheads, but with the entire relationship between political and military affairs. Many soldiers rejected the connection, haranguing against politicians of all stripes. The 14th Indiana's Augustus Van Dyke wondered aloud if the 1862 Peninsula Campaign's stated goal of capturing Richmond was "merely a secondary consideration to that of political aggrandizement upon part of some parties high in authority, military and civil."²⁹ John Beatty complained in his diary that, "In the North the army has little or nothing to do with the creation of public sentiment, and yet is its servant." By contrast, he noted, "In the South the army makes public opinion, and moves along unaffected by it."³⁰ Marion Ward of the 102nd Ohio wrote home to friends near Mansfield, Ohio, attacking "a few political demagogues (traitors) who are banqueting in the spoils of the war, and who are using their best endeavors to prolong the war, augment our suffering and plunge our nation deeper in the gulf of ruin and wretchedness, and needless bankruptcy." Ward's criticism was

²⁸ Letter collections dealing with German immigrant soldiers, such as Bertsch and Stängel, *A German Hurrah!* and Willich, *August Willich's Gallant Dutchmen* all include some discussion of the complicated relationship between German-Americans and the Republican Party.

²⁹ "Gus to Brother," December 28, 1862, Augustus Van Dyke Papers, IHS. The 14th Indiana had been assigned to the Army of the Potomac in late June, after McClellan's failed Peninsula Campaign, meaning most of Van Dyke's information came from outside sources rather than personal experience with his regiment.

³⁰ "December 21, 1862, Beatty, *The Citizen-Soldier*, 196.

more likely directed toward Lincoln and the Republicans (fiscal complaints were a common Democratic hobbyhorse), yet his remedy was fairly common across the army. “Now is no time for politics,” he offered, continuing, “Politics...should be molded into one true patriotism and lofty devotion to the union.”³¹

Other, more strenuous denunciations came as well. J. M. McCane decried “The deluded fools...from Old Abe down” as “the vilest and most tyrannical wretches in the world.”³² David Stathem in the 39th Ohio worried about others “shooting certain Democrats for not helping in this war,” and made sure to turn his anger toward “certain Republicans that I know of,” later declaring party politics to be the real reason for the war’s extension.³³ Even those like Solomon Hamrick, who expressed his “Regret that the cecesh have both carried county & State” also worried about “Designing & Treacherous men.” He judged the Republican administration to be unable to defeat the rebellion.³⁴ William Orr of the 19th Indiana did not blame Lincoln, but instead “some mad reckless fanatical Demagougues [*sic.*] at Washington who have got control of the president the secretary of war & of Gen Halleck.”³⁵ Other soldiers worried not about Democratic malfeasance, but Republican incompetence. “The weakness of the Administration affords most cause for alarm,” complained Edward Wood of the 48th Indiana. “It is most disheartening,” he continued, “that with three million of able bodied men at home, the rebels should always be able to outnumber us in the field, & that thro' the imbecility of the Administration, which dares not enforce its own laws.”³⁶

Though complaints began about politics in principle, as Chapter 1 shows these could very quickly become more targeted, especially in the direction of Copperheads. Owen Hopkins of the

³¹ “M. D. Ward to Home Friends,” July 15, 1864, Marion D. Ward Letters, WRHS.

³² “J. M. McCane? to Uncle,” September 2, 1861, Trimble Family Papers, OHS.

³³ “Dave to Phebe (Mrs. Samuel Hannaford),” March 30, 1862, David T. Stathem Papers, OHS.

³⁴ “Simps Hamrick to Father,” October 27, 1862, Solomon Simpson Hamrick Civil War Letters, IHS.

³⁵ “Will to My Dear Wife,” December 21, 1862, Orr Collection, Lilly.

³⁶ “Edward to My dear wife,” July 2, 1863, Wood, *A Fierce, Wild Joy*, 111.

42nd Ohio cast his gaze against “the contemptible Peace hyenas,” claiming, “they cannot meet the steady gaze of a soldier, or even look up when a loyal man meet them face to face.”³⁷ “We know,” echoed F. A. Wildman of the 55th Ohio, “that there are traitors who gloat over our reverses, and rejoice at every seeming success to the rebel arms.”³⁸ Some soldiers did try to draw a distinction between Copperheads and Democrats, with willing leniency to the latter, even if the Democrats appeared to support the former. “Some people think all who voted for Vallandigham are disloyal to the Government,” wrote T. E. Smith of the 79th Ohio to his brother Will. “I don’t think so,” he continued, “I couldn’t believe you desire the destruction of the Union....I think that all that a great majority of those who voted for Val meant was that they think some of the acts of the Gov. unnecessary, some unconstitutional and unwise.”³⁹ A May 1863 complaint gave M. A. Barber an opportunity to attach himself to the Illinois soldiers’ resolutions, “expressing their sentiments toward copperheads of their state.” The resolutions themselves are not noteworthy in this context, except that here Barber identifies “[t]he majority of these men [as] old line democrats.”⁴⁰

It is in this transition, highlighted by Barber, that soldiers’ tendency to conflate the terms “Democrat” and “Copperhead” begins to take shape. As critical elections began drawing near, particularly after Democratic success in the 1862 Congressional midterms, some soldiers worried about what they saw as excessive influence on the Democratic Party by the anti-war faction. Brigadier General William Lytle received word from Burke, a friend in Cincinnati, about the desire of Copperheads to control the government and make peace with an independent Confederacy. “This cursed thirst for power and peace,” charged Burke, “is mining the Democratic Party and it is gradually lapsing from the position it first took as in simple

³⁷ Hopkins, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 166.

³⁸ “F. A. Wildman to Sam,” December 31, 1862, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

³⁹ “T. E. Smith to Will,” December 9, 1862, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS.

⁴⁰ “M. A. Barber to Mr. Ed,” May, 1863, M. A. Barber Letter, CHM.

antagonism to the Administration into open sympathy with the rebellion.”⁴¹ Captain Jonathan F. Harrington of the 72nd Ohio received similar sentiments from his brother Lionel, who hurled curses at “the damed democrats as they term themselves but Secessionist at heart.”⁴² Solomon Simpson Hamrick went even further in denouncing the Democrats. “[I]t Does appear,” he complained, “from what little I can find out that the Democratic party is Determined if possible to aid their Southern Rebels in finally Destroying the government.”⁴³ Not picking on Democrats particularly, John Beatty noted instead, “A Republican has not much need to write. His patriotism is taken for granted.”⁴⁴

Some soldiers knew which party was to blame and were not shy about making sure that opinion was shared. “There is beyond all doubt a growing feeling in the North against this war, and the men who have always been the humble slaves of Southern Aristocrats are fostering it by all the means in their power,” wrote Channing Richards in his diary. “Very naturally,” he continued, getting to the direct accusation, “it raises its treasonable head under the name of Democracy but shame to say, it controls more than one Legislature and openly proclaims its opposition to ‘coerture’ [*sic.*] in our National Council.”⁴⁵ John Craft in the 57th Indiana blamed the party for starting the war in the first place, and referred to the party as “a punishment for our nation sins...to bring this great calamity upon our Nation.”⁴⁶ Andrew Powell in the 123rd Ohio reported disagreement on political stances within the ranks, as he noted “most of the new recruits whose term of service is somewhat lengthy yet and the old ones who are sick of the war and that class of democrats who would vote for a hog or anything else on the democratic ticket went the

⁴¹ “Burke to My dear General,” September 6, 1863, Lytle Papers, CHS.

⁴² “Lionel Harrington to J. F. Harrington,” February 22, 1863, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

⁴³ “Simp. S. Hamrick to Brother Charley, January 16, 1863, Solomon Simpson Hamrick Letters, IHS.

These letters are presented (coincidentally) in reverse chronological order, but do reveal the changing sentiments of soldiers from across the Union armies during the early part of 1863.

⁴⁴ April 10, 1863, Beatty, *The Citizen-Soldier*, 250.

⁴⁵ Entry of February 19, 1863, “Diary of Channing Richards,” Channing Richards Papers, FHS.

⁴⁶ “John A. Craft to Wife and Children,” December 29, 1861 in Nation and Towne, eds., *Indiana's War*, 69.

McClellan ticket." He continued by observing, "They seem to harbor the idea that Mac. will settle the war sooner than Abe, and they don't care on what terms the war settles only that it settles. On this," he concluded, "I disagree with them."⁴⁷

General Ralph P. Buckland noted on several occasions the importance of those at home supporting the soldiers. "The expression of good opinion of the regiment by the people at home does the soldiers great good," he wrote to his wife Charlotte, adding that such sentiment "makes them ambitious to distinguish themselves...and gives them renewed courage to bravely encounter the hardships and dangers of the field."⁴⁸ In a later letter to his daughter Annie, he repeated the claim: "I am gratified to learn that the people of Fremont continue to take great interest in the well fare of the soldiers. They deserve all the aid and sympathy their friends at home can give them."⁴⁹ Along with familiar refrains of treason and Southern sympathy came from some the painful thought that the government that claimed to support them was turning its back on the army. "Are those with whom we have implicit confidence and trusted to our homes and firesides turning traitors to us?" asked Pittenger. "In the name of High and Holy Heaven are we thus to be destroyed, sacrificed and degraded? Is it possible?"⁵⁰

By 1864, the Copperhead-Democrat connection was firmly established in the minds of many soldiers. Even as Democrats nominated the openly pro-war candidate George McClellan, his presence was not enough for the men. Years of believed abuse from Copperheads combined with the infamous "peace plank" and the nomination of George Pendleton for Vice President created the image of Copperheads as the party's driving faction. "The nominations of the Chicago Convention are satisfactory enough to me," offered Sam Wildman somewhat

⁴⁷ "A. Powell to My Dear Brother," November 11, 1864, Andrew Powell Letters, RBH.

⁴⁸ "R. P. Buckland to My dear Wife," March 9, 1863, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH. Buckland was a Brigadier General at the time of writing this letter, but received a promotion to Major General shortly thereafter.

⁴⁹ "R. P. Buckland to My dear daughter Annie," April 27, 1863, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH.

⁵⁰ Entry of January 21, 1863, "William Henry Pittenger Diary," OHS.

sarcastically. “The ‘peace’ platform and ‘peace’ candidate for Vice-President make a hard pill to swallow...I think “Little Mac” will lose some friends...if he accepts the nomination...by the side of so notorious a copperhead as Pendleton.”⁵¹ Even after the war, Charles Dana Miller of the 76th Ohio remembered the Democrats and their activities, ignoring all potential distinctions between Copperhead and Democrat: “the Democratic Party of the North in convention assembled in Chicago was resolving that the war was a failure, thus adding insult to injury upon the heads of the devoted soldiers.”⁵²

In the war's earliest days, Democrats had supported the conflict just as strongly as their Republican opponents. Stephen Douglas, the Northern Democrats' 1860 presidential candidate, worked hard to rally support for Lincoln and Union during the first weeks after Fort Sumter, up to his death in June 1861. As the war continued, though, the reality of a long struggle turned many Democrats away from supporting the administration. Democrats, claiming the mantle of civil liberties defenders, attacked the Republicans for placing the military in a position of preeminence relative to civilian authority. Democrats worried about the corrupting influence of the military, in terms of both personal morality and the extension of non-conservative viewpoints. "I fear...from the fearful increase of dishonesty engaged and cultivated in our own army," complained Christian Poorman to the *Belmont (OH) Chronicle*.⁵³ Military authority in parts of the conquered South, especially when it involved slavery, outraged their limited government sensibilities. Further actions to support the military such as the draft, income taxes, and the printing of greenback money aroused familiar Democratic concerns about consolidated

⁵¹ “Sam to Father,” September 15, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

⁵² Miller, *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 204.

⁵³ Poorman quoted in Hall, *Appalachian Ohio and the Civil War*, 135.

Republican power. Lincoln, they charged, was another example of Henry Clay's intrusive Whigs or, more potently, Alexander Hamilton's monarchical Federalists.⁵⁴

Many Democrats had become involved as political generals, appointed for their ability to demonstrate partisan balance and unity rather than any discernible military skill. Some of these men lent their considerable support to Lincoln's causes, such as Benjamin Butler, who famously created legal rationales for emancipation, and John A. Logan, a strong campaigner both militarily and politically. Those Democrats who were less enthusiastic about the president and his war aims, most famously Army of the Potomac commander George McClellan, faced charges of disloyalty from the more radical faction of the Republican Party. McClellan certainly exacerbated these concerns through his paralyzed marches and open feuding with Lincoln. In addition to private references to the president as the "original gorilla," and "a well-meaning baboon," McClellan also publically snubbed the president and his thoughts on war strategy. Sensing political conspiracy with greater alacrity than he did opposing troop strength, McClellan saw the Republican Party as out for his position. This concern could make contentious political issues, such as the court-martial of his supporter General Fitz John Porter in the aftermath of Second Bull Run and after McClellan's removal from overall command, appear more sinister to the general's eye than was necessarily true.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ J. Matthew Gallman, *The North Fights the Civil War: The Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1994), 141-143. Gallman's discussion of civil liberties does reference Neely, *Fate of Liberty*, though Gallman only really mentions the suspension of habeas corpus, rather than the larger picture of civil liberties in the North as Neely does. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 70-77. Paludan, *A People's Contest*, 91-98 discusses the Democratic ethos and their objections to increased military authority, which they saw as evidence of "Yankee" treachery. Paludan mentions that, at times, "Yankee" was a term for Republicans analogous to "Copperhead" for the Democrats.

⁵⁵ McPherson, *Tried by War*, 41-44 looks at some of these appointments, and defends Lincoln's broader purpose in appointing non-professionals, even while quoting Henry Halleck's derision that doing so was "little better than murder." Gary Ecelbarger, *Black Jack Logan: An Extraordinary Life in Peace and War* (Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2005) looks at Logan in particular, an Illinois Democrat who became a prominent Lincoln supporter, even to the point of looking to the president for support in obtaining a Senate seat in 1864. Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, Appendix 2, 375-386 contains a list of notable Democrats serving in the officer corps. While a nice reference list, some of the citations are tenuous, such as naming Ulysses Grant a Democrat solely on the basis of his Buchanan vote in 1856. McClellan and Lincoln's relationship described in Stephen W. Sears, *George McClellan: The Young Napoleon* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1988), 132-133. Elizabeth Leonard, *Lincoln's Forgotten Ally:*

As soldiers read more, heard more, learned more about the political events of their day, they became more demonstrably political. In some cases, the region's Unionist governors carefully cultivated these political leanings. Republicans, like William Dennison of Ohio, Richard Yates of Illinois and Oliver Morton of Indiana, used their political authority to position themselves as the "soldier's friend," backing the fighting man whenever possible. Trying to maintain the Union Party's fusion approach, Dennison's successors David Tod and John Brough similarly tried to cull support from the ranks. Ambitious legislators, like Isaac Funk, attempted to build similar bases of support from the army, making speeches for distribution to the men.

Richard Yates of Illinois was probably the most secure of the Ohio Valley governors. A long-time Illinois politician, and elected in 1860 for a term that ran through the end of the war, he was free from concerns over re-election during the actual conflict itself (a chronological trait not shared by Yates's counterparts in Ohio and Indiana). Yates immediately moved to control his state, garrisoning troops in Cairo and raising as many regiments as Illinois could provide. Historian Jack Nortrup described Yates as "a man of quick and noisy public sentiment." As troops gathered in Springfield, Yates made sure to meet and speak with as many as he could, creating for himself the persona of a wartime leader. He kept agents stationed in as many Illinois regiments as possible, and even ordered Illinois hospital ships to treat only Illinois soldiers.⁵⁶ Letters and journal entries noted the governor's presence, and while they mentioned little of his actual words, it seems likely the soldiers appreciated the effort of his visit. Certainly, later in the war, soldier sentiment leaned toward backing not just the state and national governments, but Yates in particular. D. Lieb Ambrose recognized Yates as a "friend at home," and offered the

Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 166-173 discusses Holt's role in the Porter case, and supports Holt's care in treating the case professionally, though his prickly personal temperament could suggest otherwise.

⁵⁶ Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors*, 46. Jack Nortrup, "A Personal Glimpse of the Illinois Soldiers' Friend," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. 56, No.2, Civil War Centennial (Summer, 1963): 121-138.

support of the army to “uphold our President and our Governor in all their efforts to crush the rebellion and restore the Union.”⁵⁷

Yates’s politicking was especially important in the earliest stages of the war, as Union troops converged on Cairo in southern Illinois. The so-called “Little Egypt” region of Illinois was a hotbed for Confederate sympathies, given the close geographic proximity to Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee. Cairo, located at the very southern tip of Illinois at the convergence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, was crucial to maintaining Union control of both waterways. This critical location needed reinforcing as quickly as possible, and Yates instructed his staff to raise a force to take control of the city quickly and quietly.⁵⁸ Worried about the potential for trouble from the citizenry itself, Yates personally directed Brigadier General R. K. Swift to, “Say to the people of Cairo that troops are sent there from no distrust of their loyalty to the Government but under orders from the War Department at Washington to repel expected invasion from other states.”⁵⁹ Swift’s mission was a success, as Yates later wrote a commendation letter to the general for his service, while Cairo became an important launching point for early Union probes into the Confederacy.

Of the Ohio Valley governors, Oliver Morton was perhaps the most aggressive in setting a Unionist course for his state and bringing the case for it to his state’s fighting men. Some of Morton’s activity was born out of necessity, as Indiana was the most pro-Southern state in the region. A decidedly mixed population and general unease over Lincoln’s war policies built a Democratic majority in the state legislature, potentially damaging to Morton’s own pro-war

⁵⁷ Entry of January 29, 1863, Ambrose, *From Shiloh to Savannah*, 97; Nortrup, "A Personal Glimpse": 130-136 discusses Yates' relationship with Illinois Democrats, and how the governor created an antagonistic relationship with Copperheads to build his own reputation among the soldiers. Nortrup does criticize Yates for blaming all governmental shortcomings on Copperhead obstruction, though it certainly seems to have been an effective strategy politically. See also letters in Richard Yates and Catherine Yates Pickering, *Richard Yates: Civil War Governor*, edited by John H. Krenkel (Danville, IL: The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc., 1966), 187-198.

⁵⁸ “John W. Burns to Genl R. K. Swift,” April 20, 1861, William H. Christian Papers, CHM.

⁵⁹ “Richard Yates to Gen R. K. Swift,” April 21, 1861, William H. Christian Papers, CHM.

policies. In response, Morton suspended the legislature, and funded the war effort through a series of resolutions from the governor's office. Democrats threatened to prosecute Morton for using profits from the state arsenal to fund the war effort. Morton's tenacious attitude in the face of prosecution (and the convenient fact that the legislature had not officially recognized the arsenal as state property), allowed Morton to use those funds as well as donations from private citizens to maintain the state's finances during the war.⁶⁰ Though intensely criticized both during and after the war for his heavy-handed approach to running the state (historian James McPherson describes Morton's action as "quite extralegal, if not illegal"), Morton's measures brought him tremendous support from soldiers across the nation.⁶¹ Governor Yates made a similar move, applauded by some soldiers as, "the only course left [for] him to protect the people," but never took control of Illinois in the way Morton did Indiana.⁶²

Funding the war effort was no little thing. In addition to arms and supplies, Morton made sure any soldier who came through Indiana received the best care possible. Soldier relief, through hospitals and other sanitary supplies came from a state agency likely envied by other governments. The governor made sure he received reports from all the state's camps and hospitals, ensuring the best possible conditions and care. These efforts did not go unnoticed, as men from Indiana and other states referred to Morton affectionately as the "Soldier's Friend." Men from the 27th Indiana recovering at the Indianapolis Soldiers Home remarked on their

⁶⁰ William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton, Including His Important Speeches*, Volume I (Indianapolis: The Bowen-Merrill Company, 1899, reprinted by AMS Press Inc., 1974), 254-255. Just before this, on 253, Foulke praises Morton for his actions in funding not only the war effort, but the entire state government. Foulke criticizes the Democrats for refusing to fund anything, accusing them of abdicating their political responsibility.

⁶¹ McPherson quote from *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 596; Stamp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War*, Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 106-110, 114-123 and Wilson, *Indiana*, 139-143 each attest to Morton's titanic presence in the state's politics.

⁶² Nathan Kimball to Bro., June 15, 1863, Kimball Collection, Lilly.

governor's "restless solicitude for the welfare of the State's troops."⁶³ These favors were hardly limited to Indiana troops, as Roger Hannaford of the 2nd Ohio Cavalry noted:

Gov. Morton's word was pledged that as soon as a Regt set foot in Indiana they should be met by a warm meal, if nothing else why hot coffee and although our stay was very short, and I have no idea they were warned of our coming, yet the promise was redeemed, all honor to Gov. Morton the Soldiers Friend, & there is no true Soldier let him hail from where he may but will say amen to that.

Hannaford spared no sentiment in complementing Morton, including his notation that "the Ind. boys, why they fairly worshipped Oliver P. Morton, and well they might."⁶⁴

Morton also made sure to put himself in front of the men whenever possible. Indiana soldiers reported speeches from the governor, and opinion trended heavily in his favor. "The old Governor made a good short speech," remarked John Harding of the 7th Indiana. He continued by adding, "If the war ends and he runs for Govnor [*sic.*] the second time and the soldiers get home, he is sure to get it."⁶⁵ Roger Hannaford's observation of Indiana hospitality concluded with the wish, "that our Gov. was like Oliver P. Morton," and added his belief that, "the Soldiers of every State in the Union envied the Hoosier boys their Governor."⁶⁶ Some of Indiana's citizenry seemed to take the governor's lead, and the 59th Illinois's Chesley Mosman noted, "Eastern soldiers are filled with praise of Indiana."⁶⁷ Likely unpopular politically, and certainly of questionable legality, Morton's actions had the undeniable effect of currying great favor with soldiers both from Indiana and elsewhere.

⁶³ Venner, *Hoosier's Honor*, 197-202.

⁶⁴ Memoirs, 29, Roger Hannaford Papers, CHS; Alan D. Gaff, *On Many a Bloody Field: Four Years in the Iron Brigade* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 65-68 discusses Morton's role in examining the conditions of soldier hospitals, though Gaff comments on 144 the governor's requests for regular reports were complicated by the fact that Indiana's soldiers stayed at dozens of different hospitals throughout the Union.

⁶⁵ "John L. Harding to Father," April 3, 1863, J. L. Harding Collection, Lilly. Other letters that mention Morton addresses include "WAR to *Louisville Anzeiger*," September 29, 1861, Willich, *Gallant Dutchmen*, 29 and "Cary A. Wooley to Sister," June 16, 1864, Wooley Collection, Lilly.

⁶⁶ Memoirs, 29, Roger Hannaford Papers, CHS.

⁶⁷ Entry of October 31, 1863, Mosman, *The Rough Side of War*, 113.

While Indiana and Illinois enjoyed consistency in the governor's office, Ohio was consistently in flux. Two year terms with elections occurring twice during the war created more turnover in the state's executive office. At the war's outbreak, William Dennison held the governor's chair, and was actively involved in raising and equipping Union troops. William T. Coggeshall, who served in the State Adjutant General's office, kept a diary of the war's early days, and appears to have been impressed with Dennison's passion, if not his capabilities.⁶⁸ Coggeshall's feelings were not shared elsewhere in the state, as in 1862 the Republican Party dropped Dennison in favor of Unionist David Tod, a decision the aide criticized as "Gross injustice" and "Melancholy to see earnest Republicans in the background while shrewd Compromisers rant the Machine."⁶⁹ During his short term, Tod proved little able to rise above Coggeshall's negative impression, and the Union Party replaced him with John Brough, a railroad executive and former state auditor and newspaper publisher. Chapter 5 will discuss in greater depth the 1863 governor's race that brought Brough to power. His strong affiliation with the soldiers, though, is easy to see in Henry Kauffman's letter home, referring to Brough's election as, "a great pleasure to a true Union soldier."⁷⁰

The active support given by governors to the Union army helped insulate them from potentially damaging attacks out of their state legislatures. Now any attack on the governor could be construed as an attack on the war effort. Noteworthy resolutions from state legislatures became abhorrent or treasonous to soldiers in the field. "We learn that the Legislature of Illinois has made a motion to withdraw her troops from the field. Shame," wrote William Henry

⁶⁸ Havighurst, *Ohio*, 95-100 provides a laudatory account of Dennison's governorship during the war's earliest days, mentioning his friendly relationship with Yates and Morton. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors*, 153 and 172 is less impressed. He refers to Dennison as "the most inefficient of the state executives," and "completely befuddled by his duties."

⁶⁹ William T. Coggeshall Diary, ALPLM. Coggeshall's quotes on the injustice to Dennison came in the entry of September 5, 1861.

⁷⁰ "Henry Kauffman to Brother and Sister," October 31, 1863, Kauffman, *The Harmony Boys Are All Well*, 51.

Pittenger in his diary. “Also...the Legislature of Indiana has refused to give Gov. Morton’s message a reading.”⁷¹ Indiana soldier Robert Hanna remarked on both his home legislature and that of Illinois, and a set of counter-resolutions drawn up by Indiana officers. Reflecting the urge for violent retribution he wrote, “If necessary, we will come back & Hang the whole congress.” He coldly added, “Traitors will not fare so well in Indiana as they have down here [Murfreesboro, Tennessee].”⁷²

Governors received censure from some corners of the army. While in large part this criticism was likely muted by the fact that many governors in the Midwest were Republicans who held strong pro-Union and pro-war positions, they were not immune to the occasional complaint. Floyd Thurman of Indiana wrote that he and his compatriots in the cavalry felt, “Governor Morton has not treated us with due respect.” Accusations had come to the camp that the governor, likely taken aback by concerns that soldiers were deserting due to the influence of Copperheads and secret societies, had named Thurman’s 1st Indiana Cavalry regiment as one “tinctured with butter nutism.” The cavalry, Thurman continued, “have done hard service for twenty months always obeyed orders and have lost but a few by deserting.” Thurman does offer the possibility that “this is a mistake of the Gov beyond a doubt if he made the assertion.”⁷³ Thurman’s ability to disbelieve that Governor Morton would have denounced the cavalry lends itself to believe the Governor’s words were far less harsh and perhaps misinterpreted. Still, this

⁷¹ Entry of January 21, 1863, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS. According to E. L. Kimball, “Richard Yates: His Record as Civil War Governor of Illinois,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Apr., 1930): 55-60, in January, 1863 members of the Illinois State Assembly had strongly condemned Lincoln for his administration of the war and called for a cessation of hostilities. By February, they had issued resolutions calling for the recall of all Union forces (though particularly Illinois’ men) as Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation forced the army beyond its stated objective of ending the rebellion and reuniting the nation. Pittenger’s entry is too early for the February resolutions, though his sources either hinted at the possibility such resolutions were forthcoming or accused Democrats of doing so. It was these resolutions that prompted Isaac Funk’s address referenced at the beginning of this chapter. Skepticism regarding Kimball’s pro-Yates perspective and the early 20th century publication date aside, the resolutions are sourced from state assembly records, and Yates clearly thought them threatening enough to prorogue the legislature by June of that year.

⁷² “Robert Hanna to Mrs. R. B. Hanna,” January 29, 1863, Robert Barlow Hanna Family Papers, IHS.

⁷³ “Floyd Thurman to Brother,” March 4, 1862, Floyd Thurman Civil War Letters, IHS.

shows the sensitivity many soldiers felt toward not only criticism, but also the potential for betrayal.

Isaac Funk's "Speech of a Brave Old Patriot" joined with the work of the governors in preaching unionism to the soldiers. Reacting to the anti-war activities of members of the Illinois legislature, Funk finally declared, "I can sit here no longer," and denounced the Democrats as traitors and secessionists. He was careful to align himself with the soldiers, referring to his heart crying out "for the lives of our brave volunteers in the field...the widows and orphans at home." Funk blamed "traitors and villains in this senate" for "killing my neighbors' boys now fighting in the field." The speech, reprinted in 1863 as a part of the pamphlet "The Loyalist's Ammunition," contained commentary on the gallery around Funk, highlighting the "tremendous cheering" and announcing that the publisher "never before witnessed so much excitement in an assembly."⁷⁴ That the publisher likely exaggerated his reaction for political effect does not detract from the likelihood that at least some segments of the Senate gallery met Funk's address with a great deal of approval.

As highlighted at the beginning of the chapter, Funk's address hit a chord with the soldiers. "I have read your gloriously eloquent and patriotic speech," wrote James C. Rice, who offered Funk his gratitude. Furthermore, he implored Funk to continue, saying, "you must hush the voice of treason at the North, and at the South, we will hush it, under God & General Hooker with the bayonet."⁷⁵ Rice's equation of Northern Copperheads and the Confederate armies should not go unnoticed. J. H. Wickizer reported that Funk's "great speech in the Senate" had "been read with enthusiastic cheers, around a thousand campfires. It has strengthened their hearts and nerved them with the gracious assurance that you and such patriotic men as you will protect

⁷⁴ "Speech of a Brave Old Patriot," *The Loyalist's Ammunition*, 3-6.

⁷⁵ "James C. Rice to My dear Sir," February 22, 1863, Isaac Funk Papers, ALPLM.

their homes and families.”⁷⁶ Funk received a number of similar sentiments from other soldiers, echoing a belief that those at home who defended the cause were as much a part of the war effort as the soldiers themselves.

Much like the governors, Abraham Lincoln did much to cultivate support for himself and his policies amongst the men. While much of it owed either to the necessities of war or to a need to advance his policies, the president delighted communicating with soldiers. He regularly visited with the Army of the Potomac, meeting with generals and enlisted men alike. The president also spent his time away from Washington at the Soldiers' Home, speaking with men trying to recuperate from injuries. Broadly speaking, many men did come to see Lincoln positively, and expressed their support for "Father Abraham" throughout the war. Lincoln was able to gain some of this support through his lenient policy of soldier pardons, especially in the face of exhortations to desert coming from Copperhead friends, relatives, and politicians at home. Lincoln famously encapsulated this concern by rhetorically asking, "Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wiley agitator who induces him to desert?" Joseph Holt, the Judge Advocate General, who debated soldier sentencing with Lincoln, generally conceded the president's desire for leniency stemmed from his chief priority of saving lives.⁷⁷

The mixing of political and military activity was not limited to the army. The Democratic Party, long a supporter of aggressive military action (such as in Mexico), regularly used martial metaphors when discussing campaign strategy or during its rallies and parades.⁷⁸ Even as they

⁷⁶ "J. H. Wickizer to Hon Isaac Funk," March 23, 1863, Isaac Funk Papers, ALPLM.

⁷⁷ Davis, *Lincoln's Men* discuss this relationship broadly, while Pinsker, *Lincoln's Sanctuary* looks more at the President's visits to the Soldiers' Home, partially to curry support and escape the pressures of the White House, but also as a way for him to feel closer to the men. Wiley, *Life of Billy Yank*, 216-217 mentions Lincoln's role in lenient punishment, generally done at the request of a commanding officer or Joseph Holt, the army's Judge Advocate General, and generally seems to lament the broad clemency issued by Union officials for lazy soldiering. Leonard, *Lincoln's Forgotten Ally*, 159-160 characterizes Judge Holt as more aggressive in wanting to prosecute offending soldiers, but also deferential to Lincoln's more lenient prescriptions.

⁷⁸ Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 287-289. Pages 294-295 of the same book discusses using George McClellan as a martial figure for the 1864 presidential campaign, but there will be more information on that in Chapter 5.

argued against military action, many Democrats still found use for this language during the war. On winning election to the governor's seat in New York in 1862, Horatio Seymour received letters congratulating him on his victory over "the black republican army of York state," with his "democratic army, who had volunteered [*sic.*] to fight under the Command of the Oneida Chief." This particular letter, from M. Miller, is rather extensive in its use of the military metaphor, especially when Miller describes his own participation, "as Adj. of the Old Gibraltar [*sic.*] Regiment on the glorious day of battle the 4th of Nov 1862."⁷⁹ Republicans, as war supporters, certainly used similar metaphors as well, such as an invitation to Nathan Kimball to speak at a Union Party rally in Cincinnati that offered him the opportunity to, "come and face the muzzle."⁸⁰ The relatively uninviting image may speak to the inexperience of Republicans in using such metaphors, or at least the Republicans of Cincinnati.

The use of such metaphors between soldiers and their friends on the home front is easy to see in the entertaining relationship between John B. Rice, a surgeon in the 72nd Ohio, and his wife Sarah Elizabeth (Lizzie) Rice. Amid their usual correspondence, Lizzie detailed to her husband, "an encounter I had with Brundage [a local Copperhead] the other night." She proceeded to harass Brundage for anti-war opinions he had espoused, which she had taken as a personal affront to her husband's service. The sight of a woman upbraiding Brundage clearly made an impact, as Lizzie delighted in noting that her behavior drew hearty laughter and cheers from nearby observers.⁸¹ Rather than scold his wife, Rice commented in reply, "I can not find it in my heart to chide you with one word for what you have done in the present instance." The

⁷⁹ "M. Miller to Hon Horatio Seymour," December 8, 1862, M. Miller Letter, ALPLM.

⁸⁰ "C. D. Miller, W. J. Crippen to Gen. N. Kimball," Western Union Telegram sent February 18, 1863, Kimball Collection, Lilly.

⁸¹ "Lizzie S. Rice to Husband," November 17, 1863, Sarah Elizabeth Wilson Rice Correspondence, RBH. Mrs. Rice's correspondence is filled with this kind of bold, dramatic behavior, enough so that the archivist at Spiegel Grove felt comfortable referring to her as a "little princess," not necessarily as a complement.

soldier's pride in his wife's action is clear, especially when he offers to her a recommendation "for promotion 'for meritorious conduct.'"⁸²

While many men expressed their concerns about Copperheads campaigning and agitating the population, some turned their attention to those actually in office. Disagreement between military and civilian government was hardly new to the history of warfare, and the Civil War was no different. Resolutions that worked their way through the various state legislatures, as well as perceived shortcomings of specific politicians were made known to the army, and many soldiers reacted to them as one would expect. Soldiers did not likely discuss the potential efficacy of such resolutions, or even their chances of actually passing. Their very presence, proposed by Copperheads (who, perhaps more importantly, were also Democrats) in the legislatures, was demeaning enough to the Union soldier.

Because of their rather open membership and ability to contain a wide variety of opinions, state legislatures became one of the key loci of Copperhead activity. Once in office, Copperhead legislators had the ability to write and promote resolutions and legislation that would weaken the war effort, or at the very least bring about their desired end of a peaceful compromise, and this could easily make their efforts appear outsized relative to their actual numbers. This tactic was not limited to the state level, as members of the US House of Representatives, in particular New York's Benjamin Wood made use of their ability to introduce antiwar petitions and resolutions.⁸³ The most notable part of this strategy was its utter failure to

⁸² "John B. Rice to Wife," November 28, 1863, John B. Rice Papers, Addenda, RBH.

⁸³ Representative Wood of New York, on July 13, 1861, 37th Cong. 1st sess., *Cong. Globe*, 116; Representative Wood of New York, on July 15, 1861, 37th Cong., 1st sess., *Cong. Globe*, 129. Benjamin Wood's brother, former New York City Mayor Fernando Wood, joined the House following the 1862 elections and fought to obstruct Lincoln's war measures, establishing himself as a leading "Peace Democrat," but not having much more of an impact on the President's program, as mentioned in Jerome Mushkat, *Fernando Wood: A Political Biography* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1990), 142.

effect the policy sought. Lack of Democratic power in the House made Wood little more than a gadfly.

Affected on all sides by political influence, soldiers began to take it on themselves to influence the process. Colonel William Trimble issued a General Order to his 60th Ohio Regiment as early as June 1861, even before First Bull Run, ordering, “every officer and private...[to] exert his influence in his immediate neighborhood to create and maintain a correct public opinion, and feeling of loyalty to the government of the Union.”⁸⁴ More serious efforts to promote the war and attack perceived enemies came in the form of resolutions drawn up and passed by the men in the field. “Similarly, on Washington’s Birthday a few days before,” related Constantin Grebner of the 9th Ohio, “the Ohio regiments of our army felt obliged...to compose a belligerent address to the people of Ohio. The troops (it said) were as ready and willing to destroy the enemy from the rear as to annihilate him from the front.”⁸⁵ These resolutions met with similar support from Indiana regiments such as the 33rd, “approving all the acts of the administration and condemning the proceedings of the Indiana State Legislature.”⁸⁶ Ohio troops in the eastern theatre also passed resolutions, and the officers of the 17th Ohio made sure that those resolutions, “condemn[ed] the butternuts of the State of Ohio and express[ed] views in favor of prosecuting the war to the end proposed”⁸⁷ The 66th Ohio, also in the East, passed similar resolutions in early March. These resolutions affirmed, “The treasonable propositions of Northern Traitors for ‘peace’ ...merit the contempt and scorn of all loyal citizens and soldiers,” and “Woe be unto the ‘Copperhead’ demagogues who may attempt to sever the Northwest from

⁸⁴ General Order No. 3, Regimental Head-Quarters, 1st Reg’t., 2d Brigade, 5th Div., O. R. M., Col. Wm. H. Trimble, June 27, 1861, Beecher-Trimble Collection, CHS.

⁸⁵ Constantin Grebner, *We Were the Ninth: A History of the Ninth Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, April 17, 1861, to June 7, 1864*, translated and edited by Frederic Trautmann (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1987), 122.

⁸⁶ “James Hill to My dear friend Lizzie,” February 23, 1863, Hill Collection, Lilly; Entry of January 22, 1863, William Hair Diary, Hair Collection, Lilly also contains mention of Indiana soldiers from the 68th Indiana recording their “unanimous” support for the war.

⁸⁷ “E. P. Sturges to Folks,” February 11, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

the East.” Word from the regiment recorded “that the full resolution was adopted unanimously by the men standing in dress parade.”⁸⁸

The resolutions were attempts by soldiers to take a role in the political conversation. To that end, after approval the soldiers and other Unionist groups printed up the resolutions and distributed them to the general population. A number of Illinois regiments passed and printed a set of resolutions, distributed in pamphlets like *The Loyalist's Ammunition*. Even their passage became part of the narrative. D. Lieb Ambrose reported in his journal, “The soldiers seem well satisfied with the resolutions adopted last night.” He proudly reported that his regiment, the 7th Illinois, “adopt[ed] them with a vim, saying amen to every word,” and he further added “All the Illinois Regiments adopt them without one dissenting voice, except ten men belonging to the 52d Illinois Infantry.”⁸⁹ Ambrose does not tell what happened to those dissenting voices, but the presence of some suggests a greater degree of free will among the soldiers than is sometimes allowed by historians.⁹⁰ Soldiers also took the time to promote their resolutions to crowds at home, and Major General Nathan Kimball enthusiastically received several invitations to a Union rally in his home of Washington County, Indiana (near Louisville) to endorse the soldiers’ actions.⁹¹

Men would do more than just draw up resolutions. Some soldiers took an active part in campaigning. Lewis Hanback, a soldier who had mustered out following service with an Illinois

⁸⁸ Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 123.

⁸⁹ Entry of January 30, 1863, Ambrose, *From Shiloh to Savannah*, 99.

⁹⁰ Arguments between soldiers appear to have been common, but rarely appear to have descended beyond words. Soldiers would occasionally complain about Democrats within the ranks, but saved their more aggressive tendencies for civilians. Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 1 mentions the 109th Illinois and 20th Massachusetts, which other soldiers taunted as “Copperhead” regiments due to approximately 20 percent of those regiments expressing Democratic sympathies. Entry of October 13, 1863, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS includes disdain directed towards Ohio soldiers who voted for Vallandigham, saying they should feel shame and accused them of treason.

⁹¹ “T. Buchanan – Read E. Kinner – Thos. Sherlock to Gen. N. Kimball,” Western Union Telegram sent February 18, 1863, Kimball Collection, Lilly; “C. D. Miller, W. J. Crippen to Gen. N. Kimball,” Western Union Telegram sent February 18, 1863, Kimball Collection, Lilly.

regiment, was with one of his officers, a Colonel Smith, and reported on their campaigning activities.

Yesterday Colonel Smith spoke in Browning, a Copperhead hole on the Illinois River. He spoke there last Tuesday night and so stirred up the Copperheads that nothing would do but that we should come back to Browning and meet their Champion, have a discussion. The Colonel agreed to come back and Friday at 2 o'clock P.M. was set for the meeting. Well the time came round and we came back to Browning and at the appointed hour proceeded to the School House there we waited nearly an hour a few came straggling in but no Champion of Democracy made his appearance. Finally the Col. commenced speaking and continued for half an hour when in came the Democratic Champion a Major Cummings a renegade soldier who says he left the army because he couldn't fight for the nigger. The Colonel spoke an hour. Cummings followed in another hour in which did not answer a single point but abused "Old Lincoln" and the Abolitionists. The agreement made about the speaking was that Col Smith should speak one hour Cummings to follow in a reply of One hour and a Quarter Col Smith to have half an hour to reply, but just as soon as Cummings got through with his speech he left taking all the democrats with him....As the Democrats were leaving the house their ladies shouted "Cowards Cowards." Quite a respectable number remained and Colonel Smith replied in a short speech after which the meeting broke up....the Democrats felt decidedly mean I do not think they will get over it this fall Really I do not know whether this will interest you or not.⁹²

Colonel Smith's attempted debate with the "Copperhead Champion" fell flat on its face, and while an ardently pro-war man like Hanback could very easily take this as a general sign of Copperhead cowardice, we have little way of knowing if this was a pattern of activity or an isolated incident.

Campaigning was not relegated to events at home. Some Copperheads, especially family members, took their campaign to the field. Instead of general statements and pamphlets sent to cover the whole of the army, these appeals targeted family members who served. John Dow told of "a fellow in our company that gets the most discouraging letters you ever heard of from his sister." Her arguments, as Dow understood them, were straightforward, claiming the war as one about blacks and not Union. "[S]he writes and tells him how fast the niggers are coming into Ohio and how they [unintelligible] the White Women."⁹³ Wives would write such letters to their

⁹² "Lewis Hanback to Hattie," October 8, 1864, Lewis Hanback Letters, FHS.

⁹³ "John Dow to Maria," May 22, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

soldier-husbands. Henry Schmidt of Kentucky appears to have received one from his wife Cate. His response referenced her previous letter, which stated “that I Should Resign and go home that we wasent [*sic.*] Fighting for the Union but that we were Fighting for the Nigros.” Schmidt scolded her for her accusations. “Peoples that think or Say so,” he wrote, “are Copperheads.”⁹⁴ Families were not the only sources of these letters. Dow mentioned a soldier named Dave who received letters from female Vallandigham supporters.⁹⁵ Knowing the role that women could play in a man’s decision to enlist, it is easy to see how such letters would prove potentially effective. Dow seems to have doubted the overall efficacy of these letters. “What Soldiers are left,” he observed, “are true Blue. What few Butternuts we had have either disserted or resigned.”⁹⁶

In addition to resolutions and other forms of expressing opinions back home, many soldiers took the next political step and actively campaigned, either in the name of another, or in some cases even for themselves. Lieutenant Colonel Alvin Voris received word from political friends at home that the “chairman of the state Union Central Committee [had] written the Secy of War for leave for me till after the elections to take part in the political campaign.”⁹⁷ David Thackery's history of the 66th Ohio relates a story of some soldiers who gleefully took the opportunity to "distribute" Democratic tickets. As the stunned candidate watched the troops proceed to toss the tickets into the wind, he was left helpless when one of the soldiers responded, “Why, ain’t I distributting them?”⁹⁸

⁹⁴ “Henry Schmidt to Cate Schmidt,” March 14, 1863, Schmidt Family Papers, FHS.

⁹⁵ “John Dow to Sister,” October 2, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

⁹⁶ “John Dow to Bro. Tho^s,” May 30, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS. Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair*, 74 looks at the relationship between soldiers and women at the home front through the lens of gender roles, which forms the basis for the entire book.

⁹⁷ Letter of October 4, 1864, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier’s Civil War*, 225.

⁹⁸ Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 161.

