

2011

Forage Liberally: The Role of Agriculture in Sherman's March to the Sea

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Forage liberally:
The role of agriculture in Sherman's march to the sea

by
Robert Christopher Welch

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Agricultural History and Rural Studies

Program of Study Committee:
Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, Major Professor
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2011

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Acknowledgements

Of all the work that goes into producing a dissertation, this page may be the hardest to write, for there is no way that I can properly thank all the people who have helped in this short space.

My committee deserves my deepest thanks. My chair, Dr. Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, showed an amazing amount of patience with me throughout this process, offering guidance and suggestions when I needed assistance, and keeping this work on track. Dr. Kathleen Hilliard, a late but very welcome addition to my committee, helped me deal with many of the environmental and agricultural aspects of my work. Dr. Charles Dobbs offered me kind advice and an ear whenever I needed them. Dr. David Hollander and Dr. Jeff Houghtby also have my deepest personal and professional respect for their assistance in this project. Any errors in this work are my own and do not reflect upon them.

The Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library, the Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Iowa, and the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, all assisted in my research. The technological change that enabled greater access to Civil War collections at Iowa State University and the University of Iowa will continue to bear great fruit for future scholars and enabled me to find and utilize more materials in a shorter span of time.

Countless friends have been forced to listen to my rambling ideas and discussions based on my research. Kristi Medanic offered advice and a kind ear whenever either was needed. Brian Baird offered helpful suggestions for sources at various times throughout the

process. Brandon Jolly and several other friends suffered through countless conversations about my research, always willing to listen and offer suggestions and support when they were needed the most.

The greatest thanks go to my wife Bridget. She was my rock when I needed it most. She listened, gave advice, and offered me her love and understanding when I needed them. There were times in the course of this project that she provided the moral support that enabled me to continue on and finish. I have no words worthy enough to communicate my debt to her unfailing faith and love. I look forward to spending the rest of my life repaying those debts.

In the course of researching and writing my dissertation I lost one man dear to my life and I saw another enter the world. To the former, my heart aches that he will never be able to read these pages, though he encouraged me at every step in life. His death very nearly halted this dissertation. In the case of the latter, well, I joked early in grad school that with my luck, I'd finish my dissertation with a baby duct taped to my desk so that I could write. Thankfully, day care is only a block from my house. Papa wouldn't really do that, Jack. It is to the love of my wife, the memory of my father, and the hope I have in my son that I dedicate this work. It is far too paltry an offering for all that these three mean to me.

Introduction

With apologies to Wendell Berry, the Civil War was an agricultural act.¹ The secession crisis and war were born of the dispute over an agricultural labor system, and our culture has oversimplified the conflict as one between the industrial Northern states and the agrarian Southern states. The war changed agriculture in both regions as civilians fought to feed their families and the respective armies in the field, as well as manage with the loss of labor due to military enlistment. In an era when combat required large open spaces for the mobilization of armies, fighting scarred the agricultural landscape from Pennsylvania and Virginia to Arkansas and Georgia. To understand the causes and effects of the Civil War, agriculture serves as one of the best lenses available to the historian.

William Tecumseh Sherman's Savannah Campaign in November, 1864, remembered as the March to the Sea, is the ultimate expression of the war's interaction with agriculture. While historians have long discussed the campaign's effects on the transportation infrastructure and collective psychology of the South, the mantra of destruction glosses over agriculture in many cases. Foraging, the army's main interaction with Georgia's farms and plantations, gleaned the wealth of the land from the storehouses and sheds of the state, and yet the act of foraging and the Union soldier's understanding of the Southern agricultural landscape often falls into anecdotal discussion while authors and historians write about other aspects of the campaign. Agriculture played the central role in the planning and execution of the March to the Sea. If Sherman had been wrong about the wealth of Georgia's agricultural resources, history would remember the Savannah Campaign as a failed

¹ Wendell Berry, "The Pleasures of Eating" *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* edited by Norman Wirzba (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2002) page 321.

expedition, an incident similar to Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. But Sherman was not wrong; he is not remembered for leading an army to its destruction, but rather for helping to usher modern warfare, the warfare of annihilation as historian Russell Weigley described in *The American Way of War*, into the American lexicon.²

My interest in the March to the Sea and agriculture comes from family history. While in high school I met a distant relative who researched genealogy. Through her, I learned that I had a relative who fought in the Union Army during the Civil War, and that he took part in the campaign. From that point forward, my study of the conflict concentrated on the western theater of the war. With only a name and regiment to start with, I wanted to learn as much as I could about the war experience of my ancestor specifically, and Iowa's soldiers more generally. I have never seen a picture of my ancestor, and the only written account of his surface that I have found is at best an example of the flawed nature of human memory, but James Donaldson has steered my historical imagination and my research interests, including agricultural history. Ultimately, my work in agricultural history and Civil War studies my many year effort to better understand the life of one soldier.

This dissertation came about because of my independent reading. While free reading time can be non-existent in graduate school, I have tried to improve my time when I could find it. After finishing my master's thesis and while casting about for dissertation research, I began reading Noah Andre Trudeau's *Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea* at night. After fifteen years of researching the Civil War, I encountered something that piqued my combined research interests. Fifty-two pages into *Southern Storm*, for the first time that I

² Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1973), pages 150-152.

could remember, Trudeau laid out the agricultural importance of Sherman's March to the Sea. "He utilized a map prepared by the Department of the Interior that displayed the Georgia counties he wished to traverse, over which he hand wrote livestock and crop production from information he found in the 1860 census."³ For some reason, this was the first time that I saw a clear intersection between agriculture and the March to the Sea. Successful foraging was reliant on the state of Georgia's agriculture, and it was so much more than just a supplemental action to the destruction of railroads and moving to Savannah. Foraging provided the central dialogue for the Savannah Campaign; as such, to understand the success of the campaign, it is essential to understand the agriculture of the state of Georgia.

The only real discussion of this topic appears in the work of Lisa Brady and Mark Grimsley. Both rely on the use of the term *chevauchée* to explain the campaigns that Grant and his subordinates pursued in both theaters of the war beginning in 1863. Last used in the fifteenth century during the Hundred Years' War, the *chevauchée* was a combined supply raid and terror campaign, focused on wreaking havoc, burning, and pillaging enemy territory to reduce the productivity of a region, as opposed to siege warfare or wars of conquest. While this term is an apt description for Sherman's march through Georgia, I have been unable to find evidence of a direct historical influence that links the tactics of fourteenth and fifteenth century warfare and the events of the American Civil War nearly four hundred years later. However, I agree that Sherman's grand campaign does share certain tenets, including the denial of assets to the enemy through foraging, as well as the psychological aspects of the

³ Noah Andre Trudeau, *Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008) page 52.

tactic. The March to the Sea was a punitive campaign, meant to punish Georgians for supporting a rebellion against the government of the United States, as well as delivering proof that the power of the Union Army could be brought to bear with impunity wherever it saw fit as a means of ending the war.⁴

The struggle for the meaning of the March to the Sea has endured into the twenty-first century. Mark Grimsley viewed the campaign as a punitive raid, but he also noted that the soldiers who marched across Georgia looked upon the movement as a non-event, an unopposed march between points of operation.⁵ When Sherman penned his memoirs, he shared the view that Grimsley attributed to the enlisted men under the General's command. "I only regarded the march from Atlanta to Savannah as a 'shift of base,'" Sherman wrote, "as the transfer of a strong army, which had no opponent, and had finished its then work, from the interior to a point on the sea-coast, from which it could achieve other important results. I considered this march as a means to an end, and not as an essential act of war. Still, then, as now, the march to the sea was generally regarded as something extraordinary, something anomalous, something out of the usual order of events; whereas, in fact, I simply moved from Atlanta to Savannah, as one step in the direction of Richmond, a movement that had to be met and defeated, or the war was necessarily at an end."⁶ After the war, the Savannah Campaign was of little importance in the General's mind, and Sherman downplayed the importance of the work for which history has remembered him. He even

⁴ Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pages 190-191; Lisa M. Brady, "The Wilderness of War: Nature and Strategy in the American Civil War" *Environmental History* 10 (July, 2005) page 428.

⁵ Grimsley, 203.

⁶ William Tecumseh Sherman, *The Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman, Volume II* (New York: Literary Classics of America, 1990) page 697.

went so far as to rate the Savannah campaign as a “one” in importance, ranking the march north through the Carolinas as ten times more important to the outcome of the war.⁷

This work approaches the complex set of circumstances that combined to allow the Savannah Campaign to take place. Chapters one and two act as literature reviews in many ways. The first chapter discusses the changes in the nature of Georgia’s agriculture that the secession crisis and the onset of war brought about. Secession created the impetus for Georgia’s farmers and planters to turn away from commodity cotton production in order to concentrate on the cultivation of food staples after the loss of Northern market access. Southern agricultural change was framed in patriotism. Georgia’s planters and farmers succeeded in transforming a rich cash crop production area into the breadbasket of the Confederacy, an act which would bear grave consequences in the fall of 1864.

The second chapter reviews the change in Federal war policy through the course of the war. Sherman’s march to the sea was inconceivable to the American military in 1861; governmental policy towards civilians in the various theaters of operation changed drastically between the fall of Fort Sumter in April, 1861, and the spring of 1864. The evolution of the army’s approach to interacting with non-combatants developed because of Northern impatience with a prolonged war. Ultimately, the government abandoned a conciliatory approach, a slower-paced form of warfare favored by Generals Winfield Scott and George McClellan, in favor of the development of a “hard war” concept that General U.S. Grant first utilized during the siege of Vicksburg, which emphasized bringing the war home to the Southern civilian, including the use of foraging for food as a weapon of war.

⁷ Ibid.

The combination of the change in agriculture and war policy created the opportunity for William Tecumseh Sherman to pursue the Savannah Campaign after the fall of Atlanta. Chapter three discusses the process of planning the campaign. The march to the sea was an unorthodox maneuver by design, with a planned disconnection from any base of supply. Sherman used a copy of the newly published agricultural census from 1860 to lay out his army's path as it wove its way across Georgia, satisfied in his knowledge that Georgia's untapped agricultural resources could provide the food and forage necessary to keep his men alive as they moved on Savannah.

During the march, some of the men of Sherman's army kept detailed diaries that noted the state of farming and the environment around them. The fourth chapter uses those diaries to better understand the way soldiers from the Midwest encountered Georgia's agricultural landscape. How did Sherman's Midwestern soldiers evaluate the agricultural landscape they encountered in Georgia? We know now that Sherman and his soldiers found a bounty of food as they went through Georgia, but what did the men of the western army say about the farms they saw and the food they took? I have chosen to avoid the discussion of soldiers in urban areas, concentrating on those accounts left to history that describe rural Georgia and the farmscape these men laid waste.

Chapter five investigates the March to the Sea from the point of view of the women who faced down Sherman's army. While the voice of the planter class weighs heavily on the chapter, it works well to illustrate the chaos and violence that the women of rural Georgia faced when the army came to their doors. The war had already taken a hard toll on the women of Georgia, forcing them to take on tasks such as farm management and labor on a

greater scale than prior to the war. Now, alone in the face of an invading army, their diaries grant an insight as to how they dealt with Union soldiers as they took over their lands and households, and how foraging directly affected their lives. The work then concludes with an analysis of Georgia's agricultural recovery and the soldiers' commentary on what they saw and accomplished during the March to the Sea, as well as a discussion of the memory of the Savannah campaign.

Foraging represented the ultimate interaction between Union tactical doctrine and Southern agriculture. This work views Sherman's March to the Sea through the lens of agriculture. Rather than discuss foraging as one of the myriad tales of destruction that arose from the Savannah Campaign, I view the foraging of Georgia's farms as the central theme of the March to the Sea. While foraging created short-term damage that is difficult to differentiate from the total effects of the loss of the Civil War, it played a crucial role in the punitive nature of the campaign. The act of foraging brought war to the doorstep of Georgia's farms and plantations, and it implied that the operations of Sherman's army could be replicated wherever rebellion still existed within the South. It ensured the survival of an army, the success of a campaign, and the destruction of a people's will to fight. Leslie Anders began his history of the Twenty-First Missouri with a simple premise. "It was the Union armies west of the Appalachians that struck the death knell of the Confederacy."⁸ That death knell sounded for Georgians when William Tecumseh Sherman's men brought the war into the farmyards and homes along their path to Savannah.

⁸ Leslie Anders, *The Twenty-First Missouri: From Home Guard to Union Regiment*. Issue 11 of "Contributions in Military History." (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975) page viii.

Chapter One:
Deposing the Monarch:
Secession, War, and the Changing Nature of Agriculture in Georgia

On March 4, 1858, James Hammond, the Democratic Senator from South Carolina, stood before his fellow legislators and gave one of the signal speeches of the late Antebellum period. The previous day, Republican Senator William Seward of New York spoke out against not only the expansion of slavery into Kansas under the Le Compton Constitution but also against the very institution of slavery itself in his remarks about Kansas's problems seeking statehood and the national controversy over slavery and popular sovereignty. When Hammond arose in response, he laid out an argument that moved past Seward's discussion of statehood and the nature of American labor and established the social and economic claims that the South as a region could and would survive alone should the need arise because of the growing national discord. Chief among these claims, the only part of Hammond's speech that remains in the American historical imagination, was that "Cotton *is* king."⁹

Cotton *was* king in 1858. It remained so until the outbreak of conflict three years later. The Southern cotton crop accounted for nearly sixty percent of American exports. It fueled the factories of Europe and the industrial towns of the American North. Cotton built financial empires and fueled a Southern agricultural empire that eschewed industrialization and even the growth of subsistence crops in the name of prosperity. To make an attack on slavery and Southern society such as Seward's was to make war on cotton and the financial prosperity of the United States itself. As Hammond stated in the spring of 1858,

⁹ William Seward, *Freedom in Kansas.: Speech of William H. Seward, in the Senate of the United States, March 3, 1858.* (Washington: Buell & Blanchard, Printers, 1858); *Selections from the Letters and Speeches of the Hon. James H. Hammond, of South Carolina* (New York: John F. Trow & Co., 1866), 317. The emphasis is Hammond's.

Without firing a gun, without drawing a sword, should they make war on us we could bring the whole world to our feet. . . . What would happen if no cotton was furnished for three years? I will not stop to depict what every one can imagine, but this is certain: England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her, save the South. No, you dare not make war on cotton.¹⁰

As an economic weapon and as a symbol of regional might, the people of the South could choose no better icon than the cotton plant. It represented not only economic might, and a strangle-hold on the nascent industrialization of the Western world, but also a potent symbol of every aspect of Southern society. It stood for a controversial and immoral labor system, a social caste system built upon that system of chattel slavery, and the political power used in state capitols as well as the nation's capitol in the name of the economic domination wielded by one region of the country. And that power was expanding. In the twenty years preceding the secession of the Southern states, cotton production nearly doubled in areas of the South. In 1860, Mississippi alone produced more than 1.2 million bales of ginned cotton, or nearly five million pounds of the fleecy substance, two and a half times as much as it produced a decade earlier. Georgia, fourth in cotton production when compared to its sister states, still produced nearly 702,000 bales of cotton in 1860, an increase of more than two hundred thousand bales from 1850. Mississippi led the entire South in cotton production, and the South led the world.¹¹

The use of cotton as an economic weapon reflected the belief that the United States was too reliant on the financial benefits of its major export crop, as well as Europe's desperate need for Southern cotton to maintain the operation of its factories and mills.¹² The

¹⁰ Hammond, *ibid.*

¹¹ Joseph C. G. Kennedy, Superintendent of Census, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office., 1864), xciv.

¹² Willard Range, *A Century of Georgia Agriculture, 1850-1950* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954), 34.

Confederate government called upon the patriotism of citizens to create an artificial cotton famine, withholding current stores from the market as well as abstaining from planting while the crisis existed. Such an action would not only injure the industrial base of the Northern states, it would also expedite European recognition of the Southern states as an independent nation in order to reopen markets and bolster the economic houses of England and France. Additionally, the move away from cotton production would promote the cultivation of food staples to feed the people and the army after the loss of Northern trade partners in the Northwestern states.¹³ Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan initially aided the Southern plan for a cotton famine with its planned blockade of disloyal seaports as a means to use economic coercion to bring about a relatively peaceful end to the rebellion.¹⁴ Yet the attempts at producing a cotton famine and forcing the economic hand of those nations that relied on the industrial aspects of cotton failed from nearly the beginning. Due to the record setting crops produced in 1859 and 1860, Northern textile mills had been able to set aside warehouses full of cotton prior to the closure of Southern ports; coupled with the development of cotton production in areas such as Egypt, Brazil, and India, foreign exports to American mills as well as the mills of Europe kept factories open and negated the impact of loss of American cotton.¹⁵ And, Southern secessionists overlooked the role of Northern skilled labor in their factories and port cities, labor that left the South in the weeks and months after Fort Sumter.

For all that cotton and the other Southern commodity crops symbolized, and for all that the explosive increase in cotton production represented, there was one major problem

¹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵ Range, 46. See also Paul W. Gates, *Agriculture and the Civil War*. The Impact of the Civil War Series, Allan Nevins, editor (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 13. Range provides a nine point analysis of the ineffectiveness of the Confederate cotton famine on page 45 of his book.

that cotton could not solve: man could not eat cotton. Georgia, the self-proclaimed “Empire State of the South,” was the most diverse producer in the region. Farmers and planters there cultivated every staple commodity and food crop found in the region, and while it did not lead in the production of many of these items, the farmers and planters of Georgia worked to raise the most diverse selection of agricultural commodities and food staples in the region. But the large-scale cultivation of cotton curtailed food production at the plantation level and limited the amount of food at the yeoman and tenant farming levels due to economic necessity.¹⁶ As cotton culture became more profitable in Georgia following improvements in shipping infrastructure and processing technology, larger farmers and planters turned increasingly to its production and away from raising food crops for domestic consumption. As a result Georgia and the South as a whole became economically connected to the Midwest for the importation of basic food stuffs like wheat, corn, and livestock.¹⁷ Only the Upcountry section in the northern portion of the state, most recently opened after the Cherokee removal and with scarce transportation resources connecting it to marketing centers, continued to operate at a something near a subsistence level of production.

The emphasis on cotton and market commodity production meant that Georgia and the other Southern states relied on outside resources in order to import foodstuffs. With the rise of sectional hostilities and secession, correspondents in the Southern press immediately recognized the dearth of food crops and what it meant for the future of the region. In January

¹⁶ The South’s level of food production is a contentious topic. All of the secondary authors consulted for this study varied greatly in their opinions on that subject. For counter-examples supporting the possible self-sufficiency of Southern agriculture, see Robert E. Gallman, “Self-Sufficiency in the Cotton Economy of the Antebellum South,” as well as Diane Lindstrom, “Southern Dependence Upon Interregional Grain Supplies: A Review of the Trade Flows, 1840-1860.” Both articles appear in *Agricultural History*, Volume 44, No. 1. (January, 1970). Gallman’s article appears on pages 5-23, and Lindstrom’s article appears on pages 101-113.

¹⁷ Range, 14.

of 1861, the *Southern Cultivator* carried a lengthy editorial about the food emergency that loomed just over the horizon. While the Fire-Eaters and those pushing for military operations to secure the independence of the South preached the need for guns and the munitions of war, the editor bemoaned the lack of subsistence crops produced in Georgia.

The State of Georgia has not now grain enough within her limits to feed her population and domestic animals until the gathering of the next crop. It is presumed that the rest of the Cotton States are in similar condition. Last year we obtained our supplies from the North-west. . . . The subject is worthy of the immediate attention of the authorities of the Plantation States.¹⁸

The writer stated bluntly that while the drought and poor weather conditions of 1860 were in part to blame for the lack of food crops in Georgia's storehouses, the full weight of blame fell squarely on the shoulders of a self-proclaimed agrarian society that chose to concentrate its powers of production on the cultivation of market crops rather than concern itself with growing enough food to feed a society. The editor summed up his argument in such a way as to leave little doubt about the state of the food production of Georgia before secession. "The deficiency is then a natural result of our system of Agriculture. We are presenting in Georgia, at this moment, the anomalous spectacle of a people having upwards of twenty millions of dollars worth of the earth's products for sale, yet requiring a large proportion of the results of sale to buy the common necessities of life, which are also the products of the soil!"¹⁹ In the same issue, a correspondent known only as "J." also bemoaned the state of Southern dependence on the other agricultural regions of the United States in the name of cotton and the economic prosperity it reputedly brought with its production.

¹⁸ *Southern Cultivator*, XIX: 1 (January, 1861): 10

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The South is emphatically an Agricultural community. With regard to the products of the soil, there can be no excuse for dependence. The absurdity of our importing Hay from Maine, Irish Potatoes from Nova Scotia, Apples from Massachusetts, Butter and Cheese from New York, Flour and Pork from Ohio, or Beef from Illinois, is apparent at a glance. The Connecticut Yankees might with as much propriety take to the cultivation of Cotton and Sweet Potatoes, and send to South Carolina for their timepieces and to Georgia for a supply of wooden nutmegs.”²⁰

While historians have attempted to reconstruct the South’s ability to feed itself through the use of statistics, and some claim that the region was self-sufficient, the voices of those who lived in the region in 1861 show clearly that they feared the loss of foodstuffs from Northern markets that came with secession. Including the two articles mentioned previously, the *Southern Cultivator* published thirty-five articles in 1861 alone that raised the alarm of food shortages in the newly formed Confederacy. Writers from every state that seceded prior to the fall of Fort Sumter called for a renewal of Southern agriculture to feed the people of the region following the loss of Northern commodities. The Washington County, Georgia, *Central Georgian* laid bare why farmers and planters lagged behind in staple production. “For some time past, we (individually) have been purchasing Western corn, which cost us one dollar per bushel – twenty-five cents cheaper than we could purchase it from our own countrymen. Georgia can never be independent until she raises her own corn and pork.”²¹ In an April letter to the editor, G. D. Harmon of Milliken’s Bend, Louisiana, bemoaned how few of their own needs the agriculturists of the region actually met. “We have so long bought Cincinnati and Western pork, worked Western mules, used Northern Agricultural implements and Gin stands, planted Northern fruit trees, and wore Northern goods, that it has almost become second nature with us to *look away from ourselves* for

²⁰ Ibid.,15.

²¹ “Plant Provision Crops.” Originally published in the *Central Georgian*, date unknown, and reprinted in *Southern Cultivator*, XIX:2 (February, 1861), 67.

everything except the raw article of Cotton, and *Corn bread*.”²² The editors of the *Cultivator* quoted the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in March, showing that even those in the North recognized the state of Southern farming. “Heretofore, the Cotton, Rice, and Sugar States have found it to be more profitable to cultivate those staples to the exclusion of all products and depend upon the North-west for Corn, Pork, Flour, etc. That was a matter of choice, not of necessity.”²³

The statesmen of the South and those who most loudly pushed for regional separation saw that King Cotton would be the great savior of the nascent Confederate states. Cotton was the great national export of the United States, the commodity that fueled the plantations of Georgia and Mississippi as well as the textile and shipping industries of New England. Who would make war on the South if it meant the loss of the one great export that fueled so many economic markets? In the popular imagination of the cotton states, the loss of the great Southern crop meant that factories in both the industrial North and Europe faced shut downs due to the shortage of raw materials, in turn causing labor unrest and massive unemployment. Farmers in the Northwest and the rest of the North would lose their main regional markets and encounter economic ruin with no outlet for their crops and livestock. Shipping interests in New England would stand idle with no cargo in the holds of their ships. Nationally and internationally, the power of cotton as a vital commodity would create a clamor such as to ensure the recognition of the South, thereby diverting any crisis.

²² G. D. Harmon, ““Southerners! – Support Home Industry!” *Southern Cultivator* XIX:4 (April, 1861), 104-105.

²³ “Capacity of the South to Feed Itself.” Originally published in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, date unknown, and reprinted in *Southern Cultivator*, XIX:3 (March, 1861), 104.

While the vocal proponents of Southern agrarianism and secession touted the region's ability to stand alone, others across the breakaway states, including the government in Richmond, worked to prevent the possibility of famine and shortage that lay in the wake of cutting ties with the Mississippi Valley and the Northwestern states. Long reliant on trade with the agricultural North in order to not just supplement but also to supply the nutritional needs of its slave and free populations, secession created a crisis of food acquisition as early as the spring of 1861. Historian John Otto rightly places Georgia's farmers in the midst of a global market economy; the South bodily felt the hardships from the loss of that global market economy when it became removed from it through its own actions, as well as actions imposed by others.²⁴ Prior to secession, the planters of Georgia relied heavily on trade with the upper Mississippi Valley as well as trade along the Ohio River corridor to provide the majority of the foodstuffs they consumed. While farmers in the Northwest relied upon Southern production of sugar, rice, tobacco and other products, the people of Georgia in turn depended upon the interregional trade network for grain, livestock, fruit, dairy products, and a host of other food staples. One historian has estimated that up to one half of the pork produced in the upper Mississippi Valley in 1860 went south to support the food needs of the region.²⁵ In short, the South valued interaction with the global market economy so heavily that it relied on other American regions to produce the food it needed to survive; Georgia's planters found it more cost effective to pay more for food brought in from outside its borders than to remove land from commodity production to cultivate its own staples. Indeed, from a

²⁴ John Solomon Otto, *Southern Agriculture During the Civil War Era, 1860-1880*. Contributions in American History, Number 153. Jon L. Wakelyn, Series Editor (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 22.

²⁵ For regional interdependence, see E. Merton Coulter, "The Movement for Agricultural Reorganization in the Cotton South During the Civil War," *Agricultural History* Volume 1, Number 1 (January, 1927), 276 and 278. For pork consumption estimate and other crops, see Gates, 4.

market economy perspective, the loss of Southern buyers for Midwestern crops brought a short-lived recession to farmers in the upper Mississippi region that was only resolved with increased European trade and a redirection of trade routes via the railroad to the East Coast.²⁶

The maintenance of pre-established trade networks along the rivers of America's heartland and the provender it allowed the people of the South weighed heavily on the minds of the region's leaders. Free navigation of American waterways had long been a tenet of trade and interregional relations. Cutting off free navigation of the Mississippi and ending the trade relationships that provided food to the people of the South could potentially bring about the end of Southern independence faster than any military might the Union states could muster. To these ends the Confederate Congress moved quickly to maintain any normalized relations it could with the agricultural North. In February and April of 1861 that body passed two separate yet nearly identical resolutions calling for the duty-free passage of specified products into the borders of the rebellious territories. The roster of duty-free products read like the grocery list that in fact it was. In essence, the agricultural produce of the upper Mississippi Valley, the staples that were the backbone of the American diet, were to be allowed into the Southern Confederacy without fear of protective taxation. This was not simply an attempt by the Southern states to stave off the specter of starvation while southern farmers brought the cultivation of foodstuffs up to speed; the legislation was a vain endeavor to reinforce some form of friendly relations with the Northwest, an area that outwardly shared few ties with the Yankee North.²⁷ Should the South and Northwest reinforce financially important trade networks following secession, there existed a hope within the

²⁶ Gates, 5.

²⁷ Coulter, 278-281.

South that a divided nation would further fracture, thereby preventing war and ensuring Confederate independence. Ultimately the legislation was of no avail. With the enactment of the Federal blockade of the South along its entire boundary prior to the passage of the second duty-free act, any attempt to import food was preordained to failure.²⁸ To feed the people of the South, let alone prosecute what many now called a war for independence, the people of Georgia and the region as a whole now faced the reality of reforming the very nature of agricultural production by returning it to a position of regional self-reliance.²⁹ Cotton brought about the secession crisis and war, but corn would win it.

Throughout the region, the press called attention to the new patriotic role of farmers in the face of separation and possible war. The patriotic farmer and planter would cast aside the old modes of commodity agriculture in the name of cultivating food crops to feed both the people of the South as a whole as well as the grey-clad armies struggling for freedom.³⁰ The Columbus, Georgia, *Sun* stated plainly that the corn equaled freedom, while the South “will be powerless against grim hunger and gaunt famine, such as will overwhelm us if we insanely raise Cotton instead of corn.”³¹ Even the grand jury seated in Macon County, Georgia, issued a statement on the importance of agriculture in the coming conflict, echoing the calls of the revolutionary generation to practice non-importation and self-sufficiency in the time of crisis:

²⁸ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. Volume VI in The Oxford History of the United States, C. Vann Woodward, General Editor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 380-382 discusses the effectiveness of the blockade as a weapon against the Southern economy.

²⁹ E. Merton Coulter, “The Movement for Agricultural Reorganization in the Cotton South During the Civil War”, *Agricultural History* Volume 1, Number 1 (January, 1927), 4.

³⁰ Range, 32; Coulter, “Reorganization”, 5.

³¹ Quoted in Gates, 16.

It behooves us all to avert the evil that might befall our young Confederacy in the way of provisions by planting three or four times as much corn, peas, potatoes, rice, sugar cane, all sorts of vegetables, as we have ever before planted. In short, that we plant no cotton, except what we want to spin and weave at home, that we pay more attention to stock of all kinds and have them fat and fine, especially the pigs, calves and lambs, that we make our own clothes at home, tan our own leather and make our own shoes – make our own hats and weave our own blankets.³²

And so the clarion call went out to Southern agriculture; the citizen farmer best expressed his patriotism and loyalty to the new Confederate government was by growing food crops, and the chief food crop was corn. King Cotton was to be deposed in favor of Prince Corn. Officials and editors across the region urged farmers across the South to increase production of food staples, and these calls to action continued throughout the war; following the territorial losses of much of Virginia, Tennessee and Texas, the pressure to produce more food fell heaviest on Georgia, where the only major area of Federal incursion was around Fort Pulaski on the Atlantic coast. While famine and destruction came to the other states of the Confederacy, Georgia turned its cotton fields to a bounty of food production. Throughout the state farmers worked to diversify their production to include more and more corn, wheat, livestock, and other table crops in support of the civilian and military staple markets.³³ A corn crop was patriotism manifest; those planters and farmers who chose to continue planting cotton faced public disdain for pursuing profit over the need for food in times of crisis.³⁴

The agrarian shift to increased food production in the war-time South concentrated on two long-time staples that typified the diet of not just the South, but rural America as a

³² Range, 39.

³³ Mills Lane, editor, *“War is Hell!” William T. Sherman’s Personal Narrative of His March Through Georgia.* (Savannah; The Beehive Press, 1974), xiv.

³⁴ Otto, 31.

whole. Corn and pork, hog and hominy, were the mainstays of much of America's diet in the nineteenth century. Typically found on dinner tables in regions on the frontiers of society as well as a dietary mainstay of rural areas, hog and hominy found resurgence in the austerity of wartime dining across the South.³⁵ Cornbread, a culinary mainstay of the rural poor, found its way back to the dining rooms of the wealthy across the region with the loss of wheat imported from the North as well the loss of the wheat-producing areas of the Confederacy.³⁶ But corn was necessary to the Southern cause beyond the bread pan; corn fattened hogs and cattle that provided the other main nutritional components of the diet of farmer, clerk, and soldier alike, as well as meeting the needs of the draft animals that moved both commercial and military vehicles. The average person in the South consumed approximately thirteen bushels of corn per year either directly in its native form or as animal flesh. Comparatively, horses and mules put away seven and a half bushels of corn directly as feed grain every year, and hogs ate four bushels of the grain annually.³⁷ Corn in all of its forms was both a military and civil necessity.

Corn's place on the tables of the Deep South also rose from environmental factors. Georgians tended to import more wheat from Virginia, Tennessee, or the states of the Northwest than they cultivated.³⁸ With an annual rainfall of approximately forty inches per year, Georgia possessed an adverse climate for the production of wheat, which preferred drier climates with fewer than thirty inches of rain per year.³⁹ With an ever-decreasing arable

³⁵ Sam K. Hilliard, "Hog Meat and Cornpone: Food Habits in the Ante-Bellum South," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Volume 113, Number 1 (February 20, 1969), 3.

³⁶ Hilliard, "Hogmeat and Cornpone", 8-9.

³⁷ Otto, 14.

³⁸ Hilliard, "Hogmeat and Cornpone", 9.

³⁹ Otto, 10.

territory, and those territorial losses coming in the wheat producing areas of the upper south, wheat became a much scarcer staple in Confederate larders. As an example, some forecasted wheat production in 1863 to bring forth 2.5 million bushels of grain. Farmers and planters required twenty percent of that crop, half a million bushels, to seed the crop for 1864; only two million bushels of wheat was left to meet the bread needs of both civilians and an army in the field. Clearly wheat flour was an unsustainable portion of the secessionist menu, and corn products, often seen as a primitive form of frontier food by the planter class, became much more important regionally.⁴⁰

It is hard to quantify increases in corn production in any of the Confederate States during the war. The only reliable statistics available to use as a benchmark are the production numbers for the 1859 crop year recorded in Schedule IV, the agriculture section of the 1860 U.S. census. In that year, farmers in the state of Georgia reported a crop of 30,776,293 bushels; the South as a whole produced 282,626,778 bushels of corn in 1859. In comparison, Illinois produced 115,174,777 bushels of corn, Tennessee claimed 52,089,926 bushels, and the state of Iowa cultivated 42,410,686 bushels of corn in the same year.⁴¹ Historian John Solomon Otto estimated that the average laborer in Georgia, free or enslaved, could produce approximately thirty acres of corn with an average yield of seventeen bushels per acre, as compared with the eight acres of cotton one laborer could cultivate in a single season. With optimal corn production anticipated at almost five hundred bushels of corn per farm in the pre-war period, the change of emphasis in agriculture to promote food crop cultivation more than likely equated to a significant increase in corn output, if farmers and

⁴⁰ Gates, 114.