General Ralph Buckland of Fremont, Ohio received a nomination for Congress while in the field, and expressed shock at least to his wife: “I was not expecting the nomination for congress, supposing the candidates at home would stand a better chance.” The General was hardly new to the political world, having served as Fremont’s mayor and delegate to the Ohio State Senate prior to the war. Not one to put down the opportunity, Buckland happily accepted the nomination, though he did worry about the necessity of campaigning politically while still doing so militarily.⁹⁹ He repeated this concern in his acceptance letter to the nomination committee, reminding them that, “I cannot leave my post here whilst there seems to be any danger of an attack upon this City (Memphis).”¹⁰⁰ Other officers were considered for and received nominations to political office while still in the field, such as General Abner Harding for the 7th Illinois Congressional District or General John A. Logan for an at-large Congressional seat.¹⁰¹

Not all soldiers, though, took up the political banner easily. Many felt the distinctions American society had put on soldiers expressing political views, and these would certainly not be broken merely for personal gain. Logan for example refused his nomination on the grounds that it would be “unnecessary for me to enlarge as to what were, are, or may hereafter be my political views... I express all my views and politics when I assert my attachment to the Union.”¹⁰² Other soldiers received nominations but from the other party. Democratic politicians in and around Urbana, Ohio nominated several men in the 66th Ohio for political office, including Maryland-

⁹⁹ “Ralph P. to wife,” August 17, 1864, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH.

¹⁰⁰ “R. P. Buckland to Committee,” August 26, 1864, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH.

¹⁰¹ “A. McCoy to Glancy,” February 25, 1864, Theodore Glancy Papers, ALPLM discusses General Harding, while Logan’s nomination receives a mention in his *History 31st Regiment Illinois Volunteers organized by John A. Logan*, edited by W. S. Morris, L. D. Hartwell, and J. B. Kuykendall, with a Forward by John Y. Simon (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 53-54. Ecelbarger, *Black Jack Logan*, does not mention the possibility of the at-large seat, but 208-211 discusses Logan’s successful campaign for the US Senate, which Ecelbarger attributes to Logan’s absence from the state.

¹⁰² Logan, *History 31st Regiment Illinois Volunteers*, 53.

born Theodoric Keller. Keller wanted no part, and denounced “the d----d Butternuts” for their activities, instead proclaiming his support for “Old Abe; the Union, and for Johnny Brough.”¹⁰³

In December 1863, War Democrats hoped to capitalize on the successful advances of Ulysses Grant by nominating him for the presidency. “The question,” he responded, “astonishes me.” He continued, “I do not know of anything I have ever done or said which would indicate that I could be a candidate for any office...Nothing likely to happen would pain me so much as to see my name used in connection with a political office.”¹⁰⁴ Approaching Grant was a reasonable step for the Democrats to take, as their eventual nomination of McClellan certainly proved a willingness to select military candidates, and Grant’s record by that point quite outweighed McClellan’s. Grant, also, had been a Democrat prior to the war, though a lukewarm one, reserving his opinions as a member of the army. His first political vote had come in 1856, when he supported James Buchanan, later commenting that he “didn't know him and voted against Fremont because I did know him.”¹⁰⁵

Many soldiers throughout the war struggled with the concept of mixing their politics with the war effort. Though many did not object to airing their opinions, either among comrades or with friends and family at home, voting was potentially a different matter. Lieutenant E. P. Sturges, serving in the 1st Ohio Light Artillery, noted in 1864, “Capt. Colburn and I [are] the only officers of the staff who voted.” With the staff that did vote, including Sturges, heavily favoring Lincoln, other officers objected to voicing their political opinions in that manner.

¹⁰³ Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 161.

¹⁰⁴ “U. S. Grant to B. Burns, Esq.,” December 17, 1863, Ulysses S. Grant Letters, ALPLM.

¹⁰⁵ Jean Edward Smith, *Grant* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001) 94-95 includes the general's explanation as a joke given later, an interesting story and worthwhile shot at Fremont’s reputation. Grant discusses the election in his *Personal Memoirs: Ulysses S. Grant* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003) originally published 1885, 123-124, saying that he voted Democrat as he felt it was the best option for maintaining the Union (which is echoed in Brooks D. Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph Over Adversity, 1822-1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 70), though admits to identifying his relationship with Fremont as another reason to side with Buchanan. Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 379 identifies Grant as a Democrat in an appendix, citing James H. Williams' 1916 biography of John A. Rawlins.

Sturges reported, “Capt. Lambert thinks it right horrid that a majority of [Colonel John Milton] Brannan’s staff should go against Little Mac,” and even remarked that their superior officer, “tells me that he never voted in his life & that it was very rare for an officer of the old army to vote or engage in politics in any way.”¹⁰⁶ Union soldiers felt the heavy distinction between their military and civilian lives during elections. Robert Caldwell complained about his lack of a political voice to his father in 1862, saying:

What a pity it is that I could not be at home to day, to poll my vote. I declare it makes me feel insignificant to think that after having lived in this country upwards of 21 years, and one year of that time spent in the service of Uncle Samuel himself, I say it makes me feel as though I were small potatoes. It appears to me that there ought to be some arrangements made whereby the Soldier, absent from his home, could Send in his vote, what a shame, here I am two things at once, and good for nothing either side, namely a voter and yet not a voter.¹⁰⁷

Like Caldwell, most soldiers certainly did not object to the principle of voting, and certainly not amongst themselves. Attempts early in the war to vote for officers died at the hands of higher command, but when the opportunity to express their opinions on other positions within the regiment arose, soldiers were sure to speak up. Sergeant Major Stephen F. Fleharty, serving with the 102nd Illinois, related the campaign in search of a regimental chaplain. Through Fleharty’s efforts, the officers leaned strongly towards his brother Jesse, though in the end decided not to pick anyone. The enlisted men, though, wanted a chaplain, and so in proper democratic fashion they circulated a petition in favor of the Reverend Cornelius M. Wright. The officers conceded to let the men vote, and Wright held the chaplain's position for the duration of the war.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ “E. P. Sturges to Folks,” November 9, 1864, Sturges Family Letters, OHS. Sturges actually spelled out Lambert’s opinion as “wight hawwid,” probably mocking the captain’s speaking style.

¹⁰⁷ “Robert to Father,” October 14, 1862, Caldwell Family Papers, RBH.

¹⁰⁸ Fleharty, *Jottings from Dixie*, 16. While the episode demonstrates the desire of soldiers to choose their leadership whenever possible, Fleharty actually reacts quite negatively to the story, referring to the men calling for Wright’s chaplaincy as “fools & blockheads and sinners,” though undoubtedly his relationship to the other candidate played a significant role in this interpretation of events.

Voting for regimental offices was only one expression of a Civil War soldier's democratic feelings. Men in the nineteenth century saw a clear connection between voting and citizenship. To be able to vote was a sign of one's connection to the political process. Even though many men saw some difference between themselves and civilians, they rarely lost their own sense of possessing the nation. Indeed, serving in the army to put down a treasonous insurrection, as many of them understood the Confederacy to be, was the highest form of citizenship. Remembering that only citizens could be soldiers, then surely soldiers could vote as a further sign of that citizenship. While some of the men had difficulty making this connection while lamenting their distance from civilian life, few missed it when the debate centered on arming black volunteers. To arm black soldiers was to grant their citizenship, and to grant citizenship would suggest the right to vote for black men. Judge Joseph Holt concluded as much, and expressed both his support for the use of black troops as utilizing "every source of strength within [the nation's] grasp," and claiming that any defenders of the nation should expect all the rights afforded to the citizen by the Constitution.¹⁰⁹

Democrats were not going to forgo the soldier vote if they could help it, and their calls would not have necessarily fallen on deaf ears. "I am to day as much of a Democrat as ever I was," averred Alexander K. Ewing of the 46th Indiana. He continued, though, that "[t]he principles of a sound [Democrat] is those that in this the hour of our country's peril who do not lend a helping hand is a traitor at heart...Such Democracy as exists in Indiana at this present day I

¹⁰⁹ Paludan, *A People's Contest*, 245-246 and Kenneth J. Winkle, "Ohio's Informal Polling Place: Nineteenth-Century Suffrage in Theory and Practice," in Brown and Cayton, eds., *Pursuit of Public Power*, 169-184 each discuss the important ties between citizenship and voting. Davis, *Lincoln's Men*, 105-108, 157-161, and Carole Emberton, "'Only Murder Makes Men': Reconsidering the Black Military Experience" *The Journal of the Civil War Era* Vol. 2, No. 3 (Sept., 2012): 369-393 discuss the importance of conflating citizenship and voting for black troops, and the ways in which fighting in the war could earn more political rights for free blacks. Emberton specifically examines the importance of combat, actively fighting for the nation, as distinct from other, non-combat service, in justifying the claims of black soldiers to something greater than simply not being slaves. Holt's quote from Leonard, *Lincoln's Forgotten Ally*, 180.

denounce, and will never support.”¹¹⁰ John Vaught noted an invitation he received to, “a Supper of Butternut Soup.” While he may have thought that, “I can make a dish of soup of hard tack and beans that would prove more healthy than Butternut Soup,” it is telling that the Democrats would be sending such an invitation in his direction.¹¹¹ Soldiers were brought into the campaign in other ways. Some even were running for office as Democrats. Thomas Maholm told to his brother that a Captain Putman was running for legislature, and that while doing so he had published a list of names supporting him. This list, to Maholm’s surprise, included his brother John! Without knowing whether John actually supported Captain Putman or not, Thomas clearly did not like the idea of such a list of support. “I want to know if there is no way among you to stop such men as him from making use of your names for political purpose,” he wrote, and, “I wish your officers and privates would draw up some resolutions that would settle him forever”¹¹²

Democratic efforts notwithstanding, perceptions of extensive Copperhead activity, as well as direct evidence of such, had a heavy influence on the political mindset of the soldiers. Faced with denunciations from home, the men in blue took the opportunity to assert themselves as a political force. Goaded by both Copperheads and pro-war politicians, soldiers made sure their political viewpoints aired at home. Whatever disinclinations they may have had towards becoming a political army evaporated as the war itself became a political issue. Many soldiers eagerly abandoned any mindset that placed them outside of politics when given the opportunity. When they took that opportunity, Copperheads in particular became the target of their ire and political activity. The underlying perception that tied Copperheadism explicitly to the Democratic Party became clearer as the war dragged on, and when the time came for voting, the

¹¹⁰ “A. K. Ewing to Parents,” September 28, 1862, Alexander K. Ewing Papers, ALPLM.

¹¹¹ “John W. Vaught to Mr. William C. Magill,” January 27, 1864, William Magill Letters, IHS.

¹¹² “Thomas T. Maholm to Brother John,” August 16, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

ultimate political act, the army was quite prepared to maintain that connection and voice their opinions along those lines.

Chapter 3 **"Half Her Population Are Half Loyal"** **Marching Through Kentucky**

Dear me how strong is the contrast of Union Sentiment on the Banks of the La Belle Rivere say the fluttering handkerchiefs of our better halves and hear the shouting hurras of the men and boys as we pass along and also how strong by way of contrast is any want of Union sentiment made thereby. A point in time after passing Maysville – a loyal U family on the Ky. side did salute us most heartily with the U. flag up side down, not an unfit emblem of Old Ky's Distress in the present struggle and then to the house of their next neighbor so cold and so sullen not a cheer or a sign of good wishes made manifest as we pass by and made doubly more so by the contrast of their neighbors on both sides of them.¹

The two Kentucky neighbors Thomas D. Phillip and his 35th Ohio regiment passed illustrate the tensions faced not only by soldiers as they advanced into territories with ever increasing Confederate sympathies, but between the families in that tense area. The experiences of Union soldiers with these Confederate sympathizers differed from those back in their homes. These instances touch on the day-to-day activities of armies and the organization's relationship with civilians as a whole. Sometimes the line northern troops saw between sympathizer and soldier could be very blurred indeed. Union soldiers' experiences in Kentucky provided additional evidence for the dangers of antiwar resistance, which they demonstrated by using similar language for Confederates, Copperheads and Kentucky civilians. That these groups regularly blended in Kentucky only made the connection more plausible for troops on the march.

The areas of these Midwestern states that tended to sympathize more strongly with the Confederacy were the southern sections, those closest to the frontlines. Union soldiers marching from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, heading towards the Ohio River, the Mason-Dixon Line of the West, could very quickly find themselves in uncomfortable and unfriendly territory. The situation grew even more tenuous after crossing the river, as troops marched through uncertain Kentucky. It is perhaps most telling in these instances how similar soldier characterizations seem

¹ Entry of November 16, 1861, "Thomas D. Phillip Diary," FHS.

to their descriptions of Copperhead agitators at home. Terms such as "secesh" and "traitor" fit not only these individuals, but also soldier descriptions of Confederates. In the minds of many men, all acted as a threat to the greater cause of reuniting the nation.² Only in Kentucky, though, did those lines between antiwar agitator and enemy soldier truly become blurred. While soldiers believed Copperheads at home to be a threat, in Kentucky that threat became a reality.

Kentucky's place in the war is sometimes difficult to grasp. The Bluegrass State faced many questions regarding its loyalty to the Union. These questions were not without reason, as the state provided troops to both sides. Perhaps most famously, members of the prominent Todd family sided with the Confederacy even as one of their own, Mary Todd Lincoln, lived in the White House. Other states though, including Kentucky's northern neighbors, were also politically divided. Not quite as violent as Missouri, Kentucky still saw high incidence of guerrilla activity and fighting between neighbors, friends, and families. In some cases, this internecine fighting drove Kentuckians into the arms of the soldiers willing to protect them, most often from the North. In others, Union soldiers are able to question both the sincerity of the state's loyalty, and sometimes by extension, the sanity of its population. Taken as a whole, Kentucky's civilians displayed the collective schizophrenia expected of a state on the frontier of war.

In many respects, the Ohio River acted not as a boundary between North and South, but instead had what historian Edward Smith called a "unifying influence" on the region. Early settlers floated their crops down the river and its tributaries, while cities such as Cincinnati and Louisville grew along the border, drawing together farmers from both sides of the river. Developments in transportation technology only tightened these ties, as steamboats and railroads grew to enhance trading routes that already existed.³ Those who traversed this regional divide

² Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011) and McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades* each discuss the importance of the "Union" concept to northern soldiers.

³ Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 1-39.

could count the President among their number. Abraham Lincoln's father had been born in Virginia and then moved out to Kentucky to farm and raise his family. Thomas Lincoln then left Kentucky for Spencer County in southern Indiana, before heading farther west to Coles County, Illinois, near Springfield, in 1830.⁴ Kentuckians, like their brethren in the southern regions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, hoped for Union, and first pursued a path of neutrality when dealing with southern secession.

Considering the degree to which many Kentuckians opposed the Union cause, as compared to citizens of other states, this can be a difficult case to study. Various degrees of Copperhead sentiment existed in Ohio and Indiana. Some claimed to favor the Union, as they called for an end to the war through negotiation and reconciliation. Others declared that if the southern states wished to leave, then it was their right, the North ought to let them go and it was quite simply none of their business. Different though these stances may have been, they were similar in that they were rhetorical, or at the very least political in the way of a town hall meeting. But if war is politics by other means, then some Kentuckians were willing users of other means. While an actual Confederate was a rare find in Ohio or Indiana, the distinction between Confederate and Copperhead in Kentucky was quite malleable. As explained in the introduction, I consider these violent resisters as Copperheads provided they did not serve in the official Confederate army. Union soldiers would not necessarily have made such a distinction, though most telling is their ability to describe each group in similar terms. After some initial wavering, Kentucky would remain Union, and the state's votes would still very much count in the national elections of 1862 and 1864. Unlike other states with guerrilla problems such as Tennessee, Kentucky would still have a direct role to play in national politics of the era.

⁴ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 19-37 and Charles H. Coleman, *Abraham Lincoln and Coles County, Illinois* (New Brunswick, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1955), 1-7. Coleman's story focuses mostly on the Lincoln family's journey to Coles County, as the future president left home shortly after the family settled there.

In many parts of this border region, Union sentiment ran high. These were areas threatened by Confederate forces, or those where the majority of the population preferred to stay with the Union. Soldiers from northern states noted the sendoff they received from the locals. These good feelings extended into Kentucky, and even into some parts of Tennessee. Cheering crowds, waving flags, and other symbols of support were a welcome intrusion into the otherwise repetitive and mundane military day of marching and drill. Many soldiers took the time to mention the support they received from certain towns they passed through. As the western Union armies mustered in the late summer of 1861, support for the cause was widespread and fervent. Democrats of the region generally fell in line with the prevailing sentiment, following the lead of the nationally recognized Stephen Douglas, a fellow Midwesterner. Douglas's support for Lincoln and the war was echoed in the parades of Ohio. William Henry Pittenger's experience leaving Ohio was typical of the war's early days. Calling it "needless" to say so and proceeding to mention it anyway, Pittenger wrote that his fellow Ohioans "thronged around to look upon those who had sacrificed their all to go forth to engage in the holy cause of defending their country's rights...Thousands had gathered there to witness our departure and to bestow the wish of success." Betraying the emotion of the moment for many, Pittenger also noted the, "faces...mottled with sorrow and warm hearted tears."⁵

The celebration continued to the state's borders. Pittenger described Lawrenceburg, Ohio as home to "the most patriotic friends and people we have yet found." That the "reception in the city was gratifying indeed," he continued, "attest 10,000 of the citizens gathered on the levee to witness our departure for the West, there to engage in the common defense of our country. We received many hearty cheers when we pushed from the shores of old Buckeye."⁶ Accounts from

⁵ Entry of August 2, 1861, "William Henry Pittenger Diary," OHS.

⁶ Entry of August 18, 1861, "William Henry Pittenger Diary," OHS.

Indiana troops were not as glowing. The 72nd Indiana's Ambrose Remley observed that although in "most of the houses the ladies and slaves [were] waving their flags and cheering us" in Louisville, in "about one third of the houses they did not cheer any."⁷ Robert Hanna, of the same regiment, noticed a similar reception, but remained optimistic. Commenting that the area around his position in Kentucky was "half "secesh", & half union," he added, "if Indiana pours herself in here for a while, I guess the union side will be considerably in the majority."⁸ Augustus Van Dyke of the 14th Indiana made a similar observation, saying, "The people here are divided as to their opinions, some being 'secesh' and others Union." Van Dyke made sure to express his support for the Union citizens by remarking that they "have been compelled to leave town on account of their sentiments...The rebels," he complained, "even went so far as to oppress the women." He followed with a story about a woman who insisted on flying the US flag in spite of the Confederate army, and was arrested after sneaking through Rebel lines for some salt.⁹

As a divided state, Kentucky possessed many towns and cities that expressed their support for the presence of Union troops. "The majority of the people here are Union," wrote Ira Goodrich from an army camp in the state. "We are treated very cordially by the citizens all," he added, "Union or Secesh."¹⁰ Willie Shepherd of the 1st Illinois Light Artillery mentioned that when being teased by pro-Confederate locals "one's political sentiments get rubbed pretty severely once in a while." He happily added that "while we're in earnest, we are also in *fun*, and sing our own national songs & hymns, with a pleasant feeling all around." He also mentioned that on occasion "we call on our lady friends who are still loyal," where he and his comrades

⁷ "Ambrose Remley to Friends," August 19, 1862, Remley Collection, Lilly.

⁸ "Robert Barlow Hanna to Wife," August 20, 1862, Robert Barlow Hanna Family Papers, IHS.

⁹ "Gus to Brother," March 8, 1862, Augustus M. Van Dyke Papers, IHS.

¹⁰ "Ira Goodrich to Cousin Sarah," May 9, 1863, Ira B. Goodrich Letter, FHS.

enjoyed "some Rebel ice-cream for dinner, which part of the Rebellion we found no trouble in 'putting down.'"¹¹

Union sentiment stretched even to the southwestern part of the state, on the Tennessee border. Lewis Dunn reported similar good will in the same area. "[A]s good luck may have it instead of getting words we got better. Cheering was it to hear the union Sentiments exclaimed as we passed along. Greenville in [Muhlenberg] Co. was illuminated with union flags. Yes I may say from Calhoun to the Tenn. line."¹² This extended farther into Christian County. "The union men of the country," Dunn would write in 1863, "are uncompromising men. They say that if no other policy will sustain the union but to free the negro let them go before we would let this Glorious Cause that we are fighting for fall."¹³ Emancipation remained a significant issue even among Union troops. Following the issue of the Emancipation Proclamation, the fact that the citizens of Christian County were so willing to support the Union as to accept the liberation of slaves speaks to the depth of their Union fervor.

Even farther south, into Tennessee, blue-coated soldiers met with hospitality and even cheering. In the summer of 1863, John Dow was in eastern Tennessee, and he acknowledged that portion of the state was "all union" and that "the Boys gets great encouragement from the People and nearly every house that I have passed you can see the Stars & Stripes floating from the door." Reflecting on the distressing news he must have been hearing from home, Dow further added: "If one half of the People of Ohio are as loyal as the people of East Tenna. there would be no party-ism."¹⁴ Still, danger could abound in this decidedly Confederate state. Lewis Dunn contrasted the cheering of Kentucky with the very dissimilar response from Tennessee. "[T]hey

¹¹ "Willie to Parents," September 13, 1863, Shepherd, *To Rescue My Native Land*, 285-6. As for pro-Confederate songs, Shepherd specifically cites "Bonnie Blue Flag," "Maryland, My Maryland," and "We'll Hang Abe Lincoln to a Palmetto Tree."

¹² "Lewis R. Dunn to Father," February 17, 1862, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

¹³ "Lewis R. Dunn to Father," April 14, 1863, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁴ "John Dow to Sister," August 24, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

were as still as a mouse; had nothing to say.” Though quiet, these civilians certainly did not lack resentment and malice towards the Union armies.

Still, not all soldiers who met Union populations were completely convinced. Hugh Gaston of the 97th Indiana offered his belief that “The people here all say they are for the union but I do not believe there is any union men here except the soldiers. The sight of seventy thousand soldiers makes them say what they do”¹⁵ Echoing this potential concern, Dunn mentioned orders that “a Soldier is not allowed to buy a thing from a citizen of eatable kind for Several Soldiers has been poisoned.”¹⁶ Samuel Miller mentioned a similar story: “Last week a soldier was poisoned by eating a pie. He died the next day.”¹⁷ Grey-clad troops were not the only threats to face men in hostile territory, but Union soldiers had their own unofficial ways of dealing with potential trouble. Solomon Hamrick discussed camping “close to an old Secessionist Barn. I go over & buy milk from the Women. You may think there is Danger of getting Poisoned but there isn’t a bit for they know if they hurt one of us Down goes all their possessions [*sic.*].”¹⁸ Soldiers who met with such unpleasant civilians saw little distinction between them and either outright Confederates, or Copperheads at home. All represented “secesh” or “traitorous” elements that required stamping out in order to prosecute the war successfully.

Other soldiers expressed their objections to the less-than-loyal opinions and actions they saw in the borders of the Bluegrass State. Kentucky soldier Thomas Speed, writing to his mother, expressed the concern that “Kentucky is in a Miserable Condition. I wonder how long it will last.” Being a native, Speed also thought of his mother’s safety, as he wrote, “I suppose the

¹⁵ “Hugh Gaston to Catharine Gaston,” November 24, 1862, Gaston Civil War Collection, IHS.

¹⁶ “Lewis R. Dunn to Father,” February 17, 1862, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁷ “Fergus to Father, Mother + Sisters,” April 9, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS.

¹⁸ “S. S. Hamrick to Friends at Home,” October 6, 1861, Solomon Simpson Hamrick, IHS.

rebels around you are very bitter – do you have anything to do with them?”¹⁹ Others serving in Kentucky dealt with the populace, and did so with much reluctance. Julius Stedman complained to his father of the price gouging done by the citizens. “The Kentuckians charge us four prices for every thing we get from them....This I look upon as no good omen of their loyalty”²⁰ Doubts existed even into the very late stages of the war. Lincoln’s new attorney general, native Kentuckian James Speed wrote to his mother, “I can see that the people of Kentucky want to go to the very verge of anarchy before they can be brought to their senses.” This came in late March, less than a week before the fall of Richmond.²¹

When not questioning the loyalty of Kentucky the state, many soldiers remained more than willing to complain about the conditions that they faced that surrounded their dealings with civilians who were less than receptive to Billy Yank’s presence among them. In contrast to the tales of cheering and flag-waving crowds in some towns, others were marked with a decidedly southern temperament. The soldiers labeled these people and towns “secesh,” a shorthand form of “secession” and “secessionist,” and a common epithet thrown at many Confederates and their northern supporters. Whether in the requisition of goods, verbal disagreements, or merely sullen and angry stares, Confederate sympathizers who met the army were determined to make sure they expressed their dislike.

Many Union soldiers regarded Kentucky with heavy negativity. Edwin Smith referred to his march towards Versailles, Kentucky, in pursuit of John Morgan, as being through “the enemies’ country.”²² Rudolph Williams of the 111th Ohio wrote that he was “tired of Bowling Green and the citizens especially. They are the meanest class of humanity that ever Kentucky

¹⁹ “Thomas Speed to Parents,” June 29, 1864, Thomas Speed Papers, FHS.

²⁰ “Julius Stedman to Father,” December 27, 1861, Julius Caesar Stedman Letters, FHS.

²¹ “James Speed to Mother,” March 26, 1865, Speed Family Papers, FHS. This Speed is unrelated to the previously cited Thomas Speed.

²² “Edwin Smith to Brother,” October 21, 1862, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS.

was infested with." So disgusted was he with the population he met, Williams offered that "if instead of colonizing the negroes they would hang their masters Kentucky would be a [reasonable] place to live."²³ In the 87th Indiana, Jerome Carpenter plainly stated "Our boys hate Louisville and Kentucky in particular...if permitted they would burn the secesh hole of Louisville."²⁴ "I have seen little or no Union Sentiment shown," offered Samuel Miller. "Every thing is 'secesh' and they ain't afraid to tell you so." The end result of this secessionism was clear, at least to Miller: "From all appearances, it looks as if the war might continue for years."²⁵

The most common way for Union soldiers to come into contact with civilians, and for those civilians to make a soldier's life difficult, was in the requisition of supplies for the army. Early in the war, it was the policy of the US government to reimburse civilians for the provisions given, and the army paid what was asked. As mentioned in previous letters, those civilians with Confederate sympathies were not above making some money off of the army. Instead of refusing to aid the soldiers, they would either offer their goods at exorbitant prices, or provide a discount to Confederates with similar requests. "There is an old bachelor," wrote George Vanvalkenburgh, "lives out where we go on picket and you would think to hear him talk that he was one of the best union men in the world but when the rebels were in here he told them that he would give them two good fat sheep for every union man that they would kill." Added to this general distrust was the resentment Vanvalkenburgh felt at the army's duty to the 'old bachelor,': "But we have to guard his property and if the quarter master goes there and gets any corn, oats and hay he must have just as much pay as though he [the old bachelor] was the best union man in the country."²⁶ The 105th Illinois' George Cram complained that citizens outside of Frankfort

²³ "R. Williams to Unknown," August 1863, R. Williams Collection, Lilly.

²⁴ Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 26.

²⁵ "Fergus to Sister," June 29, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS.

²⁶ "George W. Vanvalkenburgh to Wife," March 30, 1863, George W. Vanvalkenburgh Papers, FHS.

“charged us terrible prices and I was more than once tempted to refuse to pay them anything.”²⁷

Solomon Hamrick noted that Union requisitions did pick their targets carefully: "we take our hay & corn from the Noted rebles," if for no other reason than “the Rebles took the property of all Suspected union men.”²⁸

Not all requisitions came from Union payment. Some, especially in the early days, were items taken from those who did not wish to see troops in their homes. “Before the soldiers came here,” wrote Watson Goodrich, “the people were secessionists, but many left when the union troops came. Several of the houses are now vacant.” Not willing to let such a good situation go to waste, the army commandeered these houses, “and the officers have generally good quarters in them.”²⁹ Henry Hibben also reported vacant houses in his travels with the army. In a town where “people...are all secessionists and sympathize with the Rebels,” Hibben noted, “Many of the people have fled and left their houses, fearing that we would murder them.”³⁰ “Business is perfectly prostrate,” observed Samuel Miller from within Kentucky, and “I doubt if there is a dozen union men in town...The people don’t dair [*sic.*] say anything, but they look daggers at us.”³¹

As the war went on, the army needed more and appears to have been less willing to pay what was asked. “The Soldiers have taken every thing the Citizens have,” wrote John Dow, “and our commissaries had to issue rations to them to keep them from Starving.” Expressing the desire of these civilians to get out from under the hard hand of war, he continued, “They are all Sick of the war and are willing to Settle with Uncle Samuel on any terms.” In the end though, Dow’s lack of sympathy is what comes through. “They all claim to be good union men,” wrote the

²⁷ “George to Mother,” October 15, 1863, Cram, Soldiering With Sherman, 9.

²⁸ “Simps Hamrick to Father,” March 20, 1862, Solomon Simpson Hamrick, IHS.

²⁹ “Watson Goodrich to Friend Alvin,” November 26, 1861, Watson Goodrich Papers, FHS.

³⁰ “Henry B. Hibben to Sister,” October 30, 1861, Kephart Family Papers, IHS.

³¹ “Fergus to Father, Mother & Sisters,” April 9, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS.

implacable Union soldier, “but there was not a man voted for the union in this (Franklin) County.”³² E. P. Sturges made a similar observation about an “old secesh” on whose land his regiment encamped. “Soldiers come and go at will about his grounds and out-houses. Anything they see lying around loose that suits their necessity they 'confiscate.’” Echoing a common sentiment towards Copperheads back home, Sturges offered, “It is a good thing to have such men feel this war.”³³ F. P. Houser of the 17th Indiana reported, “Our capt went out the other day with a gun and soon got Back with a fine hog. You may think it is wrong,” he offered preemptively, “as we might kill some union mans stock. I am satisfied there is not a union man this side of the Green River...for my Part I am willing to Burn evry thing in Dixie”³⁴

Thomas A. Phillip recorded a meeting with several Copperhead civilians in his diary, a story that carries both aspects of Copperhead resentment towards soldiers, and Copperhead threats levied at civilians who may have been less enthusiastic about the Southern cause. While requisitioning supplies at the farm of a man named Jenkins, Phillip recounted:

about 12 o. clock our steam boat landed at the Rebel Jenkins farm – which is some 7 miles long and about 5 miles wide...the companies searched the Houses they did not find much in the Houses except the wife the Father & Mother in Law of the Rebel Jenkins who said that the farm belonged to them and that there was not anything belonging to Jenkins unless it was some stock and produce...The Mother in [law] of Jenkins was quite Secesh and called our officers and men some very hard names...about 5 O’clock the Regt formed on the level Sunday morning the citizens feeling much relieved that some one had come to protect them, for the Rebel Jenkins has threatened to burn the place and destroy the Stores belong[ing] to Uncle Sam.³⁵

For Jenkins and his kin, it wasn’t enough to harass the soldiers. Their daily regimen required terrorizing the whole of the area. The activities of Phillip’s “Rebel Jenkins” are very similar to some of the guerrilla activities to which Union soldiers and other civilians were subject around the area.

³² “John Dow to Sister,” July 12, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

³³ “E. P. Sturges to Folks,” January 11, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

³⁴ “F P Houser,” November 23, 1863, Houser Collection, Lilly.

³⁵ “Thomas A. Phillip Diary,” pg. 13-15, FHS.

Other soldiers shared similar experiences even without the need to gather supplies. “[Y]ou ought to know that there can be no worse copperheads hissing “treason to freedom” anywhere than those that I now have to associate with,” wrote Robert Winn from an encampment in Kentucky.³⁶ “Hopkinsville is a splendid place for troops to be station,” added Lewis Dunn, “though I can’t say much about this town though...they are all Rebels.”³⁷ Walker Porter, when describing a particular day’s march, also mentioned the loyalties of the towns through which he passed. He was willing to note the exception, though, and described the town of Crittenden by saying: “Saw the first union flag flying that I have seen in Ky. received with cheers.”³⁸ Robert Hanna put forth a similar description, referring to the place he was at as populated with “Rebel with some few exceptions.” In a somewhat revealing observation, he noted, “All of the exceptions are those who are [without slaves].”³⁹

Thomas D. Phillip (not related to the previously mentioned Thomas A. Phillip) noted similar experiences in the various towns through which he passed. While the life of a soldier on the march did not generally contain a great deal of excitement, it is notable that each town entered received special mention based on the reception given. In Mt. Washington, Kentucky, the soldiers appear to have drawn some attention to themselves. Referring to the town as, “a secession hole” Phillip also noted that the regimental band was “playing Yankee Doodle” as they passed through. He concluded with a description of the citizens’ response: “No one saluted or cheered us but on the contrary they all looked sullen and bad.”⁴⁰ The next day, he simply labeled Bardstown “a Secesh hole.”⁴¹ Several days later, after making similar observations about the town of New Haven, Phillip also added an opinion regarding the areas of support and derision. “I

³⁶ “Robert Winn to Sister,” September 12, 1863, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

³⁷ “Lewis R. Dunn to Father,” April 9, 1862, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

³⁸ Entry of September 20, 1862, “Walker Porter Diaries,” FHS.

³⁹ “Robert Barlow Hanna to Wife,” January 24, 1863, Robert Barlow Hanna Civil War Papers, IHS.

⁴⁰ Entry of December 11, 1861, “Thomas D. Phillip Diary,” FHS.

⁴¹ Entry of December 12, 1861, “Thomas D. Phillip Diary,” FHS.

notice,” he said, “that we are cheered and saluted in the country. When in the towns that we have passed through the people appear to be cold and indifferent, not caring much for the Union.”⁴²

Samuel Miller made similar observations in a different town. “The ladies at the house are strong ‘Secesh,’” he wrote, “& make all sorts of fun of us.” He proudly asserted his own superiority, informing his family that “I treat [them] by silent contempt, never replying to their comments.”⁴³

Though soldiers regularly complained about the population they encountered, many also made sure to point out changes in local sentiment. “I think there is a real revolution in sentiment going on among the people of this country,” wrote Thomas Smith of the 79th Ohio in August 1863. He continued by noting, “Citizens who were original secessionists [*sic.*] are constantly taking the oath and admit that secession [*sic.*] was a mistake.”⁴⁴ Still, even by early 1865 skepticism remained about the state’s loyalty. “Though great numbers have taken the oath of allegiance in Kentucky,” offered the 129th Illinois’ William Bradbury to the *Manchester Guardian*, “it is questionable whether there is much more loyalty in that state now than at the commencement of the rebellion.”⁴⁵

Kentuckians themselves had plenty to say about the advance of Union soldiers through their territory. A year prior to Smith’s observations, Kentucky native William Dulaney commented, “Our difficulties are increasing in Ky, instead of abating since the Northern Soldiers have come amongst us.” In particular, Dulaney feared for his slaves, especially those who were “getting unruly and many are following on with the army.” Like many other Kentuckians,

⁴² Entry of December 14, 1861, “Thomas D. Phillip Diary,” FHS.

⁴³ “Fergus to Father, Mother + Sisters,” April 9, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS.

⁴⁴ “Edwin S. to Maria,” August 16, 1863, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS.

⁴⁵ “B. to *Manchester Guardian*,” January 21, 1865, published February 21, 1865, William H. Bradbury, *While Father is Away: The Civil War Letters of William H. Bradbury*, edited by Jennifer Cain Bohrnstedt, compiled by Kassandra R. Chaney (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 217.

Dulaney worried about “abolitionists...trying to make the negroes believe that they [were] to be freed when this war is ended.”⁴⁶

As he and his regiment marched south, Ohioan William Pittenger recorded similar thoughts about the towns through which they passed. A series of entries in September 1861 reveals the sentiment encountered in some towns. “We have on exhibition a blackhearted Secessionist who was captured by our scout last night.” More than just any secessionist, “He is mounted and is a Capt. of a cavalry camp, armed with a double barrel shotgun,” which certainly made him something of a prize.⁴⁷ Unfortunately for Pittenger and his compatriots, the next day’s entry includes the information: “The man who we had on exhibition yesterday was released last night by Gen. Sturgess.” Pittenger was also willing to report from among the men that, “There is great dissatisfaction in camp on account of his doing but he was released for lack of evidence.”⁴⁸ Men such as this captured captain were actually rather hard to come by, as Pittenger observed a few days later, “There is scarcely an able bodied citizen to be found, as they have nearly all joined the Rebel army.”⁴⁹

Not that such men were impossible to find. An entry from November mentioned that a few men tried to get some chickens from an “old Secessionist,” who responded rather violently. One of the soldiers received for his effort, “some 70 shots in the back which will no doubt prove fatal.”⁵⁰ Union soldiers also dealt with potential spies. Thomas Phillip passed along one such incident in a diary entry from January 1862. “It was rumored,” he wrote, “that Genl. Nelson had discovered two female spies in the persons of two daughters of a farmer adjoining our [camp] who came to him for passes to cross the lines.” The passing of civilians through camp was not in

⁴⁶ “Wm Dulaney to Robert,” June 14, 1862, Robert L. Dulaney Letters, ALPLM.

⁴⁷ Entry of September 9, 1861, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS.

⁴⁸ Entry of September 10, 1861, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS.

⁴⁹ Entry of September 15, 1861, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS.

⁵⁰ Entry of November 18, 1861, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS.

and of itself an unusual occurrence, but he continued: “On looking at them, [General Nelson’s] suspicions were awakened and putting his hand on their persons he drew out of their bosoms Several letters giving an account of our camp, and also the plans thereof.”⁵¹ Phillip did not mention (and likely did not know) what hint General Nelson received as to the intentions, nor what became of the two would-be spies.

More dangerous than spies, and more present in this tenuous area, were guerrillas. Rather than express their distaste for the Union with cold stares, exorbitant prices, and the occasional poisoned offering, some took matters a step further. Joining the Confederate army was one such method, while going underground was another. Guerrilla activity in the state was not uncommon, and Confederate sympathizers found no lack of hiding spots. Dashing Confederate cavalry commander John Morgan raided Kentucky through the war, and even used it as a base for the occasional thrust into Northern states such as Ohio and Indiana. As the debate within towns raged over which side to take in the conflict, soldiers found themselves squarely in the middle. Though the whole of the state was initially neutral, individual cities and towns took strong stances, and the residents made sure passing soldiers knew their orientation.

Guerrilla fighters, also sometimes called Bushwhackers by the soldiers they harassed, threatened the Union army in all theaters of the war. In Kentucky, they also could target civilians, including those whose relatives fought. “[T]his country is well adapted to Guerilla warfare,” explained soldier Aetna Pettis, “as they are well acquainted with the country.”⁵² Simeon Sigfried, a chaplain in the 160th Ohio, made a similar observation in Virginia: “Newtown has the name of being a '*secesh hole*' and has among its population many who are sanctimonious Union men in the daytime, when the Yankees are around, and at night are

⁵¹ Entry of January 14, 1862, “Thomas D. Phillip Diary,” FHS.

⁵² “Aetna B. Pettis to Julien,” March 17, 1863, Aetna B. Pettis Papers, FHS.

guerrillas of the meanest type."⁵³ If Virginia had troubles with guerrillas, then Kentucky would certainly face similar struggles.

Kentucky differed from its fellow Ohio Valley states in the political position of its governor. Where William Yates and Oliver Morton sought to grow Union support in spite of legislatures that could be recalcitrant or worse, Kentucky's Beriah Magoffin attempted to maintain his state's neutrality in the face of a staunchly pro-Union legislature. Magoffin's own personal loyalties are the subject of some historical debate. Captain Thomas Speed's *The Union Cause in Kentucky*, written in the early twentieth century, identified Magoffin as a Rebel sympathizer who hoped to use neutrality as a stepping-stone to bringing Kentucky in the Confederacy. Only the efforts of Unionists in the legislature prevented this calamity, and the eventual presence of troops solidified Kentucky's place with the North. Some revisionist articles challenge the openness of Magoffin's alleged Confederate sympathies, though it is certainly probable that even if the governor acted sincerely in maintaining his state's neutrality, his own personal loyalties lay with the Rebellion. At the very least, Magoffin's attempt to provide a neutral buffer zone provided recognition to the Confederacy, as did his statement that sending troops to forcibly reunite the nation represented a "wicked purpose." Still, Magoffin's ability to preserve Kentucky's position, even against his own sentiments, deserves some credit in a period where national loyalty was quite flexible.⁵⁴

⁵³ Rev Simeon Siegfried, captain, Co. E, 160th Ohio, May 14, 1864, *A Hundred Days to Richmond*, 66.

⁵⁴ Michael T. Dues, "Governor Beriah Magoffin of Kentucky: Sincere Neutral or Secret Secessionist?" *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* Vol. 40 (Jan., 1966): 22-28 suggests that Magoffin's actions on neutrality during the war's early years were sincere efforts to keep Kentucky out of the war rather than a plot to secretly arm the state's Confederates, as is charged in older works, particularly Thomas Speed, *The Union Cause in Kentucky, 1860-1865* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), 26-44, and Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 270. Donald Clark, *The Notorious Bull Nelson: Murdered Civil War General* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 49-62 details the efforts of native son William Nelson in the distribution of US government arms to the hands of the state's loyal population. Speed, *The Union Cause in Kentucky*, 158-164, identifies Unionist sentiment across the state, further condemning Magoffin for transgressing the will of the people in his ardent secessionism. Magoffin quote and further declarations of the governor's secessionist feeling in McKnight, *Contested Borderland*, 25.

Union soldiers would dismiss pro-war claims of Democrats as untrustworthy, at least for the time being. Any protestations by Magoffin of neutrality, or at least non-support for the Confederacy, fell on deaf ears. Through the efforts of the state legislature, many Union soldiers certainly leaned against Governor Magoffin. "I pity the 'old commonwealth' my native state," complained James Anthony. "[Kentucky] has been placed by her politicians in, I think, a contemptible position – but the people are loyal and will yet save the state if they can be awakened and armed before it is too late."⁵⁵ "The Kentucky legislature strongly decided against the Rebels," wrote "Z" in a letter to the German newspaper *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, "and made a favorable impression in the camp, especially because many had misgivings about the holding back of the legislation and the machinations of the Rebel-friendly *Gouverneur* [Governor] Magoffin."⁵⁶ As in other states, the ardently pro-Union governors received much greater support from the soldiers. "Bertsch," another soldier-correspondent for the *Volksfreund*, commented that German soldiers welcomed the idea that, "*Gouverneur* Morton of Indiana will be appointed senior commander of the Kentucky army," and continued by saying "We Germans know this energetic and patriotic man too well not to sincerely enjoy the hope for this sort of change."⁵⁷

Soldiers from other states took the opportunity to compare where they were to where they had come from. "You cannot imagine the difference between Kentucky and Ohio and Indiana," wrote Randolph Williams to his sister Nellie, describing his regiment's return to Indiana from Kentucky as "like another world...Instead of the citizens being angry and looking sour at us as they would have, had we been entering a town in Kentucky under like circumstances, they met us like friends and gave us plenty both to eat and drink...I was in Ind[iana], and not the land of

⁵⁵ "Bro Jim (James W. Anthony) to Sally (Price)," July 2, 1861, Price Family Papers, ALPLM.

⁵⁶ Letter 54 – *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, September 29, 1861, z, Camp Pleasant Hill, 9/20/61, Bertsch and Stängel, *A German Hurrah!*, 129.

⁵⁷ Letter 79 – *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, December 31, 1861, Bertsch, Camp Lebanon, Ky., 12/24/61, Bertsch and Stängel, *A German Hurrah!*, 194.

the Traitor.”⁵⁸ E. P. Sturges offered a comparison between Kentucky and its southern neighbor in mailing Nashville and Louisville papers to his parents. “[the *Nashville Union*] represents the loyal men of Tennessee who differ a great deal...from the class of union men in Kentucky, represented by the *Louisville Journal*.” Though Sturges said the *Journal* claimed a conservative mantle, his letter reveals some skepticism of a conservative perspective that was “abusing Abe Lincoln and his advisers in one column, and Jeff Davis and his in another.”⁵⁹ While probably representative of the state's divided opinion, the paper's hair-splitting conservatism was not going to impress Union soldiers with a clear view of loyalty and proper bounds of political conversation.