⁴¹ *Agriculture of the United States in 1860*, 185, xlviii.

planters actually stopped growing cotton.⁴² The amount of corn produced in the peaceful year of 1859 clearly illustrated how important corn was to the Southern diet and economy prior to the call for agricultural collusion with secession and rebellion.⁴³

Amid calls for an increase in the production of garden crops such as peas, beans, the ubiquitous sweet potato, and pumpkins for consumption by soldiers and at home, accounts began to circulate in the press as early as the spring of 1861 that the number of acres planted to corn jumped by fifty percent.⁴⁴ In the spring of the following year, the *Southern Cultivator* declared that farmers planted more than five million Confederate acres of corn and other grain crops. Without interference and the loss of arable territory, the corn yield alone would stand near fifty-five million bushels, nearly double to crop of 1861. Conversely, an article in the same issue claimed that cotton production dropped at least a million bales from the benchmark of 1860.⁴⁵ One editor estimated in March of 1863 that the farms of Georgia and the other Southern states needed to produce four hundred and eighty million bushels of corn in order to meet the needs for human consumption, both as corn meal as well as feed for meat animals, as well as feed for draft animals. This would culminate in a seventy percent increase in the production of corn.⁴⁶ According to statistics published in the *Memphis Appeal*, corn production in the Confederacy topped out at three hundred and fifty million bushels of corn in 1863, well below the stated need of the Confederate States as estimated that same year. However, by harvest season of 1863, the South had lost much of Tennessee's and Virginia's best agricultural land to advancing Union armies. The article showed a

⁴² Otto, 34.

⁴³ Gates, 8.

⁴⁴ Otto, 34-35, 41; Gates, 14.

⁴⁵ "Cotton Crop of 1860." *Southern Cultivator* XIX: 7 (November – December, 1862), 213.

⁴⁶ Gates, 22.

marked increase in Southern production of corn, wheat, and potatoes, all critical staple crops, but there is no way to actually verify the numbers printed in the *Appeal*. While numbers provide a benchmark for estimating the increases in production in the face of the loss of normal supply markets, without a way to validate the production estimates provided by the Southern press, a number of reasons come to mind that prevent using the numbers as a serious means of measuring the agricultural output of the beleaguered Confederacy.⁴⁷

Not every planter actually took his nation's interests to heart over the best interests of his pocketbook. Almost as quickly as the calls for increased corn production went out across Georgia and the rest of the South, reports of the continued cultivation of cotton began to echo across the Confederacy. Rumors abounded that some farmers and planters were planting corn where visible from the road, only to screen the production of cotton in the center of their fields. A small group of planters throughout Georgia and the other Cotton States declared they needed to maintain some semblance of cotton production, not only to supply the fiber needs of the Confederacy, but also to keep a viable stock of cotton seed. Once the war ended Southerners would need seed to supply the European markets when they once again begged for the crop that fueled the productive capacity of their factories. Some larger planters, personified by Georgia's Robert Toombs, the noted secessionist and Southern politician, continued to produce bumper crops of cotton, no matter how loudly the public cried out against their unpatriotic activities. If the Southern Confederacy was established on the property rights of individual, as well as in opposition to the strong-handed legislation of a central government, these purists felt that the private citizen had every right to produce any

⁴⁷ Gates, 104. Gates also doubted the veracity of the agricultural statistics found in the Southern press. Propaganda, as well as accuracy in reporting without a Southern census to gauge production, stands in the way of taking any numbers seriously for the purpose of this study.

crops he chose for the market. Other charges went out in the press that those who produced a combination of cotton and food crops were using the freshest, fortified soils for the production of cotton for the market while utilizing older, exhausted soils to cultivate corn for the government tithes and the support of the general welfare.⁴⁸

The other pillar on which secession relied upon to rebuild the agricultural base of the South was animal husbandry. The United States as a whole and the South as a region had long relied on some variation of common field open grazing, where agriculturists fenced their fields in to prevent damage from livestock that were allowed to roam free and fend for themselves on mast, the dried nuts of various trees such as acorns, hickory nuts, and the like, and native grasses until such time as they were needed, such as herding hogs in the fall in order to fatten them on corn prior to slaughter. In the cotton portion of the state, south of the mountains and below the fall line, plantation-style agriculture allowed for open ranging of livestock on private lands; above the fall line, in the Georgia upcountry where poorer soils unfit for cotton and commodity tended to limit farm size, smallhold farmers practiced common right to unfenced lands on a larger scale.⁴⁹ The state of Georgia helped enforce this custom through its Stock Law, designed to limit and define a farmer's right to sue for damages to crops done by roaming livestock. Fences must be kept at a minimum height of

⁴⁸ Gates, 19-20, 30-32.

⁴⁹ Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 58-60. See also David F. Weiman, "Farmers and the Market in Antebellum America: A View from the Georgia Upcountry," *Journal of Economic History* Volume 47, Number 3 (September, 1987) 634.

five feet and properly maintained; only then could a farmer sue the owner of any cattle or hogs that broke through a field's perimeter and damaged the enclosed crops.⁵⁰

While the common field system of grazing benefited farmers and planters by lessening the amount of time required handling and managing their stock, it also had a negative effect on animal husbandry in the South. Livestock outside of the daily management of the farm tended to be of poorer quality. Farmers and planters saw animal husbandry as secondary in importance to field crops, and especially the marketable commodity of cotton. Therefore, they gave little thought and effort to the improvement of herd bloodlines and the general quality of animals.⁵¹ The results can be seen in the description of Southern livestock. Solon Robinson, one of America's preeminent agricultural writers of the nineteenth century, described cattle in the South as small and "scrubby." While Georgia's cattle production ranked second only to the famed beef production of Texas, common pasturage without intensive management resulted in smaller cattle, lean and bony with lower meat and milk production to the point that on average they dressed out after slaughter at between four hundred and six hundred pounds in an era when Robinson and other writers pushed America's farmers to produce fat cattle.⁵² With the loss of the regional trade that normally brought in Northern hay to feed cattle in lean times, crafty farmers attempted to substitute crab grass as fodder with little benefit.⁵³ Beef remained of secondary importance in the South, however. Even at a smaller size, six hundred pounds of meat from one animal was more than one farmer could preserve satisfactorily. The upper classes of the

⁵⁰ Lee Kennett, *Marching Through Georgia: The Story of Soldiers and Civilians During Sherman's Campaign*. (New York; Perennial, A Harper Collins Imprint, 2001), 93.

⁵¹ Range, 19.

⁵² Solon Robinson, *Facts for Farmers, Volume I* (New York: A. J. Johnson, Publisher, 1869), 14.

⁵³ Coulter, "Agricultural Reorganization", 80.

South usually consumed beef fresh; beef played a significantly smaller role in the culinary rotation of the average small farmer who slaughtered perhaps one to two beeves a year.⁵⁴

The admonitions against Georgia's hogs were even more pointed, despite their status as the nation's signature meat supplier. If cotton was king of the fields, pork was "king of the table," outpacing in importance any other form of animal protein available.⁵⁵ In the February, 1860, *Godey's Lady's Book*, John S. Wilson's "Health Department" held forth on the importance of the hog to the American table, calling the South the "Republic of Porkdom . . . for in many parts of this region, so far as meat is concerned, it is fat bacon and pork, fat bacon and pork only, and that continually morning, noon, and night, for all classes, sexes, ages, and conditions . . . hogs' lard is the very oil that moves the machinery of life, and they would as soon think of disposing with tea, coffee, [or] tobacco . . . as with the essence of hog."⁵⁶ Pork ruled the American diet, with occasional inclusions of beef. Sam Hilliard estimated the annual per capita consumption of pork by Southern whites at approximately one hundred and fifty pounds; the enslaved population of the South received between two and one half and five pounds of pork in their weekly rations, or between one hundred and twenty-five and two hundred and fifty pounds annually. Taking variables of age, location, and other items into consideration, Hilliard estimated that the average enslaved adult received three and one half pounds of pork per week, with a seasonal and geographic range of one hundred and fifty-six to two hundred and sixty pounds of pork consumed per year.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Hilliard, "Hogmeat and Cornpone", 5.

⁵⁵ Sam B. Hilliard, "Pork in the Ante-Bellum South: The Geography of Self-Sufficiency" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 59, No. 3 (September, 1969), 462. See also Hilliard, "Hog Meat and Cornpone", 3.

⁵⁶ John S. Wilson, "Health Department", *Godey's Ladies Book* Volume 60 (February, 1860), 178. Quoted in Hilliard, "Hogmeat and Cornpone", 4.

⁵⁷ Hilliard, "Pork in the Ante-bellum South", 466-467.

Mutton remained such a rarity on the dinner table that only the upper classes in the South consumed it, as the management of sheep was less common on small farms due to the fragility of the animal and the close contact required to husband a flock, as compared to the open-field system used in large animal production. Only poultry contributed a viable alternate protein for the Southern table in the form of eggs and meat, but it never approached the levels of pork.⁵⁸

Despite the recognized status of pork as the main meat dish of the Southern table, agricultural writers reserved special vitriol for the condition of the common hog. As with other varieties of livestock, there was little concern about improving the blood lines and breeding of animals, while the open-field system of grazing allowed agriculturists to limit the amount of man-hours dedicated toward herd management. The downside of this practice was that animals of varying quality were part of the available breeding population, to the point that there was no real recognizable breed of hog. Foraging in the woods for mast and whatever food they could root out helped to create a hog designed for survival: fast, small in size, and in essence a wild animal, rather than a refined breed of domesticated livestock.⁵⁹ Southern writers described Georgia's numerous hogs as “. . . long-headed, long legged, fleet footed ‘piney woods rooters’ . . .”, generally small of frame and inferior to animals found on Northern farms.⁶⁰ Additionally, free-ranging sows tended to have smaller litters, usually

⁵⁸ Hilliard, “Hogmeat and Cornpone”, 6.

⁵⁹ Hilliard, “Pork in the Ante-bellum South”, 464; Gates, 102.

⁶⁰ Gates, 6-7.

three to five piglets per birthing, rather than the potentially larger farrowing of up to ten offspring per litter in well managed plantation herds.⁶¹

Meat production in Georgia and the rest of the South kept pace with the dietary needs of the people theoretically, but in practice still needed support through trade with other regions of the country. The 1860 census recorded more than twenty million hogs present on Southern farms in 1859. Otto estimated that if half of these animals were available for slaughter that year, with a potential yield of one hundred and forty pounds of meat per animal. If the average person consumed one hundred and fifty pounds of pork per annum, a rather large deficit of pork quickly accumulated. This deficit reflected the Southern emphasis on low-grade management of livestock in favor of the monetary yield of cotton and the culinary yield of corn. The only way to fill this void before secession was interregional trade, a method lost to southern farmers by the late spring and early summer of 1861.⁶² The loss of Northern trade was so problematic that L. B. Northrop, the Commissary General in charge of subsistence for the Confederate Army, spent the first months of the war attempting to stockpile Northern pork in an unsuccessful bid to curtail a pork deficit. Insufficient regional production meant that there was not enough of the Southern staple to meet the needs of an army in the field as well as the civilian and slave population on the home front.⁶³ Otto estimated a theoretical potential surplus of Southern beef, but this “surplus” was often marketed to foreign markets before the war. This figure dipped dramatically with the loss of Texas beef after the fall of New Orleans in April, 1862, and the intensifying presence of the Federal navy on Southern waterways, culminating in the loss of Vicksburg in early July,

⁶¹ Hilliard, “Pork in the Ante-bellum South”, 465.

⁶² Otto, 16; Hilliard, “Pork in the Ante-bellum South”, 470.

⁶³ Gates, 7.

1863. The loss of the Mississippi River cut off Texas beef from Southern larders after the summer of 1863.⁶⁴

Lack of standard slaughter practices also limited Southern pork production, often influenced by the commons system of grazing and irregular feeding patterns. If the standard farming practice in the Midwest and other regions called for the slaughter of hogs after approximately one year of growth, Georgia's farmers often held swine over for a second or even third year in order for them to complete the fattening process on a hardscrabble diet of forest mast and grasses. While Otto estimated a yield of one hundred and forty pounds of meat per animal, there is no real estimated slaughter weight for hogs available. The result was often a mixture of generations of hogs awaiting slaughter at the same time, with the more visionary practitioners of animal husbandry attempting to fatten their swine on corn in the final weeks and months before they were transformed into hams, pork shoulders, and sausage.⁶⁵ With the onset of war, pork production failed to meet the needs of the nascent Confederacy. The rapid and continuing loss of territory left Georgia alone as the leading hog producer in the rebellion. Coupled with grain shortages and droughts, hog cholera swept through Georgia between 1862 and 1864, cutting deeply into the number of animals available for food on all fronts, and the impact of foragers from both armies, the number of hogs in Georgia and the other Confederate states continued to decline, leading to a crisis in available meat.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Otto, 16, 36.

⁶⁵ Otto, 16; Hilliard, "Pork in the Ante-Bellum South", 465; Hilliard, "Hogmeat and Cornpone", 5.

⁶⁶ Gates, 90-92; Otto, 36.

Secession and the onset of civil war brought about another change for Southern agriculture with much deeper implications for the war effort: the attempt to switch from commodity agriculture to subsistence farming. The number of men required to serve in Georgia's regiments as well as support the Confederate war effort in Georgia's few industrial centers seriously depleted the available pool of labor to manage the change to subsistence agriculture. The loss of enslaved labor through both the impressment of slaves to work on the defenses near Savannah and other strategically important cities and the self-emancipation of slaves who ran away to Federal-occupied areas of the South magnified the labor issue.⁶⁷ John Solomon Otto claimed that the loss of labor actually gave an advantage to food production in Georgia; with fewer hands available to begin with, and fewer people needed to cultivate food rather than cotton, the potential problem of an excess labor force never came to a head, as corn and other subsistence crops required less intensive labor than cotton did.⁶⁸

The change in labor became another source of patriotism for Georgians, who called upon the spirit of their forebears to inspire the push for home production of goods as the Revolutionary generation did with the calls for the non-importation of British goods. More importantly, the meaning of labor itself changed in the era of the Second American Revolution. No longer would Southerners cling tightly to the words of John C. Calhoun, who declared in the 1830s that manual labor was below the dignity of any white man, a statement long used to justify race-based slavery and the social caste system that evolved in the decades prior to secession.⁶⁹ Labor carried a new dignity, one based in the patriot's duty to see to it that his or her country found independence rooted in a return to the yeoman values

⁶⁷ Range, 57; Gates, 23.

⁶⁸ Otto, 34; Gates, 23.

⁶⁹ Range, 58-59; Coulter, "Agricultural Reorganization", 11.

of Jefferson while shunning, at least temporarily and publicly, the values of a slaveholding aristocracy molded by the image of South Carolina's fieriest son.

One challenge to the change in the honor of labor came in the form of changing gender roles on the farm. Whereas large farms and plantations in Georgia's cotton-producing areas were generally far enough from Union lines to prevent large-scale escape attempts, thus maintaining a sufficient labor force, areas in the northern half of the state had a long history of limited or small scale slave investment. Coupled with the proximity of Federally-held Tennessee acting as a lure to what slaves did live in the region, northern Georgia was plagued with a severe loss of farm labor. More importantly, almost none of the small farms in Georgia qualified for the exemption from service under the South's "twenty slave law," which meant that those farmers did not qualify for draft exemptions based on the number of slaves they owned. These small farmers became the rural draft pool for soldiers, while planters with at least twenty slaves were exempt from service.

The loss of free white labor created a much larger vacuum with fewer resources to replace the sons and husbands that enlisted in the armies of the Confederacy, be it through free enlistment or conscription.⁷⁰ This left women, the elderly, and the infirm to handle the task of managing the farm. The onus of this change fell hardest on women, although class did mitigate how deeply the struggles of war on the home front were felt. The wives of the planter class suffered the loss of a standard of living they once enjoyed, often using this as a symbol of patriotism, although the loss of accustomed social status and the luxuries that went

⁷⁰ Gates, 74.

with that status did not rival the losses felt by women of the yeoman South.⁷¹ Additionally, the circumstances of war forced some women of the planter elite to assume the management of their familial lands and the slaves that formed the basis of their power and wealth. This challenged the paternalistic ideals of the South, both through socially elite women taking on a task historically done by men, but also through the role of women in charge of slaves, seen as the duty of a male “parent” to lead his child-like laborers. While some women were able to subvert the traditional narrative of female powerlessness, societal fears based on the perceived sexual brutishness of slaves played on the collective consciousness of the region, limiting the success of female plantation operators.⁷²

Women of the poor rural South felt the harshest effects of the loss of white male labor during the war. This population, no matter how hard they tried, could not fill the loss of male labor due to the nature of farming in the South. Prior to the war, the demands of labor often stretched thin the yeoman family’s resources; the loss of a farm’s male population often acted as a breaking point in the functionality of a family.⁷³ While Northern farms had technological assets that eased the tasks of plowing, harrowing and harvesting, these same tasks in Georgia relied on manual labor with much simpler tools. The physically taxing action of walking behind a team of horses while plowing, cultivating a corn field with a garden hoe, and harvesting wheat in the summer sun with only a sickle or a grain cradle was often more than those left behind could physiologically handle, resulting in the lower

⁷¹ Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era*, (Urbana; University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 69.

⁷² Drew Gilpin Faust, “Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War”. *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, editors. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 182-184.

⁷³ Edwards, 90.

productivity of the small yeoman farms that made up the majority of agricultural operations in Georgia.⁷⁴ The wives of Georgia's yeomen soldiers struggled to maintain their family farms without the guidance and assistance of their husbands and sons, but the task proved too great for many of them. As the war dragged on and farms fell out of optimal production, an increasing minority of Georgia's rural poor farm wives found called upon the state for food relief, unable to feed their families, let alone produce food for the Confederate war effort.⁷⁵

Coupled with the loss of farm labor was the loss of farm tools available to Georgia's yeomen. As with so many other items vital farm life, Northern factories produced the majority of tools used in the South prior to the war, with only a small portion made in the native shops of Georgia's cities and towns.⁷⁶ Not only was the source of horse-drawn implements curtailed by the blockade, the source for axes, scythes, shovels, and the myriad other farm tools needed to run a farm and cultivate the fields was also lost. With this loss, tools became harder to replace when they wore out or broke, further limiting the productivity of Georgia's farms.⁷⁷ Moreover, the few iron-producing facilities in the South, such as Richmond's Tredegar Iron Works, focused on supplying the military needs of the South, rather than producing agricultural goods such as plows and other tools.

Impressment, the official Confederate course of action taken to supply the troops in the field and fill the needs of the defense of the South, added exponentially to the loss of tools and labor. In order to meet the needs of supplying men in the field, as well as build

⁷⁴ Ibid; Kennett, 26.

⁷⁵ Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia*, Civil War America; Gary W. Gallagher, editor (Chapel Hill; The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 156-160.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 22-23.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 62-62, 95.

defensible positions around major cities and strategic locations and deal with the social pressures of want and need in nonagricultural areas, the Confederate Congress passed legislation that created the power and process to impress goods for the war effort. This legislation placed rigid price caps on food crops, even in the face of wildly fluctuating market prices and brought about a system by which tools, slaves, and field crops could be taken by the government, as well as a system of tithing in lieu of taxes.⁷⁸ The irony of a Confederacy established on the rights of states and individuals to use property as they chose passing a law that mandated the seizure of goods and labor in the name of the national good was not lost on many.

The Confederate Congress established the crop tithe as part of the Revenue Act passed on April 24, 1863. The act established an eight percent tax on the value of processed crops such as tobacco, wool, cotton, molasses, and rice not meant for family consumption effective July 1 of that year. It exempted farmers from paying a levy on the value of their land, but they had to pay a tax on income from the sale of beef cattle, as well as a one percent tax on the value of animals in their possession not directly tied to farm management.⁷⁹ Financial levies aside, Section Eleven of the Revenue Act established a tithe on agricultural produce that allowed farmers to plant a certain quantity of crops for home use; agriculturists owed ten percent of any surplus produced. The legislation also created a means for collecting the tithe, usually a military officer or member of the community, as well as the

⁷⁸ Ibid, 46.

⁷⁹ “An Act to lay taxes for the common defence, and carry on the Government of the Confederate States.” *The Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America, Passed at the Third Session of the First Congress; 1863. Carefully Collated with the Originals at Richmond Public Laws of the Confederate States of America, Passed at the Third Session of the First Congress; 1863. Private Laws of the Confederate States of America, Passed at the Third Session of the First Congress; 1863.* (Richmond; R. M. Smith, 1863), 115.

means of adjudicating any disparities in the amount to be tithed.⁸⁰ In the very real terms of rations generated from the tithe, officials estimated based on previous production records that the tithe could generate bread rations for 200,000 men per year and bring meat to the haversacks of 160,000 men, as well as feeding more than 100,000 animals in Confederate service from the hay, oat, and fodder tithe.⁸¹

The Confederate Congress chose to avoid issues of enforced subsistence production, however, leaving that question in the hands of the states even with increasing food shortages reported around the South.⁸² To this end, Georgia's Governor Joseph Brown pushed for legislative action to aid in the protection of agricultural resources within his state. Echoing the calls of newspaper editors and public figures across the state, Brown early on in the crisis appealed to the patriotism of Georgia's farmers to double their efforts at the production of consumable crops for the public good and to abandon cotton production.⁸³ In February of 1862 Brown moved to limit if not halt the production of distilled alcohol from the state's increasingly tenuous supply of corn and rye in order to conserve grain for civilian and military use, as well as taking steps to control the state's precarious salt supply, a necessary item to the preservation of food for home use as well as preparing meat for shipment to the armies in the field.⁸⁴ With legislation passed in November of 1862, all whiskey distillation was halted in Georgia, with the only exceptions going to those who produced under Confederate contract, as well as distillers manufacturing alcohol for medical or industrial

⁸⁰ Ibid, 122-123. The Congress established a limit of fifty bushels of potatoes, sweet or "Irish," one hundred bushels of corn, fifty bushels of wheat, twenty bushels of peas and beans combined, as well as limits for other crops and fodder for home use.

⁸¹ Gates, 69.

⁸² Ibid, 32-33.

⁸³ Ibid, 17.

⁸⁴ Kennett, 30.

purposes.⁸⁵ Brown and the Georgia legislature also took aim at the producers of cotton, limiting the cultivation of the crop to just three acres per hand and fining overproducers \$500 per acre over the allowed amount. Money collected from the fine aided those in need of relief, especially the families of soldiers in the field.⁸⁶

Confederate impressment went beyond the seizing of grain crops. Legislation allowed representatives of the army and the government to take tools, animals and slaves to meet the needs of the war effort.⁸⁷ The tithing of slave labor filled the need for workers to build Georgia's defenses and military infrastructure. This freed white troops for use in the field rather than spending their time with pick and spade.⁸⁸ Slave owners large and small took issue with the state's demands on their own privately invested labor supply; tales and worries of abuse and maltreatment abounded, to the horror of owners. Small-scale slave owners, who most often owned between one and three slaves, protested being overburdened by donating labor to the government; they lost a greater proportion of their productive capacity than the owners of large plantations.⁸⁹ A substantial backlash existed against the impressment or purchase of draft animals from the Georgia's farmers and planters. With fewer animals to begin with than the surrounding states, the loss of any meant a serious blow to the productive capacity of a small farm or even plantation. Additionally, Georgia's inferior transportation infrastructure relied more on draft animals than it did on the railroad, so impressment prevented farmers from moving their goods to market for sale, thereby

⁸⁵ Gates, 97-98.

⁸⁶ Coulter, "Agricultural Reorganization", 9.

⁸⁷ Gates, 57.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 59.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 60-61.

causing want in the towns and cities around the state.⁹⁰ Diseases such as hog cholera also cut into the amount of food available to both farmers and the Confederate commissary; to meet the problem of meat production, the Confederate Congress allowed farmers to commute the pork and bacon tithes to cash payments.⁹¹

Questions of food became more and more central to the state of Georgia as the war dragged on and demanded more resources. Agents of the Confederate Commissary system, in order to meet the demands of the army, turned increasingly to purchasing a farmer's entire crop while it was still in the field and yet unharvested, creating the illusion of food abundance in some localities while hiding the realities of localized food shortages created by tithing and problems created by inclement weather.⁹² Between 1862 and 1864 several areas of the state suffered food shortages due to a combination of severe drought and periods of heavy rains, limiting the amount of food produced for home consumption, let alone allowing the farmer to meet the requirements of the Confederate tithe.⁹³ Coupled with this inclement weather came the flood of refugees fleeing the Union-occupied regions of the upper South. Georgia, the breadbasket of the Confederacy, now faced a food crisis previously unheard of within its borders. In a January, 1864, letter to Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon, Brown painted a bleak picture of the impact of civil war on the agriculture of Georgia:

I have lately been through the upper, middle and southwestern portions of the State, which are its most productive portions, and I tell you in all candor that the country is becoming so far drained of supplies that if relief cannot be had from some other source, I do not see how it is possible to supply the people and the army with bread till another crop is made, while the supply of

⁹⁰ Kennett, 26; Gates, 58.

⁹¹ Gates, 91.

⁹² Kennett, 26.

⁹³ Gates, 113-114; Range, 54.

meat is entirely inadequate. The cattle have been so generally taken for the army as to leave a still less encouraging prospect for meat for another year, and if heavy calls are to be made for troops to be taken from the agricultural pursuits the prospect for bread will indeed be gloomy.⁹⁴

The cumulative effect of weather, conscription, the loss of labor, and the influx of refugees took a toll on the agricultural capabilities of Georgia. Though the populace as a whole now suffered food shortages and a general want of goods, the state now needed to mobilize resources in order to meet the needs of the destitute. At first this aid came in the form of direct monetary payments to widows and the indigent families of soldiers in the field; by 1863 and 1864, Brown transformed this aid into allocated food resources, especially to the families of north Georgia, especially hard hit by the combination of weather, refugees and foraging. With meat hard to come by, his administration sent tens of thousands of bushels of corn to the needy throughout the state in some attempt to alleviate the want of food.⁹⁵

The impressment system came with a price, as evidenced by the degree of want in Georgia. From the very beginning, the outcry against waste and hoarding created a divisive bitterness throughout the state. Massive amounts of corn and other grain crops lay at rail junctions and other collection points, rotting away while awaiting final collection and distribution to the storehouses and troops in the field. Barrels and sacks of food spoiled before collection due to the lack of buildings or other means of protecting them from the elements. Flour, meat, grain and other much needed supplies lay wasting away and good

94 Joseph Brown to J.A. Seddon, January 29, 1864. *The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia*, Volume III, Allen D. Chandler, editor (Atlanta: Chas. P. Byrd, State Printer, 1910), 461.

95 Range, 47; Kennett, 31, 84; Gates, 87.

only for the production of whiskey or soap, rather than human consumption.⁹⁶ Some saw the waste and loss as a sign of the inadequate transportation infrastructure already overburdened by both civilian and military use.⁹⁷ Georgia's rail system dated only to the 1850s, built as a means to allow market access in between Atlanta and Chattanooga, with a second rail system connecting Savannah and points westward. Without enough cars and engines to meet the demands of the populace and the government, the overtaxed rail system failed to answer the needs of the state. While food by the ton wasted away and rotted at rail heads awaiting distribution, Georgia's men in the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee saw their rations cut in half, often without meat, and lacked proper shoes and clothing due to the transportation issues on the home front.⁹⁸

The public often targeted the farmers of Georgia themselves as part of the failure of the Confederate tithe and supply system. While the original legislation established prices at which government agents were to purchase goods, the prices that the Confederacy offered were often well below market value, an issue that got worse as the war continued and Confederate currency lost value.⁹⁹ Collection agents working for the government often resorted to outright seizure of farm goods in order to procure for the needs of the army due to farmers withholding goods for a higher price.¹⁰⁰ People across the South cried out against farmers as speculators and hoarders, selling at a price so dear in that economic climate as to

⁹⁶ Gates, 66-68.

⁹⁷ Kennett, 27.

⁹⁸ Gates, 50.

⁹⁹ Gates, 51. In March of 1864, one US dollar was worth approximately twenty-six Confederate dollars, and the scale slid quickly as the year went on. In December of 1864, that same US dollar was worth thirty-two Confederate dollars, and on April 20, 1865, the exchange rate was 100:1. T.C. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals: An Inside View of Life in the Southern Confederacy from Birth to Death* (Mobile: The Gossip Printing Company, 1890), 375.

¹⁰⁰ Otto, 38.

have their patriotism questioned.¹⁰¹ City dwellers and newspapermen claimed farmers were responsible for driving the price of agricultural commodities up in some cases almost four hundred percent in the name of profiteering, often preferring to hoard goods in the hope of selling at a better price than Confederate officials offered.¹⁰²

The economic argument cut both ways. Farmers decried the effect of inflation on their ability to purchase goods. Often they did attempt to resist the offers from Confederate purchasing agents, if only to attempt to receive something closer to market value for the goods they were forced to sell.¹⁰³ Resistance came most heavily from areas in north Georgia, with a much more limited history of market interaction, and where the stony ground and colder climate made subsistence much more difficult.¹⁰⁴ Writing to the *Augusta Chronicle* in November of 1864, one Georgia farmer related how inflation quadrupled the prices merchants were charging, thereby decreasing the amount of goods he was able to get in trade to pay the debt for what his slaves needed every year.¹⁰⁵ While the civilians and merchants in Georgia's cities claimed that farmers enriched themselves through wartime profiteering, the evidence showed that the merchants themselves were guilty of what they accused farmers of doing. As one writer in rural Georgia pointed out, everyone was trying to buy cheaply and sell dearly, with the result that nearly everyone involved in the buying and selling of goods in war time was responsible for the economic mess at hand.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Gates, 42.

¹⁰² Gates, 41, 51.

¹⁰³ Gates, 64-65.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 59.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 43.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

This was the agricultural climate of Georgia in early 1864. What began as the patriotic call of farmers and planters to shed the industrial crop of cotton in favor of the production of corn and hogs to feed the people and armies of the South had now devolved into a back and forth argument over the shortages, profit and waste that came from an underfunded system unable to meet the demands put upon it. The free white labor of the Georgia's small farms, the yeoman backbone of its volunteer regiments, filled the gray ranks now sitting at Dalton guarding the northern approaches to Atlanta or watching the Army of the Potomac in Virginia, causing a labor shortage that decreased the ability of the state thought to be the breadbasket of the Confederacy to produce the bread and meat needed to feed the military and civilian populations of the South. When the state seceded, the great hope of self-sufficiency seemed within easy reach simply by replacing King Cotton with corn crops on Georgia's plentiful farmlands. To some extent these hopes were initially met with success, only to find that the Georgia and its fellow Southern states lacked the ability to maintain and distribute the new-found food bounty in the face of war and an unprepared infrastructure.

Now Georgia's greatest challenge sat at Chattanooga, awaiting the opportunity to finally bring the war to a state previously untouched by the invader's tread. While Georgia's agriculture had changed greatly in order to meet the needs of the Confederate South, Federal war policy had changed as well. The state of Georgia was about to feel the final product of that evolution. It was a far cry from the way war was fought just three years earlier.

Chapter Two:
From Kid Gloves to “Hard War”:
The Evolution of Federal War Policy Toward Civilians

Shortly after taking to the field on his first active campaign in the spring of 1862, Si Klegg of the 200th Indiana encountered the hard realities of army life on the march. After his unit passed its first night in the field in a driving rain storm with no tents, and then went through the farcical exercise of erecting their tents for the first time outside of the level fields of the camp of instruction, Si learned from his “pard” and messmate Shorty on how to create some form of creature comfort in the field. Following the missive of his company captain to his men to make themselves comfortable, Wilbur Hinman’s young protagonist scanned the area around his new camp in search of something to make his life in camp more like home; what he found did not soothe his aches and pains.

There were barns and outbuildings and fences in the vicinity, but bristling bayonets warned off all who sought to lay violent hands upon them. They were as tempting to those gloomy-hearted Hoosiers as was the forbidden fruit to the ancestral pair in the Garden of Eden – and they were a great deal more securely protected. The destructive propensity, which seemed to be an instinct in the breast of the soldier, showed itself at the very outset in the 200th Indiana, and foreshadowed great activity in this direction whenever the restraint should be removed. As the murky twilight began to deepen they would have torn down half the city, if they had been turned loose, and used the debris to keep themselves out of the mud. But the time for this had not yet come.¹⁰⁷

Though surrounded by the fences and outbuildings of the farm on which they camped, Army policy prohibited the use or destruction of private property. Pickets walked a beat around all

¹⁰⁷ Wilbur F. Hinman, *Corporal Si Klegg and His “Pard”* (Cleveland, OH: N. G. Hamilton & Co, 1889; Galway, NY: York Publishing Company, 1993), 73-74.

the buildings and even the fences in order to protect the Southern farmer's improvements from the prying hands of soldiers looking for dry wood or the means to make a bench, let alone those in the ranks of the army who naturally felt an inclination towards thievery and criminal mischief.

After they attempted to make their beds in the muddy ground, finally sheltered by the thin canvas of an army tent, Si's friend Shorty, a veteran of an earlier enlistment in 1861 who took the young Indiana farm boy under his wing, decided to defy the espoused official policy of the War Department and improve the living conditions of the pair. After he posted Si as a lookout and after studying the pace and movements of the guard, Shorty made repeated forays against the Rebel rail fence until the guard, whom Hinman makes clear did not see the sense in guarding the fence and did not want to actually catch any thieves, challenged the pair. After they ran off into the night with their illicit new possessions, Si and Shorty were able to hurriedly construct a sleeping pallet from their fence rails and spend a dry though uncomfortable night in the field for the first time.¹⁰⁸

As the war progressed and the shine wore off the martial existence that a young boy dreamed of, Si diverged more and more from the official War Department stance towards the civilian populace. In another telling instance when on guard during a period of short rations, Si drew blood for the first and only time with his bayonet. When first enlisted, the young hero saw the bayonet as a fearsome weapon; instead, after finding use grinding coffee, holding a candle or securing a tent, Klegg's mighty blade found its mark in the flesh of an errant Southern hog that unwittingly challenged the guard post of a hungry young soldier. In

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 78-81.

the name of hunger the soldier directly defied orders issued against foraging and the destruction of private property in the quietest way possible.¹⁰⁹

Hinman's post-war fiction narrative, written by a veteran to illustrate the life of a soldier serving in the field, reveals the changing nature of how Federal soldiers, like soldiers before them on the march in countless armies over the centuries, confronted the civilian populace of the South. Generals and politicians could make policy in smoke-filled rooms, but the soldiers themselves determined how and if these policies were enforced. These changes ultimately embraced foraging by the army, best exemplified by the events of Sherman's Savannah Campaign in November of 1864.