Men from other states also had plenty to say concerning the fighting spirit and Unionist sentiment of their Kentuckian counterparts. Their support for the war was generally considered tenuous, outweighed by their dedication to slavery as an institution. William Bentley, fighting with the 104th Ohio, caustically described the “3 KY Regiments in our Brigade, and I will venture to say that not over 1/10 of them ever owned a negro...These poor whites are raving over the idea of the nigger being raised (or lowered, which ever you like) to a level with them.” Though Bentley thought little of these men and their concerns (he casually remarked, “This is what might be expected of persons raised in the slave states”), he worried mostly about their potential electoral weight. Luckily for Bentley, and all Unionists, the Kentuckians “constitute a very small part of our army...and will have very little influence on the election.”⁶⁰ Still, Kentucky soldiers made their feelings known. Bentley observed, “The 11th KY voted but their votes are of no account, as KY is one of those states which does not consider a soldier a citizen. They gave him [1864 Democratic presidential nominee McClellan] nearly as large a majority as the 104th

⁵⁸ “R. Williams to Nellie,” August 9, 1863, R. Williams Collection, Lilly.

⁵⁹ “E. P. Sturges to Folks,” March 2, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

⁶⁰ September 28, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased*, 116.

gave Lincoln." He further characterized their colonel as "a rank copperhead and makes no secret of his principles."⁶¹ On hearing news of Atlanta's fall, Kirk Jenkins's 15th Kentucky, which he described as "Democrats to the last," cheered lustily for both William Sherman, the victorious general, and for McClellan, the Democrats' presidential nominee.⁶²

Though prepared to fight, Kentuckians did so for much more narrowly defined reasons than their northern neighbors.⁶³ Much as Confederate soldiers would claim to fight in protection of their homes from ravaging federal troops, men of the commonwealth sought similarly to be "left alone." As T. E. Pickett described: "The war spirit of Kentucky is universally aroused...She desired as earnestly as ever did President Davis to be 'let alone', but that bloody apostle of Discord – Bishop Polk – has decreed otherwise."⁶⁴ The state's neutrality, violated by prewar Episcopal bishop turned Confederate general Leonidas Polk, was hardly sacrosanct. Kentucky native James Anthony described neutrality as "a kind of pretended joint love feast of Unionists & their unfortunate fellow citizens who are suffering all the horrors of the dread malady, Secessia." He continued saying, "they hate each other with a perfect hatred and its [*sic.*] my opinion that before sixty days shall have passed Kentucky will again be the dark & bloody land suffering all the evils of a civil war."⁶⁵ "At Shelbyville," William Anderson reported, "You talk to them about the war and they will say that they are in favor of the union but they can not stand Lincoln that

⁶¹ November 16, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased*, 124. Bentley's characterization of Kentucky soldiers being unable to vote is incorrect, as not only did Kentucky count its soldier votes, but those men were one of only two states where McClellan won a majority, as counted in Josiah Henry Benton, *Voting in the Field: A Forgotten Chapter of the Civil War* (Boston, 1915), 106-107 and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed. *History of American Presidential Elections, Volume II: 1848-1896*, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), 1244. According to Benton, the Kentucky law had changed that year, perhaps accounting for Bentley's inaccuracy.

⁶² Kirk C. Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher: The Union's Fifteenth Kentucky Infantry* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 243.

⁶³ Leah D. Tarwater, "When Honor and Patriotism Called: The Motivation of Kentucky Soldiers in the Civil War," (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 2010) attributes only a desire for reunion to Kentuckians who chose blue, much like their counterparts from more solidly Union states. The motivations of Confederate Kentuckians were far more complex.

⁶⁴ "T. E. Pickett to John A. Trimble," October, 1861, Trimble Family Papers, OHS. General Leonidas Polk had captured the town of Columbus, Kentucky in September, violating the state's declared neutrality.

⁶⁵ "Bro Jim (James W. Anthony) to Sally (Price)," July 2, 1861, Price Family Papers, ALPLM.

he does not do his duty about the negro." Anderson does note the citizen's division on the war issue, remarking, "they want [Lincoln] and Jeff Davis hung on the same tree." He mentioned that "They will have a union flag out but I expect there was another kind out when [Confederate General Edmund Kirby] Smith was up hear [*sic.*] last week."⁶⁶

Following the horrific battle at Shiloh, Smith sought to strike a positive blow for the Rebel cause in the West in the summer of 1862. He launched an invasion of Kentucky with two aims. The first was to capture the state, making its star on the Confederate flag more than merely symbolic. Secondly, Smith hoped to bolster the Confederate Army of Mississippi with Rebel sympathizers who were eager, he believed, to take up arms for the cause of Southern independence. Braxton Bragg, Smith's neighboring department commander and superior in rank, would much preferred to have confronted the Union army in Tennessee, but Smith, despite having promised to cooperate with Bragg, refused to do so once the campaign was underway. That left Bragg no choice but to follow Smith into Kentucky, using his men as a shield against the larger Union force in the state. While Smith had grander goals in mind, he had neglected to provide much in the way of detail, specifically regarding how exactly to recruit men to the Confederate cause. Most Kentuckians who wanted to join Confederate armies had done so at the war's outbreak, leaving few behind for Smith to recruit. In addition, Buell's force and the strong defenses prepared at important cities like Louisville made trying to shift the state's allegiances a less appealing prospect. Bragg wanted Smith to join him for a decisive struggle against Union commander Don Carlos Buell, but Smith insisted that Bragg should take on Buell alone.⁶⁷ The result was the accidental and anti-climactic Battle of Perryville on October 8. With no

⁶⁶ John W. Rowell, *Yankee Artillerymen: Through the Civil War with Eli Lilly's Indiana Battery* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975), 41.

⁶⁷ Buell had taken command in the West following Grant's enforced leave following the disaster at Shiloh. Further progress in the war would prove Grant's suspension to be unfair, as Shiloh proved to be a harbinger of the bloodshed to come in the war, rather than as a spectacular failure on his part.

accomplishments to speak of, the Confederates withdrew back into Tennessee. Kentuckians would prove just as lukewarm to overtures from the South as they had from Northern leadership.⁶⁸

In many respects, Kentucky soldiers were very much like their comrades from other states. They fought for Union, to mend the nation's broken bonds, and for each other. They complained about camp life, temperamental civilians, and the loneliness of being so far from home for such a long time. They also read newspapers, though in Kentucky's case Democratic and other anti-administration papers were far more prevalent in the camps. By 1863, Louisville newspapers such as the *Journal* and *Democrat* railed against the excesses of the Lincoln administration, emancipation being chief among them.⁶⁹ Indicating the weight of slavery on the minds of Kentucky's citizens, George Cram of the 105th Illinois, in a New Year's Day letter in 1863, related that a War of 1812 veteran he encountered offered his opinion that Union soldiers "were coming down here for not other purpose than to set the Negroes free, incite insurrections, and pillage the country."⁷⁰

The policies of Lincoln and the Republican administration earned much of the negative reaction that would come from Kentucky's fighting men. In general, those reactions surrounded issues prevalent among other Ohio Valley soldiers: slavery and the draft. Racial issues in particular seem to have drawn much of their ire. "I would not be surprised if all the officers of

⁶⁸ James Lee McDonough, *War in Kentucky: From Shiloh to Perryville* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994) provides a concise overview of the attempted campaign. Stephen L. Rockenbach, "A Border City at War: Louisville and the 1862 Confederate Invasion of Kentucky" *Ohio Valley History* Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter, 2003): 35-52 tries to take the focus away from the Perryville battle, and suggests that Bragg intended to take Louisville if possible. Clark, *Notorious Bull Nelson*, 119-136 discusses Nelson's failures at the smaller Battle of Richmond, one of the few Confederate successes in the campaign, while 137-148 provides some details on Nelson's role in the defense of Louisville, which he ties to the general's eventual assassination at the hands of the unfortunately-named Jefferson C. Davis. Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), while more specifically focusing on the climactic battle, does offer a similar take on the ineffectiveness of Kirby Smith's mission.

⁶⁹ Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 143.

⁷⁰ "George to Mother," January 1, 1863, Cram, *Soldiering with Sherman*, 34.

my Regt. send in their resignations," suggested Samuel J. F. Miller, a surgeon in the 5th Kentucky, "for Mr Lincoln's [emancipation] proclamation don't suit us Kentuckeyans."⁷¹ Even their negative reactions to forced conscription dealt with slavery. Will Dulaney wrote to his cousin Robert, in Bowling Green, "Congress has passed a conscript law that includes our ablebodied negroes and I fear that Lincoln will announce a Proclamation for the Border States...I may be mistaken, but I fear that we will have more troublous times this summer in Ky than ever."⁷² Further emphasizing Kentuckian distaste with the president, the surgeon Miller would also add his "wish [that] McClelland would play the part of Oliver Cromwell, dissolve Congress, set Old Abe aside, & then settle this difficulty at once."⁷³

Kentuckians were hardly receptive to abolitionists, and the German-language *Louisville Anzeiger* referred to them as "*Zwillingsbrüder*" (twin brothers) with southern secessionists in splitting the Union.⁷⁴ Stephen Fleharty of the 102nd Illinois reported the reaction of soldiers on hearing of the Proclamation, pointing out "that many of the Kentucky union troops have deserted and gone home, and the conviction is gaining ground that hereafter Tennessee and Kentucky troops will play a very insignificant part in suppressing the rebellion," even if "these states are exempt from the operation of the proclamation."⁷⁵ In a long letter to Mary J. Kemper, Kentuckian Samuel Miller listed the soldiers' concerns over their life in the field, and added "There [was] much dissatisfaction in all the Ky. Regs with regard to the manner Congress is treating the slavery question." Miller also added his "fear that our staff officers, together with many others, will resign if matters go much farther," referring to the continued extension of the

⁷¹ "SFJM to Sister, December 18, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS.

⁷² "Will Sesoy? Dulaney to Cousin," February 21, 1864, Robert L. Dulaney Letters, ALPLM.

⁷³ "SJFM to Sister," December 18, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS.

⁷⁴ John Daeuble and Gottfried Rentschler, *Two Germans in the Civil War: The Diary of John Daeuble and the Letters of Gottfried Rentschler, 6th Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, edited and translated by Joseph R. Reinhart (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004), xxxi.

⁷⁵ S. F. Fleharty, *Jottings from Dixie*, 98.

war's aims to include emancipation.⁷⁶ Still, the general suspicion of disloyalty made any other sentiment newsworthy. E. P. Sturges of Ohio's 1st Light Artillery reported that Unionist resolutions passed in Cincinnati and Indianapolis "were received with enthusiasm by the troops, among which we had Kentucky regiments."⁷⁷ That Sturges felt the need to highlight the Kentuckians speaks to his relative surprise at their making such a statement.⁷⁸

Though slavery weighed heavily on the minds of Kentuckians, it was not so simple to say that owning slaves made one sympathetic to Democrats or the Confederacy. Kirk Jenkins, in *The Battle Rages Higher*, a history of the 15th Kentucky, highlights the complex pre-war relationship between slavery and political connections across the state: "Although only 23 percent of the families in the state owned slaves, approximately 50 percent of the families in Shelby, Nelson, Spencer, Fayette, and Oldham Counties did...Nevertheless, these counties tended to be Whig strongholds" in the years before the war.⁷⁹ Dennis Belcher focused on the tenuous nature of the 10th Kentucky's Unionism, as the regiment drew heavily from Washington and Marion counties, which the author refers to as "one of the nation's most divided areas."⁸⁰ Even after the war, men in these regiments faced a hostile public not very pleased at the more radical course the war had taken over the years. Without a real sense of gratitude from the public, whether in terms of emotional acceptance, economic assistance, or support for any damaged physical condition,

⁷⁶ "Sam. J. F. Miller to Mary J. Kemper," April 27, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS.

⁷⁷ "E. P. Sturges to Folks," March 17, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

⁷⁸ Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 53 discusses the reaction of the 15th Kentucky to news of emancipation, and the general dissent given to the idea by Kentuckians.

⁷⁹ Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 18. Jenkins' book has a chart on page 17 comparing the percentage of certain county populations that owned slaves, fought for the Union (in this case, the 15th Kentucky), and voted Whig in the 1832-1852 presidential elections. In 1856, Shelby and Fayette counties went for Know-Nothing candidate Millard Fillmore, while the other three supported James Buchanan. In 1860, four of those five counties supported John Bell and the Constitutional Unionists, with Fayette going for Stephen Douglas. By 1864, all were heavily for McClellan, highlighting a reluctance to join with the openly abolitionist Republicans.

⁸⁰ Dennis W. Belcher, *The 10th Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War: A History and Roster* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2009), 3.

Jenkins speculates, “the Fifteenth Kentucky veterans must have frequently wondered whether they had fought for the losing side.”⁸¹

Coming to the state as a foreign immigrant, Robert Winn was sometimes able to be very harsh toward his adopted home. Added to his trademark cynicism, the sarcasm practically oozes from his letters when the conversation turns to Kentucky’s citizenry and their loyalty. “We are in a State that cast an almost unanimous Union Vote, Unconditional Union,” he wrote at one point, “but what does it signify – when and how was such a remarkable change effected in the minds of Kentuckians? Does anybody suppose that Kentucky would have cast any Union Votes, much less a majority, without the presence of Federal soldiery.”⁸² “It is a wonderful thing this Kentucky loyalty,” he wrote at another time, for “they (the Kentuckians) all full of the greatness – the goodness of Ky. in giving half her proper quota of men to the Government.” And just in case Martha had thought him serious in this instance, he concluded by adding, “Every man she [Kentucky] has in the Rebel Army has let her off from sending two to the U. S. A.”⁸³

Coupled with cynicism over the citizens of his state, Winn expressed concern at the fate likely to befall the state from the enemy. “A great deal of us,” he wrote, referring to himself and fellow soldiers, “believe Kentucky will be overrun yet and the desolation now existing in the Eastern part of Virginia and northern Mississippi carried there.” As for the proper response to such an invasion, Winn stated his objection to actually forcing the Confederates out. “In such an event the power of all these yellow shouldered rascals [a reference to the yellow insignia of rank of Union generals] would not keep us here to defend the property of rank rebels. These fellows are heartily detested. I consider them next to the Devil only worse.”⁸⁴ Matthew Cook shared some of his future brother-in-law’s negativity towards the state, even if he fell short on the

⁸¹ Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 258.

⁸² “Robert Winn to Sister,” August 8, 1863, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

⁸³ “Robert Winn to Sister,” March 17, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

⁸⁴ “Robert Winn to Sister,” c. August 12, 1862, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

sarcasm. Writing to Martha over his fears of the citizenry, he stated, "I hope the rebels will conscript Ky. if the Government won't," thereby drawing pro-Confederate civilians into the army. Echoing concerns held by non-Kentucky soldiers about Copperheads at home, Cook added his belief that "the rebels in the rear are more dangerous than in front."⁸⁵

Robert Winn both gave and received stories of guerrillas. A raid on the town of Hawesville was related to him in July 1864. "I have to thank you for the full account of the depredations of the Guerrillas in Hawesville," he wrote to his sister Martha, also adding that he would be "grateful for the smallest particulars of their operations."⁸⁶ About a month later, Hawesville was attacked again, and this time it was Robert sharing the story. "Hawesville has been invaded again by the Hancock renegades, the guerrillas, said to be 150 men." This account is also notable as it relays the response Union troops were giving when they finally encountered these bushwhackers. "The Gun boat shelled the town, or rather that part occupied by the rebels – and they were of course driven out. . . . Yesterday evening I saw a rebel ironed off – he had betrayed three of the 92nd Ill. Mtd. Inf. into the guerrillas' hands – and one of them escaped – and has identified the chap. I guess he will hang. A woman and family were brought in – they had one trunk with them – she had harbored guerrillas, and was an abandoned character – her house was burned."⁸⁷ As to be expected, Union soldiers were not prepared to treat these assaults with much kindness. It should also be noted that these responses came in the summer of 1864, when general Union policy appeared to be growing much harsher.

Guerrilla activity varied depending on the site and need of the men, as Amelia Winn related to Martha. Though herself not a soldier, her experience was not likely atypical in that part of Kentucky, nor was it unlikely to find its way to the ears of Robert Winn and other soldiers.

⁸⁵ "Matthew Cook to Martha Winn," July 13, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

⁸⁶ "Robert Winn to Sister," July 8, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

⁸⁷ "Robert Winn to Sister," August 1, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

“[M]y neighbors is all agoing to leave Kentucky on account of the rebels,” Amelia wrote, adding, “I would leave but I want to see [the neighbors] out.” Adding to her account were descriptions of guerrilla activity, mostly related to the items they stole, which included, horses, clothes and money. Amelia also mentioned the growing fear visible in these Rebels as the war progressed. In December 1864 she wrote, “The rebels will do all they can til the union Soldiers comes in Kentucky. The rebels says this is the last effort they will make if the union does whip them”⁸⁸

Word of guerrilla activity threatening the homes and families of Union soldiers crept through the ranks. Martha Adams, writing in August 1864, complained about the “numerous and bold,” guerrillas in the countryside. “Uncle James’ rebel friends fled,” she continued, “and warned him not to stay out there, so for some time we have had the pleasure of his company.”⁸⁹ Solomon Simpson Hamrick of the 27th Indiana wrote home asking “is Indiana in any Danger of invasion if the Rebles succeed in Ky? Cant Ky & Ind of them Selves raise force enough of themselves to Drive the Rebles out of Ky?”⁹⁰ “Quite many [have] been very worried by the most recent news about the conditions in Kentucky and the threatening danger for Ohio (and also especially for Cincinnati),” worried *Cincinnati Volksfreund* correspondent “Z”. “And it is certain,” he continued, “that our brigade would use its ultimate energy-even the last drop of blood-in order to screen and protect 'our own hearth.”⁹¹ Defense of home could be a powerful motivator for Union troops, as well as with their Confederate counterparts.

Thomas Speed also mentioned his concerns over such activity in his letters to both parents and friends. “I hope the Guerrillas will not pester you while we are gone,” he wrote in

⁸⁸ “Amelia Winn to Sister,” December 20, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

⁸⁹ “Martha Bell Speed Adams to Jimmy,” August 8, 1864, Speed Family Papers, FHS.

⁹⁰ “SSH to Father and Family,” October 13, 1861, Solomon Simpson Hamrick, IHS.

⁹¹ Letter 62 – *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, October 26, 1861, Z, *Camp Jackson Hill* [Camp Anderson], Va., October 16, 1861, Bertsch and Stängel, *A German Hurrah!*, 145.

one letter to his parents. To a friend named Will he wrote, “I have been wondering for some time past where you were – and in suspense about you being in guerrilla country.”⁹² The young Speed was able to relate the tales of guerrilla action to his parents from Will, writing, “He [Will] says the guerrillas are thick and troublesome.”⁹³ While sharing on another occasion the possibility of raids into Kentucky, Speed coldly remarked, “I suppose though they are heartily welcomed there by most of the people.”⁹⁴

Other raids occurred near larger cities. Writing from Bowling Green, Kentucky, Henry Shouldise outlined such an attack. Near the city, a guerrilla force had “stopped the Steamer Betty Gilmore and threw two thousand bushels of corn in to the river and all of the government supply and paroled all the soldiers that was on board and they also Stopped [a] train of cars and burnt them and put Steam on [the] locomotive and Started it back to run in to the passenger train.”⁹⁵ Kentucky was not the only site to raids by Confederate guerrillas. Some raids struck even into Union territory. “We are having a series of Rebel raids here now, wrote Cornelius Madden from a Union hospital in New Albany, Indiana (located across the Ohio River from Louisville). “[T]he first was under Hines which was captured with the exception of the Capt and one other man. They escaped by swimming the Ohio River.”⁹⁶ The gritty, destructive and irregular nature of guerrilla warfare frustrated Union soldiers, and likely made them as wary of the population in which the guerrillas hid.⁹⁷

While not a soldier who experienced guerrilla attacks, Samuel Haycraft helped to catalogue their activities. Haycraft was the Clerk of Hardin County, Kentucky, and his journal

⁹² “Thomas Speed to Parents,” July 1, 1863, Thomas Speed Papers, FHS; “Thomas Speed to Will,” July 4, 1864, Thomas Speed Papers, FHS.

⁹³ “Thomas Speed to Parents,” December 14, 1864, Thomas Speed Papers, FHS.

⁹⁴ “Thomas Speed to Parents,” November 11, 1864, Thomas Speed Papers, FHS.

⁹⁵ “Henry Shouldise to Sister,” March 3, 1863, Henry Shouldise Letters, FHS.

⁹⁶ “Cornelius J. Madden to Son,” June 23, 1863, Cornelius J. Madden Letters, OHS.

⁹⁷ Ambrose, *From Shiloh to Savannah*, xvi credits the harsh nature of guerrilla warfare with hardening the 7th Illinois, and other regiments, against the locals and increasing the war's violent nature.

entries from 1862 through 1865 outline the various incidents in which his residence of Elizabethtown was involved. As the campaigns began to pick up in 1862, Haycraft outlined the challenge facing Kentucky and its citizens: “Kentucky is now passing through a fiery ordeal. She is invaded by the rebels to the amount of nearly 200,000, and there is now in the field on the part of the government in Ky. 150,000 fighting men.”⁹⁸ In June 1863, he wrote, “a band of guerrillas entered into town, stopped a train of cars loaded with horses, helped themselves & left.”⁹⁹ In late March of 1864, fears of another raid were kindled. “On yesterday & last night there was some fears of Guerrilla bands now roaming this country. On Friday 25 of this month about 18 miles from Town, our late Sheriff Isaac Radly was robbed of upwards of \$100 a watch & a horse, and let go at their headquarters (as they termed it) at James Wades, a Secessionist.”¹⁰⁰

Several entries surrounded a raid, or series of raids, by guerrillas into Elizabethtown around Christmas of 1864. On the 23rd, Haycraft noted, “At night there was an alarm of Confederate troops or guerrillas in town.”¹⁰¹ The next day’s entry began simply: “Town entered by rebels.” Haycraft continued by saying the invaders burnt the rail depot, captured some Union soldiers and then lit the railroad bridge on fire. After a Union detachment initially forced the Rebels out, they returned later that night to set the bridge on fire again. In spite of twice being set alight in one day, Union soldiers would save the bridge.¹⁰² The next day, Christmas, fears of a renewed assault on the town remained as a train “carelessly” crossed the still-standing bridge, even though, “it was ascertained that a band of Guerrillas were hovering around Town.”¹⁰³

Even into the very end of the war, guerrillas were a danger for Haycraft and his hometown. His accounts from the final months, though, also revealed the tremendous degree to

⁹⁸ Entry of October 10, 1862, “Samuel Haycraft Journal,” FHS.

⁹⁹ Entry of June 13, 1863, “Samuel Haycraft Journal,” FHS.

¹⁰⁰ Entry of March 27, 1864, “Samuel Haycraft Journal,” FHS.

¹⁰¹ Entry of December 23, 1864, “Samuel Haycraft Journal,” FHS.

¹⁰² Entry of December 24, 1864, “Samuel Haycraft Journal,” FHS.

¹⁰³ Entry of December 25, 1864, “Samuel Haycraft Journal,” FHS.

which the guerrilla forces had been weakened by Union pressure and the ever more certain coming end to the war. In early January 1865, Haycraft wrote, "On this day at about 10 o'clock AM The citizens were alarmed by the sudden appearance of some rebel cavalry in Town." This appearance would prove almost comical, for, "the fear soon subsided when they found out their force was only 35." "[T]hey soon left under the flag [of truce]," he continued, "but broke the truce by taking (blank) head of horses"¹⁰⁴ At the same time, the 129th Illinois' William Bradbury used the constant presence of guerrillas in the war's late stages to rail against Kentucky itself. "The aid and countenance frequently given to raiding parties and guerilla bands, and the opposition shown," he complained, "have induced the sneering remark that 'half her population are half loyal.'" Tellingly, Bradbury blames the state's governor, Thomas Bramlette, claiming he represented "all that class who voted for McClellan."¹⁰⁵ Still, the end was near, and in late April Haycraft was able to write the following entry: "Genl. Palmer came from Louisville and read the surrender of a rebel Guerilla Co. Capt. Duval & his men."¹⁰⁶

In addition to this relationship with guerrillas, Haycraft also was near the activities of the famous raider John Morgan. Though he was a commissioned general in the Confederate army, Morgan used his men in the manner of a guerrilla force. They terrorized towns, burned buildings, stole goods, killed and captured soldiers, and generally made a nuisance of themselves to Union troops in the area. Haycraft appears not to have met Morgan's men personally, but relates their activities. In October 1862, Haycraft wrote of one of Morgan's raids:

On this day the rebel Genl. John Morgan entered Elizabeth Town at night with 15,000 cavalry, robbed the post office of this Town, & burnt a railroad bridge 2 miles from Town. At 2 O'clock at night Morgan learned that he was pursued by United States troops from Louisville, he having searched the Clerk's office and some private houses, left in a hurry. His retiring pickets were fired on by the advance of the Federal troops, but suffered no hurts. The Federal troops

¹⁰⁴ Entry of January 9, 1865, "Samuel Haycraft Journal," FHS.

¹⁰⁵ January 21, 1865, B. to *Manchester Guardian*, published February 21, 1865, Bradbury, *While Father is Away*, 217.

¹⁰⁶ Entry of April 26, 1865, "Samuel Haycraft Journal," FHS.

being infantry did not pursue. As he retired his command committed various robberies of horses, Store goods, money, etc. He was last heard from at Leitchfield, Grayson County.¹⁰⁷

Even into December, Haycraft had Morgan's exploits to keep his journal entries lively. "Genl. Morgan came in with 5000 cavalry & about a Dozen pieces of artillery and after firing 107 shots into Town captured the 91 Regt Illinois, about 500. Next burnt the Rail Road bridge, the Depot with about 3500 bushels of wheat (private property), Park's house & also the military stockade. Took all the horses nearly in Town & for miles around & many thousand Dollars worth of dry goods, boots, shoes, &c."¹⁰⁸ The havoc wreaked by Morgan and others certainly kept the attention of Haycraft and the area's Union soldiers, and provided more than a little extra danger in the uncertain ground upon which they tread.

Not every enemy faced was a Confederate soldier, and not every Copperhead was back at home. Union soldiers encountered resistance and resentment in the towns through which they marched. These meetings with 'secesh' were as much a part of the coloration of a soldier's mindset as any rally, speech, or pamphlet from home. In either case, there were people actively campaigning against their mission, and understandably, soldiers took considerable offense to that. Ohio Valley soldiers, perhaps more so than their eastern counterparts, prized the fight for Union above concerns over slavery. To oppose the Union cause, that is to give any comfort, even only verbally, to the Confederacy was tantamount to treason. Much like their more northern comrades, Kentucky soldiers also expressed dissatisfaction with the civilians of their home state. Reports from home that offered threatening tales of anti-war violence and potential insurrection dovetailed dangerously with the more concrete concerns soldiers faced in Kentucky from spies, guerrillas, and even civilian poisoners. These collective experiences with Copperheads both at home and in the field took their toll, and when the time came to make a choice in the election,

¹⁰⁷ Entry of October 20, 1862, "Samuel Haycraft Journal," FHS. Leitchfield is approximately 30 miles from Elizabethtown.

¹⁰⁸ Entry of December 27, 1862, "Samuel Haycraft Journal," FHS.

such pictures were clear in the soldier's mind. As elections came during 1863 and later in the war, the issues of the day were discussed with more fervor than before. Both at home and in the camps, though, not every soldier would reject out of hand the positions of the men they otherwise considered to be their enemies.

Chapter 4
"When I Consider the Conduct of the War"
Soldiers React to Conscription and Emancipation

I had the pleasure of taking a part in a conversation at the Guard House last night on the Emancipation & Negro Enlistment Policy, and had the majority of the crowd on my side – or rather I was with the majority, but a rare thing you know. We all agreed that the U. S. had to right to Arm the Niggers – that it was expedient depends with the worst enemies of the Negro Soldier, upon the question whether it is necessary to keep them out of the army. All agreed that they would have a dozen niggers in the army rather than serve another term. Some of them had niggers and advocated Emancipation – while that question with some degenerated into Extermination.¹

Robert Winn is, amongst his peers in the service, noteworthy for the clarity and education he displayed in his letters. Beyond an understanding of grammar and spelling hard to come by among Civil War soldiers, Winn was also capable of expressing his opinions in a way that spoke to real intellectual thought. What his telling of this February 1864 meeting suggests is that he was not alone in the ability to express thoughts and debate them. While the debates in which he engaged with his sister Martha center mostly on religion, he was clearly competent on other topics. Discussed here amongst his fellow soldiers were the issues of emancipation and its implications. The conversation itself is indicative of the disagreements with which members of the army could concern themselves.

What this passage also indicates is the absence of any kind of monolith when one talks about “soldier opinions.” When it came to politics and political identification, these soldiers were not uniformly Republican. Even those that were Republicans did not sign on to the entire Republican platform without reservations. Still, soldiers were as much political beings in the field as they had been at home before the war. Soldiers shared their views with one another, and on key issues of the day such as the draft, slavery, emancipation and even the many wartime

¹ “Robert Winn to Sister,” February 25, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

elections, their opinions differed. Some even found agreement with the very Copperheads against whom they and their comrades railed. They carried their opinions from home into the field, and while much likely remained consistent, the experience of the war perhaps modified some of their positions.

Klement's interpretation is exceedingly useful here, but so are some of the older histories he helped generally to disprove. Wood Gray's *The Hidden Civil War*, an earlier, more nationalistic interpretation of Midwestern Copperheadism, begins the examination of the movement as a particularly regional phenomenon. This is not to say that anti-war Democrats existed only in the Midwest, or that there were in fact no Copperheads in the eastern states. While New England and New York remained traditional hotbeds of abolitionism, and subsequently Republican politics, Peace Democrats were numerous and vocal, including the Wood brothers in New York City and Governor Thomas Seymour of Connecticut. Still, the more grassroots kind of Copperheadism seen in the Midwest stems in many ways from the peculiarities of the region. While undergoing rapid transformation and industrialization, the Midwest remained more agrarian than the Northeast. The southern regions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois in particular were populated with immigrants from states whose secession had caused the War.

Republicans were not the only men who enlisted. The earlier days of the war in particular saw large enlistments of men driven by a common patriotism and desire to see the Union restored. Potentially skeptical Democrats were defeated, but unbowed, and Senator Stephen Douglas's support of Lincoln and the war effort undoubtedly helped convince them to join the army. Yet enlisting did not eliminate the backgrounds and histories many individual soldiers brought to the field. Midwestern Copperheadism arose from more than just southern ancestry. Klement notes that antiwar sentiment in the region grew from a host of factors, including

economic and religious concerns.² These concerns were not easily rectified by enlisting and heading off to war. Even out in the field, these differences exposed themselves, and sometimes Union troops and home-front Copperheads were not quite as different as the soldiers sometimes imagined.

Conscription

In 1863, with the war continuing and no end in sight, both sides needed more men. Though the Confederacy first resorted to forced conscription in order to fill its ranks, Lincoln and the North would soon follow suit. Conscription, also called the draft, was a controversial policy from the beginning. This kind of forced service was new in American history. Eugene Murdock's overview of the Union draft system *One Million Men* refers to conscription as a "new departure" from previous American policy. Confederate draft policies were far more stringent and much more willing to restrict the civil liberties of its citizens. In spite of this difference, many in the North disliked the draft and its process. Resistance to it came from all corners of the Union, not just the copper-tinted Midwest. Rioting over the draft consumed several northern cities, most famously New York. Much like their civilian comrades from around the nation, soldiers from the Ohio Valley did not have a unified opinion on conscription's usefulness and efficacy.³

Even so, Murdock points out, the draft was meant less to fill the army's ranks through force than to encourage further volunteering. In all, approximately 776,000 men in the North

² Klement, *Copperheads*, 37.

³ Eugene C. Murdock, *One Million Men: The Civil War Draft in the North*, (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1971), 7; Richard Franklin Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 135-139 compares the two conscription efforts. Bensel also tries to offer a comparison between Union conscription and Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus*, though this comparison seems a bit unfair. The Constitution allows for a suspension "in Cases of Rebellion" (US Constitution, Article I, Section 9, Paragraph 2), and as Neely, *The Fate of Liberty* points out, Lincoln used the suspended writ judiciously, especially in comparison to his counterparts in the Confederacy.

received draft notices. Of those, only 46,000 actually ended up serving in the army, less than one quarter of one percent of the North's total population. James Geary's study of Union draftees noted that nationwide, the drafted tended to skew older and poorer than other recruits did, though their numbers rarely included immigrants. The draft was initially done at the state level. Towns received quotas in order to encourage enlistment, which many did by using bounties, money paid to soldiers who volunteered. In Illinois, bounties could rise as high as a year's wages, serious money during the war's tight economic times. Only those towns that could not meet the quota faced the prospect of a draft. The system was not without many flaws. In Indiana, resentful partisans charged political motivation in the quota system, particularly blaming the controversial Governor Oliver Morton. By 1863, the federal government stepped in to manage the draft nationwide. Even after their selection, men had several options open to them. Those with the financial wherewithal could hire a substitute, or pay \$300 for a commutation. Even if the draft itself did not provide a substantial number of men (relative to total enlistments), the commutation process provided the federal government with enough money, in some circumstances, to cover the cost of enlistment bounties. Even with relatively open loopholes to avoid selection, the draft still provided the army with men, and, in Murdock's phrasing, "it worked."⁴

The Northern government focused on voluntary recruitment because it had hoped to avoid a draft. There had very nearly been a draft in 1862, with manpower numbers running lower

⁴ Murdock, *One Million Men*, 335; Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 7 mentions the percent drafted figure, mostly to highlight the many ways in which Union citizens could avoid the forced conscription; James W. Geary, *We Need Men: The Union Draft in the Civil War* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), excerpted as "Yankee Recruits, Conscripts, and Illegal Evaders," in Michael Barton and Larry M. Logue, eds., *The Civil War Soldier: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 57-68; Other accounts on the process of drafting include Gallman, *The North Fights the Civil War*, 64-66, which highlights the localist nature of Northern towns in raising men and avoiding the draft. Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 131-139 focuses on the conscription process in Indiana, while Jensen, *Illinois*, 68 does similarly for Illinois, though the processes differed little from the rest of the country; Quote from Murdock, *One Million Men*, 344.

than expected as communities struggled to increase enlistments across the nation.⁵ Volunteering numbers decreased as the war went along. Those who felt motivated to join had done so at the war's outbreak, and by 1863-1864 states could not necessarily afford to provide more. "Ohio at the time had already sent ten percent of her entire population into the army," reported the state's adjutant-general Benjamin Cowen. "We had in the field 130 regiments of infantry, 12 of cavalry, three of artillery and 26 independent companies of all arms; in all, about 150 regiments."⁶ Communities in the region continued to answer Lincoln's call for men. The addition of recruits and reenlistments emboldened soldiers. Ohio soldier David Stathem saw the addition of new troops, combined with Lincoln's 1864 re-election, as vital to the Union cause. "I verily believe," he wrote, "that...the reenlisting of so many veteran troops will help to restore peace more than the greatest victory we could gain by force of arms."⁷

Though the eventual method of drafting was rather inefficient, this was by design. Congress would have been unable to pass legislation for an all-out forced conscription effort, and so designed the process to encourage recruitment.⁸ With additional recruits as their goal, many states, particularly in the Old Northwest, were able to postpone drafting, or even avoid it altogether, with full blessing from both Congress and Lincoln.⁹ Plenty of men recognized this state of affairs and worried about their states and towns being able to avoid the draft by filling their quotas. "Do volunteers enroll fast enough or are they drafting in Ohio," asked E. P. Sturges, while Harvey Scribner Wood remarked to his wife that, "By Mary's letter I see Recruiting is going on very slow in that Township." "Great God," he complained, "what kind of men have we

⁵ Davis, *Lincoln's Men*, 70-71; William Blair, "We Are Coming Father Abraham – Eventually: The Problem of Northern Nationalism in the Pennsylvania Recruiting Drives of 1862," in Joan E. Cashin, ed., *The War was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 183-208 discusses the difficulty of raising troops from Pennsylvania during that 1862 period.

⁶ Benjamin R. Cowen, adjutant-general of Ohio, in *A Hundred Days to Richmond*, 2.

⁷ "D. T. Stathem to Sister," February 3, 1864, David T. Stathem Papers, OHS.

⁸ Murdock, *One Million Men*, 335.

⁹ Davis, *Lincoln's Men*, 148-149.

left at home?"¹⁰ Others like Frederick Pimper of the 39th Ohio hoped that "there will be no draft or but few drafted in Ohio, as that State has furnished over its quota in Volunteers."¹¹ William Shepherd reacted to good recruitment news, commenting proudly to his parents that, "I had no idea that you were doing so much toward enlisting," and added his thoughts that this was "much better...than to draft."¹² Most pessimistically on the topic of additional volunteers, the 72nd Ohio's John Rice offered his reasons for the necessity of the draft relative to recruiting. "When I consider the conduct of the war, the policy of the president, and the incapacity, and the proslavery tendency of our Generals and their staff satellites," he wrote to his brother, "I do not wonder that volunteering will fail."¹³

The war's progression had thinned the army's ranks, and without new bodies the Union would not be able to follow up on their progress. Committed as they were to the cause, Northern troops feared for what remained of their regiments. Concerns arose as early as 1862. "We want just a few more 'Good Mrs.,'" complained George Fox.¹⁴ A year later, the numbers had gotten worse. "The 14th [Indiana] numbers about 400 men all told," complained Augustus Van Dyke, "and... it will be consolidated into 4 or 5 companies."¹⁵ The lack of numbers and necessity of a draft caused some soldiers to turn on Lincoln, as it was his responsibility, they reasoned, to provide men for the war effort. "I hope the President will enforce the draft," wrote John Dow, "for if he does not I am afraid he will lose the vote in the army, for I hear a great many say that if he don't enforce they will not vote for him." Dow continued with the practical considerations of the men he served with, saying, "We want more men, and if they will not volunteer why not draft

¹⁰ "E. P. Sturges to Folks," August 29, 1862, Sturges Family Letters, OHS; "Harvey to Wife," August 11, 1862, Harvey Scribner Wood Family Letters, CHS.

¹¹ "Fredrick to Friend," April 11, 1863, Pimper Collection, Lilly.

¹² "Willie to Father and Mother," August 26, 1862, Shepherd, *To Rescue My Native Land*, 218.

¹³ "John to Brother," August 11, 1862, John B. Rice Papers, RBH.

¹⁴ "Ben to Father," August 5, 1862, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS.

¹⁵ "Gus to Father," August 2, 1863, Augustus M. Van Dyke Papers, IHS.

them? Unless he [Lincoln] follow up the victories he had won this summer they will do us no good.”¹⁶ Robert Winn was similarly concerned, but in his own pessimistic way did not believe change would come. Writing in May 1864, he criticized the President’s lack of action on the issue, saying, “Lincoln could have drafted men – can do it, but won’t – no, the idea is by hook or crook to keep the worthies that are at home out of it.”¹⁷

As Van Dyke's earlier complaint demonstrates, many soldiers worried about the disappearance of their regiments.¹⁸ They hoped that the draft would provide some measure of relief, adding to their membership. Practical considerations drove this image as well. "It is better," offered to put these new recruits into old regiments and fill them up for then they will be associated with old veteran soldiers and be commanded by old experienced officers," wrote the 59th Illinois' Chesley Mosman. The men did not "want to lose their regimental designation under which they have served for three years." Instead, though, states organized the new recruits and draftees into new regiments. Mosman reported that the men circulated a petition to Governor Yates calling for new recruits to join their regiments, and that "Five of our officers refused to sign it and the men are disgusted with them. Nearly all Illinois officers in the Army of the Cumberland have signed the petition to the Governor."¹⁹ William Venner's history of the 19th Indiana records a similar phenomenon in that state. In Venner's history, particularly in the mind of Captain David Holloway, this decision came from Governor Oliver Morton, who used officer commissions for new regiments to grow his own base of political support.²⁰ Union leadership

¹⁶ “John Dow to Brother Thomas,” September 14, 1864, Dow Family Letters, FHS. The victories Dow is referring to are most likely those of his own regiment, the 31st Ohio, in Sherman’s recently completed Atlanta campaign, but possibly also including Grant’s advancement on Richmond in the East.

¹⁷ “Robert Winn to Sister,” May 5, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁸ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 82-89 discusses the importance of regimental bonds for Civil War soldiers, particularly the local sentiment derived from symbolic representations, particularly flags. Knowing that soldiers placed a great deal of importance on this aspect of the conflict, then negative reactions to the suggestion of eliminating their regiment through attrition rather than replenishing its numbers make sense.

¹⁹ July 31, 1864, Mosman, *The Rough Side of War*, 252.

²⁰ Venner, *Hoosiers' Honor*, 119.

may have also been interested in the psychological effect of new regiments upon both the Confederates and the northern public. Recruits among the hundred days men in 1864 reported the awe of observers in Washington DC. When George Perkins identified himself as a member of the 149th Ohio, the reaction was "One hundred and forty nine, that means a 149,000. My goodness, boys, do men grow on trees in Ohio?"²¹ Similarly, Sylvester Sherman and the 133rd Ohio encountered such reactions as "Great God, man! What kind of a damned machine have you got out there to make soldiers with?"²² The soldiers might not have seen a use in new regiments, but other people certainly took notice.

The earliest talk of a draft came in 1863. "You said that there was strong talk of drafting," wrote Henry Kauffman to his sister in early March, "but I hope such may not be the fact."²³ When Lincoln did issue the call, soldier reaction was mixed, at best. Some reported celebration, such as Samuel Day, whose diary recorded, "Great excitement in camp about the new Enlistment Bill."²⁴ Others, like George Benson Fox, noted the number, and professed his hope that conscription would be carried out "for my opinion is that all of them will be needed."²⁵ The earliest call, though, engendered much negative reaction as well. Many soldiers objected to the meaning of a draft, arguing that more men would mean a lengthening of the war. Constantin Grebner of the 9th Ohio Infantry reacted to the announcement by exclaiming, "Certainly not a sign of a speedy termination of the war!"²⁶ Others took the opportunity to chide Lincoln and the government for waiting. "We need the men & should have them," wrote General Alvin Voris,

²¹ George Perkins, private, Co. A, 149th Ohio, in *A Hundred Days to Richmond*, 57. Perkins' observer was calculating 1,000 men per regiment, traditionally the number of men who made up a full regiment. Union strength, though, was significantly lower than that, as many regiments did not make the full complement, and even fewer fought in battles due to disease and other disabilities. See Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank* and Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

²² Sylvester M. Sherman, first sergeant, Co. G, 133rd Ohio, in *A Hundred Days to Richmond*, 85.

²³ "Dear Sister," March 1, 1863, in Kauffman, *The Harmony Boys Are All Well*, 21.

²⁴ "Entry of August 31, 1863," Samuel Day Diary, S. Day Collection, Lilly.

²⁵ "Ben to Father," July 4, 1862, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS.

²⁶ Grebner, *We Were the Ninth*, 122.

continuing with the complaint "This call is doing what ought to have been done a year and a half ago...but is entirely too slow in operation."²⁷ George Squier echoed Voris by calling the draft operation "too slow."²⁸

As draft calls went out again for 1864, soldier reaction turned far more positive. "We are all excitement about the draft which comes off in our state the 5th of January," wrote James Gaskill to his wife.²⁹ Augustus Frey agreed. "I think it a good thing," he wrote. "This call means men, not a few conscripts...With a proper reinforcement of our armies, the war can be ended this fall."³⁰ George Squier celebrated the drafting of "traitorous scoundrels," sarcastically bemoaning their being forced to fight against those things "they worship."³¹ Oscar Ladley echoed earlier complaints on institutional inertia by proclaiming, "That looks like doing the thing up right," and adding his hope that Lincoln "will order a draft every month until we get men enough to do something."³² William Bentley, though, was less optimistic. "I hope it is true," he wrote, "and that the draft will be completely enforced in Ohio...but I am afraid that it will be put off again."³³ Concern existed over soldier sentiment among the highest levels of command. Even after capturing Atlanta, General William T. Sherman worried how the army would react should Lincoln not enforce the draft. "If Mr. Lincoln modifies it to the extent of one man, or wavers in its execution," Sherman warned Henry Halleck, "he is gone. Even the army would vote against him."³⁴

²⁷ November 13, 1863, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 148.