The onset of hostilities in 1861 brought forth not just a conflict of arms for the War Department in Washington; the firing on Fort Sumter created an existential conflict for the Federal government. It created a question as to how policy should deal with the waging of a war, especially in light of the presence of American citizens as civilians in the path of the army once charged with protecting them. President Lincoln's view of South as a territory under rebellion, that is, a lack of civil authority, rather than a combatant nation, further complicated issues of how to deal with Southern civilians and their assets. As a result, the War Department and its generals handled Southern civilians with an ever evolving set of rules and regulations dependent upon how those in charge of the Union war effort saw fit. What began as a strategy based upon the conciliation of perceived innocent civilians forced into secession slowly developed over three years into the use of the army as a means to punish the South as a whole for acting in open rebellion against the government.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 88-93.

This process of change from a conciliatory stance towards what historians have come to term as “hard war” occurred neither quickly nor evenly across all theaters of conflict.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, Federal policy went through three distinct stages as the war progressed. The first stage, conciliation, is best understood and lasted the longest in the operational area of the Army of the Potomac, the great eastern army which received a greater portion of news coverage and marched directly under the watchful eye of the government at Washington. Conciliation, couched in the history of other American conflicts as well as the belief in a slave power conspiracy, emphasized peaceful interaction with civilians, as well as granting them the full rights and protections of the Constitution and the government of the United States as a means of drawing the support of the Southern populace back into the fold of the Union.¹¹¹

The policies that came to typify the harsher forms of warfare developed beyond the Appalachian Mountains in the Western Theater of conflict, initially in the volatile environment of the state of Missouri, and developed further through the actions of the Army of the Tennessee under Generals U. S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. The pragmatic mindset that came to typify Washington’s set of policies after the fall of 1862 came to fruition in Missouri as early as the summer of 1861 under the command of General Nathaniel Lyon. This pragmatism chose to ignore the presence of civilians. Civilians lost the protection of their non-combatant status if and when they took any actions that

¹¹⁰ I utilize the term “hard war” to discuss the final Union military policies as delineated by Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 4-5.

¹¹¹ Grimsley, 2-3. Examples of this conciliatory attitude towards an enemy can be seen in Grimsley’s discussion of American military dogma during the Revolution, which largely eschewed unconventional tactics in favor of a conventional European-style battlefield in order to avoid British retribution, as well as the discussion of General Scott’s recognition of the rights of non-combatants in Mexico in order to prevent a guerilla conflict that would threaten his lines of communication. Grimsley, 17-22.

challenged the primacy of the United States government or impeded the work of the army. Civilian property was sacrosanct only if the person or property in question was clearly not used to succor the enemies of the United States. Foraging was not allowed, and if soldiers in an official act took the private property of civilians, a receipt must be given. All other physical assets, including slaves, became military goods in the hands of secessionists, and were to be handled in an official manner by those representing the government. In essence, the army needed to constrain itself to making war on the enemy on the battlefield.¹¹²

Ultimately by the fall of 1863 pragmatism gave way to what has come to be termed “hard war” by modern Civil War scholars, and it was this set of policies that determined how soldiers interacted with civilians during the long campaigns of 1864. These policies ended any official attempt to reconcile seemingly loyal civilians in seceded territories with the national government through noninterference and reimbursement. From the fall of 1863 through the end of the war, the Union Armies turned to a policy of treating all encountered in hostile territory as enemies of the state, allowing them to seize any and all goods needed for the support of an army in the field, as well as openly denying resources and comfort to the opposing forces present.¹¹³

¹¹² Grimsley, 3.

¹¹³ Grimsley, 4-6. One aspect of Federal military and political strategy toward Southern civilians needs to be kept in mind through the discussion of these changes. No matter how harsh the evolving policies towards Southern civilians seemed, these tactics never equaled the complete and total warfare practiced against Native American tribal groups to this point in American history. From King Philips’ War in the seventeenth century through the Cherokee Removal and the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864, American military policy resorted quickly to the annihilation of indigenous peoples in order to bend survivors to the will of the American government. While the changing nature of Northern war policy came around to inflicting psychological warfare on civilians and the destruction of assets vital to continued Confederate resistance, no codified military strategy practiced by Union forces ever brought about the level of destruction seen in the conflicts with tribal groups west of the Mississippi River, a destruction couched in the racialization of Natives and the use of that creation of racial identity as the sociological other in order to rationalize activities that the government would not and could not carry out against white Americans. For further discussion, see Grimsley, 4, 17-18, as well as

The first architect of the Union's war policy brought the nation's only real experience in planning and executing a war. The seventy-four year old Winfield Scott, hero of the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War, could no longer take his position in the field at the head of an army, but his advanced age and physical condition did not prevent him from formulating the earliest attempts at a whole war strategy. Scott drew on nearly fifty years of field service and a lifetime of study devoted to military tactics to lay the groundwork for a campaign designed to end the rebellion in much the same tone as his Mexican-American War campaign. During that conflict, Scott's victory relied upon a concentrated, well-disciplined force moving through the Mexican landscape without bringing harm directly to the civilians the army encountered. This force only exercised its might in combat against the standing Mexican Army when encountered on the field, and Scott's orders ensured that the rights of the Mexican civilians encountered in the path of the army be respected as the citizens of a sovereign nation, not as a people subjugated by the American military. The ultimate goal of the campaign as Scott had planned it was to impress upon the people of Mexico the utter futility of waging a war against the vast strength and will of the United States. Following the models of war established in pre-Napoleonic Europe, Scott sought to not destroy the army or country that stood in his path, but to bring about combat when and where he saw fit as a means to ultimately capture the enemy's capitol and victory. This was the ethos that the man

Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007)

considered to be the military genius of his day brought to bear when attempting to deal with civil war.¹¹⁴

Remembered as the “Anaconda Plan,” a derogatory label given it in the press, Scott’s plan called for an army and navy of immense proportions to cut off the seceded states from any support through a naval blockade and the use of the army to sever the Confederacy in two through a prolonged expedition down the Mississippi River, and, if the South continued to resist, to cut the South into ever smaller pieces¹¹⁵ Scott’s plan rested on the belief that the majority of the people in the South did not favor secession and were in fact still loyal to the government. The overpowering strength of the national army, moving to seize the major cities of the South while at the same time respecting the rights of mistaken citizens standing in rebellion, would cause the people of the South to question the wisdom of their leaders.¹¹⁶ Scott and other strategists felt that any attempt to wage war on the citizenry of the South in the spring and summer of 1861 would only serve to destroy the actual loyalties of the people and prolong the war.¹¹⁷ By cutting the South off from any contact with sources of military and civil succor, as well as removing the source of the region’s wealth through a blockade that made cotton sales impossible, secession would wither on the vine, ultimately ending in a reunited Union.

At the core of these early conciliatory strategies lay the belief that the great “slave power conspiracy” deluded average citizen living in the rebellious states into secession, a

¹¹⁴ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), 71-74, 93.

¹¹⁵ United States War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 51, Part 1. (Washington, DC; Government Printing Office, 1897), 369-370. Referred to hereafter as *OR*.

¹¹⁶ Grimsley, 20.

¹¹⁷ Grimsley, 22.

tenet of pre-war Northern political rhetoric. Essentially the overpowering mantra in the North following the secession crisis held that the planter class duped the average citizen into supporting secession because of a perceived threat against slavery and all that slavery represented for Southern society, because even poor white farmers, according to this mantra, dreamed of acquiring property and slaves like the great planter-aristocrats. To actively make war on civilians in the South would only destroy any sense of loyalty left in the region, further enhancing the power of the large planters and political leaders of the secession movement. When the army encountered any civilian, it had to respect all legal and property rights. No soldier could touch private property of any kind without fear of arrest and prosecution. Thus, a show of great force through a reinforced army coupled with the European courtesies accompanying traditional warfare would aid the hoped-for majority of loyal Americans in finally overthrowing those conspirators comprising the base of Confederate power and end the rebellion with as little bloodshed as possible.¹¹⁸

The War Department chose at first not to adopt Scott's Anaconda Plan as delineated, though it became a rough outline for the long term prosecution of the war as the years passed. A long spring and summer of inaction in 1861 did not help in the acceptance of Scott's form of conciliation as practiced by the army. Throughout the period after the fall of Fort Sumter the Federal government lost control of naval yards and arsenals in Virginia and other Southern states, forcing Northerners to realize that the population of the seceded states might not be as pliant and coerced as many had wanted to believe earlier during the year. Defeat at the Battle of First Bull Run/ Manassas Junction in late July helped close the era of Winfield

¹¹⁸ Grimsley, 8-9. For more information on the slave power conspiracy, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 91-102.

Scott and his delicate plans for pursuing a conciliatory war policy; with the Federal loss, any thought that the masses of Southern civilians were in fact secretly loyal to the old government evaporated, and leaders in Washington quickly realized that Confederate Army represented the best efforts of a people willingly at war.¹¹⁹

Conciliation as a policy continued to wield its influence through the summer of 1862. George McClellan, Scott's replacement and heralded as the "Young Napoleon" by the press for his actions prior to his promotion to the head of the army, continued the kid glove approach to warfare in Virginia. The main difference between McClellan's strategy and Scott's was the perception that McClellan intended to bring on actual combat while still respecting the rights of the citizens in the path of the Army of the Potomac.¹²⁰ The new general restored pride to an utterly demoralized force after its early setbacks through training and parades, but his lack of success on the battlefield, or perhaps his difficulty in finding anything like a battlefield in a timely manner, ultimately rang the death knell for the continued use and acceptance of conciliation by the Lincoln administration and the general public. With the defeat of McClellan's army before Richmond during the Seven Days battles in early June, 1862, and its hesitant retreat to Harrison's Landing on the James River, followed by the tedious lack of movement until Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia moved aggressively to the Second Bull Run/ Manassas Junction and Maryland campaigns in the late summer of that year, all patience was lost for the concept of a slow moving army handling the enemy with kid gloves and kindness. From this point forward, the second phase

¹¹⁹ Grimsley, 29-31; Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 81.

¹²⁰ *OR* V,6-8.

of Northern military strategy toward civilians began to take effect, mirroring a strategy already in use in the Missouri and the Western Theater of the war.¹²¹

From the very beginning, the war in Missouri carried a much different tenor than the more refined conflict that took place in the one hundred miles between Washington, D.C., and Richmond. The war in Missouri was fought on a personal level, neighbor savaging neighbor. Many used the mask of war to resolve old grievances, which in turn created a state of near lawlessness. With the personal, vitriolic nature of the struggle over slavery and secession, coupled with Union leadership bent on domination rather than conciliation, Major General Henry Halleck established what came to be known as the War Department's pragmatic policy, which governed the middle third of the war. Missouri proved the perfect testing ground for pragmatism due to the tense nature of the war in that state. While Missouri technically remained within the fold of the Union, the polity remained viciously divided on the question of secession. Captain Nathaniel Lyon, commander of the Arsenal at St. Louis and proxy commander of Federal forces in the state while his superior traveled to Washington for a conference, nearly pushed the state to the brink of open hostilities when he used loyal militia and regular Army troops to surround and arrest members of the Missouri State Guard encamped in St. Louis in the spring of 1861. The zealous Lyon followed the Camp Jackson affair with a conference that pushed tensions beyond the boiling point in June when, at a peace conference with secessionist governor Claiborne Jackson and pro-Confederate militia leader Sterling Price, Lyon negated an offer of state neutrality by telling his Southern aligned counterparts that "Rather than concede to the State of Missouri for one single instant the right to dictate to my Government in any matter . . . I would see you . . . and

¹²¹ For a discussion of the death of the conciliatory policies of the early war period, see Grimsley, 67, 93-95.

every man, woman, and child in the State, dead and buried. *This means war.*” Lyon’s speech ended any pretense of conciliation; from that point forward, Missouri became a contested, enemy-held territory in the view of Federal commanders.¹²²

Guerilla warfare marked much of the conflict in Missouri from an early stage, and dealing with irregular combatants became Federal policy there. John Pope, one of the departmental commanders in Missouri, issued one of the first orders holding local citizens to task for the actions of guerillas in their area, a tool used over and over again in the West through the remainder of the war. Should any guerilla activity occur within five miles of a town, and evidence showed that the populace had not taken action to oppose or stop the mischief, then the Army would hold the populace within that distance financially responsible for the actions in question.¹²³ This order in essence began the process of dividing the population of Missouri, and eventually the rest of the South, into distinct groups based upon their perceived loyalties. Pope divided the populace into two parts: those who supported the government and those who did not. Such action was anathema to the concept of conciliation. Rather than work to maintain the loyalty of Missourians through a gentle, hands-off policy meant to foster good feelings toward the government, Pope set the stage for a new approach to handling civilians, one where civilians really played no part in the establishment of a strategy focused on military victory. In essence, Pope hoped to ignore civilians unless their actions brought them to the attention of the authorities. Pragmatism also meant that the government needed to avoid aggravating relations too much, so foraging or illicit actions by soldiers was met with harsh punishment. Thus were born the new pragmatic policies that

¹²² Grimsley, 35-37. See also Thomas Lowndes Snead, *The Fight for Missouri: From the Election of Lincoln to the Death of Lyon*. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1886), 198-200.

¹²³ *OR* III, 404.

came to characterize the middle years of the war, from the late summer of 1862 through the end of 1863.¹²⁴

On November 9, 1861, Major General Henry Wager Halleck took command of affairs in the state when the War Department gave him command of the Department of Missouri.¹²⁵ Halleck stood as the nation's preeminent expert on military theory and the legality of making war. Just before the war began, Halleck published his own treatise on the laws of war, *International Law; or Rules Regulating the Intercourse of States in Peace and War*. His work became central to the understanding of how the United States could make war in the nineteenth century. Halleck admitted no place for irregular warfare in his treatise, finding such actions outside the laws of war as recognized in the European manner of warfare. Also essential to the developing sense of how to fight, Halleck elaborated on the practice of seizing private property as both a tactical asset and a means to supporting an army in the field. While Halleck did not condone illicit foraging, his work did acknowledge that times existed when confiscation from civilians was necessary for the support of a military force as long as policies laid out explicitly how and when this could be done. If a military force needed to avoid being overly harsh to a local populace, it could, as shown earlier by John Pope's actions, levy fines for the actions of partisans in a locale. Additionally, an army had a right to seize material support on the battlefield, as well as force the citizens of an area to surrender food and other material needs for the support of an invading army without acting beyond recognized international conventions of warfare.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Grimsley, 50-51.

¹²⁵ *OR* III, 567.

¹²⁶ Grimsley, 16-17.

Halleck set about the task of handling the civilian situation in Missouri soon after taking his place at the head of the Department. On November 26, 1861, less than two weeks after taking command, his office issued General Order #8, establishing parameters for the seizure and use of civilian assets by the Federal military in his jurisdiction. In this order, Halleck set strict guidelines for the practice, allowing only officers to take goods from the general public with the issuance of a receipt, as well as the intention to return or remunerate for any goods taken for the use of the army. General Order #8 allowed for only highly regulated foraging, and punished those who operated beyond the law, for very good reasons in the mind of the General. To forage in an irregular manner not only discredited the honor of the American army, it also created enemies where they did not previously exist.¹²⁷

Rather than continuing the practice of conciliation, Halleck's order acted to begin the process of refining the new era of pragmatism. After the brash actions of Lyon and Frémont, which antagonized the population of Missouri, as well as the rest of the South, Halleck worked to create a feasible war policy that was neither too harsh nor too friendly. A week after General Order #8, Halleck issued a new circular in his department which set forth his opinion of issues with civilians. "Peace and war cannot exist together. We cannot at the same time extend to rebels the rights of peace and enforce against them the penalties of war. They have forfeited their civil rights as citizens by making war against the Government, and upon their own head must fall the consequences."¹²⁸ Halleck then went about defining the classes of citizen within the confines of his command, a distinction that also came to color future Federal military policy.

¹²⁷ General Orders #8, November 26, 1861. *OR VIII*, 381.

¹²⁸ General Orders #13, *OR VIII*, 405.

Casting aside those actually under arms in service of the Confederate government as enemy combatants, Halleck developed a tripartite understanding of the people of Missouri specifically and the South in general. The first class of citizen was loyal to the United States. These people supported the actions of the Federal government and Union forces should leave them alone as they advanced. The second class of citizens openly supported the Confederate cause as well as any troops that opposed Federal forces. Halleck no longer condoned the “mild and indulgent” manner in which the government previously handled these people. Those who acted in such a manner, by hiding irregular forces, offering aid and comfort to enemy soldiers, or through any number of other means, should bear the full brunt of the army, and their possessions were fair game for foragers and military officials in time of need. General Order 13 did not condone outright punishment through foraging, however. Officers needed to issue receipts for goods taken, though they could note the loyalty of those from whom goods were taken; those deemed less than loyal faced a harder time receiving reimbursement from the government for the use of their goods.¹²⁹

Between these two classes of people lay the neutral citizen of Missouri, and by extension, the noncombatants throughout the Western theater. General Order 13 ignored their existence, dealing with only the loyal and disloyal. While Halleck’s orders ended any pretense of conciliation in the West, it also recognized that wanton foraging and other actions by the military could push these people firmly into the support of the Confederate cause. As such, some gentleness remained in the official policies of the government. In essence those who occupied the middle ground in terms of overt shows of loyalty deserved to be treated with respect, but official actions began to shift towards a stance that ignored their presence.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

No longer would the army purposely act in a manner that attempted to curry favor and loyalty; noncommittal citizens came to be ignored entirely in Federal policy for the duration of the war.¹³⁰

The onset of the pragmatic era in Federal war policy marked an important chapter in how the military handled encounters with Southern civilians. Policies issued during the conciliatory phase deemed the act of foraging a crime. Generals and political leaders saw foraging as the acts of felons and the most visible problem of an ill-disciplined army. They did not realize or did not care about the boredom in the Union army diet; there was plenty of pork and hard tack, but little to enliven that menu. Troops sought out pickles, tobacco, and other amenities, and all too often from the sutlers that followed the army.¹³¹ To encourage the act of foraging was to cast the army, and in fact the entire Union war effort, into a poor light nationally and internationally; to condone foraging was to act beyond the perceived bounds of civilized warfare. Yet, as Mark Grimsley has pointed out, the outcry from the country came to call for some sense of “moral justice” to become part of how the government prosecuted the war. Conciliation left a bad taste in the mouths of many who felt that the people of the South needed to pay a dear price for the sins of secession and war.¹³² The soldiers themselves mirrored the reaction of the general public and wished to make the war a harsh judgment on Southern civilians. Writing near Bolivar, Tennessee, in August of 1862, Charles Cady of the Fifteenth Iowa Volunteer Infantry vented his feelings about how the people of the South should be treated in a letter home. “. . . we have tried the milk and water plan long enough[.] do just what their leaders said we would do, that is take their nigers and

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Francis A. Lord, *Civil War Sutlers and Their Wares* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1969).

¹³² Grimsley, 2.

cotton hang the leaders and if that wont do drive the Whole of them into the ocean. the rebellion must be crushed and the sooner we do it the better.”¹³³ He was not alone in his feelings. Other soldiers during all periods of the war voiced their frustrations with the gentle war being fought from Washington.

In August, 1861, and July, 1862, Congress attempted to act on the wishes of Cady and others with the passage of the First and Second Confiscation Acts. The First Confiscation Act, signed into law by President Lincoln on August 6, 1861, gave sanction to the seizure of any Southern property in use by supporters of the Confederacy. The key aspect to the concept of property as mentioned was the definition of slaves as private property. Whereas the various departmental commanders previously employed differing policies toward slaves and property, Congress passed the First Confiscation Act to create a singular unified practice for the government. Section four of the law specifically stated that any slave used to materially support the Confederacy, a vague notion that might range from those slaves that drove wagons, built fortifications, or otherwise assisted in the insurrection against the government freed as a means to impede the Confederate war effort.¹³⁴ The Second Confiscation Act, passed into law in July, 1862, reinforced the first act as a means of punishing states and people in rebellion against the government. The act authorized the seizure of all property that those in rebellion against the government owned, something that would come to fruition when the Armies of the United States turned to a greater use of foraging in order to punitively act against the Confederacy. Additionally, the act freed any

¹³³ Charles Cady to Parents, August 17, 1862, 3-4. Charles Cady Letters, MSC 17, Special Collections Department at the University of Iowa Libraries.

¹³⁴ George P. Sanger, editor, *The Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America* Volume XII (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1863) page 319.

slaves held in bondage within areas controlled by the United States, as well as those slaves that escaped Confederate-controlled areas of the South and successfully entered Union lines. While the debates that surrounded both Acts raised deep questions about the nature of private property during war time, the impetus behind both pieces of legislation was to limit the ability of the South to materially continue in rebellion against the United States.¹³⁵

Foraging itself was not solely an activity based in vengeance. While some soldiers used every opportunity to vent their frustrations with military service and Southern secession on the local populace, for others, foraging provided a vital activity to amend the logistical issues prevalent in the West. As early as the summer of 1861 the men marching to Springfield, Missouri, as part of Nathaniel Lyon's push against Confederate forces in that portion of the state found themselves in dire straits and turned to foraging to procure food and clothing. Eugene Ware, part of the First Iowa Volunteer Infantry recorded his thought process when it came to stealing a pair of pants to replace the ragged ones he wore. After paying a woman for a meal of chicken and biscuits, Ware and his friends encountered an abandoned log cabin with wash drying on the line.

It took a good deal of argument to convince myself that I was entitled to that pair of pants. But I was partially successful; it was this way: The house was evidently deserted on our approach. I plainly, by intuition, saw that the man there was getting ready to go into the rebel army. [. . .] it was the duty of all American citizens to do what they could to increase the efficiency of the army during active service, and to make such sacrifices as were necessary to accomplish that purpose. Thirdly, there could be no more worthy recipient of private charity than one who was serving the Government in an effort to put down the rebellion at eleven dollars per month. Fourth, I needed the pants. Fifth, I was defending the Constitution for him, the owner. I was preserving for him all that was

¹³⁵ Ibid, 589-592. For more information on the Confiscations acts, see Silvana R. Siddali, *From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

dear for him,—life, liberty, the magna charta, the right of habeas corpus, and those inalienable and inestimable rights which he and his children would enjoy through all time. In this great drama I was his agent with power to act, and he must furnish the pants.¹³⁶

Not every soldier was as conscientious about the constitutional arguments behind foraging and interactions between the military and civilians, but Ware's comedic interlude nicely illustrated in microcosm many of the logistical and moral issues present in the west. While the men serving in the Army of the Potomac rarely felt the hand of hunger and deprivation in their military experiences, the men serving beyond the state of Virginia dealt with supply shortages on an almost regular basis. In an area of operations plagued with shortages due to poor transportation infrastructure, as well as irregular forces operating to disrupt the flow of goods at random points along those routes of travel, the recognition of foraging as a viable military tool during the pragmatic stage of the war opened a new door in not only bringing the war home to civilians but also as a new way of making sure that an army on the march possessed the ability to feed and clothe itself when regular lines of supply dried up.

Unleashing young men to find and pilfer items became a vital tool of the army's logistical operations. The movement deeper into the South reinforced soldiers' opinions about the use of foraging as a physical and psychological weapon. Halleck's pragmatism was born in the heated atmosphere of Missouri, one of four slave states that never officially seceded yet nevertheless contained a populace deeply divided over the war. As the western armies entered into Tennessee and Mississippi in 1862, the divided face of the people fell away, exposing the Midwesterners in the Army of the Tennessee for the first time to the

¹³⁶ Eugene Fitch Ware, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri*. (Topeka, KS: Crane and Company, 1907), 204-205.

hard-line supporters of secession. For some soldiers, close contact with the homes of the leadership of the Confederate government or army allowed them the chance to take some form of vengeance on those they blamed for the war. Alexander Downing of the Eleventh Iowa Infantry made special note in his diary of the treatment that the plantation of an unnamed “secesh” general his regiment guarded. “we made ourselves at home, killing all the cattle we wanted and taking all the honey that we could carry away with us.”¹³⁷ In an October letter to Grant that accompanied the submission of quarterly reports, even General Sherman added his sentiments to the growing list of people looking to make a harder war on the South. Noting that he finally felt that the number of Union enlistments was equal to the needs of the army and the situation at hand, Sherman told Grant that while they could not “change the hearts of those people of the South, but we can make war so terrible that they all realize the fact that, however brave and gallant and devoted to their country” that the people of the South would force their leaders to sue for peace in the face of the Union war effort.¹³⁸

As the war progressed into 1863, two events transpired which aided the transformation of the Union war effort towards a harsher prosecution of the war. The Emancipation Proclamation, which Lincoln announced on November 1, 1862, and which took effect on January 1, 1863, changed the nature of the war by officially attacking the existence of slavery. Beyond the theoretical implications of the Proclamation for ending slavery in areas that Federal forces did not control, thereby causing confusion and disrupting normal patterns of civil and military life in the Confederacy, the act aided the prosecution of the war by not only subverting the existence of the institution in the South, but also by

¹³⁷ Entry for July 30, 1862. Alexander G. Downing, *Downing's Civil War Diary*. Olynthus B. Clark, editor (Des Moines, IA: The Historical Department of Iowa, 1916), 60.

¹³⁸ W. T. Sherman to U. S. Grant, October 4, 1862. *OR XVII*, Volume 2, 261.

directly attacking the agricultural and military support networks in place across the region. Slaves across all theaters of the war performed the menial tasks of military life, from constructing trenches to driving wagons and cooking meals; by planting the seeds of liberation and encouraging African-Americans to seek their freedom, the Federal government created a means of disrupting the noncombatant labor force, thereby limiting the ability of the armed forces of the Confederate states to operate at its most efficient. The Proclamation also attempted to create a similar labor vacuum on the home front by disrupting the labor force responsible for agricultural production, thereby limiting the South's ability to grow foodstuffs. While it is impossible for historians to accurately measure the success of these two subversive aims of the Emancipation Proclamation, they still represent an important step towards the prosecution of the war in a manner that eschewed the gentle handling of civilians.¹³⁹

The second major change that signaled a renewal of the push for a harder prosecution of the war came about during the prolonged campaign against Vicksburg in the winter and spring of 1863. The new use of foraging as part of Federal policy expanded the interaction between Federal soldiers and Southern civilians and proved its importance in supplying the needs of an army in the field. Nowhere was this better illustrated than by Grant's Army of the Tennessee in its operations prior to the siege that finally caused the fall of the Gibraltar on the Mississippi. Twice during the many months of action Grant severed his army from its base of supply and moved his army overland through populated areas and sustained his men strictly through foraging operations. The first occurred in December of 1862 when

¹³⁹ Mark Grimsley marks the Emancipation as the official abandonment of the conciliatory stage of military policy. See Grimsley, 3. See also Weigley, 138, and Chandra Manning's *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War*. (New York: Random House, 2007), 93-94.

Confederate forces under General Earl Van Dorn seized the Union depot at Holly Springs, Mississippi, and destroyed Grant's means of supply. With his only other convenient supply base located far in the rear at Columbus, Kentucky, the loss of Holly Springs forced Grant to perform a retreat through hostile territory without rations or the possibility of regular resupply. The success of the retrograde movement awakened Grant to the ability to feed an army from the farms of a hostile people, as well as the inherent problems with the tenuous nature of long supply lines in the West. To feed his men Grant sent out foraging parties in a sweep fifteen miles on either side of his line of march with orders to take food and forage, but to also leave a sixty day supply in the household. "I was amazed at the quantity of supplies the country afforded," Grant reported in his memoirs. "It showed that we could have subsisted off the country for two months instead of two weeks without going beyond the limits designated."¹⁴⁰

The civilians along Grant's line of march learned an important lesson as well. Gloating over the minor Confederate victory that resulted in the loss of his depot, many of the locals jeered Grant at his headquarters in Oxford, Mississippi, upon his return from the aborted movement, asking how the General would feed his men now. When told of the foraging parties then stripping the land all around, "[C]ountenances soon changed, and so did the inquiry. The next was, 'What are we to do?'" Grant's calm reply was a subtle and yet menacing commentary on events yet to unfold. Simply put, Grant told them that the Army had long supplied itself from Northern sources for as long as it could and avoided molesting the local farmers until the enemy had forced his hand. His men would not starve in one of

¹⁴⁰ U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, Volume I. (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1990), 289-291.

the best agricultural regions in the Confederacy. “I advised them to emigrate east, or west, fifteen miles and assist in eating up what we left.”¹⁴¹

The second instance of widespread army foraging during the Vicksburg campaign occurred later in the spring of 1863. After several futile attempts at approaching the city overland from the Mississippi side of the river, in April Grant moved his army south of Vicksburg, crossed the great river near Bruinsburg to circumvent the city’s defenses, and then headed east to seize the state capitol at Jackson and drive off any Confederate reinforcements in the area, all to isolate Vicksburg and ultimately compel its surrender. To do this meant a complete and pre-planned removal from regular lines of sustenance. On April 20, the General issued Special Order 110 to his commanders, laying out the minutiae of his plans.¹⁴² Article 13 authorized his forces to forage for all supplies necessary to feed an army on the march. The Union Army along the Mississippi River now undertook its first prolonged operation without a base of supplies. Life was good for the men on the march. Charles Cady wrote home about what he encountered in Louisiana, and with a farmer’s eye recorded what he saw about Southern agriculture in the face of war. “corn is knee high[.] that is the only crop that they have out in this section but that is gone to Davy Crocket, we have made use of the most of the fenceing for firewood and our rout is right through the plantations wherever the best land is . . .”¹⁴³ On April 29 and 30 Grant’s men completed the downriver swing and landed once again on the eastern shore of the Mississippi below Grand Gulf, and as Grant himself famously noted, “I was now in the enemy’s country, with a vast

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 291.

¹⁴² Ibid, 313.

¹⁴³ Charles Cady to Brother and Sister, May 6, 1863, 3. Charles Cady Letters, MSC 17, Special Collections Department at the University of Iowa Libraries.

river and the stronghold of Vicksburg between me and my base of supplies. But I was on dry ground on the same side of the river with the enemy.”¹⁴⁴ The army attempted to create a supply depot at Grand Gulf, but the position was too tenuously held to securely act in this capacity. From this point until the establishment of his siege lines around the city following the battles in early May near Jackson and Champion’s Hill and the lines of supply necessary for a prolonged siege, the Army of the Tennessee lived off the fat of the land, which Grant noted was in abundance, answering all the needs of his men.¹⁴⁵ Iowa cavalryman Lot Abraham’s diary is rife with accounts of the bounty found in the vicinity of Vicksburg. Entries for the month of June, 1863, constantly mention gathering berries, plums, and other cultivated fruits, as well as corn, honey, and other instances of food gathered from local farms and plantations.¹⁴⁶ Grant’s gamble paid off; not only did Vicksburg fall during the summer of 1863, the end of nearly a year’s planning and campaigning, but Grant, Sherman, and the hardened veterans of the western armies proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that an army in the field could function with impunity in an enemy’s territory without a base of supplies, or the loss of men to guard and protect those bases and the long roads and rail lines to get rations to the front. In these movements and moments of success, a new mode of war was born.

Grant’s success at Vicksburg secured for him the command of the armies of the United States in the fall of 1863. Following the disastrous battle along Chickamauga Creek in Georgia in mid-September and Grant’s subsequent relief of Braxton Bragg’s siege of

¹⁴⁴ Grant, 321.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 328-329.

¹⁴⁶ Lot Abraham Papers, MSC 73, Special Collections Department at the University of Iowa Libraries. Abraham served as an officer in the 4th Iowa Cavalry, Company D. See particularly entries for June 11, 17, 18 and 21, 1863.

Chattanooga and the Army of the Cumberland with the taking of Missionary Ridge in mid-November, promotions abounded and the leadership of the western armies changed hands. Grant moved his headquarters to Nashville, and soon thereafter accepted Lincoln's appointment as head of all Union forces, leaving Sherman in command of the region around Vicksburg. With plans brimming for the coming spring campaign, General Sherman needed to remove the threat that the remaining rebel forces in Mississippi presented to his army and the flow of traffic on the river so recently reopened. To this point, the man soon to command the armies of the west approached his chief with an idea to strike at the Confederate forces in the area and destroy their ability to fight. Such an action would thereby free the men of Sherman's command to move on Georgia in the spring. By marching on the rail head of Meridian, Mississippi, Sherman hoped to not only destroy the wealth of supplies that lay there, but also to tear up the rail network that connected Meridian with the principal points of supply throughout the region.¹⁴⁷

Sherman and the Army of the Tennessee set out on February 3rd, and for the next eleven days his men destroyed the railroad and marched against only light resistance until they arrived in Meridian, one hundred and fifty miles from Vicksburg along the Alabama border, on the 14th. Sherman spent the next week destroying the depots, rail works, and Confederate supplies in and around Meridian. In his official report to Grant, Sherman bluntly stated the town's fate. "Meridian, with its depots, store-houses, arsenals, offices, hotels, and cantonments no longer exists."¹⁴⁸ On February 17, as the army prepared to leave, Company D of the 4th Iowa Cavalry went out to scout a road in advance of the column. Lot

¹⁴⁷ William Tecumseh Sherman, *Memoirs of W. T. Sherman, Volume I*. (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1990), 422; *OR XXXII*, Part I, 181-182.

¹⁴⁸ *OR* Volume XXXII, Part I, 176.

Abraham noted that his men “got plenty to eat, some fine Turkeys & found our camp old cotton gin burned down on our return[.]”¹⁴⁹ The men then returned via Canton, Mississippi, having fed off the land and destroyed rebel property at will. With no significant resistance, Sherman satisfied himself that the strength of the Federal army could operate at will within the South, taking whatever it wanted in the way of food and forage while completely disrupting the ability of the Confederate military to make war.

Thus was born the doctrine of “hard war,” as Mark Grimsley terms it.¹⁵⁰ In this final iteration of Federal war policy, which would come into full favor and use when the spring campaigns of 1864 began, American military and political leaders came to embrace the notion that the quickest way to put down the rebellion was not on the battlefield. Yes, military victory was necessary to deal with the Confederate armies in the field, but the sole reliance on military victory had prolonged the war and made the Northern people both angry and weary. To end the conflict quickly meant to remove the willingness of the Southern people to fight. To this point in the war, Union forces attempted to either daintily handle the Southern populace or ignore it. Neither system worked well, although the latter allowed for the development of foraging as a viable weapon. The new theory of making war, proven in the west, showed that an army unleashed on the economic, logistical, and perhaps most importantly agricultural resources of an enemy not only denied resources to the armed men in open rebellion against the government, but also by marching at will through a territory and taking whatever was needed through foraging, Grant’s men had proven that the war could be brought home to the civilians of an enemy state. No more would the casualty lists and taxes

¹⁴⁹ Entry for February 17, 1864. Lot Abraham Papers, MSC 73, Special Collections Department at the University of Iowa Libraries.

¹⁵⁰ Grimsley, 5.

of war prove the main sources of civil discontent and fear; indeed, the unopposed movement of an army comprised the greatest source of demoralization and terror possible. If the war was to be brought to a rapid conclusion, then the men of the Union Army and the Federal government now knew how to bring that about.¹⁵¹ All that stood between the people of the South and the North's new way of making war was the usual winter period of rest and resupply and the subsequent spring thaw. It was late February; the spring campaigns of 1864 were less than two months away.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 3.

Chapter Three:
 “I Can Make This March, and Make Georgia Howl”:
 Planning the Use of Foraging as a Weapon in the March to the Sea

On April 4, 1864, Ulysses S. Grant, commanding general of the armies of the United States, transmitted his plan for the spring campaigns to his long-time confidant and replacement in command of the forces operating in the Western theater. After explaining his wish for a unified push against Confederate forces across all areas of operation, Grant laid bare his expectations for the men under William Tecumseh Sherman’s command.

You I propose to move against Johnston’s army, to break it up and to get into the interior of the enemy’s country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against their war resources. I do not propose to lay down for you a plan of campaign, but simply to lay down the work it is desirable to have done, and leave you free to execute in your own way. Submit to me, however, as early as you can, your plan of operation.¹⁵²

With three sentences, Grant laid bare his objectives for the coming year and gave his friend the free hand necessary to achieve those goals. Parenthetically, Grant had a broad strategy where he would accompany George Meade and his Army of the Potomac, lock on Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia and deny it the opportunity for attack, while Benjamin Butler would march an army up the peninsula to threaten Richmond, just as McClellan had tried and failed to achieve in 1862, while a Union army under Nathaniel Banks would march from Mobile, Alabama, to meet Sherman near Atlanta. Butler was too hesitant to achieve his goals with the Army of the James, and Banks turned his attention to the Red River region and its agricultural assets in Louisiana and Arkansas, a campaign which failed miserably. Only

¹⁵² United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*; Series 1, volume XXXII, Part 3. (Washington, D.C.; Government Printing Office, 1880-1891,) pages 245-246. Hereafter cited as *OR*, and all volumes will be considered series 1 unless otherwise noted.

Meade and Sherman were left to carry out their portions of Grant's plans. Grant framed the year as an attempt to finally crush the rebellion by not just seeking combat, but to also make war on the ability of the South to prolong the conflict. For three years the opposing armies parried at various points, and while the Federal armies made territorial gains, the Confederate government still stood at Richmond, its armies still arrayed the field. Combat alone had not put down the rebellion; Grant now turned the focus of his forces against not just the men in gray who opposed him, but against the resources that sustained their ability to fight. It was now time to turn the forces of the Union Army against the infrastructure and sources of supply that allowed the South to keep a force in the field. Trains and supply depots seemed an obvious choice, but Grant's orders meant something more sinister for the people of the Confederacy. While Union leadership still sought to bring about a military victory, they now concluded that other means were necessary in order to weaken the resiliency of the Confederate government and its people. By directing its armies against the logistical and economic infrastructure of the South, Grant and his lieutenants hoped to sever their opponents from their lines of supply permanently and bring to bear another weapon against both Lee's army in Virginia as well as Joseph E. Johnston's army awaiting Sherman in northern Georgia.¹⁵³

While Grant directed the movements of the Army of the Potomac against Lee in person, the most important aspect of the 1864 campaign against the Confederate armies and its logistical network took place under the watchful eyes of William Tecumseh Sherman. His

¹⁵³ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1973) pg. 145; see also Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Towards Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp. 165-166.

Military Division of the Mississippi, the combined might of the Army of the Tennessee and the Army of the Cumberland, sat perched at Chattanooga in the spring of 1864, awaiting the order to march. All of Sherman's men knew their destination, as well as the importance of the coming campaign. Two major rail lines intersected in Atlanta, making it the distribution hub of the Southern war effort. Additionally, many of the major manufactories, displaced by the loss of other cities throughout the region, had relocated to Atlanta, making it a center for the preparation of war materials. By taking Atlanta, Sherman and Grant hoped to remove the most important point in the Confederate logistics chain, paralyzing the flow of food, material, and other goods throughout the entire south.

The question of logistics weighed heavily on Sherman's mind in April, 1864. The main base of supply for the western armies lay at Nashville, and one single track line served as the vital link between that point and Chattanooga, and ultimately Atlanta itself. In order to facilitate his campaign against the Gate City, the General halted all nonessential traffic on the line in order to ensure the build-up of a supply depot large enough to feed and equip his men throughout the coming summer campaign season. All civilian traffic, including food relief for the beleaguered loyalists in eastern Tennessee ended; Sherman even forced soldiers returning from veteran furlough to march from Nashville back to their regiments. Even with these strictures placed upon the railroads in order to build up ammunition and food stores, Sherman estimated that the army could not lay in a large enough supply of grain and hay for his army's animals. He figured to use the Georgia countryside to furnish those requirements through foraging. To fulfill that need, Sherman retained a copy of the 1860 U.S. census in order to ascertain the varying levels of agricultural production in each county and plan the

route of march accordingly. That volume of the census would play a decisive role in Georgia's fate as the year went on.¹⁵⁴ Sherman issued another order that held consequences for future action in Georgia. In order to limit the length of his baggage train, and thus limit the number of animals and their need for forage, as well as the opportunities for Confederate cavalry forces to threaten his progress by disrupting his supply, the General issued orders that cut a regiment's allotment of wagons to one supply wagon and one ambulance. Rather than relying on a supply train that on other campaigns measured tens of miles in length, this order required that all men carry five days' rations and all their own clothes on their person, and forbade the use of large tents.¹⁵⁵

Over the course of the next two months, Sherman's western soldiers sparred with their counterparts in the Army of Tennessee, slowly flanking and murderously fighting across northern Georgia in places like Resaca, New Hope Church and Kennesaw Mountain, before fighting around and then ultimately laying siege to Atlanta. Confederate General Joseph Johnston crafted a carefully staged fighting withdrawal, throwing up obstacles in Sherman's path which forced the Federal general to order a series of flanking maneuvers. Johnston intended to counterattack near Atlanta, when Sherman's line of supply would be most vulnerable; Jefferson Davis replaced Johnston with John Bell Hood before the former could carry out his full plans. Hood attacked Sherman's forces in July, when he was beaten back into the city, where both armies settled in for a prolonged siege. While the siege allowed Sherman to avoid committing his troops into the headlong combat that he generally abhorred, the campaign dragged out for another three months, until the fall of the city at the

¹⁵⁴ William Tecumseh Sherman, *Memoirs of W. T. Sherman, Volume II*. (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1990,) 466-469, 495.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 473.

beginning of September.¹⁵⁶ Earlier in the summer, the General quipped that “when we reach Atlanta the campaign will be but just begun.”¹⁵⁷ As the Confederate Army, now under the command of John Bell Hood, retreated following the defeat at Jonesboro, Sherman’s men occupied the city of Atlanta and planning for the second phase of the 1864 campaign began.

The first consideration was what to do with the city itself. Sherman inherited a devastated city and the roughly 3,000 civilians who remained following the summer of siege and panic.¹⁵⁸ To garrison the city and use it as supply depot or armed camp for the coming winter required the detachment of a significant portion of his army, forever lost to the duties of guarding the long line of supply, as well as preparing to repulse any attempt to retake Atlanta, further disrupting the flow of future operations. One had only to look at the number of men required to protect Chattanooga, Nashville, and other major cities throughout the South to realize that such an attempt would rob Sherman of a significant portion of his army.¹⁵⁹ In general, the army assigned approximately 1000 men per mile as it advanced to protect its rail lines, supply depots, and bridges, as well as constraining the local populace. Cut off from the sources of supply that fed the city prior to its envelopment, these hungry civilian masses relied upon the charity of the Federal government to feed them. The single rail line from that connected Northern farms and factories to Louisville, Kentucky, to Nashville and Chattanooga was still the main line of supply for the western armies, and now there was an additional hundred miles of track to guard against saboteurs. Feeding the

¹⁵⁶ For further reading on the Atlanta campaign, see Albert Castel’s *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1992.)

¹⁵⁷ Lee Kennett, *Marching Through Georgia: The Story of Soldiers and Civilians During Sherman’s Campaign* (New York; Perennial, A Harper Collins Imprint, 2001) pg. 11.

¹⁵⁸ Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pg. 188.

¹⁵⁹ Sherman, page 584.

civilian populace of Atlanta would unnecessarily tax the already thin line of supply that linked the army back to its distant base of supply. Success, to the mind of Sherman, could be as crippling as defeat.

In the short term, Sherman decided to make Atlanta a military fortress, corresponding to its isolation in Confederate territory. To accomplish this, the General decided to expel the civilians living in the midst of his army so as to be able to have their homes for storage and quarters for his men, as well as to tear down those buildings that stood in the way of forming a compact defensive line. As previously noted, ultimately the people living in Atlanta fell under the guardianship of the army in occupation. It was too daunting a task for the slim Federal supply line to feed both soldier and civilian, all while attempting to build up the stores necessary to feed and equip any garrison that might maintain Atlanta. Additionally, harboring a hostile population encouraged a security breach by allowing spies to move at will through the midst of his army.¹⁶⁰

While negotiating the evacuation of the population of Atlanta with John Bell Hood, a verbal dance that resulted in Sherman's eloquent and blunt damnation of the South for bringing civil war to America, the General also began contemplating the next moves of his army. The process of planning the next move for Sherman's army began with a September 12, 1864 communication from Grant to Sherman posing grand strategy questions for his friend aimed at points along the east coast, yet searching for what Sherman himself wanted to accomplish next with his army.¹⁶¹ On September 20, Sherman replied with the first outline of his future plans. If an army-navy expedition could take possession of Savannah, the

¹⁶⁰ Sherman to Halleck, September 20, 1864. Quoted in Sherman, pp. 591-592.

¹⁶¹ Grant to Sherman, September 12, 1864, in Sherman, page 586-7.

General prophetically stated that he “would not hesitate to cross the State of Georgia with thousand men, hauling some stores, and depending on the country for the balance. Where a million of people find subsistence, my army won’t starve . . .” due to Georgia’s as yet untouched agricultural bounty.¹⁶² Sherman’s main concern was the presence of a blocking force that could easily stall any movement of his forces; if a Federal force could take Savannah and establish a point of resupply for Sherman’s columns, such a fear would be unfounded. Sherman was emphatic, however; such a move could only be considered if there was a relief force waiting for him in Savannah.¹⁶³

Grant waived in his plans for Sherman, or rather in his approval of Sherman’s plans. Nathan Bedford Forrest’s cavalry roamed central Tennessee at will, threatening the railroads and garrisons throughout the region, and there was still the Army of Tennessee hovering around Sherman, waiting for any opportunity to move against the army. By late September, it became evident that Hood meant to move out of Georgia, and proceed north into Alabama and invade Tennessee from the south, an act meant to divert Sherman’s men out of Georgia.¹⁶⁴ Hood’s withdrawal north to Tennessee via Alabama confronted Sherman with two possibilities. On the one hand, he could spend the coming winter chasing Hood across the upper South and ultimately fight the Confederate forces at a place of their choosing, prolonging the war and offering the Army of Tennessee something of a pyrrhic victory. Conversely, Sherman now saw the opportunity to hand Hood off to General George Thomas’ Army of the Cumberland; Thomas had gained fame as the “Rock of Chickamauga” when he prevented the Union defeat at that battle from becoming a disaster, and Grant and

¹⁶² Sherman to Grant, September 20, 1864, in Sherman, page 588.

¹⁶³ Ibid, pp. 588-589.

¹⁶⁴ Sherman, page 619.

Sherman had confidence in his ability to deal with Hood's threat to Tennessee. This second option allowed the General to move to Grant's relief in Virginia, combining the two largest and most storied armies in the Union war effort to come to bear against Lee's Army of Northern Virginia around Richmond from both north and south after a march from dealing with Georgia. Grant had long pressed Sherman to abandon the chase and move overland by the most direct route, but to Sherman, moving directly from Atlanta into a new fight in Virginia left the job unfinished in Georgia.

Sherman pushed to finish the job his men started in Georgia. On October 1 he telegraphed Grant about the situation now before him as Hood began to move north.

Hood is evidently across the Chattahoochee, below Sweetwater. If he tries to get on our road, this side of the Etowah, I shall attack him; but if he goes to the Selma and Talladega Road, why will it not do to leave Tennessee to the forces which Thomas has, and the reserves soon to come to Nashville, and for me to destroy Atlanta and march across Georgia to Savannah or Charleston, breaking roads and doing irreparable damage? We cannot remain on the defensive.¹⁶⁵

The cat and mouse game that Sherman feared was now afoot, and while dutifully beginning the chase, he offered Grant a clear vision of what he wished to do. Rather than garrison Atlanta and have Confederate raids target his meager supply line, or hunt futilely after Hood's battered army, why not take this chance to end the charade once and for all? With Hood moving into Tennessee, it appeared, there was no force that stood in the path of the armies under General Sherman's control. That same day, Sherman wired O. O. Howard, commander of the Army of the Tennessee, to stand in readiness for a move south into Georgia, should Hood move as the General hoped. If that happened, Sherman proposed to

¹⁶⁵ Telegram from Sherman to Grant dated October 1, 1864. *OR* XXXIX:3, page 3.

send the Army of the Cumberland under Thomas after Hood, along with any Federal forces above Kingston, Georgia. However, Sherman also warned Howard to stand ready to move against Hood if he did not leave Georgia as the Union commander hoped. In any case, while Sherman had not yet received Grant's final approval, he was optimistic that his proposed move across Georgia would be an easier feat than others thought. As he told Howard, "[t]he march I propose is less by 200 miles than I made last fall, and less than I accomplished in February, and we can make Georgia a break in the Confederacy by ruining both east and west roads, and not running against a single fort until we got to the seacoast and in communication with our ships."¹⁶⁶

Unfortunately for Sherman's plans, by the afternoon of the first it was evident that Hood presented a very real threat to the Federal army occupying northern Georgia. As the telegraph hummed with communication to various commanders in the field, Sherman began to hint at what the future of the army held, more than likely to find out who supported his plans, while also putting men in motion to counter Hood and Forrest. At 2:00 PM, Sherman wired George Thomas, commander of the Army of the Cumberland, then at Nashville, to do just that. After giving Thomas permission to act at his discretion, the commanding general laid out what he hoped for from the actions currently developing. "If I can induce Hood to swing across to Blue Mountain I shall feel tempted to start for Milledgeville, Millen, and Savannah, or Charleston, absolutely destroying all of Georgia, and taking either Savannah or Charleston. In that event I would order back to Chattanooga everything the other side of Kingston, and bring forward all else, destroy Atlanta and the bridge, and absolutely the Southern Confederacy." While Thomas made reference to Sherman's plan in his response, it

¹⁶⁶ Sherman to Howard, October 1, 1864, *OR* XXXIX:3, page 6.

is evident that Atlanta's fate, and the fate of Georgia itself, was sealed, pending permission from Grant and the War Department.¹⁶⁷

Of course, the more obvious stumbling block that stood in Sherman's path was Hood. While Forrest moved into Middle Tennessee, Hood's army shunted north and then westward into Alabama. The Federal troops garrisoning positions between Atlanta and the Tennessee border mobilized and moved after Hood as he dithered through western Georgia and eastern Alabama. The Army of Tennessee lashed out at the Western and Atlantic Rail Road, destroying miles of track and illustrating the just fear that Sherman held all summer about the sinewy lifeline connecting him with Chattanooga and Nashville. On October 5th, forces under Major General S. G. French attacked the Federal depot at Allatoona Pass, and while the rebel forces were hurled back after a long and bloody day of combat, Sherman and Grant saw yet another preview of the problems with continually occupying Atlanta and northern Georgia. Was it worth trying to bring about a general engagement with the Army of Tennessee while they were still within reach of the Army of the Tennessee? Could the army continue to chase Hood's ghost across the South all winter without prolonging the war unnecessarily?¹⁶⁸

These tensions built up in Sherman, and on October 9th, he telegraphed Grant to push for the approval of his plans to march through Georgia. "It will be a physical impossibility to protect the roads, now that Hood, Forrest, Wheeler, and the whole batch of devils, are turned loose without home or habitation," declared the General.

¹⁶⁷ Sherman to Thomas, October 1, 1864, *ORXXXIX*:3, page 13.

¹⁶⁸ Sherman, pp. 622-625.

. . . I propose that we break up the railroad from Chattanooga forward, and that we strike out with our wagons for Milledgeville, Millen, and Savannah. Until we can repopulate Georgia, it is useless to occupy it; but the utter destruction of its roads, houses, and people, will cripple their military resources. By attempting to hold the roads, we will lose a thousand men each month, and will gain no result. I can make this march, and make Georgia howl! We have on hand over eight thousand head of cattle and three million rations of bread, but no corn. We can find plenty of forage in the interior of the state.¹⁶⁹

With no word back from Grant, Sherman continued the pursuit of Hood, attempting to discern his enemy's movements and ultimate destination. The spring campaign started with the objective to destroy the enemy in his front, and if the Army of Tennessee would simply stand still, Sherman planned to do just that. By midnight of the 10th, Sherman's information placed the Army of Tennessee at Tuscumbia, Alabama; he wired Thomas to ascertain if Thomas thought he could withstand an attack from Hood in Tennessee with the force at hand, as well as the expected reinforcements coming to his aid, "as in that event you know what I propose to do."¹⁷⁰ The cautious Thomas replied that he could not say if he could hold against Hood yet, because he had no idea how many reinforcements were on their way to him.¹⁷¹ Too many variables lay on the table for Sherman to disengage from Hood and turn south again.

Grant finally replied to Sherman's telegram on the morning of October 11th; it contained the cautionary words of a commanding general viewing the whole operations of his men in the field. How should the army deal with Hood? He certainly couldn't be allowed to roam freely throughout Tennessee. While the Confederate army seemed destined to turn north and clear from Sherman's path, Grant feared that the men under his friend's

¹⁶⁹ Sherman to Grant, October 9, 1864. *OR* XXXIX:3, page 162.

¹⁷⁰ Sherman to Thomas, October 10, 1864. *OR* XXXIX:3, page 191.

¹⁷¹ Thomas to Sherman, October 10, 1864. *OR* XXXIX:3, page 191-192.

command faced the sniping and daily attacks “by all the old men, little boys, and such railroad guards as are still left at home,” inferring that the cost of constant petty assaults might be a worse cross to bear than confronting an organized army head on. Grant added two more strictures: Thomas must remain in Tennessee to guard Nashville with its huge supply depots and still might not be up to the job of defeating Hood, and more importantly, Grant could not and would not detach a force from his command around Richmond to take Savannah as Sherman originally hoped. Were these meant to be crushing blows to his friend’s plans, or a test to see how tenaciously Sherman held on to his plans?¹⁷²

William Tecumseh Sherman’s reply was straight to the point, illustrative of his frustrations with the way the War Department conducted the war, and how much he favored making an offensive war while in enemy territory. After stating his actions in attempting to guess and counter Hood’s army, Sherman bluntly told his friend what he wanted to do.

We cannot now remain on the defensive. With twenty-five thousand infantry and the bold cavalry he has, Hood can constantly break my road. I would infinitely prefer to make a wreck of the road and of the country from Chattanooga to Atlanta, including the latter city, send back all my wounded and worthless, and, with my effective army, move through Georgia, smashing things to the sea. . . . Instead of being on the defensive, I would be on the offensive; instead of guessing at what he means to do, he would have to guess at my plans. The difference in war is full 25 per cent.
I can make Savannah, Charleston, or the mouth of the Chattahoochee.
Answer quick, as I know we will not have the telegraph long.¹⁷³

The cat and mouse of the last week weighed too heavily on Sherman. Final victory did not belong to those who sat and waited for the whims of his enemy; if Hood went north, then let the army sitting at Nashville take care of him. If Hood followed Sherman, then let him come.

¹⁷² Grant to Sherman, October 11, 1864. *OR* XXXIX:3, page 202.

¹⁷³ Sherman to Grant, October 11, 1864. *OR* XXXIX:3, page 202.

But Union armies could not defeat the Confederate States of America by garrisoning every point between Chattanooga and Tennessee. Surprisingly, Sherman accepted Grant's word that Savannah must remain in enemy hands until his force seized the city at the end of their campaign. Sherman found it preferable to seize another city after a campaign through enemy territory than to follow Hood around and hope for a fight. Confident in his plans for the fall campaign, he wrote his wife Ellen that "Georgia is now open to me, and steps are being perfected at other and distant points that will increase the value of my position here."¹⁷⁴

Grant replied that night; if Sherman truly thought he could make the march without major loss, and if he also thought that Thomas, the Rock of Chickamauga, could hold once more in Tennessee, then he could make his march through Georgia, as long as the railroad destruction began between Chattanooga and Dalton.¹⁷⁵ Sherman held in his hands the permission he needed to carry out his plans. Now he just needed to verify where Hood was going; once he knew that Hood would move into Tennessee, then the planning for his march on Savannah could begin in earnest. That same day he sent a telegraph to Henry Halleck, Army chief of staff in Washington, restating his plan to the War Department, emphasizing that "I can do it."¹⁷⁶

Despite his positive affirmations to Halleck and Grant, President Lincoln hesitated about the plan that Sherman now urged. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton wired Grant to that effect on the night of the twelfth, but contrary to his superior's concerns, Grant showed a

¹⁷⁴ Mills Lane, editor. "War is Hell!" *William T. Sherman's Personal Narrative of His March Through Georgia* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1974) page 129.

¹⁷⁵ Grant to Sherman, October 11, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3* page 202.

¹⁷⁶ Sherman to Halleck, October 11, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3* page 203.

favorable frame of mind to his friend the next morning.¹⁷⁷ “It would be much better to go south than to be forced to come north,” declared Grant. In the process of the operation, Grant wanted the country scoured clean of every useable piece of material, including slaves, which Grant mused about arming in order to add a force to Sherman’s army as it marched through Georgia.¹⁷⁸

Grant began to take an active interest in the plans of his friend. On October 13th he sent word to Halleck to begin preparations for Sherman’s approach to Savannah at the end of his march. He ordered the preparation of a complete resupply of rations, forage and ammunition for the western army’s arrival at the Georgia coast. Grant requested that the relief flotilla depart for the Georgia coast as soon as Sherman did so as to be prepared for his arrival. It seemed that while the commanding general would not spare Union forces from Virginia to take Savannah in order to give Sherman a safe-haven on the coast, he could at least meet the original plan halfway by using the powerful Union Navy to meet the army’s arrival with enough food and forage to save it from starvation, should the worst happen.¹⁷⁹ Later that same evening, Grant again sent word to Halleck to have Thomas consolidate his forces by abandoning certain points on the railroad in the face of the enemy. Rather than contesting Hood at every point, Thomas was to pull as many men as possible to a central point of strength to meet the advancing enemy.¹⁸⁰ Stanton relayed the good news to Sherman that evening. “You will see by General Grant’s dispatch that your plans are approved by him. You may count on the co-operation of this Department to the full extent of the power of

¹⁷⁷ Edwin Stanton to Grant, October 12, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3* page 222.

¹⁷⁸ Grant to Sherman, October 12, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3* page 222.

¹⁷⁹ Grant to Halleck, October 13, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3* page 239.

¹⁸⁰ Grant to Halleck, October 13, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3* page 240.

the Government. Supplies will be forwarded with the utmost dispatch to the points indicated. Whatever results you have the confidence and support of the Government.”¹⁸¹ Sherman now had the green light to go forward with the march to the sea. All he needed to do was to consolidate and prepare his forces.

Sherman still had to deal with Hood. The Army of Tennessee roamed at will across northern Georgia, one day bending towards the Tennessee border, the next showing signs of heading south again. All the while the men of the Military Division of the Mississippi wound through the countryside in an attempt to catch up. With so many breaks in the rail line and the winding nature of their march, Sherman turned his men to foraging to supplement their rations.¹⁸² Marching in the path of Hood’s army, also foraging, while tracing in reverse the path of the spring’s campaign assuredly brought hardship to the people of northern Georgia. Alexander Downing noted in his diary that “[t]he valleys through which we are marching are quite rich and there are some fine plantations which afford good forage.”¹⁸³ O. O. Howard, commanding the Army of the Tennessee, took notice of the raucous nature that this foraging began to take on October 16th, when he sent a circular order to his command condemning illicit foraging. Word reached him of officers overseeing home invasions, and while the specific events were not detailed, General Howard informed his command that all foraging should be done in an orderly manner as prescribed by earlier army policy. While the Union Army no longer followed the strictures of “kid glove” treatments

¹⁸¹ Stanton to Sherman, October 13, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3*, page 240.

¹⁸² Sherman’s first mention of foraging during the pursuit of Hood is on October 16 in a communication with Thomas. *OR XXXIX:3*, page 311.

¹⁸³ Alexander G. Downing, *Downing’s Civil War Diary*. Edited by Olynthus B. Clark. (Des Moines: The Historical Department of Iowa, 1916) page 223.

toward civilians, there was a difference between foraging and pillaging, and the latter would not be tolerated under the command of the prim Howard.¹⁸⁴

Sherman's push for starting on a new campaign, rather than fruitlessly chasing Hood, gained momentum during the week after October 19. On that day, Sherman sent two communications to the Chief of Staff that gave greater clarity to his plans. In the first, a telegram sent at noon, Sherman promised to send the IV Corps back to reinforce General Thomas in Tennessee, reinforcing the defenses around Nashville should the Army of Tennessee finally take an offensive stance against that city.¹⁸⁵ The second communication, a letter written by Sherman at Summerville, Georgia, gave the general more room to expand on his plans. The Federal soldiers marching after Hood could not overtake the beleaguered Southern army; Hood's army, unencumbered by supply trains, moved far faster than their opponents could hope. Rather than continuing the fruitless chase, or moving in a defensive posture, Sherman pressed for the final permission to begin his movement into Georgia. After destroying the rail connection between Chattanooga and Atlanta, Sherman wanted to leave Atlanta in such a manner as to leave everyone, especially his enemies, in doubt as to his final destination. The general gave four possible avenues of egress from his Georgia campaign: Savannah, Charleston, Mobile, and Pensacola, and he asked that those four areas be put under surveillance so as to be prepared for his arrival.¹⁸⁶ Sherman also practiced deception while on his march, sending his divisions on varied routes of march which threatened strategic points that he never intended to attack, keeping the outnumbered Confederate

¹⁸⁴ O. O. Howard's circular appears in *OR XXXIX:3*, pp. 308-309.

¹⁸⁵ Sherman to Halleck, October 19, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3*, pg. 357.

¹⁸⁶ Sherman to Halleck, October 19, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3*, pp. 357-358.

defenders bottled up and confused near Macon and other vital points outside of the path his men took to the sea.

Most importantly, Sherman finally exposed the true purpose of his new campaign. Yes, he would destroy the railroad and threaten the major towns along his route of march, but he hoped for something much greater from the proposed march through Georgia. By moving his army through the yet untouched heart of Georgia, Sherman hoped to emphasize the power of the Union Army and bring home the horrors of war firsthand to those who supported secession in 1861. “They don’t know what war means,” declared Sherman, “but when the rich planters of the Oconee and Savannah see their fences and corn and hogs and sheep vanish before their eyes they will have something more than a mere opinion of the ‘Yanks.’ Even now our poor mules laugh at the fine corn-fields, and our soldiers riot on chestnuts, sweet potatoes, pigs, chickens, &c.” Yet Sherman also promised to visit this hardship on everyone. There was no yeoman friend of the nation to be relied upon in Georgia, and all those who did not work hard enough to prevent secession needed to feel the same pain and deprivation as those who actively supported treason against the United States. His army would not suffer in the face of want, no matter the class or political leanings of the people who fed the army against their will. This was not a time for receipts and requisitions; this was a time for hardship and suffering as a means to educate the South, through Georgia’s example, of the folly of secession and war.¹⁸⁷

That same day, Sherman wrote the men charged with the logistical support of his command. To Colonel Amos Beckwith, acting Chief Commissary at Atlanta, the general

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, page 358.

stated that he knew that Hood's men were beyond his grasp. As such, Beckwith needed to begin preparations for the coming campaign. Giving him twelve days' notice, Sherman declared that he want his army on a war footing, with nothing in Atlanta save those stores necessary for the movement of his men. "Send all trash to the rear at once and have on hand thirty days' food and but little forage. I plan to abandon Atlanta and the railroad back to Chattanooga, and sally forth to ruin Georgia and bring upon the seashore."¹⁸⁸ He echoed these same orders to Chief Quartermaster L. C. Easton. Sherman charged the quartermaster with the repair of the railroad back to Chattanooga to ensure the forwarding of necessary supplies to Chattanooga while also sending back excess material and those men unfit for the coming campaign.¹⁸⁹ Sherman was once again putting his army into fighting trim, just as he did before the Atlanta campaign. There would be no room for the infirm soldier who could not effectively make the march, nor was there room for superfluous baggage. Uniforms, food, and ammunition, the barest essentials of an army, were all that he wanted waiting for his men in Atlanta when they returned from the fruitless chase after Hood. Sherman ordered Henry Slocum, commanding the force at Atlanta, to ensure that "1,500,000 million rations of bread, coffee, sugar, salt, and 500,000 rations of salt meat" were on hand in Atlanta in preparation of the campaign.¹⁹⁰ While the American mythos prefers to think of Sherman's men living entirely off the land while marching through Georgia, the general himself knew better. It was far better to bring enough food on the march to feed his moving army than it was to watch them starve should they be delayed by an opposing force, or find that the populace had acted to prevent foraging in any way.

¹⁸⁸ Sherman to Beckwith, *OR XXXIX:3*, pp. 358-359.

¹⁸⁹ Sherman to Easton, October 19, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3*, page 359.

¹⁹⁰ Sherman to Slocum, October 20, 1864. *OR XXXIX:3*, page 370.

On October 26th, news of Hood's army arrived at Sherman's headquarters. Hood's men now occupied Decatur, Alabama, and, with the exception of Joseph Wheeler's small cavalry force, no major Confederate military presence remained in northern Georgia. This was the moment Sherman had long hoped for; the Army of Tennessee, outside of his reach and beyond the range in which they could threaten his plans, was Thomas's problem now. Final preparations began in earnest to start the long march through Georgia.¹⁹¹ The next day, the general wrote his wife Ellen of his plans, preparing her for events to come. "I expect very soon now to attempt another feat in which I think I shall succeed, but it is hazardous and you will not hear from me for months. The War Department will know my whereabouts, and the Rebels and you will be able to guess."¹⁹² While confident of the prospects of success, Sherman also hinted at the effect a change in plans at this juncture might bring. "We can now live on the corn of the South, some salt and beef on the hoof, but it discourages our men to be compelled to turn back to attend to what others in our rear should."¹⁹³

On the morning of November 1, Sherman sent Grant a detailed telegram, laying out the state of affairs in Tennessee and Georgia, in essence pleading again for final permission to begin his march to the coast. To chase Hood with the army negated the work of the year to date. "If I were to let go Atlanta and North Georgia and make for Hood, he would, as he did here, retreat to the southwest, leaving his militia, now assembling at Macon and Griffin, to occupy our conquests, and the work of last summer would be lost."¹⁹⁴ Rather than granting final permission to proceed, Grant's response triggered a rush of communications

¹⁹¹ Sherman, page 637.

¹⁹² William T. Sherman to Ellen Sherman, October 27, 1864. Lane, "War is Hell!", pp. 135.

¹⁹³ Ibid, page 137.

¹⁹⁴ Sherman to Grant, November 1, 1864. OR XXXIX:3, pg. 576.

that threatened all of Sherman's plans. Grant's telegram of 6 PM, which Sherman claimed to receive on the morning of November 2, harkened back to the primary goal of the 1864 campaign: destroy the enemy in the field. While Sherman's capture of Atlanta was a major coup for the Federal war effort, he had failed to destroy the Army of Tennessee, the main Confederate military presence in the western theater of operations. With his men weakened from constant marching and few supplies, Grant's message strongly stated to Sherman that Hood's destruction was far more important than a romp through the countryside.¹⁹⁵

Sherman's reply to Grant, dated 11:30 on the morning of November 2, allowed Sherman to fully explain the tactical situation in Tennessee and Georgia to his commanding officer in Virginia. To chase Hood was useless; his army was faster than Sherman's larger force, Thomas held command of a force more than large enough to defend middle Tennessee, and he was a trusted, if not slow and methodical, leader with proven battlefield experience. Let the Rock of Chickamauga stand one more time, this time with a larger, better equipped force, in a strategically stronger location. More important than the impossibility of catching Hood, Sherman saw his enemy's movements for what they were: a diversion to draw him away from the breadbasket of the Confederacy. Atlanta must be abandoned, no matter which direction Sherman chose; if it must be abandoned, then put the army into an offensive stance and move into Georgia, fulfilling Grant's second directive for the campaign. Hood now led an army in flight, an ineffectual fighting force wandering across the Georgia, Alabama and

¹⁹⁵ Grant to Sherman, November 1, 1864. *OR* XXXIX:3, pg. 576.

Tennessee, and Sherman saw this as the chance to finally destroy the will and ability of the people of the South to make war against the United States.¹⁹⁶

While Sherman awaited Grant's reply as to the mission of the men in the western army, Sherman continued making preparations for his hoped-for campaign east-southeast to the Atlantic coast. He ordered Chief Engineer Orlando Poe to prepare two separate pontoon trains for the use of the two wings of the army during the coming advance. He also ordered Poe to prepare to destroy any remaining supplies in Atlanta, as well as any supplies or buildings that might provide succor to the enemy.¹⁹⁷ Sherman wired General Thomas at Nashville the same day with more information about the known disposition of Confederate troops in Tennessee. Sherman prodded his subordinate to concentrate his forces and preparation for action, but he also noted that with the chase of Hood completed in Georgia, he was now headed south to Kingston, Georgia, to begin final preparation for his departure.¹⁹⁸

Grant's reply came a few hours later. Realizing that Thomas did in fact have an army at his disposal large enough to handle the combined forces of Hood and Forrest, and assenting to the fact that a move against the Army of Tennessee was in fact a retreat, Grant gave final approval of Sherman's plans for the march he planned. At long last, all the obstacles were pushed aside. Now all that remained was the minutiae of final preparations.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Sherman to Grant, November 2, 1864. *OR XXXIX*: 3, page 594.