²⁸ "George to Ellen," Letter 10, May 24, 1863, George W. Squier, *This Wilderness of War: The Civil War Letters of George W. Squier, Hoosier Volunteer*, edited by Julie A. Doyle, John David Smith, and Richard M. McMurry (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 56.

²⁹ "J. R. M. G. to My Dear Wife," December 18, 1863, James R. M. Gaskill Papers, ALPLM.

³⁰ "Gus to My dear Mother," July 24, 1864, A. B. Frey Papers, ALPLM.

³¹ "G. W. Squier," Letter 2, September, 1864, Squier, *This Wilderness of War*, 77-78.

³² "O. D. Ladley," February, 1864, Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 162.

³³ Entry of March 21, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails*, 86.

³⁴ Sherman quoted in Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 245.

News from home regarding the draft mirrored the mixed sentiments of the soldiers. William Lough gleefully reported to his brother, "It is rather amusing to see the number of unsound men now in the country." Men at home tried to avoid the war by playing up their disabilities. "Many who one year ago would knock a man down had they called him unsound," Lough continued, "are now boasting of their inability."³⁵ Oscar Ladley's mother let her son know that "There has been none drafted in this Township and but very few in the country." Perhaps more importantly, she added that, "no one drafted that we know."³⁶ James Gaskill wrote to his wife to say, "I am not in the least alarmed about" the draft, remarking that their hometown of Marion, Illinois had easily filled its quota.³⁷ R. S. Rice wrote from northern Ohio to his son John, "There is a good deal of excitement about the Draft." Though Rice worried about some in the family being drafted, he added, "I want the government to have men."³⁸ Later in the war, though, Rice reported that while "The draft has again gone off and not one of the stone boys are drafted," he hoped "there will not be necessity for another draft as everything is progressing so well with the army in front which of course you are aware."³⁹ Joseph Hotz from the 15th Indiana worried about one of his neighbors. "I see that Schenk's wife died and that he was drafted. Drafting alone would not be so bad," he thought, "but that his wife died is a great blow for him."⁴⁰

One of the more controversial aspects of the draft system was the ability to use money to avoid service and encourage enlistment. States offered bounties for men to volunteer and fill quotas rather than face the draft. While some took the money, others manipulated the system to their advantage. Called "bounty jumpers," these men would volunteer, collect their bounty, then desert before training, only to surface later at another location to volunteer again and repeat the

³⁵ "Wm. to Bro.," December 18, 1863, Lough Family Papers, CHS.

³⁶ "Mother C. Ladley to Oscar Dear Son," November 2, 1862 in Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 53.

³⁷ "J. R. M. G. to My own dear wife," January 4, 1864, James R. M. Gaskill Papers, ALPLM.

³⁸ "R. S. Rice to My Dear Son," February 20, 1864, John B. Rice Papers, RBH.

³⁹ "E. A. Rice to Son John," October 6, 1864, John B. Rice Papers, RBH.

⁴⁰ "Joseph Hotz to Maria Hotz," October 5, 1864, in *Indiana's War*, 68.

process. Men who were drafted could also use money to avoid their service, paying a substitute to enlist in their stead.⁴¹ Frederick Wildman reported to his son Samuel, serving in the 55th Ohio, the efforts of Norwalk to use bounties to fill the community's quota and avoid local implementation of the conscription: "A private subscription is being raised to pay to each man for one year of \$300 and the Town raise by tax \$100, now making in all with the Gov. bounty \$500, and this for only one year. Isn't that a pretty good bounty?"⁴² As the draft continued, though, substitutes could command higher amounts, as men became more desperate to avoid the army.⁴³ Captain John Hartzell of the 105th Ohio described some of the ways the army tried to combat bounty jumpers:

The money of the substitutes had been taken from them as they arrived at the barracks. They were taken to a private room and thoroughly searched...The amount so taken was placed opposite the name of the substitute on the roll, and was to be paid him on his arrival at the command to which he was assigned, otherwise the officer in charge was to return it to the commanding officer at the draft rendezvous.

Hartzell questioned the plan's legality, saying: "I never knew that this scheme of our Major had any backing in civil or military law, and to the best of my knowledge it was not practiced in any other part of the country."⁴⁴

The bounty system, which either allowed men at home to stay continually out of the fight, or provided additional inducement to men who had previously refused to join, generated little enthusiasm from the soldiers. Some states, such as Ohio, used the bounty system to encourage re-enlistments, hoping to fill their local quotas by reusing veteran troops. William Bentley and his comrades in the 104th Ohio thought little of this proposal. Bentley reported that

⁴¹ Henry Vail's regiment, the 131st Ohio, was assigned to guarding a fort in Washington for drafted men set to join the army, and used the term "bounty jumpers" to describe those who did escape in *A Hundred Days to Richmond*, 58. The relatively nonchalant way Vail describes the process suggests that while escapes happened on occasion, they were not particularly common. Rice, *Yankee Tigers*, 22 accused several Canadians of bounty jumping, using their citizenship as a way to avoid punishment for desertion after pocketing their money.

⁴² "F. A. Wildman to Sam," August 26, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

⁴³ "F. A. Wildman to Son," October 1, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS hints at this when Wildman comments to his son that "The price of substitutes is running very high."

⁴⁴ Hartzell, *Ohio Volunteer*, 167.

the men "want to see every man of the 350,000 brought out first, and then if necessary, we will go in for another term."⁴⁵ Lewis Dunn, commenting on the draft to his sister, guessed that "a good many has payed [*sic.*] out."⁴⁶ Bentley hoped that those in his neighborhood that received the call "will stick to it and not buy off it," as he expected a local "butternut" named Morris to do.⁴⁷ "I expect the price of substitution will run up pretty high," he later suggested, clearly sensing an opportunity. "If I was at Home," he continued, "I might be induced to try it for a year for some of our friends who can afford."⁴⁸ Hartzell noticed many soldiers taking up that option: "Many of the old soldiers who served, and had been discharged...went as substitutes for big money."⁴⁹

Though soldier opinion on the draft was mixed in many regards, their greatest source of pleasure in conscription was the thought that Copperheads, the army's longtime nemesis from the home front, would now have to join ranks and could no longer practice their wicked ways. Benjamin Walker of the 86th Illinois plainly stated the opinion of many soldiers when he said, "I hope to god every man they draft...will be a copperhead."⁵⁰ "Some of the cowardly butternuts will have to come this time," cheered John Erastus Lane.⁵¹ "I want to see the conscript take effect," offered James Prosser, for "I want to see those men that are always crying for Peace come and help fight for it."⁵² Augustus Van Dyke wanted to see "some of the copperskins to be made to shoulder a musket."⁵³ "It is the only way to get out a certain class of men that are doing

⁴⁵ Entry of September 11, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased*, 113.

⁴⁶ "Lewis Dunn to Sister," June 18, 1864, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

⁴⁷ Entry of June 3, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails*, 97.

⁴⁸ Entry of September 16, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails*, 114.

⁴⁹ Hartzell, *Ohio Volunteer*, 193.

⁵⁰ "Benjamin F. Walker, Co. D, 86 Ill. Inf, to Kind Uncle (Jarvis and Lizzy)," September 19, 1864, W. H. Gilligan Letters, ALPLM.

⁵¹ "Erastus to Ellen," March 14, 1864, Crist Collection, Lilly.

⁵² "James Prosser to Sister," June 11, 1863, Neely Collection, Lilly.

⁵³ "Gus to Brother," November 14, 1863, Augustus M. Van Dyke Papers, IHS.

no good at home," offered the 7th Ohio Cavalry's William McKnight.⁵⁴ "Traitor element in the north quaking in their boots over Abraham calling," wrote William Henry Pittenger. "Yes," he continued, "Abraham has called and they'll have to go, for he says 500,000 against the 10th of March, 1864." Lest his opinion still not clear, Pittenger added, "Good, good, more than good."⁵⁵

A member of the 18th Indiana Light Artillery echoed Pittenger's optimism, saying, "I am in hopes that some of the southern sympathisers [*sic.*] will be compelled to go and fight those that they have been offering their wishes for."⁵⁶ Even after Lincoln's re-election, the prospect of rubbing salt into the proverbial political wound generated excitement in the army. "He will soon make another draft [of] the Copperheads," cheered Alonzo Wilson, and "make the poultrons [*sic.*] help to whip out their dear brothers in the south"⁵⁷ "I hope some of our copperhead friends will have to come up to the mark this time," wrote William Bentley. Furthermore, he even offered to help. "I would like to be at home" for the draft, as "I think I could have some fun over it."⁵⁸ So noteworthy was the prospect of conscripting Copperheads that many soldiers took to naming specific targets, men they could not wait to see in uniform. "I wish they would draft Jess," offered Lewis Dunn, "as he is a good Rebel, and make him fight for the Government as he claims protection under it."⁵⁹ Alexander Ewing was eager to offer his services to the conscription effort: "I would like to be the one to make the selection, some of them fine bucks would have to fall."⁶⁰ Even folks at home got into the act of naming draftees. "I wouldn't care if they would [draft] a few of them around here. I think it would learn them a lesson," wrote Alley Ladley to her brother Oscar. In a later letter, she hoped "when the draft comes off they will draft every one

⁵⁴ "William McKnight to beloved Samaria," June 28, 1863, McKnight, *Do They Miss Me at Home?*, 104.

⁵⁵ Entry of February 7, 1864, "William Henry Pittenger Diary," OHS.

⁵⁶ Rowell, *Yankee Artillerymen*, 11-12.

⁵⁷ "Alonzo Wilson to Miss E A Tuttle," November 18, 1864, Tuttle Collection, Lilly.

⁵⁸ Entry of August 13, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails*, 110.

⁵⁹ "Lewis Dunn to Father," June 2, 1864, Dunn Family Papers, FHS.

⁶⁰ "Alex. K. Ewing to Parents," March 22, 1863, Alexander K. Ewing Papers, ALPLM.

of them." His other sister, Mary, wrote of locals inviting the infamous Vallandigham to speak nearby, and added, "I hope the draft will take off all these copperheads."⁶¹

In spite of their desire to see Copperheads face the guns, many soldiers saw the draft as a danger to friends and family at home. When news came to the army of friends and family receiving draft notices, soldiers were more than prepared to encourage their avoidance of service. Clearly worried about the prospect, James Handley wrote to his father to "tell Bill not to go in the army unless he is drafted."⁶² "I am sorry to hear that my brother is anxious to enlist," complained William Bentley, "and I hope he will take a brother's advice and stay at home. One of us is enough at once."⁶³ "I do not want you to go," wrote Augustus Van Dyke to his brother, "as I think you would not be able to undergo the hardships." If the worst should come, Van Dyke offered a solution: "represent your case to the medical inspector and I think you will be exempted."⁶⁴ Captain Jonathan Harrington, in a similar vein, wrote to his brother that he was "pleased to learn that your name was Spared as yet" from drafting.⁶⁵ If he were drafted, Harrington wrote in a later letter, "you can get clear by Showing your Leg where the vane is busted." Harrington worried not only for his brother's safety, but also because "there is no one there only you to See to things and take care of Mother and Charly and Mary."⁶⁶

For some soldiers, this worrying forced them to look into ways for family members to avoid being drafted. Some men saw enlistment as preferable to drafting, offering a degree of protection to younger siblings and family members. "Do not think about such a thing," wrote

⁶¹ "Alley to Brother," March 8, 1863, "Alley L. to Brother," March 18, 1863, and "Mary to My Dear Brother," March 27, 1863, in Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 97, 100-101, and 105, respectively.

⁶² "James Handley to Father," July 10, 1863, Handley Collection, Lilly.

⁶³ Entry of June 3, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails*, 97.

⁶⁴ "Gus to Brother," August 23, 1862, Augustus M. Van Dyke Papers, IHS. Van Dyke is hinting at some physical deformity in his brother that would undoubtedly have made him unfit for military service. There was no uniform standard for the health of recruits, and what few standards existed became lower as the war progressed. Presumably this deformity of Van Dyke's brother would have been quite serious to merit exemption.

⁶⁵ "J. F. H. to Brother," November 7, 1864, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

⁶⁶ "J. F. H. to Brother," December, 1863, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

William Ross to his brother about the prospect of volunteering. "If you will go," he offered, "come here where I can be with you and where I [k]now you will have good Officers."⁶⁷ Ross implored his father to "raise three hundred [dollars] for Levi," rather than let him go fight.⁶⁸ "I don't think that they will Conscript the Boys in Kentucky," Benjamin Jones told his brother, "if they do I don't Want you to stay to see it." Instead, Jones extended an offer to his brother to join his regiment, the 21st Kentucky Infantry. "[Y]ou Must not think that I am trying to get you into the army," he added, "for I had rather suffer death almost than to See one of my brothers come into the army"⁶⁹ Frank Ingersoll, having resigned from service in 1862, refused to accept the possibility of going back. "I am going in the Navy," he wrote to his sister, "before I am drafted into the Militia."⁷⁰ Ingersoll repeated his threat several days later writing "I will go as a 'sailor before the mast'...before I will be conscripted and 'foot-load' through the mud."⁷¹ A few men even made sure their family would not be subject to service, if drafted. Stephen Fleharty advised a similar course of action, telling his brother John to pay the commutation or "do anything else that was honorable" to stay at home.⁷²

The new recruits, though, represented a mixed bag for soldiers. Ohioan Andrew Powell certainly seemed impressed when he commented, "Our [company] is nearly full with what are here and there is still more coming." He complained about the newest recruits, referring to some of them as "fitter for an Insane Asylum than the ranks of soldiery." However, he also expressed concern that many of the recruits, whom he referred to as "big bounty pups" for their taking enlistment bounties to enlist, "wont amount to much." Still, he believed it to be better than

⁶⁷ "W. H. Ross to Brother Levi," September 30, 1862, William H. Ross Papers, CHM.

⁶⁸ "W. H. Ross to Father," December 11, 1863, William H. Ross Papers, CHM; "Wm H Ross to Father," February 2, 1863, William H. Ross Papers, CHM also expresses his concern over the potential drafting of William's brother.

⁶⁹ "Benjamin Smith Jones to Wm. C. Jones," May 15, 1863, Civil War Letters, FHS. A prior listed Jones letter, expresses his contempt for blacks and Lincoln's support thereof.

⁷⁰ "Frank to Sister," February 17, 1863, Ingersoll Collection, Lilly.

⁷¹ "Frank to Sister," February 26, 1863, Ingersoll Collection, Lilly.

⁷² Fleharty, *Jottings from Dixie*, 8.

nothing and offered to his brother, "I am well satisfied with things as they are."⁷³ One soldier in the 19th Indiana recorded similar distaste with the preparation drafted soldiers needed, saying, "We fear to see the drafted or conscript men come here, for we know that we will have to drill."⁷⁴ Other men saw little use in adding Confederate sympathizers to their ranks. "What is the use," wondered John Dinsmore, "to draft Copperheads to fight Copperheads."⁷⁵ More simply put, Alvin Voris noted, "Drafted men get many dry stands in the army. Volunteers don't like them."⁷⁶ Even soldiers who enjoyed the idea of drafting Copperheads, like William Bentley, were "not particularly desirous of having them in the same Co."⁷⁷

More than the conscription of friends and family, soldiers feared the possibility of violent resistance to the draft. These concerns dovetailed easily into existent fears about Copperheads preparing to resist violently any aspect of the Lincoln administration's war effort. "If there is any fighting to be done in the north," suggested Harrison Canaday to a cousin in Indiana, "it will likely come off when the draft is made."⁷⁸ Many of these warnings came from those back at home. Robert Rice's sister in Sandusky County, Ohio offered her belief that a draft "will be resisted if they attempt it."⁷⁹ Jonathan Harrington's father Ralph, when describing the mood of locals on the draft, noted that "one class of the people don't like it like it very well that is the Velandingham [*sic.*] party." He added that other locals "thought that they calculate to resist it."⁸⁰

⁷³ "A. Powell to Brother Israel," March 9, 1864, Andrew Powell Letters, RBH.

⁷⁴ Gaff, *On Many a Bloody Field*, 231.

⁷⁵ "J. C. Dinsmore to Jane," June 8, 1863, John C. Dinsmore Papers, ALPLM.

⁷⁶ Voris, *A Citizen Soldier's Civil War*, 108. "Dry stands" is likely a play on non-drinkers, those that drunk being referred to as "wet" or other similar terms. A dry stand would then be left alone or ignored, such as non-drinkers would alcohol. Most references to "dry" refer to non-drinking or prohibition.

⁷⁷ Entry of October 8, 1863, *Burning Rails*, 72; Bruce Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1953), reprinted by Pocket Books, Inc., 1964, 26-35 further discusses the soldiers' discontent with drafted men.

⁷⁸ "Harrison Canaday to Cousin," June, 1863, Stephen Emert Letters, IHS.

⁷⁹ "Sis to Robbie," March 6, 1863, Dr. & Mrs. Robert H. Rice Correspondence, RBH.

⁸⁰ "Ralph Harrington to Son," March 13, 1863, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

Leafie Niles noted for her brother William, "There seems to be an impression that the copperheads are armed and prepared to resist the draft."⁸¹

Soldiers heard plenty of additional rumors from the field and made sure to pass those prospects along to those at home as well. "I hear it rumored," wrote John Lane, "that some of the northern traitors intend to try to resist the draft."⁸² Humphrey Hood reported to his wife news from a friend at home about a Bob Davis, "making speeches against the draft, advising a resistance." Davis had broken his leg recently, and was exempt from service. Rather than sympathy, Hood wrote, "It is to be hoped he may break the other – or his neck in this traitorous adventure."⁸³ Frederick Pimper noted, "I also see in the papers a warning from Gov. Brough for those that would try and resist the draft," suggesting that even the state governments saw the potential for violence.⁸⁴ "It is much talked in camp," noted John Hilliard, "that there is much excitement, and much feeling shown against the war, and if the President should order a draft it would be resisted." Hilliard seemed skeptical of the prospects (and again notably conflated antiwar sentiment with Democrats specifically) when he followed by asking, "is it so or is the cry of the democrats for political purposes?"⁸⁵

Sometimes rumors of news translated into greater action. "I saw in the Bulletin to day an account of a meeting held in Montgomery County to denounce the Conscript Law," wrote Humphrey Hood. "It was a meeting of Democrats." Hood did also note, "The account came from the Chicago Times," a Democratic paper he described as "bad authority."⁸⁶ Most news from home focused on the times when rumored resistance did not take place. "Many of those who advised resistance," wrote John Hallem to a friend, "are now very anxious that the delinquents

⁸¹ "Sister Leafie Niles to My Dear Brother," August 6, 1864, Niles Collection, Lilly.

⁸² "John E Lane to Ellen," April 1, 1863, Crist Collection, Lilly.

⁸³ "H. H. Hood to My Dear Wife," June 13, 1863, Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM.

⁸⁴ "Fred to My dear Friend," September 1, 1864, Pimper Collection, Lilly.

⁸⁵ "John T. Hilliard to Friend," January 7, 1863, Civil War Letters, FHS.

⁸⁶ "H. H. Hood to My Dear Wife," February 26, 1863, Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM.

should be found." Hallem wrapped up with the thought that "all parties appear to have come to the conclusion that the Government is strong enough and has the nerve to enforce its measures."⁸⁷ William Bentley did report news from home that some men "are trying to organize a sort of home guard to resist draft. They must be the biggest kind of fools." Further emphasizing his disdain, Bentley hoped his regiment would be sent "into Ohio to enforce the draft if there is one made."⁸⁸

The largest, and most famous, riots over the draft took place in New York City over July 13 to 16, 1863. Simmering discontent over the Union war effort in the heavily Democratic city spilled over into the largest rioting in the nation's history. Poor workers, especially from Manhattan's southern districts, rebelled against the unfair nature of the Union draft, attacking both blacks and wealthy New Yorkers that could pay the commutation fees. The mob even lynched several black civilians. All told, the rioting claimed at least 105 lives, though some contemporary estimates put that figure over one thousand.⁸⁹ The New York Riots required a number of Union troops to put down, and many needed to stay to maintain order. James Hartley of the 122nd Ohio made mention of several in his regiment being sent to New York in July 1863. David Thackery's history of the 66th Ohio notes the regiment headed to New York in August, presumably to maintain order as Union officials carried out the draft.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ "J. L. Hallem to Old Chum," January 1, 1864, John L. Hallem Letter, ALPLM.

⁸⁸ Entry of March 13, 1863, Bentley, *Burning Rails*, 40.

⁸⁹ "The Bloody Week" in James Marten, *Civil War America: Voices from the Home Front* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 147-158 reviews a pamphlet published in the immediate aftermath of the riots. Political in nature, it blamed Democrats for the rioting, and though exaggerated for effect, Marten concludes that the pamphlet accurately reflected a mood of tense distrust among New Yorkers in the weeks following. Paludan, *A People's Contest*, 189-195 focuses on the class and racial animosity of the rioters, and claims their main goal was to chase blacks out of the city. Edward K. Spann, *Gotham at War: New York City, 1860-1865* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 93-105 places the rioting in the context of New York as a violent city, and compares this riot to the 1849 Astor Place Riot and the 1857 Dead-Rabbit Riot, both similar in their scope, and the relative calm that prevailed afterward. Death toll cited in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 611.

⁹⁰ Hartley, *Civil War Letters*, 56; Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 157. Both of these letters came in August, well after the riots, as Union officials used the army to maintain order in the city during the draft itself. Hartley's comment is the most curious, as it seems unlikely that officials would send only part of a regiment in that fashion. Garber Davidson, the collection's editor, only excerpts the letters, and seems to accept Hartley's claim that

Though only a few soldiers journeyed to New York personally, word of the violent clashes reached Ohio Valley troops. "I suppose you have heard of the awful riot in New York City," wrote Mary to Oscar Ladley. Listing several of the mob's crimes, she described it to her soldier brother as "the awfulest thing I ever heard tell of."⁹¹ William Bentley noted the news of "a terrible riot in NY but I expect it is quelled by this time." Bentley criticized the suppression effort, saying Union officials "fooled with [the rioters] too long," and derided these attempts as "ridiculous and rather encouraged the mob."⁹² John Harding celebrated the stern response of Union troops, saying "Some of them, I reckon, that denounced Old Abe's Administration and said that our government was rotten [find] that it is still worth something."⁹³ Others, like James Drish, knew who was to blame for the violence. "I would like to be there with my Reg to See how many of those Copper heads I could Kill."⁹⁴ Rioting in New York fit well into the established soldier narrative of Copperheads causing violent trouble on the home front.

Riots did not only occur in far off places such as New York. Violent resistance to the draft took place in Ohio Valley states, as draft measures brought Copperhead resistance to the public. Much like in New York, though, the draft merely acted as a catalyst for Copperheads to protest various aspects of the war or society with which they disagreed. Violent resistance like New York's was also quite rare. Joan Cashin's categorization of resistance included soldiers who deserted after receiving their draft notices, or of sympathetic civilians who hid deserters from

only part of the regiment went to New York. Moses Moorhead Granger, *The Official War Record of the 122nd Regiment...* (Zanesville, OH: George Lilenthal, Printer, 1912), 35, which consists almost exclusively of pages copied from the *Official Record*, notes that the 122nd was sent to New York under a temporarily organized brigade without any suggestion that they divided. At the time, Hartley had recently returned to the regiment at Martinsburg, Virginia, and it was there he made note of their absence.

⁹¹ "Mary to Brother," July 19, 1863, Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 150.

⁹² Entry of July 18, 1863, Bentley, *Burning Rails*, 60.

⁹³ "John L. Harding to Sister Almiry," September 4, 1863, J. L. Harding Collection, Lilly.

⁹⁴ "to My Dear Wife," July 18, 1863, James F. Drish Letters, ALPLM.

Army officials.⁹⁵ Emma Thornbrough's history of Indiana during the Civil War mentions some violence in Sullivan and Greene counties in the southern part of the state, particularly over the arrest of deserters.⁹⁶ March 1864 also saw a riot between soldiers and Copperheads in Charleston, Illinois, though Charles Coleman ascribes the rioting to long-simmering tensions between soldiers and Copperheads, and not over the draft. The timing, he suggests, was merely coincidental.⁹⁷ Other violence, such as that in Careysville, Ohio, was according to historian David Thackery, probably provoked by Republicans, and not really related to the draft at all. Moreover, according to Thackery, such violence "faded quickly enough."⁹⁸

Soldier reaction to local resistance was surprisingly limited. Henry Kaufman relayed the prospect of his 110th Ohio regiment heading home to enforce the draft. "I do hope that Ohio has not come to that yet," he wrote, continuing, "I think it is just a report. At least I hope so."⁹⁹ "We had heard of the draft riots at home," reported John Hartzell of the 105th Ohio, "and all looked forward to taking a hand in quelling them, in much the spirit of the school boy going to his first circus."¹⁰⁰ This violence, even more so than that in New York, suggested quite strongly the potential danger of Copperhead and other forms of resistance on the home front. Jack Overmyer's history of the 87th Indiana noted an angry mob that confronted John Mow in Bloomingsburg as he came to register draft-eligible men, even going so far as to steal his

⁹⁵ Paludan, *A People's Contest*, 192-193 mentions draft resistance across the North, but places it in the context of pre-existing labor disputes, with those themes (rather than the draft itself) being behind the riots and dissention. Joan E. Cashin, "Deserters, Civilians, and Draft Resistance in the North," in Cashin, ed., *The War was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*, 262-285. Though Cashin mentions violent resistance, listing small riots or disturbances in at least 14 northern towns and counties, mostly in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, on page 273, she focuses more extensively on these non-violent forms of resistance. Union soldiers did not have much to add on this subject, certainly not relative to news of violence from home; Kenneth H. Wheeler, "Local Autonomy and Civil War Draft Resistance: Holmes County, Ohio" *Civil War History*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (June, 1999): 147-159 describes most resistance as localized, dealing with local concerns rather than general dissatisfaction over the course of the nation.

⁹⁶ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 200-202; Morton's proclamation on resistance published in *Indiana's War*, 140-143.

⁹⁷ Coleman, *Abraham Lincoln and Coles County, Illinois*, 226-227.

⁹⁸ Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 161.

⁹⁹ "Henry Kauffman to Brother and Sister," July 24, 1864, Kauffman, *Harmony Boys*, 80.

¹⁰⁰ Hartzell, *Ohio Volunteer*, 162.

registration books. Revealing the tenuous nature of most resistance, Governor Morton dispatched a company from the 71st Indiana to quell the rioting, only to have the soldiers encounter a friendly town willing to hold a banquet and ball for them.¹⁰¹ Perhaps the lack of action, as shown to the 71st Indiana, made soldiers less likely to believe such stories. Rumored resistance fizzled into nothing, making those threats less likely to provoke much anger from the men.

The draft represented a dramatic change in the way the government raised men for military conflict, though many soldiers did not regard it in that manner. Excitement over adding men to their ranks and the possibility of bringing home-front resisters to the battle lines generated a good amount of positive feeling from fighting men, especially important as the war dragged on. Still, these feelings gave way to hesitation surrounding the desirability of Copperhead soldiers (especially the difficulty involved in trusting the untrustworthy), some dissatisfaction with the war's progress given the necessity of adding more men, and the distinct possibility that the government's wide net would catch their own friends and relatives. Many Democrats saw a sinister irony in forcing men to fight, especially when the emancipation of slavery became an additional war aim.¹⁰² In spite of these misgivings, the soldiers' view that drafting would give the Copperheads what they deserved made opposing the draft a tricky proposition for Democrats.

Emancipation

Of the many issues that divided the country prior to and during the war, slavery was chief among them. Even amongst the soldiers, slavery was a critical issue for the war's duration. Opinions about slavery and blacks as a race were mixed. There was some support for black

¹⁰¹ Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 22.

¹⁰² Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 154.

freedom, or at the very least according them some form of dignity. In some cases, this support translated into a respect borne of personal interaction. While not completely out of question in civil society, the army's movement through areas densely populated with slaves undoubtedly facilitated such interactions. Mixed with this, though, was the ever-present racism of the age. Added to the background of these men, especially the Kentuckians for whom slavery was a part of the state's law, virulent anti-slave and anti-black sentiment still held significant weight amongst many soldiers.¹⁰³

For many soldiers, marching into the South represented their first encounters with actual slaves. Wilbur Jones' history of the 27th Indiana notes the regiment's curiosity about meeting blacks for the first time, as few lived north of the Ohio River.¹⁰⁴ "I never before knew what a slave was," wrote William Shepherd of the 1st Illinois Light Artillery. Observing the construction of a rail fence by the slaves on a plantation, he observed "Negro Men, Women, Boys & Girls dressed in rags indescribable," and even noticed, "girls about 10 years old carrying rails that I would not like to lift." He concluded, "I am quite unaccustomed to such scenes."¹⁰⁵ Even as a soldier who had met blacks in the North, Charles Miller wrote that "the regular plantation darky was a very different specimen from the northern free negro."¹⁰⁶ A few soldiers, such as John Hartzell, observed the relationship between slaves and their masters fleeing the advancing army's path:

¹⁰³ Much of this abolition sentiment, while prevalent before and especially during the war, falls out of discussion during the reconciliation periods in the latter half of the 19th century. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001) is the most comprehensive overview of this phenomenon. Robert Hunt, *The Good Men Who Won the War: Army of the Cumberland Veterans and Emancipation Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), which examines the postwar accounts of soldiers from that army, notes that many of their accounts focused on emancipation as a singular event, and part of the righteousness of their cause. The act of freeing slaves becomes part of the large victory for the nation, subsuming emancipation to a broad conception of defeating the enemy.

¹⁰⁴ Wilbur D. Jones, Jr., *Giants in the Cornfield: The 27th Indiana Infantry* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing, 1997), 32.

¹⁰⁵ "Willie to Father," June 26, 1861, Shepherd, *To Rescue My Native Land*, 31.

¹⁰⁶ Miller, *Struggle for the Life of the Nation*, 66.

We passed many families, old husband and wife with daughters and small children and trusty old colored servants. They were often in what had once been fine family carriages. The ladies were often almost helpless – from training – but refined in style and manner and dressed in rich clothing. The old servants were uniformly kind and polite to their former owners, and there seemed to be a close bond of sympathy and good feeling between what had been master and slave. The people were refugees and were fleeing their homes till the storm should pass.¹⁰⁷

Henry Scott, serving in the 100th Indiana, offered his first observations of slaves, calling them "more sprightly and smart than I had supposed." He wrote of meeting a small slave boy who wandered into their camp: "not half clothed he shivered round the fire in the storm (for it was the worst day which we have seen yet) but it was but a very short time before a nice coat and cap out of a secesh store were brought in and given to him." He also noted that slaves were quite happy to "tell us any thing which they think will be of service," for "they know their friends."¹⁰⁸

Like those Scott observed, many slaves expressed themselves to Union soldiers, several being quite willing to expose masters whose loyalty had been quite flexible depending on which army was in the region. "The Negroes tells me their Masters was all Secesh until the union troops came there," wrote Solomon Hamrick, but, "Now they are all union men...The Negroes Say their Masters are awful good to them Since the Soldiers come here & they would be glad if we staid [*sic.*] here."¹⁰⁹ Slaves shouted, "God bress de [*sic.*] union!" at Stephen Fleharty and his 102nd Illinois. Describing the slaves excited dancing, Fleharty noted, "The darkies furnish an inexhaustible fund of amusement."¹¹⁰ Later in the war, when news of the Emancipation Proclamation came south, Fleharty observed their considerable delight. "The only class of people that seem to be really happy, in the midst of so much misery, is the negro population." One slave, he wrote, "thought the blue coats would be willing to give them 'Christmas three or four times a year,' whereas the grey coats (butternuts) only give them one." Still, Fleharty noted slaves'

¹⁰⁷ Hartzell, *Ohio Volunteer*, 183.

¹⁰⁸ "Henry S. to Friend," November 2, 1862, Wilder Collection, Lilly.

¹⁰⁹ "S. S. Hamrick to Sister Lou," October 12, 1861, Solomon Simpson Hamrick Civil War Letters, IHS.

¹¹⁰ "S. F. F. to Rock Island *Argus*," October 18, 1863, Published October 11, 1862, *Jottings from Dixie*, 53.

concerns over the prospects of maintaining emancipation. "They express grave doubts as to the success of the president's policy," he wrote, "but seem to be very generally in favor of setting up for themselves."¹¹¹

Some soldiers took advantage of their new travelling companions, beginning to contract out for servants while encamped. "I have about twenty," bragged James Hill, and noted, "I have only to say to one go and he goes, and the another come, and he comes."¹¹² Historian Jack Overmyer's history of the 87th Indiana refers to the army's new hangers-on as "the solution to the laundering problem" and relates the story of private having a dress turned into two shirts for 20 cents.¹¹³ Augustus Van Dyke wrote of his "contraband" that, "I intend to bring home with me, if I can persuade him to come." Trying to convince his father of the plan, Van Dyke offered, "He would be worth a thousand dollars a year on a farm, and if the cook should get sick could supply her place to the satisfaction of everybody."¹¹⁴ William Shepherd's 12-year old helper even offered to go on his own, saying "he wants to go to Kenosha," flattered his new master by asking, "is dey all as handsome as you up dar [*sic.*]?" Shepherd was certainly taken by his young companion, and wrote, "I wish he *was* at home-He would make the best "*hired girl*" you ever had."¹¹⁵ Valentine Randolph wryly noted that even a few that cursed abolitionists and the Emancipation Proclamation, "were...glad to get negroes to carry their knapsacks."¹¹⁶ Charles Miller wrote, "The negroes seemed to take a secret delight in administering to the wants of the Union soldiers." Perhaps more notably, Miller noted that these slaves did so "notwithstanding

¹¹¹ "S. F. F. to Rock Island *Argus*," January 31, 1863, Published December 31, 1862, *Jottings from Dixie*, 90-91.

¹¹² "James Hill to My dear friend Lizzie," October 31, 1861, Hill Collection, Lilly.

¹¹³ Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 64-65.

¹¹⁴ "Gus to Father," November 23, 1862, Augustus M. Van Dyke Papers, IHS.

¹¹⁵ "Willie to Father and Mother," September 1, 1862, Shepherd, *To Rescue My Native Land*, 220.

¹¹⁶ January 6, 1863, Valentine C. Randolph, *A Civil War Soldier's Diary: Valentine C. Randolph, 39th Illinois Regiment*, edited by David D. Roe, with commentary and annotations by Stephen R. Wise (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 131.

that they were taught by their masters that the Yankees had horns and were dreadful monsters." Ultimately, he concluded, the slaves "were smart enough to know their real friends."¹¹⁷

Though not steeped in abolitionist fervor to the same degree as their compatriots from more eastern states, many soldiers from this region did march to free the slaves. When a letter from home suggested that these soldiers were abolitionists, attempting to use the word as a smear, Milton Crist responded proudly: "We are proud of the name, we hail it with honor!" Tying emancipation and reunion together, Crist added, "I would a thousand times sooner be an abolitionist than to be a rebel to my country."¹¹⁸ David Stathem expressed a similar sentiment, saying, "God speed the day when slavery shall cease forever," though he was willing, he wrote, to take the abolitionist cause up to the destruction of the Union itself.¹¹⁹ German immigrants, particularly more recent arrivals with ties to the radicalism of the 1848 revolutions, held strong abolitionist viewpoints. Wilhelm Stängel, heavily steeped in a broad free labor ideology that drove elements of both the Republican Party and the German revolutionaries, criticized parts of Virginia as "ruin, poverty, filth, the result of slavery, and the lack of immigration, [and] industrious and free workers."¹²⁰ Correspondent Z of the *Cincinnati Volksfreund* echoed this sentiment, suggesting Southerners would be much better off "to be rid of this trouble with these 'lazy thieving black people,' and their work could be provided by free labor, which they could retain when useful, and send away when not useful."¹²¹

Others saw slavery as a pernicious influence, harmful to both the slaves and their masters.

¹¹⁷ Miller, *Struggle for the Life of the Nation*, 47.

¹¹⁸ "Milton to Sister Ellen," September 7, 1863, Crist Collection, Lilly.

¹¹⁹ "D. T. Stathem to Sister," April 21, 1864, David T. Stathem Papers, OHS.

¹²⁰ Bertsch and Stängel, *A German Hurrah!*, 18. Joseph R. Reinhart, the collection's editor, does point out that the region in which Stängel marched actually had very few slaves, and the resultant poverty was probably not tied to the presence of forced labor. Reinhart reads this as Stängel's commitment to abolitionism, and willingness to see slavery anywhere he thought necessary to prove a point.

¹²¹ Letter 102 – Z to *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, July 9, 1862, published July 18, 1862, , *A German Hurrah!*, 267.

Alvin Voris, describing the efforts of Fanny Gage and her son to educate newly freed slaves, revolted at the condition of these "degraded people." He further wrote, "the abuses of the 'blessed institution' has almost obliterated the last vestiges of humanity in them," and called for God's "terrible wrath," to come down upon "the authors of the abominable crime."¹²² Arnold Needham, a devout soldier serving in the 13th Illinois, wrote home describing his efforts to educate slaves left helpless by the system:

When I left Chicago last summer, Bro. H. L. Hammon gave me some "Facts for Contrabands". I attempted to distribute them; but found none who would read. The duty to teach them, was suggested to my mind, but that opportunity was not afforded. Since being settled in this camp, a number of the negroe cooks - assisted and encouraged by the soldiers - have procured primers, and applied themselves to the acquirements of reading and spelling. They have come to me from time to time for aid; and having put up a small long-house, I gather about 15 or 20 around me each afternoon, to teach their dormant ideas how to shoot. This you see almost imperceptibly, has grown out of a necessity, the establishment of a free school system in this benighted State. The school scenes is truly pleasing. Here in one corner is a swarthy son of Africa's sunny clime, crouched down over a print intensely applying himself to the task of acquiring a knowledge of a - b, ab; while his huge hands and extended finger, hides nearly every other letter on the page but the one over which he agonizes, as his head were bomb-proof against its inception. In another corner, sits one, whose ebony face is gemmed with pearly drops of perspiration, in an effort to solve the perplexing mystery, why k,-a,-t wont spell cat, as well as c,-a,-t. Another astonished that his memory can retain a whole verse of poetry, and yet not remember each individual letter that composed a word, proceeds to spelling, loud enough to make the whole house resound with the volume of his sonorous tone.

Needham eventually went from reading simple words to explaining Scripture, slaves' knowledge of which he noted was woefully inadequate, a lack he criticized as "a fearful condemnation upon those who have boasted that slavery christianizes [*sic.*], and elevates the African race."¹²³

Commenting on the negative influence of slavery on whites in the South, Rudolph Williams suggested the army should "take the whites off to some distant wilderness...for I believe if the Negroes had half a chance they would make more of the country than ever will be while these ignorant brutes have possession of it."¹²⁴ Slavery had degraded whites as well as blacks,

¹²² Voris, *A Citizen Soldier's Civil War*, 111.

¹²³ "Arnold T. Needham to Sir & Bro.," March 8, 1864, Arnold T. Needham Letter, CHM.

¹²⁴ "R. Williams to Sister Nellie," December 29, 1862, R. Williams Collection, Lilly.

Williams reasoned, and the nation could only realize its full potential by removing the institution. "The more I see of slavery the more I become disgusted with it. Its tendencies are to debase both races. How different are our Ind. homes when things are kept in order by free labor and by those who feel interested in making home pleasant and happy to those who the work is all done by careless negligent and ignorant slaves."¹²⁵

Isaac Dale also favored fighting on behalf of the slaves. His reasons were far from representing any kind of desire for racial equality. Instead, his focus was on the practical nature of slave labor in the progress of the war. Responding to a letter from a friend, Dale refuted the argument of many Copperheads that the war was no more than a cover for freeing blacks. "They write and tell me that we are fighting for nothing else, only to free the niggers and they say let him alone where he is. I say not, for we find him making breast works and in fact they are doing as much for the rebs and are fighting for them"¹²⁶ Dale zeroed in on one of the South's hidden advantages: that of a forced labor supply to do the logistical work of the army, freeing more men to fight when needed. "Let every man be branded as a traitor, who is not in favor of using any and every measure necessary to the successful and speedy crushing out of this Rebellion," added William Caldwell. "Why is it that they outnumber us? Why is it that the sickness has not thinned their ranks as it has ours?" he asked before answering: "because the Nigger whose name we dare scarcely mention in connection with this war...is now and has been ever since the war commenced employed to do the drudgery and hard work of the Army of the South."¹²⁷

While many Union soldiers began the war opposed to, or at the very least ambivalent toward, emancipation, the conflict's progress had a profound effect on their opinions towards the South's "peculiar institution." Chandra Manning's recent *What This Cruel War Was Over*

¹²⁵ "James Hill to My dear friend Lizzie," October 31, 1861, Hill Collection, Lilly.

¹²⁶ "Isaac Dale to Friend," June 19, 1863, Stephen Emert Letters, IHS.

¹²⁷ "William Caldwell to Father," July 13, 1862, Caldwell Family Papers, RBH.

describes this transition and claims the war caused Union soldiers to move toward abolitionism, even if only for the previously described purpose of depriving the Confederates of a logistical advantage.¹²⁸ Though her account attempts to distill the experiences of the entire Union army into broad trends, these trends are visible, if less potent, at this regional level. "There has been a wonderful change in the popular sentiments of the soldiers in the last year in regard to the slavery question," wrote Captain Peter Troutman of the 87th Indiana. "Soldiers who could not bear the sight of a darky [*sic.*] a year ago," he continued, "are ready to use him in any way to put down the rebellion."¹²⁹ "When I came into the service myself and many others did not believe in interfering with slavery," wrote Amos Hofstetter, "but we have changed our opinions." Putting his finger on one of the key changes in the war, he continued, "We like the Negro no better now...but we hate his masters worse." Turning his attention to anti-abolitionist Copperheads and other perceived opponents of the war effort, Hofstetter threatened "We will soon end slavery if you only leave us alone."¹³⁰

Others noted the change in sentiment among their fellow soldiers. One of Lieutenant James Hill's correspondents wrote, "I am rejoiced to hear you are becoming an abolitionist," but was quick to add, "I would not...think it is because of the negro's degraded condition." Still, the correspondent believed such a change was inevitable, even suggesting that Hill's parents would have influenced his decision, writing that if James' father were still alive, "I don't think you would be anything but an abolitionist."¹³¹ Though William Pugh in the 7th Indiana criticized a Captain Miller by describing him as one of "these Weather Cocks we often see on houses," he

¹²⁸ Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007). Manning argues that the war had the opposite effect on Confederate soldiers, deepening their attachment to the slave system as a sign of their region's moral superiority.

¹²⁹ Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 128.

¹³⁰ "A. W. Hostetter to Mr & Mrs O. P. Miles," January 29, 1863, Amos W. Hostetter Letters, ALPLM.

¹³¹ "L to Lieut Hill," December 25, 1862, Hill Collection, Lilly.

noted that Miller "now...endorses Old Abe's Proclamation."¹³² Jasper Berry even predicted this change for the future, suggesting that his brother "and the greater part of your Regiment will be in favor of it before you are in the Service six months." By way of comparison, Berry offered: "I was of the same opinion of yourself when I first came in service but I have learned better," and further suggested that without any change, the South might very well secede again.¹³³

Soldiers were exposed to new experiences being in the army and these men now had a chance to observe blacks in a setting outside of slavery. One Kentucky soldier wrote of his camp's "negro cooks," and discovered that "I find that it is a very pleasant thing to eat after [a] negro cooks; still I used to think I would not like to eat after they had cooked the victuals."¹³⁴ Soldiers were especially able to observe their abilities as fighting men, which promoted a level of racial understanding the previously had not existed. E. P. Sturges said so directly, writing, "the contact which the war has brought the white and black race into has greatly diminished the prejudice against the latter which hitherto extended itself to every class of northerners." He further offered that "each day increases the willingness on the part of the soldiers to give the black man his due."¹³⁵ Robert Hanna spoke of having a servant, "& as he thought he could shoot a traitor as well as any one I furnished him with a gun, which he keeps in good order." Armed blacks, long the bogeyman of the South, became a reality, as well as the outcome Hanna foresaw. "If we have a fight," he wrote, "I intend him to have a chance to shoot some rascal of a traitor. I think a traitor is not half as good as a nigger." Hanna is even willing to go farther, saying that, "if I had my way of it, I should take every nigger in the country, arm them, drill them, & put them to

¹³² "Wm Pugh to Mr. Harding," February 16, 1863, J. L. Harding Collection, Lilly.