¹⁹⁷ Sherman to Orlando M. Poe, November 1, 1864. *OR XXXIX*: 3, page 577.

¹⁹⁸ Sherman to Thomas, November 1, 1864. *OR XXXIX*: 3, page 580.

¹⁹⁹ Grant to Sherman, November 2, 1864. *OR XXXIX*: 3, page 594.

Sherman sent two communications to General Grant on November 6 that summarized his feelings on the true purpose of the coming campaign. Sherman's ultimate goal was to finally bringing home the terrors of war to the people of Georgia and the south as a whole. "If we can march a well-appointed army right through his territory, it is a demonstration to the world, foreign and domestic, that we have a power which Davis cannot resist. This may not be war, but statesmanship, nevertheless it is overwhelming to my mind that there are thousands of people abroad and in the South who will reason thus: If the north can march an army right through the South, it is proof positive that the North can prevail in this contest, leaving only open the question of its willingness to use that power."²⁰⁰ The damage done by a rampaging army, unopposed by those charged with protecting the Confederate homeland, would devastate the psyche of the South. This was the ultimate means of fulfilling Grant's plans for 1864 and bringing about a final victory; the Army of Tennessee had been swept aside and rendered impotent in the face of the Federal army, and now the people of Georgia must be made to feel the pain of defenselessness as the exemplar of Federal power in the west moved through their fields and farms at will. The destruction wrought by Sherman's men in Georgia would also aid Grant's eastern campaign, stalled into a siege of Richmond; by subsisting on the fat of the land, Sherman's men prevented precious food resources from feeding Lee's army.²⁰¹ Grant's replied with his full support for the operation. "Great good fortune attend you! I believe you will be eminently successful, and, at worst, can only make a march less fruitful of results than hoped for."²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Sherman to Grant, November 6, 1864. *OR XXXIX*: 3, page 660.

²⁰¹ Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) page 322, 330.

²⁰² Sherman, page 643.

William Tecumseh Sherman spent the next week speedily preparing his army for its grand movement. Orders to the various posts and officers under his command kept his telegrapher and support staff busy day and night. On November 9th, Sherman's staff issued perhaps the single most important document related to the operations of the army in Georgia. As a mundane document necessary to the functioning of an army, Special Field Orders No. 120 outlined the routes of march for the men under Sherman's command, assigned the place of pontoon trains and wagons, and the like. Yet the core of the orders spoke directly to the purpose and support of the movement at hand. Removed from any lines of supply, and carrying thirty days' worth of rations to be used only in the case of an emergency, the core of Special Field Orders No. 120 laid the groundwork for feeding the army and interacting with civilians during the weeks ahead. Only corps commanders could order destruction of private property, and this was to happen only in the event that the army encountered armed resistance or attempts to retard the movement of the army. Should that resistance be met, Sherman's orders allowed his subordinate generals to "order and enforce a devastation more or less relentless, according to the measure of the hostility." As an homage to the slave power conspiracy so prevalent at the beginning of the war, in foraging and taking animals for army use, the commander ordered his soldiers to consider the difference "between the rich, who are usually hostile, and the poor and industrious, usually neutral or friendly." No soldier was to enter a private dwelling, or use "abusive language" toward the civilians they encountered, but that was as far as manners went. In order to feed itself, "[t]he army will forage liberally on the country during the march." Sherman officially charged organized brigade-level foraging parties to maintain the stocks of food and forage necessary for the logistical support of the army. Any form of food encountered along the route of march was fair game for

seizure by foragers. In essence, Sherman's orders to his men, while written with the constraint of men's passions in mind, opened the door to a wholesale devastation of everything that lay in the sixty mile wide path of his army.²⁰³

With the issuance of final orders, the army's pace quickened towards Atlanta. Sherman departed for that point on November 12 after sending one last telegram to George Thomas. With the words "Dispatch received – all right," the last telegraph line connecting Atlanta and Nashville went silent, and all communications with the North ended.²⁰⁴ Sherman's army, divided into two bodies for the movement, set upon Atlanta, the gathering of the blue tide about to sweep southward. Colonel Poe soon took to his special assignment, destroying any possible excess assets with fire and destroying the railroad infrastructure at the heart of the city. The sky soon glowed red with the results of his work, although greatly aided by the actions of looters and hooligans, Northern soldier and Southern civilian alike.²⁰⁵

George Cram of the 105th Illinois Infantry wrote his final letters home on November 6th and 9th, detailing his preparations for the coming campaign. Old letters, reread one last time, went into the fire in order to lighten the load. The soldier carefully packed his knapsack, including a small packet of tea, a comfort of life in garrison after the long summer's work. As one of the company non-commissioned officers, Cram also looked to preparing the company tools and paperwork for departure, sending some papers back for storage, while making sure that a few entrenching tools found their way to the sole company

²⁰³ Ibid, page 652.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, page 644.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 654.

wagon, should the enemy be found in force.²⁰⁶ Amid the other preparations for the coming march, Alexander Downing of the 11th Iowa Infantry noted the constant drilling of the company in order to prepare the new recruits for active service.²⁰⁷ As the men of the army gathered into Atlanta, Charles Wills noted that “[c]oming through Atlanta the smoke almost blinded us. I believe everything of any importance there is on fire.”²⁰⁸ W. B. Emmons of the 34th Illinois recorded that “a pall of smoke hangs over the ruined town and the great black cloud of smoke and forked tongues of shining flame roll up from many a house that has just caught fire.” As with so many other regiments, the 34th passed out of the town and encamped outside the defenses, drew rations and uniforms in preparation for the movement, and waited for orders.²⁰⁹

On November 15, the first of Sherman’s men began marching out of the ruins of Atlanta. Men of the XV Corps rushed amid piles of quartermaster supplies, grabbing new shoes and replacements for their campaign-worn uniforms as they marched by. The next morning, as dawn broke over north Georgia, William Tecumseh Sherman sat astride his horse on a small knoll and watched as the last of his men left the object of his long summer obsession. Eleven years later, the General wrote perhaps the most stirring description of his army’s departure possible.

. . . and reaching the hill, just outside of the rebel works, we naturally paused to look back upon the scenes of our past battles. . . . Behind us lay Atlanta, smouldering and in ruins, the black smoke rising high in air, and hanging like

²⁰⁶ George F. Cram, *Soldiering with Sherman: Civil War Letters of George F. Cram*. Edited by Jennifer Cain Bohrnstedt. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000) page 149.

²⁰⁷ Downing, page 228.

²⁰⁸ Charles Wright Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier*. Edited by Mary Kellogg. (Washington, D.C.: Globe Printing Company, 1906) page 319.

²⁰⁹ Entry for November 15, 1864. W. B. Emmons Diary. Special Collections Department at the University of Iowa Libraries. MSC 10.

a pall over the ruined city. Away off in the distance, on the McDonough road, was the rear of Howard's column, the gun-barrels glistening in the sun, the white-topped wagons stretching away to the south; and right before us the XIV Corps, marching steadily and rapidly, with a cheerful look and swinging pace, that made light of the thousand miles that lay between us and Richmond. Some band, by accident, struck up the anthem 'John Brown's soul goes marching on;' the men caught up the strain, and never before or since have I heard the chorus of 'Glory, glory, hallelujah!' done with more spirit, or in better harmony of time and place."²¹⁰

Hood's army lay in the opposite direction; there was no chance for another Nickajack Creek or New Hope Church action. On November 21, Hood left Florence, Alabama, to fight a bloody battle at Franklin and thereafter sit outside Nashville, passively waiting while Thomas completed preparations for his devastating counterattack in mid-December. Only scattered portions of Wheeler's Confederate cavalry and the old men and boys of Georgia's home guard units stood between Sherman's men and the sea coast at Savannah. The March to the Sea had begun.

²¹⁰ Sherman, *Memoirs*, 655-656.

Chapter Four:
 “. . . Probably the Most Gigantic Pleasure Excursion Ever Planned:”
 Sherman’s Soldiers on the March to the Sea

The officers and men who marched with Sherman left their impressions of the march, the countryside through which they passed, and the horror they wreaked on civilians along their line of march. While Confederate forces never threatened to stop Sherman’s advance, Confederate General Joe Wheeler and his limited number of cavalymen and militia did seek to contest that advance. The army marched in two broad wings, the Army of the Tennessee on the right flank and the Army of Georgia on the left, screened by General Judson Kilpatrick’s cavalry force. In addition to the problems that Union foragers faced, portions of Sherman’s forces did see combat on November 22 at Griswoldville, as well as increasing enemy contact as they neared Savannah. While contact with Confederate forces occurred, it did not provide the main narrative of the campaign. Food filled that role.

For Major Charles Wright Wills of the 103rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the Savannah Campaign began with his first glass of milk in eleven months, and things got more interesting from there. The next day, November 16th, the Major took note of the “really fine country” that he and his men moved through, and again took note of the new culinary options supplementing his normal army fare. After a camp servant prepared an opossum for breakfast, Wills wrote how the men of his mess “voted this morning that opossum meat was good enough for white folks. I liked it very much.” Glasses of milk and opossum breakfasts aside, the infantry officer delighted in what he and his men experienced in the Georgia countryside. Just two days after the start of the campaign, Wills already summarized his

daily life: “This is probably the most gigantic pleasure excursion ever planned. It already beats everything I ever saw soldiering, and promises to prove much richer yet. I wish Sherman would burn the commissary trains, we have no use for what they carry, and the train only bothers us. . . . Our men are clear discouraged with foraging, they can’t carry half the hogs and potatoes they find right along the road. The men detailed for that purpose are finding lots of horses and mules. The 6th Iowa are plumb crazy on the horse question.”²¹¹ On November 19th, Wills penned the results of his first interaction with a civilian while marching south from Atlanta. After stating that the column of troops still marched through “a level, fine country” that was “well cultivated,” the Major took the time to thank a local woman for a rare occurrence he encountered at the end of the day. “By the kindness of Mrs. Elizabeth Celia Pye, I occupy a feather bed to-night. It is the first house I have been in for the last three months. She understood from the Rebels that we burned all houses and she took all her things out and hid them in the woods. The foragers found them and brought them in to her.”²¹²

Wills’ diary, published by his sister in 1906, recorded his daily life and observations during the March to the Sea. Nearly every day on the march, Wills took note of his interactions with civilians, the environment, and the agricultural production of the state of Georgia, notably through the commentary on the food that found its way to his camp due to the foragers employed by General Sherman under General Orders Number 120. He was not alone. Of the sixty thousand men under Sherman’s command, a multitude of letters and diaries survive, giving light to the experiences of soldiers of all ranks as they made their way

²¹¹ Charles W. Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier*. (Washington, D.C.: Globe Printing Company, 1906), page 320.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 321.

from Atlanta to Savannah. Some, like Mifflin Jennings of the 11th Iowa Veteran Volunteer Infantry Regiment, only recorded the amount of marching done during a day; other journalists simply stopped writing on November 15, 1864, only to resume once the army began the siege of Savannah.²¹³ As with Wills, of those soldiers who did maintain a documentary history of their experiences on the march, almost all commented on three common aspects of their experiences: interactions with the environment, civilians, and agriculture, especially in the form of food. These descriptors combine to show how the men of Sherman's army understood their actions in Georgia as well as how they encountered the world around them as they helped ring the death knell of the Confederacy.

Sherman's men began their movement south from Atlanta early on November 15, and as the prospects for the future looked bright, the smoldering remembrance of a hard summer's campaign lingered just over the shoulders of the departing army. Sergeant Alexander Downing of the 11th Iowa Veteran Volunteer Infantry noted with enthusiasm that the column "[S]tarted early this morning for the Southern coast, somewhere, and we don't care, so long as Sherman is leading us." The devastation of the long siege and fighting around Atlanta surrounded the men of the XVII Corps as they made that first day's march, for Downing also took the time to mention the landscape around him. "The country is very thinly settled and there is nothing to forage."²¹⁴ For an army designed to "forage liberally"

²¹³ For the Mifflin Jennings diary, see <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ialcgs/mifflinj.htm>. I tend to agree with Mark Grimsley's analysis of diaries, or lack thereof, from the Savannah Campaign that for many soldiers, the march was a non-event. With little or no hostile contact with the enemy, and only endless days of marching, many Federal soldiers simply found nothing of interest to write about, especially after years of hardship and the terror of combat. In the process of researching this chapter, I ran across countless document sets that came from the pens of prolific diarists, only to find the period of the campaign blank, with no later record of the soldier's experiences. See Grimsley, page 205.

²¹⁴ Alexander G. Downing, *Downing's Civil War Diary*, ed. Olynthus B. Clark. (Des Moines: The Historical Department of Iowa, 1916) page 229.

off the land to find its sustenance, an area of few farms and little food left after a summer of two armies taking whatever they needed boded ill for that first day. Rations also played heavily on the mind of Allen Morgan Geer of the 20th IL. His diary entry for November 15th listed the food carried in the regimental wagons to support the regiment on the campaign to come. “Rations 15 days hard tack, 100 days coffee, 50 days sugar. No meat or vegetables issued, 2 rations whiskey.”²¹⁵

The prospects for the coming days brightened considerably for Sherman’s left wing, the Army of Georgia, as it snaked its way further south. Sergeant Downing noted with a farmer’s eye that the land through which he now passed was home to “some fine plantations, well improved with some good buildings.”²¹⁶ Foraging parties found a much more productive region to operate in after the first days’ march, and John Gay of the 25th Iowa wrote that the men found “plenty of Forage of every kind we now live on sweet potatoes, beef, pork, honey and chickens[.]”²¹⁷ Allen Geer agreed with Gay’s judgment on the rich nature of Georgia’s produce. “This is rich foraging country. . . . Sweet potatoes and yams are found of all kinds and sizes. Some of the latter weighing from 8 to 15 pounds.”²¹⁸

When Reverend G. S. Bradley of the 22nd Wisconsin Infantry ended his march on the 16th of November, he began his remarkably detailed journal of the March to the sea. As the 22nd went into camp that night, a soldier found a supply of corn hidden by a local civilian which quickly became fodder for the horses of the regiment. The ubiquitous sweet potato also

²¹⁵ Allen Morgan Geer, *The Civil War Diary of Allen Morgan Geer, Twentieth Regiment, Illinois Volunteers*, ed. Mary Ann Andersen (New York: Cosmos Press, 1977) page 176.

²¹⁶ Downing, *ibid.*

²¹⁷ John Gay diary, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City Manuscript Collection. Cited in Steve Meyer, *Iowa Valor* (Garrison, IA: Meyer Publishing Company, 1994) page 395.

²¹⁸ Geer, *ibid.*

entered Bradley's historical record, for the Reverend took note that "This is a great country for sweet potatoes and yams, the only difference between them being in the quality of the two, the sweet potatoes being finer." That night the menu for regimental headquarters consisted of "bacon, sweet potatoes fried, hard bread and coffee with sugar."²¹⁹ Bradley also gave a lengthy commentary on a conversation held that day with a local civilian. While he learned that Sherman's movement south caught the local populace completely unaware, Bradley also learned some of the agricultural history of the area through which he was now passing. "The country through here was formerly owned and worked by rich planters, but exhausting the soil, they divided their large plantations, selling to poor men, and moved to Mississippi or Alabama, to the put the land there through the same exhausting process."²²⁰ The Reverend also recorded a rather humorous anecdote from another encounter he witnessed that day.

By the road side, resided a family of Smith's. The following conversation occurred between one of the married daughters and one of our soldiers;
 "Is your husband in the rebel army?"
 "Of course."
 "Was he conscripted?"
 "No, sir, he volunteered; *I would not have a man if he had to be conscripted!*"²²¹

For George Sharland, a member of Company B of the 64th Illinois Infantry, the day's orders meant marching in the rear guard of his brigade, protecting the wagons. Sharland felt rather dejected at the assignment, for as he put it, ". . . being rear guard and having our charge to watch and care for, our time had not yet come to enjoy the common luxuries of the

²¹⁹ Rev. G. S. Bradley, *The Star Corps; or Notes of an Army Chaplain During Sherman's Famous "March to the Sea"* (Milwaukee: Jermain & Brightman, 1865) page 182.

²²⁰ Ibid, 182-183.

²²¹ Ibid., 183.

sunny South. For in the main line of march of an army, everything in the line of eatables is taken in out of the wet by those that are in the advance, leaving the rear only the scanty pittance of their refuse, and sometimes not that.” While Sharland longed to personally take part in the moving harvest brought in by others working to fill the provender of the column, the scenery of a summer’s fight surrounded him. Sherman’s men now passed through a land that the soldier judged “was very good, and well adapted for farming purposes,” soldiers blue and grey had stripped the land “of everything in the shape of forage for either man or beast, from the fact that everything pretty much had been culled from it for the use of our army during the siege . . .” While the diarist did not note the presence of common farm houses, the occasional plantation house, “large and stately,” found its way into the pages of his journal. These mansions were not the rewards of diligent work and a life well-lived, but rather “the product of compulsory labor and toil.” The very slaves who provided the labor being the profit that built those homes lingered at the periphery as Sharland passed by, grim reminders of an unjust system, although their owners and masters seemed not to be present.²²²

Company D of the 21st Wisconsin Infantry, commanded by Captain John Otto, served as foragers for the regiment on the second day of the campaign. It was a good day for the party, who returned to camp with a mule harnessed to a cart that carried sweet potatoes, molasses, honey, cornmeal, a two hundred pound hog, “a dozen turkeys and a dozen Chicken.” As his party approached their camp, Otto remembered that the men from the division gathered by the side of the road and “cheered lustily” for every group of foragers and their prizes. One man in Otto’s company was less than cheerful, however. Identified as

²²² George Sharland, *Knapsack Notes of Gen. Sherman’s Grand Campaign Through the Empire State of the South* (Springfield, IL: Johnson & Bradford, 1865.) Transcribed by Scott Gutzke, 2005. http://www.64thill.org/knapsack_notes.htm.

“John,” the man lamented the lack of a good cooking vessel in the face of such bounty.

“With mutton and fresh ham and turkey and sweet potatoes and cornmeal laying around him he grumbled. On my inquiring what was lacking he groaned; ‘Oh my Dutch oven’! The dutch oven we had to leave at Chattanooga at the beginning of the Atlanta campaign. But he had a spider to fry in, and we had camp kettles to boil sweet potatoes; the only trouble was with the Cornmeal bread.”²²³

The foraging parties mentioned by the diarists acted as the official means of procuring food for Sherman’s army. Several men, detailed from each company and regiment, became part of a larger body of men from their brigade who, under the direction of a regimental staff officer, set off away from the column for the day after being informed as to where to expect to meet the column at the end of the days’ march, generally at a crossroads along the route used for the day. John Henry Otto felt the need to define foraging in his memoirs in the face of historical misconception. “A good many people believe that the whole army was let loose bumming around like a lot of vagabonds, robbing and murdering and God knows what else. That was not the case. Why, we would have been gobled up, and taken prisoner, or killed within a short time by the rebel troops.” Captain Hartwell Osborn of the 55th Ohio Volunteer Infantry described the sight of a party awaiting their unit at the end of day’s foraging:

As the marching column neared its camp at night, at each cross-road would be found the party waiting to join its command. The ability of the American soldier to get fun out of any and everything came out strong. Wagons, carriages, buggies, in short, every vehicle was seized and loaded with the

²²³ John Henry Otto, *Memoirs of a Dutch Mudsill: The “War Memories” of John Henry Otto, Captain, Company D, 21st Regiment Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry*, eds. David Gould and James B. Kennedy (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2004) pages 292-293.

spoils of the day. Animals of every description and all sorts and sizes provided power; and too often the foragers presented themselves arrayed in motley finery of ancient date and fashion, and of no earthly use, except to add a fantastic air to the march of the invading army. These rolling plains were fairly well cleared and cultivated, and proved to be a veritable granary. The grotesque cavalcades nightly unloaded bacon, hams, sides, smoked and fresh meats, sweet potatoes, flour, meal, molasses, corn, fowls, ducks, geese, and turkeys; cows, often yoked with mules or horses, and drawing carts; sheep and hogs; and on more than one load a hive of honey gave evidence to the enterprise as well as the sweet tooth of the forager.²²⁴

For those soldiers who wished to attempt to forage on their own, without the sanction of being part of an official party, military punishment sometimes awaited their actions. Captain Ephraim Wilson of the 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry related the experience of two of the young men under his command. After making camp one evening, the two men chose to find some excitement of their own and set off looking for their own food. After shooting a hog, their division commander, General Mower, discovered the men busily cutting up their prize. The general ordered the men tied up by their thumbs on the color line of their regiment, to serve as an example to others who would disobey orders. While Wilson complied with the intent of the orders, he did so in such a way as to mitigate what he saw as a severe but necessary order. The main lesson learned from the incident for the men of the 10th Illinois was vigilance in their surroundings, especially towards the presence of their own officers. As Captain Wilson put it, “The boys, after this little episode, kept a close watch on Gen. Mower when they wanted to take in a pig or two or do a little foraging on their own account.”²²⁵

²²⁴ Otto, 291; Hartwell Osborn, *Trials and Triumphs: The Record of the Fifty-fifth Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1904) pages 175-176.

²²⁵ Captain Ephraim A. Wilson, *Memoirs of the War* (Cleveland, OH: W. M. Bayne Printing Co., 1893) pages 392-393.

Army justice was not the only thing to fear for the forager, sanctioned or not. While the main body of the Army of Tennessee had marched northward into Tennessee before the Savannah Campaign began, Sherman's men still faced the haunting presence of Confederate cavalry under Joseph Wheeler as it screened the Federals' march. When Sherman left Atlanta, Wheeler's cavalry force placed itself in position so as to protect Macon, an important arsenal and manufacturing point for the Confederate government, thus allowing the foraging parties to move relatively freely, but within days of the beginning of the campaign, units of rebel cavalry began to monitor and threaten the Federals out in search of food. When the two opposing groups encountered one another, the foraging parties often deployed as skirmishers in order to fend off the mounted assaults. They also played the role of a reconnaissance force, reporting back to the main army where they encountered Confederate resistance, allowing Sherman and his subordinates to know about the presence of Southern forces before the Federal cavalry could send such information up the chain of command.²²⁶

Foragers who encountered Confederate cavalymen in groups smaller than a full party faced a deadly reality. Reverend Bradley of the 22nd Wisconsin related the tale of such a group. On December 5th, a sergeant from the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division of the XII Corps ran into rebel forces while foraging with three other men. After taking their day's prizes to a crossroads church to await the main Federal column, the sergeant and his men found the bodies of four Union infantrymen, all shot in the breast, being buried by a group of slaves. The sergeant remained behind while his fellow foragers went back after something, and when they failed to return, he went in search of them. After going several miles, the sergeant encountered a group of Confederates, and only escaped capture by riding hard for the route

²²⁶ Hartwell, 175.

of march. The Southern cavalymen gave up their pursuit only when the noise of the Union column told them that the sergeant was within reach of relief. His companions were not seen again.²²⁷

As the Army of Georgia continued south, the men of Sherman's army continued to enjoy what might almost seem a carnival-like atmosphere, despite the occasional death of foragers. None of the diarists make any mention of thoughts of the enemy or of any of hardships normally mentioned about a campaign. Foraging continued to exceed any of their expectations, and several took note of the "fine country" they passed through still. As Allen Morgan noted, "We pass through a splendid agricultural region and where the people have suffered but little from the ravages of an army." In fact, Geer's only complaint seemed to be that the foraging party for the 20th Illinois went out on the wrong road, thereby not bringing as much as normal. Albert Utterback, part of the foraging detail sent out by the 9th Iowa did not get lost, and the young man returned to camp with a canteen of molasses and sweet potatoes for his personal dinner. As Reverend Bradley noted in his diary, "We are now striking through the very heart of Georgia. All intend to live well during the campaign." John Henry Otto remembered the central portion of Georgia as "a fertile, rich farming Country and quite well settled by planters. It was full of large, well stocked plantations, such as we had seldom met with in Kentucky. No armies, either rebel or yankee had ever been here . . ."²²⁸

²²⁷ Bradley, 205-206.

²²⁸ Downing, 229; Geer, 176-177; Albert Utterback diary, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines. Cited in Meyer, *Iowa Valor*, page 397; Bradley, 183; Otto, 292.

The 64th Illinois noticed a new and growing mass of humanity that attached itself to Sherman's army as they moved away from Atlanta. Slaves by thousands, some alone, some in family groups, began to follow the Union force. Attracted by the strange army, as well as the martial music that sounded their arrival, slaves liberated themselves from the grasp of their masters in order to find freedom with the army. According to George Sharland, the former slaves carried items of every description in every manner possible as they joined the army. The chaos of the black flight drew comparisons to "the ancient Israelites' exit from Egypt to the Wilderness," an apt description for those fleeing from generations of forced labor and chattel slavery.²²⁹

As the column passed south of McDonough, Georgia on November 18, foraging continued apace. Captain George W. Pepper mentioned in his diary that more than two thousand men from Butler County, the location of the march that day, served in the ranks of the Confederate army; where he got this information is not recorded, but Pepper's retribution against the local populace found its way to the pages of his diary. "The poor people look surprised and begged us not to touch their scanty commissariat. Sherman's order was to forage liberally off the rich, and it was rigidly observed." Civilians in the route of march seemed more aware of the approaching troops, as the 22nd Wisconsin found out when they broke ranks at a place called Social Circle for a meal. News of Sherman's men reached that place the night before, and the soldiers found no rail cars and very few people upon their arrival. Foraging was good in this land of empty homes, and the men brought in "literally everything" they could lay their hands upon. That night, the 22nd went into camp on the plantation of a Mr. Jones, reputedly a former member of Congress from Georgia, yet the

²²⁹ Sharland, *Knapsack Notes*, November 17th, 1864.

owner failed to properly greet the men of the Federal Army; Mr. Jones fled his 2,000 acre plantation at their approach, telling his overseer that “it would not do for him to remain at home, as he had made too many speeches against the North when in Congress.” The freshly harvested crops of 1864, apparently a banner year for the congressman, did not last the night. Several of Mr. Jones’ slaves also joined the column that night, causing G. S. Bradley to assume that “they had worked long enough for Mr. Jones.”²³⁰

When the 64th Illinois caught sight of their foragers waiting to rejoin the regiment at a crossroads, the men struck a humorous chord for their comrades. By the side of the road was a parade of every possible type of vehicle and means of conveyance the ingenious parties could find. “Some could be seen with splendid horses, attached to silver mounted carriages and harness, driving in aristocratic style, the results of their adventure; some with light vehicles or buggies, driving like fast young men, with mules attached; others, not so fortunate as to secure horses or mules, get ropes and thereby attach steers, and even cows to buggies and carts, being the works and style of the olden time.” The author even saw wagons and carriages pulled by former slaves, offered their liberty for pulling wagons of food to the army.²³¹

The narrative of the campaign continued much the same day in and day out as the men made progress toward the coast. On November 19th, John Gay and the 25th Iowa crossed the Ocmulgee River near some “fine factories” that the river powered. Those “fine factories” made a fine fire, destroyed as an asset to the Confederacy, but only after any cloth on hand was distributed to the “great number” of female workers present. Ohioan George

²³⁰ Captain George W. Pepper, *Personal Recollections of Sherman’s Campaigns in Georgia and the Carolinas* (Zanesville, OH: Hugh Dunne, 1866) page 240; Bradley, 184-185.

²³¹ Sharland, *Knapsack Notes*.

Pepper's men marched through "one of the best sections" of Georgia yet encountered. "The soil is one of great fertility – the surface gently undulating; Jackson is the county seat. . . . The country around it, is one delightful, wide-spread plain, studded with an occasional rich planter's residence." The presence of several plantations provided Allen Geer of the 20th Illinois the chance to deal with the boredom of marching; Geer began foraging books from the libraries of houses he passed along the road, although he didn't always get to enjoy them. On the 20th, Geer mentions retrieving several volumes from local homes, but he soon lost them "through the agency of Capt. Raymond who is always around on the road." While Geer did not mention any punishment other than the loss of his entertainment, it appears that his officers wanted their men to keep their foraging activities restrained to the letter of their orders.²³²

To Alexander Downing, those plantations were a wealth of agricultural production ripe for the picking; foraging provided a much more important source of food than ever before, because on November 20th for he mentioned the first time that he and his fellow soldiers were on reduced rations. W. B. Emmons of the 34th Illinois echoed much the same tone about rations. How was it that in this land of plenty, these men complained of the lack of food? Word choice was important in these cases. The men did not complain about a lack of food, but rather the lack of militarily issued rations. As the soldiers themselves stated, food abounded throughout this early portion of the campaign. Military rations, however, filled a void in the types of food mentioned in diaries and letters. Coffee, sugar, and hard tack, the army's form of bread issued on campaign, irreplaceable through foraging, had long acted as the mainstay of the army diet. As such, William Tecumseh Sherman ordered that his

²³² John Gay diary, cited in Meyer, 395; Pepper, 240-241; Geer, 177.

army carry twenty days' rations in wagons for the Savannah Campaign. In addition to the prepared rations transported in the wagon trains, Sherman's men also drove a herd of 3,400 cattle at the rear of the column. These essentially emergency rations provided security in the event that food somehow failed to materialize in necessary quantities, or in the case that Confederate resistance slowed the march to the extent that foraging failed to supply the needs of the army. Cut off from any form of immediate resupply and reliant on the land to feed his army, Sherman planned a layer of safety against the worst case scenario.²³³

George Sharland documented not only the seizure of food from plantations and farms in the path of Sherman's men, he also noted an important form of devastation visited upon any place where the army actually halted. While food provided fuel for the inner man, men needed other fuel with which to cook their captured groceries. Any piece of wood within reach of the army became fair game, and fences provided the easiest form of firewood for an army on the march. As Sharland saw it,

Fancy to yourself a large and wealthy plantation, surrounded and divided off with well constructed fences, for a mile or two in every direction, in the brief space of five minutes, cleared of everything, and present nothing but the appearance of a vast uncultivated plain, and yet such is the fact. For as soon as each regiment ascertains the whereabouts of its color line, two or three from each company can be seen rushing in wild haste in every direction of the camp to the fences, and piling up each for their respective companies; and as soon as they have stacked arms, each man instantly put off for his share—all presenting the appearance of rail brigades and divisions. The planters dread to see them more in this aspect of their warfare than any other, as it entirely cuts off their hopes for the prospect of a next year's crop, but such is the dreaded fortunes of war.²³⁴

²³³ Downing, 230; Emmons, diary entry for November 20, 1864; J. Britt McCarley, "Feeding Billy Yank: Union Rations Between 1861 and 1865" *Quartermaster Professional Bulletin*, December, 1998, http://www.qmfound.com/feeding_billy_yank.htm; Sherman, *Memoirs*, 684.

²³⁴ Sharland, *Knapsack Notes*.

Once the soldier procured firewood, the men raced for water and straw or other bedding material, stripping the farm or plantation in question of every usable agricultural asset within reach. The devastation of property could be total.

Every day, the column moved forward, sweeping over the roads of central Georgia, marching relatively unopposed through one of the last untouched regions of the Confederacy. Allen Geer finally found a plantation where he “secured” a few volumes to help pass the boredom of the campaign without the interference of an officer. The Harris plantation, Geer’s lending library of choice on November 21st, provided a mixed reading list for the traveling soldier; “Cogan on the passions, Loomis on the Elements of Geology, & The Devil on two sticks.” Whether Geer’s personal tastes ran the gamut from religion to science and cultural satire is unknown, but it is certain that in his case, the inner man was just as nourished as the physical man.²³⁵

For Rev. G. S. Bradley, property of another kind continued to enrich the lives of the men on the march. Slaves from the plantations through which the army passed continuously brought in the horses and mules under their care. Ordered by their masters to hide the animals in the local swamps, the slaves chose to liberate themselves with the animals and join the Union Army, and the assistance rendered to the army extended beyond just bringing in horses. As the Reverend saw it, “The feeling is almost universal among them to fall into our army. They all seem to have the idea that we are down here to set them at liberty, or that the war is in behalf of the blacks. They very readily tell us where anything is concealed, and

²³⁵ Geer, 177.

seem well pleased when we find various articles.” In an area “more productive than any other we have seen,” such help ensured full forage wagons for Sherman and his army.²³⁶

As the march continued on, an absence began to bother one Wisconsin officer. His men never found garden vegetables during their foraging, nor did any other foraging party bring them in to the column for distribution. Many plantations showed the evidence of a large amount of money and labor spent on landscaping and flowers, “but hardly a specimen could be found of such articles as beans, peas, carrots, lettuce, cellery, parsnips culliflowers or anything with which the gardens in the north abound. Even onions could seldom be found but garlic grew wild in the fields. Even the poorer class of the white people were to[o] lazy to raise such things. At the best they would have a little patch of corn, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and gourds.” Otto did grant some leniency to economically poor farmers in the path of Sherman’s army, noting that they tended to occupy less productive sections. Lack of vegetables failed to bother another soldier. George Pepper saw these plantations as islands of beauty and tranquility in an otherwise uncivilized land. “The squalid, poverty and extreme misery apparent elsewhere and so irksome to a benevolent mind, does not exist here.”²³⁷

Vegetable production was not the only critique Otto had for the Southern means of agricultural production he now witnessed in an area untouched by the ravages of an army on the march. Marching through Georgia, Otto noticed very little wheat flour; corn meal instead marked the cereal staple of the Southern staple. Perhaps the most wasteful form of production that he saw was open-field grazing.

²³⁶ Bradley, 187-188. W. B. Emmons’ diary entry of the November 27th mirrors Bradley’s words almost exactly when describing the foraging in the swamps of the Oconee River.

²³⁷ Otto, 297; Pepper, 241.

If they wanted fresh meat or a beefsteak they saddled the horses and went a beast. Their stock was all and allways running at large. They were branded with the owners mark or name and they had to hunt until one of the right mark was found. Many did not even know how many cattle they had. The pasture ground was seldom enclosed, nor was any hay made as the Cattle were outdoors and found their living all the year round. They did not care much for milk and butter, but some would keep a milch cow in a pasture near home.