¹³³ "Jasper Berry to affectionate brother," October 24, 1862, John C. Dinsmore Papers, ALPLM.

¹³⁴ Rowell, *Yankee Artillerymen*, 16.

¹³⁵ "E. P. Sturges to Folks," August 24, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

shooting the traitorous rascals down here whenever they could be found.”¹³⁶ He went even farther than Isaac Dale in suggesting that black troops could not only be removed from helping the Confederacy, but instead could be put to better use fighting for the Union.

The experience Thomas Speed of Kentucky reflects more the changes in soldier opinion. “There is a division of Negro troops here, a great many of them from Ky. I met one yesterday from Hopkinsville who recognized me and seemed overjoyed to see me.” At the very least, Speed had met these men before, but now could look at them with a newfound respect. “You must not turn up your nose when I say they fight splendidly,” he wrote, trying to convince a friend who likely shared his prior prejudices. Speed even noted the change in his whole regiment. “I saw them tried yesterday,” he continued, “and our Regiment saw it, and they all acknowledge that ‘We have to give it up – old Nigger will fight.’”¹³⁷ They did indeed fight, to the number of well over 100,000 men.¹³⁸ There were a number of issues revolving around the use of black troops, among them pay and the response of the Confederate government. What appears not to have been an issue, at least for the fighting men of the North, was the courage and capability black troops brought to the field.

Many soldiers offered their support for black soldiers and their enlistment into the Union cause. “My notion is it just requires that to close the ‘Great Conflict,’” offered Anson Patterson. “Won’t Slavery, Rebellion and Chivalry all die together?”¹³⁹ Historian Daniel Sutherland, editor of D. Lieb Ambrose’s history of the 7th Illinois, notes that his subject does not discuss slavery much, though another man in the regiment offered that most believed “if a negro can stop an

¹³⁶ “Robert Barlow Hanna to Mrs. R. B. Hanna,” September 11, 1862, Robert Barlow Hanna Civil War Papers, IHS.

¹³⁷ “Thomas Speed to Will,” February 12, 1865, Speed Family Papers, FHS.

¹³⁸ Abraham Lincoln offered up the figure 130,000 men, cited in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 769, but Davis, *Lincoln’s Men*, 164 puts that number at over 179,000.

¹³⁹ “Anson Patterson to Auntie,” June 8, 1863, Anson Patterson Papers, ALPLM.

enemy's ball, why not let them go and do it."¹⁴⁰ Charles Miller, after observing newly freed slaves that followed the army, offered conscription as a way to deal with "the great numbers of colored people who were everywhere coming into our lines, following our armies and needing protection and sustenance." Miller heartily approved, comparing their use in the Union army to their removal from Confederate forces. "Every body of negroes taken from them," he wrote of the Confederates, "was a blow against their material strength and endurance."¹⁴¹ "I would be willing," added James Anthony, "to see a hundred thousand negroes armed and drilled and launched against the rebellion."¹⁴² "W," a correspondent for the *Rochester [IN] Chronicle* then serving in the 87th Indiana, supported the use of black troops by mocking their opposition. "'Oh, yes,' some of these Negro-loving men of the North will say, 'you must not arm them, if you do we will secede.'" "W" would not stand for this double standard, adding, "I would as soon have one of them killed on the battle-field as to have my brother or father."¹⁴³

Black troops also provided new opportunities for ambitious soldiers. Black soldiers served under white officers, and there were plenty of new commissions available.¹⁴⁴ Thomas Edwin Smith supported this distinction, saying that it created "a natural demarcation" in social standing, which made discipline much easier to maintain. "There will be none of that sort of

¹⁴⁰ Ambrose, *From Shiloh to Savannah*, xx-xxi.

¹⁴¹ Miller, *Struggle For the Life of the Nation*, 91.

¹⁴² "Bro Jim to Sallie," March 16, 1863, Price Family Papers, ALPLM.

¹⁴³ Overmyer, *A Stupendous Effort*, 51-52. Overmyer follows this anecdote by wryly referring to "W" as "what we today would call an equal opportunity employer." "W" refers to these opponents of black soldiers as "Negro-loving," as a way to mock their supposed desire to "protect" blacks from the difficulties of service, making this not a reference to racial egalitarians or other abolitionists, but an unusual formulation of Copperhead.

¹⁴⁴ Commanding black troops was considered dangerous work, given Jefferson Davis' proclamation that white officers of black troops were subject to execution upon capture. This forms an important plot element in the film *Glory*, an account of the 54th Massachusetts, perhaps the war's most famous black regiment. Edward A. Miller, Jr., *The Black Civil War Soldiers of Illinois: The Story of the Twenty-ninth U.S. Colored Infantry* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 39-40 notes that this policy was rarely carried out, even as black troops presented difficult challenges to the slave-holding Confederacy. Davis, *Lincoln's Men*, 160-161 says that Confederates did not execute black soldiers or their officers. Instead, black troops were kept as prisoners of war in worse conditions (though those for white soldiers were hardly pleasant), while white officers were not included in prisoner exchanges. He does mention the atrocity at Fort Pillow, but seems to absolve the Confederate government of official responsibility.

difficulty," referring to social differences in all-white regiments, "as all Negroes are accustomed to acknowledging white men as their superiors."¹⁴⁵ "Some of the [100th Illinois] are petitioning for Commands," observed Anson Patterson, and added, "I think there will be no trouble in getting commanders—a good many are anxious to wear Shoulder Straps. I will also say that some are worthy."¹⁴⁶ George Cram noted to his mother that "Two of our sergeants," receiving commissions into black regiments, but defended his decision not to, saying "I could have held one also just as well as not, but to please you, I did not go before the examining board."¹⁴⁷ Not everyone took advantage, though, as William Redman in the 12th Illinois Cavalry wrote to his sisters in the spring of 1863 that he would not accept any commission to a black regiment.¹⁴⁸

White officers, with firsthand exposure to abilities of black troops, became some of their earliest new champions. The 55th Ohio's Samuel Wildman recorded that a "Capt. Wood, of our regiment," referred to a company of black troops as "the best drilled company he ever saw." Furthermore, a "Major Haughton praises the non-commissioned officers...He says some of the Sergeants are equal in intelligence and discipline to those of his own regiment." Perhaps most tellingly, Wildman notes Haughton had "no 'abolition' or 'nigger loving' proclivities."¹⁴⁹ The *Western Star* newspaper from Lebanon, Ohio, using an account from Colonel Thomas Higginson of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, reminded its readers of the common use of black troops in American history. "Everybody knows," the editors wrote, "that they were used in the Revolution and in the last war with Great Britain—fought side by side with white troops, and won equal praises from Washington and Jackson." Further emphasizing this point, the *Star* added, "[n]o

¹⁴⁵ "T. E. Smith to Will," December 9, 1862, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS.

¹⁴⁶ "Anson Patterson to Auntie," June 8, 1863, Anson Patterson Papers, ALPLM. At this time, the Patterson and the 100th were assigned to the Convalescent Barracks in Nashville, undoubtedly fuelling their desire to gain command elsewhere.

¹⁴⁷ "George to Mother," November 3, 1863, Cram, *Soldiering with Sherman*, 60.

¹⁴⁸ Samuel M. Blackwell, Jr., *In the First Line of Battle: The 12th Illinois Cavalry in the Civil War* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 67.

¹⁴⁹ "Samuel A. Wildman to Father," May 8, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

officer who has commanded black troops has yet reported against them." As a reminder of the real enemy Union soldiers faced, the *Star* noted that the only objections came from "No one but the rebels and those who sympathize with them."¹⁵⁰ Historian William C. Davis, in *Lincoln's Men*, suggests this opposition from anti-war figures at home made soldiers more sympathetic to black soldiers.¹⁵¹ When it came to choosing a side over wartime measures, if Copperheads felt one way, soldiers were likely to take the opposite position.

Just as officers changed their minds about the efficacy and positive aspects of using black soldiers through experience, the enlisted men did the same. The 63rd Indiana's Andrew McGarrah was at first skeptical, calling the idea of black troops "useless." Still, he suggested his mind might be changed, saying that if such soldiers fought well, "We will view them in another light."¹⁵² Samuel Wildman reported that black troops, especially those from the North, were "intelligent, and generally as well disciplined as the white troops."¹⁵³ Stephen Flaherty observed a black picket in Vicksburg, and wrote that he and his regiment "have never seen a white soldier conduct himself more faithfully...Nor have we seen any white soldier surpass him in the military precision which characterized all his movements."¹⁵⁴ E. P. Sturges noted that "Each day increases the willingness on the part of the soldiers to give the black man his due, and credited "The contact which the war has brought the white and black race into."¹⁵⁵ John Beatty wrote of a change in opinion for Colonel Harrison Hobart of the 21st Wisconsin, saying that, "he was at one time opposed to arming the negroes; but now that he is satisfied they will fight, he is in favor of using them." So turned on the issue was Hobart that later in the entry Beatty reports that he

¹⁵⁰ "Negro Soldiers," *Western Star*, Lebanon, OH, February 19, 1863, CHS. The *Western Star* was a Republican paper, given the article immediately following is titled "Indiana Democracy vs. Soldiers," while several other articles on the page attack Vallandigham and Democrats in Indiana and Ohio.

¹⁵¹ Davis, *Lincoln's Men*, 106.

¹⁵² "A. J. McGarrah to Kind Parents," March 8, 1863, *Indiana's War*, 119.

¹⁵³ "Samuel A. Wildman to Father," May 8, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

¹⁵⁴ "S. F. F. to Rock Island *Union*," May 4, 1864, Published April 20, 1864, *Jottings from Dixie*, 193.

¹⁵⁵ "E. P. Sturges to Folks," August 24, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

converted Colonel William Hays of the 10th Kentucky to the cause.¹⁵⁶ Historian Samuel Blackwell's history of the 12th Illinois cavalry notes a similar change among papers at the home front. He cites the *Rock River Democrat* and *Mount Carroll Mirror* as both changing their tenor based on the bravery of black troops.¹⁵⁷ Alvin Voris, after noting the cheers Union troops gave to black troops, hopefully predicted, "The North will soon come to this, and in a few years will wonder why they ever were so unwise and unjust as to curse the colored man and damn his friends."¹⁵⁸

For some men, though, the prospect of fighting with blacks was nearly as distasteful as fighting for them. "I heard today they Was enrolling the negros in Barren Co.," wrote W. C. Jones home to his mother. "If they Want me to fight," he said, "they had Better keep the negros Back."¹⁵⁹ David Stathem referred to black recruitment as a "hideous blot," while Henry Coffinberry complained that "I didn't come into this service to drill moachs [*sic.*] and I don't want to."¹⁶⁰ Other soldiers tried to discourage black recruitment. William Ross even threatened, "The first Negro that ever I see carrying a musket I am going to Shoot him."¹⁶¹ Robert Winn noted the effort made by some officers. Bill, a black boy in the 14th Infantry Regiment, "was out

¹⁵⁶ Entry of August 11, 1863, Beatty, *The Citizen-Soldier*, 316-317.

¹⁵⁷ Blackwell, *In the First Line of Battle*, 67. Blackwell specifically cites the sacrifice of the 54th Massachusetts as the turning point for these papers where their opinion of black troops turned from hopeful skepticism to outright support. Miller, Jr., *The Black Civil War Soldiers of Illinois*, 23 notes that those on the Illinois home front gained greater appreciation for black troops when it became clear that those men would fill enlistment quotas, limiting the draft among white civilians.

¹⁵⁸ Voris, *A Citizen Soldier's War*, 233. The necessities of war made black troops far more palatable to Union soldiers, as Mark A. Lause, *Race and Radicalism in the Union Army*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009) makes clear. Though Louse's narrative deals with men involved in the brutal Kansas fighting, white soldiers there became far more enamored of their black compatriots as the war continued. Though some distance still existed, the situation was far more equal than through most of the rest of the North.

¹⁵⁹ "W. C. Jones to Mother," December 18, 1863, Civil War Letters, FHS.

¹⁶⁰ "Henry to Parents," August 4, 1863, Maria D. Coffinberry Papers, WRHS. "Moachs" is presumably a misspelling of "moke," a less common racial slur, as defined in John D. Wright, *The Language of the Civil War* (Westport, CT: Oryx Press, 2001), 194. As for the specific spelling, it may be related to "mocha," referencing darker skin color. According to Merriam-Webster, the term, first used in 1773, derived from coffee beans and can mean a dark color. Coffinberry came from a wealthier family (a relative, George Washington Morgan, was former Minister to Portugal and served as a brigadier general in the Army of the Mississippi), may have been familiar with. "D. T. S. to Sister," March 24, 1862, David T. Stathem Papers, OHS.

¹⁶¹ "Wm H Ross to Father," February 2, 1863, William H. Ross Papers, CHM.

with a few more recruiting among the sable camp followings.” He continued by noting that, “The leader made a very powerful appeal to some of Bill’s friends but without success.” Winn knew who he blamed for the lack of support, saying, “the Kentucky Regular Constitutional conservation – Negro Hating – slave loving herd around, ridiculed them out of some no doubt.”¹⁶² George Cram, reading of the disastrous Battle of the Crater near Petersburg in August 1864, blamed the troops for its failure. “I tell you,” he wrote to his mother, “that colored troops cannot be depended on and that evidently caused this great defeat.” In this view, he was mistaken.¹⁶³

Benjamin Smith Jones felt similarly to that “slave loving herd.” While other soldiers welcomed black troops, or at least allowed their respect to be earned, men like Jones were never prepared to accept such a thing. “I Saw Something at Shelmound that I did not want to See. I Saw a regiment of negros. That is Something that you never saw. I reckon it is Something that I don’t want to see any more if I Can help my Self.” For Jones, arming blacks was only the beginning. Writing in February 1863, after the implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation, Jones simply did not believe that would be the end of it. I reckon that the negros

¹⁶² “Robert Winn to Sister,” April 18, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁶³ “George to Mother,” August 9, 1864, Cram, *Soldiering with Sherman*, 133. The repulse at Petersburg Cram refers to is likely the incident at the Crater. The ingenuity of the 48th Pennsylvania led to the digging of a trench from Union lines to lay explosives under the Confederate line and blow a hole in the defenses, hopefully breaking the siege at the city. Initially, Grant and IX Corps commander Ambrose Burnside planned on using a division of US Colored Troops to breach the hole, and this division received special training in advance. On the eve of attack, however, Grant and Burnside switched this division out of the lead, replacing it with the First Division under the unfortunate choice of James Ledlie. The untrained white division flooded the crater, leading to disaster for them and the black troops that followed. Miller, Jr., *The Black Civil War Soldiers of Illinois*, 59-105 discusses the Crater assault (the 29th was one of the black regiments sent in), and specifically the long history of assigning blame for the failure. Various inquiries targeted Grant, Burnside, and the black troops themselves, and while Miller notes that later accounts credited the bravery of the black troops, the lack of source material makes a true appraisal of their performance difficult to ascertain. W. H. Hutter and Ray H. Abrams, “Copperhead Newspapers and the Negro” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Apr., 1935): 140-141 discusses the ways in which Copperhead newspapers, particularly the New York *World* and Philadelphia *Age*, blames Burnside and Grant for being “smitten” by “Negro mania” and not thinking clearly about the assault. Kevin M. Levin, “Is Not the Glory Enough to Give Us All a Share?: An Analysis of Competing Memories of the Battle of the Crater” in Aaron Sheehan-Dean, ed., *The View From the Ground* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 227-248 briefly mentions efforts of Virginians to downplay the death of black Union troops in the earliest days of reconciliation memory shortly after the war, but otherwise focuses on the creation of Southern memory on the battle.

will be freed before this war is ended and then old abe Lincoln will be Satisfied.” Not content to speculate on future policy, Jones expressed his disdain towards the President further, saying, “I wish that he had to Sleep with a negro every night as long as he lives and kiss one’s ass twice a day”¹⁶⁴ His position changed very little over the next year, as a letter from March 1864 expressed a similar sentiment. “This is nothing but an abolition war. It is for nothing, only to free the negros.” Even after seeing these men in action, Jones was unprepared to accept their presence in the army. “I Can See negros every Day with guns and they Stand guard as Same as I do...Lemuel if I had my way at the abolitionist party I would kill every one of them.”¹⁶⁵ Copperhead newspapers throughout the North did their part to rail against arming black soldiers, and regularly accused black troops of "barbarities," including the burning of Darien, Georgia.¹⁶⁶

As would be expected, many troops expressed the stinging racism of their times. Many of these letters were written contemporaneously to the ones previously cited, showing the division of opinions within the ranks of the men. "I perfectly Detest the sight of them," wrote Napoleon Bartlett, adding, "You cant speak to them and have a civil answer. The smarter they are the worse they are."¹⁶⁷ The frequency of such statements relative to more respectful remarks suggests most likely that many men were unwilling to change their minds or to feel any kind of kinship with blacks, encountered or otherwise. Ormond Hupp called the 500 slaves that followed the army to the Cumberland Mountains a "disgusting sight," adding, "If I ever felt like deserting it was then."¹⁶⁸ John Lynch wrote to a cousin in New Orleans that he wished "every nigger in the

¹⁶⁴ “Benjamin Smith Jones to Brother,” February 12, 1863, Civil War Letters, FHS.

¹⁶⁵ “Benjamin Smith Jones to Brother,” March 9, 1864, Civil War Letters, FHS. Jones likely means he would kill every abolitionist, not every black, but in either case, the sentiment remains the same.

¹⁶⁶ Hutter and Abrams, "Copperhead Newspapers and the Negro": 137-142. Carole Emberton, "Only Murder Makes Men: 369-393 discusses this difficulty many black troops had striking the balance between the restraint necessary to gain acceptance, while still mustering the ferocity to prove themselves in battle. This ferocity would be critical to maintaining the probability of blacks receiving social acceptance through successful military service, which she views through analyses of gender and masculinity.

¹⁶⁷ "N. B. Bartlett to Brother Franky," August 2, 1864, Napoleon B. Bartlett Letters, CHM.

¹⁶⁸ Hupp, *In the Defense of This Flag*, 26, 149.

Union should be sunk in the Atlantic Ocean or else remanded back to slavery." Calling them "wily and treacherous," he added that he needed to keep a close eye on his own servant, "or he will steal everything I possess."¹⁶⁹ Slavery and race relations were sensitive issues that had created the actual war. Even within the North, abolitionism and racial egalitarianism (such as that occasionally supported by Lincoln and other leaders of the Republican Party) were far from universally accepted. When the soldiers came from areas steeped in Copperhead sentiment, they could easily summon such feelings in their writing.

Sometimes, this racism expressed itself as denial. Even Isaac Dale, so willing to fight and stop slaves from aiding the Confederacy, believed there to be more at stake than simply emancipation. "They might talk about us being nigger lovers," he said, referring to Copperheads back home, "but the way it is they have no right to call us that and it is treason to do so and if I ever get back and they tell me that I have been fighting for the nigger and nothing else I will set some of them up for 90 days."¹⁷⁰ We cannot expect that a soldier such as Dale would simply accept that fighting against slavery was the only aim of the war. Even we in the present day cannot do that. Dale likely fought for many of the other reasons northerners fought for the Union. Still, his very negative reaction to the accusation that he was fighting because of a love for blacks belies a man uncomfortable with the suggestion.

While men like Dale lashed out at those who made such accusations, others accepted them, and acted accordingly. Lewis Hanback noted that a Democratic candidate in a local election, "a Major Cummings," was, "a renegade soldier who says he left the army because he couldn't fight for the nigger."¹⁷¹ Not all men left as Cummings apparently had, but they willingly expressed their dissent with the prospect of fighting in support of blacks. Hiram Wingate

¹⁶⁹ "John J. Lynch to Cousin (in New Orleans)," February 17, 1863, John J. Lynch Letter, CHM.

¹⁷⁰ "Isaac Dale to Friend," June 19, 1863, Stephen Emert Letters, IHS.

¹⁷¹ "Lewis Hanback to Hattie," October 8, 1864, Lewis Hanback Letters, FHS.

received a letter from a friend serving in Tennessee in early 1863. Wingate had advocated to him previously that the war was being fought on behalf of blacks. Now, the friend would respond that, "I am of the same opinion as yourself." Wingate's friend goes even farther, showing the spread of such sentiment within at least his own circle. "It is the Opinion of the Soldiers," he wrote, "that we are fighting against the North and South and for my part I do not care how soon it Stops."¹⁷² Not all men stopped coming, though. A letter from Kentuckian A. G. Dow registered his surprise that the sons of local "Butternuts" had joined the army. "I shouldn't think they would Let their boy come to fight an abolition War."¹⁷³

Instead of targeting slaves themselves, many soldiers chose to focus their ire on abolitionists, speaking of them in the same manner that they spoke of Copperheads. "I think it advisable for us folks in the service to whip out the rebels as soon as possible," Henry Coffinberry suggested, "and then come home and take the miserable, cowardly abolitionists in hand and learn them a little sense." Referring to them as "a pack of fanatics and madmen that don't appreciate" the soldiers' wartime efforts, Coffinberry complained, "we had fought long enough without knowing whether we are fighting for abolition or our country."¹⁷⁴ Though personally supportive of ending slavery, George Cram noted that men who tried to avoid the draft tended to be "all the most rabid abolitionists." Perhaps even more damningly, Cram suggested: "those who are the bitterest on rebels; the most affectionate to the Negroes; those who continually tell how they want to fight to the bitter end, etc. are always taken suddenly very ill just before a battle and find some reason for being obliged to stay in the rear, very much of *course* against their will."¹⁷⁵ Lincoln and the abolitionists at home certainly made for easy targets. After a long night march, Valentine Randolph observed that men in his 39th Illinois,

¹⁷² "To Friend Wingate," February 18, 1863, Hiram Wingate Papers, FHS.

¹⁷³ "A. G. Dow to Tom," July 30, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

¹⁷⁴ "Henry to Parents," May 29, 1863, Maria D. Coffinberry Papers, WRHS.

¹⁷⁵ "George to Mother," August 20, 1864, *Soldiering with Sherman*, 135.

while "suffering from fatigue, the want of sleep and the cold," vented their anger by "heap[ing] execrations upon the heads of President Lincoln, Gen. Peck, Gen. Ferry and 'the damned Abolitionists.'"¹⁷⁶ In some respects, abolitionists were worse than Copperheads, as they had real influence upon the Lincoln administration's policies.

The slavery issue came to resolution with the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in September of 1862. Though committed to the eventual abolition of America's "peculiar institution," Lincoln had campaigned in 1860 on a platform committed only to stopping slavery's spread. As the war began, he focused on reunion, hoping to draw in the large population of southern unionists he always believed existed. Still, the president knew that, as he put it, "a house divided against itself cannot stand," and that true reconciliation between North and South would be impossible without the elimination of the day's great issue. During the summer of 1862, Lincoln was prepared to issue the Proclamation, but held off on the advice of Secretary of State William H. Seward, by that time a close friend and advisor. Seward suggested that the president should wait until the aftermath of a Union victory, otherwise risking the appearance of desperation. Antietam victory in hand, Lincoln braved the negative reaction at home and abroad to announce that come the new year, slavery would no longer be recognized or protected within the self-styled Confederacy.¹⁷⁷

The Emancipation Proclamation did not start the debate on the extent of the war, nor did reaction to it mark the beginning of racial rhetoric in Congress, especially from Democrats. Still, the rhetoric was real, and seems to have increased in frequency at the end of the 37th Congress. The potential presence and use of black soldiers seems to have been what truly instigated a response from Congressional Democrats. Representative Henry May of Maryland argued that the

¹⁷⁶ December 11, 1862, *A Civil War Soldier's Diary*, 128.

¹⁷⁷ David M. Potter, *Lincoln and his Party in the Secession Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942); Narrative of Lincoln's preparation for issuing the Proclamation from McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 502-505.

Republican's insistence on arming blacks would be to elevate an inferior race, "which raises questions with eternal power, and challenges the plans of the Creator."¹⁷⁸ Pennsylvania Representative Charles Biddle expressed a similar concern, believing that the elevation of blacks into military service would disturb the relationship between blacks and whites in society. Calling these troops "black janizaries [sic]," and a "negro army," Biddle predicted that this new relationship would "disturb the harmonious relations which may otherwise exist between them."¹⁷⁹ Certainly similar rhetoric, even from some Republicans, existed, being part of the lexicon of the time. Even so, these concerns were much stronger amongst the Democrats, whose notions of racial hierarchy were more solid than the antislavery Republicans.¹⁸⁰

There were certainly large swaths of the army that supported Lincoln's announcement. "The President's Proclamation came over the wires last night," wrote S. S. Harding to his wife. "Thank God, thank God, for it. It is the most cheering news that I have heard in a long time."¹⁸¹ Indiana soldier W. K. Hoback, writing to his sister, spoke of the widespread acceptance of the measure. There were, he wrote, "No thoughts of any thing like growing angry with the administration," and he personally would, "cordially endorse the proclamation nigger and all." D. Lieb Ambrose wrote that the men in his 7th Illinois issued "laudations upon Abraham Lincoln for having the backbone and the wisdom to issue...the great emancipation proclamation. We hail this as one of the most powerful blows against rebellion."¹⁸² This is not to say that soldiers did not feel pressure to do otherwise. "There are some people at home," Hoback added, "writing to their friends in the army trying to disquiet them and discourage them and induce them to desert and offering them protection if they will come home." Without knowing how Hoback's

¹⁷⁸ Representative May of Maryland, on February 2, 1863, 37th Cong., 3rd sess., *Cong. Globe*, 685.

¹⁷⁹ Representative Biddle of Pennsylvania, on January 30, 1863, 37th Cong., 3rd sess., *Cong. Globe*, 634.

¹⁸⁰ Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 220-229.

¹⁸¹ "S. S. Harding to My Dear Wife," January 4, 1863, Harding Collection, Lilly.

¹⁸² September 25, 1862, Ambrose, *From Shiloh to Savannah*, 64.

comrades responded to these offers, he merely offered the warning that men who followed the advice of such letter writers, “had better be careful. They seem to forget that they are violating a positive order...falling under the sentence of the 20th Article of war.”¹⁸³

There were very few references to the actual proclamation by many soldiers.¹⁸⁴ Some comments appear to have been mixed in with the general sentiments on race and race relations. Generally, though the announcement of emancipation and the actual implementation of the Proclamation merited little mention for many soldiers. Some do not appear to care, such as Thomas Honnell. Writing to his friend Benjamin Epler, Honnell expressed his desire to continue fighting, and appeared to downplay the importance of emancipation. “The blood of our fallen Comrades would cry out against us if we did not fight on until we establish those principles for which they fought and died.” Lest Epler be confused as to what those principles may or may not have been, he continued: “We fight not to free Negroes or to enslave Whites.”¹⁸⁵ Honnell rejected the common argument that the freedom of blacks would lead only to an outright restructuring of the racial hierarchy.

Many men do not appear to have been opposed to the emancipation of slaves but seemed less than enthusiastic about the Lincoln Administration’s course of action. They worried more about the potential fallout in the country and the nation. Ben Bristow, not a soldier but a Louisville lawyer, wrote to his friend, future Attorney General James Speed, in 1864, and expressed his concerns over the effects of emancipation. “The conduct of certain officers & other

¹⁸³ “W. K. Hoback to Sister,” March 13, 1863, Kephart Family Papers, IHS. The 20th Article of War, from the Revised US Army Regulations of 1861, governs travelling while on duty as a soldier. When given an order to report to a specific place, the soldier must account for any activity undertaken prior to reporting and an explanation for any delay. Desertion, especially at the behest of relatives, was not likely considered good reason for failing to fulfill one’s duty. The soldier was liable to court martial for desertion, punishable by death, while the family member offering aid could also be punished under federal law at the time.

¹⁸⁴ In particular, Blackwell, Jr., *In the First Line of Battle*, 40-41 notes that men in that regiment offered not thoughts on the Proclamation as January 1 came and went with the Proclamation taking effect. Even local papers had very little to say on the issue.

¹⁸⁵ “Thomas Honnell to Friend,” September 25, 1864, Thomas Corwin Honnell Papers, OHS.

persons in connection with the negro question is causing great dissatisfaction and doing a real injury to our cause in Ky.," he wrote. Denying that he was obsessed, as some would suggest, with the "negro question," Bristow tried to clarify his position and the potential pitfalls. "I do not believe the Govmt. can be permanently reestablished without the abolition of slavery," he wrote, "and for this reason I desire it to be abolished but I want it done legally."¹⁸⁶

Never one to sugarcoat his opinions, Robert Winn on several occasions stated his belief that the army, and likely the nation, was not ready for emancipation. "I may state for your information," he offered to his sister in February of 1862, "that I believe a law abolishing slavery at the present time would have the tendency to prolong the war, and slavery too."¹⁸⁷ And just in case she may have thought this changed into the summer, he offered the following thought in July. "The western army is thoroughly devoted to the Divinity of Slavery," he wrote, continuing, "I hear among...Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois troops that Congress has no right to free the slaves of even Rebels in arms – and such an attempt would justify a revolt of the troops in favor of the South."¹⁸⁸ That would not affect his opinion, of course. "So bad as the war is, on both sections its prosecution on a radical plan, if it could be done and not divide the Northern forces, would be decidedly the best." He hoped for anything to end the difficulties of the troops and bring the war to its swift and proper conclusion. "But," he added, "if radicalism must sever the Border States and Nor'western States, it will prolong the war indefinitely and probably cause defeat – and thus make another war necessary."¹⁸⁹ He told his sister, "On [the issue of] Emancipation however if I thought it worth while and had the opportunity of voting, I would vote for it of course."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ "Ben Bristow to James Speed," June 23, 1864, Speed Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁸⁷ "Robert Winn to Sister," February 21, 1862, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁸⁸ "Robert Winn to Sister," July 21, 1862, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁸⁹ "Robert Winn to Sister," July 25, 1862, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁹⁰ "Robert Winn to Sister," June 15, 1862, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

Beyond personal support for emancipation, Winn also held the view that the war needed such a change. “I can’t see how the war can end without the destruction of Slavery.” He continued with his typical predictions of dire straits, writing: “if the immediate end of it was attempted, the blood that has been spilt in this war would be nothing to what would be then, now the end of such a state of affairs would be like the millennium – afar off.”¹⁹¹ These threats of bloodshed aside, the circumstances of not ending slavery were far worse. Another letter outlines this thought process:

“I could not see that a long bloody war with a compromise for its end – and slavery consequently in the ascendant – as being much better than a short one with one half of the nation free and the other a separate slave government (a thing that would die of necessity soon). You may say we would have war under this divided state of the country – well would we have peace under the Compromisers [*sic.*]? No! Another and more violent rebellion would result.”¹⁹²

By 1864, these predictions of gloom regardless of the status of slavery had faded from Winn’s letters. “Emancipationists are increasing in numbers, and in boldness – even in Ky. Regts.,” he wrote in a letter from March of that year. Robert Winn never lacked for opinions and observations when they related to any matter, and the army’s discussion of slavery and emancipation was no different. Though not wholly enthusiastic about the plan of Lincoln’s Party, Winn would at least concede that the Democratic solution, as expressed by the Copperhead faction, was no better.

In many regiments, the Emancipation Proclamation received a mixed reaction, as soldiers struggled to reconcile their goal of reunion with Lincoln’s new purpose of ending slavery. John Ellen’s journal, noting the arrival of 1863 and the announcement of Lincoln’s Proclamation, suggested that it would be “possible to work some good, and probable (very) some evil, so I

¹⁹¹ “Robert Winn to Sister,” July 12, 1862, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁹² “Robert Winn to Sister,” August 17, 1862, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

think," highlighting the difficulty with which many soldiers wrestled.¹⁹³ While William Ross believed "Some of the soldiers is in favor of it but a good many of them is not," he also wrote that these men "are sworn to stand to Abryham [*sic*] and what he says must be law and gospel." In a later letter, he still thought "a majority of the Volunteers is against the President's Proclimation [*sic*.] but they have about come to the conclusion that they will have to submit to what ever Old Abe says."¹⁹⁴ Humphrey Hood claimed, "The proclamation is a thing I never asked for," but now with Lincoln having issued it, "I am very thankful the President had stood by it."¹⁹⁵ Oscar Ladley, though personally opposed the Proclamation, decided "I will keep mum," rather than spark an argument in the ranks.¹⁹⁶ Samuel Willard worried that this mixed sentiment would hurt enforcement of the Proclamation. "With the generals and officer that we have," he wrote, "I fear that his emancipation measures will be so ill-enforced as to amount to very little."¹⁹⁷ Carl Day's biography of Tom Custer (brother of the infamous George Armstrong) also noted divisions among the officers of the 21st Ohio. These various splits played themselves out accordingly, with some officers returning escaped slaves to their owners.¹⁹⁸

A few soldiers actively opposed emancipation, and reacted negatively to Lincoln's announcement. "It's my opinion that if the men in the field could be heard on this emancipation question," offered Henry Coffinberry, "that Lincoln would alter his policy or resign, as soon as possible, if not sooner."¹⁹⁹ "I don't like it," wrote William Orr, complaining, "I don't want to fight to free the darkeys."²⁰⁰ William Venner's history of the 19th Indiana claims the regiment's morale "sank disastrously," upon hearing of the Proclamation. He further writes, "Many Hoosiers

¹⁹³ Entry of January 1, 1863, John S. Ellen Journal, WRHS.

¹⁹⁴ "William H. Ross to Father," October 18, 1862, William H. Ross Papers, CHM; "William H. Ross to Father," November 2, 1862, William H. Ross Papers, CHM.

¹⁹⁵ "H. H. Hood to My Dear Wife," January 6, 1863, Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM.

¹⁹⁶ "Oscar to Mother," February 13, 1963, Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 89.

¹⁹⁷ "Willard to Darling," December 30, 1862, Samuel Willard Family Papers, ALPLM.

¹⁹⁸ Carl F. Day, *Tom Custer: Ride to Glory* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 41.

¹⁹⁹ "Henry to Parents," January 29, 1863, Maria D. Coffinberry Papers, WRHS.

²⁰⁰ "Will to Father," January 5, 1863, Orr Collection, Lilly.

wrote home proclaiming, "They never came here to free the Negroes." As Venner notes, several members of the 19th deserted, fleeing west to avoid fighting an abolition war.²⁰¹ Desertion and other forms of resistance certainly occurred, but with limited frequency. Many soldiers, particularly officers, attempted to resign their commissions. George Benson Fox noted that the 75th Ohio's Lt. Col. William Constable and Captain Horace Deshler sent in their resignations, "claiming they could not conscientiously serve under the last Proclamation of Pres Lincoln."²⁰² Fox was hardly disappointed to see them go. Constable was placed under temporary arrest, and though Fox reported that over a month after resigning Constable was still being held.²⁰³ Eventually, the army accepted his resignation.

The Proclamation caused the greatest amount of trouble for troops from Kentucky. Samuel Miller worried about the prospect of resignations, suggesting in April 1862 that if Lincoln were to issue some emancipation measure, "I fear that our staff officers, together with many others, will resign." After the president's issuance of the preliminary document, Miller noted that "Mr. Lincoln's proclamation don't suit us Kentuckeyans [*sic.*]"²⁰⁴ Kirk Jenkins' history of the 15th Kentucky relates the story of fifteen of the regiment's officers submitting their resignations in late January. The resignations passed up the Army of the Cumberland's chain of command to William Rosecrans, who rejected them. Several weeks later, five of the officers attempted to resign again, only to receive another rejection. In March, Major Henry Kalfus, who had not been part of the original group, submitted his resignation on the grounds that he was now being forced to fight "for the degradation of the white man to an equality with the negro."

²⁰¹ Venner, *Hoosiers' Honor*, 147.

²⁰² "Benson to Father," January 21, 1863, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS.

²⁰³ "Benson to Father," January 31, 1863, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS; "George B. Fox to Father," February 26, 1863, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS.

²⁰⁴ "Sam. J. F. Miller to Mary J. Kemper," April 27, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS; "SJFM to Sister," December 18, 1862, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS.

Though he spent three days in confinement, he eventually received a dishonorable discharge.²⁰⁵ Such resistance was not limited to Kentucky though, as William Ross noted that the 109th Illinois had mutinied, and was held under arrest in Memphis. Ross had been nearby during the mutiny and sympathized with the soldiers. "I can not blame the Boys much," he wrote, "when they Stacked their arms they said that they was deceived and that they never would fight to free the Negroes." The mutineers' arrest certainly had some desired effect, as Ross wrote that he was discouraged from resigning after seeing the treatment of the 109th.²⁰⁶

For a number of soldiers, though, whatever their opinions on emancipation, they would not countenance opposition from Copperheads on the home front. "I denounce the Butternut Peace party in the north," wrote J. H. Pickens, even while noting that "I didn't endorse the Emancipation Proclamation, never did."²⁰⁷ A supporter of emancipation from the war's beginning, Alexander Ewing complained about "a great number of men at home who are loud in their denunciations against this proclamation... those are members of the [Democratic] Party." "Butternuts and soft Heads object to it," he later charged, "because they know it is injuring the enemy."²⁰⁸ Benjamin Webb Baker complained that "The Proclamation serves a good purpose, as an excuse for some rebel sympathizers in the north" to avoid volunteering for service.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 120-124. In spite of this reasoning, Jenkins believes Kalfus was posturing, using a well-worn reason to goad Rosecrans into discharging him. Instead, Jenkins claims Kalfus resigned over discontent regarding his promotion and rank. That Kalfus used an anti-abolitionist stance only strengthens the notion that a number of officers attempted to resign over the tense emancipation issue. In his introduction (xii), Jenkins notes that discontent surrounding the Proclamation went beyond just the border states, and listed the resignation of officers in a regiment from the Army of the Gulf and vocal opposition from Army of the Potomac units.

²⁰⁶ "WH Ross to Father," January 1, 1863, William H. Ross Papers, CHM; "W. H. R. to Father," February 18, 1863, William H. Ross Papers, CHM. In a letter from late September, "W. H. Ross to Brother Levi," September 30, 1862, William H. Ross Papers, CHM, Ross predicted that many men would lay down their arms in protest of the Proclamation.

²⁰⁷ "J. H. Pickens to Lieut James Hill," March 4, 1863, Hill Collection, Lilly.

²⁰⁸ "A. K. Ewing to Parents," September 28, 1862, Alexander K. Ewing, ALPLM; "Alex. K. Ewing," Early March, 1863, Alexander K. Ewing, ALPLM.

²⁰⁹ "Webb to Mother," March 16, 1863, Bobrick, *Testament*, 227.

David Thackery's history of the 66th Ohio noted that the regiment's officers decided to present a united front to the public in favor of the Proclamation in order to attack "Northern Traitors" and "'Copperhead' demagogues."²¹⁰ Augustus Van Dyke worried about the galvanizing effect the Proclamation would have for Copperheads heading into the election. "If the abolishment of slavery in the District of Columbia and the Presidents Emancipation Proclamation had been delayed until after the elections," he theorized, "we would have carried every state." Criticizing those "dishonest men in the anti-administration party," Van Dyke still believed the Proclamation to be "ill-timed" given the issue's tense politics.²¹¹ Though Lincoln's decision to steer the war's aims to emancipation as well as reunion engendered a variety of reactions from the divided region's soldiers, plenty still saw fit to remember and attack antiwar forces at home.

The Civil War was an immensely complicated event, especially for those forced to experience it day by day. Men fought for a variety of reasons, and wearing the blue uniform did not represent complete alignment of political views with President Lincoln or other architects of the nation's wartime policies. Maintaining a national tradition of vigorous debate (its required acceptance of, if not agreement with, opposing viewpoints), Union soldiers considered the many reasons why others had gone to war. Exposure to debate, and more importantly exposure to the necessities of war, caused some transition in individual thought, yet the rejection of one viewpoint (in many cases Copperheadism) is not necessarily acceptance of another. That some soldiers saw the draft or emancipation as another opportunity to harangue Peace Democrats at home does not require their full acceptance of the same. Instead, it points to the primacy of defeating Copperheadism in the politics of many, even as they may find fault in the large policy

²¹⁰ Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 122.

²¹¹ "Gus to Brother," November 11, 1862, Augustus M. Van Dyke Papers, IHS.

itself. This nuanced approach is most effective in debate discussion but suffers in elections. This most political of acts forces a choice, one soldiers were allowed to make in the war's later years.

Chapter 5
"The Greatest Battle"
The Soldiers' Role in Civil War Elections

Brother, tomorrow is the day on which will decide who our next President will be. We will be on the march no doubt, for St. Louis Mo, but we will arrange things that we may assist in the great Defeat of Majr. Genrl. George B. McClelland which will be very Successful I think. Although there will be a few votes for Little Mc I think that the defeat of Mc will be a Greater victory to our arms than the Greatest victory won by battling the Enemy during the past Season. Lone if I had had the opportunity of Seceding away a letter I Should have written a letter to Some of my, ahem, a Copperhead friends of mine, or in other words McClelland Friends. Had I done So like enough aroused their feelings for this I would not have cared a penny for I think those Copperheads in the north a worse enemy to the union cause than those already in armies against our Government. Lone we will give old Abe, a lift tomorrow would like very much to have been down to Groton tomorrow to See how the Election goes off but you will please write me and give the full particulars and I will do the Same as Soon as we get to St. Louis Mo.¹

As Captain Jonathan Harrington's 72nd Ohio moved towards St. Louis, the regiment, along with many others, took the opportunity to stop and allow the men to cast a vote for office. Politics in the nineteenth century remained a participatory experience, as all qualified voters went to a central location to cast their votes publicly and declare for a candidate or position. That Harrington could join them in 1864 is not the result of a fortunately timed furlough, but the conscious effort on the part of his home state to include soldiers in the election. As the war deepened, soldiers took a greater role in its politics. Campaigning, petitions, and other activity finally gave way to the act of participating in the decision. Away from home, and unable to visit traditional polling locations, soldiers had the ballot brought to them. More so than a wide canvass of letters and journals, this act of voting puts real numbers to the support for Republicans or Democrats. Any political act, especially the conscious choice of one candidate over another, is more revealing than any justification can be. That so many soldiers by 1864 felt compelled to cast their votes for Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party says a great deal

¹ "J. F. H. to Brother," November 7, 1864, Jonathan F. Harrington Papers, RBH.

about the men's impression not only of the President, but also his opposition. Copperheads would fall victim to their own viewpoints, anathema as they were to the soldier.²

For some, like Captain Harrington, elections are a cathartic experience. They represent a time when disgruntled voters are able to register effectively their displeasure with the party or individual in power by taking a deliberate action toward removal. Likewise, the candidate and party's enthusiastic supporters have an opportunity to express their satisfaction and work to keep those individuals whom they favor in power. For many others, of course, no such feelings accompany the election, perhaps merely the feeling of accomplishing one's duty to the continued operation of the democratic republic. People may quibble over the difference in parties or positions as they ranged from election to election. In some years, the oft-expressed belief that differences are cosmetic perhaps carries some validity. In many Civil War elections that was not the case, especially from 1863 onward. With the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation and the elevation of slavery's eradication to equal level with restoring the Union as a northern war aim, elections became significant choices between the purposes of the war, or even whether the war itself should continue.

The first significant elections during the war came in 1862. Congressional midterms dominated electoral politics. Democrats gained in the House of Representatives, picking up support on the back of slow Union advances in the East and Lincoln's announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. Joel Silbey's history of the Civil War Democratic Party highlights its great successes in 1862, not only winning back Congressional seats, but also grabbing the governorship of New York, the Union's largest state, as well as additional gains outside of New England. Silbey, though, is careful not to make too much of these shifts, noting that decreases in

² A good summary of voting qualifications and process in antebellum Ohio can be found in Winkle, "Ohio's Informal Polling Place," Brown and Cayton, eds., *The Pursuit of Public Power*, 169-184. While there were undoubtedly differences in specific details, the general process was likely similar in the rest of the region.