In the eyes of at least one Midwesterner, Southern agriculture seemed inefficient and slovenly, more content with impressive show than substance.²³⁸

The agricultural gleanings following the harvest of 1864 continued to richly feed the Federal army. On November 23rd, Allen Geer described a rather idyllic scene. Encamped near Gordonsville, Geer dined on “Molasses, Fresh Pork, & Sweet Yams” before spending the evening reading. Sweet potatoes were indeed easy pickings for the men of the 20th Illinois, as they camped that evening on a plantation with “several thousand bushels” of the crop in storage. W. B. Emmons of the 34th Illinois judged that the land which he and his comrades now camped near Milledgeville was “the best Country we have seen in the Confederacy.” But Alexander Downing of the 11th Iowa noted a change in the country during that day’s march. Sherman’s army began to enter the piney woods region of Georgia, and the transition marked one of the most commented geographic changes among the diarists in blue. While the Iowan still noted the presence of “some very fine plantations,” the environment itself became more heavily wooded with pitch pine, a feature that would heavily influence the coming days of the campaign.²³⁹

²³⁸ Otto, 297-298. Otto’s discussion of farm management is interesting in the fact that most states still allowed open-field grazing prior to the Civil War. Perhaps Otto’s critique lays in the scope and size of plantation grazing as opposed to small farm livestock management more common to the upper Midwest.

²³⁹ Geer, 178; Emmons diary, entry for November 23, 1864; Downing, 231.

As the country turned to pine woods, the topography became more uneven and many began to note the sandier composition of the soil. One member of the 22nd Wisconsin wrote in his journal that “The soil must be rather poor through here, judging from the amount of sand it contains.” The sandy soil also struck George Sharland’s imagination, but from an anonymous source he learned that the ground here was in fact productive and in fact preferred to the “low and dismal swamps” that more and more occupied the lowlands.²⁴⁰

Sharland’s “low and dismal” description of the swamps was very nearly applied by George Pepper to the civilians he met along the path of the march. The Ohioan did not hold the yeomanry of the state of Georgia in high esteem, and his post-war publication reflected his opinions rather openly. “The people in this section are horribly ignorant. The poor whites are the most illiterate and depraved creatures I ever saw – mentally and morally. I don’t remember of ever having seen their equal.” Pepper, whose earlier writing gave high praise to the taste and grand style of the plantation class, lambasted the common citizens of Georgia for their perceived lack of religion and education. His journal repeated tales of women who could not say the ages of their children, families who seemed to lack any religion at all, and were ignorant of modern styles in clothing and manners. When compared to the people of Western Europe, Pepper’s contempt ran deep. “Edmund Kirke, in his work entitled “Down in Tennessee,” avers that the ignorance of the poor whites in the South is not so deep-seated and universal as that of the Irish and Dutch. I must express my surprise and indignation at such an avowal. I have seen the poorest, the most degraded subjects of Europe, and I must pronounce them superior to the imbecile looking creatures who eke out a miserable existence in the canebrakes of the Cotton States.” Pepper’s stinging damnation of

²⁴⁰ Bradley, 193; Sharland, *Knapsack Notes*.

the Southern populace was not universal; in fact, few soldiers recorded anything of the people they interacted with, save an occasional interesting conversation. In many ways, the civilian unlucky enough to live in the path of Sherman's men merely provided a temporary obstacle that only slightly impeded the ability of foraging parties to efficiently do their jobs. Few men even took the time to mention any interactions they had with those people unlucky enough to come in contact with the army.²⁴¹

The men of Sherman's command now passed closer to the region around the Oconee River, and Charles Wills began to encounter new and unfamiliar plant life, noting in his diary on November 26 that he was "sure he saw palm leaf fan material growing." The next day, Wills mentioned a magnolia tree growing along the route of march, "the first I have seen in Georgia." G. S. Bradley took a decidedly judgmental tone in his journal the same day. "I should dislike living in this part of Georgia very much indeed," the Reverend declared. While the country was well timbered, perhaps reminding him of parts of Wisconsin, the soil was substandard to him. Environmental concerns aside, Bradley found the area around the Oconee "extremely lonesome." The army encountered far fewer men in this portion of Georgia due to military service, and even male slaves were scarcer, conscripted into Confederate service in various capacities. So few men were to be found in this part of the state that "women have the most work to do," according to the minister. Unfortunately, the gentleman left no account of his thoughts on how well the women here were able to maintain their farms in the absence of those traditionally charged with agricultural production. Despite

²⁴¹ Pepper, 242-243.

being forced to walk through the numerous swamps, the 34th Illinois enjoyed “splendid” health and were in “fine spirits . . . eating up the produce that the Rebel Army stands so much in need of.”²⁴²

By November 29 the piney woods section of Georgia grew denser, materially changing the tone of many soldier’s diaries. Despite the fact that Charles Wills of the 103rd Illinois saw his first sugar cane farm, the pine forest played heavily on his mind. “All day in an awful pine forest, hardly broken by fence or clearing. I never saw such a lonesome place. Not a bird, not a sign of animal life, but the shrill notes of the tree frog. Not a twig of undergrowth, and no vegetable life but the grass and pitch pine. The country is very level and a sand bed. The pine trees are so thick on the ground that in some places we passed today the sight was walled in by pine trunks within 600 yards for nearly the whole circle.” Thankfully, the army was still able to bring in adequate forage even with the dramatic change in the environment. The 11th Iowa drew only forty percent of their normal rations, but “the country still affords additional rations, such as potatoes and pork.” Dr. John Hostetter, surgeon for the 34th Illinois Infantry, enjoyed the same type of forage that night, dining chiefly on “sweet potatoes, corncakes, pork, coffee and syrup.”²⁴³

As the blue-clad army pushed through the piney woods closer to the coast, interactions with civilians also changed, or perhaps became more notable in this seemingly sparsely populated region. As Alexander Downing wrote in his journal on November 30, farm houses were fewer in number, and those that stood in the path of the army represented a lower economic class than those farms and plantations found in the “good land” regions

²⁴² Wills, 327; Bradley, 195; Emmons Diary, November 27, 1864.

²⁴³ Wills, 328; Downing, 233; Dr. John L. Hostetter diary, entry for November 29, 1864. Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

found south of Atlanta. Those small farms that Downing saw consisted of crude log structures, possibly reminiscent of his youth in pioneer Iowa. As with other diarists, Downing only mentioned seeing “poor women and children” occupying these farms, as any men and boys old enough to fight served in the Confederate Army. Charles Wills spent a period of time talking to a German-born farmer, from whom he learned that the army now marched through an area whose main cash crop was sugar. Allen Geer took time off from his reading when rumors began to circulate about a group of foragers finding a large cache of gold hidden in the swamps; as he put it, “The people hide many valuables but they are generally found by our Wide a Wakes.”²⁴⁴

On November 30, W. B. Emmons recorded a lengthy conversation he had with an elderly Georgia woman in Louisville. The weather struck Emmons as nice as an Illinois spring day, one where he and his friends spent a good deal of time eating persimmons, sweetened by the November frosts. Peering into a slave cabin, Emmons found several displaced books left by other foragers, including a copy of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The soldier set about finding the mistress of the plantation, who was in another of the slave cabins, reduced to parching corn with the help of two female slaves. “I told the old lady that as our soldiers were helping themselves to any thing that they wanted on her grounds that I wanted the book Milton but would not take it without her free consent,” the young man wrote. The “old dame” consented, but not without lamenting the loss of some antique family china and wishing that the Federals would leave her alone and “go home.” Emmons took this as an open invitation to discuss the merits of the war, perhaps goading her into further conversation. Emmons proclaimed that the war was “for the restoration of the Union and

²⁴⁴ Downing, 233; Wills, 329; Geer, 179.

until that is accomplished it will go on.” The two verbal combatants sparred back and forth, one backing the United States and the Federal government, the other arguing that the country as it existed before the war could never exist again, and the only way the war would end was when “all the Southern men were killed and crippled up.” The sight of the elderly mistress sitting before the first struck hard at Emmons’ heart, and he soliloquized about the actions of his fellow soldiers during the past two weeks.

[S]he went on parching corn poor Old Soul. She had been wealthy by all appearances but now the fortune of war forces her to parch corn. I suppose our stragglers had taken all the provisions from her. it is outrageous and against Gen Shermans orders but it is an evil that can hardly be stopped even by our Gen for we are living off the country. we do not draw enough from our Quartermasters to keep us going and if we do not do some private foraging we would soon be reduced to starvation. But there are hundreds of men in the Army that because they have a chance to look about for something to eat go it like a pack of thieves take money! watches! silver ware! finery! silk dresses! ribbons! womans and childrens clothing, insult white women! and go far beyond the bounds of human decency.

Foraging had its limits, and for men like Emmons, the raucous nature of the March to the Sea began to border on robbery and cruelty in some cases.

On December 1st the 21st Wisconsin moved into the transitional environment of the Piney Woods. John Henry Otto took great interest in the changing nature of the landscape, noting the agricultural shift from upland crops like corn and cotton to the coastal crops of rice and sugar cane. The new forest also piqued his curiosity. “With the country the vegetation changes in general. The sturdy, tall whitewood, beach, soft maple and Chestnut give room for the live oak, red cedar, Cypress, magnolia and Palmetto. The swamps are covered with tropical vegetation, so dense that not even a cat would find room for passage.” Most impressive to the Wisconsin soldier were the pitch pines that now dominated the

environment. The pines made for “excellent firewood,” but the smoky fires they created put off so much soot that they made “the whitest man into a nigger in less than no time and, what is the best of it, no amount of water” could clean the clinging soot from anyone so covered.²⁴⁵

Not everyone was charmed by the changing environment as they approached the Atlantic coast. Charles Wills wrote of the new landscape around him on December 1st. Wills seemed drawn to the presence of swamp palmetto and palmetto trees, but his men found the presence of another type of plant life rather threatening from previous experience. As they marched closer to the coast, Spanish moss began to sway from the branches overhead. It reminded the men of their time along the Black River in Mississippi during the summer of 1863. “The men shake their heads when they see it and say, ‘Here’s your ager,’” in reference to the likelihood of the fevers, disease, and illness found more commonly in the near-tropical climate. Reverend G. S. Bradley agreed with the men of the 103rd Illinois; his diary noted that the march through the swamps already told on the health of the men in his Wisconsin regiment with many men already coughing and showing signs of growing sickness.²⁴⁶

The army still foraged and camped at farms along their route of march. One provided a humorous incident for Major Wills. As he finished some paperwork at the end of the day, he overheard a captain talking of his men’s action that day. “I heard Captain Smith say, ‘Our folks captured one Rebel ram.’ I asked him where, and he pointed out an old he sheep, one of the men had just brought in.” The 22nd Wisconsin passed through a seemingly deserted

²⁴⁵ Otto, 301.

²⁴⁶ Wills, 330; Bradley, 200.

land, passing farms devoid of all but slaves. The regimental chaplain thought that word reached the people of this section in such time that allowed them to escape the army.²⁴⁷

George Sharland and the 64th Illinois encamped on December 1st near the plantation of one Mr. Jones who was not present to greet the Federal force, perhaps, as Sharland noted, because he was a member of the Confederate Congress, and as such felt that his future looked brighter in another place. The plantation, well maintained and effectively farmed, gave a great spectacle to the men of the Midwest unaccustomed to such sights. “It was three stories high with a square roof, while in the center of the same was a square enclosure surrounded with a balustrade, thereby enabling the owner to enjoy a full and extensive view of his broad possessions. The whole design forming a correct expression of genuine aristocratic proclivities.” The agricultural spoils were just as great as the manor house they were meant to supply. The smokehouse held choice cuts of pork that could not survive the quick work of the foragers, and an older slave placed in charge of hiding the plantation’s work stock came in and turned the horses and mules over to the Federals, “proving his genuine loyalty,” as Sharland noted. The home of a Confederate legislator paid a heavy toll at the hands of the invading army. Sharland wrote that the men of Sherman’s grand army caused the plantation to pay dearly for the insurrection of its owner, one that would teach a “silent lesson” for years to come for the owners’ role in plunging the nation into civil war. The people of the South who wanted war and secession “must expect terrible results” from the men charged with putting down rebellion.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Wills, 329; Bradley, 201.

²⁴⁸ Sharland, *Knapsack Notes*.

December 2 found John Gay and the 25th Iowa marching with the course of the Ogeechee River, although Gay mentioned that their progress was slow due to the cypress swamps. The swampy ground forced the army to corduroy the road as they advanced, laying down trees into the road bed so as to make a passable surface. Because of the work in the swamps, the 25th Iowa only marched six miles that day. Allen Geer did not note the length of his march that day spent guarding the wagons at the rear of the column, but he did stay at the same plantation that George Sharland wrote of the previous day. While Geer failed to mention the results of that day's foraging, once again he dabbled in the literary arts to his fiscal and moral satisfaction, thanks to Mr. Jones. "Sold American Female Poets. Read S[w]edenburg's Heaven & Hell." For Jefferson Moses of the 93rd Illinois, the only thing memorable about December 2nd was that he drew government rations for dinner, a half ration of hardtack and sugar. The countryside still afforded foraging parties the opportunity to find more than enough meat to satisfy the needs of the men. Indeed, even Dr. John Hostetter of the 34th Illinois commented on the broad nature of the farm operations he witnessed that day. "The great wonder is the plenty found through this region. Corn, wheat, rice, hops, sheep, molasses and sweet potatoes are abundant on every plantation. Cotton here is grown on every plantation and it is not uncommon to see fifty acres and more in one field." Dr. Hostetter enjoyed a rather easy day while his regiment guarded a local crossroads; truly his main concern seemed to be commenting on the evening meal of "fresh pork, fried; sweet potatoes, boiled; baked flapjacks, syrup and coffee." The lack of china to dine from seemed to bother the physician, as he even took the time to comment on having to use tin for his meal service.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ Gay, cited in Meyer, 396; Geer, 180; Jefferson Moses diary, <http://www.ioweb.com/civilwar/>; Hostetter

The increased presence of sugar cane plantations itself created a situation both comical and problematic to the health of the men. On December 3rd, John Otto wrote that some of his men began to suffer the ill effects of too much raw sugar consumption. His men witnessed several slaves at work in the field who consumed raw cane sugar from the plant when in need of a break. “The darkies cut of[f] a stalk, peel of[f] the rind and chew the marrow. The men soon followed their Exemple and as the stuff is of pleasant taste indulged freely therein.” Unfortunately the men under Otto’s command, the saccharin treat created gastrointestinal distress. Too much sugar caused men’s bowels to loosen, and several hours after they indulged in their sweet snack, the men often had to break ranks and find a place to relieve themselves. “After a few hours it was amusing to observe how anxiously the men would dodge aside in the woods or swamps which was the cause of much joking and merriment.” The day was a pleasant one, as far as the diarists contended; Jefferson Moses avoided the sugar cane but supped on sweet potatoes brought in by foragers, and Allen Morgan Geer wrote “In foraging we find plenty, we see much, and in fact enjoy the campaign hugely.”²⁵⁰

Rev. G. S. Bradley conversed that day with an overseer on the plantation where he stopped to feed his horse. Feeding the animal directly from a corn crib, the overseer told the minister that prior to the arrival of Sherman’s army, his plantation possessed approximately 3500 bushels of corn produced in that year’s crop “worth about \$8,00 per bushel;” by the time the Federal army finished passing by, the cribs would be empty. “The overseer remarked, that the women and children of the country must suffer very much after we go

diary, entry for December 2, 1864.

²⁵⁰ Otto, 306; Moses diary; Geer, 180.

away.” Bradley also learned from the overseer that “The Confederate government calls for a tenth of all they raise. What would our northern farmers think to be thus taxed?”²⁵¹

The army’s foragers varied in their results on December 4th. For the 103rd Illinois, the day was marked by an easy passage over good roads and the presence of vast quantities of sweet potatoes, “from 75 to 500 bushels” per farm. Alexander Downing of the 11th Iowa found examples of some excellent farms as he marched that day. “Good crops were raised the past season, the work having been done by old men and negro women.” Unfortunately for Albert Utterback and the 9th Iowa, foraging proved an empty activity after he finished guarding a local home. The 22nd Wisconsin received news about the fate of a group of unlucky foragers that afternoon. “A few days ago, four men of the 55th Ohio were found hanging by their necks in the woods, with a piece of paper attached to one of them, stating that the hanging was done by members of company F, 21st Georgia.”²⁵²

The 64th Illinois received a welcome gift from an unsuspecting Georgia farmer on the 4th akin to Allen Geer’s practices during the march. While stopped in the afternoon at an abandoned farmstead, the men of the regiment found a large stash of old newspapers which quickly passed from soldier to soldier, hungry for a taste of civilian life. The treat did not last very long, as George Sharland remembered; “. . . the idea of being treated to a feast of reading matter is out of the question, as the necessity of timely reaching our distant camps is of more importance . . .” The men reached their night’s camp near Cameron Station in the late afternoon, only to discover a herd of hogs nearby. Within short order, the men dispatched the unlucky swine, and fresh pork filled the menu that night, which Sharland and

²⁵¹ Bradley, 202.

²⁵² Wills, 331; Downing, 234; Utterback diary, cited in Meyer, *Iowa Valor*, 399; Bradley, 205.

his comrades enjoyed “squatting around nature’s table in true and genuine Chinaman style.”²⁵³

John Hostetter of the 34th Illinois spent December 4th marveling at never before seen oddities. The first discovery of note was “a kind of small tuber, somewhat less in size than a peanut. . . . The negroes call them grass nuts or chufusco.” Hostetter also handled a piece of alligator leather. The discovery of greatest comment, however, was a rice-hulling machine. Designed to clean rice after threshing, the machine featured “four tilthammers of square wood, in a mortar made of blocks” on a crank system. While Hostetter failed to mention the mode of power used to operate the crank system, machines such as this rice huller would soon play a vital role in feeding the men of Sherman’s army.²⁵⁴

On December 5th, Charles Wills wrote of an encounter with several slaves. During the afternoon, “Negroes swarmed” the 103rd Illinois. “I saw one squad of 30 or 40 turned back. Sherman’s order is not to let any more go with us than we can use and feed.” Later, after sunset, a young slave girl came into camp. Earlier that day, the girl showed Federal soldiers where her mistress ordered the plantation’s work stock hidden. In return, Milly Drake, the slave owner and plantation mistress, “took half a rail and like to wore the wench out. Broke her arm and bruised her shamefully.” The unnamed slave waited until dark and looked to the Federal column for her freedom. Her fate once inside Union lines remained unclear. G. S. Bradley of the 22nd Wisconsin told of a conversation that day with a slave who aided three Union cavalymen from Stoneman’s failed raid earlier that year. The man sheltered and fed the men for several weeks before guiding them out of the area. When Bradley asked the man

²⁵³ Sharland, “Knapsack Notes,” entry for December 4, 1864.

²⁵⁴ Dr. John L. Hostetter diary, entry for December 4, 1864.

why the slaves of Georgia so willingly aided the men of the Union Army, the slave replied, "O," said he, "I knew that they were trying to set us free, and I was not afraid of them."²⁵⁵

On December 6th, W. B. Emmons of the 34th Illinois got word of a tragic incident. A farmer shot a soldier in the process of foraging, and the army wrought swift retribution upon the farmer's property. While the man who pulled the trigger eluded the grasp of a vengeful army, Emmons recorded that soldiers removed the family from their home and promptly burned the property. To Emmons, Georgia at times was a world on fire. "Our men burn all cotton gins and presses that have cotton in them day after day as the Column marches along the road we see the smoke and flames from the burning buildings we started. Oftimes we can feel the heat of the fires as we march past, the buildings are so close to the road." Fear spread ahead of the oncoming column, and Emmons wrote that "the citizens hide their effects in the swamps or bury them to keep the hated Yanks from getting them out[.]" A diarist in the 22nd Wisconsin also noted the wrath with which Sherman's army sometimes acted. The force stripped the land of anything of value for a width of forty miles along the route of march. "No one, without being here, can form a proper idea of the devastation that will be found in our track. Thousands of families will have their homes laid in ashes, and they themselves will be turned beggars into the street. We have literally carried fire and sword into this once proud and defiant State."²⁵⁶

By December 8th, rations began to play a more important role in the campaign. The 20th Illinois found plenty of supplemental food that day, and Allen Geer's foraging party

²⁵⁵ Wills, 332; Bradley, 205.

²⁵⁶ W. B. Emmons diary, entry for December 6th; Bradley, 207. Emmons is unclear as to what regiment the soldier belonged to; the possibility remains that a member of the 34th Illinois may have been the victim of the shooting.

brought in “flour bacon pickled port fresh pork and molasses,” as well as a the usual selection of books that Geer always kept an eye out for. However, the men also drew five days’ worth of rations that day, including “one pound hard tack to the man.” Alexander Downing and the 11th Iowa received two days’ rations, with instructions to make them last for five days. As the army continued further into an area dedicated to rice production and dominated by swamps, foraging opportunities began to disappear.²⁵⁷

W. B. Emmons noted on December 9th that he witnessed very little cultivation where he passed, and the men were forced to use the swamp water for drinking and cooking, “which is very bad stuff.” George Sharland wrote that foraging, in the terminology of his comrades, was “played out.” After spending nearly a month living off the fat of the land, the men now faced short rations and little relief from the land. Foraging parties searched longer and more intensively for decreased amounts of food. In the Piney Woods region and the swamps near the rice plantations, the men turned in desperation to stalking loose cattle. Under orders not to shoot animals, and painfully aware of the closer presence of the enemy, men became creative in the methods they used to dispatch their bovine adversaries. Sharland described one strategy:

Having a very wild and untractable heifer to secure, they surrounded it, and gradually narrowing the circle down to a small diameter, they made a plunge for its tail, which often turns out, not a very safe undertaking. One of the number having secured it, clings to it with all the muscular strength he has to spare; the heifer in the meantime making desperate plunges to extricate herself; but others jumping in, secure the same hold, and pull in an opposite direction with all their might having by these means considerably retarded her progress; another jumped in and secured her by the horns, while the executioner with the axe, struck the fatal blow but it often turns out that the adventures get a little

²⁵⁷ Geer, 181; Downing, 235.

worsted, and can be seen sprawling on the ground in near proximity, while the poor animals make good their retreat, to elude if possible, further pursuit.

The men used a similar manner to trap and deal with hogs. While a certain amount of levity surely ensued in such an act, it was actually an act of desperation, a struggle to feed Sherman's men as they passed through an area that offered little to eat.²⁵⁸

If free-ranging cattle were unavailable, and with all other forms of foraging “played out,” Sherman's commissary began to issue what rations were available. George Sharland claimed that after December 9th, no hard tack remained for issue, and that the 64th Illinois only received coffee. M. D. Gage of the 12th Indiana merely claimed that the men of his regiment were issued reduced rations. To alleviate the situation, the army began to issue fresh beef, culled from the herd brought along on the hoof from Atlanta, as well as the rice found locally. Army beef, as Sharland wrote shortly after the war, provided an exercise in chewing. These cattle “have been driven on foot from the Ohio river to the coast, at all hours and under all circumstances, by night and by day, through streams, swamps, bogs, quagmires, woods, and dense bush, with scarcely anything to eat but what they could pick up by the way, and huddled together in big droves and placed in all conceivable circumstances, that by the time it is issued to the rank and file, most of the flesh has disappeared from the bones, leaving nothing but the frame work or structure to be issued to the troops—the very smell of it sometimes proving very disagreeable to one's olfactories.” For those accustomed to army rations as well as the bounty afforded by foraging, bony, worn-out livestock with

²⁵⁸ Emmons' diary, entry for December 9, 1864; Sharland, entry for December 9, 1864.

nearly a thousand miles under their feet proved poor fare. Hunger made the option acceptable to the discerning palate.²⁵⁹

Despite Dr. Hostetter's earlier description of a rice hulling machine, the army issued unhulled rice to the troops. Expedience required issues of food as it became available to the men, and in the swamps surrounding Savannah, rice became the cereal of necessity. The men attempted various means to separate the rice grain from the hull. George Sharland recorded that some groups of men constructed mortars and pestles to clean the grains, a technique learned from local slaves. On December 11th, Captain John Otto of the 21st Wisconsin described the threshing and cleaning process as he witnessed it. The 20th Corps provided the means for threshing the rice after capturing a threshing mill on an island outside of Savannah. Otto noted that some preferred to use mortar and pestle, which also relied upon fanning the rice away from the chaff by winnowing, an action familiar to soldiers who farmed before the war and did not have access to a fanning mill. "In this operation we usually had to raise the wind, which was done either with the hat, or big fan made from old tent cloth, bags or any kind of rags we could get hold of, stretched on a frame. The stamping and winnowing was repeated until the kernels were free of shells." Others chose to clean and thresh their rice in one operation by placing the grain to be cleaned in a bag and beating the bag against a tree stump or rock. "This process was more slow but no rice was wasted, which could not be avoided in the stamping process." Once cleaned, Otto wrote that the men took their rice "boiled with salt and water we took it with gries, or without, but one becomes

²⁵⁹ Sharland, December 10, 1864; M. D. Gage, *From Vicksburg to Raleigh; or A Complete History of the Twelfth Indiana Volunteer Infantry* (Chicago: Clarke & Co., 1865) page 266.

soon tired of and disgusted with it if eaten three times a day. How the Chinese and Japanese get along with it is more than I can account for . . .”²⁶⁰

John Gay of the 25th Iowa mentioned the rice now issued to the men in their ration, but also noted that oysters were present in abundance, offering a new diversion from army beef and rice. The 34th Illinois seemed to not avail itself of the seafood, as W. B. Emmons only mentioned beef and rice as the main form of sustenance. The “awful swamps” bothered Charles Wills due to the inability to find enough flat, dry ground for his men to sleep at night. As always, Allen Geer defrayed the swampy experiences and poor rations in his usual manner: “Read Richard’s Electron a poem on the power history and uses of electricity.”²⁶¹

The 11th Iowa ran out of rations on December 13th. “. . . no more can be issued until we open up communications with the fleet,” bemoaned one Iowan in the unit. “To do that we shall have to open a way to the coast. Our men have foraged everything to be found. The only thing that we can get now is rice, of which there is a great deal in stacks, besides thousands of bushels threshed out, but not hulled, and stored away in granaries.” The 20th Illinois sent out foragers in a vain attempt to find enough food for the regiment. The party “captured a wagon load of corn & potatoes with two yoke of steers and darky.” The regiment slept well that night after a feast such as that.²⁶²

Despite the fact that Fort McAllister, the Confederate bastion on the coast that prevented Sherman’s resupply from the sea, fell to a Union assault on December 13th, food relief did not immediately begin to flow into the Federal army outside of Savannah. Albert

²⁶⁰ Sharland, December 10: 1864; Otto, 312-313.

²⁶¹ Gay, cited in Meyer, *Iowa Valor*, 396; Emmons, diary entry for December 12, 1864, page 2; Wills, 334-335; Geer, 182.

²⁶² Downing, 237; Geer, 182.

Utterback went to bed the night of the 13th hungry after he failed to receive any form of rations that day while on picket duty. Alexander Downing looked forward to the renewed issue of full rations, delayed by the presence of Confederate torpedoes in the Savannah River. “There is great rejoicing in camp, as we have nothing left but unhulled rice.” W. B. Emmons still lived on rice and beef on the 14th, as well as coffee made with swamp water. Emmons wrote of hulling the rice by putting it in a sock and beating it with a stick to little avail. More noteworthy to him were the thousands of slaves that wove their way into the life of the army after they followed it to freedom. “[I]t appears that the slave women are more anxious to get free of their masters than the males are and many a slave mother has carried her little child in her arms, endured the hunger and hardship of the march to be free.”²⁶³

Relief came to the men of the Military Division of the Mississippi slowly but surely. On December 17, Jefferson Moses of the 93rd Illinois still subsisted on nothing more than rice. “It is very good but still hard tack and sow belly would go much better here.”²⁶⁴ However, as army rations flowed in from the waiting naval vessels of Savannah, the men began to write accounts of the last month of their lives that glossed over the more recent hardships. Frank Malcolm, a sergeant in the 7th Iowa Infantry wrote a letter home that remembered rather glowingly his life of the last thirty days.

We have in the last month passed through a fine country with the Exception of about 3 days travel in the pine swamp and with the exception of four or five days the weather has been beautiful and the Roads good. forage has been plenty and while on the move we lived fine had plenty of frish Beef and Pork Chickens Turkeys Gees & &. in fact “we had all that

²⁶³ Utterback, diary entry for December 14, 1864, cited in Meyer, *Iowa Valor*, 399; Downing, 237; Emmons’ diary, entry for December 14, 1864.

²⁶⁴ Jefferson Moses diary, entry for December 17, 1864.

we wanted to eat had Plenty of Sweet Potatoes Turnips Cabbages corn meal molasses salt sugar && there was a guard stationed at every house & guard all that was inside of it & to protect the women & children but the soldiers were at liberty to take all that they could find out side of the house or on the farm we are now living rather hard but I think we will have plenty in a few days all that we have to eat now is Cornmeal and Beef. we live on mush & fryed beef. I could not care if I could get plenty of coffee but we do not get anything excepting what I have mentioned.²⁶⁵

George Cram wrote his mother on the 18th, extolling the great bounty of food he and his friends fed from. Foraging successfully fed the men as long as the army kept moving; when the army met Confederate resistance before Savannah, food became the one great question for Cram and his comrades. According to the letter, the rice and beef met that so dominated other soldiers' accounts was better than nothing for the men in the 105th Illinois, at least until regular rations could once again make their way from the Navy. Edwin D. Levings of the 12th Wisconsin sent a letter home to his parents the same day wherein he gave an account of his foray into Georgia with Uncle Billy. "We lived off the country almost entirely. We had only 12 days rations hardtack issued to us while on the way and full rations. We took everything we could lay our hands upon and I will say never since I have been a soldier did we fare better, lived like princes in the eating line, flour, meal, rice, fresh pork, chickens, geese, turkeys, honey, fresh beef, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, turnips, sugar and molasses being plenty. But we took all and there is not enough left along the line of our march to save the people from starvation. They must go elsewhere or suffer with hunger."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Frank Malcolm to Eliza Malcolm, December 17, 1864, Frank Malcolm Letters, 1864. Special Collections Department at the University of Iowa Libraries

²⁶⁶, George F. Cram, *Soldiering with Sherman: Civil War Letters of George F. Cram* ed. Jennifer Cain Bohrnstedt (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000) pages 151-152; Edward D. Levings, http://www.soldierstudies.org/index.php?action=view_letter&Letter=588.

Some civilians would indeed “suffer with hunger” in the wake of Sherman’s army. Like locusts, the Union force stripped the land of every useable item in a three hundred mile long swath across the heart of Georgia. For the men of the Midwest, however, the Savannah Campaign proved to be almost a non-event. For those soldiers who bothered picking up their pen at the end of the days’ march, their diaries reflect the bounty of the land that entered their camps in the forager’s wagon. Some found a new environment to study, enamored with the palmettos and magnolia trees of coastal Georgia that complimented the well-groomed plantations and tasteful architecture found during the early days after leaving Atlanta. Many men took the time to praise the “good land” they saw around them in those opening days of the campaign; with the eye of a farmer or those used to the agricultural landscape of the Midwest, these soldiers admired the well-cultivated larger farms that showed an organized effort to tend the land in an efficient manner. But this was not truly the pleasure excursion that Charles Wills spoke of shortly after leaving the wastes of Atlanta. Sherman’s Savannah Campaign proved to the dying Confederacy that it was useless to resist the might of the Federal government and its armies in the field.

The March to the Sea was over. Behind Sherman’s army lay the ravaged landscape of Georgia. After a short period of rest and refitting in Savannah, the men turned north, their gaze set on South Carolina, where the army truly came to perfect the role of punitive foraging. The fate of the seat of secession and war mattered little for the civilians left in the wake of Sherman’s army. For them, the narrative of the previous month was not one marked by feasting and pleasure. Instead, theirs was a tale of survival in the face of an oncoming army.

Chapter Five:

Those Who Remained Behind: The Women of Rural Georgia and the March to the Sea

When William Tecumseh Sherman's men swept southeastward from Atlanta, they found an agricultural land untouched by war, but that land was not uninhabited. Thousands of small farms and plantations lay directly in the path of the Union Army as it snaked its way towards Savannah. While the male population of Georgia early on had flocked to the colors and enlisted to fight for the Confederacy and later faced conscription to maintain the armies in the field, the women of the South remained behind to manage their family farms and plantations to the best of their ability, thrust into unfamiliar roles by the necessities of war.

Unfortunately, the women of Georgia's farms and plantations did not leave as expansive a record of their experiences with the invaders as did those who lived in Georgia's small towns and cities. The wealthy plantation class contributed most if not all of the written accounts available to the historian today. The voice of the yeoman's wife is lost, unfortunately. As such, the civilian accounts of the March to the Sea are heavily skewed toward the upper-class experience; these accounts are skewed even further by the relative distance between when the women who endured Sherman's campaign first set pen to paper, and when they were edited and published. Later generations must sift for the truth through the invocation of the Lost Cause mythos. For example, Julian Street edited Dolly Lunt Burge's diary and published it in 1918, in the midst of the First World War. Street's introduction to the text invokes the Rape of Belgium as a comparison for the Savannah

Campaign.²⁶⁷ Other works cited herein saw publication between 1906 and the middle of the twentieth century, often in the works compiled by the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Eliza Frances Andrews' tale of refugee life in the face of Sherman's army begins with a lengthy defense of the Old South as pure and almost holy state, the last bastion of culture and social bearing before the descent into wage slavery and corporate oligarchy, a place noted for the presence of "faithful" servants until the army brought social change.²⁶⁸

In November, 1864, these women faced down a threat greater than the loss of labor or the deprivation caused by the Federal blockade. Sherman's grand Military Division of the Mississippi, the great western arm of the Union Army, now descended slowly from the smoldering ruins of Atlanta, its eye set on Savannah and the Atlantic coast. No great Confederate force stood in its path; the Confederate Army of Tennessee marched now in Tennessee on the way to its near destruction at Franklin and Nashville under John Bell Hood. Only a small cavalry force remained, just large enough to pester the flanks of Sherman's army and watch where the Federals went. Rumors moved faster than Sherman's men, and so those women and families with enough prescient knowledge took what actions they could to prepare for the invaders. Fueled by these tales and rumors, Georgia's rural populace struggled to hide their possessions and provisions, all too often in vain. It seemed that only

²⁶⁷ Dolly Lunt Burge, *A Woman's Wartime Journal* ed. Julian Street (New York: The Century Co., 1918) page viii. The women of Georgia appear most often as illustrative examples of the works of Sherman's army. Much of this is due to the nature of the material left by those who encountered the soldiers who marched to the sea. Soldiers rarely lingered in an area more than a few days; as such, there is relatively little prolonged interaction between one civilian and the army. Katherine M. Jones' *When Sherman Came*, the only work that attempts to reconstruct the Savannah Campaign solely through the use of civilian accounts, utilizes this same stylistic model, chronologically arranging the accounts to rebuild the progress of the campaign. This chapter concentrates on those accounts left by women who faced Sherman's army on the farms and plantations of Georgia, rather than in its cities and towns. While there are excellent accounts, and perhaps more prolific accounts, left by urban civilians, this work attempts to delve more deeply into the agricultural impact of Sherman's columns as they coursed through Georgia.

²⁶⁸ Eliza Frances Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1908) "Introduction," *passim*.

luck itself stood between the farm wives and plantation mistresses of Georgia and the utter ruin that followed in the path of the hungry blue army that marched unstoppably toward them.

Dolly Lunt Burge, a thirty-seven year-old widow, lived on a plantation near Covington with her young daughter and approximately one hundred slaves. On November 16, 1864, while traveling from town after she completed some household marketing, Burge encountered two neighbors who asked if she was aware that the Sherman's army was on its way to the area. Burge quickly put the idea aside, and she commented to her diary that more than likely the rumors dealt with a foraging party. As evening approached, she walked to a nearby home to see if there was any more news about the gossip, only to find Joe Perry, the head of the household, preparing to report for Home Guard service.²⁶⁹

Word arrived the next day that shook Burge to her core. Her wishful thoughts of a small Federal foraging party evaporated when the neighbors informed her that in fact "a large force moving very slowly" was headed towards her home. The thoughts "What shall I do?" and "Where go?" dominated Dolly's mind that night. She "[s]lept very little" that night, and every time she went outside and stared at the northern horizon, the bright glare of buildings aflame dominated the skyline.²⁷⁰

The plantation mistress refused to leave her fate in the hands of the oncoming army. Early on the morning of the 18th, Burge took steps to secret away some few provisions in order to survive the coming horde. She ordered two mules taken into hiding to preserve

²⁶⁹ Burge, 16-17.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 17.

some small amount of her work stock. Next, Burge ordered her slaves to disguise a barrel of salt, a precious commodity in the blockaded South, as an ash-leaching barrel used for the manufacture of lye. Finally, she had some of the meat in her smokehouse hidden in an out of the way portion of the grounds and the wagon used disassembled and stashed away as well. With these few steps, Dolly hoped to save something against the worst she thought an army could do. After the men completed her orders, she then set them to the fall plowing, perhaps to disguise any anxiety felt on the plantation, as well as to go about the usual tasks involved in farm maintenance. An army might well be on its way, but life needed to go on once the invader passed.²⁷¹

No sooner were these few tasks completed than she learned the proximity of Sherman's force. Several slaves asked to hide their personal property, especially their mules. Word had spread quickly among the slaves of the nearby plantations that the Federals took all the livestock they found, no matter who claimed ownership. As such, Burge allowed her coachman to take his herd of forty hogs and hide them in a distant swamp on the property. For the rest of the day, life seemed at a standstill. Burge took up some sewing projects, but she reported that most of the slaves on her plantation sat idle in the face of the strange army that hovered in the distance. That distance closed with every hour, as she learned when one of her slaves, returning from an errand to a neighbor, told of encountering two Union foragers who encouraged him to run away. Tension began to build on the Burge plantation.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Ibid, 18.

²⁷² Ibid, 18-19.

November 19th began with an almost palpable sense of foreboding. Dolly Burge slept in her clothes, sure that the Union Army would come in the middle of the night. After breakfast, Burge and her daughter walked to a neighbor's house to see about any news of the Federals. As they talked in the road, the neighbor looked for her husband who hid the night before after portions of the Union force visited the plantation of her in-laws. As the two men emerged from the nearby hiding place, a group of blue-clad soldiers crested a hill. The sight struck terror in Burge's heart, and she ran for her home. As she fled, she heard the two recently hidden men shoot at the oncoming force, only to hear their opposition met with a salvo of Federal guns.²⁷³

Dolly Burge arrived at the front gate of her home at almost the same time as the first Union foragers. She rushed to tell her servants to hide themselves before she went in search of a guard for her home. It was too late, as she recorded the maelstrom that exploded in her front yard. "But like demons they rush in! My yards are full. To my smoke-house, my dairy, pantry, kitchen, and cellar, like famished wolves they come, breaking locks and whatever is in their way. The thousand pounds of meat in my smoke-house is gone in a twinkling, my flour, my meat, my lard, butter, eggs, pickles of various kinds – both in vinegar and brine – wine, jars, and jugs are all gone. My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and fowls, my young pigs, are shot down in my yard and hunted as if they were rebels themselves."²⁷⁴

Burge pleaded to no avail with a nearby officer to stop the hurricane that swept over her home and plantation. Helpless, she saw her horses and mules laden with all that the

²⁷³ Ibid, 20-21.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 22-23.

foragers could take and lead away, followed closely by her young slaves. Burge claimed that the Union soldiers forced her young male slaves to come with them, some at the point of bayonet; at least two boys attempted to hide before they were forced to leave their cabins. Burge lamented the loss of her slaves and railed at the invading army that perpetrated this deed.

They are not friends to the slave. We have never made the poor, cowardly negro fight, and it is strange, passing strange, that the all-powerful Yankee nation with the whole world to back them, their ports open, their armies filled with soldiers from all nations, should at last take the poor negro to help them out against this little Confederacy which was to have been brought back into the Union in sixty days' time! My poor boys! My poor boys! What unknown trials are before you! How you have clung to your mistress and assisted her in every way you knew. Never have I corrected them; a word was sufficient. Never have they known want of any kind. Their parents are with me, and how sadly they lament the loss of their boys. Their cabins are rifled of every valuable, the soldiers swearing that their Sunday clothes were the white people's, and that they never had money to get such things as they had.²⁷⁵

The Federals continued to loot the Burge household, including the slave cabins. Every item of marginal use disappeared, until the plantation's mistress sought permission to bring her possessions, as well as those of her slaves, into her room, the one sanctuary from the storm afforded to her.²⁷⁶

One of the Federal officers that entered Burge's home became a source of comfort. Identified as a Captain Webber, the gentleman took the time to talk with the nearly hysterical woman. After he offered her his personal protection against further action, Captain Webber informed Dolly Burge that he knew her brother back in Illinois. The officer expressed surprise that she had not stored any foodstuffs inside her home in light of the order that

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 25-27.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 27.

forbade entering private homes; Burge stated that such measures had no effect during the raids she suffered through the previous summer. While the officer showed sympathy with her plight, he also took no action to alleviate her condition.²⁷⁷

All day long, Sherman's army trudged past Burge's plantation. Each passing regiment added to the devastation that surrounded the scared woman. Her fences disappeared, torn down for easier access to the gardens and to open easier paths. The army's cattle herd trailed across her land, which added to the destruction of the land itself. As Burge witnessed the passage of the army, she thought that much of the damage was done "wantonly," almost for fun, "when there was no necessity for it."²⁷⁸ Someone attempted to burn the cotton stored in her carriage house; the bales smoldered but failed to ignite, saving the building and everything stored in it. As night finally fell, Dolly Burge found herself crowded into her bedroom with her daughter and several of her slaves. All watched with anticipation for soldiers to set fire to the other buildings on the plantation, an action that failed to occur. Eventually, even the two soldiers that guarded Burge's home came in and laid down for the night in front of her fireplace. Burge could not sleep that night, and she paced the floor and wondered what the future held for her.²⁷⁹

As the sun came up on November 20th, Dolly Burge expected more of the same treatment from the rest of the army. She and those female slaves that sought sanctuary in her room breakfasted on a chicken shot the day before and found in the yard, as well as a few yams. She traded a little breakfast for some coffee, and then those soldiers who encamped on

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 27-29.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 29-30.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 31-32.

the grounds of her plantation departed as a part of the main Federal column. By ten o'clock that morning, no one else attempted to molest Burge's property, and save for one request for a bucket of water, the Southerner reported no other interactions with any of Sherman's men. Dolly traveled to a close friend's home to commiserate about the damage done, an act interrupted by a rising pall of smoke in the direction of her home. Rushing home, Burge surmised that it was the cotton gin of another neighbor down the road. She supped that night with her slaves in one of their cabins. She confided to her journal that she felt "so thankful that I have not been burned out that I have tried to spend the remainder of the day as the Sabbath ought to be spent."²⁸⁰

For the next several days after the departure of the Sherman's army, Burge attempted to return her life to normal. She took a quick inventory of what remained and found several bushels of potatoes, as well as wheat, syrup, and some meat in her smokehouse. To protect these precious commodities, Burge ordered these hidden in her rooms in case some straggling bum came to her home. Thankfully, two forlorn cows from the army's herd strayed on her property, and the two Union cows quickly fell under the knife to restock that which was stolen. Burge shared the meat with some of her neighbors, with whom she also compared losses and celebrated the survival of the men she thought died when Sherman's men first appeared. In the process of reassembling her life, Dolly Lunt Burge, plantation mistress and long unaccustomed to the benefits of all that accompanied that class, traveled by wagon with a load of wheat to a local mill in order to procure flour for her home. "Never did

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 32-35.

I think I would have to go to mill! Such are the changes that come to us!” Indeed, life would never be the same for Burge.²⁸¹

After they departed the Covington area, Sherman’s men continued on their march to Savannah. Soon after they passed Dolly Burge’s plantation, the army entered Jasper County, the home of Louise Caroline Reese Cornwell. Cornwell lived on a plantation near Hillsboro, along with her mother, niece, and two cousins, refugees from Memphis. On the morning that the Federal army came to their farm, a group of Confederate cavalry arrived shortly before their counterparts and asked the family for breakfast. Nervous about the rumored retribution that such an action promised, Cornwell refused them food and begged for them to leave. Just as the rebel horseman left, Union soldiers appeared and gave chase to the Confederates. For the rest of the day, the Union army passed their home, and groups of foragers entered the property in search of food and spoils. The destruction was total. “We had a negro boy who was our dining room servant and hostler. The Yankees made him ride one of the carriage horses off and lead the other. They drove off every cow, sheep, hog, yea, indeed, every living thing on the farm – took every bushel of corn and fodder, oats and wheat – every bee gum, burnt the gin house, screw, blacksmith shop, cotton &c.&c.” According to Louise Cornwell’s account, the family’s slaves never betrayed the location of any secreted goods, unlike stories related to her by friends and neighbors. One slave, an “Uncle Peter,” remained so loyal to the family as to never visit the Federal camps, and assisted the family when he located what food he could after soldiers looted the plantation.²⁸²

²⁸¹ Ibid, 36-41.

²⁸² Louise Caroline Reese Cornwell in Katherine M. Jones, *When Sherman Came: Southern Women and the “Great March”* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964) pages 19-21.

For four days the army passed by the desolate home. A cold front accompanied the Union Army which brought a chill to the air, perhaps made worse by the mental scars of invasion and loss. “We had little fire,” wrote Cornwell, for despite the loyalty of her slaves, “the negroes did not provide wood for us as was their custom.” The Federals destroyed every possible form of transportation, burning the wagons as well as taking the work stock. Every axe and cutting implement departed with the soldiers, and what food remained on the home place “was destroyed by being made unfit to eat.” During the passing of the army, only one momentary pleasure brightened the lives of Cornwell and her family. A band attached to the XVII Corps played “Lorena,” a popular sentimental song of the era. “For a moment we enjoyed it, then looking around, seeing our desolation the thought involuntarily came, ‘This music plays her gayest airs as in mocking of our woe.’”²⁸³

Emma Manley’s trouble with Sherman’s foragers also happened in Jasper County. A resident of Spaulding County, Manley’s parents sent her away to refugee with extended family near Macon because of the Yankee invasion. Manley left home on November 16 with “two large wagons” filled “with edibles, valuables, and comforts.” Emma rode in the family’s phaeton, pulled by a matched pair of prized horses, all intended to make her life in hiding comfortable, as well as to secure the family’s most valuable possessions.²⁸⁴

As the Manley’s procession crossed Jasper County they stopped for lunch near the plantation of a Stephen Johnson. Suddenly, a Union cavalry force appeared on the near horizon; when the travelling group sought refuge with Johnsons they were turned away on the rumor that the Yankees burned out any family that harbored refugees. The cavalrymen

²⁸³ Ibid, 22.

²⁸⁴ Emma Manley in Jones, page 16.

claimed the wagons that carried the family's precious possessions. Emma watched as the silks and fabrics she hoped to carry into hiding suddenly became garish pennants and drapings for the cavalry horses of her captors, as her traveling trunks were rifled for trinkets and trophies of war. Taken to Federal General George Spencer's headquarters, who granted Manley protection in a simple log cabin where she stayed for three days, all the while watching the carnival of destruction around her.²⁸⁵

At the first opportunity, Emma Manley returned home after her captivity. A new, harsh world met her at the gate of her family's home. "We left Sylvan Grove on a warm, bright sunny morning in a handsome turnout and returned in an oxcart on a bitter, cold, icy day, found house standing alone, palings, fences, gin houses, cotton, cows, chickens, horses, mules, everything in the house, except my sister's room, destroyed."²⁸⁶ Only the fact that General Blair, commander of the XVII Corps, used her sister's parlor as his headquarters prevented further damage to the home, although Emma recorded that when the General wished to communicate an order to someone outside the home, he uncouthly kicked out the window panes instead of summoning a courier or aide-de-camp.²⁸⁷ For the next week, Manley's family huddled in the ruined shell of their home. "We sat up by the fire a week and had no bedding and lived on parched and boiled corn and roasted potatoes. Not a dish or cooking vessel was left. Dead carcasses lying all around the house." The pleasant scenes of Manley's youth were now gone, replaced by the true spoils of war.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 17-18.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 18.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 19.

Sue Sample met the XV Corps of Sherman's army on November 30th as it neared the coast and its' goal of Savannah. Semple, originally from Newberry, South Carolina, travelled to Emanuel County, Georgia, to visit her sister-in-law Rachel. A local Confederate cavalry unit, home in search of remounts, left during the day after they visited with relatives and rested. That night, a slave summoned Sample and the other members of the household around nine to find the plantation's yard filled with Federal cavalrymen. While none entered the house, and Sample failed to note if her in-laws lost anything that night, the terror of the disturbance acted only as a precursor of things to come.²⁸⁸

The next morning, as the women surveyed the damage from the previous night, the first foragers entered the plantation. The action was chaotic and immediate. "They shot all the hogs in the pen. Two Yanks came first, a Dutch and Negro, telling Rachel [Sue's sister-in-law] it would be best to turn the hogs out, but she had no time before they were there. We could hear nothing but guns all day and the squeals of hogs. We begged them to leave something, but no answer."²⁸⁹ Sue rushed to the corn cribs in an attempt to save some of the precious grain, where the soldiers promised that they would only take what they could fit in the wagons present. "They left enough corn for my sister to make out on, when no one else had a bushel left. Was it my entreaties that saved it?"²⁹⁰

The Union soldiers camped that night near the plantation. According to Sample the camp was "five or six miles long," and the next morning several local civilians investigated the scene after army departed. "Persons were obliged to pick up what they left, or perish. I

²⁸⁸ Sue Sample in Jones, pages 45-47.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 47.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

saw such a destruction – only those who have marked the footsteps of the Yanks know. Here families were left without knowing where they would get their next meal.”²⁹¹ That night, thanks to the largesse of the Federal soldiers who failed to destroy the corn cribs and all they held, the women of the household supped on parched corn. One of the slaves, Pete, returned from hiding with lard, bacon, and a few other comestibles with which to make things more comfortable for the home. A week after Sherman’s men passed by, Sample and her relations left the plantation as refugees seeking shelter and hospitality from a planter who suffered far less than those in Emanuel County. Three weeks later, Sample attempted to return home to South Carolina, following in the wake of those who swore an even stiffer punishment for that state.²⁹²

Nora Canning was a refugee of a different sort. In the rush to avoid Sherman’s approach to Macon, one of the perceived targets of the campaign, Canning and her husband, a judge only noted as “H.” returned to their plantation near Louisville in the swamps of Jefferson County. On November 24th the couple discovered that they lay directly in the path of Sherman’s men and decided to take precautions against the oncoming army. One servant dug a false floor in the smokehouse to hide its contents, and Judge H. took charge of building stockades in the swamps to hide the cattle. Nora ordered one of the cooks to prepare several days worth of food for their owners; she also distributed a month’s worth of rations to the slaves to prepare them for the destruction to come. Then, she and the overseer’s wife buried their valuables in an attempt to save them.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Ibid, 48.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Nora M. Canning in Jones, pages 49-50.

The Union army arrived at noon while the Judge and Nora prepared to dine. Unlike other accounts of civilian interactions with the Union army, Canning recorded several polite conversations with the soldiers who rapidly invaded her home and plantation. The first foragers on the scene asked Canning's husband about purchasing some flour. They then inspected the smokehouse and other outbuildings, after which they advised the Judge to "have these provisions carried into your house; some of our men are not very particular to ask for what they want." At the same time, another soldier actually offered his assistance in securing the meat from the smokehouse.²⁹⁴

Not all her interactions were so pleasant. When one soldier's question about the presence of Confederate soldiers was met with stony silence, he proceeded to curse Canning. When another soldier asked her the same question in a more polite manner, Nora answered with candor that Wheeler's cavalry was in the vicinity and had been for several days. Despite the relatively polite interactions, when Canning and her family returned inside their home to try and eat their supper, they found the table bare, stripped of all food, dishes, and even the tablecloth. Men of every principle composed Sherman's army.²⁹⁵

The next morning brought a new intensity to the family's interactions with the Union Army. The soldiers forced Judge H. to assist them in their search of the swamp for barrels of syrup. As her husband departed in the company of the foragers, others set fire to the plantation's cotton gin and the bales of cotton and cloth stored therein. The granary soon followed suit, and fire consumed the building and the wheat stored within. One soldier, remembered by Canning as "particularly insulting," gloated to the plantation's mistress about

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 50-51.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 51.

the work wrought upon the gin and granary. “Well, madam . . . how do you like the looks of our little fire. We have seen a great many such, within the last few weeks.” Nora’s only response was to express gratitude that the cotton would never “feed a Yankee factory or clothe a Yankee soldier’s back.”²⁹⁶

At some point during the day, someone cut the well ropes and stole the water buckets, which deprived the family and slaves of that precious fluid. As Nora Canning remembered, the next morning another soldier came to their aid.

. . . a rough looking man from Iowa came to the window and asked me if he could be of any service to me. . . . I told the stranger we had no water and nothing to eat. He offered to bring me some water if I would give him a bucket. I told him every vessel had been carried off and we had nothing. He then left and in about an hour returned with a wooden pail, such as the negroes used in carrying water to the fields. . . . I was thankful to get it and expressed my gratitude to the man.

The good Samaritan then took from his pocket two envelopes containing about two tablespoons of parched coffee and the other about the same quantity of brown sugar, and handed them to me. . . . I never appreciated a cup of coffee more than I did that one. This man was rough-looking, but his heart was in the right place. He certainly acted the part of the ‘Good Samaritan.’²⁹⁷

Nora Canning looked back upon her experiences with the soldiers of Sherman’s army and believed that “[W]ith one exception, the only kindness I received was from the Western soldiers. There were in that large army some feelings of kindness, but it was not my good fortune to meet them.”²⁹⁸

The “rough” Iowan continued to assist the family in crisis. When Canning saw a group of soldiers looting her potatoes, the “rough” Iowan again came to the door and offered

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 52-53.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 55.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

his renewed assistance. “Give me a basket and I will bring in some of those potatoes before they are all taken, for you will need them.” The soldier brought in three bushels of potatoes for Canning, who directed him to hide them under the bed. “All the time he was bringing them in, the soldiers were jeering ‘Old Secesh.’ He paid no attention to their taunts, but kept bringing in the potatoes as long as he could find a place to put them.” Eventually, everything that Canning, her slaves, and the helpful soldier saved filled one bedroom that Canning and her husband occupied, safe perhaps against the hands of the foragers, as long as they failed to fully notice the stores of food.²⁹⁹

As tensions increased around the manor house with the continuing influx of Federal soldiers, Canning sought protection for her home and husband. Finally, when one soldier threatened to fire the house, Nora invoked her husband’s Masonic membership as means of protection. A young infantryman brought his Colonel to the house, who then granted a guard to the family and cleared the home of foragers. In an act of kindness to a brother Mason, the Colonel ordered several days’ worth of “coffee, sugar, rice, beef, flour and other articles” sent to the family’s relief.³⁰⁰

The army remained stationary near Canning’s plantation through the course of the day, and several officers came to visit her home. In a candid conversation with an “intelligent” officer about the nature of war and “the horrors . . . brought upon the women and children of the South,” Canning learned that a far worse fate awaited the people of South Carolina. “‘You think the people of Georgia are faring badly,’ he said, ‘and they are, but God pity the people of South Carolina when this army gets there, for we have orders to lay

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 56-57.

everything in ashes – not to leave a green thing in the State for man or beast. That State will be made to feel the fearful sin of Secession before our army gets through it. Here our soldiers were held in check, as much so as it is possible with such a large body of men, and when we get to South Carolina they will be turned loose to follow their own inclinations.”³⁰¹

On Friday, the army departed the neighborhood of Nora Canning’s plantation, and on Saturday morning, the full reality of the effects of an invading army began to sink in to the mistress of the plantation. Such a scene of ruin and despair surrounded the home that Canning could hardly believe that “[O]ne week before it was one of the most beautiful places in the State.” The cotton gin and wheat granary, outbuildings so essential to the processing and storage of the plantation’s produce, “lay in ashes.” No more fences stood within sight of the house, and the corn crop, previously unharvested, lay trampled in the field, destroyed by the cattle and horses of the Union army. The sun itself, blotted out by the smoke from the burning structures in the area, “seemed to hide its face from so gloomy a picture.” Sherman’s hungry foragers even sought their prizes from the slave cabins. The month’s worth of rations, distributed a few days before the army came to prepare the slaves against the oncoming swarm of looters, was gone, along with every other possession. The destruction spoke to an orgy of waste and gluttony. “All around the grove were carcasses of cows, sheep and hogs, some with only the hindquarters gone, and the rest left to spoil. There were piles of carcasses all around where the army had camped. Some of them had been

³⁰¹ Ibid, 57.

killed and left without being touched.” If this gross destruction was evidence of an army held back, then the fate of South Carolina truly would be terrible.³⁰²

The diaries presented here have long provided the historian an important and accessible tool for understanding how soldiers and civilians interacted during the Savannah Campaign. The highly personal and sometimes emotional accounts grant an appreciation for the ways in which women faced the invading army and the damage it did to their farms and plantations. They put a human face on what historians have otherwise termed foraging. Soldiers foraged and supplied themselves from the fat of the land, but these women sat by and watched as strange men came and stripped away their livelihoods.

While the women in Sherman’s path watched an orgy of destruction unfold around them, Union soldiers, witnesses to nearly four years of destruction, boredom and slaughter, enjoyed what Major Charles Wright called “the most gigantic pleasure excursion ever planned.”³⁰³ A great juxtaposition occurred in Georgia’s rural landscape that November. For those men so long habituated to the harsh realities of military life, the movement from Atlanta to Savannah proved a rare period of relief from the usual tensions of war. There was no real risk of violence on a grand scale; an unchallenged movement supplemented by the spoils of war gave a festive attitude to Uncle Billy’s soldiers. The civilians who lived in the path of those men, unaccustomed to the tread of an invading army, watched as their peaceful life evaporated with the approach of the army, changed forever by the touch of war.

³⁰² Ibid, 58-59.

³⁰³ Charles W. Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier*. (Washington, D.C.: Globe Printing Company, 1906) page 320.

There remains another source to learn how the people of Georgia fared in the face of the Union Army's advance across the state. During the early 1870s, the government established the Southern Claims Commission, an entity tasked with analyzing the claims of Southern civilians who lost property to the armies of the United States during the war. In order to receive compensation for lost goods, the person in question needed to prove that he or she remained loyal to the Union throughout the course of the war and provide an itemized list of the property lost to the army. In all, the commission received 22,298 claims, with a total value of \$60,258,150.44.³⁰⁴ A total of 2,151 applicants came from Georgia, of which the commission only allowed or reimbursed thirty-eight percent.³⁰⁵ It took nearly a decade for the government to sift through these petitions, To receive financial assistance, applicants needed to fall within strict guidelines, in some cases guidelines almost impossible to meet. The value of crops in the field, as well as grass fields that the tread of armies disrupted, were not included in the schedule of items eligible for reimbursement, nor was the value of items lost to illegal foraging.³⁰⁶ In the end, the government paid only \$4,636,920.69 for 16,991 claims.³⁰⁷

Harriet Howard of Baldwin County, a seventy-six year old widow, submitted a claim on August 7, 1871, in the amount of \$1,231.50. In her claim, Howard gave an itemized list of all she lost, including livestock, grain, syrup, clothing and furniture, all lost to Sherman's troops when they foraged near Milledgeville. Her affidavit claimed a loyalty to the neighborhood, and while three of her nephews served in the Confederate army, none enlisted

³⁰⁴ Frank Wysor Klingberg, "The Southern Claims Commission: A Postwar Agency in Operations" *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* Volume 32, No. 2 (September, 1945) pages 195-214. Page 200.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 207.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 202-203.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 208-209.

of their own free will. Throughout the document, she strived to prove her loyalty to the Union with claims that she lived in a Union neighborhood, and that several people heard her speak in such terms during the war. In April, 1877, the Claims Commission awarded Harriet Howard the sum of \$881.00 for her claim. The men who heard her case allowed some value for the majority of her property, although she only received reimbursement for the full worth of her cattle.³⁰⁸

Tabitha Batson experienced the hardships of war from both sides of the conflict. Confederate soldiers executed her husband when he refused to enlist or serve in their cause. When General Hugh Kilpatrick's cavalry force entered Baldwin County in November, 1864, they passed over the widow's farm. Already struck by the tragedy of war, Batson's farm supplied the Federal cavalrymen with four horses, one hundred bushels of potatoes, two hogs, a barrel of flour and five bushels of wheat. In all, Tabitha claimed a loss of \$487 when she filed a claim on July 14, 1871. The Claims Commission awarded the woman \$313 when it adjudicated her claim on December 5, 1877. The commissioners granted her full value for the loss of her potatoes (fifty dollars), as well as her barrel of flour (ten dollars), while they only awarded a partial value for her horses (\$250 rather than \$400) and her meal (three dollars rather than seven). The commission disallowed the value of her hogs.³⁰⁹

For Sarah Wiggins, Sherman's men brought her the means to escape Georgia. She claimed to be "loyal in her feelings and language throughout the war, and to have rejoiced in

³⁰⁸ NARA M1658. Approved case files of claims submitted to the Commissioners of Claims (known as the Southern Claims Commission) from the State of Georgia, 1871-1880. Record group 217. Claim 5113, Harriet Howard, Baldwin County Georgia, December 4, 1876.

³⁰⁹ NARA M1658. Approved case files of claims submitted to the Commissioners of Claims (known as the Southern Claims Commission) from the State of Georgia, 1871-1880. Record group 217. Claim 4170, Tabitha Batson, Baldwin County Georgia, December 5, 1877.

Union victories.” Wiggins claimed no forms of passive resistance such as hiding food and valuables when the foragers entered her farm. Not only did she give “everything she had” to those soldiers with whom she interacted, she chose to uproot her family in the wake of the passing column. In her petition, she claimed to follow the army with her seven children all the way to Savannah. From there, her family took passage to New York, and from there journeyed to Indiana, perhaps to live with family. The commissioners who reviewed her case noted that “[t]he testimony to prove the taking is all familiar testimony [and] that of claimant [and] her two daughters, [and] is therefore to be received with great caution, [and] all doubts are to prevail. Without going into detail we allow \$365.00. Most of the items disallowed were not taken for Army use.” The reimbursement of \$365 represented less than half of the amount she claimed. The government refused to pay Wiggins for the loss of her cattle, potatoes, syrup, and a shotgun, among other items.³¹⁰

A quick survey of the allowed claims from Georgia shows that there were eighty-nine women who filed claims with the Southern Claims Commission and who received some form of reimbursement for their losses. Those claimants asked the government for an approximate total of \$126,412.45; the commissioners of the Southern Claims Commission authorized a payment of \$54,279.70, something like 42.9 percent of the funds requested. Six women received full compensation, whereas only one woman received no money from the government.³¹¹

³¹⁰ NARA M1658. Approved case files of claims submitted to the Commissioners of Claims (known as the Southern Claims Commission) from the State of Georgia, 1871-1880. Record group 217. Claim 5499, Sarah Wiggins, Emanuel County Georgia, March 20, 1877.

³¹¹ Information for this paragraph came from a survey of the “Southern Claims – Allowed – Georgia” files of the Southern Claims Commission. The eighty-nine files that make up this survey represent the claims of women who filed as the primary claimant. The totals for the claims and the actual funds spent on those claims

The women that met Sherman's men during their exodus across Georgia were not simply passive observers. The narrative of the diaries female witnesses to Sherman's march left, as well as the affidavits filed with the Southern Claims Commission, illuminated the ways in which Georgia's women participated in the military actions on their farms. While the loyalty claims filed with the Southern Claims Commission strived to show women as willing participants who aided the Union cause at every instance, including Sarah Wiggins's open-arms policy, the diaries and letters generally illustrated two types of resistance. Those who hid food and livestock through a variety of mechanisms presented an active resistance towards the Federal army. Many such attempts failed to entirely save the resources so hurriedly disposed of, the act itself showed a self-awareness and agency in action. Nora Canning's tale recorded the use of active resistance in the hiding of goods; she also used a more passive form of resistance when taunted by some of the Federal troops. Her refusal to interact with anyone who treated her in an ungentlemanly manner was a socially acceptable emotional response open for women to use in the face of stress and hostile action. When Canning acted in a "cold" manner and refused to cooperate with those who threatened her life and livelihood, she operated within the accepted scope of emotional response for a Southern woman.³¹²

The Military Division of the Mississippi did not raze every field and farm in Georgia. As such, some women left a record of the aftermath of the Savannah Campaign, rather than a tale of being caught up in the actual foraging. Sherman's army missed Eliza Frances

is approximate because one claim did not show an amount submitted by the claimant, and another did not show a total compensation approved by the Claims Commission.

³¹² For more information on emotional response as resistance, see Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North From the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Homefront* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003) pages 14-16.

Andrews's family plantation; the family suffered no deprivations at the hands of foraging parties. In December of 1864, after the Union Army took possession of Savannah, Andrews's father sent his daughters to spend the winter with an older daughter who lived alone on a plantation in southwestern Georgia.³¹³ The two girls travelled first via an overcrowded train and then by wagon, a trip over "65 miles of bad roads and worse conveyances, through a country devastated by the most cruel and wicked invasion of modern times."³¹⁴ After two days' travel, the girls and their traveling party neared Sparta, the edge of what Andrews' referred to as the "Burnt Country," the sight of which made the young Andrews "understand the wrath and desperation of these poor people."

I almost felt as if I should like to hang a Yankee myself. There was hardly a fence left standing all the way from Sparta to Gordon. The fields were trampled down and the road was lined with carcasses of horses, hogs, and cattle that the invaders, unable either to consume or to carry away with them, had wantonly shot down to starve out the people and prevent them from making their crops. The stench in some places was unbearable; every few hundred yards we had to hold our noses or stop them with the cologne Mrs. Elzey had given us, and it proved a great boon. The dwellings that were standing all showed signs of pillage, and on every plantation we saw the charred remains of the gin-house and packing screw, while here and there, lone chimneys, 'Sherman's Sentinels,' told of homes laid in ashes.³¹⁵

Destruction existed everywhere within the 'burnt country.' The agricultural landscape bore the brunt of Sherman's wrath, and everywhere that Andrews looked, she saw the largesse of the land wiped away in the short time that the Federal soldiers spent in any particular spot. There was no evidence left of the year's harvest in the path of Sherman's men; the "corn cribs were empty," and no fodder existed for Georgia's livestock, should any livestock still remain on those farms. Eliza confided to her diary that she "saw no grain of

³¹³ Andrews, 19, 21.

³¹⁴ Ibid, 22.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 32.

any sort, except little patches they had spilled when feeding their horses and which there was not even a chicken left in the country to eat. A bag of oats might have lain anywhere along the road without danger from the beasts of the field, though I cannot say it would have been safe from the assaults of hungry man.”³¹⁶

At the edge of Milledgeville, Andrews and her party crossed the site of where the Federals encamped. Here the young girl described local citizens, left destitute by the passing of the army, as they gleaned the site of the former camp in search of anything they could use for food, as well as any lost valuables they might find. Conditions forced many of the people to pick “up grains of corn that were scattered around where the Yankees had fed their horses.” The first scavengers found the possessions and treasures of Georgians scattered about, “plunder that the invaders had left behind,” but the pickings grew slimmer by the day. As Eliza described it, when she passed the field the only things left were spoiled grain, rotting animal carcasses, and the stench of death.³¹⁷

Another, perhaps more important view met Andrews’ eye. “Some men were plowing in one part of the field, making ready for next year’s crop.” The damage wrought by Sherman’s men as they crossed Georgia was only temporary in nature. While the coming years brought a drastic change to the nature of agriculture in the South, in the winter of 1864-1865, those left with the tools of production set about preparing the land for the year to come. The short-term view for the people of the South was bleak indeed, and for many the twin specters of famine and want accompanied the coming winter. For the farmers of Georgia,

³¹⁶ Ibid, 33.

³¹⁷ Ibid, 38.

however, the seasons remained the same. In order to recover, the time came to prepare the land for next year. There was hope for the land with the turning of the plow.