Republican votes outweighed Democratic gains, suggesting the Democratic victory was more likely a result of fewer Republican voters than an increase in Democrats.³ While the organization of electoral campaigns in the midst of war may have surprised some Republicans, the election went on.⁴

Many historians focus on racial issues driving the shift away from Republicans in 1862, a charge the presence of the Emancipation Proclamation makes easy to see. Democrats utilized racial rhetoric against the Republicans as they had done since the latter party's founding (a notable side effect of being an avowed anti-slavery party). This became even more pronounced as several War Democrats switched to the Republican Party, even joining its more radical faction. Republicans in states such as Illinois needed to burnish their pro-white credentials and supported the exclusion of free blacks. Lincoln and other Republicans attempted to combat this shift with their support of colonization schemes, but these bore little fruit either electorally or among blacks themselves.⁵ Christopher Dell, historian of the War Democrats, downplays the strength of Peace Democrats at this time. Fears over emancipation and conscription, as well as Union military defeats in the late summer, boosted the Democrats to successful totals. The peace cause, he argues, did not become a compelling argument for Democratic success until after the

³ Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 143-146. As the book mostly focuses on a quantitative analysis of Democratic strength and vote tabulation, Silbey avoids significant attempts at interpretation of voter habits, merely suggesting that Republicans "stayed home" instead of voting. Weber, *Copperheads*, 69 points out that many of these Democratic gains came in areas of traditional strength, suggesting a regression to the mean from the more unusual 1860 election. Neither addresses the number of voters Republicans potentially lost through men leaving for the army, which tended to be Republican, though that kind of analysis would be difficult without a full account of the voting habits of each enlisted man.

⁴ Neely, *The Union Divided*, 39-40. This statement is probably one of the most demonstrative in Neely's book, highlighting the uncertain nature of party conflict during the Civil War. It is the resiliency of the system, demonstrated by the continued contestation of elections, which provided previously unseen strength to the two-party system, and further legitimized the actions of the Lincoln administration. Page 38 in Neely also provides a useful chart of scheduled election days throughout the Northern states. While a majority occurred in November, many states voted in August, September, and October. Rhode Island and Connecticut held their elections in April, while New Hampshire was actually in early March. In the states covered here, Illinois was the first Tuesday in November, Indiana and Ohio the second Tuesday in October, and Kentucky the first Monday in August.

⁵ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 506-510. McPherson highlights Union general Benjamin Butler and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton as emblematic of these switches towards Radical Republicanism.

election. Instead, he targets a fusion between War Democrats and Conservative Republicans against the war aims of the Radicals (of which emancipation was a major aspect) as the source of Democratic success, aligning them against the Proclamation.⁶ Frank Klement, who viewed the Copperheads as emblematic of economic regionalism, saw the 1862 elections as a reaction to economic troubles in the winter of 1861-62. Democrats in the Old Northwest suspected easterners of nefarious economic schemes that limited their independence to the benefit of New England industry. Klement highlights concerns at the Illinois constitutional convention over railroads, plus the opposition of Midwestern Congressmen (including Vallandigham and Voorhees) to Republican proposals such as higher tariffs and land settlement acts. Success in the election, Klement argues, allowed Democrats to dig in their heels over other actions of the Lincoln administration, emancipation chief among them.⁷

Leading up to the election, members of the Illinois State Constitutional Convention pushed state residents to vote on adopting a pro-slavery Constitutional amendment, attacked the wartime policies of Governor William Yates and newly appointed Senator Orville Browning, and even suggested forbidding the entrance of free blacks into the state, attempting to rile up racist sentiment in the state against Republicans. War Democrats, such as the editor of the *Missouri Republican* (based in bordering St. Louis and willing to comment on Illinois politics) professed embarrassment at the convention. Democratic officers from Illinois were now suddenly forced to respond to the convention's acts. In the 2nd Illinois Cavalry Major Quincy McNeil angrily retorted that, being assigned to write a constitution, "Why the hell don't you do

⁶ Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 171-186. Dell points out though, on pages 173-176, that the elections also caused the Radicals to push away from the Centrists, only entrenching the Republican Party further towards emancipation.

⁷ Klement, *The Copperheads of the Middle-West*, 7-10, 38. Midwestern fears over New Englanders were not limited to economics. Many expressed concerns regarding the evangelistic moralizing of "Puritans," concerns that echoed many Southerners over slavery as well as other issues.

it?"⁸ The convention's positions on these and other issues gained greater importance when it also held in its power the ability to allow soldier voting. The new constitution provided for soldiers to vote on its passage and, on the condition of passage, the ability to vote in later elections. Faced with an otherwise disagreeable document, soldiers rejected the proposed constitution, as did the rest of the state.⁹ Copperheads were also able to make hay through a denunciation of Republican wartime administration, criticizing the party in power for profiteering and general misadministration of the war effort. In Illinois, at least, these charges bore fruit in a Democratic takeover of the legislature.¹⁰

Harking back to the transition highlighted in Chapter 2, not all soldiers worried about anti-war sentiment at home at this early stage in the war. Even further, those who did were as likely to direct their ire at both parties rather than specifically Democrats. William Caldwell of the 21st Ohio, made a distinction for "Secession democrats" before issuing a familiar threat to "carry the war north of Dixie" if such men did not stop their expressing sympathies for the South.¹¹ It is probably not a coincidence that Caldwell originated from Sandusky County, Ohio, a Democratic stronghold along Lake Erie, where such a distinction between specific kinds of Democrats would be more probable. Thomas Smith also expressed some sympathy for his state's Democrats, such as his brother Will, to whom he wrote, "I couldn't believe you desire the destruction of the Union." Echoing the complaints of Democrats throughout the war, he later added, "I think that all that a great majority of those who voted for [Vallandigham] meant was that they think some of the acts of the Gov. unnecessary, some unconstitutional and unwise."¹² The infamous Vallandigham lost his congressional seat to Robert Schenck, consolation for

⁸ Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 165-167.

⁹ Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 251-253.

¹⁰ Jensen, *Illinois*, 70-71.

¹¹ "William to Mother," February 12, 1862, Caldwell Family Papers, RBH.

¹² "T. E. Smith to Will," December 9, 1862, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS.

Lincoln and the Republicans in an otherwise poor showing. Vallandigham biographer Frank Klement blames dirty campaigning on the part of Republicans for the Copperhead's defeat, citing a newly gerrymandered 3rd District, campaign lies about anti-Union groups such as the Knights of the Golden Circle, and Lincoln's personal endorsement of Schenck, characterized by his promotion to major general just prior to the election.¹³

What anti-Copperhead sentiment existed amongst Indiana soldiers focused on Daniel Voorhees. Voorhees was a noted anti-war member of the US House of Representatives from Terre Haute and had been re-elected that fall. He was a strong personality, prominent in Indiana's Democratic Party long after the war's end. Union soldiers certainly took notice of his positions. Solomon Hamrick offered several alternatives over the summer, expressing the soldiers' hope of "the next most available man to Superseed [*sic.*] the traitor our Dan Voorhees," even as the men lamented their own inability to vote, saying, "we will leave that to our friends in the District." As the election drew nearer, Hamrick complained, "our State has already Suffered enough from Such Traitors as Voorhees."¹⁴ Similar to the soldiers' threats of violence towards Copperheads, Alexander Ewing suggested, "If we had such men as [Indiana Congressman David] Turpie, Voorhees & [Judge John] Pettit, in this country they would make a good mark to shoot at."¹⁵

Soldiers certainly knew about the elections, though they could not yet cast their votes. The few who did comment on the 1862 elections beforehand highlighted this perceived injustice. "What a pity it is that I could not be at home today, to poll my vote," complained Robert

¹³ Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 111-114. Klement's *Dark Lanterns* has much more to say about the illegitimacy of groups such as the Knights of the Golden Circle (as well as the related Order of American Knights and Sons of Liberty), which he regards as pure propaganda rather and any kind of existential threat.

¹⁴ "SS Hamrick to Father," June 28, 1862, Solomon Simpson Hamrick Papers, IHS; "SS Hamrick to Father," September 26, 1862, Solomon Simpson Hamrick Papers, IHS.

¹⁵ "A. K. Ewing to Parents," October 14, 1862, Alexander K. Ewing Papers, ALPLM. Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 26 references Pettit as a Conservative Democrat and Negrophobe during the late 1850s, positions he likely kept after the war's outbreak.

Caldwell, "I say it makes me feel as though I were small potatoes."¹⁶ Ichabod Coddling, an abolitionist speaker from Wisconsin, noticed the discrepancy as well. "The Democrats have carried Ohio & Indiana & have gained several Congressmen," he reported, "but had the Soldiers been allowed to vote we Should have more than maintained" a Republican advantage.¹⁷ The Republican *Indiana Daily Journal* was even more direct, blaming the defeat on "the absence of 70,000 Union voters in the army" and calling it "the overmastering cause of the catastrophe." Though the elections may have taken Republicans by surprise, they readily noticed the consequences of so many voters missing.¹⁸

The push towards emancipation had hurt Lincoln's standing in some corners of the army, particularly among Democrats. J. B. Danforth, publisher of the Rock Island, Illinois *Argus*, angrily tore into the president for "advocating...the abandonment of party names and distinctions during the war...till forced by the republican party to take sides with the abolitionist or democrats."¹⁹ Though he would eventually leave the paper, denouncing its anti-Lincoln stance, 102nd Illinois Sergeant Major Stephen Fleharty agreed with the *Argus* regarding the dangers of extreme partisanship, being careful to criticize both "your Lovejoys on the one hand and your Vallandighams on the other." Indeed, he argued that he and other soldiers believed "the discarding of radicalism, and the introduction of a conservative element...into the councils of the nation, will be for the good of the whole country."²⁰

¹⁶ "Robert to Father," October 14, 1862, Caldwell Family Papers, RBH.

¹⁷ "I. Coddling to Friend Eastman" October 20, 1862, Zebina Eastman Papers, CHM.

¹⁸ "The Result," *Indianapolis Indiana Daily Journal*, October 17, 1862, *Indiana's War*, 131. The editorial also accused the most recent troop levy of containing no Democrats, and blamed the party for "keeping their men at home."

¹⁹ Fleharty, *Jottings From Dixie*, 10. Danforth was himself a Democrat and regular recipient of his party's job patronage, so *Jottings From Dixie* editors Philip J. Reyburn and Terry L. Wilson suggests his protestations about Lincoln's partisanship can probably be taken with a requisite grain of salt.

²⁰ "S. F. F. to Rock Island *Argus*" November 10, 1862, published November 20, 1862 in *Jottings From Dixie*, 65. Lovejoy is Radical Republican Owen Lovejoy, a Representative from Illinois, brother of murdered abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy, and friend of Abraham Lincoln. Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*, 98 repeats the idea that because few (if any) soldiers voted, the election cannot be seen as a referendum amongst the

While many men said little about the elections as they took place, the results garnered much response. Robert Caldwell celebrated Vallandigham's defeat, offering "three groans for the old villain," after he had learned "the true sentiments of the Union loving men of his [District]."²¹ Following Dan Voorhees' reelection in the Indiana 7th District, Solomon Hamrick emphasized his previous concerns, writing, "it is an outrage that Indiana is Disgraced by Such Traitors as he." In a later letter, though, Hamrick would also criticize "old Lincoln & Seward" as "incompetent in our [the soldiers'] estimation." He pessimistically concluded, "I am thorouly [*sic.*] convinced that this Rebellion will Not be conquered while the present administration & chief Generals Now control affairs."²² Alexander Ewing celebrated the defeat of "Butternut Turpie," and castigated Indiana voters for choosing men who "claim to be Democrats but far from it they are worse for us that open enemies in arms." Emphasizing this distinction among Democrats, he highlighted "David S. Dickinson of New York, [Joseph A.] Write [Wright] of Indiana & [John A.] Logan of Ill." as "the sound Democracy and are in favor of sustaining Congress and the President in a vigorous prosecution of this war."²³ Perhaps the Illinoisan H. Barber best expressed the generally pessimistic sentiment of most Unionists at the time when he wrote to his brother that, "I have but little confidence in many of our leading politicians & Generals."²⁴

For some others, this pessimism shifted after the Democrats took office and began to agitate further against the war effort. Edwin Smith of the 79th Ohio wrote, "I was glad the

military on emancipation. Still, these comments suggest a general dissatisfaction with politics, at least among soldiers from this particular region.

²¹ "Robert to Mother," October 16, 1862, Caldwell Family Papers, RBH.

²² "Simps. to Father," October 18, 1862, and "Simps. Hamrick to Father," October 27, 1862, Solomon Simpson Hamrick Papers, IHS.

²³ "A. K. Ewing to Parents," October 26, 1862, Alexander K. Ewing Papers, ALPLM. Dickinson is probably Daniel, New York's Democratic Attorney General and former Senator, not David as Ewing writes. Write is probably Joseph A. Wright, Indiana's former Democratic governor, former ambassador to Prussia, and a War Democrat who replaced the disgraced Jesse Bright in the Senate. Logan is probably John A. Logan, former Illinois representative and at the time a Brigadier General in the Army of the Tennessee. Citations drawn from Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, which identifies each man as a prominent War Democrat, making them likely targets for Ewing's praise in this context.

²⁴ "H. Barber to Brother," June 24, 1862, H. Barber Letters, ALPLM.

Democrats carried the Elections last fall for I thought Mr. Lincoln was going along a little too easy and needed reminding in a forcible manner that some people had his eye on him."

Unfortunately, he would see Lincoln's opposition run by "those D-d fools...Among the Democrats Who undertook to say that was a triumph of...Peace Men." Michael Gapen of the 28th Illinois sympathized with "the majority of the honest voters" who he believed "were induced to vote that ticket with the understanding that it would induce a change of policy which would bring the war to a more speedy & honorable close." Unfortunately, he noted, "That election was brought about by secesh agents in the North," and in spite of the populace's good intentions, "the opposite, & real leaders (& players) of the same party armed to bring the war to a dishonorable close." Their ultimate goal, he charged, was to "allow the Southerners to succeed in their favorite plan, of getting the Western states to join...for the exclusion of and subjugation of the Yankees."²⁵

Democratic success in the 1862 congressional elections emboldened their anti-administration policies. Where secession had driven wide rifts in the party by removing key leadership figures and a major portion of the party's geographic base, increasingly the Democrats began to define themselves in terms of an opposition party. The impression created by the Emancipation Proclamation of a more radical Republican party combined with the general ineffectiveness of Union armies (particularly in the East) boosted the Democrats as the alternative, a narrative they, and soldiers desperate to avoid partisanship, latched on to. For the time being, Democrats could do little more than continually agitate, especially at a national level. In spite of their defeats, Republicans still controlled Congress and the White House, and were able to drive policy without much input from the opposition party. While many Democrats argued against emancipation, confiscation of property, arbitrary arrests, and other evidence of

²⁵ "M. Gapen to Sister," December 17, 1862, Michael Gapen Letters, CHM.

corruption and incompetence, the continual frustration over their lack of influence likely created the prospect of more directly antiwar and anti-administration candidates during 1863 and 1864.²⁶

This transformation of the Democratic Party more heavily toward its Peace faction was driven in many respects by the Democrats' own interpretation of the election results. Americans, they concluded, did not like Lincoln and his radical emancipation policies. While the greater implications of that may have been unclear and largely dependent on trends at the state and local level such results had also propelled several Copperheads to important positions. Further developments, such as the arrest of Clement Vallandigham in April 1863, emboldened Copperheads to push for greater success in the spring following their midterm successes.²⁷ Even as he celebrated Republican success elsewhere, Humphrey Hood of the 117th Illinois worried about the spring elections in Chicago, a Copperhead hotbed. "I am particularly anxious to hear from that city," he wrote to his wife, "as the Copperheads undoubtedly made superhuman efforts to carry the election there."²⁸ Jonathan Harrington of the 72nd Ohio asked his nephew about spring elections in Groton Township, hoping to hear "the Union men would carry the Day by a large majority" against "those Copper Tales [*sic.*]."²⁹ And perhaps most notably, abolitionist

²⁶ Neely, *The Union Divided*, sees this as the fundamental truth of Civil War politics: that without control of any part of the government, the ability of any Democrats to effectively influence policy was extremely limited, a limitation they accepted in adherence to the power of majorities given by the US Constitution; Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 66-70 sees the party uniting around these issues, which had the added benefit of not appearing to be anti-war on their face. Whether one supported or opposed the war effort, no one would support a war effort driven by corruption and incompetence. Bruce Tap, "Race, Rhetoric, and Emancipation: The Election of 1862 in Illinois" *Civil War History* Vol. 2, No. 39 (June, 1993): 101-125 credits racism with the Democrats' big victory in Illinois, and cites Lincoln's preliminary announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation as a "smoking gun" for Democrats to charge the Republicans with radical policies, anathema to a negrophobic state.

²⁷ Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 231-232 discusses the Peace Democrats' interpretation of electoral results, while 252-253 highlights the efforts of Chicago Copperheads to wrest control from War Democrat mayor Francis C. Sherman following the proroguing of the legislature by Governor William Yates. Committed to the war, Sherman burnished his Democratic credentials by opposing abolition, though his son, Colonel Francis T. Sherman of the 88th Illinois, regularly warned him against siding with Copperheads (Letters of February 18, May 7, and May 30, 1863 in Sherman, *Quest for a Star*, 31-32, 37, 44).

²⁸ "H. H. Hood to My Dear Wife," April 7, 1863, Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM

²⁹ "J. F. Harrington to Nephew Charly," April 17, 1863, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH

speaker Ichabod Coddington wrote his fear that "there is real danger" in the 1863 summer over the prospect of "the election of Copperhead governors in Many of the Northwestern states."³⁰

The 1863 elections also saw the return of Clement Vallandigham to the political scene. After losing his Congressional seat in 1862, he made speeches harassing the Lincoln administration until Ambrose Burnside saw fit to declare such troublesome remarks illegal. Burnside had Vallandigham arrested, and a trial convened by Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt found the Copperhead guilty, sentencing him to spend the duration of the war in Fort Warren, Massachusetts. Not wanting to make a political martyr of Vallandigham, Lincoln quietly commuted the sentence, instead exiling the troublemaker to the South. The indifferent Confederates let Vallandigham wander as he pleased, in spite of his own protestations that they consider him an "involuntary prisoner" of war. Gaining little from remaining in the South, Vallandigham took advantage of his freedom. Less than two months removed from his initial arrest, he went to Canada in hopes of regaining his influence in Ohio and the North.

While in Canada, Vallandigham appealed his conviction, a case that Judge Holt brought to the Supreme Court. In the ruling *Ex parte Vallandigham*, the Court upheld the principle that a civilian court could not overrule a military court proceeding done in a military district, and by extension upheld Vallandigham's conviction. From Windsor, Ontario, Vallandigham saw his supporters defeat a movement to nominate War Democrat Hugh Jewett and a short-lived attempt to support Ohio-born George McClellan. His arrest at the hands of the Union army solidified his support amongst Ohio Democrats and made his position within the party nearly unassailable. Democrats campaigned for him by throwing familiar charges of radicalism, especially emancipation, at the Republicans which made the campaign decidedly national in tone. A few elements focused on traditional fears of domination by "Eastern Yankees," but otherwise the

³⁰ "I. Coddington to Friend Eastman," June 25, 1863, Zebina Eastman Papers, CHM.

campaign focused on the direction of the war itself, a debate made far more amenable to Democrats after the recent Union defeat at Chickamauga.³¹

The Republicans nominated John Brough to oppose Vallandigham. Brough was in fact, like Vallandigham, a Democrat. Unlike his opponent though, Brough was a member of the War faction in the party, a supporter of the late Stephen Douglas, and generally approved of the war's anti-slavery direction. By this point, the Republicans, especially in the treacherous Midwest, had replaced their name with the Union Party label, an attempted alliance involving pre-war Republicans and War Democrats. Dissatisfied with the weak leadership of the current Unionist governor David Tod, the two factions in the party replaced him on the ticket with Brough. Formerly a Jacksonian, Brough served in the Ohio House of Representatives, worked as a state auditor, and edited the *Cincinnati Enquirer* before spending the last several years as president of the Cincinnati and Indianapolis Railroad. Like Vallandigham's, Brough's campaign took on a national tone, and he received endorsements and campaign assistance not only from fellow Ohioans Governor David Tod, Senators Benjamin Wade and John Sherman, Congressman Robert Schenck, who had won Vallandigham's House seat the previous year, and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase, but also from without. Neighboring governors Richard Yates (Illinois), Oliver Morton (Indiana), and Zachariah Chandler (Michigan) came to Ohio for the

³¹ This and the preceding paragraph reference Cowden, *Heaven Will Frown*, 176-178, Frank L. Klement, "Clement L. Vallandigham," in Kenneth W. Wheeler, ed., *For the Union: Ohio Leaders in the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), 43, Leonard, *Lincoln's Forgotten Ally*, 182-84, Weber, *Copperheads*, 118-120, Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 229, and Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 243. Both Klement and Dell note that Vallandigham outmaneuvered party leadership to seize the nomination, though they clearly see the story differently. Dell posits that Vallandigham's nomination further weakened the War Democrat faction, which would cost the whole party dearly both in this election and the 1864 presidential campaign to follow. For Klement, Vallandigham is the hero (unsurprising in his own biography), a principled figure willing to fight for his beliefs against the party's more temperate leadership.

campaign, while Republicans also dispatched generals Thomas Meagher and Franz Sigel to drum up Brough support amongst the state's Irish and German populations, respectively.³²

Most reaction amongst the soldiers, while mixed in its levels of optimism, trended heavily against the exiled Vallandigham. E. P. Sturges referred to Vallandigham's nomination as a "happy disappointment." He reported seeing no supporters in the ranks, "not because he [Vallandigham] is not spoken of frequently," but rather "because of the general and deep hatred and contempt that is had for the man among the private soldiers."³³ Ralph Buckland worried that Vallandigham's election "would be an everlasting disgrace to the State," and accused the Democrats of nominating a man who would help the Confederacy. "The southern Rebels," he charged, "are relying almost entirely now upon the aid they will receive from the success of that party at the North." Providing his own evidence, Buckland noted "I see and talk with a great many of them and know that such are their feelings and hopes."³⁴ Owen Hopkins punctuated several late summer diary entries with cheers for Brough, and at least one call of "Down with the traitor Vallandigham," while George Benson Fox happily reported to his sister: "I don't think Vallandigham will get any votes [in my regiment]."³⁵

While Vallandigham himself represented a large target for soldier ire, his standing among the Copperheads brought them to the forefront of voting soldier perceptions. Nathan Kimball, in

³² Quote from Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 229. This is meant to sharply contrast his description of Vallandigham, who campaigned from Canada while maintaining a set of principled stances (in Klement's eyes). Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 238-239, provides the more comprehensive list of Brough supporters, tries to paint him as a front for a powerful political operation whose sole purpose was to deny Vallandigham political office; Klement, "Clement L. Vallandigham," in Wheeler, *For the Union*, 48 also mentions Brough's out-of-state support. Klement, as well as Cowden, *Heaven Will Frown*, 178-179, does grant that Brough was an able campaigner, one whose blunt manner certainly played well during the campaign. Additional information on Brough's background from Richard C. Knopf's brief biography on the Ohio Historical Society website's Governor's Page, <http://ww2.ohiohistory.org/onlinedoc/ohgovernment/governors/brough.html>. There are, unfortunately, few worthwhile books written about John Brough, a fascinating figure in his own right, making the relatively pro-Vallandigham Klement one of the more informative sources.

³³ "E. P. Sturges to Folks," June 17, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS.

³⁴ "Ralph P. to My dear wife," September 23, 1863, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH.

³⁵ Quote from August 8, 1863, Hopkins, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 79. Other entries include July 31, 1863 and August 25, 1863, Hopkins, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 79-80; "Ben to Sister Mary," October 3, 1863, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS

the 14th Indiana, wrote that "Vallandigham was nominated to the candidates of the Valandinghamers," erasing any distinction between Copperheads (defined here as supporters of Vallandigham) and Democrats. "Then surely," he suggested, "will be a wide split in the rank of the party. The War democrats can't go with the Copperhead butter nuts any longer."³⁶ Referring to the candidate as "that Tory & Culprit," Andrew Evans wrote to his son in the 70th Ohio, and in strong language for a Republican described Vallandigham as "a Slander to the name, Democrat."³⁷ Maria Paxton equated the two nicely, referring to a rally set up by "The Copperheads or in other words the Vallandigham peace men," and complained that "Butternut breastpins are the order of the day."³⁸ E. P. Sturges wrote home that the goal of Ohio voters should be to "labor very hard not only to defeat the Copperheads," but to "annihilate them by a crushing majority."³⁹ A soldier in the 37th Ohio felt so strongly that as he died in October, he told the chaplain his last wish was "tell my brother to vote for John Brough & the Union ticket."⁴⁰ John Brough's status as a Democrat gave the Union Party significant claim to the status of a fusion party. The nomination of Vallandigham, especially coming at the expense of two War Democrats, solidified in the minds of many Ohio soldiers the connection between Copperheads and Democrats. The Democrats had not only nominated a Copperhead, but the most symbolically significant one of them all. What was Vallandigham's greatest strength as a candidate within his own party made him unpalatable to many other voters, particularly those in

³⁶ "To Bro," June 15, 1863, Kimball Collection, Lilly. It should be noted that Kimball was a staunch Republican, and regular correspondent with Oliver Morton, means his claims of a coming Democratic split had some elements of wishful thinking from a dedicated partisan foe.

³⁷ "Andrew to Sam," June 11, 1863, Robert F. Engs and Corey M. Brooks, eds., *Their Patriotic Duty: The Civil War Letters of the Evans Family of Brown County, Ohio*, original transcriptions by Joseph Shelton Evans, Jr. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 157.

³⁸ "M. E. Paxton to Cousin Fone," September 8, 1863, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

³⁹ "E. P. Sturges to Folks," July 14, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS

⁴⁰ "T. T. Taylor to My Dear Sir [Andrew Evans]," October 14, 1863, Engs and Brooks, *Their Patriotic Duty*, 205.

the army. "If he meets with a glorious defeat," predicted Harvey Wood, "it will have a glorious affect on this war."⁴¹

Even as he hoped for crushing the Copperheads, Sturges worried about their influence amongst the soldiers. "A copy of the *Volksfreund* [a German-language newspaper] with Vallandigham at the masthead is before me now," he complained to his family. This, he noted, was "the paper most read in our battery, and consequently has its share in influencing the minds of the men."⁴² Thomas Edwin Smith did not fully back Brough at first, but for more personal reasons. Brough's ticket had defeated "JQ," someone to whom Smith was clearly connected. "I was much in hopes he would get to office and thereby be able to help...get me a position in some new Reg.," he complained to his wife Maria. Hardly ready to desert the electoral cause, Smith did add that Brough's campaign "will be a very powerful one."⁴³ Smith would later mention a rare pro-Vallandigham voice in his own regiment. "I heard yesterday," he wrote to his brother, "that there was one man in Co. K who said if he voted at all he would vote for Val." Smith does not bother to relate the man's reasons for supporting Vallandigham, just his conspiratorial belief that "he didn't suppose he would be allowed to vote." Smith promised to protect the man, or at least extend the offer, but did also state his own belief that "I don't think there will be more than 10 or 15 votes for Vallandigham cast in this Reg."⁴⁴ With so few Vallandigham voters, few anti-Brough statements came from soldiers. George Roberts of the 121st Ohio was a notable exception, declaring to his parents, "I can't vote for John Brough." He harangued against

⁴¹ "Harvey Wood to Wife," September 15, 1863, Harvey Scribner Wood Family Letters, CHS.

⁴² "E. P. Sturges to Folks," July 14, 1863, Sturges Family Letters, OHS

⁴³ "Edwin to Maria," June 20, 1863, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS. "JQ" is likely John Quincy Smith, a Republican from Clinton County, Ohio, located outside Smith's hometown of Cincinnati. Smith had been a contender for the Lieutenant Governor's slot that went to Charles Anderson, Joseph Patterson Smith, ed., *History of the Republican Party in Ohio, Volume 1* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1898), 159.

⁴⁴ "TE Smith to Brother," September 9, 1863, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS. Smith's offer of protection suggests that the pro-Vallandigham soldier's vote was likely to be restricted by physical retribution from his peers, though without meeting the man it is possible he believed that the army's leadership would not allow him to vote, perhaps because of his somewhat open Vallandigham support.

abolitionists, "especially those cowards who stay at home and blow." While he did not specifically support Vallandigham, it is hard to conclude otherwise when he explicitly wrote to his father, "for God's sake and the sake of our country," not to vote for Brough.⁴⁵

It was in 1863 that state legislatures even began considering the soldier vote. In Ohio, petitions from around the state came in, and a law allowing for those in the service to vote in a prescribed manner passed by mid-April. In 1862, Illinois soldiers actually voted in the field on the question of the adoption of a proposed new state constitution. Like Illinois voters at home, the Prairie State soldiers rejected the new constitution. Governor Yates pushed the following year for legislation authorizing soldiers to vote, but a heavily Democratic committee of the legislature determined that the proposed law would be unconstitutional. A new bill surfaced in June, but only days prior to Yates' proroguing of the legislature, rendering it moot. A similar situation occurred in Indiana, where the legislature delayed action on the basis of constitutional questions. As in Illinois, the legislature would adjourn in March without a law, not meeting again until the war's last days.⁴⁶ Following the announcement of their voting rights, Constantin Grebner and the 9th Ohio celebrated:

More meaningful to us...was the act on suffrage. Ohio's soldiers in the field who had not had the vote, were granted it: and those who had had it, were guaranteed it. The news pleased us. Now, whatever our location, we could exercise that fundamental right. Therefore, at a crucial moment, we could (so to speak) strike a blow with the ballot. As the nation's history proclaims, a blow with the ballot was no less important than a stroke of the sword.⁴⁷

Vallandigham himself worried about the electoral process, commenting in October, "It may be free, but will not be fair." He remained confident about winning, but specifically mentioned the need to win "the home vote," and "by a considerable majority."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ "G. W. Roberts to Parents," August 24, 1863, *Ohio's War*, 160.

⁴⁶ Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 73-74 (Ohio), 251-261 (Illinois), and 281-283 (Indiana).

⁴⁷ Grebner, *We Were the Ninth*, 122-123

⁴⁸ "CLV to M. Marble, Esq.," October 4, 1863, Clement L. Vallandigham Papers, OHS.

With the opportunity to vote finally in hand, soldiers seemed excited for the possibilities. Though some may have had reservations about Lincoln and the probable plans of the Republicans, Vallandigham was a favorite target of scorn. "I do not believe Vallandigham will get a Single vote in our Division or Camp," wrote John Dow to his sister, continuing, "the Army will not vote for a man who is not in favor of fighting the Rebels until they Surrender."⁴⁹ Oscar Ladley's mother engaged in similar speculation, suggesting that "when the Soldiers votes come pouring in [Vallandigham] will stand a slim chance."⁵⁰ Thomas Smith, upon hearing of "some danger about the Election," assured his sister that "it must be a mistake. You better believe we are going to give Brough a lift." Offering proof of the intense feeling Vallandigham aroused beyond Ohio's borders, Smith added, "Soldiers of other states seem almost as much interested as we."⁵¹ Rudolph Williams was decidedly less optimistic about the prospects of an effective soldier vote:

The vote of the Soldiers will be almost unanimous for Brough but will not be near as large as it is generally expected. I think thirty-five thousand will be as large as the vote of Ohio soldier possibly can be. Two hundred to two and fifty will be about the average for the Regiment. Regiments are cut up and scattered around—one man here and two there, such cases as this will have to be lost—a matter of course others having always voted the democratic ticket, and feeling strongly inclined to vote for Vallandigham and at the same time feeling as though a smashed nose would add considerably to the trials and tribulations necessary to a soldiers life.⁵²

Like many other soldiers, Williams believed there to be minimal support for Vallandigham amongst the army, a sentiment that would have shocked few, including the candidate himself.

Pursuant to the 1863 law, the state of Ohio sent commissioners, voting rolls, and ballot boxes down to several camps to record the votes of the state's soldiers. As the legislature had been unable to change the day of the vote, men filed into their camps on October 13, prepared to do their civic duty. Sam Evans reported to his father about "the agents for the State election...at

⁴⁹ "John Dow to Sister," October 9, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

⁵⁰ "Mother C. Ladley to Son," June 14 1863, Ladley, *Hearth and Knapsack*, 141.

⁵¹ "Edwin Smith to Sister," October 11, 1863, Thomas Edwin Smith Family Papers, CHS.

⁵² "R Williams to Father," October 11, 1863, R. Williams Collection, Lilly.

Memphis," claiming they had "the Books and paper necessary," for the election nearly a month in advance.⁵³ Jonathan Harrington even believed the army assisted in getting men to the polls, suggesting that his superiors "put off marching yesterday on acct. of Election." Men voted based on their regiment's location, so each voting station required name rolls from every county in the state. "There were men here from nearly every County," he observed, and mentioned "Some thirty five Rolls Books and hadn't enough then there was Several that couldn't Vote because we hadn't Poll Books for their County." Harrington's station outside of Vicksburg recorded voters from 26 different counties from across the state.⁵⁴ Colonel Warren Kiefer reported that because they were busy skirmishing with the Confederates near Bristoe, the men of his 110th Ohio voted with "both the boxes and ballots being carried to the voters along the battle-line so they might vote without breaking it."⁵⁵

In spite of these difficulties, which undoubtedly occurred at more locations than just Harrington's, the election did not create any trouble. J. P. Sanderson, a Pennsylvanian watching, "all the Buckeye Boys...voting," recorded in his journal that the process was done "very quietly and orderly, without noise or confusion, or any electioneering."⁵⁶ Alvin Voris noted, "No scrambling, no electioneering, no drinking no quarreling, everything is as quiet as if it were the Sabbath. I never knew an election to go off so quietly."⁵⁷ Thomas Honnell expressed a similar situation from his camp. "The Election went off very quietly here, though there was great excitement."⁵⁸ Though hardly an unbiased source, Major Thomas T. Taylor of the 47th Ohio claimed, "I never saw a more impartial election in my life, not an officer had anything to do with it except to vote. The enlisted men were left perfectly free to vote as they pleased and tickets of

⁵³ "Sam to Father," September 13, 1863, Engs and Brooks, *Their Patriotic Duty*, 194.

⁵⁴ "J. F. Harrington to Father & Mother," October 14, 1863, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

⁵⁵ Pope, *The Weary Boys*, 48.

⁵⁶ Entry of October 13, 1863, "War Journal of J. P. Sanderson," J. P. Sanderson Papers, OHS.

⁵⁷ "Letter from Morris Island, S. C.," October 13, 1863, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 140.

⁵⁸ "Thomas Honnell to Brother Henry," October 26, 1863, Thomas Corwin Honnell Papers, OHS.

both parties were circulated."⁵⁹ John Dow expected outside interference. "We anticipated a good shelling from the rebels as would undoubtedly [*sic.*] have hindered the Election" he wrote, "but there was not a Shot fired."⁶⁰ These quiet processes contrasted starkly with voting at home. Soldiers whose enlistments had previously expired voted at home as before, while other men had received furloughs during the election. Franklin Wise, formerly of the 76th Ohio, went to the election at home, and noticed "a crowd of copperheads and a lot of them having Revolvers in their side pocket and some with Butternuts in, and some with hickory stubs in their hand."⁶¹ Charles Miller, home on sick leave from the 76th Ohio, called the election "of such vital importance to the soldier and the cause he as fighting for," that he got out of bed and went to vote.⁶²

The earliest reports on the election suggested a very positive result. "Today," wrote Franklin Wise, "the report is that Brough is Elected By 60,000 Majority without the soldiers vote, it is estimated at 100,000 with the soldiers vote."⁶³ The final tally amongst the soldiers, unsurprisingly, went overwhelmingly to John Brough. Historian Jennifer Weber has calculated that 95% of all Ohio soldiers' votes went to Brough. The total count of soldier votes, slightly fewer than 44,000, represented about 9 percent of all voters in the state, and produced a margin just shy of 40,000 for Brough.⁶⁴ Rudolph Williams's pessimistic prediction of 35,000 soldier votes had been under by nearly 10,000, a testament to the dedication of the state government and

⁵⁹ "T. T. Taylor to My Dear Sir," October 14, 1863, Engs and Brooks, *Their Patriotic Duty*, 205.

⁶⁰ "John Dow to Sister," October 14, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

⁶¹ Entry of October 13, 1863, Franklin A. Wise Papers, WRHS. The hickory stubs are almost certainly a reference to past Democratic president Andrew Jackson, known by his nickname "Old Hickory." Jackson had been the first Democratic president, and most Democrats in the Civil War still claimed to be the heirs of his small-government tradition.

⁶² Miller, *Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 134.

⁶³ Entry of October 15, 1863, Franklin A. Wise Papers, WRHS.

⁶⁴ Weber, *Copperheads*, 121 cites the 95% figure, while Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 77-78 gives some total figure estimates.

military authorities to guarantee the soldiers' voting rights.⁶⁵ Statewide, Brough had triumphed with a strong showing of just over 60 percent of the total vote, including victories in Vallandigham's home county of Montgomery, as well as Dayton, the city where he had worked.⁶⁶

William Pittenger's diary expressed the day of success in poetic terms but also included some interesting statistics. His entry for October 13 reads as follows:

Well I suppose this day has been celebrated by and among the greatest battles for liberty ever fought, not of blood, but of the greater privilege of the American citizen, the right of suffrage, a battle between treason and loyalty at the ballot box. We have confidence that the victory has been all over today. Our Regt., and I blush to say it, gave for treason, Vallandigham, 8 votes, but for loyalty 550. The 63rd had but 3 for treason, the 27th 28 for treason, the 43rd 57, making 97 for treason, we the Ohio brigade. This better than we expected yet not so good as we would that it had been. Shame, eternal shame, upon our soldiers who voted for a traitor. Why, Voted for the very thing against which he is fighting, for all know Vallandigham to be a traitor, or at least all intelligent persons. Such, in order to be consistent should desert the first night they're on picket, that's what's the matter.⁶⁷

Those few men who voted for Vallandigham did so under the suspicions of their fellow soldiers, such as those expressed by Pittenger. There do not appear to have been, as Pittenger suggested, any great number of desertions in the days following the vote. Pittenger's take provides a general template for men reporting election results. All excitedly recounted Brough's large majorities while decrying or trying to explain away the few Vallandigham votes they did count.

Letters and other reports from Ohio soldiers gloated over the large margins given to Brough by their men.⁶⁸ Several soldiers, including George Benson Fox of the 75th Ohio and

⁶⁵ 35,000 prediction in "R Williams to Father," October 11, 1863, R. Williams Collection, Lilly.

⁶⁶ Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 252n56 and Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 77-78. While the soldier vote in Ohio was not decisive, votes from the field did make the difference in Pennsylvania, where Copperhead George W. Woodward lost a bid to unseat Andrew Curtin for the governor's seat in that state, Weber, *Copperheads*, 121-122.

⁶⁷ Entry of October 13, 1863, "William Henry Pittenger Diary," OHS.

⁶⁸ Reports of overwhelming Brough victories came from the 76th (191 Brough to 36 Vallandigham in Miller, *Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 134), 47th (200 to 5 in "T. T. Taylor to My Dear Sir," October 14, 1863, Engs and Brooks, *Their Patriotic Duty*, 205), 27th (463 to 28), 39th (539 to 9), 43rd (306 to 51), and 63rd Ohio Regiments (375 to 3, preceding four from "Frederick Pimper to Friend," October 27, 1863, Pimper Collection, Lilly (Pimper himself served in the 39th and provided a further breakdown of those 9 Vallandigham votes)). These results are scattered amongst those regiments who had men willing to provide an accounting of their regiments'

Constantin Grebner of the 9th, happily noted a clean sweep for Brough in their regiments.⁶⁹ William Bentley reported a similar shutout in the 44th Ohio, but this was only a disappointment to Bentley, whose 104th "was disgraced by 4 votes" for Vallandigham.⁷⁰ Orin England of the 72nd Ohio noted about 16 Vallandigham votes in his regiment, but gloated that one of his superiors "has those fellows worked that voted that ticket."⁷¹ Alvin Voris cheered the votes of "all the native born Americans" who went for Brough, while explaining away the Vallandigham voters as "Some Irish, Gov Seymour's friends." Voris casually diminished their standing, snorting, "If I had taken a big jug of whiskey, I think I could have controlled the votes of the Irish company." Perhaps most surprisingly, he observed, "The intelligent colored man is much more respectable and safe as a voter than the Irish."⁷²

Vallandigham's defeat prompted much celebration across Ohio and the nation from Republicans and other Unionists. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton called Brough's election "a glorious victory," while Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase called Brough voters "bullet[s] fairly aimed at the heart of the rebellion." Abraham Lincoln himself let out a rhetorical sigh of relief, telegraphing outgoing governor Tod: "Glory to God in the highest. Ohio has saved the Union," high praise from the man tasked with doing just that.⁷³ Celebration ranged beyond the upper reaches of government into the state's municipalities. John Rice's wife Elizabeth told him of the great celebration in Sandusky:

In the evening they had a great time rejoicing over the election. They had an immense bonfire down street. The Croghan House, Kessler and all the buildings and hoses on Main Street and up nearly as far as the railroad bridge were brilliantly illuminated. All the houses in that part

votes. This sample is meant to analyze the general style of reporting and feeling of the reporter himself, and is not intended as a full statistical accounting of those numbers or an attempt to find error in their calculation.

⁶⁹ "Ben to Dear Bro. Charley," October 14, 1863, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS; Grebner, *We Were the Ninth*, 159.

⁷⁰ Entry of October 23, 1863 in Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased*, 75.

⁷¹ "Orin to Deed," October 20, 1863, Captain Orin England Letters, RBH.

⁷² "Letter from Morris Island, S. C.," October 13, 1863, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 141.

⁷³ Klement, "Clement L. Vallandigham," in Wheeler, *For the Union*, 51; Weber, *Copperheads*, 122.

of town where your folks live were also illuminated. The streets were crowded with men, women and children, even babies were out. There was also a torchlight procession which marched around town. Col. Lee of Tiffin spoke from a stand in front of the Bank, and after he had finished two ladies and two gentlemen who gave a concert here the night before got up on the stand and sung two patriotic pieces. After they got through the Band played and with the hurraing of the people and firing of the cannon the meeting broke up. In one of the windows of McCulloch's Drug Store there was a small stand covered with a black cloth on it was a white plate and on the plate a black bean. Above it was a card on which was printed "here lieth the remains of the Butternut Party of Sandusky County". Under that "Rest in Peace" in Latin and then two letters Va and P just above the bean. It was first rate. I asked Owen why he did not illuminate his office and he said because he thought it would be too much like having a wake at his own funeral, or like sitting up with his own corpse. Cute answer wasn't it?⁷⁴

Similar to Elizabeth Rice's story, Samuel Wildman described "bonfires, rockets, fire balls, fire crackers, &c." being shot off in Norwalk, while Maria Leggett's diary noted, "The cheering over the returns of the Election kept us disturbed considerable last night, and the noise in the streets today has been very great...Banners, & Flags are floating all over" in Zanesville.⁷⁵ Soldiers in a field celebrated as well, and J. P. Sanderson reported "hurrahs for the defeat of the Copperheads" in the Provost Marshall General's office in Missouri.⁷⁶ Soldiers along picket lines even took the time to shout election results across the way to their Confederate counterparts.⁷⁷

While many soldiers celebrated publically, many also did so privately, expressing their satisfaction in asides and epitaphs in private journal entries or personal letters. Ralph Buckland wrote that Brough's victory "has rejoiced the hearts of all good soldiers," while Henry Kauffman called it "a great pleasure to a true Union soldier." Not to be outdone by anyone, Samuel Wildman's diary entry for the day after the election called the day's events "Great, grand and

⁷⁴ "Lizzie S. Rice to Husband," October 17, 1863, Sarah Elizabeth Wilson Rice Correspondence, RBH. "Va and P" probably represent initials of the Democratic candidates, "V," for Vallandigham and "P" for George Pugh, the candidate for lieutenant governor.

⁷⁵ Entry of October 14, 1863, Samuel Wildman Diary, Wildman Family Papers, OHS; Entry of October 14, 1863, Maria Wells Leggett Papers, WRHS.

⁷⁶ Entry of October 17, 1863, War Journal of J. P. Sanderson, J. P. Sanderson Papers, OHS.

⁷⁷ Havighurst, *Ohio*, 101; "SJFM to Father and Mother," October 18, 1863, Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS specifically mentions the "anxiety" of the Confederates, calling them "crestfallen" at the election result.

glorious!"⁷⁸ Alvin Voris celebrated in South Carolina, claiming that in the result Ohio had "vindicated its intelligence and political virtue." "Never were men more deserving," he wrote of the Democrats in a later letter, "of severe punishment for infidelity to their Government...I hope the people will mock these traitors, and forever after shut them out of the control of public matters." Echoing common soldier rhetoric about the threat posed by Copperheadism, Voris told his men that "the citizens at home...would take care of the miserable traitors at home," and that they should do so "till after the war when we will finish the work by laying [the Copperheads] out forever."⁷⁹

As the celebrating died down, soldiers hoped the conversation over war support had decisively ended. George Fox thought "this election will have a 'sadly demoralizing' effect upon Butternuts & Copperheads," hoping such men would see the error of their ways, or at least their increasing marginalization in the nation's political discourse.⁸⁰ In a few isolated incidents, some Democrats attempted to have election results thrown out that included the soldiers' vote. Andrew Evans, whose election to the state legislature had involved the soldier vote, welcomed such a challenge, telling his son that his opponents should "Let Er Rip."⁸¹ Frank Klement's Vallandigham biography posits that had the election been held in June, it is likely the exile would have won. Unfortunately for Vallandigham, the election was in October, by which time

⁷⁸ "R. P. Buckland to Wife," October 29, 1863, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH; "Henry Kauffman to Brother and Sister," October 31, 1863 in Kauffman, *The Harmony Boys*, 51; Entry of October 13, 1863, Samuel Wildman Diary, Wildman Family Papers, OHS. Conventions of punctuation prevent a literal transcription of Wildman's joy, which included ten exclamation marks to conclude the thought.

⁷⁹ Letters from Morris Island, SC, October 19 and 24, 1863, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 142-143.

⁸⁰ "Benson to Father," October 24, 1863, George Benson Fox Correspondence, CHS

⁸¹ "Andrew Evans to Son," December 6, 1863, Engs and Brooks, *Their Patriotic Duty*, 221; Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 74-75 mentions that while Vallandigham did not challenge the result, a defeated candidate for Probate Judge challenged the voting law, having lost by a margin covered by the soldier vote. The case went to the state supreme court, and though the court upheld the right of the legislature to make such laws, thereby validating the result, the legislature passed a new law in March 1864 clarifying and replacing the earlier legislation. A letter to Evans from George Early ("G. W. Early to Father," December 11, 1863, Engs and Brooks, *Their Patriotic Duty*, 223) suggested such challenges were desperate challenges of the defeated, rather than any particular constitutional objection to soldiers in the field voting

defeat at Chancellorsville had given way to dramatic victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. Ohio Democrats had gambled that the notoriously anti-war Vallandigham would be able to overcome his perception problem, and lost handily. Union soldiers hated Vallandigham, and as defeats turned into victories and other Copperheads rioted at home, the Democrats appeared to slip further away from the broader political mood. It was this lesson that Lincoln and the Republicans seemed to take heading into 1864, as the president continued moving forward with his reconstruction and emancipation policies, setting the stage for the presidential election to come.⁸²

In 1864, Lincoln's great moment of truth came. The President would face re-election, and the war, both its progress and goals, would be the main issue. Lincoln's popularity fluctuated with the successes and failures of the army. He experienced high tide in the days following victories, such as the dual successes of Gettysburg and Vicksburg in early July 1863, and Chattanooga later that fall. Conversely, defeat and lack of movement hurt his standing, particularly setbacks at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, or the late summer 1864 stalemates outside of Petersburg and Atlanta. Lincoln was acutely aware of the relationship, and as the victories diminished that summer (combined with a continually climbing body count), the President pondered his administration's potential end. With suffrage being extended nationally to a wartime army for the first time in the country's history, soldiers in many more states had the opportunity that Ohioans did in 1863. Of the 25 states that made up the Electoral College for the

⁸² Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 231-250; Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 98; Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*, 118-119 comes to a similar conclusion, though she tries to fit it into her larger narrative about the shift towards abolitionism within Union ranks. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered a little over a month after Vallandigham's defeat, reinforced the president's policy of victory with as little regard as possible given to the nation's war weariness. Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 261 puts the Address into the timeline of Lincoln's marginalization of the Democrats' long-standing conservative tradition, while Weber, *Copperheads*, 123-124 points out that the Copperheads came to that conclusion on their own, and subsequently derided the address. Even the *Times* of London referred to it as "so grotesque a production."

1864 Presidential election, 11 extended the vote to their fighting men, among them Kentucky and Ohio.⁸³

As summer gave way to fall in the critical year of 1864, Lincoln's chances at re-election stalled with the main Union armies. The president faced challenges from the opposition Democrats and even within his own party. So convinced was Lincoln of his eventual defeat that he circulated the famous "blind memorandum" amongst his cabinet in August, stating that his administration would cooperate with the President-elect to save the Union, "as he will have secured his election on the grounds that he can not possibly save it afterwards." Lincoln needed to strike a careful balance between his party's radicals and the conservatives he was attempting to court into the Unionist Party. It was the radicals who caused Lincoln the most trouble, forcing a veto of the Wade-Davis reconstruction plan and providing potential challengers. Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase offered himself as a potential replacement for Lincoln in the early spring. In spite of his support from notable Ohioans (including recent Lincoln favorite John Brough), Chase's campaign went nowhere, and he quietly withdrew from the race, eventually resigning his cabinet post and accepting Lincoln's nomination to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.⁸⁴

Never one to let political realities get in the way of his own ambition, John Fremont also attempted to mount a challenge to Lincoln first for the Republican nomination, then later as an

⁸³ Much of the narrative that follows is reliant on David E. Long, *The Jewel of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln's Re-Election and the End of Slavery* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), Dudley, "The Election of 1864": 500-518, Harold M. Hyman, "Election of 1864," in Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *The Coming to Power*, 144-167. Tennessee and Louisiana, though fully under Union control by this time, were in the early stages of Reconstruction, and their citizens not permitted to vote. The other nine states were California, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Wisconsin.

⁸⁴ Narrative of Lincoln's nomination struggle from Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 292-293, Weber, *Copperheads*, 157, Long, *Jewel of Liberty*, 33-38, Gallman, *The North Fights the Civil War*, 162. John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 360-364, and Donald, *Lincoln*, 478-483 outline Chase's attempt at unseating Lincoln for the nomination. The Blind memorandum incident cited in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 771 and Weber, *Copperheads*, 164. The memorandum received the descriptor "blind" due to Lincoln's insistence that his Cabinet sign the document without having seen it, likely as a demonstration of faith in his leadership.

independent candidate of the party's radical wing. He drew particular support from radical Germans in Missouri, who had expressed dissatisfaction with what they saw as Lincoln's hesitation on further emancipation. Attempts to court radical Democrat Benjamin Butler proved fruitless, as few flocked to the Pathfinder's banner. Fremont held on to his presidential dream until September, in a move that also cost Postmaster General Montgomery Blair his position. Lincoln forced Blair's retirement in order to placate the few remaining radicals that supported Fremont. As he fought off the radical challenge, Lincoln also needed to shore up conservative support for the Union Party. Electoral realities quietly forced Hannibal Hamlin out of the vice presidential slot, leaving room for a Democratic replacement to solidify partisan unity. Republicans sounded out Ben Butler for the position, but after his refusal, Tennessee Senator and wartime governor Andrew Johnson defeated Daniel S. Dickson for the nomination. So secure was the political union that Robert Breckenridge, uncle of 1860 Democratic nominee and Confederate general John C. Breckenridge, declared to the Baltimore convention that he would support the Union Party "to the ends of the earth."⁸⁵

While the general reaction to Lincoln's re-nomination was fairly positive, there were some tepid or uninspired reactions. Upon hearing the news, "all of the soldiers [said] 'amen'" in Charles Miller's 76th Ohio, while J. Fletcher Danton, a lieutenant in the 157th Ohio (a Hundred Days regiment), noted that "the popular feeling for 'Old Abe' was beyond description."⁸⁶ John Harding noted that "The majority seem to be well pleased," at Lincoln's nomination, but he

⁸⁵ Fremont candidacy and Blair's dismissal cited in Donald, *Lincoln*, 533-534, Long, *Jewel of Liberty*, 239-243, Charles R. Wilson, "New Light on the Lincoln-Blair-Fremont 'Bargain' of 1864," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Oct., 1936): 71-78; Vice Presidential narrative in Don E. Fehrenbacher, "The Making of a Myth: Lincoln and the Vice-Presidential Nomination in 1864," *Civil War History* Vol. 41, Issue 4 (Dec., 1995): 273-291, and Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 295; Breckenridge quote from Gallagher, *The Union War*, 52-53, and Breckenridge added in the next sentence that he "would not take one step" if Lincoln were to run as a Republican. Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 309 also states unequivocally that the Union Party represented a true fusion of the main parties.

⁸⁶ Miller, *Struggle for the Life of the Republic*, 169; J. Fletcher Danton, June 18, 1864, *Hundred Days to Richmond*, 63.

added that others would have preferred “Fremont and Johnson,” while others “rather it had been Johnson and Lincoln instead of Lincoln and Johnson.”⁸⁷ W. L. Phelps wondered “how Abraham Lincoln ever received the Baltimore nomination,” and while he added that “Johnson would of suited me better,” the most important thing was that “I will never give a vote that will count as much for the Copperhead candidate as for a true loyal man.”⁸⁸

More so even than Lincoln's re-nomination, soldiers reacted strongly to the potential challenge from John Fremont. David Stathem complained about “the politicians...trying to split the Union party at home by trying to favor Chase, Fremont and others.”⁸⁹ H. Barber related his concerns about Fremont's challenge, suggesting “The Germans are said to be unalterably hostile to him [Lincoln]. Thousands of Radical Americans heartily sympathize with the Radical Germans.”⁹⁰ Sam Wildman sadly recounted that “Fremont used to be my favorite man, but,” should he persist in opposing Lincoln, “I am afraid I shall despise him,” while he father Frederick wrote back that he was “very sorry for the course Fremont has taken,” and accused the general of “playing into the hands of the Copperheads.”⁹¹ Other soldiers were even more pronounced in their denunciations. Andrew Powell wrote that “Fremont has made a perfect ass of himself,” and added that “I could not think it possible that Mr. Fremont would so absurdly belittle himself.”⁹² George Cram noted that Fremont's maneuvering “blasts him forever in the eyes of the soldiers.” The other men, he added, “now rank him with the enemies of the country and the special enemy of the soldier.”⁹³ The negative reaction to Fremont's attempt at muscling into the election certainly demonstrates the degree to which soldiers had equated Lincoln with

⁸⁷ “John L. Harding to Mother and Father,” June 15, 1864, Harding Collection, Lilly.

⁸⁸ “W. L. Phelps to Sir,” August 17, 1864, James R. M. Gaskill Papers, ALPLM.

⁸⁹ “D. T. Stathem to Sister,” February 3, 1864, David T. Stathem Papers, OHS.

⁹⁰ “H. Barber to Brother,” March 12, 1864, H. Barber Letters, ALPLM.

⁹¹ “Sam to Father,” June 20, 1864, and “F. A. Wildman to Son,” July 6, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

⁹² “Andrew Powell to Brother & friends,” July 12, 1864, Andrew Powell Letters, RBH.

⁹³ “George to Mother,” June 15, 1864, Cram, *Soldiering With Sherman*, 105.

victory. As this happened, the Democrats continued to align themselves closer to their Copperhead wing, making the choice even more clear for the Copperhead-hating army.

Sensing opportunity, the Democrats gleefully tried to milk the public perception of the war's failure as much as possible. In the days prior to the current protocols of nominating conventions, where the party in power is given the honor of going last, both parties held conventions whenever they pleased. The Democrats, trying to capitalize on the momentum of the late summer as much as possible, succeeded in pushing their convention back to late August. Gathering in Chicago, the party's own internal factions debated, and their disagreements provided a fractured party to oppose the President. Even though War Democrats dominated most of the leadership positions, the Peace faction was given the prime position of composing the Party's platform for that year. Led by Vallandigham, the platform contained the famous "Peace Plank," which declared the war to be "four years of failure." Historian Jennifer Weber even declared that this platform represented "the Copperhead's apex." Other pieces of the platform ignored traditional Democratic issues, such as tariffs or banking policy, to focus almost totally on the war and the Constitutional issues raised by Lincoln's conduct within.⁹⁴

As Copperheads wrote the platform, the War Democrats rallied around their favored candidate. Led by men such as Party Chairman August Belmont, they settled on George McClellan, former commander of the Army of the Potomac, pushing him past Peace Democrats like former Connecticut governor Thomas Seymour. Further deference was given to the Peace faction when George Pendleton, a Representative from Ohio and a noted Vallandigham ally, was tabbed as the vice presidential candidate. After consultation with several Democratic leaders, and several rewrites of his acceptance letter, McClellan took the nomination, but took the

⁹⁴ Democratic platform printed in Schlesinger, Jr. ed., *History of American Presidential Elections*, 1179-1180; Weber, *Copperheads*, 172.

unprecedented step of repudiating the platform, in particular the Peace Plank. "I could not look into the face of my gallant comrades," he wrote in that official acceptance, "and tell them that their labors...had been in vain." McClellan had taken great pains to enforce the distinction between himself and the Democrats' peace faction, a faction that would give the party a great deal of trouble among the soldiers and the national electorate.⁹⁵

The president and his closest advisor, Secretary of State William Seward, made sure to respond. Unofficially, Lincoln offered his reaction in a letter to supporters in Buffalo regarding a speaking engagement. He refuted the contention that the war could be won without emancipation and maintained that any armistice, or other cessation of hostilities which the Chicago platform seemed to call for, would lead only to separation and defeat. Seward offered a more official reaction from the administration in early September in Auburn, New York. Titled "The Allies of Treason," Seward's address castigated the Chicago convention for aiding the southern cause. "I think you will agree with me," he offered, "that the Richmond democrats and the Chicago democrats have lately come to act very much alike." As Democrats complained that Lincoln refused peace without abolition, Seward sternly reminded the crowd that the South offered peace only without reunion. Much as state and local Republican candidates would try to earn support through public investigation into disloyalty, figures in the Lincoln administration laid out their suspicions of treason on the part of the opposition.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Accounts of the convention and the drama of McClellan's nomination cited from Weber, *Copperheads*, 169-173, Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats*, 295-297, Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 130-131, Sears, *George B. McClellan*, 371-376, Charles R. Wilson, "McClellan's Changing Views on the Peace Plank of 1864" *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Apr., 1933): 498-505. Jeffrey D. Wert, *From Winchester to Cedar Creek: The Shenandoah Campaign of 1864* (Carlisle, PA: South Mountain Press, 1987), 11 notes that some Republicans were so nervous about McClellan's ability to garner the soldier vote that they called for Lincoln to restore the general's command, calls the president wisely ignored.

⁹⁶Weber, *Copperheads*, 173-174 mentions both the Lincoln and Seward addresses. Neely, *The Union Divided*, 1-3 discusses the Auburn address, and Neely uses it to set up the rest of his book dealing with party divisions. He contrasts it with the sentiments of reconciliation advanced by Lincoln, which he characterizes as being done safely in the aftermath of electoral victory. Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 407-408 also discusses the Seward address.

Prior to the convention, Democratic civilians expressed their concerns over the party's potential direction. Loyal Democrat O. J. Pritchard (who made sure to mention that he had "cast my first vote in 1852 for Pierce & King") wrote to New York governor Horatio Seymour that "I think it necessary that a War Man should be nominated by the convention." While he worried that the "Peace at any price portion of the Party may be too strong," Pritchard hoped for McClellan's nomination as the best hope to beat Lincoln.⁹⁷ Opposite men like Pritchard stood Ohio Congressman Alexander Long, who wrote to supporter Alexander Boys that with "a peace platform and peace candidate at Chicago all will be well, & if McClellan is put upon us all is lost."⁹⁸ Cincinnati lawyer John Trimble, who referred to War Democrats as "Monstrous frauds," and called for a nomination representative of "the true democracy of the Northwest Ohio, [Indiana] and Ill[inois] and others," revealing the party's regional tensions.⁹⁹ Following the convention, and McClellan's nomination, Trimble was predictably outraged. He responded to the proceedings with "utter, and entire condemnation," referring to it as "the base truckling and betrayal of the party," and even suggested to vice-presidential nominee George Pendleton that he "come out wholly and reject the nominations."¹⁰⁰ The stress of uniting as necessary for a successful presidential campaign exposed the deep fissures still damaging the party and its message.

The Democratic platform made its way to the soldiers, and they reacted with a predictable outrage. "The Chicago Convention offers the Soldiers its protection. Such protection as Wolves would offer Lambs," sneered Thomas Honnell of the party's offering to the army. "They will not give a man or a Dollar to continue this war," he continued, "but they will support

⁹⁷ "O. J. Pritchard to Hon. Horatio Seymour," August 15, 1864, O. J. Pritchard Letter, ALPLM.

⁹⁸ "Alexander Long to Alexander S. Boys," September 9, 1864, Alexander St. Clair Boys Papers, OHS.

⁹⁹ "J. A. Trimble to Sir," March 4, 1864, Trimble Family Papers, OHS.

¹⁰⁰ "John A. Trimble, Esq. to Kentucky Platform Committee," November 9, 1864, Trimble Family Papers, OHS; "J. A. Trimble to G. H. Pendleton," September 16, 1864, Trimble Family Papers, OHS.

and Protect the Soldiers! How preposterous McClellan tries to gain votes by Declaring war in his letter of acceptance. But his blind is too thin, We can see through. We can't trust him."¹⁰¹ Some soldiers certainly saw the difference between McClellan and his supporters. "The doings of the Chicago Convention of Traitors ought to open the eyes of people," wrote Ralph Buckland to his wife, though a later letter to his son expressed some worry by claiming "McClellan is the strongest man the Democrats could have nominated."¹⁰² Sam Wildman was not prepared to dismiss McClellan on his own, but noted that the presence of "The 'peace' platform and 'peace' candidate for Vice-President make a hard pill to swallow for some of our men." He even added that "One of our sergeants, who was a war supporter of George before the nomination, has expressed his intention...of not voting at all under present circumstances."¹⁰³ Alvin Voris complained of Pendleton's nomination, noting that the vice presidential nominee regularly "voted with Vallandigham & the Woods, and was every ready to extend the hand of sympathy to the haters of his country and willingly stab every effort for the salvation of the Government offered by the political friends of the Administration." Voris, like Wildman noted the difference between Democratic factions, but sadly believed "the war democracy of the country had enough of spirit and loyalty to spurn such an alliance as they make at Chicago with the Copperheads."¹⁰⁴ Whatever goodwill McClellan might have been able to build through his pro-war acceptance letter was squandered by the necessity of allying with Vallandigham and the party's peace faction.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ "Thomas Honnell to Friend," September 25, 1864, Thomas Corwin Honnell Papers, OHS.

¹⁰² "Ralph P. to Wife," September 4, 1864 and "R. P. Buckland to Son," September 11, 1864, Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH.

¹⁰³ "Sam to Father," September 15, 1864, Wildman Family Papers, OHS.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from near Petersburg, Va., September 8, 1864, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 218.

¹⁰⁵ Paludan, *A People's Contest*, 249 claims that this platform had a similar effect on Republicans in general, drawing the party together in opposition to McClellan, or whatever nominee the Democrats would choose.

Robert Winn, never one to avoid the chance at a clever solution, saw the platform as an opportunity. "I would like to apply," he offered, "the proposed resolution of the Peace Democrats to the Chicago Convention – for each delegate of war proclivities to join the army – so – let men who teach soldiers to permanently fix themselves in the army – let them volunteer for 5 years at least."¹⁰⁶ If these Democrats, including McClellan, were truly in favor of the war, they would do the honorable thing, and join up to fight. Undoubtedly, Winn would not have voted for McClellan even if the candidate and his supporters took his advice, given his strong support for emancipation. He did, though, take the opportunity to voice his opinion that not all was well with the Republicans, and that maybe not all soldiers would be so enthusiastic. Others, like Chesley Mosman, expressed similar dissatisfaction with their options, as he noted that several of his fellow officers were "not satisfied with the candidates and want other men named."¹⁰⁷ John Rice wished "there was a better candidate than either running," but decided he would vote for Lincoln, "to keep from being called 'disgruntled.'"¹⁰⁸

In a sense, the Democrats' Peace faction took a reasonable risk in criticizing Lincoln on the war. The sense that Lincoln was mismanaging the war, and his re-election guaranteed four more years of conflict against an intractable foe, was one of the major factors driving anti-Lincoln sentiment. Lincoln and the Republicans certainly knew this, and the president made sure the strategy conducted by Ulysses Grant in the 1864 summer reflected that concern. Sherman's march on Atlanta represented a critical opportunity for Union and Republican aims, and any delay combined with the inactivity outside of Richmond by the late summer provided much support for the Copperheads' position. Confederates also felt some concern regarding the success of Union forces. Andrew Powell suspected that the Confederates would launch another invasion

¹⁰⁶ "Robert Winn to Sister," October 26, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

¹⁰⁷ Entry of September 7, 1864, Mosman, *Rough Side of War*, 274.

¹⁰⁸ "John to My Own Dear Wife," November 7, 1864, John B. Rice Papers, RBH.

of the North, similar to previous advances that had ended at Antietam and Gettysburg, in advance of the election. Henry Brimhall worried that even as the Confederates near Atlanta came closer to the end, they were certain to hold out "until the next Presidential Election" to influence the results. Historian Richard McMurray claims that John Bell Hood's desire to be more aggressive in his defense of Atlanta was driven, at least in part, by a desire to gain an actual victory for the Confederacy to continue diminishing morale in the North. The Democrats were suddenly put on the defensive regarding the war when Sherman finally broke through and captured Atlanta on September 2. News reached the North less than a week after the Democrats' nomination of McClellan and before the General had been able to send them his acceptance. Quickly following Sherman's victory was a successful campaign by General Phil Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley, which pushed Jubal Early away from Washington and built upon the Atlanta success. Once again, Union troops were on the move, and Copperheadism appeared to be on the decline.¹⁰⁹

This would not be the universal case, as many in the party still believed their chances for victory were strong. "The gallant Sherman at Atlanta (cheers), and the daring and dashing Sheridan, in the Shenandoah Valley (cheers), have achieved victories of vital importance to the cause of the Union," exclaimed Robert Winthrop in a pamphlet.¹¹⁰ Winthrop continued by using

¹⁰⁹ Quotes from "Henry Brimhall to Friends," May 22, 1864, Henry Brimhall Letter, CHM; "A. Powell to Brother," October 18, 1864, Andrew Powell Letters, RBH. For information on military strategy relating Atlanta and the 1864 campaign, see Albert Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 543-547, especially regarding the outcome of Atlanta's capture, and Richard M. McMurry *Atlanta 1864: Last Chance for the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), especially 16-17, 163-164. McMurry, *Atlanta 1864*, 163-164 makes the claim regarding Hood's motivation. Roy Morris, Jr., *Sheridan: The Life and Wars of General Phil Sheridan* (New York: Crown, 1992), 180 discusses the political celebration following the Shenandoah victory, and the way Republicans and the public saw that success as confirming Sherman's advances. Woodworth, *Nothing But Victory*, 583-588 credits Atlanta with pushing Lincoln over the top for victory, while Wert, *Winchester to Cedar Creek*, 138-141 and Morris, *Sheridan*, 220 make a similar point about Sheridan's victories in the Shenandoah. Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 162 mentions more broadly the possibility of military advances by both sides influencing the election.

¹¹⁰ "Great Speech of Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, at New London, Conn...." *Union Pamphlets of the Civil War, 1861-1865: Volume II*, edited by Frank Freidel, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 1080. Notations of (cheers) are additions found in the pamphlet.

his cheer as a chance to display the greater patriotism of his party. “We are told,” he wrote, “that all these victories are impairing the prospects of our own political success... (b)ut we rejoice in them all, notwithstanding, and thank God for them with undivided hearts.”¹¹¹ He continued to say that the Democrats were just as hopeful of Union war success, and therefore more patriotic, for it was likely to cost them votes at the polls. The power of the Peace faction within his party could make Winthrop’s assertions of Democratic cheer ring slightly hollow, but it would be difficult to dismiss the former governor of any state, particularly one as prominent as Massachusetts. Winthrop and his pamphlet were as much a part of the Democratic campaign effort as Vallandigham’s “four years of failure” plank in the platform.

General Democratic malaise regarding McClellan did not prevent them from putting him forward as an exemplary soldier and man. Harold Hyman is particularly critical of the Democrats’ campaign for using the general’s glamour as a substitute for actual policy.¹¹² While the party was certainly willing to use McClellan’s celebrity for its cause, that occurred mostly in their use of him as a foil for Lincoln, the true subject of the campaign. Winthrop’s pro-McClellan pamphlet praised the general for his “quiet endurance of injustice and calumny,” which “won for him a respect which will outlive the ephemeral notoriety of his revilers.”¹¹³ The *Cleveland Plain-Dealer* newspaper took a similar tack. “His exalted purity of character, splendid talents, and bright statesmanship all indicate qualifications for the high position he will be called upon to fill by his countrymen.”¹¹⁴ In particular, McClellan compared favorably in campaign rhetoric to Lincoln with regard to the leadership of military affairs. Winthrop continued his stumping for McClellan’s leadership: “Nobody imagines, I presume, that the hero of Antietam would be a less

¹¹¹ “Great Speech,” 1080.

¹¹² Hyman, “Election of 1864,” 1172

¹¹³ “Great Speech,” 1078.

¹¹⁴ Anonymous, “Our Noble Standard Bearer,” *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*, September 8, 1864, *The Civil War: Primary Documents on Events from 1860 to 1865*, edited by Ford Risley, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 257.

prudent or a less skillful superintendent of our military affairs than Abraham Lincoln...Nobody dreams that he would be likely to interfere disadvantageously with the conduct of the war.” In addition to his exploits in Antietam and in the Peninsular Campaign, Democrats pointed to McClellan’s successful career. The general had previously gained notoriety for his exploits in Mexico, the Crimea, and in West Virginia at the war’s outbreak. The party milked those references as best it could.¹¹⁵

Included in Democrats' description of their candidate’s superior war record was the accusation that Lincoln had unfairly handcuffed McClellan in the general's attempts to fight. Some accused Lincoln of trying to re-promote McClellan to active command shortly before the 1864 presidential campaign in order that he would be unable to run. Referring to McClellan’s military abilities, Winthrop even noted that Lincoln must have thought him capable “when he so obviously connived a few weeks ago at offering him a high command if he would only decline to be a candidate for the Presidency.”¹¹⁶ Lincoln knew either that McClellan was the best military man, or feared the general’s political power. In each case, McClellan came out looking better than the president. McClellan’s strength in this arena seemed to fit well with the Democrat’s general campaign style. Democratic papers continually used war metaphors to describe their campaigning, exhorting their followers in similar language. Democratic voters were to “close ranks” and fight with their “paper bullets.” The magazine *Caucasian* summarized this strength: “If campaigns are in fact military affairs then generals are the best to lead them.”¹¹⁷ Other campaign events such as parades and mass gathering contributed to this martial atmosphere. Efforts were made to get the regular voters constantly to think and act like an army, single-

¹¹⁵ “Great Speech,” 1081-1103. At the time, Democrats attempted to praise McClellan's performance in the Peninsular Campaign as an able retreat in the face of difficult odds, a situation exacerbated by Lincoln's mismanagement of the war effort. Whatever the reason, McClellan was simply not to blame for the failure to take Richmond at that time.

¹¹⁶ “Great Speech,” 1081.

¹¹⁷ Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 300.

mindedly focused on the objective of winning the battle at the ballot box. At an evening rally in New York's Union Square, spotlights shone on a statue of George Washington, projecting the shadow of a mounted figure onto nearby buildings, a reminder of McClellan's status as a military leader.¹¹⁸

Added to charges of military incompetence were accusations paralleling Republican attacks on Democratic loyalty. Lincoln, the Democrats argued, was the candidate the Confederacy truly wanted to see win the election. "We all know," Winthrop proclaimed to his audience, "that the secession leaders aided and abetted the election of President Lincoln for that very purpose." "The war cry of the South," he continued, "was not so much -- 'We will not submit to the Constitution...as we will not have these men to rule over us.'"¹¹⁹ The policies of the administration, he said, "has tended to breathe a spirit of defiance and desperation into the breasts of every southern man and woman and child."¹²⁰ The war's end would only come through more pain and suffering, for Lincoln could only succeed in encouraging dissent. The South had left because of him, and would not return for him. Confederates certainly did their part to promote this idea, and Democratic pamphlets published southern newspaper editorials.¹²¹ "*Abraham Lincoln is the South's best ally*," declared an editorial from Richmond, which claimed that he, "effectually succeeded in calling out and combining every element of resistance in the South,"¹²² The editorials promised the possibility of reconciliation, or at the very least some kind

¹¹⁸ Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 288-295.

¹¹⁹ "Great Speech," 1086.

¹²⁰ "Great Speech," 1081.

¹²¹ Nelson, *Bullets, Ballots, and Rhetoric* discusses this idea more fully, and especially considers the official efforts of the Confederate government to influence the election, specifically to ensure Lincoln's defeat.

¹²² "Hear Hon. Geo. H. Pendleton," Freidel, *Union Pamphlets of the Civil War*, 1126-1127.

of peace with the North. A writer from Georgia promised that “if Gen. McClellan should be elected, a cessation of hostilities will follow. The war will be suspended.”¹²³

By blaming secession on Lincoln, the Democrats hoped to paint the war as a “Republican” war, one which the South, as an unwilling party, was dragged into as a defense against despotism and tyranny. This alleged despotism made up the largest portion of Democratic rhetoric against the President and his party. Claims that Lincoln and the Republicans were corrupt usurpers of the Constitution peppered all forms of Democratic discourse on the election. The fears of Republican corruption stemmed in part from a long tradition of Democratic understanding of the workings of Republican government and the Constitution. On the other hand, they were in many cases the product of campaign rhetoric and fears over the power Republicans were gathering for themselves while in office.

Racism played an ugly and important role during the political campaigns of many Democratic candidates. Lincoln in particular was the subject of many outbursts. The famous “Lincoln Catechism,” published during the 1864 presidential race, referred to the President as “Abraham Africanus the First.” The catechism made several other references to Lincoln and the Republicans as “agents for negroes,” and claimed that they have, “no other God but the negro.”¹²⁴ Lincoln and others certainly believed slavery and race had played a role in the campaign, or at least made this claim after the election had passed. Lincoln and noted abolitionist Frederick Douglass certainly cited the victory as a statement of the people that slavery should be abolished throughout the nation.¹²⁵ Democrats certainly put emphasis on the slavery issue during

¹²³ Anonymous, “The Presidential Canvass in the United States,” Augusta, GA, *Chronicle & Sentinel*, Risley, ed., *The Civil War: Primary Documents*, 258.

¹²⁴ “Lincoln Catechism” found in Schlesinger, ed., *Presidential Elections*, 1214-1244.

¹²⁵ Michael Vorenberg, “‘The Deformed Child’: Slavery and the Election of 1864,” *Civil War History* Vol. 43, No. 3 (2001): 240.

the campaign, but questions about its overall effectiveness in garnering votes outside of their own base remain.¹²⁶

Fears of racial equality were mixed in with the specter of a newly coined phrase: miscegenation, an invented term meaning the mixing of races. A pamphlet produced in late 1863 claimed the theory that such mixing was meant to further the development of humanity. The pamphlet, far from academic, was a fake. It had been written by David Goodman Croly and George Wakeman, employees of the *New York World*, a fiercely Democratic paper. Their hope was that noted abolitionists would give support to the pamphlet and would claim the “anonymous” author as one of their own. Thus, they would tar the abolition movement (and hopefully by extension the Republican Party) with the position that mixing the races was not only ideal, but the true aim of emancipation. These claims would play on common fears held by many whites of the day, especially in the South but elsewhere as well, of the nearly predatory sexuality of blacks.¹²⁷ While mentions of miscegenation or similar terms (melaleukation and amalgamation were also commonly used), do not appear in the writings of these Ohio Valley soldiers, they seem connected with Copperheads and society at large enough that such a concept would have come to their attention, and thus subsequently played a role in their understanding of the war.

As they fought to secure a military victory, Union troops also tried to impress the civilian population of their ongoing successful progress toward securing an equivalent political triumph. Even Ulysses Grant got involved, writing reports that detailed the ongoing disintegration of the

¹²⁶ Weber, *Copperheads*, 185 argues that slavery and race was a central tenet in the Democrats campaign, while Vorenberg, ““The Deformed Child,””: 245 suggests the stance cost the party during the election. Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 301 argues that race itself, separate from the slavery issue, did not become a central Democratic theme until 1868.

¹²⁷ A good treatment of the growth of the miscegenation issue in the later years of the war is Sidney Kaplan, “The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 34, No. 3, (Jul. 1949): 274-343. Long, *Jewel of Liberty*, 153-177 also discusses the issue in the larger context of slavery and race relations for the election.

Army of Northern Virginia. All that remained "was young boys and old men. A man lost by them cannot be replaced. They have robbed the cradle and the grave equally to get their present force." Reminding the populace of the issue at stake, Grant warned that for the Confederates, "their only hope is a divided north."¹²⁸ Other soldiers participated in the campaign, and their political supporters made sure they could do so. Alvin Voris wrote that G. Volney Dorsey, Ohio State Treasurer and chairman of the state's Union Central Committee, had been lobbying Secretary of War Edwin Stanton for Voris to receive leave until after the elections.¹²⁹

A. G. Dow expressed concerns over the direction of the soldier's vote in a letter to his son serving in the army. "How do the soldiers like the Peace Candidate for President, can they vote for Vallandigham & Seymour's candidate?" he queried. Answering his own question, and revealing his sympathies, he responded, "I think not." Next, he exposed the reason for his concern, mentioning that "Your Officer Carlisle sent home for some Democrat tickets."¹³⁰ Not all men were as concerned as the elder Dow. Thomas Honnell boldly stated to a friend, "I have not a single McClellan man in My Company and I don't want any. We have about a dozen in the Regt But they are so ignorant they don't know any better."¹³¹ Andrew Evans reported to his son that Copperheads on the home front "expected a large vote in the Army for Mack [McClellan] which I don't believe they will get."¹³² Even McClellan supporters in the army worried about the potential for military votes. "'Mac' will get a few votes in the army, but Abraham is uppermost in the minds of the mass of soldiers," wrote Owen Hopkins, a self-proclaimed Democrat. "Those who vote for the 'Chickahominy racer,'" he continued, "are Hospital shirks, play-offs, men sick

¹²⁸ Blackwell, *In the First Line of Battle*, 147-148.

¹²⁹ "Near Chaffin's Farm," October 4, 1864, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 225.

¹³⁰ "A. G. Dow to Son," September 25, 1864, Dow Family Letters, FHS. "Seymour" is Thomas Seymour, governor of Connecticut and another high profile Peace Democrat.

¹³¹ "Thomas Honnell to Friend Sallie," October 26, 1864, Thomas Corwin Honnell Papers, OHS.

¹³² "Andrew Evans to Son," September 4, 1864, Engs and Brooks, *Their Patriotic Duty*, 287.

of the service, tired of the arduous though honorable duties of Campaign," referring to the overall perception of the general held by the army.¹³³

William Helsley had some concerns, but his were about the result of the vote at home, where the question was more likely to be decided. "[I]f he [Lincoln] is defeated, I will get out of the service as soon as can, for by all that good an lovely I will not serve under a d-d old Copperhead if can help it, and if Mack is elected President we can just give up for the South will get their independence before he is in Power one year." Lest the reader think Helsley were not serious in his charge, he continued, saying, "I would rather lose every cent I have got then see the Copperheads get their man elected if I could." Switching to a description of the army's opinions, Helsley expressed a point of view similar to many others. "There is a few men that will vote for the Copperhead candidate in the army but they are scarce. I have tried to find out the opinion of the soldiers and they are very near all for old Abe." He ended the letter with a request for the recipient, a family member: "Tell father I want him to vote for Abe."¹³⁴

Much as with any other issue previously discussed, elections brought out opinions of all kinds. Voting for the Republican candidate did not equal a full endorsement of his positions, nor did it mean such for Democrats. "All men opposed to Father Abraham's way of doing business are not in favor of Jeff Davis' way – nor of Vallandigham's," wrote Robert Winn. Though the army as a whole strongly supported Lincoln and the Republicans, the support was not universal. "[W]e have one staunch Democrat, 'old Chick,'" Winn noted. "Old Chick" was not shy in his opinions about Lincoln, and even told Winn that he would not have joined the army if he knew what was to come with their mission. This is not to say that Chick in any way supported Southerners. "Chick is one of the men that propose going into an independent company with

¹³³ "Johns. to Friend," September 11, 1864, Hopkins, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 159. "Chicahominy Racer" is likely a reference to McClellan's retreat from Richmond during the 1862 Peninsular Campaign.

¹³⁴ "William Jefferson Helsley to Mary," September 8, 1864, William Jefferson Helsley Papers, FHS.

Spencer Rifles on being mustered out of the U. S. Service – to clear out our share of Ky.,” he shared. Winn even appears to endorse the idea, suggesting Chick as perfectly qualified for the position. “Wouldn’t he make about as good a Guerrilla as any of the rest – he hates Abolitionists and Foreigners enough I know.”¹³⁵ Democrat, of course, is not the same thing as Copperhead. As manpower changed over the years, the camaraderie of the army solidified. What soldiers are left are true Blue,” wrote John Dow, and, “What few Butternuts we had have either disserted or resigned.”¹³⁶

Many soldiers who attacked McClellan and the Democrats saw no distinction between the candidate and his party's platform. As early as January, Major General Benjamin Grierson equated the triumph of "Old Abe" with a mandate to "defeat the Copperheads...we must pull altogether."¹³⁷ William Bentley expressed clearly the sentiment of many in the army, that while even though McClellan himself might be in favor of continuing the war, his party affiliation would make that position nearly untenable:

If the Peace party prevails I shall be ashamed to own myself as American citizen. The Chicago Platform is killing McClellan’s cause in the army. Tho, in his letter of acceptance he tried to evade the many questions. It is easy to see that he will be a pliant tool in the hands of such men as Vallandingham, Seymour, Woods & others. Thousands who were strong in the faith a month ago are perfectly disgusted with his course. There was a time when he was very popular with the army but that has passed away and he has but a few admirers in this army at least, and they are the poor, ignorant trash who can only say against Lincoln that he freed the niggers.¹³⁸

John Lane saw the situation in similar terms. "If Father Abraham is elected the rebels will soon give up in despair," he wrote, "but on the other hand if McClellan is made President there will be some hope for them, for he is their friend and the whole butternut party are friends to the rebels."¹³⁹ A soldier who wanted to make that distinction, William Redman of the 12th Illinois

¹³⁵ “Robert Winn to Sister,” August 1, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, FHS.

¹³⁶ “John Dow to Bro. Thos.,” May 30, 1863, Dow Family Letters, FHS.

¹³⁷ “B. H. Grierson to Mr. John Strong,” January 6, 1864, John D. Strong Letters, ALPLM.

¹³⁸ Entry of September 25, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased*, 116.

¹³⁹ “John E Lane to Ellen,” September 21, 1864, Crist Collection, Lilly

Cavalry, decided he would not vote for McClellan "for he is supported by all the Copperheads." Even though he believed the candidate to be loyal, the party was "shrouded with treason."¹⁴⁰ George Squier even responded to allegations of unfairness, and claimed that "A man is known by the company he keeps, and... every copperhead, peace snake, and outspoken rebel of the North will sustain and vote for the democratic candidate for the Presidency."¹⁴¹ Even a few non-soldiers stretched the connection between candidate and party. Immediately after complaining that "if there is any quadruped I hate it as a 'Copperhead,'" William Bement stated, "We must re-elect Father Abraham."¹⁴² Similarly, though he heard little of other news, outgoing Utah Territorial Governor Stephen Harding knew "that McClellan is the democratic copperhead candidate for President."¹⁴³ Support for Lincoln came not from support for wartime policies, or necessarily love for the president himself, but rather out of fear over who was certain to replace him.¹⁴⁴

Soldiers echoed these campaign themes, hoping to end the war by removing Lincoln from power. An anonymous letter from a "Veteran Soldier," printed as a pamphlet titled *General McClellan and the Presidency*, attacked Lincoln and offered the general as the best possible candidate. The soldier offered McClellan as the conservative choice. McClellan, he declared, "would conduct the war upon more humane principles...would repeal the Emancipation Proclamation, and probably make overtures to the South to return to the Union."¹⁴⁵ Owen Hopkins offered cheers for Vallandigham and Jefferson Davis, and even referred to himself as a

¹⁴⁰ Blackwell, *In the First Line of Battle*, 147-148.

¹⁴¹ "G. W. Squier to Wife," September, 1864 in Squier, *This Wilderness of War*, 77.

¹⁴² "Wm B Bement to Isaac Bush Esq," September 5, 1864, Bement Collection, Lilly.

¹⁴³ "Ste. S. Harding to My Dear Wife," September 10, 1864, Harding Collection, Lilly.

¹⁴⁴ Hicken, *Illinois in the Civil War*, 263-264 contains several additional examples of Illinois soldiers equating the Democrats with their Copperhead movement, while Frank, *With Ballot and Bayonet*, 117-118 concludes that soldiers saw the election as specifically related to the progress of the war, conflating Lincoln with victory.

¹⁴⁵ "General McClellan and the Presidency: Letter from a Veteran Soldier on the Subject. His Opinion of McClellan," Print: 1864, WRHS, 5.

Copperhead when expressing his opposition to Republican war aims. Hopkins explained his support for Copperheadism as opposition to abolitionists, explaining to his friend Julia Allison that she "need not turn Copperhead just because I have." In late August, he wrote that it was unlikely he would support Lincoln, and instead hoped to see Franklin Pierce receive a nomination.¹⁴⁶ Chesley Mosman, of the 59th Illinois, expressed support for McClellan in his diary, writing "Hurrah for McClellan!" on November 8. Oddly though, while noting that his regiment did not vote, he speculated briefly that the general would "Let our erring sisters go" if he won, but also mentioned that the soldier vote would not give him the chance.¹⁴⁷

Henry Coffinberry of Ohio, who served aboard the naval vessel *Louisville*, was an ardent McClellan man, and regularly asked for his parents' thoughts on the general's election prospects throughout the summer of 1864. By October, Coffinberry began suggesting he would resign should Lincoln win re-election. His father James was sympathetic, but offered that Henry should do so only if he could avoid the draft. After Lincoln's re-election, a gloomy Coffinberry suggested he would resign sometime in the spring of 1865, though by that point the war would end. For Coffinberry, beyond his belief that Lincoln was a dangerously radical abolitionist, McClellan's election presented the best chance for ending the war in a rapid and positive way. Relating tales of locals met while cruising the Mississippi River, Coffinberry suggested that Southerners would more than willingly come back into a Union prepared to protect their property rights, a McClellan government. "The rebels," he wrote in late August, "are very much afraid McClellan will be elected," for such an event "would unite the north and divide the south." In September, he added, "Evry body south but the...rebels," hoped for McClellan and the war's end.

¹⁴⁶ Quote from "O. J. H. to Friend Julia," August 21, 1864, Hopkins, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 151-152. See also "Owen Hopkins to Friend [Julia Allison]," March 6, 1864, Hopkins, *Under the Flag of the Nation*, 113.

¹⁴⁷ Entry of November 8, 1864, in Mosman, *The Rough Side of War*, 303.