The women who wrote of the Savannah campaign faced a hard recovery in the wake of Sherman's passing force. Dolly Burge lamented a Christmas without the revelries and presents of years passed. The pain was almost palpable when she wrote of her daughter's empty stocking as it hung by the fireplace and waited for a Santa Claus that never came. Her slaves, used to the distribution of gifts on Christmas morning, erupted into her room and chanted "'Christmas gift, mist'ess! Christmas gift, mist'ess!' I pulled the cover over my face and was soon mingling my tears with Sadai's."³¹⁸ Unfortunately, her heavily edited diary portrayed little of the agricultural recovery on the plantation until April, and then only as an introduction to the discussion of the collapse of the South.³¹⁹ For Burge's editor, the only tale worth being recounted was that of a Southern woman who passively told of the world around her. Sue Sample and Nora Canning's stories failed to elaborate on their experiences after Sherman passed. Eliza Andrews spent the winter of 1864-1865 with relatives in southwestern Georgia. The teenage girl's dairy related only the tales of visitations with neighbors and the doldrums of rural Georgia, isolated from home. Though touched by war, the last thing on a young girl's mind was the agricultural work of the coming year.

Survival dominated the lives of Georgia's rural population when Sherman brought his army through their farms and plantations. While all practiced some form of resistance to the invaders, in the end all they could do was wait for the army to pass in order to pick up the

³¹⁸ Burge, 43-45.

³¹⁹ Burge, 46.

pieces of their lives. The loss of slaves, either through their desertion of their Southern homes or by their post-war emancipation, coupled with the loss of fences, the destruction of fields, and decimated livestock populations retarded Georgia's agricultural recovery. In the autumn of 1867, John Muir of Wisconsin set forth on a thousand mile walk to the Gulf Coast. On October 3, he recorded his encounter with a Georgia plantation still attempting to recover from the passage of Sherman's army. While he travelled through the "Piney Woods," he met came to the plantation of one Mr. Cameron. He arrived at the plantation just as Mr. Cameron attempted to repair parts from his cotton gin, just then resurrected from a pond on his property where they escaped the Union Army's wrath, along with the mechanisms of his cotton press.³²⁰ Muir wrote of the scarred landscape he saw at the time, as well as Georgia's hope for the future. "The traces of war are not only apparent on the broken fields, burnt fences, mills, and woods ruthlessly slaughtered, but also on the countenances of the people. A few years after a forest has been burned another generation of bright and happy trees arises, in purest, freshest vigor; only the old trees, wholly or half-dead, bear marks of the old calamity. So with the people of this war-field. Happy, unscarred, and unclouded youth is growing up around the aged, half-consumed and fallen parents, who bear in sad measure the ineffaceable marks of the farthest-reaching and most infernal of all civilized calamities."³²¹ In the end, the marks on the landscape and the civilian population of Georgia would take far longer to replace than Muir thought.

³²⁰ John Muir, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916. New York: Mariner Books, 1998) pages 60-61.

³²¹ *Ibid*, 84.

Conclusion

One month following the surrender of the Confederate armies in both major theaters of operation, the victorious Federal armies gathered around Washington, D.C. in preparation for the largest troop review held to that point in American history. On May 23, 1865, the Army of the Potomac, the spit-and-polished soldiers of the East who always operated within easy reach of supply depots and major cities but found mixed battlefield success, marched down Pennsylvania Avenue under the watchful eyes of the new President of the United States, Andrew Johnson, and the population of Washington, long familiar with these men. With polished brass, bright weapons, white gloves and cleanly brushed uniforms, these men presented an image of what a properly fed and supplied army should look like. For the Army of the Potomac, this was just another parade.³²²

The next day, May 24, brought a hushed excitement to the crowds gathered along the parade route. The men on review today were new to Washington; their service in the Union was beyond the eastern theater and the eyes of the Capitol City. At 9:00 A. M. a gun sounded on the outskirts of Washington and announced the march of Sherman's men. Beginning with the men of the Old Northwest serving in the XV Corps, the Army of the West strode along the parade route as their long western step pushed them along at a pace faster than the men took the day before. These men were not bedecked in the finery of a proper nineteenth century army: while some men wore fresh uniforms drawn by commanders who wanted to be seen leading textbook soldiers, the majority wore wide-brimmed slouch hats and threadbare uniforms. But uniforms only clothe the soldier; long marches across the

³²² James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, Volume IV of The Oxford History of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) page 853.

South, hard fought victories, and short supplies hardened these shabbily dressed soldiers. These shared experiences imbued them with a sense of pride in themselves and their general. Each man fixed his gaze the proscribed fifteen paces to the front as they marched. Honors were paid to the dignitaries, but no man gawked and acted the buffoon that Sherman feared might happen. This was Sherman's grand Army of the West; they had not let down their general in the field, and they refused to let him down now.³²³

Sherman turned in his saddle to look back on his men only once that day to see how his men appeared as they marched down Pennsylvania Avenue. The love of a general for his men flowed from Sherman's pen as he remembered what he saw. "When I reached the Treasury Building, and looked back, the sight was simply magnificent. The column was compact, and the glittering muskets looked like a solid mass of steel, moving with the regularity of a pendulum. . . . It was, in my judgment, the most magnificent army in existence . . . well organized, well commanded and disciplined; and there was no wonder that it had swept through the South like a tornado."³²⁴ The General also noted that proof of his army's destructive legacy appeared as trophies for the edification of the Washington crowds. "Some of the division commanders had added, by way of variety, goats, milch-cows, and pack-mules, whose loads consisted of game-cocks, poultry, hams, etc., and some of them had the families of freed slaves along with the women leading their children."³²⁵ Sherman saw no better punctuation to put on the campaigns that brought fame to him and his army, as well as a finale to the war.

³²³ William Tecumseh Sherman, *Memoirs of General W. T. Sherman, Volume II* (New York: Literary Classics of America, 1990) pages 864-865.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 865-866.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 866-869.

In a letter home to his wife written the day after the Review, Frank Malcolm, a sergeant in Company D, 7th Iowa Volunteer Infantry, related the events he witnessed in Washington and the tension between the soldiers of the two major theaters of the war.

Crossed the Long Bridge passed through the principle streets of the city and then down Pennsylvania Avenue past the President's Mansion the Treasury Building and Capitol [.] I had the pleasure of seeing all the big men of the day . . . the Crowd was the largest that I ever saw in my life – do wish you could have been present. . . . I am told by those who witnessed both reviews that Shermans Army marched better and was a much finer looking set of men than the Army of the Potomac . . . I flatter myself that our sunburnt hands and faces did not make an unfavorable comparison with the white cot gloves and pale faces of the Army of the James. The Difference in the two armies is this. they have remained in camp and lived well. we have marched and fought and gone. Ended the war and now they are not willing to admit that we are soldiers, call us Shermans Greasers Slouch Hats && . . .³²⁶

Malcolm was but one soldier, yet his thoughts are representative of the great body of men whom one observer commented that day “march like lords of the world.”³²⁷

William Tecumseh Sherman's Savannah Campaign, more popularly situated in the annals of American memory as the March to the Sea, still evokes the imagery of burning and destruction spread across a civilian landscape. Historians declare it among the first military campaigns that utilize the concepts of modern warfare.³²⁸ *Gone with the Wind*, Margaret Mead's popular novel and in 1939 starring Clark Gable and Vivian Leigh, one of the most

³²⁶ Frank Malcolm, letter to wife dated May 25, 1865, pp. 2-3. Frank Malcolm Letters, Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries.

³²⁷ Thomas Fleming, “The Big Parade.” *American Heritage* Vol. 41, No. 2 (March, 1990.) Pp. 103.

³²⁸ Lane Mills, editor, “*War is Hell!*” *William T. Sherman's Personal Narrative of his March Through Georgia* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1974) page xii. There are more sources on this topic than can possibly be listed here. For the discussion of Sherman's place in modern warfare, see Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), and Mark Neely, Jr., *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

popular films in the history of American cinema, portrays the path of Sherman's men as devoid of any evidence of life. The soil is bleakly tan, no grass or living plant or animal can be seen within camera shot, and the only living things evident, aside from the Southern belle refugee and her entourage, are the vultures moving amongst the bodies of dead Union and Confederate soldiers. The evidence of total and complete destruction is everywhere and only intensifies as the travelers move closer to their destination. The only living Yankee depicted is a deserter, a lecherous man desirous of stealing everything he can find, including the purity of Southern womanhood. Poverty and ruin face the young girl, perhaps the South as a whole, due to the actions of a faceless army and its vindictive leader, whose name is the only one uttered when discussing this savagery perpetrated against the people of Georgia.³²⁹

The March to the Sea is perhaps one of the most memorable and disputed aspects of the Civil War, lingering in the American memory like the scar Sherman and his men supposedly left on the landscape. It posits the agrarian South against the industrial North on a real scale. Soldiers, some armed with repeating rifles, the apex of the weapons industry in 1864, roamed the land faced only by a rag-tag assembly of Georgia militiamen and women who helplessly watched as damned Yankees looted and burned their farms.³³⁰ Farms burned, slaves gained their freedom, and the glory of the Old South died forever under the heels of Sherman and his bummers. Brooks Simpson and other historians have argued, rightly so,

³²⁹ *Gone with the Wind*, directed by Viktor Fleming, produced by David O. Selznick, 238 minutes, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939, videocassette.

³³⁰ Edward Caudill and Paul Ashdown, *Sherman's March in Myth and Memory*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.) 2008. Pg. 1.

that the memory of the march to the sea is another example of how the Union army won the war, but the collective memory of Southerners and their writers won the peace.³³¹

That Southern victory over the memory of the March to the Sea emphasized the total destruction of Georgia and the South as a whole. If one were to believe the mythology that surrounds the Savannah Campaign, Georgia in December of 1865 was completely devastated, a burning scar on the American landscape, with nothing left within the borders of that state. While Sherman's men left a deep psychological scar on the people of Georgia, the physical damage was confined to a strip of territory sixty miles wide and three hundred miles long. Yet people still talk of Sherman's destruction of the landscape, that the lone chimneys of destroyed homes still stood a skeletal watch over the route from Atlanta to Savannah. In fact, geographer D. J. de Laubenfels followed a portion of the route used by Sherman's men in the mid-1950s in order to compare the landscape of Georgia at that time with a set of highly detailed maps created by one of Sherman's officers. Instead of the scars of a long finished war, de Laubenfels found that many of the buildings on the original maps still existed, and that time and age stood as a greater enemy to their future than Sherman's visit presented in 1864. These maps showed seventy-two dwelling places present in 1864; in 1955, twenty-two of them still stood. Sherman's men destroyed only three of the seventy-two structures, the rest falling at some point in the ensuing ninety years.³³² de Laubenfels pointed out that most of the changes in the landscape of Central Georgia occurred because of

³³¹ Brooks Simpson's introduction, especially pp. x – xii. Henry Hitchcock, *Marching With Sherman: Passages from the Letters and Campaign Diaries of Henry Hitchcock, Major and Assistant Adjutant General of Volunteers, November, 1864-May, 1865. Edited, With an Introduction, by M. A. DeWolfe Howe.* Bison Book edition. (Lincoln, NE; University of Nebraska Press.) 1995.

³³² David J. de Laubenfels, "With Sherman Through Georgia: A Journal" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* Volume 41, Number 3 (September, 1957) page 291.

the changing nature of agriculture after 1864, both because of displacement of civilians unwilling or unable to start over after the loss of their food and farm supplies, as well as the conversion from a cotton-based agriculture to one that was beginning to emphasize cattle production in Georgia following the invasion of a more devastating foe, the boll weevil.³³³

Sherman's March to the Sea carried a heavy toll on a previously untouched agricultural landscape, and the soldiers who wrought their work on the land noted the change. On December 3rd, George Ward Nichols, a member of Sherman's personal staff, wrote extensively about the agricultural production he saw in the country around Millen, and the ultimate meaning of the army's movement through Georgia. While Georgia's landscape now seemed filled with corn fields from "one hundred to one thousand acres" in size, Nichols wisely deduced that those fields "were once devoted to the cultivation of cotton, and it is surprising to see how the planters have carried out the wishes or orders of the Rebel Government; for cotton has given way to corn."³³⁴ Regardless of the adjustment in crop production, Sherman's men still burned thousands of bales of cotton on their march through Georgia, although Nichols thought that the actual production must have been larger, as the men of the Federal army only burned what they found concentrated near the railroad. More important than the destruction of cotton, however, was the yeoman's work that the men of the Military Division of the Mississippi wrought in destroying and consuming the food found along their path. Georgia acted as the granary of the Confederacy, and especially for the western armies. ". . . for although corn and beef are sent to Lee's army, he draws the bulk of his supplies from the states east of the Savannah [River], and there is no region so prolific as

³³³ D. J. de Laubenfels, "Where Sherman Passed By" *Geographical Review* Volume 47, number 3 (July, 1957) pages 388-395.

³³⁴ George Ward Nichols, *The Story of the Great March*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865) page 81.

that about Columbia. . . . One thing is certain, that neither the West nor the East will draw any supplies from the counties in this state traversed by our army for a long time to come. Our work has been the next thing to annihilation.”³³⁵ Charles Wright Wills of the 103rd Illinois concurred with Nichols’ estimates. On December 6th, Wills wrote in his diary that, “We were talking over last night what this army had cost the Confederacy since the 4th of October last, when we started from Eastpoint after Hood. We all agree that the following estimate is not too high in any particular: 100,000 hogs, 20,000 head of cattle, 15,000 horses and mules, 500,000 bushels of corn, 100,000 of sweet potatoes. We are driving with us many thousand of cattle.”³³⁶

Such numbers failed to take into consideration the destruction of buildings and fences for firewood, a wide-spread and more universal devastation than even the loss of food represented. The ravenous need for fuel to cook soldiers’ meals devastated the infrastructure of Georgia’s farms. Animals and crops were renewable resources, ones that took time to replace through investment and natural increase. The loss of buildings and fences, measured as improvements to the land in the nineteenth century, could take years to replace, if a family possessed the financial resources to start over. The millions of fence rails destroyed for cook fires alone meant that fields were no longer protected from the advances of wildlife and livestock, which limited the fecundity of a crop. Intangibles such as these, the minutiae of destruction, took as great a toll on Georgia’s farms and plantations as did the broad strokes of emptied seed bins and raided smokehouses. It is almost impossible to establish a monetary value for the property improvements destroyed by Sherman’s men. Perhaps, as Paul W.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Charles Wills Wright, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier* (Washington, D.C.: Globe Printing Company, 1908) page 332.

Gates notes, the loss of invested time may be more important than the financial loss. An individual earned pennies per rail when they split logs for fences, but a fence line represented years of work and upkeep.³³⁷

As noted in their journals, the soldiers of the Military Division of the Mississippi saw their Georgia foraging as not just a function vital to the survival of the army, but as fun as well.³³⁸ The grand caravans of carriages that carried the prizes of war back to the main column were often gay affairs, illustrative of the fun that the assignment to a foraging party brought. The opportunity to forage gave the soldier a social release from his normal duties and discipline as a soldier, augmenting the festive atmosphere. According to Lee Kennett, some soldiers found an additional release through group polarization; not only did service in the army separate their individual identity from their deeds during their service, but it also allowed individual foragers to commit acts they would never attempt in civilian life.³³⁹ American society has never accepted arson or larceny as socially normal activities, yet Sherman's men were able to use the mask of military service, as well as the loss of individual identity while acting in a group of foragers ransacking a farm together.

On the second day after he departed Atlanta, General William Tecumseh Sherman visited a plantation near Covington, Georgia. After he conversed with several slaves, the General was talking with some members of his staff when a pair of soldiers passed by. Sherman painted a very singular picture of one the soldiers who confiscated goods from the plantation's larder. The forager "passed me with a ham on his musket, a jug of sorghum-

³³⁷ Paul W. Gates, *Agriculture and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965) pages 78-79.

³³⁸ Kennett, 282.

³³⁹ Kennett, 284.

molasses under his arm, and a big piece of honey in his hand, from which he was eating, and, catching my eye, he remarked *sotto voce* and carelessly to a comrade, ‘Forage liberally on the country,’ quoting from my general orders.’³⁴⁰ While General Order Number 120 indeed instructed the men to take advantage of Georgia’s agricultural bounty, Sherman confronted the impertinent enlisted man and reminded him that “foraging must be limited to regular parties properly detailed and that all provisions thus obtained must be delivered to the regular commissaries, to be fairly distributed to the men who kept their ranks.”³⁴¹ Properly admonished, the General and the soldier parted ways. In some sense, Sherman’s attempt to lecture the man seems to only pay lip service to the concept of military discipline. If the event actually happened, was the General simply going through the motions of limiting his foragers?

Sherman only ordered one case of foraging as an act of revenge. On November 22nd, Sherman and his staff stopped at plantation for the night. After he first sought shelter from the weather in a slave cabin, he was summoned to another home a short walk down the road. “In looking around the room, I saw a small box, like a candle-box, marked ‘Howell Cobb,’ and on inquiring of a negro, found that we were at the plantation of General Howell Cobb, of Georgia, one of the leading rebels of the South, then a general in the Southern army, and who had been Secretary of the United States Treasury in Mr. Buchanan’s time.” The owner’s name sealed the land’s fate. Sherman sent word to the closest command about who owned the plantation, and told the men to “spare nothing.” The soldiers took up the task assigned them by their beloved Uncle Billy as they emptied the secessionists’ grain bins and

³⁴⁰ Sherman, 658.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

storehouses. “That night huge bonfires consumed the fence-rails, kept our soldiers warm, and the teamsters and men, as well as the slaves, carried off an immense quantity of corn and provisions of all sorts.” Cobb’s treason in leading Georgia from the Union and making war on the United States of America bore final fruit in the destruction of his property.³⁴²

How had Sherman’s men seen the farms of the South? The commentary on Southern agriculture was often intermixed with their environmental commentary. Repeatedly during the first three weeks of the march, men of Sherman’s army used terminology that evaluated the concept of “good land” to describe what they saw. The only large-scale discussion came when the men of the upper Midwest discovered some unfamiliar aspect of the southern world. During the early portion of the march, the most common comment seems to reflect Charles Wills’ notation of November 19th about a “fine country” cited earlier.³⁴³ On November 16 and 17, Sergeant Alexander Downing of the 11th Iowa Veteran Volunteer Infantry made mention of the area he passed through to the same effect. On the first date he made mention of “some fine plantations, well improved with some good buildings,” while the next day he wrote that “We marched through some fine country today, and though heavily timbered, it is well improved.”³⁴⁴ As an Iowa farmer, Downing’s use of the term “fine country” seems to rely on the nature of farm assets available on the land in question, such as level of cultivation and the presence of natural resources.

As historian Conevery Valenčius argues, nineteenth century Americans possessed a heightened connection with the land, often attributing physical and moral attributes to the

³⁴² Sherman, 661-662.

³⁴³ Charles W. Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier*. (Washington, D.C.: Globe Printing Company, 1906), page 321.

³⁴⁴ Alexander G. Downing, *Downing’s Civil War Diary*. Edited by Olynthus B. Clark. (Des Moines: The Historical Department of Iowa, 1916) page 229.

environment.³⁴⁵ When soldiers like Downing and other Midwesterners assigned such descriptors as “good” or “fine,” they passed judgment on both the ability of the landowner to manage his fields and holdings, as well as the natural state of the soil. Good land was fertile and clean, well cultivated and free from weeds and trash. A “good” farm belonged to a man that took pride in his work and his profession. Conversely, the men used disparaging terms in reference to both poorer modes of farming, as well as to give negative connotation to the wastelands or borderlands of the swampy regions and Piney Woods sections of Georgia. Soldiers labeled the swampy regions as “unhealthy.” The most notable example came on December 1st, when Charles Wills commented that his men associated the presence of Spanish moss with “ager” or the fevers and illness prone to happen in these areas.³⁴⁶ The farms in this area presented fewer “fine” plantations, replaced by the farms of yeoman families, and as such, were not generally held in as high a regard as the better kept farms and plantations seen during the first half of the march.

If the memory of the March to the Sea claimed a swath of total destruction discernible for decades, what was the real agricultural impact of Sherman’s campaign through Georgia? The diaries and letters of the civilians left in the path of the army do not answer the question. The only quantifiable way of measuring the destruction left by the Union Army’s foray is to compare agricultural census data from before and after the war. As Lee Kennett notes, it is nearly impossible to extricate the effects of the Savannah Campaign from the war as a

³⁴⁵ Conevery Valenčius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) pages 4-7, 192.

³⁴⁶ Wills, 330.

whole.³⁴⁷ Georgia's agricultural recovery was stunted by the loss of slavery as a labor system and the loss of a generation of young men to disease and the gore of the battlefield. de Laubenfels noted that in the confusion of the post-war era small farms exploded, driving down the average amount of land per farm, radically changing the agricultural landscape.³⁴⁸ The largest single change was the loss of slave labor. Without chattel slavery as a cheap source of labor, farm production dropped markedly. When farm recovery came, it changed the face of farming in Georgia.³⁴⁹

In 1860, the state of Georgia had 62,003 farms worth \$157,072,803. The owners of those farms showed an investment in machinery and implements valued at \$6,844,387. While Georgia did not lead the nation in the production of any single crop, as a whole the state produced magnificent amounts of crops. More than thirty million bushels of corn came from the fields, as well as more than seven hundred thousand bales of cotton. Six and a half million bushels of the ubiquitous sweet potato, food for man and beast alike, came from Georgia's fields. In the coastal regions, rice planters produced more than fifty million pounds of their chosen crop, and the sugar producers sent forth nearly twelve hundred hogsheads of sugar and more than half a million gallons of cane molasses. Two million hogs populated the landscape, and 130,771 horses and 101,069 asses and mules provided the

³⁴⁷ Lee Kennett, *Marching Through Georgia: The Story of Soldiers and Civilians During Sherman's Campaign*. (New York: Perennial, A Harper Collins Imprint, 2001) page 310.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 389.

³⁴⁹ Willard Range, *A Century of Georgia Agriculture, 1850-1950* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1954) page 17. While loss of slaves crippled the dominant labor system in the South, it also financially crippled the former Confederacy, where forty-seven cents of every dollar were invested in slaves.

motive power for agricultural tasks and transportation. The total value of all the livestock in rural Georgia was \$38,372,734.³⁵⁰

In 1870, Georgia's agricultural production was a shadow of its former self. While there were seven thousand more farms than a decade before, the cumulative value of those farms was sixty percent less than the previous census showed. Machinery and implement value was just over four and a half million dollars, approximately two-thirds of their pre-war value. Georgia's agrarians produced only seventeen million bushels of corn and 473,934 bales of cotton. Sweet potato production plummeted to just over one-third of its previous number. Coastal Georgia's rice and sugar planters, so heavily reliant on slaves to work their swampy fields, suffered equally with the rest of the state. Only twenty-two million pounds of rice appeared on the census; there were only 644 hogsheads of crystallized sugar produced in 1869. Only cane molasses showed a growth in the first census following the war, but only by seven thousand barrels. The war decimated Georgia's livestock populations. Census marshals only tallied 988,566 swine, a devastating blow to the main source of protein in the Southern diet. Fifty thousand fewer horses, and approximately fourteen thousand fewer asses and mules lived on the state's farms. It is impossible to know what combination of events suffered the farm animal population to drop; the military needs of the Confederacy, as well as Sherman's foraging in certain areas no doubt took a steep toll on these numbers. With the destruction of fences and other farming infrastructure, it is possible that a certain percentage

³⁵⁰ Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864) pages 22 – 29, 222. For a full accounting of the sample discussed here, see Appendix I.

of these animals became feral, especially hogs. Regardless of what happened to the animals, the total value of Georgia's livestock was \$30,156,317, a drop of eight million dollars.³⁵¹

Georgia's long recovery continued into the 1880 census. The total number of farms exploded to 136,626 worth \$111,910,540. There was a total investment in farm machinery and implements of \$5,817,416, an increase of one million dollars from ten years earlier, but still one million dollars less than before the war began. Corn production had nearly recovered to prewar numbers but was still two million bushels shy of the numbers recorded in 1860. Rice production remained less than half of that reported in 1860, and forty-three fewer hogsheads of cane sugar came from the coastal sugar region, although cane molasses now numbered nearly three times the number of gallons produced twenty years earlier, perhaps representative of a change in the market for that material. Sweet potatoes showed an increase from 1870, but lagged behind 1860's numbers by two million bushels. Cotton production exploded with the number of farms to more than eight hundred thousand bales, an increase of more than one hundred thousand bales over the number of bales recorded in 1860. Livestock continued its slow recovery as well. There were now 1.4 million swine on Georgia's farms, an increase almost half a million from ten years before, but still six hundred thousand fewer than before the war. The 132,078 asses and mules that powered the state's agriculture showed an increase of thirty thousand over 1860, but there were still less than one

³⁵¹ Francis A. Walker, *Ninth Census – Volume III: The Statistics of the Wealth and Industry of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872) pages 120 – 127, 348.

hundred thousand horses on Georgia's roads and farms. Agricultural recovery from the ravages of war was a slow process that would continue for years to come.³⁵²

Capital, labor, and transportation infrastructure issues worked hand in hand to create an economically distraught South in the post-war period. Financially ruined by the loss of slaves, the single largest form of investment for the planter class, as well as the loss of money invested in Confederate war bonds and the five year removal from markets that generated revenue before the war, the South sought credit from Northern institutions, often through mortgages and loans, in an attempt to rebuild their lives and restart their farming operations.³⁵³ Georgia's transportation infrastructure was devastated by the war; not only did Union military forces destroy certain aspects of its rail network, but roads had degenerated due to lack of maintenance, as had river and sea transport lanes, which also suffered from Confederate attempts to make these avenues inaccessible to Union naval encroachment.³⁵⁴ However, the greatest issue that faced that Georgia's farmers and planters faced was the end of slavery and the quest for a new source of labor to produce the commodity and sustenance crops that fueled the South's agricultural base.

One change that might be directly linked to the after effects of the presence of soldiers in the South is the change in Georgia's fence laws in the 1870s and 1880s. Prior to the war, Georgia, along with other states throughout the Union, utilized laws that required farmers to fence to in their fields as a protection against wandering open-range livestock.³⁵⁵

³⁵² Francis A. Walker, *Report of the Productions of Agriculture as Recorded in the Tenth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883) pages 3 – 10, 102.

³⁵³ John Solomon Otto, *Southern Agriculture During the Civil War Era, 1860-1880* "Contributions in American History, Number 153, Jon L. Wakelyn, editor (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994) page 54.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 48.

³⁵⁵ Otto, 5-7.

Soldiers decimated the fences of Georgia for firewood. As discussed earlier, fence construction represented a larger investment of time rather than money. In response to the need to maintain croplands and prevent loss to meandering livestock, Georgia's legislators created new fencing laws in the 1870s and 1880s that shifted the responsibility for fences to livestock raisers by mandating that they fence in their animals. While these laws were not uniformly adopted at once, they reveal the general trend towards ending open range livestock rearing.³⁵⁶

Cotton's resurgence in Georgia's post-war economy indicated the push for financial recovery. Cotton became the commodity of choice in all regions of the state as people sought ways to alleviate the financial losses suffered due to the war.³⁵⁷ Still a staple of the industrial systems of America and Europe, cotton offered the quickest means to gain relief from the indebtedness that followed the war. Spurred by prices that reached eighty-three cents per pound, those planters labeled as unpatriotic by the Southern press during the war for continued cotton production were the first to bring cotton back on to the open market, selling the bales they produced and hoarded throughout the war.³⁵⁸ Cotton quickly became the premier commodity crop in the post-war period due to its profitable nature. According to Lee Alston, four factors increased cotton's profitability: high price per unit, decreased prices for fertilizer, the development of new areas of cultivation in upcountry Georgia due to

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 80.

³⁵⁷ Lee J. Alston, "Issues in Postbellum Southern Agriculture" in *Agriculture and National Development: Views on the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Lou Ferleger. The Henry A. Wallace Series on Agricultural History and Rural Studies, series editor Richard S. Kirkendall (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990) page 208.

³⁵⁸ Otto, 54, 51, 53.

increased rail development after the war, and the fact that merchants accepted cotton in payment for debts at country stores and factor houses.³⁵⁹

Rice and sugar production dwindled in the postbellum era due to a number of issues. The production of both crops found a more congenial environment in Louisiana.³⁶⁰ In addition, much of Georgia's rice infrastructure was damaged during the war by direct action or through neglect; without the finances and labor to repair the water control devices on coastal Georgia rice plantations, the industry became a shell of its former self.³⁶¹ Access to land became an issue for the rice and sugar planters following the war when their lands, often abandoned when families became refugees from Union incursions, were aggregated into a slave resettlement area along the coast known as Sherman's Reservation.³⁶² Additionally, rice and sugar production were much more capital intensive than cotton production, which limited the recovery of these two forms of agriculture.³⁶³ The former slaves who took on these subdivided lands tended to practice subsistence agriculture, rather than opt for commodity rice and sugar production.³⁶⁴

The answer to Georgia's labor issued came in the form of sharecropping. With little else to turn to, and no means of their own to earn a living, former slaves returned to the land and worked as laborers on plantations or became tenants. The Freedman's Bureau attempted to aid in the resettlement of African-Americans, and it encouraged the development of

³⁵⁹ Alston, 208; Otto, 83.

³⁶⁰ Otto, 92; Alston, 208.

³⁶¹ Otto, 61.

³⁶² Otto, 49, 60-61.

³⁶³ Ibid, 67.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, 61. See also Joseph P. Reidy, "Slavery, Emancipation, and the Capitalist Transformation of Southern Agriculture, 1850-1910" in *Agriculture and National Development: Views on the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Lou Ferleger. The Henry A. Wallace Series on Agricultural History and Rural Studies, series editor Richard S. Kirkendall (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990) page 244.

Republican free labor ideology throughout the South via contract negotiations over the value of labor between former slaves and land owners.³⁶⁵ Joseph Reidy argued that sharecropping developed from a stalemate between land owners who desired to maintain former production levels on their lands and the former slaves who sought to control their own labor for the first time, unwilling to work the long hours forced upon them when they were slaves.³⁶⁶ While contracted labor at first began as a contractual arrangement between groups of laborers and farm operators, it eventually assumed the guise of the family as a contractual unit through lease contracts.³⁶⁷ In the long term, sharecropping came to replace slavery as the predominant form of indentured labor in the South, often placing long-term economic bonds on a family that replaced chattel slavery in Georgia and the rest of the South well into the twentieth century.³⁶⁸

Although the March to the Sea had an immediate negative effect on Georgia's agrarians unfortunate enough to live in the path of the marauding Union Army, in and of itself, it was not an agent of long term agricultural change. Some slaves left their plantations and farms and followed the army to freedom, which limited the amount of labor available in the short run, and the Military Division of the Mississippi ransacked the storehouses that stored the harvests of 1864, but Sherman was not an agent of change in his actions. The success of the campaign rested in the denial of resources to Confederate soldiers and civilians alike, and in the terror that Sherman wrought in the population of Georgia. The casual reader and the historian alike cannot escape that terror when confronted by the words of Dolly

³⁶⁵ Reidy, 244.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, 240.

³⁶⁷ Alston, 209.

³⁶⁸ For more on sharecropping, see Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) chapter 5, *passim*.

Burge, running from the blue clad figures as they appeared from behind a hill while she visited with her neighbors. That emotion was based in the loss of control over their lives when confronted by an invading army. No longer was the war miles away in Tennessee or Virginia; here was conquest visited upon Burge, her neighbors, and all the families who awaited Sherman's arrival. The greatest victory of the Savannah Campaign was the psychological wound that Sherman and his soldiers inflicted when they showed Georgia that no one was safe from the power of the Union Army.³⁶⁹

Sherman wrote as much in a letter to General Henry Halleck on Christmas Eve, 1864. After he discussed his plans for South Carolina in the renewal of the campaign, as well as his wishes for General Thomas' actions in Tennessee, Sherman wrote the Chief-of-Staff about the importance of maneuvers such as the one just completed by his men in Georgia. "I attach more importance to these deep incisions into the enemy's country," wrote the victorious General, "because this war differs from European wars in this particular: we are not only fighting hostile armies, but hostile people, and must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war, as well as their organized armies. I know that this recent movement of mine through Georgia has had a wonderful effect in this respect. Thousands who had been deceived by their lying newspapers to believe that we were being whipped all the time now realize the truth, and have no appetite for a repetition of the same experience."³⁷⁰ By bringing the war to those previously untouched by its grisly hand, William Tecumseh Sherman drove a wedge through the Confederacy physically and mentally. The physical scars healed, eventually; the mental scars lasted for generations, and they continue to find

³⁶⁹ Katherine M. Jones, *When Sherman Came: Southern Women and the "Great March"* (Indianapolis: the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964) page vii.

³⁷⁰ Sherman, 705.

currency today. That is the greatest legacy of Sherman's foraging parties and their interactions with Georgia's agrarians.

Appendix

. Comparative analysis of selected census data for Georgia from 1860 – 1880.

	1860 ³⁷¹	1870 ³⁷²	1880 ³⁷³
Cash Value of Farms	\$157,072,803	\$94,559,468	\$111,910,540
Value of Farming Implements and Machinery	\$6,844,387	\$4,614,701	\$5,817,416
Horses	130,771	81,777	98,520
Asses and Mules	101,069	87,426	132,078
Swine	2,036,116	988,566	1,471,003
Value of Livestock	\$38,372,734	\$30,156,317	\$25,930,352
Bushels of Indian Corn	30,776,293	17,645,549	28,202,018
Pounds of Rice	52,507,652	22,277,380	25,369,687
Ginned Cotton, bales of 400 lbs. each	701,840	473,934	814,441
Bushels of Sweet Potatoes	6,508,541	2,621,562	4,397,778
Cane Sugar, hhds. Of 1000 lbs. each	1,167	644	601
Cane Molasses, gallons of.	546,749	553,192	1,565,784
Value of Animals Slaughtered.	\$10,908,204	\$6,854,382	XXX
Total Number of Farms	62,003	69,956	136,626

³⁷¹ Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864) pages 22 – 29, 222.

³⁷² Francis A. Walker, *Ninth Census – Volume III: The Statistics of the Wealth and Industry of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872) pages 120 – 127, 348.

³⁷³ Francis A. Walker, *Report of the Productions of Agriculture as Recorded in the Tenth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883) pages 3 – 10, 102.

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