Coffinberry further ranted against Lincoln and the Republicans for over-expanding the war's aims, and attacked Lincoln supporters for enriching themselves by prolonging the conflict.¹⁴⁸

J. Porter, serving in the Acting Assistant Provost Marshal General's office, wrote a relatively stirring defense of McClellan to his brother. Stating that he would not "cast a vote in Support of Any Abolition Candidate," Porter would still consider supporting Lincoln should he be convinced that re-election would end the war, suggesting his tenuous opposition to abolitionism. Worse than that, he offered, were the dastardly statements made against McClellan and his candidacy. Where Porter's brother had claimed that McClellan would call for an armistice without victory, he responded that "nowhere in the McClellan platform, can it be found that any such thing should ever take place...it is only a surmise of his political opponents." Instead, Porter pointed out, "one thing [McClellan] did publicly declare...that the Union should be preserved at all hazards," a statement Porter described as "all that Mr. Lincoln proposes & more than he has yet done." Even further, addressing concerns of McClellan's earlier mismanagement of the war, Porter is able to turn them around onto the president. First commenting that, "I regard [the charges of incompetence] as being very much magnified," he noted that it was Lincoln who would "allow McClellan to continue in Command during so much disaster," and that "if disaster happened, none but Mr. Lincoln as to blame." Porter did not cast a vote, though his able defense of McClellan against Republican charges suggests the intelligence and fortitude necessary to argue for the Democrat.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Quotes from "Henry to Parents," August 24, 1864; "Henry to Parents," September 8, 1864. Requests for information on McClellan in "Henry D. Coffinberry to Parents," March 21, 1864; "Henry to Parents," August 11, 1864. Discussions on Henry's resignation in "Henry to Parents," August 24, 1864; "H. Coffinberry to Parents," October 8, 1864; "HDC to Parents," October 23, 1864; "J. M. Coffinberry to Son," October 28, 1864. Suggestions of Southern support for McClellan in "Henry to Parents," August 11, 1864; "Henry to Parents," September 8, 1864; "Henry Coffinberry to Parents," November 20, 1864. Other Lincoln attacks in "H. Coffinberry to Parents," October 8, 1864; "Henry Coffinberry to Parents," November 20, 1864. All letters in Maria D. Coffinberry Papers, WRHS.

¹⁴⁹ "J. Porter, Jr. to Brother," November 14, 1864, J. Porter, Jr. Letter, ALPLM.

John C. Dinsmore, serving with the 99th Illinois, wrote home to his wife suggesting a large anti-Lincoln faction. "As I understand," he wrote, "all those who does not agree with Abe, & his gang are called Copperheads. If that is a Copperhead," he concluded, "3 Fourths of the Men in the Army are Copperheads." Dinsmore cited soldier discontent over emancipation and the draft, and mocked the idea that drafting antiwar men would help the army, asking, "What is the use to draft Copperheads to fight Copperheads?" On another occasion, writing to his brother, Dinsmore expressed his belief that supporting emancipation was hurting the Republican cause. He criticized abolitionists for calling "all the Democrats Sesech" and foolishly swearing that there "ain't [*sic.*] a Democrat in the army." Much as many soldiers tarred Democrats with the "Copperhead" brush, Dinsmore categorized Republicans as radical abolitionists with little sense about the army or politics.¹⁵⁰ William Orr promoted McClellan's candidacy on the basis of ending the war. "I am in favor of the effort to Stop this Bloodshed." Orr attacked those "who hold up their hands in holy horror and cry treason if one but say 'peace.'" Being careful, Orr noted that his desired peace would be an "Honorable" one, "on the basis of the union," and that "Gen McClellan will do well to bring about such a peace." In a later letter to his father, William suggested he would leave the army if the president were re-elected, as he no longer wished to fight for "Mr. Lincoln nor for the object for which He is now carrying on this war," referring to emancipation. Reiterating his support for McClellan and an honorable peace, Orr did worry that his candidacy was "clogged by Pendleton and by his Platform, which I do not altogether like." Still, Orr firmly stated, "I do like his letter of acceptance, and I am for him."¹⁵¹

Much like their comrades, McClellan voters in the Union army focused on doing what was necessary to win the war. Convinced that Lincoln's radicalism and mismanagement of

¹⁵⁰ "J. C. Dinsmore to Jane," June 8, 1863, John C. Dinsmore Papers, ALPLM; "J. C. Dinsmore to brother," November 4, 1862, John C. Dinsmore Papers, ALPLM.

¹⁵¹ "Will to Maggie," September 11, 1864, Orr Family Collection, Lilly; "William to Father," September 16, 1864, Orr Family Collection, Lilly.

affairs would make that impossible, they backed his opponent. What Democrats perceived as Lincoln's abolitionist stance played a limited role in these justifications. Mostly, it provided evidence of the president's radicalism, and served as further proof that he would be unable to reunite the nation effectively. By 1864, though, many Union soldiers no longer cared about abolitionism, or as Chandra Manning's *What This Cruel War Was Over* concludes, they supported emancipation as a wartime policy designed to hurt Confederate logistics.¹⁵² While emancipation and other racial issues certainly played a part in Democratic campaigning, soldiers had greater concerns on their minds. Most likely, these soldiers were loyal Democrats who, upon figuring that McClellan did not accept the peace platform and planned to continue fighting the war, reliably backed their party.

In Ohio, legal challenges to the 1863 provisions for soldier voting in elections required two different bills to remedy the situation. Whereas the original law did not expressly state that soldiers in military service "beyond the limits of the state" could vote, a law passed in March 1864 explicitly added that distinction, while an earlier law provided specific processes for recording those votes. Oliver Morton tried to ensure a number of furloughs for Indiana soldiers to return home, as there was no official state legislature to provide such legislation. Indiana would pass soldier-voting legislation in early 1865, after the legislature had been elected and finally allowed to reconvene. Illinois soldier Rueben Prentice noted, "I have as yet seen nothing from the state of Illinois in favor of giving her Soldiers in the field this most sacred of all borne American rites the chance to assist in electing the President." As in Indiana, the state governor had prorogued Illinois's legislature prior to 1864, and though there had been proposed legislation

¹⁵² Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*, 218-219.

earlier, it had not passed. Also like Indiana, Illinois would eventually pass a soldier voting law, but not until February 1865.¹⁵³

Roger Hannaford served as a clerk for the election, and wrote about the process for his 2nd Ohio Cavalry to vote:

When our Regt. reached the turnpike we waited a short time for the wagons & the Officers immediately began preparation for voting for Presidential Electors, electing the clerks & judges & receiving a few votes, on the very ground that less than 3 weeks before, was pressed by the feet of the rebel cannoniers briskly moving to & fro. After pickets were placed, the Regt went busily to work voting, for at best it was slow work & it was getting late; but by six o'clock the ballot of every man entitled to vote was cast...It was quite an interesting scene to see the clerks & judges sitting under a large tree, questioning & at times swearing the men as they came up; the ballot box was a hat covered by another, but rough & hasty tho' the affair was it showed that as a whole our men stood square & fair for liberty."¹⁵⁴

Jonathan Harrington also served as a voting commissioner, and wrote that he "used our ambulance to carry the Polls and at Every halt would open the polls and receive votes from 3 to 15 votes at each halt until Reaching the Osage River."¹⁵⁵ Andrew Powell wrote that Election Day had passed quietly in his camp, without "even a fist fight nor a quarrel anywhere in all the camps."¹⁵⁶ "On Election day we stopped long enough to vote in a field by the road," recorded Fredrick Pimper of the 39th Ohio. Commenting on men who tried to vote for McClellan, Pimper casually remarked that their candidates "thought so little of them that they even forgot to send their tickets and lost their votes."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Quote from "Prent to Vine," August 19, 1864, Reuben T. Prentice Letters, ALPLM. Ohio information in Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 76. Indiana in Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 283-287, Long, *Jewel of Liberty*, 218, and Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 220-222. Illinois in Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 255-265 and Long, *Jewel of Liberty*, 218. Benton, *Voting in the Field*, 105-107 discusses similar laws in Kentucky involving the soldier vote, which pass well in advance of the 1864 election. The state's Confederate Congress would pass similar legislation, allowing Kentucky soldiers on both sides of the war to vote in the election of their choosing.

¹⁵⁴ Memoirs, 211c-212, Roger Hannaford Papers, CHS.

¹⁵⁵ "J. F. Harrington to Mother," November 17, 1864, Captain Jonathan F. Harrington Papers, RBH.

¹⁵⁶ "A. Powell to My Dear Brother," November 11, 1864, Andrew Powell Letters, RBH.

¹⁵⁷ "Fredrik to Friend," October 22, 1864, Pimper Collection, Lilly. This represents one of the few occasions where soldiers mentioned any trouble occurring during the election. Manning, *What This Cruel War was Over*, 185 refers to the electoral process as "cumbersome" and "makeshift," but it appears to have gone off with minimal fuss, and, other than Pimper, those who chose to comment on the process generally noted the lack of interesting occurrences or other delays.

Cary Wooley complained of other men in his regiment that were given furloughs in order to vote. "There is men in this Company that has had 9 furloughs since I have been in the Company," he complained, "Just on the account of them being Married men and as I am a single Man I Cant get any furlough at all."¹⁵⁸ Dr. William Harvey, while amputating the foot of Private Jacob Hunt of the 19th Indian, wrote that "his Furlough [should] be extended so long as to permit him to remain at home to vote for President." Harvey was sure to add that Hunt's vote would "be of as much or more value in the Presidential Election, in this State, than the service he might otherwise render the Government, I think."¹⁵⁹ Democrats worried about the pivotal nature the soldier vote could play in the upcoming election, and worried in particular about the ability of a Republican-leaning officer corps to suppress Democratic voters. Though instances of intimidation did occur, historians Joel Silbey and James McPherson both suggest that these were likely isolated incidents, and that the soldiers' vote was no less secure than comparable nineteenth-century elections.¹⁶⁰ Alvin Voris addressed this concern in his diary, noting that "I had no inclination to interfere with the vote of a single soldier."¹⁶¹ Even men not allowed to vote were sure to add their opinions, as Union soldiers held in Confederate prison camps across the South made sure to tally their support, mostly large majorities in Lincoln's favor.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ "C. A. Wooley to sister," October 28, 1864, Wooley Collection, Lilly. The 68th Indiana's William Hair also noted several men from his regiment that had been furloughed for the election in "Entry of November 12, 1864," William Hair Diaries, Hair Collection, Lilly, but lists nothing more except their names.

¹⁵⁹ Gaff, *On Many a Bloody Field*, 389.

¹⁶⁰ Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 159-161 and McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 804-805. Winkle, "Ohio's Informal Polling Place," 169-170 notes that regular election officials in peacetime were normally partisan, and not above abusing their position. Klement, *Copperheads of the Middle West*, 213-221 outlines extensive campaigning by Republicans through the officer corps, though cloaks this argument in a conspiratorial way, suggesting quite heavily that soldiers were merely manipulated into buying abolitionist arguments. While some men held abolitionist tendencies, many supported emancipation for logistical reasons, and were quite capable of coming to this conclusion through experience rather than propaganda.

¹⁶¹ Hd Qrs 1st Brig 34d Div 10 Corps, Near Richmond, October 11 1864, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 227.

¹⁶² Davis, *Lincoln's Men*, 220.

Even without interference, many soldiers were quite convinced of their stance against Copperheadism, and either celebrated or criticized their regiments' voting accordingly.¹⁶³ Daniel Buchwalter wrote that his 120th Ohio "did not do as well as last year," in comparison to their strong support for John Brough. With a majority to "Union" of only 17 votes over the "Copperhead," including a Company E, which actually went Democratic, it had been "Rather a bad record for the 120th."¹⁶⁴ Jonathan Harrington complained that his 72nd Ohio "gave more Votes for [McClellan] than any other Regt. in our Division, but we got the majority Small as it was."¹⁶⁵ "There are some little Mac's in our Regt," wrote Fredrik Pimper, "but their number has grown small in the last month." Pimper continued, "Mac is getting about one vote out of 8 for Lincoln," a development described as "very encouraging."¹⁶⁶ William Bentley celebrated his regiment's support for Lincoln, but complained of the other regiments in his division that went for McClellan. He particularly cited the 11th Kentucky, even as he noted that "their votes are of no account, as KY is one of those states which does not consider a soldier a citizen." He also referenced a colonel in the 11th, referring to the officer as a "rank copperhead" who believed that "Fernando Wood of NY, is in his opinion, the purest politician in the country," before ultimately concluding that the man "was a disgrace to the service."¹⁶⁷ Henry Kauffman recorded the voting in his regiment, and added that "if I should have voted the Democratic ticket I would be voting for one thing and fighting for another," a clear reference to the Chicago platform and the Copperhead takeover of the party.¹⁶⁸ Captain Orin England of the 72nd Ohio celebrated

¹⁶³ Gallagher, *The Union War*, 106-108 records several sentiments very similar to the ones that follow here, though his purpose is to note the general absence of abolitionist sentiment in their votes. Gallagher argues that Northern troops voted for Union, and distrusted Copperheads as those dangerous to the cause of Union.

¹⁶⁴ Letter of October 11, 1864, Jerry Frey, *Grandpa's Gone: The Adventures of Daniel Buchwalter in the Western Army, 1862-1865* (Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 1998), 107.

¹⁶⁵ "J. F. H. to Brother," November 16, 1864, Captain Jonathan Harrington Papers, RBH.

¹⁶⁶ "Fredrik to Friend," November 8, 1864, Pimper Collection, Lilly.

¹⁶⁷ Letter of November 16, 1864, Bentley, *Burning Rails as We Pleased*, 124.

¹⁶⁸ "Henry Kauffman to Brother and Sister," October 15, 1864, Kauffman, *The Harmony Boys*, 89.

Lincoln's victory, but noted that his was the "Copperhead regiment in the division" for having split their vote evenly.¹⁶⁹

Lincoln handily won re-election. His 212 electoral votes blew out McClellan's 21, as the President won every state except Delaware, Kentucky, and New Jersey. Not every state allowed its soldiers to vote. Among the states focused upon in this study, Kentucky and Ohio did, while as previously mentioned Indiana did not. Ohio soldiers, in fact, contributed over 41,000 votes to Lincoln, the most of any state's soldier vote. Ohio actually went the furthest into the soldier voting policy, as the state's soldier vote total for McClellan of 9,757 was second only to Pennsylvania. Ohio soldier's overall vote total of 50,903 was by far the highest in the Union. The 80% of Ohio's total that went to Lincoln surpassed the national soldier vote of 77%. Kentucky, with 2,823 McClellan votes to Lincoln's 1,194, was the only state where McClellan won the soldier vote, with 71%. Kentucky's Lincoln vote was the second lowest in the Union, ahead of only Vermont's 243. It should be noted that Vermont had a grand total of 49 McClellan voters, the sum of their voting soldiers being less than 300. Amongst the soldiers of these states, Lincoln's 77%, heavily weighted with Ohio votes, mirrored the national soldier percentage. Compared to each state's popular vote percentage, Ohio's soldiers outpaced the population's 55%, while Kentucky's soldiers mirrored their state's 30%. Combined, Lincoln collected 52% of the votes in both states. Adding Indiana's popular vote to the equation, Lincoln's percentage remained roughly the same, less than his national percentage.¹⁷⁰

There would be much rejoicing in soldier camps. William Pittenger, never afraid of his emotions, or the occasional hyperbolic outburst, celebrated in his diary. "The day of the greatest

¹⁶⁹ "Orin to Darling," November 22 1864, Captain Orin England Letters, RBH.

¹⁷⁰ Election numbers from Schlesinger, *Presidential Campaigns*, 1244. Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War*, 381 blames the despotic nature of local Union military officials with shifting Kentucky voters to McClellan. He points out that Kentuckians were less likely to see treason in McClellan's stances, mentioning that Kentucky continued to fill its recruitment quotas even while protesting federal government action.

battle and I believe the greatest victory, though without the loss of a man, has been fought and I know won today,” read his entry for November 8, 1864. “Need I say,” he continued, clearly feeling the need to say, “it was the election of Abraham Lincoln to another term?” In addition to celebrating Lincoln’s victory, Pittenger added another group to share in the glory. “Yes,” he said, “the soldier who aimed his piece properly and fired and killed a dozen Rebs, the right of suffrage.”¹⁷¹ William Bradbury was more succinct, telling his son that “Most of the soldiers shout ‘Hurrah for Lincoln and Union.’”¹⁷² Alvin Voris celebrated the result by crowing that voters had “laid out the Copperheads.”¹⁷³ Dan Hindman of the 17th Illinois, while reporting on his regiment's voting, hoped that “the Devil [would] take care of that Beautiful clique – termed Copperheads.”¹⁷⁴ Augustus Frey referred to the electoral result as a “grand protest against the Chicago platform & its traitor supporters.”¹⁷⁵ “The Copperheads expected a defeat and were prepared for it,” wrote Neal Dow, “but they were not expecting to be crushed out of political existence.” Ever threatened, Dow added an additional accusation, claiming that the Copperheads’ plan “was to be beaten by a small majority, and then to resist even unto blood, under the plea of fraud.”¹⁷⁶ Humphrey Hood worried about losing states to the Democrats, and wrote “that the triumph of Copperheads in those States, will be a bitter disappointment to me.” He did hopefully add that if the Copperheads should lose, “their friends might as well call in the undertaker for their death is certain.”¹⁷⁷

Abraham Lincoln was not the only major politician up for re-election in 1864. Oliver Morton faced the voters again, and ran on the goodwill he had generated statewide by closely

¹⁷¹ Entry of November 8, 1864, “William Henry Pittenger Diary,” OHS.

¹⁷² “Father to little Willie,” October 22, 1864, Bradbury, *While Father is Away*, 196.

¹⁷³ “Hd Qrs 1st Brig 34d Div 10 Corps, Near Richmond,” October 11, 1864, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 227.

¹⁷⁴ “Dan S. Hindman to Sir,” August 23, 1864, Theodore Glancy Papers, ALPLM.

¹⁷⁵ “Gus to My dear Mother,” November 13, 1864, A. B. Frey Papers, ALPLM.

¹⁷⁶ “Neal Dow to Sir,” November 13, 1864, Zebina Eastman Papers, CHM.

¹⁷⁷ “H. H. Hood to My Dear Wife,” October 11 1864, Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM.

monitoring and prosecuting Copperheads in the state. Driven by the ongoing success of the Indianapolis Treason Trials, which very publically pilloried alleged leaders of Indiana's Knights of the Golden Circle in the days surrounding the election, Morton swept to victory. The Democrats ran Joseph McDonald, a former Congressman and state Attorney General, and ran a fairly uninspired campaign, which historian Frank Klement critically referred to as "weak" and "inept."¹⁷⁸ Indiana soldiers, though their state did not allow them to vote in the field, certainly had their thoughts on the re-election campaign of "the soldier's friend." Ambrose Remley wrote that his 72nd Indiana held a poll, "just to see how things stood," and wound up with a total of four votes for McDonald, well behind McClellan's paltry total of 27.¹⁷⁹ John Murray Nash, serving in the 130th Indiana, mentioned the disappointment some Indiana soldiers felt when they learned their marching orders near the election did not include returning home to vote.¹⁸⁰ Colonel Edward Wood of the 48th Indiana also made mention of his regiment's vote, which gave Morton an even greater margin of victory than Lincoln, and made sure to remind his wife that "Morton & McDonald are rival candidates for Governor in Indiana."¹⁸¹

Lincoln's re-election, and the great sweep of Republican candidates along with it, likely signaled the end of the war. Now firmly ensconced in office for another four years, and with a solid mandate to pursue victory, reunion based on emancipation was the nation's clear policy. Pressed at Richmond, and now unable to stop Sherman's unyielding march to Savannah, the Confederacy would soon see its days numbered. Lincoln's clear advantage among the soldiers on

¹⁷⁸ Klement, *Dark Lanterns*, 176-182, *Indiana's War*, 191, Wilson, *Indiana: A History*, 141-143 all discuss Morton's re-election campaign, with Nation and Towne discussing his further activity in the Senate that followed his appointment to that body in 1867. All credit his aggressive tactics against Copperheads in Indiana, though Klement in particular is critical of his doing so through legally dubious or otherwise dishonest means. Klement places the election into the context of the ongoing Indianapolis Treason Trials, particularly the escape of Harrison H. Dodd, alleged commander of the Indiana Knights of the Golden Circle.

¹⁷⁹ "Ambrose Remley to Parents Brothers and Sister," September 13, 1864, Remley Collection, Lilly.

¹⁸⁰ "Murray to Miss Shelby," October 2, 1864, Remley Collection, Lilly

¹⁸¹ "Edward to My dear wife," September 10, 1864, Wood, *A Fierce Wild Joy*, 200. The vote in the 48th Indiana was likely more of the polling variety done by Remley's 72nd.

this issue was hardly guaranteed prior to his re-election. Indeed, the Democrats nominated a military man for the express purpose of pushing Lincoln on this point. What the Democrats could not overcome, by 1864, was a long campaign waged by their own membership to drive soldiers into the waiting arms of their opposition. Four long years of agitation and violence damaged the Copperhead movement, and more importantly, their highly visible activity made it difficult for anyone but the most ardent partisans to see the Democratic Party as containing any other faction. Whatever disagreements soldiers may have had regarding Republican war policy, the soldiers would follow so long as that policy tended toward victory.

The picture of soldiers painted by the previous chapters suggests a group bitterly opposed to Copperheadism in all of its forms. This characterization is not truly disproved by the evidence here, which adds nuance to our understanding that profile. Many men outright rejected the statements and positions of the Copperhead movement. Some of their positions, though, especially those involving race and the draft, found common ground with these supposed diametric opposites. These men in blue, giving their blood to the cause of Union, were Republicans and Democrats. They came from a bitterly divided region, and in some ways reflected those divisions. What's more, they were not afraid to express those differences, either in public discussions, private letters, or through the act of voting. The key point here is the large degree to which these soldiers associated Copperheadism with the Democratic Party. Some of this is a failing of the Party to differentiate between the two. Then again, it is very difficult to differentiate when there are not as many differences as one would like. What can be seen here is that while soldiers were not willing to accept all tenets of the Republican platform as their own, when it came time to make a choice for the election, the choice was clear. They accepted the Republican line, because in their perception the Democratic Party offered nothing but disdain for the war in which these men had given so much, and a war in which they still believed.

Conclusion

If Sherman's capture of Atlanta had sealed Lincoln's fate, then it appears that it sealed the Confederacy's as well. With Lincoln re-elected and the last hope for compromise and negotiated separation gone, it would be only a matter of months before Lee and Johnston were forced to surrender the remnants of their armies at Appomattox and Durham Station. Defeated as they had been in 1860, the Democrats were bound to another four years out of executive power. Even worse, gains from the Congressional midterms of 1862 were reversed, and the Republicans were firmly in control again. With Lincoln firmly ensconced in the White House for another four-year term, the war would near its end and the Copperheads would lose their purpose for existence.¹

Shortly after Lincoln's re-election, Alvin Voris commented on the disposition of the army outside Richmond, calling political news "hardly matters of passing notice since the reaction of the excitement of the great political campaign has taken possession of the country."² After the turn of the new year, J. P. Charles gloated that "Those vile Copperheads who have ingloriously folded their arms, and hissed and wagged their venomous tongue have a bitter chalice out of which they must hereafter drink, and instead of sympathy they will receive scorn and contempt from all good men." He also added that if such men, "have the sense of propriety that Judas had they will hang themselves on a tree, or, throw themselves from a precipice; pray the rocks &

¹ Even this point is less than clear. Historian Stephen Sears has suggested that a McClellan presidency would have vigorously finished off the war in a counterfactual universe where the Copperhead "peace plank" is not included in the party's platform. The War Democrat would have been able to claim military victory, especially in the aftermath of Sherman's critical victory at Atlanta and Grant's long-awaited breakthrough at Petersburg, which all came before or too quickly after a potential McClellan inauguration. See Stephen W. Sears, "A Confederate Cannae and Other Scenarios: How the Civil War Might Have Turned Out Differently," in *The Collected What If?: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been*, Robert Cowley, ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1999 and 2001), 255-258.

² "Before Richmond, Va.," December 9, 1864, Voris, *A Citizen-Soldier's Civil War*, 238.

mountains to fall upon, or anything to hide them."³ In March 1865, with the war nearing its conclusion, Samuel Dorr offered the confidence of the army. "We all feel here very hopeful about the country and quite confident that Grant, Sherman, etc. are masters of the situation," he wrote. "The Southerners and their sympathizers in the contrary," he continued, "are much depressed confining themselves for the most part to assertions that the South will never give up & others like it."⁴

For the soldiers, the war not only had a profound impact upon their lives, but also on their politics. While the army's ranks contained men of all political persuasions in 1861, the four long years of war had given many a similar outlook. The Copperheads did not represent an abstraction or a construction from newspapers and Republican propaganda. Instead, soldiers heard from their own families and saw with their own eyes the potential for destruction and troublemaking caused by these dissenters. Many railed at the presence of traitors at home, and waited for the day to exact their revenge. The Copperheads may not have been the lone faction of the Democratic Party, but for many soldiers the differences between "Democrat" and "Copperhead" became meaningless. Republican politicians, especially the powerful governors of these states, worked to exploit these differences. Through material support, vocal suppression of dissenters, and other questionably legal tactics, Republicans regularly worked to paint Ohio Valley Democrats as traitors.

Still, this attempt at definition would have been useless without evidence. Reports from home about violence and other disturbances gave credence to these Republican claims. Unable to control the Peace Faction of their own party, Democrats as a whole suffered the results when the time for voting came. It was Democrats that rallied against the soldiers' cause at home, harassed

³ "J. P. Charles to Sir," January 15, 1865, Lough Family Papers, CHS.

⁴ "Samuel Dorr to Mr. Slafter," March 24, 1865, Dorr Family Papers, FHS.

their members in the field, and who nominated candidates that tried to declare their sacrifice a “failure.” The perception that there was no difference existed in the minds of these men, these soldiers, and the party would find their message emphatically rejected. This transformation came even in spite of significant overlap between soldier ideals and Democratic policies. Many Union soldiers, especially in these divided western states, fought to restore the nation and bring back the South. Many did not care for the expansion of federal power inherent in the military draft or the elimination of slavery. What support these policies engendered among the men certainly did not come from their practical effects, as many did not care for the extra effort involved in protecting newly freed slaves or training conscripted men. Those that did support these efforts did so on the grounds that the nation required such action to end the conflict. What anger did arise, many men directed at Copperheads, who appeared shortsighted in their disagreements with Lincoln administration policy. The extent to which soldiers conflated Lincoln with the Union itself varied among individuals, but Copperheads, and eventually Democrats, represented disloyalty. A vote for Lincoln, or support for the draft or emancipation, became a way to strike back at traitors on the home front.

To some extent, soldier antipathy towards Copperheads mixed with strong sentiment for the president. Lincoln's face was already a common representation of the Union cause, and similarly to some state governors, the president had cultivated a pro-soldier image for himself. Popular songs such as "We are Coming Father Abraham" and electoral sentiment for "Old Abe and Andy" provide further evidence of genuine support for the president personally as well as anger toward his enemies. This kind of support made Lincoln's assassination even more tragic for soldiers. There is little need to rehash the facts of that night's events, but the potential fallout revives old themes. "The awful news that came to us yesterday has completely unnerved me, and I can scarcely do anything," wrote Augustus Frey to his mother. More importantly, Frey's

lamentations for Lincoln included a stern warning for his political enemies. "And now," he wrote, "let Copperheads be very careful to keep their mouths closed & utter no word...of exultation over this nefarious deed, for loyal men will not stand anything of the sort." Echoing earlier soldier threats against Copperheads, Frey warned, "if they dare do it, swift punishment will be sure to follow."⁵

Not all soldiers were Republicans, of course. Many of the officers in particular, both political appointees and professionally trained men, who had come in as Democrats remained as such. These were some of the War Democrats, the faction that had supported Lincoln's prosecution of the war, even though they may have disagreed on some of the President's means of waging it. Winfield Scott Hancock followed his namesake as a presidential loser in the election of 1880. Other former soldiers who found a place on the Democratic ticket in the coming elections included vice presidential candidates Francis P. Blair (1868) and Benjamin Brown (1872). Their presence appears to have been more the exceptions, rather than any kind of extensive pattern within the ranks.⁶ Wartime Republicans certainly made the most of their veteran status during the years that followed. Most famously, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James Garfield, Benjamin Harrison, and William McKinley all rose to the presidency in the latter part of the nineteenth century. All had served, and all represented Ohio, with the exception of Harrison, who had been born in Ohio before moving to Indiana and earning political

⁵ "Gus to My dear Mother," April 16, 1865, A. B. Frey Papers, APLPM. Davis, *Lincoln's Men*, 237-245 discusses the many reactions amongst the army, most of them negative. On 240-241, he mentions soldiers happy about Lincoln's death, though their reactions are limited relative to their size.

⁶ Appendix 2 in Christopher Dell's *Lincoln and the War Democrats* names many officers from the Union army that in some context were labeled Democrats. Some of these labels, such as calling Ulysses Grant (who served two terms in the White House as a Republican) a Democrat, are dubious, but the list at least makes for interesting reading.

office in that state. Many officers held lower governmental positions, using their veteran status and networks developed during the war to support candidacies for public office.⁷

Driven by their wartime experiences, many soldiers became more active politically in the years that followed the war. Many joined veterans organizations, which grew into powerful political forces as their numbers swelled. The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), the most notable Union veteran group, could very well have been named “The Grand Army of the Republican Party” in its early days for its strong affinity for the party’s radical wing. In elections both local and national in the immediate aftermath of the war, the GAR’s ability to mobilize the soldier vote, as well as the propaganda boost it supplied to the candidate with its support, made it a powerful electoral weapon.⁸ After a membership lull in the 1870s, the group’s numbers and influence swelled again in the 1880s and 1890s. By this time, individuals voted less “how they shot,” and rather toward which candidate promised a larger pension. In many cases, this appears to have been the Republican candidate, and GAR leadership was certain to make sure their members were aware of such a fact.⁹

At the local level, groups like the GAR helped many soldiers to maintain fraternal bonds in a society that knew very little about their lives during the war. The alienation present during the past four years that had allowed many to embrace, or at least consider, Copperheadism, could not be erased by simply having the men return home. Many civilians believed such men were dangerous, and sharp increases in crime potentially proved them right. Other men fell prey to

⁷ Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 221-224 describes the post-war politics of several members of the 66th Ohio, though he singled out Lieutenant Joseph Carter Brand who had significant connections prior to the war. Keifer, *The Weary Boys*, 111-113 provides a similar list for the 110th Ohio.

⁸ Mary R. Dearing, “Veterans in Politics,” in *The Civil War Veteran: A Historical Reader*, ed. Larry M. Logue and Michael Barton, (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 285; Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 258 adds similar commentary, quoting a Kentuckian who referred to the GAR as “Generally All Republicans.” Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 225-273 discusses the importance of GAR members in Indiana’s early Reconstruction politics, mostly as an extension of governor-turned-senator Oliver Morton’s control of the state’s political apparatus.

⁹ Larry M. Logue, “The Reality of Veterans Voting,” Logue and Barton, ed., *Civil War Veteran*, 310-314.

drug abuse and alcoholism. Some soldiers took the opportunity to fight back against these images and their purveyors, finally exacting their revenge against Copperheads. These instances, though, were few and far between, as many soldiers appeared to following their former commander-in-chief's Second Inaugural admonition. The soldiers' revenge had come at the ballot box, Lincoln's re-election solidifying the righteousness of their cause demonstrated in martial victory.

Some civilians did attempt to help, though, constructing a variety of soldier homes and hospitals, including a variety of programs from the federal government, efforts strongly supported by the GAR.¹⁰ Men from the 66th Ohio had been trickling back home throughout the war, damaged physically through the ravages of war. Fewer still returned home after the war ended, about 200 from the originally more than 1,000-strong regiment. While some undoubtedly went to Veterans' Hospitals, just two percent of soldiers lived in such homes by the turn of the century.¹¹ Historian Kirk Jenkins' narrative of the 15th Kentucky is an instructive model, and he notes the hard toll of the war had made Union soldiers and the federal government unpopular. Without local support, men struggled to find jobs and reconnect with their families after many years away.¹² Some men took it upon themselves to understand and explain better their place in the war and the war's effects on American society. Various verbal attacks on Copperheads appeared throughout regimental histories, mixed in with various sentiments regarding the importance of particular battles (almost certainly the ones the regiment participated in), as well as further ruminations on emancipation and the desire for reunion.¹³

¹⁰ Information on veterans' homes and general attitudes towards soldiers from Marten, *Civil War America*, 267-277.

¹¹ Thackery, *A Light and Uncertain Hold*, 220-223; Marten, *Civil War America*, 276.

¹² Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 258.

¹³ Blight, *Race and Reunion* discusses this phenomenon broadly, and generally sets the conversation for contemporary Civil War memories. Blight is especially interested in the way Union soldiers (and the general population) subsume race and emancipation in the pursuit of a broader reconciliationist narrative. Hunt, *The Good*

Many of these former soldiers did not forget the men who had caused them so much grief in the rear. Though the threatened violence rarely materialized, soldiers were more than willing to tar Democratic and Southern politicians with the Copperhead brush. Reuben Townsend, writing to Horatio Hill, a prominent Chicago Democrat, suggested in June 1865 that, "we have had a few Copperheads in this town but they are quite still now" in the war's aftermath.¹⁴ Republican politicians certainly played up this connection through their infamous "bloody shirt" campaigning of the Reconstruction period, most notably by the "soldier's friend" Oliver Morton, who followed his wartime governorship by taking one of Indiana's seats in the United States Senate. As late as 1872, William Bailhache referred to "The Coppers" celebrating electoral success in North Carolina, "which they have carried by the aid of the Ku Klux & the new made voters who have rec'd amnesty."¹⁵

In spite of Republican efforts to keep the name alive, as the Confederacy stared its mortality in the face, so too did Copperheads. They would remain as members of the party, still active in American politics, and for many years to come. Their main issues, though, had been taken off the table, resolved by the voters and soldiers. With the war's necessity and progress no longer in doubt, many former Copperheads turned their attention to the coming Reconstruction, and would work to maintain as much of the status quo as possible in the now-reunited South. In

Men Who Won the War challenges this notion insofar as veterans of the Army of the Cumberland (almost exclusively from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio) used emancipation as a justification for their other wartime activities. Admittedly, though, these memories were written in the early aftermath, before the reconciliationist sentiment of Blight's narrative. Thomas A. Desjardin, *These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003) includes a discussion on the tendency of soldiers to overstate the importance of their own battles, specifically through the lens of Gettysburg.

¹⁴ "Reuben Townsend to Brother," June 26, 1865, Horatio Hill Papers, CHM.

¹⁵ "W. H. B. to My Darling," August 2, 1872, Bailhache-Brayman Collection, ALPLM. Bailhache's other references include the Ku Klux Klan and amnestied Confederates. Mark L. Bradley, *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 47-71 discusses violence surrounding the 1871 and 1872 elections in that state, which also saw the return of North Carolina to the Union and the reestablishment of conservative white authority. Brief discussion of "waving the bloody shirt" from Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 487-488.

general, they would blend back into the Democratic Party, joining sides over the new issues that would cause standard intraparty warfare. The difference was, of course, that these issues would no longer carry with them the burden of betting against the government in a war. Still, Democratic leadership struggled with repairing the party's image, attempting to legitimize them as both loyal and oppositional to the coming Reconstruction. Many in the party tried to ignore the war's effects, instead trying to restore old political issues that had brought much success to Democrats before the sectional crisis. Even to 1868, Copperhead George Pendleton gained a significant amount of support for the next presidential nomination based as much on his support for traditional party orthodoxy as on his good soldier duty as McClellan's vice presidential nominee. Ever wary of the party's broader image, leadership would dump the tarred figure of Pendleton for Horatio Seymour, himself a loyal party man. This struggle between what historian Joel Silbey refers to as "Purists" and "Literalists" defined the party's early post-war history, but with limited assistance from the South they could not overturn the Republican majority.¹⁶

The war may have changed some soldier attitudes toward race and slavery, but certainly did not have the same broad affect in Ohio Valley states. Both Indiana and Illinois had passed laws during the war that prevented blacks from moving into those states, while associations such as the Colored People of Ohio declared their independence from the Republican Party over concerns regarding discrimination in government employment.¹⁷ Democratic politicians continued to harangue on racial lines through Reconstruction. In the words of historian Jean Baker, "Democrats looked at currency and saw the Negro, reviewed impeachment and ended with the Negro, debated the purchase of Alaska and concluded with the Negro." Even 1876

¹⁶ Edward L. Gambill, *Conservative Ordeal: Northern Democrats and Reconstruction* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), particularly 123-136, and Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 177-208 both examine this divide within the party and the shift from Pendleton to Seymour.

¹⁷ Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 12, 109-110.

presidential candidate Samuel Tilden was a noted opponent of black suffrage.¹⁸ Copperhead historian Frank Klement famously tied the group to the growing rise in Grangerism, suggesting both groups were regionally based conservatives that rejected "eastern" imperialism, whether in the form of abolitionism or unregulated railroads.¹⁹ Ohio Democrats briefly discussed nominating William Sherman for governor in the upcoming 1865 gubernatorial race, quite a turnaround from the Vallandigham nomination two years earlier. Historian Felice Bonadio credits this kind of action to the generally tenuous nature of Ohio's Republican coalition, which without a war to hold it together, regularly splintered and joined with Democratic groups. Regardless of the reason, it was a suggestion the general did not take.²⁰ This mixed morass of regional politics that would provide opportunities to Republican soldiers in the war's aftermath also gave chances to Peace Democrats. Major Henry Kalfus, disgraced officer of the 15th Kentucky, tried to parlay his 1863 dishonorable discharge into the office of Kentucky state treasurer. He later became involved with a Sons of Liberty conspiracy that led to his self-imposed exile to Canada for the duration of the war.²¹

There is an adage that in politics, perception is reality. For Democrats, the perception amongst the soldiers was that the Party of Andrew Jackson had become the Party of Jefferson Davis. Word from home and efficient Republican propaganda had effectively rendered

¹⁸ Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 255-258. Quote from 256.

¹⁹ Frank L. Klement, "Middle Western Copperheadism and the Genesis of the Granger Movement" in *Lincoln's Critics*, 53-63, originally printed *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 38 (March 1952). *Lincoln's Critics*, 64-90 follows this article with a 1970 response, Ronald P. Formisano and William G. Shade, "The Concept of Agrarian Radicalism," then Klement, "Copperheadism, Grangerism, and Conflicting Contentions: A Rebuttal" in which historians debate the meaning of the terms "Copperhead," "radical" and "agrarian."

²⁰ Sherman's nomination discussed in the letters "Sam Evans to Father," June 25, 1865 and "Andrew Evans to Son," July 16, 1865 in Engs and Brooks, *Their Patriotic Duty*, 352, 356; Felice A. Bonadio, *North of Reconstruction: Ohio Politics, 1865-1870* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 1-33. John F. Marszalek, *Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993) does not mention any offer for the governorship, but 360-366 discusses the extensive reception given to Sherman by his home state, its citizens, and the larger world, as well as his desire to remain in military command, certainly far away from the world of politics.

²¹ Jenkins, *The Battle Rages Higher*, 259-260.

Copperheads as the sole representatives of the Democratic Party. On this though, Copperheads were not blameless. Though voices that actually supported Southern secession were rare, they were also loud. Many Copperheads had taken it upon themselves to focus their energies on damning the Lincoln administration and blaming him for continuing the war. On the issues, soldiers could consider different viewpoints, and even hold contradicting opinions to the Republican Party. On many occasions, on issues of the draft, slavery, confiscation, and other controversial Lincoln policies, individual soldiers disagreed with one another. Rarely, though, did these disagreements cast favorable light onto the opposition party. Indeed, when the time came for decision-making, it was only one side that benefitted. Sometimes, even, especially on issues of race, soldiers may have found themselves agreeing with Republicans. Others simply decided that regardless of the other issues, they could not vote for candidates whose supporters claimed that the war as a failure. Lacking the ability or desire to make the distinction when it would matter the most, the image Civil War-era Democrats faltered amongst the nation's fighting men.

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CHM - Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL

CHS - Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati, OH

FHS - Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY

IHS - Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN

Lilly - Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

OHS - Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH

RBH - Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center, Spiegel Grove, Fremont, OH

WRHS - Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH

Jacob Ammen Papers, ALPLM

John C. Bagby Correspondence, ALPLM

Bailhache-Brayman Collection, ALPLM

H. Barber Letters, ALPLM

M. A. Barber Letter, CHM

Napoleon B. Bartlett Letters, CHM

Newton Bateman Papers, ALPLM

Beecher-Trimble Collection, CHS

Bement Collection, Lilly

Henry Brimhall Letter, CHM

Ralph P. Buckland Collection, RBH

Caldwell Family Papers, RBH

William H. Christian Papers, CHM

Civil War Letters, FHS

Hezekiah Cole Clock Letters, ALPLM

Maria D. Coffinberry Papers, WRHS

William T. Coggeshall Diary, ALPLM

Lansden J. Cox Papers, ALPLM

Crist Collection, Lilly

S. Day Collection, Lilly

John C. Dinsmore Papers, ALPLM

Dorr Family Papers, FHS

Dow Family Letters, FHS

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Dunn Family Papers, FHS

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John S. Ellen Journal, WRHS

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A. B. Frey Papers, ALPLM
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 Gaston Civil War Collection, IHS
 "General McClellan and the Presidency: Letter from a Veteran Soldier on the Subject. His
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 Gregg Family Papers, FHS
 Hair Collection, Lilly
 Mary Cheney Hall Papers, CHM
 John L. Hallem Letter, ALPLM
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 Handley Collection, Lilly
 Robert Barlow Hanna Civil War Papers, IHS
 Robert Barlow Hanna Family Papers, IHS
 Roger Hannaford Papers, CHS
 Harding Collection, Lilly
 J. L. Harding Collection, Lilly
 John and Alexander Harper Papers, ALPLM
 Captain Jonathan F. Harrington Papers, RBH
 Jonathan F. Harrington Letters, RBH
 John L. Harris Papers, ALPLM
 Samuel Haycraft Journal, FHS
 William Jefferson Helsley Papers, FHS
 Hill Collection, Lilly
 Horatio Hill Papers, CHM
 Thomas Corwin Honnell Papers, OHS
 Houser Collection, Lilly
 Humphrey Hughes Hood Papers, ALPLM
 Amos W. Hostetter Letters, ALPLM
 Ingersoll Collection, Lilly
 Kemper Family Papers, Series 2, CHS
 Kephart Family Papers, IHS
 Delazon Ketchum Letters, CHM
 Kimball Collection, Lilly
 Lease Family Letters, ALPLM
 Maria Wells Leggett Papers, WRHS
 Letter: Hospital, to Ely, 1863 May 27, ALPLM
 Lough Family Papers, CHS

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 Arnold T. Needham Letter, CHM
 Neely Collection, Lilly
 Neals Olson Letters, ALPLM
 Niles Collection, Lilly
 Orr Collection, Lilly
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 Thomas D. Phillip Diary, FHS
 Pimper Collection, Lilly
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 Andrew Powell Letters, RBH
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 John B. Rice Papers, RBH
 John B. Rice Papers, Addenda, RBH
 Dr. & Mrs. Robert H. Rice Correspondence, RBH
 Sarah Elizabeth Wilson Rice Correspondence, RBH
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ABSTRACT

CAN WE CALL IT ANYTHING BUT TREASON? LOYALTY AND CITIZENSHIP IN OHIO VALLEY SOLDIERS

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This paper examines the relationship between Union soldiers from states along the Ohio River and Copperheads, members of the Peace faction of the Democratic Party during the American Civil War. The unique process of the Union Army's politicization was in large part driven by these Copperhead agitators. It encompasses soldiers' experiences both on the home front, as described in letters from family and friends, and in the field, marching through territory with residents who resented their presence. Throughout the war, soldiers and society grappled with questions of loyalty and what constituted a loyal citizenry. This region was a hotbed of Copperhead activity during the war, and to many soldiers Copperheads represented a tangible threat to their homes and families along with the war effort. Many soldiers struggled with the concept that such men could have a say in politics, while they, far from home, could not. An important facet of this relationship is the way in which these accounts of Copperhead agitation clashed with the political leanings many soldiers may have had towards the Democratic Party. Although some positions, such as pro-slavery and anti-emancipation, had sympathetic ears amongst the army, the consistent drumbeat of anti-war sentiment from these Copperheads drove soldiers towards the Republican Party. This most notably shows during elections, especially in the key elections for Ohio Governor in 1863 and U.S. President in 1864. By voting from the field in 1863 and 1864, soldiers remained active participants in the growing American democracy.